The Interplay of Charity and Theology, c. 1700-1900

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Faculty of Humanities

2010

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Final Word Count (excluding introductory material and bibliography): 79862 words
The thesis follows the development of charity, both as a theological concept and as the activity of increasing number of social institutions, over two centuries. The main narrative of the thesis follows these two themes, but it also identifies other background factors, particularly developments in social history. It uses insights from anthropological gift theory, reflected in part in the concept of noblesse oblige, a standpoint which both demands support from the rich to the poor and legitimates social divisions: points frequently made in charity sermons.

The thesis explores the development of theologies of charity, in particular in the writings of Butler, Wesley, Sumner, Chalmers, Maurice, and Westcott, and also considers the philosophy of J S Mill and T H Green. From these, it is argued that the key development in theoretical analyses of charity is a shift in discourse from an emphasis on the duty of the rich to behave charitably (as in Butler’s concept of benevolence) to a concern with the outcome of such giving on the recipients of charity. This is first seen in the writings and practice of the early leaders of the evangelical revival who saw the poor as children of God, but also as being in need of moral reformation. With the advent of a Christian approach to economics based on the thinking of Malthus and Sumner, a harsher approach developed which saw charity as undermining a divinely ordered social economy and was expressed in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The reaction against this led to a split in thinking about charity: on the one side a mix of economic theory, Comtean altruism and Greenian Idealism resulted in the growth of an autonomous, secular and professional approach to charity exemplified by C S Loch, and on the other a changing Christian approach to the position of the poor in society, going back to Maurice which was expressed in a call for justice rather than charity by the Christian Socialists of the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, other political developments were resulting in a greater state involvement in what had hitherto been an independent field of charitable work, and resulted in very different patterns of welfare, in which charity took second place to state provision.

The thesis ends by revisiting the split in discourse between givers and receivers of charity, and argues that both sides need to be considered in any theological discussion, including the need for recipients to be allowed to reciprocate to others.
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Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
Acknowledgements

This topic has been in my mind for over forty years, and my indebtedness to individuals and organisations over that time is consequently vast, both to those who have guided my Christian journey, and to colleagues in the voluntary sector and in academic life. More immediately, I am deeply grateful to the Methodist Church and to Hartley Victoria College for encouraging me to undertake this study as part of my training for the Methodist ministry, for paying my fees, and for the extremely generous time allowed for the completion of the study. More recently, my circuit colleagues have been generous in allowing me time to work on this thesis.

I am very grateful to my supervisors – the Revd Drs Len Smith, Andrew Pratt and Anne Peart, who have guided and encouraged me over this long period. I am also grateful to colleagues at Liverpool University who have answered by queries and otherwise supported me over the years: Pat Starkey, Jason Powell, David Dennis, Jean Warburton and Diana Powell.

I have benefitted greatly from the holdings of a wide range of libraries – the University Libraries of Liverpool, Manchester (John Rylands), London, and LSE. Moreover, I have been very fortunate in being able to study at St Deiniol’s Library Hawarden, a resource whose only drawback is the richness of what it offers.

The greatest generosity and support, of course, has come from Angela: she must be almost as surprised as I am to see the finished article.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis goes back a long way into my life. My first employment was with Councils for Voluntary Service, which were concerned with supporting and co-ordinating the work of voluntary organisations and forming and maintaining links between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and statutory authorities. After four years of that work I moved into academic work and during the succeeding 32 years I was engaged in research into the VCS, with a particular interest in the field of community care. So when it was suggested that I should register for a higher degree as part of my ministerial training, it seemed appropriate that I should look at the links between the theological concept of charity and the practice of charities.

The research question

The primary material which I have examined has been selected to identify how, over a period of 200 years (roughly 1700-1900) charity has been viewed by theologians and, increasingly, by secular philosophers. Secondly, and more generally, I have looked at how the practice of charity has been carried out – charitable praxis – starting with the work of individuals and moving through to charitable associations and ultimately to the work of the state. This material is less detailed, and is largely based on existing histories of social policy.

These two sets of material have been set against each other, to examine whether there is congruence between theology and praxis and, if possible, to consider whether one has influenced the other. Edward Norman has famously maintained that in modern times, at any rate, the flow has been very much one way – that politics has
laid down the agenda for theology, rather than vice versa\(^1\). On the other hand, Boyd Hilton’s study of political and economic thought in the early nineteenth century argues that evangelical views, deriving directly from theological thought, strongly coloured the ways in which people thought about economic life\(^2\). Social policy is not formed in a vacuum: it arises out of perceptions of the nature of society and of elements within society which are seen as problematic. More broadly, it raises questions of what we think of as the ‘good society’, and on what values this construct is ultimately based, whether explicitly or implicitly. These same questions are of course addressed by theology: it is scarcely surprising, therefore, that there is overlap between the two.

Part of the difficulty in dealing with such issues in this context is that charity has always been such a ‘taken for granted’ concept: a good thing, which could recognised by all. (Though, as we shall see, the practice of particular charities was not always self-evidently valued by all, and charitable organisations sometimes had to go to considerable lengths to sell their own picture of the good society to their funders and to the recipients of their services.)

There are, of course, theological histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries\(^3\), which have sometimes devoted considerable space to the exercise of benevolence, but it has always, quite properly, been a subsidiary theme. There have been studies of particular charitable organisations and individuals, or of the charitable actions of particular churches or groups, as well as studies of the exercise of charity in particular localities\(^4\). There have also been histories of charity, most notably David Owen’s


book of 1964, but there has been no major study of the whole field, in its theological context. This study is to some extent an attempt at synthesis of these studies, examining the historical evidence from the standpoint both of social policy and practice and of theology. Inevitably it must take a broad and general approach, as it analyses how factors which arise from the Christian concept of charity need to be understood in the context of social conditions and of dominant social policy paradigms.

The time scale is lengthy, and this creates problems of generality and selectivity of data. There was a deliberate decision to take a long period, in the hope that this would help to identify changes more easily, and the dates chosen reflect a period of social policy history which is highly relevant to the development of charities: associational, as opposed to endowed, charities started round about 1700, while from the beginning of the twentieth century (say, the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of 1909) the state has generally been seen as the major player both in forming and providing social policy. It is not possible to identify such clear cut movements in the history of theology, but it would be possible to argue that whereas in 1700 charity would uniformly be seen to arise from the teaching of Christianity, by 1900 there would be some agreement, in intellectual circles at any rate, that charity could be both constructed and practised in an autonomous, secular context.

One version of the research question could thus be to ask whether and how far, during this period of dominance of social policy practice by associational charities, charities influenced the theological understanding of charity, and how far theological understandings of charity influenced the practice of associational charities. But further questions arise: does our modern understanding of charitable praxis, deriving both from theology and from social science, allow some preliminary critique of the range of

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Christian approaches to charity identified by the theological material from this study?
In the conclusion, therefore, I shall look at some historical models of charitable theology and praxis, and ask how far these appear congruent with present day understandings of charity – and indeed, how far they were appropriate in their own day, while recognising that charity will always, rightly, be a response to social needs and conditions at a particular time, and that it needs to be evaluated within its own social context.

This is a wide-ranging series of questions, and obviously some have been more thoroughly discussed than others. In particular, given this broad field of study, limitations of space have prevented an adequate discussion of a number of important topics. There is a very brief reference to issues of poverty and charity in the middle ages, and a little more to the significance of women in the development of charitable work, but both of these require more thorough discussion. I am also conscious that the thesis is heavily weighted towards Anglican theology and does not engage with Roman Catholic, Quaker or Reformed traditions. This latter is significant, given Puritan concepts of the Godly Commonwealth in the 17th century, which perhaps re-emerge in the later 19th century in the prophetic elements of Christian Socialism both among the churches and in developments such as the trade union movement. Finally, it must be stressed again that this is a study of the records of charity: the story of informal charity and mutual aid among the poor remains largely unrecorded and unseen.

The structure of this chapter, and of the thesis

In this introductory chapter we look first at the whole idea of caring love for others, variously expressed as agape, caritas and charity. Having discussed these terms, we set them in a social context by examining anthropological concepts of the gift, how these developed into the political use of gifts in classical Greece and Rome, and how Christianity was co-opted into the system in the developing Byzantine Empire. The chapter ends with a discussion of evidence and methodology.

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6 See note 72, p.35
7 See pp 98 and 102 (note 238),
This introduction is followed by five chapters which explore understandings of charity roughly in the periods 1700-1750, 1750-1800, 1800-1835, 1835-1870 and 1870-1900. These are, though, very approximate dates, and the chapters in practice overlap with one another: one paradigm of charity does not immediately succeed another, but is superimposed on the next, like strata in an archaeological dig. Within these chapters, the ideas of particular theologians and philosophers are examined - Butler, Wesley, Sumner, Chalmers, Maurice, Mill, Green, Westcott, Scott Holland, Loch, the Bosanquets and the Barnetts. Their ideas are discussed in the social and political contexts of their times. Finally, a brief conclusion seeks to evaluate praxis against versions of present understandings of *agape* and of a gift-based society.

**Love and Charity**

We commonly assume that love is one of the most universal of the emotions, but its very universality also carries the implication that similar words are used to describe a very wide range of phenomena which are, both in experience and in description, extremely nuanced. There are dangers of making assumptions based on modern understandings of love in the face of cultural and historical variations, so that the same words may be used for different phenomena. All the same, we tend to assume that certain emotions are common over time and culture, and that, for example, audiences for Euripides, Racine, and today will share an understanding of Phaedra’s feelings as she becomes enthralled to Hippolytus: *Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée.*

Defining love can be a very difficult, but perhaps not impossible task. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (SOED) gives as a primary definition

> That state of feeling with regard to a person which arises from recognition of attractive qualities, from sympathy, or from natural ties, and manifests itself in warm affection and attachment.

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Further definitions include benevolence, including the paternal benevolence of God, and of His creation towards Him, ‘a strong predilection’ towards someone or something (I love strawberries – what Lewis calls liking for the sub-human\textsuperscript{10}), and sexual attraction and gratification. Charity, the subject of this thesis, is a concept carved out of the wider idea of love, and the elements in the SOED definition of love have relevance for our understanding of the term. First, all aspects of love may be supposed to contain an element of feeling, which includes a psychological drive beyond a cool rational or intellectual response. Secondly, love is a response to the attraction of the loved object, and this carries the implication that the object is special and different from others. But this does not just apply to sexual or other desires (need love), since thirdly, love may be a response of sympathy (gift love), based on a perception of the other’s need. And fourthly, love may arise from the natural ties of family, neighbourliness etc.

We would recognise these elements in most of our understandings of love, but some of them do not fit neatly into an understanding of charity. Bishop Butler, for example, argues that decisions about charity should be made in a cool, detached way (see pp. 51ff below). Decisions of need made by a charitable giver may differ from the awareness of need held by the recipient. And crucially, both Jesus’ own teaching (Matt. 12: 46-50) and present day social policy would challenge the idea that charity should be limited to those bound to us by familial or other close ties. The whole concept of love as a drive energising certain feelings and actions carries strong implications of some specificity about the object, yet the Biblical command to love seems to imply a universal duty.

Love is enjoined on humanity in the Judaeo-Christian tradition\textsuperscript{11} by two texts from the Jewish scriptures

\textsuperscript{10} C S Lewis: \textit{The Four Loves}, London, Bles, 1960, 19ff
\textsuperscript{11} Charitable love is also, of course, a requirement of other religions: see, for example, A Singer: \textit{Charity in Islamic Societies}, Cambridge University Press, 2008, and V A Dusenbery and D
Hear O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deut. 6:4-5.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Lev. 19:18.

While there is debate whether Jesus was the first to draw these two texts together (Mk 12: 28-34), it is clear that, like his near contemporary Rabbi Hillel (c.110BCE-10CE), he regarded the ‘golden rule’ “Do to others as you would have them do to you” as a summary of the law. The Jewish Scriptures teach that love originates with God, in his creation of humankind and in his forgiving covenant with Israel. Israel’s response is to be one of obedience: the Shema is to be expressed in practice through love of others. In terms of gift theory (see pp 24ff below), it could be said that God’s original gift is love, and that humankind’s counter-gift is to be expressed, not as a direct gift to God, but asymmetrically as love to others.

‘Love’, says Jeanrond, ‘is not a principle, but praxis’, and this is certainly true of charity. But it is also governed by religious and ethical imperatives, and by a sense of duty, which makes for difficulties. How can we love (exercise charity towards) those for whom we feel no love (affection)? And is Paul right in saying that ‘if I give away all my possessions...but do not have love, I gain nothing’ (1 Cor. 13:3)? Charity appears to be a matter of motivation, as well as of praxis. From Plato and Aristotle to Augustine and to modern ethical theory, charity is seen as something more than an emotional response to another’s need, and indeed many writers have frequently expressed concern at the danger of feelings over-riding reason. This dominance of reason over emotion has led at times to distrust of ‘feminine’ affection, and still more of sexual love. The counter argument, however, driven alike by Freudian and post-Freudian


12 W G Jeanrond: *op cit*, 33, and see references in note 24 of that book


14 Jeanrond, *op cit*, 5

15 *Ibid*, 21f

16 It is also an issue for receivers as well as givers, a point picked up later.
psychology and by feminist theology\textsuperscript{17}, claims that love can be an exercise in manipulation and power\textsuperscript{18}, and Blake’s contrast of the Clod and the Pebble (\textit{Love seeketh not itself to please / Love seeketh only Self to please})\textsuperscript{19} is a reminder that love cuts both ways.

It is not surprising, therefore, that writers have sought to divide the concept of love in different ways. Hebrew has a variety of words expressing different aspects of the relationship between God and his people\textsuperscript{20}, and Greek, more widely, has at least four terms for different types of love. C S Lewis, for example, identifies affection, friendship, eros\textsuperscript{21}, and charity (in Greek storge, philia, eros, and agape), though he acknowledges that the boundaries between them became increasingly blurred as he proceeded with his book.

In modern theological writing Anders Nygren\textsuperscript{22} has argued most strongly for the recognition of a division between two types of love: agape and eros. Agape appears to be a common and non-specific word for love in pre-Biblical Greek: ‘colourless and indefinite’\textsuperscript{23}. It was, however, the word generally used for God’s love by the translators of the Septuagint, and is also the most commonly used word for love in the New Testament\textsuperscript{24}. Eros by contrast, is not just erotic love in our modern meaning, but


\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, 6, 26

\textsuperscript{19} W Blake: \textit{Songs of Experience}, London, 1794


\textsuperscript{21} ‘That state which we call ‘being in love’, or, if you prefer, that kind of love which lovers are ‘in’.” Lewis, \textit{op cit}, 106


\textsuperscript{23} In G Quell and E Stauffer: \textit{Love}, in \textit{Biblical Key Words from G Kittel’s Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament}, London, A and C Black, 1949, 28

\textsuperscript{24} Though \textit{phileo}, love in the sense of friendship (as in Jesus’ friendship for Lazarus, John 11: 3, 36) and for enjoying something (e g [hypocrites] ‘\textit{love} to stand and pray in the synagogues’, Matt 6: 5) is also used quite extensively. Jeanrond \textit{op cit}, 28, citing J Barr: ‘Words for Love in New Testament Greek’ in L D Hurst and N T Wright (eds): \textit{The Glory of Christ in the New
more broadly human desire for a wide range of objects: Jeanrond summarises Nygren’s distinction ‘between worldly love, characterised by self-love (eros) and heavenly love characterised by self-giving love (agape).’ For Nygren the crucial distinction is the origin of love: agape originates in God, whereas eros originates with the self, and these two are totally different, both in source and in praxis.

To some degree Nygren is following the thought of Augustine, though his final conclusion is very different. Augustine, a neoplatonist, believed that since God is love, all love is ultimately centred in God, and any expression of love (caritas) is ultimately directed to God. Augustine’s synthesis of love makes sense in his own setting, but for Nygren it fails to take into account the idea that God is and must be the only true source of love: it is too close to need love, which Nygren cannot accept.

In its own terms Augustine’s concept of caritas derives from his belief that all love flows from God, and all human love seeks to return to God. His most famous statement: ‘You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you,’ has implications for the double command to love God and our neighbours as ourselves: we derive all our power to love from God, and the command to love God with all our hearts, minds and souls implies that all our love must ultimately be directed to him, the sumnum bonum.

Whoever, therefore, justly loves his neighbour should so act toward him that he also loves God with his whole heart, with his whole soul and with his whole mind. Thus, loving his neighbour as himself, he refers the love of both to that love of God which suffers no stream to be led away from it by which it might be diminished.

Testament: studies in Christology in memory of G B Caird, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987,3-18. Jeanrond makes the point that the use of one word rather than another may on occasion be as much a stylistic decision as for any technical differentiation between the terms.

25 Op cit, 16-17
Given Augustine’s episcopal responsibilities in the Church in North Africa when it was riven with conflict, it is not surprising that he placed so much emphasis on the Johannine writings, and particularly the First Epistle, with its stress on communal unity. The claim in 1 John 4 that God is Love (Deus est Caritas) was highly relevant to the needs of Augustine’s own times, and also helps us to understand how one strand of meaning of the term charity came to be associated with mutual peace and love within the church. And, since bishops in the late Roman Empire frequently held secular responsibilities for public order (see pp 32ff below) it is also understandable that caritas was also linked in Augustine’s thinking with justice, and that he developed the two together, with the ultimate outcome that ‘perfect charity is [also] perfect justice’.\(^{28}\) But he also recognised that such perfection is not to be attained in this life, while the Cities of Men continue alongside the City of God: ‘Justice thus appears as the rough, necessary, coerced order of human societies which is not wholly antithetical to love, since it serves the purpose of God in the creation and history. But the actual enforcement of justice, and the struggle for it, shows everywhere the tragic consequences of sin.’\(^{29}\)

*Agape*, then leads on historically to the development of Augustine’s caritas, which becomes part of the understanding of charity in later periods. But before we come to that, we need to pause to consider how the Biblical concept of *agape* has been developed, and what meaning we should ascribe to it today.

**The nature of Agape**

Nygren’s analysis of *agape* has been so thorough and influential that his definition remains the starting point for most subsequent writers on the subject. *Agape* – and we must remember that in Nygren this always starts as God’s love – consists of four linked elements: it is


\(^{29}\) Williams, *op cit*, 60-1.
• ‘Spontaneous and unmotivated’
• ‘Indifferent to value’
• ‘Creative’
• ‘The initiator of fellowship with God.’

It arises from the very nature of God, and is not triggered in any way by anything that might make people attractive to God, or which might make him love some rather than others. Rather, the worthless are given value by the creative love of God, and are thus enabled to respond to him by God’s initiative.

God’s love for us calls forth our response:

The distinctive character of the Christian ethic, as it arises out of fellowship with God, can be summed up in Jesus’ words to his disciples: “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. X, 8). Those who have freely received God’s love are called to pass it freely on to their fellow-men. ... The Agape that is required here has its prototype in the Agape manifested by God, and therefore it must be spontaneous and unmotivated, uncalculating, unlimited and unconditional.

Our agapeistic response is to apply both to our love to God, and to other people. But can we love God in a spontaneous and unmotivated way? Clearly this is not feasible if we are just thinking in terms of autonomous human emotions, but, says Nygren, in Jesus’ teaching, to love God is to be ‘possessed’ by him, to belong absolutely to him. (We might compare this with Augustine’s concept of seeking to be joined to God who is the totality of existence.) This then ceases to be egocentric love, as the lover becomes totally bound up in the other – not so unlike Phaedra’s proie attachée.

When we turn from love for God to love for the neighbour, Nygren insists that this is a specifically religious duty, rather than any kind of altruism or ‘general love for humanity’, but springing rather ‘from fellowship with God and experience of God’s

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30 Nygren, op cit, pp 75, 77, 78, 80  
31 Ibid, 91  
32 Ibid, 93-5
agape.’ Unlike human love, which responds to love or hate with its own mirror image, agape reflects the constant and unvarying love of God.  

He goes on to discuss agape in the thought of Paul and John. For Paul, the cross is at the centre of his understanding of agape, the central demonstration of God’s love, giving himself to the uttermost to those who have no entitlement to his love or mercy (Romans 5: 6-10). ‘Love is the fulfilment of the law’ (Romans 13: 10): because of God’s love we can love our neighbours, expressing his love to others in a chain of love, which begins wholly with God, and is therefore a religious love. It is in this context, Nygren argues, that we should read Paul’s hymn to love in 1 Cor. 13:

Agape has for Paul a value and significance of its own, entirely independent of its object; it is not necessary to ask every time the word occurs, to whom love is directed. Agape is primarily God’s own love, which is by its nature self-giving, overflowing. This love of God is now “shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us” (Rom. 5: 5) and the life of God has thereby taken possession of man’s inmost being. The Christian henceforth lives “in Christ”, and Christ lives and works in him; he is “constrained by the Agape of Christ”...and the stream of love that has been poured out in his heart flows forth to his neighbour.

By contrast with Paul’s universal, outward-directed agape, Nygren sees John’s concept as being more limited: love, though central to John’s message, is primarily to be shared within the church rather than with the wider community.

In purely abstract theological terms, there is clearly great strength in Nygren’s argument but it raises some sharp empirical questions. How are Christians to differentiate the sources of the love which they seek to practise? Only, presumably, to the degree that their love fits in with Nygren’s criteria, while recognising all the

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33 Ibid 95-99  
34 Ibid 115ff  
35 Nygren has been showing that for Paul agape is nearly always directed to the neighbour rather than to God.  
36 Nygren, op cit 140  
37 Here taken to include the whole Johannine corpus of Gospel, Letters and Revelation  
38 Nygren, op cit, 146ff
difficulties of self-knowledge and the risks of self-deception. And at this point we should note an alternative tradition of understanding love to which I have already briefly referred. We shall look at it in more detail when we consider Butler’s ethical theology in the next chapter, though the tradition runs through to the present day. This argues that love, whether expressed as benevolence or *agape*, is an inherent element within human nature. To be sure, we must cultivate it, but if we do so we will find that we have a happier and more rewarding life. But does this not make the pursuit of *agape* a matter of self-interest? This question is fundamentally misconceived. To desire God is, as we see from Augustine, a good thing in itself. To shape our lives in the way which he has planned for us is not to toady up to God, but to behave as he wishes, and the pursuit of virtue is no more blameable than it would be to criticise athletes or musicians who practise their craft for hours a day. In the mid and late nineteenth century there was a view among secular moralists that Christian morals, based on a hope of heaven, were to that extent contaminated compared with a secular benevolence which was completely disinterested. Such actions and attitudes *can* be selfish, but they can equally be natural and appropriate human behaviour. The same case has been made recently empirically at a societal level by Richard Wilkinson, who argues that egalitarian societies are happier for all their inhabitants than those with a wider span of income and other resources: this is not a selfish quest for happiness, but an attempt to live in a mutually beneficial society.

Another issue, which follows from this, concerns questions of justice, and consequently of rationing of resources. A society is not likely to achieve the kind of equality which Wilkinson discusses, without some quite strong state machinery to ensure an equitable distribution of goods and services. To divide loving behaviour absolutely, as Nygren does, into *agape* and *eros* may make sense in theological terms,

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40 I think that the analogy of the musician comes from C S Lewis, but I cannot now trace it.
but is too sharply divisive in terms of how people actually behave, and what the outcomes of those behaviours will be. As Reinhold Niebuhr observes, Nygren’s analysis makes the division too sharply:

Non-Christian conceptions of love do indeed seek to justify love from the happiness of the agent; but the freedom of man is such that he is not without some idea of the virtue of love which does not justify itself in terms of his own happiness. It is significant that Jesus does not regard the contrast between natural human love and the divine *agape* as absolute. He declares: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.” (Mt. vii, 11)

As we shall see, during the nineteenth century there was a move to separate off quests for charity and for social justice from the activities of religious bodies. Paradoxically, charities were one of the early ways of doing this. Although they may have been founded by committed Christians, and have relied on religious contacts for their fundraising, the level of Christian content in their activities varied considerably: charity schools, certainly, included a high level of religious instruction in their teaching, but in hospitals, although they gave religious instruction to their patients, this was marginal to their main activities, even if it provided a useful hook for soliciting donations in charity sermons.

By the mid-nineteenth century there was a wider recognition that issues of social justice could, and perhaps should, be pursued outside church organisations. There is some difference of emphasis between the first and second generation of Christian Socialists on these issues. While Maurice and his colleagues were to some extent keen to co-opt and Christianize the Chartist and Trade Union movements in the campaign for the Kingdom of God, by the end of the century bodies like the Guild of St Matthew, while certainly having their own religious emphases, were working alongside and accepting secular socialist bodies as organisations existing in their own right, and with no goal of converting them to Christianity. Charity (in an inclusive sense) then, came to be seen as something which could exist outside Christian belief, rather than with the clear division which Nygren’s model would require.

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A third possible criticism of Nygren arises from sociological theory. The American sociologist Talcott Parsons developed the concept of ‘pattern variables’, which he used to identify differences between formal and informal relationships. Formal relationships, he argued, are based on universal responses to those who fall within the remit of the professional’s work: health care workers, for example, will treat anyone who suffers from the condition which they are qualified to treat, irrespective of whether or not they ‘like’ the patient. By contrast, informal help is based very largely on personal relationships, whether through kinship or neighbourhood links, or through personal friendship. At first sight, this suggests that it is the professional model which offers a more agapistic approach to love for the other. However, the down side of this is that formal carers will only treat those who (a) fall within the remit of their skills, and (b) qualify for that treatment by NHS or other membership. The gift is not one of love, but a response to entitlement.

Both of these models, therefore, are open to the question which starts the story of the Good Samaritan: ‘Who is my neighbour?’ (Luke 10: 29), and both would appear to fail the test of that story. We should not, however, necessarily take the parable as applicable to every conceivable situation. What if, for example, we substitute for the Levite a skilled obstetrician rushing off to a difficult delivery: should he stop and risk his patient dying? The story as it stands is based on three elements: that the wounded man is met ‘by chance’, that the priest and Levite are assumed to have the time to stop if they will, and that the Samaritan has no ties of duty or friendship that would require him to help the wounded man. It is this supererogatory element of the story which makes it a paradigm of agape, but we should not suppose that the chance nature of the encounter between two strangers is a necessary requirement of agapistic behaviour. Love is not less valuable because it is exchanged among friends, and indeed propinquity makes this a much more likely scenario. The point of Jesus’ parable is that

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we must not stop there: everyone is potentially a neighbour. We should remember a later verse in Leviticus 19:

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as a citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. (v.34)

Philip Abrams, in his studies of neighbourhood care, praised the work of Christians in such schemes that they were willing to take on the care of people who were not lovable:

The long-term, unremitting general care of the seriously disabled, profoundly distressed, incontinent or disagreeable – those who have really fallen through the net of social care.\textsuperscript{45}

I do not wish to suggest that only Christians are capable of such supererogatory work, but to emphasise that it is this element of giving, not so much without return, but because of an awareness that the believer has already received great gifts from God, which characterises \textit{agape}, and which frees people up to give in this way\textsuperscript{46}. To discuss this, however, we first need to turn to a new theme, that of gift theory.

\textit{Anthropology and the Gift}

The modern idea of charity supposes a free gift from one person to another because of some perception that the other person has \textit{need} of this gift. But this is to conflate a lot of different ideas. The anthropological analysis of the gift suggests that it is seldom \textit{free}: rather, it is an action in the context of a series of complex social relationships, not necessarily needs-based, in which exchange is constantly taking place, either to sustain or to alter that relationship system. Certainly, Christian \textit{caritas} can frequently involve gifts, but this too takes place in the context of social relationships, either to sustain existing networks of relationships, or to extend them to people with whom the giver

\textsuperscript{45} P Abrams: \textit{Neighbourhood Care and Social Policy: a research perspective}. Berkhamsted, The Volunteer Centre, 1978, 11-12

\textsuperscript{46} For supererogatory love, see G Outka: \textit{Agape: an ethical analysis}, New Haven and London, 1972, 294ff
would not otherwise be involved. The key point in both analyses is that the gift is a momentary symbol of an ongoing or newly forming relationship (and hence more than a coin in a collecting box), and it is the nature of that relationship which lies at the heart of any investigation of the nature of charity. We must ask not only what is given, but why it is given, to whom, and what the outcome of the gift is expected to be.

Classical social anthropology seeks to trace the origins of social relations. Writers since Mauss and Malinowsky have argued that the exchange of goods in so-called primitive societies has a much wider significance than simple barter, or than the use of money to give items a precise relative value to one another. For Mauss in his epochal *Essai sur le don* (1922–23)\(^{47}\) gifts have two main functions: they serve to establish a pecking-order of power within a society, and they maintain good relations between social groups. Both of these positions are sustained by the fact that in all societies there is a basic expectation that when gifts are given they should be returned. If recipients cannot return the gift, because they cannot afford to do so, they lose face within the society, and become established inferiors, and perhaps clients, of the ‘successful’ giver. If on the other hand, the recipient chooses not to return the gift, that is a deliberate insult, and in inter-tribal relationships is tantamount to a declaration of war.

The extreme version of the gift as act of challenge and hostility was found in the rituals of the natives of the north-western coast of North America called *potlach*\(^{48}\). In this ceremony, rich people would deliberately and publicly destroy large amounts of their wealth. Why should such an apparently bizarre action be regarded as a means of acquiring high social status? The answer lies in the nature of the exchange of gifts. In nearly all societies to receive a gift is to accept an obligation to return the gift in some

\(^{47}\) M Mauss: *The Gift: forms and functions in archaic societies*, ET London, Cohen and West, 1954, Routledge, 1970. It is significant that one of the classic texts about the anthropology of the gift is called *Stone Age Economics* (M. Sahlins, Chicago, Aldine de Gruyter, 1972)

way. Gifts put us under an obligation to another person. To take a very simple example, if we receive a Christmas card from someone, the automatic response is that we should send one back in return: if we decide not to, that is an indication that we have decided not to deepen our relationship with that person. R.P. Dore, writing about social life in Tokyo in the late 1940s, describes a world filled with small gift exchanges: for example, when someone moved into a new home, one of their first acts would be to call on their neighbours bearing a small gift: they would introduce themselves, explaining that they would no doubt have occasion to call on their neighbours for help in the future, and would they in the meantime accept this small gift as an earnest of their good intentions? They were, as it were, buying into a network of mutual, reciprocal exchange of help and social relations. To be part of a social network you need to be able to sustain your contributions to it – or to have built up contributions in the past. To fail to contribute when your turn comes is to expose yourself to moral obloquy: you may still be part of the social system, but you will be seen as a social ‘pauper’.

This can lead to a social competitiveness: who can hold out longest in the chain of repaying other people’s gifts, constantly bidding up the market with gifts of increasing magnificence? Among these North American tribes this was taken to the point where the really wealthy man might publicly destroy his wealth in a ceremony of potlach. By not using it to make gifts to others he removed their chance of repaying him, and the only way in which they could compete was by making an even larger destruction of their own wealth. Conspicuous consumption could hardly be taken further. It is, as Levi-Strauss points out, not “the possession of riches which brings prestige, but rather their distribution.” By this means social and political ranks are settled until the next meeting time when a new trial by giving may be made.

49 Levi-Strauss (op cit, p20) describes modern Christmas gifts as “a giant potlach”, in which we spend a great deal of money to no real purpose except to show our social feelings towards one another – often in a competitive spirit. And see also Schwartz, op cit
For the élite honour counts for more than possession\textsuperscript{52}. Homeric and Norse heroes alike are esteemed in terms of their ability to make gifts to others. Honour always implies the ability to return gifts, both as a matter of duty and of prestige: the term ‘credit’ contains the implication both of honour (creditable) and of the ability to repay an obligation (credit-worthy).

There is a further element here related to the idea of \textit{potlach}. Sacrificing to the gods has a similar effect, in terms of the destruction of goods, but also has the effect of putting the gods in your debt: if you are generous to them, then you can hope that they will be equally generous to you. The giver is thus seen as one with high status, to whom the gods owe a gift in a process of what Mauss calls a ‘contractual sacrifice’\textsuperscript{53}.

However, this process can also be taken a stage further, introducing, in Mauss’ words, the beginning of a theory of alms, which combines ideas of gifts and wealth on the one hand, and sacrifice on the other. It is necessary to deal with wealth by giving it away, and the gods are happy that their share should be given to the poor and unsupported. Further, it is always wise to treat a stranger as a possible god: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13: 2) would be recognised by the ancient Greeks, who believed that "from Zeus are all strangers and beggars", and that "Zeus is the avenger of all suppliants and strangers"\textsuperscript{54}: you could never tell when a stranger might turn out to be a god. Similar beliefs have been found by anthropologists in other parts of the world.

\textsuperscript{52} Lévi-Strauss, \textit{op cit}, cf M I Finlay: \textit{The World of Odysseus}, London, Chatto and Windus 1956, Penguin Books 1962, 140-142: ‘One measure of a man’s true worth was how much he could give away in treasure’ (p.140)
\textsuperscript{53} Mauss \textit{op cit}, 15
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Odyssey} 14, 57-8, cited in Finlay, \textit{op cit}, 117
Gifts and gift-giving in early societies should not just be seen as something that happened at occasional ceremonial occasions: they filled a much wider range of activities in society. Social exchange was just that: it included not just the exchange of material goods – indeed they were rather incidental symbols – but gift exchanges involved "courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances and feasts, and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract." Further, they involved the whole clan or tribe. Sub-groups might have their own exchange systems: thus Malinowski observed in the Trobriand Islands that fishermen practised a system of exchange with farmers, but there was no formal bartering between the two: the fish was left near the farmer’s hut, and vice versa in a system of "of gifts and return-gifts".

And it is this reciprocity which underlies the system of social relations, which is the more important aspect of gift exchange. The gift and the counter-gift are both necessary, and the one legitimates the other; we give another person our name (a highly significant act) in order to start a new relationship, and we follow it up, like Dore’s Japanese neighbours, with a whole range of further gift exchanges. We exchange direct services with one another at a neighbourly level – holding keys, feeding pets, baby-sitting etc. - and we also exchange more general precautionary exchanges with others: helping to start a neighbour’s car, because we never know when we may want to call upon such help. Other exchanges, particularly within families, may take place over a long period of time: we may finally call in credits for former gifts when we are ourselves no longer capable of acts of giving.

55 Mauss, op cit, 3
However there is a further, but very important, point, which is brought out in Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of social relations among the North African people of Kabylia\textsuperscript{57}. Bourdieu points out that although the ‘objective’ anthropologist may observe how society operates, and derive from this social ‘laws’, those laws are not apparent in the same way to the people actually involved in exchanges. The ‘game\textsuperscript{58}, or social process, only works if the participants play it in a spirit of assuming that they make up the rules as they go along. For them, each exchange raises questions of whether, when, and how the counter-gift is to be made. The informal sanctions of the tribe are very different from the automatic standards of commercial law. The timing of the return is important: to return a gift immediately, or to return exactly what has been given, is in effect to reject the gift. To show appreciation of the gift there has to be a shaded measure of response which seeks to recognise what the giver would like in exchange, which involves a personalisation of the whole procedure.

John Milbank has asked the question "Can a gift be given?" If we think of a gift as an entirely spontaneous, wholly altruistic act, it is very easy to see how the answer must be in the negative. All giving implies the expectation of some measure of response, even if only an internal moral satisfaction in having done right\textsuperscript{59}. But that is to misunderstand the nature of the gift. Gifts are not independent, single acts standing in isolation from one another. They are points in an on-going process which take their relevance from their historical context, and which have the collective function of enabling the smooth running of society. It is in this way that two meanings of ‘charity’ come together: charity is a gift, certainly, but it also has an older, and arguably more important meaning, of good social relations between people.

\textsuperscript{58} Note that Rowan Williams uses the concept of the game in his discussion of charity: R Williams: Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement, London, Continuum, 2000. Chap 2
Anthropology thus introduces us to a number of issues relevant to charity. Gifts are important. They may be horizontal, between contemporaries, or vertical, between generations, or between people of different social classes. They generate social life, and the initiating gift is the crucial starting point. And here Milbank’s stress on a Trinitarian approach is important. God’s creative nature gives generous gifts which are then passed down the generations. His redemptive gifts are made to strangers who have become alienated from him, which both adopt the stranger back into the family of God and free him/her to give to others. And the Paraclete is herself a gift: ‘I will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever.’ (John 14: 15).

Not all gifts are good. Because the archaic gifts we have described are highly normative, we may tend to assume that they contain moral overtones which are lacking in the operation of the market. This may be so, but norms are not morals, and a contextual theological approach must question carefully how societies operate in toto, before prescribing a particular approach. One theme, however, which we must note at this point, is that of reciprocity.

At first sight, reciprocity seems to be the opposite of agape, but this is typical of the way in which discussion of agape has concentrated on the giver and ignored the receiver. As we have seen, to receive a gift without being able to reciprocate is to place the recipient in a subservient position, and one which present-day recipients often resent. Agape should liberate the beneficiary, and one part of that liberation should be to free them to give in their turn. We can see three forms of gift exchange: those which are strictly between two parties or groups, such as families, where the likelihood of return is very high (symmetrical reciprocity); within a broader

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60 I have discussed this issue in more depth in J Lansley: ‘Reciprocity’, The Modern Churchman, XXXII, 3 (1990), 41-48  
neighbourhood, such as Dore describes in Japan, where the freedom to give and receive help is of general benefit to the community (moderate asymmetrical reciprocity); and where the gift is always returned to another person (total asymmetrical reciprocity). It is this last which Jesus teaches:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?..... Love your enemies, do good, and lend, and you will be children of the Most High.....Give, and it will be given to you. ...for the measure you give will be given to you again. (Luke 6: 32, 35, 38)

It would be dangerous to draw sharp lines between these different types of reciprocity: rather, they shade into one another, and, as we have already seen, raise serious questions about the need for the practice of agape to be totally disinterested.

*From gift to welfare: the shift from munificence to charity in the early Christian era*

In his study *Bread and Circuses* Paul Veyne introduces the term "euergetism", bringing the concept of the archaic gift into formal classical history. The term comes from the Greek term for doing good to someone – *eugerosia* – and particularly doing good to the city – *euergetein ten polin* 62. In a world with a small number of very rich people, and large numbers of poor, it was practical to have a system where the equivalent of taxation fell on the rich, not in any formal legal sense, but where they were expected to contribute substantially to the well-being of their city, especially at times when they held civic posts as magistrates. A culture not unlike that of the *potlach* applied: there were both expectations from the citizenry to be met, but also there was a strong competitive urge to out-do, or at the very least to equal, the gifts of other powerful families during one’s term of office. Euergetism thus involves both voluntary action and the response to moral or even legal pressures, but the two overlap into a virtually seamless whole. It was only towards the end of the imperial period that people started to seek to escape their social obligations.

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Euergetic behaviour, though no doubt it can be traced back further, is discussed by Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. The Magnificent Man will spend for the sake of honour, on buildings, votive offerings and sacrifices, ‘and all those [things] which are proper objects of public-spirited ambition, as when people think they ought to equip a chorus or a trireme, or entertain the city, in a brilliant way.’ These are the greatest and most honourable ways in which a man can spend his money. It follows that wealth is not a good in itself, but only a means to prestige and glory, and in this the Greek would be in total agreement with the Trobriand Islander. This was the more significant when much wealth was created by agricultural surpluses which had a limited life and therefore had to be distributed quickly: it was the power which such wealth brought, rather than goods in themselves, which mattered.

The same principle applied in the Roman republic, where magistrates were expected to provide for their cities in appropriate ways, though in some cases, notably in the management of the corn market, the task was too great for the essentially amateur efforts of the *aedile* and became part of the imperial civil service. This professionalisation of what was previously euergetism was highly significant, but over time it was subject to further development.

With the shift of the capital from Rome to Constantinople, and outbreaks of famine in various parts of the empire, it was no longer sufficient just to support the Roman populace from taxes raised from the rest of the empire. The imperial coffers, public or private, would only stretch so far, and in 409 Theodosius II set up a fund to prevent destitution, part of which was to be provided by an ‘obligatory gift’ [*grata inlatione*]

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63 *Nichom Eth IV, iv, 2*
64 O Murray, *Introduction* to Veyne, *op cit*, xvii
65 The aediles had two tasks, *cura annonae*, the control of the subsidized bread market, and *cura ludorum*, the organisation of circuses. Veyne, *op.cit.*, 237.
66 Veyne, *op.cit.*, 243, and see the whole discussion on corn doles in *ibid*. pp.236-245. See also E Patlagean: *Pauvreté Economique et Pauvreté Sociale à Byzance 4ème-7ème Siècles*. Paris, Mouton, 1977, 183-6: in Constantinople there was a shift back to giving a ‘gracious distribution’ to those in need rather than as a euergetic distribution to social equals or as traditional rewards.
from the senators⁶⁷. Similarly, in the other great towns of the empire, there was an imperial expectation that the notables would contribute to the costs and running of relief programmes. Soon after the reign of Constantine this included bishops: Basil of Caesarea is found supplying additional grain supplies during a shortage in 368⁶⁸. Monasteries took on analogous roles in rural areas.

All this was a major shift from the previous Greek and Roman morality. Under that system, the civic leadership made gifts to the whole city, but the major beneficiaries tended to be the citizens as a whole, with perhaps some trickle-down benefits for slaves. The aim was that the city as a whole should prosper, and some Romans, like Pliny, spent vast amounts on their home towns (Veyne calculates that Pliny’s expenditure of two million sesterces on his home town of Como would be the equivalent of £40,000 in Dickens’ time⁶⁹).

By contrast, as we have seen, the Jewish law placed a much higher value on almsgiving to the poor: they believed that they should be aware of poverty among their fellows, because they were all once poor slaves in Egypt. Jesus largely took over this ethic and re-emphasised it in his own teaching. This becomes a mark of Christian mutual support as communities start to form around the empire: “instead of engaging in *euergesiai*, writes Tertullian, we give to our poor, our orphans, our old people. ‘But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another.’”⁷⁰. Of course, there is a sense in which the issue did not arise for Christians in the same way. They were unlikely to hold public office. Some, though, were comfortably off, and could recognise the social gaps that existed between themselves and the absolute poverty of some of their fellow Christians, and how quite small sums of money could make a considerable difference for these people. It was

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⁶⁷ Patlagean, *op cit* 187
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 186-7
⁶⁹ Veyne, *op cit* 10
⁷⁰ *Ib.*, 23, citing Tertullian *Apologetica*, 39, 7; *Epistle to Diognetus*, 1; Minucius Felix, 9, 2.
this solidarity with the poor which differentiated Christians (and Jews) from their pagan neighbours. "Almsgiving to the poor soon became a token of the solidarity of threatened groups of believers. The eventual replacing of a model of urban society that had stressed the duty of the well-born to nourish their city by one based on the notion of the implicit solidarity of the rich in the affliction of the poor remains one of the most clear examples of the shift from a classical to a post-classical Christianized world." 71

Of course, not all Christians lived up to these ideals, but on the whole they did so better than pagans: there was a communal commitment to their ethic of solidarity with the poor, which helped to express their own sense of sinfulness: giving to the poor became an easy and obvious way of expiating their own failings, as well as witnessing to the communal nature of the Church 72. However, the very success of Christianity created its own problems. Increasing demand from the poor in larger cities created the same problems for Christian notables, whether laity or bishops, as their pagan predecessors had faced, and expectations of widespread largesse for the poor could ruin the Christian benefactor 73. These problems were only overcome with the Constantinian revolution, when the church was showered with imperial gifts – albeit with the expectation that these would be used to meet social needs, as well as for the construction of basilicas and the like. With the decline of non-Christian philanthropy, Christian charity became formalised and institutionalised, as hospitals and similar bodies were created, and with bishops taking on themselves roles not unlike those of their euergetic predecessors.

72 Brown, op cit, 277-8
73 Veyne, Bread and Circuses, 27
However, there was one important difference: giving was not just confined to the very rich, but spreads throughout the Christian community. Post-Constantine, solidarity with the poor became a major element, whether expressed in regular small gifts or in more extensive legacies. "Almsgiving became a potent analogue of the relation of God to sinful man. The whining of the beggars as the worshippers entered the basilica to pray were overtures of their own, desperate appeals to the mercy of God. ‘When thou are weary of praying’, said John Chrysostom, ‘and dost not receive, consider how often thou hast heard a poor man calling, and hast not listened to him.’ ‘It is not for stretching out thy hand that thou shalt be heard. Stretch forth thy hand not to heaven, but to the poor.’"

Such almsgiving, with its recognition of the needs of the poor, was a new element in social life, and with it, as people were born into Christianity, rather than converted to it, there came a new morality for the rich: they had a duty to assist the poor, and thereby to acquire merit, but the poor did not have an equivalent right to be helped: rather, a new sense developed in which the poor became a necessary part of society, and an alternative model of life. This leads to a theme which there is no space to discuss here, of ‘Christ’s Poor’, which became a major issue in the middle ages: the poor should be helped, but Franciscan poverty was also seen as a virtue in itself.

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74 Brown, op cit, 278, citing Chrysostom Homily 11 in 2 Thess. and Homily 1 in Titus
To summarise, as Christianity takes front stage in shaping both ethics and service to the poor, we find a situation where a series of movements are changing the setting in which support for the poor takes place. First, the growth of urbanisation, as always, was leading to the growth of an immiserised urban class who were totally dependent on support from others. The poorest peasant could scratch something from the soil, and pick up casual labouring jobs: the contrast between employment and destitution was much more acute in towns and cities, particularly Constantinople, which were growing fast. Secondly, there was a shift in giving: from euergetic display to charity and gifts to the church (though there was also a measure of continuity in this latter: those who had previously built porticos and basilicas for citizens to meet in could now build churches which followed a very similar pattern)\(^76\). There was also a social shift in the characters of donors: the secular governing city elite were being replaced by church officials, and in particular bishops, while charitable giving was spreading much further down the social scale than had previously been the case. Philanthropy was being targeted at the poor, rather than at the generality of citizens. And surrounding, and to some extent driving these changes, was a new ethic which valued the poor. The thinking for this may have come from theologians, notably John Chrysostom and the Cappadocian Fathers, but the practice was drawn more widely from monastic traditions, which in their turn were returning to a more archaic belief in the importance of the gift rather than the more ‘modern’ economic ideas of the city\(^77\). This widening of the donor base was matched by new opportunities for giving: not just to individual beggars, nor just to churches, but to hospitals and other institutions which cared for the poor, and which become part of an increasingly complex church structure\(^78\).

What had been individual or occasional philanthropy became institutionalised. Charitable associations and establishments were created. Under Justinian, bishops were responsible for the distribution of legacies for the poor. Lay diaconates were

\(^{76}\) Patlagean, *op cit*, 183
\(^{77}\) *Ibid*, 184
\(^{78}\) *Ibid*, 189
established to support the poor, sometimes grouped by sex or occupation, often performing their charitable work at night. Specialist institutions were set up – hospitals for the sick, hospices for the poor and strangers, leprosaria – and the institutional churches ensured continuity for such services. Within the continuity of the Roman empire, the church was making itself an essential element.

Methodology: Evidence

What evidence can we identify for this exploration of charitable behaviour and understanding? Since we are approaching it from a theological point of view, we will from time to time examine the understanding of particular theological writers, such as Joseph Butler, John Wesley, F D Maurice, or B F Westcott, as well as those we might classify as theorists of charity, such as Jonas Hanway, Thomas Chalmers or C S Loch. We shall look at the evidence from charities in appeals and in annual reports, and we shall look particularly in the eighteenth century at the evidence from charity sermons, which offered, at least in theory, the opportunity to create precisely that synthesis between charity and theology which this thesis addresses, but which were also an opportunity for the charities concerned to publicise and to attract support for their work. There is also some evidence to be drawn from literature of the period, both in novels and in essays, diaries etc. And we shall endeavour to place all this evidence in the social historical context of its time.

Each of these forms of evidence is subject to severe limitations. An adequate study of theology, even in this limited field, over two centuries would require a much larger study and much greater expertise than I can offer here. The selection of theologians is inevitably partial, even though I have tried to identify those who had a particular interest in the idea of charity, including those, such as Sumner or Westcott, who would

79 Ibid 191-5
80 An additional group are non-theistic writers such as T H Green and J S Mill, who may be thought to have helped to develop a more secular approach to charity in the mid-nineteenth century
have been regarded in their own time as theologians with specific expertise in the field
of social issues. The limited account of their ideas which I offer here must be taken to
some extent as examples of current, or what would become standard, thinking.

Something of the same is true of those I have called theorists of charity. Some, like
Chalmers and Loch, wrote a vast amount, and their views developed over time. I have
tried to balance an account of their thinking and of their practice. Again, though these
are writers who were treated seriously as experts in their field in their own time, we
have to take them as proxies for wider thinking in their different periods, while
recognizing that they were more coherent in their approach than most of their
contemporaries, and that some, such as Loch, were by no means without their
contemporary critics.

The evidence of charities themselves is again problematic in many respects. Although a
few charities have been studied in detail, and there is sufficient evidence to make an
objective assessment of their practices and effectiveness, for many charities,
particularly in the earlier period of this study, all we have to go on is their own annual
reports and appeals for funds, which inevitably give a rosy picture of their activities.
Scandals were buried\(^1\) and subscribers were told what they wanted to hear. While
the broad trends in charitable action are highly relevant, we must view individual
reports with some caution.

And the same applies when we turn to charity sermons. It was quite common for the
annual report of a society to be bound up with the published version of a sermon, or
even to be read out during the sermon: clearly, preachers were not expected to
provide any sort of critical commentary on the work of the charity for which they were

\(^1\) A classic case is the row which led to Coram being removed from the governors of the
Foundling Hospital – see R McClure: *Coram’s Children: the London Foundling Hospital in the
appealing. Nor do charity sermons offer very much new thought as to the relation between Christian belief and practical charity. The very predictability of charity sermons, however, does suggest that there was a strong consensus about charitable thinking during much of the eighteenth century, although as we shall see there were some shifts of emphasis as the century progressed.

And finally, the evidence from literature is paradoxically stronger the less it is emphasized. Cowper’s poem Charity of 1782 has been described as one of ‘a series of eight Calvinist sermons written in easy-flowing verse’ but its content is relatively commonplace, as was Pope’s earlier Essay on Man (1733-4): the purpose of such poems was not to offer innovative moral insights, but to express what was generally accepted in the most effective way – What oft was thought, but ne’er so well expressed.

As always, it is the taken for granted which can offer the most interest. The character of Lady Bountiful first appears in Farquhar's play The Beaux' Stratagem in 1707. She is described, without any irony, as being a thoroughly good hearted woman, caring for the people of her neighbourhood.

My Lady Bountiful is one of the best of women. Her late husband, Sir Charles Bountiful, left her a thousand pound a year; and, I believe, she lays out one half on’t in charitable uses for the good of her neighbours. She cures rheumatisms, ruptures and broken shins in men; green-sickness, obstructions and fits of the mother in women; the king’s evil, chin-cough [whooping cough] and chilblains in children: in short, she has cured more people in and about Lichfield within ten years than the doctors have killed in twenty; and that’s a bold word.

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83 Pope, Essay on Criticism, l.298
84 G Farquhar: The Beaux Strategem, London, Lintott, 1707, Act 1, Scene 1. The local innkeeper is speaking, but dramatically this speech simply serves to introduce Lady Bountiful. We might note that Samuel Johnson, who was born in Lichfield in 1709, was one of the last people to be touched for the King’s Evil (Scrofula) by Queen Anne: perhaps he should have gone to Lady Bountiful.
We are intended to take this description at face value: Lady Bountiful may not be aware of what her daughter and daughter-in-law are getting up to with the heroes of the comedy, but her kindness is to be admired. And we can find evidence of other Lady Bountifuls in real life. A memorial tablet in Great Mitton church, near Clitheroe, sings the virtues of Lady Shireburn, who died in 1727.

Lady Shireburn was a Lady of an excellent temper and fine sentiments, singular piety, virtue and charity, constantly employ’d in doing Good, especially to the distress’d sick and poor lame, for whom she kept an Apothecary’s shop in the house. She continued as long as she lived in doing great and good charity.... Besides all the other great charities which Sir Nicholas and Lady Shireburn did, they have once on All Souls day given a considerable deal of money to the Poor, Lady Shireburn serving them with her own hands that day.

There are plenty of other monuments which give equal evidence of charitable activity among the great, just as boards listing parochial charities in old churches are evidence of the giving of the less wealthy – and were, incidentally, recorded less in celebration of the charitable as to ensure that trustees carried out their duties.

By contrast, in 1857 Elizabeth Gaskell published her novella, *My Lady Ludlow*. It is set in about 1800, before Mrs Gaskell was born, and suggests that there were some women of a particular social status who continued to operate in the same way as Lady Bountiful at the end of the eighteenth century: Lady Ludlow has a group of waiting-gentlewomen who are trained in the care of the poor: they brew medicines which they take, along with food and drink, to the sick poor of Lady Ludlow’s estate. Her Ladyship has expectations of the behaviour of her vicar, which a younger, more energetic and evangelical incumbent does not accept as easily as his older predecessor. While the story gives an interesting and imaginatively credible account of such charity, we clearly cannot accord it the same evidential value as with Farquhar’s contemporary figure, even though – indeed because – he is less interested in charitable activities.

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85 Henry Hoare, banker and builder of Stourhead House in Wiltshire is commemorated in Stourton Parish Church: ‘He lived under the settled habit of private charities, and bore a noble share in those public acts of piety and mercy which have continued the blessings and averted the judgments of God.’ He left £2000 for charity schools and workhouses, £2000 for the distribution of Bibles, Prayer Books and copies of *The Whole Duty of Man*, and £1300 for other charities.
An archaeological approach to the study of charity

This is emphatically not a Foucauldian thesis, but some aspects of Foucault’s ‘archaeological’ approach to intellectual history suggest a means of handling the material of this thesis. Foucault challenges the ‘scientific’, Enlightenment approach to knowledge, whereby objective research gradually gets nearer to ‘the truth’ in a forward temporal progression, steadily adding to the body of knowledge and correcting earlier, less accurate understandings. Rather, he argues, certain ideas and approaches are privileged at certain times, and dominate the way in which people think about a subject - and indeed about the nature of knowledge in general. The idea of dominant discourses is common enough in sociological theory, but Foucault does not follow the usual Marxist line whereby state and class relations set the agenda, but rather claims that ‘power relations of inequality and oppression are created and maintained in more subtle and diffuse ways through ostensibly humane and freely established social practices’

86, for example through clinical definitions of mental illness. Such an approach might be used to challenge the idea and practice of charity, though it could also provide a counter-critique to other critics of charity – is charity a disempowering means of social control, or does it introduce counter-cultural values of generosity in opposition to dominant social beliefs of economic self-interest?

The immediate question which Foucault’s approach raises is what areas of charity discourse have been dominant at different times, and why have these particular approaches been dominant? What alternative ideas have been subordinate? One advantage of this method is that it allows for the existence of ‘non-scientific’ beliefs

alongside formal understandings, and this has obvious relevance to a study which seeks to identify the day-to-day beliefs and practices of ordinary Christians, as well as those of theologians and church leaders. Thus, although the following chapters identify different periods in terms of dominant ideas of benevolence, evangelical holiness, social control and personal responsibility, altruism and social justice, we must not assume that other discourses and practices were not also present. Although all of these approaches claimed to refer back to Biblical agape and Augustinian caritas, the ways in which these were interpreted varied considerably at different times.

Different understandings of charity may be held at the same time by different social groups although one type of discourse may become dominant, older ideas and traditional practices are likely to continue ‘underneath’. New and old concepts are not immediately merged into a Hegelian synthesis, but continue to co-exist. All this suggests the value of a methodology which assumes that successive strata of belief and practice are laid down over earlier historical layers, and that the modern investigator, like an archaeologist, must cut a trench down through the historical mound, recording the overlaid and overlapping strata and noting how earlier ideas may crop up in later periods, while perhaps appearing on the surface to be quite different.

To some extent, therefore, the study which follows will attempt an archaeological model of study, rather than of a simple linear historical line of charitable practice over two centuries. Consequently, it will sometimes be more appropriate to follow through one stratum over a longer period. For example, the stratum of evangelical holiness runs into the nineteenth century but will be considered all together, rather than breaking off at the end of the eighteenth century to examine new ideas deriving from political economy. The final image is one of multiple understandings and practices, with some dominant ideas coming closer to the surface and others sinking at different times, yet all believing that they are seeking that agapeistic charity which underlies all Christian morality.
Chapter 2: Charity in the earlier eighteenth century

Introduction

History does not, of course, happen conveniently in centuries, and there has been a tendency recently to write about a 'long 18th century' running from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the Reform Bill of 1832. But for the purposes of this thesis, as has been argued in the previous section, there is some point in starting at about 1700, even if the social developments which underlie the growth of associational charity go back further. The Hanoverian accession inaugurated a period of relative peace and of unprecedented prosperity for England, in which national wealth increased very considerably. The distribution and location of that wealth was very unequal leading both to changes in social relations and to increasing urbanisation. The increasing growth of the 'middle class' (though the term is anachronistic) is associated with an individualized distance between givers and receivers in charitable actions. People who previously might have exercised charitable action by face-to-face giving to the known poor of their area were now being solicited to make gifts to formal charities, and charitable relationships were increasingly based on a chain of subscriber-institution-recipient more than noblesse oblige. The concept of charity as benevolence, rather

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87 See, for example, J Gregory and J Stevenson: The Longman Companion to Britain in the 18th Century, 1688-1820, London, Longmans 2000; and L Davison, T Hitchcock, T Keirn and R B Shoemaker: Stilling the Grumbling Hive: the response to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1992, xi and references in fn. 1
than the older meanings of charity as good relations with another, was becoming dominant.

We thus have two increasingly important new factors – the growth of ‘middle class’ wealth and of increasing numbers living in urban settings, both contributing to social distance between helpers and helped. During the century, too, there was a decline in the older traditions of economic morality which E P Thompson describes as ‘customs in common’. Charity became voluntary, rather than as part of a shared social code of duties and expectations. This can be seen in the content of charity sermons, as well as in the growth of the associational charities which they supported. However, we should not assume a total change in behaviour. Within the pyramidal social structure, very broad at the bottom and very narrow at the top, much informal traditional charitable help continued to be given within and between classes. Most of the help given, as always, would have occurred horizontally, within families and between neighbours – and this is so much taken for granted that we can seldom find any documentary evidence of what is happening. Secondly, there would be support given by employers to servants, workers and tenants, ranging from basic wages to help when workers were sick, and maybe even to the care of worn out workers. Many people would have thought they met all the necessary expectations if they paid their local poor rates, though there was debate throughout the century about the levels of poor relief, culminating in the Speenhamland system in the 1790s and the New Poor Law of 1834.

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88 By 1800 London had a population of just under one million, and five cities and towns had populations of more than 50,000 people, eight with populations between 20 and 50,000, and another 30 with populations of over 10,000. All told, this accounted for about 3 million of the total population of 8.5 million, so two thirds of the population still lived in rural areas. R. Porter: English Society in the Eighteenth Century, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982, 382-4.
90 Thus Beamsley Hospital was built in the late 16th and 17th century by the Clifford family to provide a retirement home for worn-out servants from nearby Skipton Castle: Shottesbrook, The Landmark Trust Handbook, 22nd ed., 2006, p29.
91 A system for calculating levels of poor relief, based on the price of bread, widely adopted in Southern England in the late 18th century
We have, then, a population mostly rural, mostly poor, and, with life expectancy at about 35, mostly young. It was governed by an increasingly wealthy oligarchy, very much in its own interests. Some proto-economic thinkers, including Mandeville, argued that the very excessiveness of their expenditure enabled wealth, as we would say now, to cascade down the population – private vices created public benefit. This was not however the view of most eighteenth century moralists, who argued a necessary link between irreligious and immoral behaviours, and who saw the church as a bulwark of social order. In the early years of the century people had a strong desire to set the religious conflicts of the previous century behind them, but as time progressed this was replaced by a sharper concern for social control, with the church firmly on the side of the authorities, and with even dissent seeking to show its loyalty to the status quo.

Charities

Up to about 1700 the great majority of charities were endowed: that is, they had been established by the donor setting aside a sum of money (usually as a legacy) for a particular charitable purpose. This money was placed in a trust, and trustees were appointed to achieve the donor’s wishes, usually by spending the interest from the trust. Unless the value of the investments expanded, the work of the charity remained fairly constant over time.

This system had its limits. For the most part, these charities remained small, and trustees could not vary their charitable objects, even if circumstances had changed. There was little supervision of trustees, and no incentive to anyone to seek to improve

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92 Porter, op cit, 27
94 Classically, if a piece of land becomes valuable. Henry Smith left a small parcel of land in the sixteenth century for a range of charitable purposes. It is now in the middle of Kensington High Street in London. In 2007 the charity had an investment income of just under £25m.
the work of a given charity. Crucially, for such a charity to operate, most of its wealth remained locked up in the original endowment, and only the income generated by that sum was available to deliver the charitable purposes.

At the end of the seventeenth century, a new model becomes available: the associational charity. A group of people would band together to contribute funds for a charity on an annual basis. So long as subscribers could be maintained, and preferably increased, the charity could apply most of its resources to its immediate objects, rather than tying them up in capital. This meant that much larger schemes could be undertaken – notably, the voluntary hospitals which sprang up first in London and then in many other cities during the century. However, it also meant that trustees were constantly seeking new funds. In this they were helped by the development of new structures for charity governance, parallel to the growth of the joint stock company, and charities adopted legal structures and methods of government similar to those of the latter group. Subscribers, the equivalent of shareholders, elected a board of governors, parallel to company directors, who were responsible for the running of the charity, and had to give an account of their work to the subscribers at an annual meeting, at which they sought re-election. There were thus three reasons for the governors to retain the support of the subscribers: first, without those subscriptions, the charity could not operate; secondly, the governors needed to be elected; and thirdly, the list of subscribers gave legitimacy to the activities of the charity, and encouraged other subscribers to join.

This development had an important impact on thinking about the work of charities: indeed, it could be true to say that it was only at this point that strategic thinking about the running and objects of charities became possible. Under the old endowed charities, once the donor had made the endowment, the objects of the charity were set. There might be some pressure on testators and other donors to give to worthy objects, but if they chose one charitable purpose rather than another (and some purposes were pretty odd and limited) then it was their money, and they could choose
to do what they liked with it\textsuperscript{95}. But with associational charities there was a constant need to satisfy a large number of subscribers and potential subscribers that the charity was both acting in the interests of the community, and that it was doing so efficiently and wisely.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out recently by scholars, particularly Donna Andrew, on the way that charities ‘sold’ themselves to the public\textsuperscript{96}. Later in this chapter we shall consider one form of charitable appeal, the charity sermon, but at this point we may look at some general issues, illustrated in the work of Jonas Hanway, one of the most indefatigable charity workers in the mid-18\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{97}.

One of the charities with which Hanway was closely involved was the Marine Society, founded in 1756. The founders, like other philanthropists of their time, were concerned that charity should not be seen as in any way deterring working people from earning to support themselves and their families\textsuperscript{98}. However, as the Foundling Hospital showed, children with no support were potentially at very grave risk. One answer proposed was the Marine Society, which offered voluntary admission to boys who would then be trained to work as seamen in either the Royal or Merchant Navies. By this means, children were supported, potentially dangerous gangs of young ruffians were removed from the street, and ‘Rightly directed aid would channel the natural ferocity of the poor toward the achievement of England’s military goals rather than

\textsuperscript{95} Unless it appeared to their heirs that too much of their prospective inheritance was going to charity. The Mortmain Act, 1736, was in part promoted from a fear that too much money was being tied up in charity investments to the detriment of the national economy, and may in part have been a reaction to Thomas Guy’s endowment of his hospital. See Owen (1964), 87-8, and G Jones: History of the Law of Charity, 1532-1827, Cambridge, University Press, 1969, 109-119

\textsuperscript{96} D T Andrew: Philanthropy and Police [i.e. ‘public policy’]: London Charity in the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century. New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1989


\textsuperscript{98} The Lying-in Charity for Delivering Poor Married Women in their own Habitations (founded 1757) had as one of its selling points that ‘By removing the wife from her home the hospitals robbed the family of a much needed commodity, the labour of the mother, which was totally “ill-placed generosity” for, by taking the wife away, the husband could slacken his own industry, having been relieved of her support.’ Andrew, \textit{op cit}, 107
allowing it to erupt into internal warfare and mayhem and into strengthening the national economy through expanded mercantile activity. It was, in Kipling’s phrase, ‘very philanthropic all round’, appealing to the City bankers and merchants, who were the Society’s main supporters, on every possible front.

We can see in these examples ways in which the benefits of charity were becoming reshaped. Whereas Coram established the Foundling Hospital from motives of pity and righteous indignation, to a point where it was criticised on the supposedly moral grounds that its existence made life too easy for unmarried mothers and their bastards, justifications were now being offered in cost-benefit terms: society at large would benefit from charities – and some more than others, so that there was a clear field of competition for charitable donations.

It would be impossible to disentangle charitable motivations between those based wholly on compassion and those with an eye to social betterment, or even to the direct interests of the middle and upper classes. Nonetheless, these extracts suggest that by the mid-eighteenth century the pressures of fund-raising were to some degree shifting justifications for charitable action away from purely moral benevolence towards social utility.

**Joseph Butler (1692-1752)**

We can explore this shift from charity to benevolence in the writings of Joseph Butler. There is widespread agreement that Butler is one of the greatest theological philosophers that the Church of England has produced. Newman described him as ‘the

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99 *Ibid*, 110, and see pp 109-115
100 *On the Foundling Hospital see* McClure: *op cit*
greatest name in the Anglican Church\textsuperscript{101}, while Gladstone, who edited Butler’s works, believed that dropping Butler from the Oxford syllabus was worse than the loss of four colleges\textsuperscript{102}. However, as Matthew Arnold commented, his work became an unquestioned text, alongside Aristotle\textsuperscript{103}, and Penelhum suggests that Butler’s \textit{Analogy of Religion} has become ‘the greatest unread classic in philosophical theology’\textsuperscript{104}. In some respects his moral theology has lasted better than the \textit{Analogy}, and his \textit{Sermons} remain of serious interest and importance.

The Sermons divide into two groups: fifteen preached at the Rolls Chapel in London at a relatively early stage of Butler’s career, and six occasional sermons, mostly for charities or to celebrate important national events, which he delivered after he became a bishop. Most critical writing, largely by philosophers, has concentrated on the Rolls Sermons\textsuperscript{105}, but for the purposes of this thesis we shall also be considering the Occasional Sermons\textsuperscript{106}. Modern philosophers have been at pains to construct a coherent philosophy from the sermons, and are sometimes critical of apparent inconsistencies in Butler’s use of language or of unclarities in his arguments, perhaps overlooking the point which Butler himself makes, that the sermons were selected from a range of discourses given over a period of eight years,

\textsuperscript{102} B Hilton: \textit{op cit} p.340, citing \textit{Letters of Mozley}, 222-3. ‘But’ adds Hilton, ‘he did not specify which[colleges].’
\textsuperscript{104} Penelhum, \textit{op cit}, 4
\textsuperscript{106} Citations from the Rolls Sermons come from the edition by T A Roberts, London, SPCK, 1970, those for the Occasional Sermons from Gladstone’s edition (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1897). The Roberts and Gladstone editions differ in the numbering of the paragraphs. References are given as follows: SP refers to Butler’s Preface of 1729, in the Roberts edition; S to the Rolls Sermons, OS to the Occasional Sermons. In each case the number that follows refers to the paragraph number.
Neither is [the reader] to expect to find any other connexion between them than that uniformity of thought and design, which will always be found in the writings of the same person, when he writes with simplicity and in earnest.  

Although Butler’s Sermons could not be described as ‘an easy read’, there is a measure of truth in his claim: they are certainly earnest, but there is also, if not simplicity, yet an appeal to common experiences, and an address to his hearers as ‘actual men’, rather than as readers of a philosophical treatise.

In some ways the most striking thing about Butler’s sermons is that at first sight they are not theological. Unlike Maurice, for whom the proper study of theologians is God (see p.155) for Butler as for other eighteenth century figures, the proper study of mankind is man. Nor do his arguments, as we shall see, derive from agape: they are strictly based in eighteenth century traditions of rational, humanistic philosophy. Philosophers addressed questions of how one could identify and interpret human behaviour, and about the underlying model of human nature which could be deduced from this behaviour. On the one hand, Butler confronted and challenged the selfish view of human behaviour which derived from Hobbes and, in Butler’s own time, Mandeville. On the other, he followed Locke’s attempt to map out human psychology based wholly on environmental factors and the issues of human perceptions of reality which led to the scepticism of Berkeley and Hume.

In making his arguments, Butler relies on empirical observation rather than a priori reasoning: is this what we, as actual men and women, observe in the behaviour of others and when we analyse our own motives? He thus makes little use of formal theology, though there is a natural theology implicit in all that he writes: in creating us, God has placed in us a sense of conscience and of benevolence which will teach us

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107 SP 45.
108 Frey, *op cit, passim*
how to live ‘naturally’: if we live un-natural lives, we will be the losers because we are going against the grain of human nature.

It is thus understandable that Butler’s first three sermons are on the topic of human nature: we need to understand that before we can proceed to the morality which derives from it. Much of his writing is in answer to the views of Hobbes and his colleagues that mankind is a selfish animal, acting only in his or her own interests. All actions, argues Hobbes, are based on self-interest, and thus have no moral element to them. Butler challenges this by an appeal to empirical observation, but before we come to that we need some understanding of how he perceives the organisation of human nature. Like other contemporary thinkers, he sees a hierarchy within the mental structure of the individual. At the top lie two key elements, conscience and self-love: below that are some general elements such as benevolence, and at the bottom are a whole range of individual ‘passions, affections and appetites’. Butler makes the argument for conscience in *Dissertation II: Of the nature of virtue*. Beings with moral nature can obey moral government by reflection: words for right and wrong exist in all languages, and we must suppose that they have meanings. There is thus a moral sense in mankind which can be discovered by rational reflection. And indeed reflection, informed by conscience, is the route to a proper understanding of human nature. A ‘cool and settled’ reflection of what is in one’s own best interest will produce an awareness of moral behaviour.

We can thus turn to Butler’s refutation of Hobbes: Hobbes’ argument is based on a belief that all human behaviour is founded on self-interest – and where is the morality in that? But Butler argues that self-interest is not necessarily narrowly selfish: I may pursue a life of vice, urged on by my lower appetites, but such behaviour, as we have

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110 See in particular the footnotes to S1.5, and S5.1, which directly attack Hobbes’ position.
111 See S1.5-9 and *passim*. There is some dispute among philosophers as to which element fits into which tier. See Frey *op cit*, 243-4
113 S 11.7
seen, is not in my best interests according to my human nature. Furthermore, observation tells us that we sometimes help people who are of no particular interest to us, and that we may rejoice in good happening to someone whom we have not helped in any way. But crucially, there is no necessary conflict between self-love and benevolence.\textsuperscript{114} It may be in our interest to help another, or it may not be. They are on two different scales, and can be observed to be so. Hobbes' argument is thus defeated empirically, a point which might usefully have been taken by some nineteenth century thinkers who were so anxious to avoid any taint of self-interest. Penelhum concludes his discussion of this part of Butler's argument:

Butler's case, though not free of detailed flaws, is compelling because of its simplicity, and is one of the best-known confrontations of common sense and ordinary experience with a dogmatic cynicism that masquerades as worldly wisdom.\textsuperscript{115}

A proper sense of self-love, then, will assist us in our search for moral and benevolent behaviour, and tell us where our true interests lie. We may decide rationally and reflectively that benevolence to other members of society is in our best interests: "it appears, that benevolence and the pursuit of public good hath at least as great respect to self-love and the pursuit of private good, as any other particular passions, and their respective pursuits."\textsuperscript{116}

Benevolence is a social virtue, "which is in some degree to society, what self-love is to the individual."\textsuperscript{117} Butler builds up his argument very much in terms of the links with self-interest: since most people are more concerned with self-interest than with those of other people, this is a tactical way to proceed. But he still remains in empirical mode. In his sermons on compassion (S5 and 6) he deals first with the general principle, showing how reason tells us to be moral, but becomes effective when it is linked to affection: we are moved by our emotions more than by reason. And this creates a society for the good of all. "It is the tendency and business of virtue and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] SP, 39-42
\item[115] Penelhum, \textit{op cit}, 43. Penelhum gives a wider account of the argument against Hobbes on pp 39-45
\item[116] S 11.16
\item[117] S 1.6
\end{footnotes}
Benevolence based upon ‘cool self-love’ may have the effect of making us more at ease with ourselves. If we start to ask, what will give me the greatest pleasure, then the answer will be that which I, as a human being, am most adapted to enjoy. People at all times have found that the exercise of charity has given them a sense of satisfaction, just as other actions may always lead to guilt.  

And finally, to whom shall we address our charity? There are limits to what we can do, and although we are commanded to love all as our neighbours, in practice we shall find limits to what we can achieve. This will also vary according to a person’s social standing:

The benevolent man is disposed to make use of all external advantages in such a manner as shall contribute to the good of others, as well as for his own satisfaction. His own satisfaction consists in this: he will be easy and kind to his dependents, compassionate to the poor and distressed, friendly with all with whom he has to do. This includes the good neighbour, parent, master, magistrate; and such a behaviour would plainly make dependence, inferiority, and even servitude, easy.

This is perhaps as close as Butler comes in the Rolls Sermons to practical applications of his theories of human nature. However, we can see to some degree how he applied them to specific cases in the three of his occasional sermons, preached in London as charity sermons in the 1740s. In many ways, these sermons conform to the standard charity sermon pattern, but inevitably with Butler deeper themes emerge.

The first of these sermons was the annual Spital sermon, preached for the six ancient hospitals of London. The text was from Proverbs, 22.2: “The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all”. Butler’s argument is that trade creates wealth, but also inequalities. This is, however, part of the design of providence, and

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118 S 5.4
119 S11.14ff
120 S 12.22
ensures that there is enough for all, if properly distributed. This requires, however, that the rich should accept their responsibilities towards the poor:

The rich... are charged, by natural providence, as much as by revealed appointment, with the care of the poor; not to maintain them idle [which would produce great mischiefs], but to take care that they maintain themselves by their labour, or in case they cannot, then to relieve them; to restrain their vices, and form their minds to virtue and religion.\(^{121}\)

To exercise this through formal charities, such as these hospitals, is better than giving directly to ‘idle vagabonds’\(^{122}\)

The fourth occasional sermon is one of those preached for the charity schools of London and Westminster, and as so often, one wonders what on earth the poor children made of it all. The arguments are standard for the most part, with some emphasis on the value of education: the consequences of children without education are much more fearsome, and education leads to prosperity and better behaviour.

The sixth sermon, for the London Infirmary produces a long statement of the meaning of charity.

Charity here meant must be such hearty love to our fellow-creatures, as produceth a settled endeavour to promote, according to the best of our judgement, their real lasting good, both present and future, and not that easiness of temper, which with peculiar propriety is expressed by the word *good-humour*, and is a sort of benevolent instinct left to itself, without the direction of our judgement.’ We cannot promote the well being of our fellows just from thoughtless ‘kind inclinations’. ‘For the love of our neighbour, as much as self-love, the social affections, as much as the private ones, from their very nature, require to be under the direction of our judgement.’ But this does not mean we can ignore the distresses of our neighbours, and that we can make mistakes by being too careful. So we must neither ‘squander’ what we

\(^{121}\) OS 2.12
\(^{122}\) OS 2.15
owe to the poor, nor neglect to do good whenever possible, recognising that 'further enquiries' may lead to delays of which 'there will be no end'.

This last comment suggests a sense of kindness on Butler’s part which shows an awareness of the problems of the poor. We should not have too high expectations of them, he argues towards the end of the sermon, nor should we refuse to treat people if their injuries are 'their own fault.'

This awareness of the needs of the poor, and sympathy with them, stands out in the rare biographical details we have of him. While rector of Stanhope, he “lived very retired, was very kind, and could not resist the importunities of common beggars, who, knowing his infirmity, pursued him so earnestly, as sometimes to drive him back into the house, as his only escape.” He lived simply, devoting much of his income to church buildings, and left £500 to the SPG on his death and some small personal bequests, suggesting that he had never managed to save much money, but he did his best to be hospitable to his clergy. We are left with the impression of someone more at ease with intellectual than practical matters, but one possessing a deep spiritual life.

Butler gives us a picture of benevolence at its best: a pattern of thoughtful behaviour, directed towards others, on the serious grounds that such behaviour is in accord with our understanding of human nature when it is lived at its best, and that such behaviour will create a good, honest, mutually supportive society. Such a society is what the Augustans, at best, sought for, and it still represents today the underlying principle of any welfare society. But Butler limits himself to what can be empirically demonstrated, and to this extent falls short of an agapeistic concept of charity. It is,

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123 OS 6.3
124 T Bartlett: Memoirs of the life, character and writings of Joseph Butler, p.231 cited in Penelhum op cit, 3
125 Halifax, op cit, xlvi
126 Rupp, op cit, 284-5
127 A modern use of such arguments can be found in H Oppenheimer, op cit
however, the model which eighteenth century moral theologians were increasingly to adopt, as we shall see as we move on to consider the evidence from charity sermons.

Charity Sermons

Preaching sermons about charity was of course nothing new: the Elizabethan Homilies quote examples from Cyprian and Chrysostom, and they themselves devote three addresses to the subject of alms-giving, as well as commending good works, after justification, in Article 12 of the 39 Articles. But there was a move in the late 17th century from general sermons on the desirability of charity to sermons which appealed for support for specific charities. As associational charities developed, so the need for fundraising events like charity sermons grew, and they continued well into the 19th century: in the 1840s we find Tractarians condemning the need for special charity sermons rather than regular Christian giving.

Two types of charity which needed these regular injections of funding in the eighteenth century stand out. The charity schools movement, which started around 1700, was one of the first mass developments of local charities. Many were established under the encouragement of the SPCK which was itself founded in 1698. This new type of funding made it possible to set up charity schools and other bodies as soon as the funding was secure for the first few years, and they could be continued as long as a sufficient number of subscribers could be maintained. Mass middle class support was sufficient to run organisations, rather than relying on smaller numbers of the rich and deceased.

128 Homily 23, in three parts.
The other type of body which particularly benefitted from association was the hospital. Although some London hospitals, such as St Bartholomew’s and St Thomas’s were much older foundations, many more were established in the 18th century. They needed more funding to expand than one donor could be expected to give\textsuperscript{131}, and they regularly sought to expand their work during the century\textsuperscript{132}.

The purpose of the Charity Sermon was to portray the charity in a favourable light, which meant presenting it in terms appealing to donors. This could take various forms. The activity of giving was argued to be beneficial to the donors, in terms of their present reputation, the sense of well-being which an act of benevolence would bring to the donors, or their position at the last judgement. The work of the agency was often commended in terms of the benefit to the community at large, whether it was the gain of having the sick restored to economic activity or of taking unruly children off the streets and teaching them good habits and proper deference to their social superiors. In addition, schools and hospitals alike were praised for the opportunity to impart religious instruction. As with all such reports, it was important that the congregation should hear what they wanted to hear. Consequently, we should not necessarily trust such reports for the actual work of the institutions. On the other hand, we may assume that on the whole preachers knew what they were doing, and that the image of charity which they projected fitted in with their hearers’ expectations. These sermons may thus give us a good understanding of the way that eighteenth century middle-class church attenders thought about charity.

\textsuperscript{131} B. Abel-Smith: \textit{The Hospitals, 1800-1948}, London, Heinemann, 1964, 4f. Thomas Guy was able to endow his hospital 1721-3 with the enormous profits he had made from the South Sea Bubble, but this was exceptional. 
\textsuperscript{132} In 18th century, the term ‘hospital’ was used widely for a range of institutions, and the term ‘infirmary’ was increasingly used for institutions offering medical care. An early example of the wider use of the term, and indeed one of the early examples of the joint stock company model, is the Foundling Hospital (chartered 1739, opened 1741).
However, the charity sermon was not only an exercise in social policy: it was also a religious activity. And here there were further elements to consider. For the preacher himself, the charity sermon could be something of a show-piece: the sermon would often be published, perhaps with a dedication to the local grandee who was chair of the governors of the institution. He could therefore acquire a reputation as a preacher which not only meant further invitations to preach elsewhere but might also bring his name to those who could offer preferment. Some preachers might build up a very considerable reputation. William Dodd, for example, excelled in preaching for the Magdalen Hospital for reformed prostitutes: however, he rather abruptly left the stage when he was found guilty of forgery, and hanged in 1777.

Charity was commended in religious terms using Biblical injunctions from both the Old and New Testaments: the examples of Job and Tobit are frequently presented from the former, and that of Jesus himself, and the exhortations of the epistles, from the latter. Perhaps the most common passage cited is the parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt. 25: the position of those who have given to the poor when they come to the last judgement is frequently depicted, and although there are attempts to differentiate the beliefs of protestants from those of catholics, there is still an element of near-Pelagianism in much of the preaching. The benefits to the giver usually over-ride those for the recipient, often quite explicitly: rich and poor have been placed on this earth together so that the rich may have the opportunity to show charity to the poor, in a society which reflects God’s love to all. Since these social conditions are pre-ordained by God, it is not surprising that there is no suggestion of equality or social mobility, and although the story of the Widow’s Mite, or the parable of Dives and Lazarus may be referred to occasionally, there is no suggestion of sacrificial giving: indeed, many sermons refer explicitly to the requirement for the wealthy to spend according to their station in life. Any giving must be from what is left over when this life-style for themselves and their families has been achieved – in other words, from their surplus. There is no recognition that Jesus commended the widow more than the rich: “They have all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she has, her whole being.” (Mark 12: 44)
Two final general points: as we go through the century, there are often references to political events at the time: the Hanoverian succession, the ’45 Jacobite rebellion, and the French Revolution, as well as a variety of wars. And there is also a regular commentary on the decline in morality, the growth of free-thinking (from early writers like Mandeville to Voltaire and the *Philosophes*). Most sermons, at least those which were printed, tended to be preached in large towns, and the social commentary, where it is more than a general belief that things aren’t what they used to be, may be a reflection of the problems of urbanisation, which is discussed in more detail in the writings of Thomas Chalmers early in the next century (see pp.125ff below).

**A Sample of Charity Sermons**

In order to examine the question of charity sermons in more detail, I took a sample of sermons available in electronic format from the John Rylands Library catalogue. The catalogue contains nearly six hundred entries. My initial intention was to take ten sermons each from the beginning, middle and end of the century, but I ended with 48, mostly in the three bands 1700-1720, 1740-1760, and 1780-1800, but with a few outside these dates. I had intended to take the first examples that offered themselves within these dates, but this would have given a very heavy weighting to sermons for charity schools, and so I omitted some of those to cast my net more widely. The final list is given in table 1.

This cannot claim to be a representative sample. I have not established how many charity sermons were published during the century, nor how many of these have been made available electronically, nor on what basis electronic selection has been made. But there are certain themes which recur regularly, and there are some changes which can be detected during the course of the century which appear relevant to the wider study of this thesis.

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133 including some double counting where copies are available both in book form and electronically and also including a number of hymns written to be sung on these occasions.
Donna Andrew, who has studied charity sermons in depth, similarly suggests that there are certain elements which remain constant throughout the century, but others which change over time\textsuperscript{134}. Andrew’s main research interest is charitable fundraising, and she is more concerned with the social context of the charities’ work than in the theological issues raised. She suggests that several continuities may be found in sermons during the century. First, there is the theme that the poor are always with us (Deut 15.11, Mark 14.7). These texts are usually quoted in isolation from their context, though the second half of the Deuteronomic text (‘I therefore command you, open your hand to the poor and needy in your land’) is usually recognised only by implication. But what are the consequences of the poor being always among you? A common theme is that God could have made all people equal, but he chose not to do so. This gives the opportunity, and indeed the duty, to the rich to care for the poor.

Table 1: Charity Sermons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Preacher</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Topic/beneficiary</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Before 1695</td>
<td>Cradock</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>General duty</td>
<td>1 Tim 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Specific charity donor</td>
<td>Luke 10.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>Clarke</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>General duty</td>
<td>1 John 4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>Kennett</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>Ps 144.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>Dawes</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>1 Tim 6.18-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>Bradley</td>
<td>York</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>John 21.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1707</td>
<td>Gastrell</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>Ps 147.12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1708</td>
<td>Blackall</td>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>Luke 6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1711</td>
<td>Snape</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
<td>Matt. 11.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity as relationship</td>
<td>Col. 3,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>Warrington</td>
<td>Clergy widows and children</td>
<td>Job 29.12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1713</td>
<td>Abbott</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Charity and</td>
<td>Ps 133.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Rawson</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>Davies</td>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>Right use of riches/charity school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1719</td>
<td>Kennett</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>Maddox</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>Holme</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Layng</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>Nixon</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Hubbard</td>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>Clergy widows and orphans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Hartley</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Rudd</td>
<td>Walmer</td>
<td>Foreign missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Chauncy</td>
<td>Boston, Lincs</td>
<td>Industrious poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>Hayter</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Keighly</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Ridley</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>Ibbetson</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Lunatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Infirmary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>Dodd</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Magdalen Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Ogle</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Magdalen Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>Nicolls</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Eyre</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>Nantwich</td>
<td>Almshouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Porteus</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Charity schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Love of God, love of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>1785</td>
<td>Urwick</td>
<td>Southwark</td>
<td>Charity school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>Method and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: For bibliographical references see bibliography 2 at the end of the thesis.

Secondly, it follows that the exercise of charity establishes good social relations between the rich and the poor, with each accepting their station in life. Thirdly, this also legitimates the possessions of the rich, if they use them properly in the care of the poor. Such proper use is not to be confused with thoughtless generosity: reason must come to the aid of sympathy in encouraging good behaviour on the part of the poor. And the sense of generosity, well bestowed, cannot but give a sense of gratification to the giver.\(^{135}\)

But, Andrew continues, there are also discontinuities in thought over the century. Understandings of poverty began to change: it was not enough simply to accept the presence of the poor, though whether this poverty was seen as arising from their own slothfulness or from external circumstances beyond their control depended of the context of the sermon. Sometimes this justified charities in promoting economic activities which would both provide for the unemployed poor and increase the general

\(^{135}\) Andrew: Philanthropy and Police, 12-22
wealth of their county. During the latter part of the century there is a greater fear of the poor, with a corresponding duty on charities to teach the poor to live peaceably and contented with their lot, as well as support for the various societies for the improvement of the manners of the poor.

In terms of exhortation, in the early part of the century, Andrew argues, the emphasis is on the benefits to the donors, particularly their justification at the last judgement. ‘Charity covers a multitude of sins’ is a common text. Since the main benefit is to the giver, it may not matter too much if the receiver turns out to have been undeserving. But in the later part of the century this position shifts, and there are warnings of the dangers of thoughtless almsgiving. ‘By rewarding honest poverty and discountenancing idle or vicious behaviour’, charity will do more to reform the manners of the poor.

And by the end of the century, ‘charity, in the sense of benevolence, was no longer encouraged as an important self-regarding activity; instead, it was recommended for its social utility, for its effects on national regeneration and on the attainment of social stability.’

I turn now to my own sample of sermons.

Themes of charity sermons

i. God’s Charity and Human Nature

Most of the sermons studied assume with Butler that there is in humanity a natural predisposition to charity.

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136 A good example of this is Jonas Hanway’s Marine Society, (see p47). See too the sermon by Chauncy (1752).

137 Andrew, (1992), 587.

138 Ibid. 591
'Since we were form’d’ says Dodd (1762)\(^{139}\) ‘in the image of God, it is no wonder that benevolence is deeply rooted in the nature of man...that benevolence ... to which we are stimulated by such irresistible motives of interest, of duty, and of happiness.’

Duty takes various forms:

‘Charity to our superiors is respect, to our governors is obedience; to our acquaintance kindness; to our friends, fidelity; to our benefactors, gratitude; to our inferiors, condescension; to strangers, hospitality; to the poor, liberality; and to our enemies, forgiveness.’ (Cradock, 1706)\(^{140}\).

And this theme continues throughout the century (see Rudd, 1752, Vincent 1784), often linked to the theme of stewardship, and sometimes with reference to the parable of the Talents: those who have been richly blessed with this world’s goods must share them with those in distress.

This will bring happiness, in a variety of forms: since we are naturally benevolent beings, we derive enjoyment from exercising it: we find

between beneficence and self-love that to be charitable and kind is an indulgence to our natural affections which strongly provoke us to commiserate the afflictions and relieve the wants of other men; by reminding us, that if their case was ours, we should desire no less from them.’ (Layng, 1746).

‘There can be no pleasure or benefit, without mutual charity, good will and benevolence; so that this love.... is nothing more than what is natural to our constitutions and implanted in our very souls.’ (Keighly, 1757).

We have thus two linked themes: benevolence is innate, but so too is a sense of common humanity with all people, and an awareness that we too may need support in the future (Holme, 1745, Hartley 1750, Church, 1754).

\(^{139}\) In this section references to individual sermons are given by author and date reference: see Table 1

\(^{140}\) Andrew, (1992), 587.

\(^{140}\) Published in 1706 posthumously: Cradock died in 1695.
Nor does the exercise of charity simply bring us a sense of personal well-being. It is perhaps inevitable that there should be a stress in sermons of this nature that charitable giving will also bring givers a good reputation among their fellows (Dawes, 1706). But there is also the vexed question of how it will bring the giver rewards at the last judgement. Early sermons tend to take this as unproblematic: the parable of the Sheep and the Goats is frequently quoted, with the re-assurance that those who have helped the poor will be rewarded as having helped Christ himself. Davies (1717) makes this quite explicit: by charity we succour friends who will pray for us, and also make Christ our ‘patron and protector’. Thus, ‘Charity and Mercy are two grand steps on the way to Happiness’, and secure our entrance to Heaven, since God hears the prayers of those who are relieved on earth. God protects and loves the poor, and rewards those who care for them – not for our merit ‘(as the Papists suppose) but from his own grace.’ We should act charitably from justice, in gratitude to God, and in response to the duty which Christ lays upon us.

As the century progressed, there was less emphasis on rewards (however they might be hedged about) and more on the free grace of Christ, but this was always a tricky question for charity sermons, and the only one to challenge it directly in the present sample is the very evangelical sermon preached by Lloyd at Leicester (1790). Lloyd argues that we must give to the poor not for any selfish ends, nor presuming on God’s favour, but knowing oneself only as a steward, not worthy of any mercy but desiring to testify to God’s love. ‘Mere natural compassion may constrain, or the pride of generosity is to be gratified, or the horrid presumption of expecting to purchase God’s favour may be harboured’, but all these hopes must be set aside: only an evangelical trust in redemption by Christ will suffice.

Charity is based on divine instruction: references to Biblical examples in both the Old and New Testaments are common, along with the example and teaching of Christ and the exhortations of the Epistles. Common at all points is the teaching from 1 John 4 that God is love, and that we must follow him in loving others.
ii. Charity and the structure of society

If charity is a natural activity, ordained by God, then God has also provided us with opportunities to exercise it. And here we find a justification for the unequal ordering of society. God has made some rich and others poor, because society requires few leaders and a lot of workers. ‘God’s great wisdom allots every man his station and circumstance in the world.’ He could have made all rich, but he chose not to do so, since a combination of poverty and riches is better for the community.

‘Tis no small happiness to the rich, that there are poor in the land for the exercise of their charity....This should make [the rich] not only embrace all fair opportunity of doing good, but also, bless Almighty God for providing such objects of pity and relief, as may at once give them so many occasions of relieving the necessities of their poor brethren and also of expressing their own gratitude to God, for his distinguishing favours to them, whom he might, with justice enough, have put in their place, whom they now see in the dust.’ (Bradley, 1706).

Later in the century Gordon (1767) makes a similar point:

‘Were all men equally rich, equally wise and equally powerful, what openings would be left for moral intercourse? What room to display our social affections?’ But the rich have a duty to respond: ‘Riches, it is probable, were given to them to no other end, but to fill up one of those vacancies in the moral system, which might be purposely left open for them to supply.’

No doubt such sentiments were very acceptable to the Earl of Hardwicke and other grandees who heard Gordon’s discourse, even if it is harder for the modern reader to accept these arguments at face value. We need, of course, to remember that these sermons were pitched specifically at the rich, calling them to a duty to help the poor. And we also need to be aware of a social order which was assumed to be providential in origin and unchanging in nature. It was perhaps precisely because the social
structure was changing, with the beginnings of an urban working class, that, as Andrew notes, sermons showed signs of greater hostility to the poor as the century neared its end, and particularly with the outbreak of the French Revolution. A few examples illustrate this:

‘The violation of that obedience and submission due to our superiors and lawful governors, the disturbances of faction, the mischiefs of usurpation, the many distresses of private life, and every species of injury and injustice, in opposition to the voice of God and nature, are the foul streams that issue from the polluted source of irreligion and immorality.’ (Scott, 1784)

We should take warning from France, sunk in atheism, where the springs of charity are dried up and ‘the revenues of the rich are no longer applied to the relief of the poor and needy, but employed to gratify the avarice and rapacity of the plunderer and oppressor. So much for the visionary system of equality which by reducing the great and opulent to a state of penury, leaves them no longer capable of ministering to the necessities of the indigent; whereas, it is certainly the interest of the poor that the property of the rich should be secured, as being better stewards for the necessitous, than even they could be for themselves.... We [rich Britons] amuse not our poor dependants with fictions, but we comfort them with realities; we tender them not nominal but substantial benefits; we are as forward, as we are able, to offer them effectual assistance in all their difficulties and adversities.’ (Glasse 1793)

Considering the dangers of the Gordon riots in London in 1780, and in Birmingham in 1791, who would not seek to prevent the dangers of the mob, especially in the larger towns? asks Pearce (1797).

At first sight, these extracts suggest a simple noblesse oblige, with the richest helping the poorest, but preachers are anxious to stress that many of the middle sort can help too – indeed, the stories of the widow’s mite, and of the widow of Zarephath who helped Elijah, are pressed into service (Dawes, 1706). As we have seen, many of the hearers of charity sermons were middle class, and it was important to emphasise that few if any were too poor to give.
On the other side, there are also a number of sermons, often delivered by bishops and upper clergy, which take it for granted that the very rich have more calls on their purses:

‘It is agreeable to the will of God that there should be great variety and disparity in men’s conditions; that some should be high and others low; that some should be richer and others poorer; and according to a man’s station and condition in the world, so must his expenses be: he must keep a better table, he must be attended in a better manner, he must bring up his children after another way...’ (Blackall, Bishop of Exeter, 1708)\(^{141}\).

It follows that the rich man may have no more superfluous wealth that the less well-off man, and proportionately they should both give something. It is accepted that the social order must be maintained, along with the economic argument that the rich, by their lavish spending on themselves, provide employment for the poor. It is also accepted that the superfluity, from which charity is to be paid, only emerges after the needs of one’s own family have been suitably met. This is especially the case in sermons for the widows and orphans of clergy (Cooper, 1712, Hubbard, 1750), in which the main point, apart from the particular pleading of the church for its own, is that, with the belief in the importance and stability of social stratification, most preachers would have agreed that a middle class person in reduced circumstances, would be more deserving of help than someone who had always been poor.

iii. Charities and their benefits

If people had a duty to give, to whom should they give? Charity sermons are of course skewed, in that they are preached specifically in favour of associational charities. We do not know how giving to these institutions would compare with other, more personal, patterns of giving to individuals, particularly for those who regarded themselves as having obligations to villagers, tenants, retainers etc. Nor is it clear how

\(^{141}\) The Bishop has some precedents on his side: Heal (op cit, vii-viii) points out how Tudor bishops were widely criticised for their failings in hospitality.
far the sermons currently available on line are representative of all 18th century charity
sermons. But within the sample, there are two main groups of beneficiaries, charity
schools and hospitals.

a. Charity Schools \footnote{142 For a detailed overview of these schools, see M G Jones: The Charity Schools Movement, a study in 18th century Puritanism in action. Cambridge University Press, 1938, reprinted London, Cass, 1964. See also Owen, 1964, 23-35.}  

As we have seen, the rapid growth of charity schools was one of the major
developments in charities during the century, and certainly one where the preaching
of charity sermons was an important element. An early example, preached in 1706 by
White Kennett, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and later Bishop of Peterborough, sets out
the main arguments for these schools. First, the schools are reaching children at a time
when they are still innocent and amenable: education was wedded to the Lockean
theory of the \textit{tabula rasa} on which suitable instruction could be inscribed. The
children, then, will benefit from early education and discipline: they will learn good
social habits and duties, and basic skills of literacy and numeracy which will make them
good employees in the future. Above all, they will receive suitable religious and moral
instruction. But this is not all: their families will also benefit, for the children will be
better behaved to their parents, and equipped to swell the family income. They will be
of benefit to their parishes, removing the threat of juvenile delinquency and replacing
it with young people brought up in the fear of God and deference to their superiors.
With their better training they will be less likely to be a charge on the poor law. Finally,
they will benefit the whole kingdom, maintaining peace and order: charity schools are
nurseries of good behaviour for the future.

These themes are repeated regularly in charity school sermons throughout the
century. The schools were not without opposition, most notoriously from Mandeville,
whose essay on Charity and Charity Schools of 1723 \footnote{143 Included in the Penguin edition (ed P Harth) of B Mandeville, \textit{op cit}} caused considerable
controversy. Mandeville argued that charity schools would breed discontent among their pupils, a view opposed by Hayter (1755) Ridley (1757) and Pearson (1786). The general argument advanced against such criticisms was that the schools instilled a sense of duty and subordination.\footnote{Thus, the Sheffield Girls’ Charity School opened each day with the prayer: ‘Make me dutiful and obedient to my benefactors, and charitable to my enemies. Make me temperate and chaste, meek and patient, true in all my dealings and content and industrious in my station.’ \textit{The Poor Girls’ Primer, for use in the Sheffield Girls’ Charity School}, 1789. Cited in Jones, \textit{op cit}, 75.}

All this is of course part of a wider debate about the value of education for the working classes, and again things became more polarised at the end of the century, with the impact of French Revolutionary thinking: how safe was it to teach literacy, thereby allowing the poor access to inflammatory literature, even if the aim was to teach them to read the Bible? But this same argument was reversed by the schools’ supporters: by the end of the century it was also being argued, from an evangelical perspective, that the main aim of the schools was to bring knowledge of salvation to these young souls, and how could they withhold that message from any child? (Pearce, 1797, Lloyd 1797).

\textit{b. Hospitals}

Many of the same arguments were advanced in favour of hospitals. These charities went back a long way (St Bartholomew’s to the 12\textsuperscript{th} century), though they had originally been places of shelter rather than therapeutic institutions. There was a well-established tradition of charity sermons (‘Spital sermons’) in their favour in London. It was in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century that the idea of hospitals as places of treatment developed, and these were sometimes called infirmaries to differentiate them from the broader usage of hospital. By the mid century they had spread widely, and there was some local status in setting up a county infirmary. As with the schools, the arguments range over social and religious benefits. Socially, hospitals offered personal benefits to the sick person, not only in relief from pain and disease, but also in being enabled to return to work. The London Infirmary was ‘for the relief of sick and diseased
manufacturers and seamen in merchant service’ – as Church (1754) put it, it was important that the poor man should be healed to work for his family again and thus contribute to the whole community and ‘to the support and profit and pleasure of the higher part of the world.’ Those who were treated, including safe deliveries from childbirth, would return home, ‘blessing God, praying for their benefactors, and re-entering on the duties of life with zeal and vigour.’ (ibid). A further point which a number of preachers make, especially at the new county infirmary in Northampton, is how the properly professional medical staff are also making valuable scientific discoveries in the course of their work: they had already established how Peruvian bark was effective in cases of mortification (Layng, 1746)\textsuperscript{145}.

But the other side, as with the schools, is the religious benefit. While patients are in hospital they are exposed to religious instruction at a time when they are most responsive to it. Some who have had little contact with religion in the past are now taught, in a setting which enables them to absorb it in a relaxed, unstressed environment. Hospitals are

‘Houses of mercy where the poor, beside the assistance of skilful persons for the curing of their bodily diseases, have also the Gospel preached unto them, and are led to the Great Physician, who has made his own wounds the balm for our spiritual condition, and the cordial for our fainting and desponding souls.’ (Nixon, 1749).

Finally, hospitals are praised as a safe investment for those seeking to give money to charity: there can be no doubt of the need of those admitted, and the level of professional skill and economic management ensures that all contributions will be used to maximum effect. Furthermore, the high running costs of hospitals make them eminently appropriate for associational funding.

\textsuperscript{145} A special case is made in Glasse’s sermon for the Royal Humane Society (1793) which had sponsored a wide range of research on the resuscitation of those previously given up for dead.
c. Other charities

We have already looked at charities for widows and orphans of clergy. There were also sermons in aid of the SPCK and SPG, who sponsored the annual service for the charity schools of London and Westminster. One interesting one-off appeal was for Spitalfields weavers, 20,000 of whom were out of work (De Coetlogon, 1793). It is noteworthy, in view of Andrew’s argument about the increasingly harsh view of the poor, that De Coetlogon should comment that people now treated poverty as ‘the unpardonable sin’, and that he should stress that the weavers’ distress arose not from unwillingness to work, but from a trade recession, occasioned in part by the outbreak of war with France.

d. Conclusion on Charity Sermons

Charity sermons, of course, are only a small part of the story of charity in the 18th century, and certainly far more would have been given in private and personal acts than in donations to formal charities through this means. Yet the way in which sermons allow us to trace changing attitudes makes them a useful tool for our analysis. In the early years, the older meaning of charity as good social relations between people can still be found in a number of sermons: partly because, after the upheavals of the previous century and the settling-in period for the Hanoverian monarchy, there was a widespread sense of the need for charitable relations to be maintained and strengthened.

But rapidly, in the context of sermons which were after all fundraising events, the idea of charity as giving from the rich to the poor, and in particular giving to institutions which would both serve and control the poor, became the main context in which the term was used. To quote one of Bernard Shaw’s Maxims for Revolutionaries 146: ‘Do not waste your time with social problems: the problem of the poor is poverty; the problem of the rich is uselessness.’ An eighteenth century gentleman would have been horrified.

146 In Man and Superman, 1903
at the phrase, if indeed he could have grasped its meaning at all. But there is a sense in which it underlies much sermon content. Three problems must be addressed: poverty, riches, and the relationship between the two, and it is this relationship which is the meaning of charity for these preachers.

The problem of the poor is primarily that of people with insufficient income to meet their needs. In this case, their needs are mostly seen in terms of health care and education, and meeting these will help the poor to be self-sufficient on the one hand, and better instructed in religion and morality on the other. To put it another way, the ‘problem’ of the poor is not simply poverty, but their lack of integration on the ruling classes’ terms. There is evidence from our own sample of sermons to support Andrew’s claim that attitudes to the poor became harsher as the century progressed. This may be related to the growth of urbanisation and industrialisation, bringing with it the beginnings of an urban working class, with its own sense of class values, different from, but perhaps growing out of E P Thompson’s description of the ‘moral economy of the poor’ in pre-industrial England. Some hints of this come out of the sermons – references to the Gordon Riots, or a sermon preached at Sunderland which speaks of the rough behaviour of the workers which can be seen too in Hannah More’s reaction to the glass-blowers of Nailsea, who horrified her by their conspicuous consumption, as opposed to the poor but honest and subservient countrymen of her moral tales.

The problems of the poor and of the rich meet in concerns, common throughout the century, as to the moral sense of the nation. While the morals of the poor were certainly thought to need correcting, there was also an awareness that those of the rich were also problematic. There is not a lot said on this topic – preachers didn’t want to scare off their congregations – but from time to time there are references to licentiousness, extravagance and vice, and a deploring that such behaviour should seem to be on the increase. In Ogle’s Magdalen Hospital sermon (1766), based on the

147 In E P Thompson: *op cit*
story of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery, there is reference to the way in which women, especially the poor, can so easily be taken in, while their seducers can glory in their triumphs – one law for women and one for men, and perhaps too one law for the rich and one for the poor. Something of the same obtained with Coram’s Foundling Hospital: the reason why women had to abandon their babies was because an unmarried mother stood no chance of employment in days when most opportunities were for living-in servants, without children, and all too often the harsh choice was to abandon the baby or turn to prostitution. Yet the Foundling Hospital was lampooned for making things too easy for women, while nothing was said about the absent fathers.149

At the close of the century morality was beginning to tighten up, and at least one sermon (Lloyd, 1797) refers with warm approval to Wilberforce’s Practical View of Christianity and its author’s work for the promotion of morality. The fear of the poor is apparently greater, but so too are the expectations of evangelical Christianity with regard to charity.

For while benevolence is a sufficient virtue and motivation for most of the century, the shift to a stricter justification of charity is hinted at in a number of sermons, and emerges in its full rigour in a sermon preached by Thomas Lloyd, Fellow of King’s College Cambridge, at St Mary’s Church, Leicester on Easter Day150, 1787, for the benefit of a local charity school. The change of tone is startling. As a Christian minister preaching to a Christian congregation, says Lloyd, he is in duty bound to remind them of their Christian principles: ‘Woe to us, if we preach not the Gospel.’ Well-doing, which is his text151, is much more than ‘mere alms-giving’, nor is it moral behaviour and honesty: what is required is to be a follower of Christ, obedient to his commands and acknowledging that the Christian is saved by him. The preacher’s hearers must

149 McClure, op cit, 107-110
150 Curiously, there is no reference to Easter in the whole of the sermon
151 Gal. 6.9: Never be weary of well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
thus give to the poor, not from any selfish ends of acquiring merit, but because they are aware that they are but stewards of God’s gifts, unworthy of any mercy, and not looking for any human approbation. And the giving to the poor is similarly structured: degenerate man must be taught his own failings, and the school is the best way ‘to correct [the] immoralities and instruct [the] ignorance’ of the poor who attend. This will reap the souls of the children, brought to eternal life. In a society which seems to be ‘filling up the measure of our national iniquities’, God is to be thanked for the growth and effects of religious education. It is interesting to speculate who Lloyd’s hearers were, and how they responded to such an uncompromising message. While Lloyd is moving away from Butler’s concept of benevolence, we may question whether what he is putting in its place is an agapeistic charity, or whether it is a harsher and more punitive evangelical morality. But if this is extreme in delivery, we can see that there is a theological tendency in this direction by the end of the century, and there has been a shift alike in attitudes to charitable giving and to the objects of charity. It is paradoxical that at the same time that the Evangelical revival was expressing greater concern for the poor, as souls with as much right to the message of salvation as anyone else, that there should be a withdrawal of ideas of general benevolence in favour of a much more tightly structured, and less generous, approach to the poor and their needs, while any ideas of liberality were crushed beneath the oppressive response of the ruling classes to the French Revolution and its aftermath.

**Conclusion**

Prior to the evangelical revival, most eighteenth century religious thinking about charity was mainly based around the concept of benevolence, which we have seen expressed in its strongest form in Butler’s sermons. This presents charity as a voluntary activity, rationally followed in a way which will achieve maximum results in a strictly ordered society. To this extent, we may conclude that theology is the handmaid of society, responding to the existing social structure and the intellectual climate of the times, and we should not perhaps look for more than this in a century still aware of the dangers of religious warfare and living in an economic climate where the rich and middling people became very much richer as the century progressed. But we should not overlook the growth of charitable institutions, or the clearly agapeistic motivation
of men like Coram, or indeed Butler’s own charitable practice. And while social
divisions can be seen to be becoming more antagonistic as the century progressed,
and the problems of urban poverty were to become the main focus of policy-makers in
the next century, a new religious approach to these issues was to emerge with the
evangelical revival, and it is to this that we now turn.
Chapter 3: Evangelicalism and Charity

Introduction

The benevolence which we considered in the previous chapter was argued for in rational, ethical terms, and while its proponents tended to rely on reason rather than emotion on the one hand or divine command on the other, its practice was promoted as an ideal to which all should aspire as a basic component of the good life. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, however, there was a shift, not so much in the practice, but in the underlying rationale of charity, which is associated with the Evangelical Revival. I do not intend to discuss in any detail many of the issues which have concerned scholars in recent years – was there a revival? Who were most influenced by it? What were the characteristics of evangelical religion? – but if we are to understand how, if at all, evangelicalism had an influence on the understanding and practice of charity, we need to suggest answers to some of the questions raised above which will help our own analysis. Four points are important in the development of evangelical charity.

First, that as far as the practice of charity was concerned, developments followed on from a tradition of what I shall call, to avoid prejudging the issues, ‘seriousness’ in religion – whether this stems from old dissent and Puritanism, or from seventeenth century high-churchmanship and the religious societies which sprang up at the end of that century and continued into the eighteenth.

Second, that seriousness took a different form from the 1730s as a result of a new element introduced in the evangelical revivals of that decade (though in part having older roots in German pietism), which was a sense of assurance that God would grant both a conviction of sin forgiven and (at any rate for the Wesleys and their followers) a possibility of perfection which freed people from a sense of personal unworthiness and an inability to move forward in their faith.

Third, there were numerous out-workings of this new sense of religious conviction and enthusiasm: the evangelical revival led to a movement, but one which took diverse theological and ecclesiological forms, so that we must be careful not to over-generalise in describing evangelicalism and its effects.

But fourthly, evangelicalism also had common features. Bebbington has suggested that there were four central elements: conversionism, crucicentralism (that belief in the saving virtue of Christ’s death lies at the core of belief), Biblicism and action. However, while these elements were undoubtedly present in the eighteenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that some of them, notably Biblicism, took on a form which we would recognise today: very few eighteenth century people would have thought of questioning the central authority of the Bible. Rack suggests that the movements of the 1730s had in common a sense of ‘revealed, biblical, supernaturalist religion’ which differentiated them from the rationalist apologetics of theologians like Tillotson and Butler.

So would this have an effect on the practice of charity? We would expect that the greater commitment and ‘seriousness’ of evangelicalism would contribute to more

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153 Bebbington: Evangelicalism, 2-3.
charitable activity, and, as we shall see, this is largely true. But does the nature of charitable action change? In many ways it does not appear to. Serious Christians are exhorted to follow the teaching of Jesus, and the most common list of charitable works is probably still that in Matt. 25: 35-6 – feeding the hungry and thirsty, clothing the naked, housing the stranger, visiting the sick and prisoners. What changes is the motivation for doing these things. William Law, discussing this passage in 1728 suggests that many Christians thought that this was something to be done occasionally, but, he declared, ‘you have no title to salvation, if you have neglected these good works; because such persons as have neglected them are, at the last day, to be placed on the left hand and banished with a “Depart, ye cursed.” There is, therefore, no salvation but in the performance of these good works.’ No evangelical would have believed that salvation came from good works, but only from the atoning blood of Christ.

One approach to understanding evangelical charity is to compare Richard Allestree's Whole Duty of Man with Henry Venn's Complete Duty of Man. Allestree's book was first published in 1657, but remained a standard handbook of Christian behaviour for the next century. When Venn, the evangelical Vicar of Huddersfield, published his book, it was an attempt to update Allestree in an evangelical context. The Whole Duty, he says, is 'an excellent system of Christian morals, and as such is heartily recommended', with the caveat that we must always remember the essential need for faith in Christ before anything else. This faith is the only means of salvation from sin, which is otherwise endemic and unforgivable. Neither works, nor sincerity, will do, and all morality must be based on scriptural grounds.

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156 Citations are from an edition of 1745, published in London by John Eyre.
157 London, Newberry, 1763
158 Ibid, xiv.
When it comes to charity, there is considerable similarity between Allestree’s and Venn’s prescriptions. Both of them, of course, assume behaviour according to one’s role in society, and there are separate instructions for servants and masters, for husbands and wives, for children and parents. But there are also subtle differences. Allestree, for example, places considerable emphasis on helping those in poverty as an act of justice, based on Old Testament commandments. The Jews, he says, gave tithes not as charity but in settlement of a debt to God:

I wish our practices were at all answerable to our obligations at this point, and then surely we should not see so many Lazarus’s lie unrelieved at our doors, they having a better right to our superfluities, than we ourselves have; and then what is it but arrant robbery, to bestow that upon our vanities, nay, our sins, which should be their portion?

We should see ourselves as God’s stewards, and if we do not, we must expect the punishment of the unjust steward\(^\text{159}\). This teaching is similar to much of what we have already seen in charity sermons, particularly in the earlier years of the eighteenth century.

This approach will not satisfy evangelicals like Venn, however. There is emphasis on law and duties, and even on rights, which does not fit with a doctrine based wholly on the free grace of God in Christ. Thus, although Venn quotes the story of Job as an example of different types of charity which Christians should follow, the central point is not so much alms-giving, or help to those who are blind, lame, or impoverished, as in the sense of sympathy which awareness of these needs creates: even if you cannot give material help,

your bowels of mercy will yearn as much as if you had of wealth sufficient to supply the distressed. And.... there still remains one way in which your merciful disposition will vent itself, a way pleasing to God and profitable to men; you will make your intercession to the Father of all mercies ...to put an end to their afflictions, or to support them under their pressures.\(^\text{160}\)

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159 Allestree, 248-9
160 Venn, 310
Moreover, the most important acts of mercy are those which assist people in their 'spiritual miseries and dangers', by helping them with private conversation and books, or by supporting others in their missionary endeavours. Such acts, performed in a proper evangelical spirit, will be pleasing to God, 'since they so fully assure us, that all acts of beneficence which spring from faith, from love to God, and an obedient heart, are well pleasing to him, and shall be honoured through his grace with an immense reward'.

Finally, we may consider Wilberforce’s Practical View, published at the end of the century. By this time, there is a clear understanding of the nature of ‘real’ (i.e., evangelical) Christianity, based on a religion of repentance and trust in the redeeming power of Christ’s death. This carries with it a recognition that the ‘real’ Christian will engage in charitable activities. But Wilberforce takes this a stage further, pointing out the value to society of religion, and especially of Christianity to civil society. The unifying effects of morality are important to the good running of the state, and thus of political importance. But this requires the stimulus of real religion: it is too easy to fall into the lax morals of the upper classes or of commercialism. True religion opposes selfishness, which is the opposite to ‘public spirit’. It ‘roots out our natural selfishness’ and teaches us ‘the various claims and obligations resulting from the different relations in which we stand. Benevolence, enlarged, vigorous, operative benevolence, is her master principle.’ Unselfishness, then, includes acceptance of one’s social position, and Wilberforce has been widely criticised by modern writers for

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161 Ibid. 311-2
162 Ibid. 314
164 Ibid, 230, and chap. 6 passim
165 Ibid, 235
166 Ibid 252
167 Ibid 254
his opposition to any form of political liberalism among the working classes. Government thus has an interest in ensuring the continuation of civil morals by encouraging religion, suppressing immorality, and especially irreligion, and continuing social harmony between the different classes. As a practising politician, Wilberforce sought to achieve these through the development of voluntary associations and what we would now describe as pressure group activities, in particular for the improvement of public morality and for the abolition of the slave trade. Beyond the general theme of seriousness in religion, there is not a lot of theological innovation in Wilberforce’s position, so much as the working out in practice of the implications of evangelical religion, as interpreted by an influential group of conservative, middle class, evangelical Christians.

Evangelicalism changed the terms of charitable discourse, though the practice evolved more slowly, and in response to changing social circumstances. We could see certain strengths and weaknesses from this new theological paradigm of charity. In terms of strengths, those who adopted an evangelical life style were more generous, and more zealous. They put more effort into their charitable activities and, as we can see in the campaign to abolish the slave trade, they were less prepared to accept the status quo when it came to challenging social conditions. On the other side, though, their theological zeal and their Biblicism encouraged them to a strong belief in the action of Providence, and an assumption that this life was a time of testing before judgement and, hopefully, a life of paradisal bliss. This could lead to complacency with the living conditions of the poor. As we have already seen, this was nothing new: charity sermons throughout the century made much the same point. But this view becomes more disturbing when it is rammed down the throats of the poor, as in Hannah More’s moral tracts. Her most celebrated story, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain tells of a poor man, content with his lot in life, despite his wife’s ill-health and his inadequate housing. He is so admired by the narrator, a wealthy, but God-fearing man, that he arranges for the Shepherd to run a Sunday school and to move into the deceased’s house.

parish clerk’s house, thereby improving his income and his wife’s health. The moral appears to be that if you are sufficiently contented with your lot, things may improve for you – but you mustn’t wish for it. Indeed, we might suspect that the happy ending is there for the middle class reader, rather than for the peasant.\footnote{169}

On the other side, the emphasis in evangelicalism on the individual, while it treated material needs as secondary to the importance of conversion, put an equal value on every soul, rich or poor. In Wesleyan theology the Arminian emphasis on the universal possibility of salvation made this very explicit, and his emphasis on ‘go to those who need you most’, opened up the church’s responsibility to those who had for too long been seen as social outcasts. And, while Calvinist theology did not make this so explicit, there was an increasing emphasis on the mission to spread the Gospel news to all throughout the evangelical movement. We can thus see a continuum of attitudes to the human condition: at the one extreme, people’s place in life is determined by providence and they must literally make the best of it. Against this is the universalist call to seek out all of God’s children, and to bring them the good news. And this is perhaps seen in its most extreme form in the slogan of the anti-slavery campaign: “Am I not a man and a brother?”\footnote{170}

What impact did these evangelical emphases have on the practice of charity? First of all, we must note that the period we are considering – say, from 1750-1820 – marked the beginning of a period of extreme social change, mostly focusing around the industrial revolution and concomitant urbanisation. Owen is clearly right when he claims that from the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century ‘British philanthropy was to be shaped to a large degree by the demands of an industrial society’\footnote{171}, though it is less evident that contemporary philanthropists would have seen it as clearly as that. As towns grew, and an urban working class developed, there seemed to be an increasingly desperate quest

\footnote{169}{For a recent critique of this and other stories, see A Stott: \textit{Hannah More, the first Victorian}, Oxford, University Press, 2003, 180ff; for a highly critical account, see Brown: \textit{Fathers} 144 ff.}\footnote{170}{And even, sometimes, a sister.}\footnote{171}{Owen, \textit{op cit}, p.91}
for the old certainties of rural society, whether in Chalmers’ attempt to reintroduce the mutual support of a Fifeshire parish into the middle of urban Glasgow, or Disraeli and the other Young England novelists looking to restore old fashioned squerarchical paternalism, or, most significant, the extent to which the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of 1834 still thought in terms of parochial relief systems at a time when it was totally inappropriate for the new cities which were expanding in the 1830s at a rate of up to 50% in a decade. ‘It would be out of the question to translate to an urban environment the network of relations, personal and institutional, that made rural England an ordered society’ says Owen, but this is just what people were trying to do, although, as he points out, the face-to-face almsgiving of a primary community where givers and receivers were personally known to each other no longer applied.\textsuperscript{172}

At the same time the growth of urbanisation was throwing up new structural problems – housing, health, education, crime, which needed to be addressed in new ways. The eighteenth century schools and hospitals were appropriate, if not adequate, for a county town like Northampton, but it took till the middle of the nineteenth century to start developing public and personal health strategies which began to address the needs of the cities.\textsuperscript{173} Not surprisingly, would-be philanthropists took a long time to come to terms with these changes, and what they called ‘the problem of the Towns’ was often seen in purely personal terms: these problems were somehow the fault of an increasingly lawless and undeferential working class, whose morals, along with their religious beliefs, urgently needed improving – a fact which became all to obvious to them as they contemplated the godless excesses of the French Revolution (1789-1795), but which had already been recognised in the 1780s. Wilberforce founded the Society for Carrying into Effect His Majesty’s Proclamation Against Vice and Immorality in 1788, a body which ostensibly sought a general reform in manners, but which in practice was mainly directed against the lower classes.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid 91-2  
\textsuperscript{174} Brown: Fathers, 83ff
But these were problems for any philanthropists, of whatever religious beliefs. What was it that made the evangelical response so specific? We could start, as Hannah More’s recent biographer has done, with the idea that evangelicalism was what was available at the time to serious Christians who felt that they had to respond to contemporary needs. The existence and attractiveness of this new expression of Christianity drew in people who were inspired to take action across a wide range of issues. Their primary goal, though, was a religious one:

Their final question always passed from material considerations to spiritual. They were indeed concerned that the poor should be comfortable; but they were more concerned that the poor should be pious.

Howse is making a specific point here about deterring revolutionary and anti-religious ideas, but there is also the more general point that conversion — not as a means to a political end, but to save an individual and immortal soul — was the ultimate goal of evangelical charity. So they undertook missions at home and abroad, and supported Bible societies. They pursued moral reform, and the abolition of slavery. They recognised that charity needed to take new forms and they set up hundreds of new societies. As Owen argues, they brought religion and philanthropy back together again. There had been something of a shift in the later eighteenth century towards a more utilitarian, cost-benefit approach to philanthropy, but evangelicalism restored a religious purpose to the exercise. And they did this so successfully that for the best part of a century religion dominated the practice of philanthropy.

175 ‘With her psychological need for strong meat, Hannah More was never going to adopt an undemanding, latitudinarian Christianity. Perhaps if she had been born a generation or two earlier she would have been drawn to the High Church piety of...William Law’s Serious Call...’ A Stott: op cit. 80.
177 Op cit, 94
Wesley and Charity

Wesley came from a non-Juring, High Church family, and his Christian formation at Oxford drew heavily on those traditions. By 1725 he was reading Jeremy Taylor and Thomas à Kempis, and by 1730 William Law. Out of this reading and regular meetings between a small group of like-minded, 'serious' friends, developed what was first called the Holy Club, and later the Methodists. In the summer of 1730 members of the group began prison visiting (particularly to support debtors) and visiting sick people in local parishes with the permission of the incumbents. From this developed a regular pattern of corporal works of mercy, the regularity contributing to the 'Methodist' nickname. When they were mocked for their 'enthusiasm', Wesley retorted with a series of questions based on the example of Christ and the consequent duties of all Christians. They start with the general point:

Whether it does not concern all men of all conditions to imitate Him, as much as they can, 'who went about doing good'?

Whether all Christians are not concerned in that command, 'While we have time, let us do good to all men?'

Whether we shall not be more happy hereafter, the more good we do now?

Whether we can be happy at all hereafter, unless we have, according to our power, 'fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited those that are sick, and in prison'; and made all these actions subservient to a higher purpose, even the saving of souls from death?

Whether it is not our bounden duty always to remember, that He did more for us than we can do for him, who assures us 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me'?


179 *Ibid* 89

The list goes on to specify the kinds of help to be given – giving food, clothes and medicines, providing improving literature (Bibles, Common Prayer Books, *The Whole Duty of Man*), encouraging them to pray and instructing their children in education and religion, and helping debtors either to pay off small debts or to help them to undertake trades while in prison. Throughout, the basic list of works of mercy from Matt. 25.35-6 is combined with the duty of *Imitatio Christi*. It was thought by their contemporaries that the Wesleys and their friends were taking things to extremes, but the basic pattern lay very much within the High Church tradition, as did the quest for a return to Primitive Christianity, including the post-Pentecostal holding of all things in common, which Wesley yearned for, but never fully achieved.  

Wesley’s practice did not change after his Aldersgate Street experience in 1738, but the underlying theology altered. Whereas the Holy Club practice appears to have been based on a sense of duty, reinforced by the individual will (as is also implied in Butlerian benevolence) after 1738 he shifted to a belief in charity arising not from duty, still less from an attempt to earn merit with God, but as a consequence of salvation. Once Christ’s offer of salvation is accepted, he believed, there is a continuing growth in holiness both in heart and in life. ‘A Methodist’, he wrote, in *The Character of a Methodist* (1742)

Is one who has “the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him” (para 5)... [and consequently] as he has time, he “does good unto all men;” unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies: and that in every possible kind: not only for their bodies, by “feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison”; but much more does he labour to do good to their souls... to awaken those that sleep in death; to bring those who are awakened to the atoning blood... and to provoke those who have peace with God to abound more in love and good works. (para. 16) 

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181 See Walsh: ‘John Wesley and the Community of Goods’, 25-50. Similar strong views on 'unnecessary riches' are found in Horneck, Nelson and Law.
178 Cited from Wesley’s *Works*, 4th edn., London, Mason, 1841, VIII, 325-333
The first point here is that salvation derives from faith, and thus holiness must be expressed through faith. In a sermon on Charity, based on Paul’s discussion of *agape* in 1 Cor 13, he stressed that love can only be based on ‘holy tempers’ which lead to ‘humble, gentle, patient love’. Methodists should be known by these fruits of love: Wesley believed that it was the failure of most Christians to lead lives of ‘authentic loving care’ which was the major stumbling block to attempts at evangelism being taken seriously. It is the growth of the Holy Spirit in believers’ lives which leads to their being enabled to love and serve others.

Opportunities for acts of mercy can thus enable the Christian to grow in grace. Poor people thus not only benefit from charity, but enable givers to benefit too. Wesley comments on the text ‘Ye have the poor always with you’ (Matt. 26: 11): ‘Such is the wise and gracious providence of God, that we may have always opportunities of relieving their wants, and so laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven.’ We benefit, through God’s continuing guidance, from giving to others – and this is something which can apply to all. Even the poorest can share in this work, and Wesley emphasizes this. Heitzenrater comments that Wesley ‘declassified the concept of poverty, identified the breadth of the problem, and universalized the responsibility for dealing with it.’

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184 On Charity, III, 12, 13.
185 Maddox, *op cit*, 69
186 It is easier for us to share love with others when we are aware of having received it for ourselves: see Lansley, (1990), 41-47.
187 ‘The means of grace serve as both avenues by which God conveys empowering gracious encounter and formative disciplines by which we strengthen and shape our character into Christ-likeness’: Maddox, *op cit*, 75. And see Wesley’s Sermon LXXXV: ‘Working out our own Salvation’, II, 4.
could contribute to the needs of others, and that their doing so contributed to their own spiritual growth.  

For the poor are not just service fodder, nor salvation fodder: they, like everyone else, are coheirs with Christ, precious souls to be saved. Walsh comments that ‘many moralists of Wesley’s time saw the beggar as merely a social nuisance. Wesley saw in him the awesome image of the suffering Christ.’ Clearly, we need to differentiate between different levels of poverty in the 18th century, and not fall into the myth of Wesley preaching exclusively to unchurched Bristol and Newcastle miners, but he did preach to a wide range of people in the lower social classes, including the very poor, and had a deep affection for them, whereas he seems to have been much less easy in his relationships with the rich. Partly this developed from his own ‘evangelical Arminianism’ and belief that the love of God is, and must be, offered to all, but also from his own empirical observations of the state in which many of the poor lived, in all parts of Britain where he travelled. While Wesley was no egalitarian – very few were at that time – he felt an instinctive sympathy with the poor, and challenged commonly held views that, for example, their poverty was consequent on their own idleness.

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190 So see his note on the story of the Widow’s Mite (Mark 12: 43) ‘How acceptable to Him is the smallest which springs from self-denying love!’ And Sermon XCVIII: ‘On visiting the Sick’: ‘Few are so poor, as not to be able sometimes to give “two mites”; but if they are not, if they have no money to give, may they not give what is of more value? Yea, of more value than thousands of gold and silver. If you speak “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth”... (III.4)  
192 Heitzenrater, op cit, 25  
193 Rack, op cit, 368  
194 See Journal: ‘On Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. I found some in their cells under ground; others in their garrets, half-starved both with cold and hunger, added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed, who was able to crawl about the room. So wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection, “They are poor only because they are idle.”’ Feb. 9-10th, 1753. (And see also Feb 21st 1753). Cited in T W Jennings: Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics, Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1990, 55 Cf Sermon XCVIII: Dives and Lazarus, II.3: ‘Ye that have not a place to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar!’
Wesley has his own suggestions of how things could be improved, though they rely on a few simple social remedies such as abolishing the gin trade\textsuperscript{195}, often putting the blame on commercial evils, rather than on the poor, as so many later analyses of poverty were to do\textsuperscript{196}. For the most part, though, he is concerned with the behaviour of individual Methodists rather than with political and social reform.

To begin with, he urges his societies that they should treat the poor in a kindly and sympathetic way: ‘Give none that ask relief either an ill word or an ill look. Do not hurt ‘em if you cannot help ‘em; ‘Abstain from either sour looks or harsh words. Put yourself in the place of any poor man, and deal with him as you would God should deal with you.’\textsuperscript{197} Societies were to collect from members on a regular basis, both for poor members and for others in need, and individual members should also be generous in their giving. Wesley himself frequently gave indiscriminately to the poor\textsuperscript{198}, and begged himself on their behalf, though he was also energetic in setting up more formal institutions to care for people – orphanages, following the Moravian model at Herrnhut, dispensaries for the sick, and mutual savings banks (similar to modern Credit Unions).

In all this he is moved by the condition of the poor, but there is also here perhaps a mix of Holy Club asceticism with what Rack calls ‘instinctive frugality’ which perhaps derives from his own early days in the poor Rectory at Epworth\textsuperscript{199}. He was ill at ease with the rich and with the possession of wealth: “‘There was a certain rich man’” he comments in a sermon on Dives and Lazarus, ‘And it is no more sinful to be rich than to

\textsuperscript{195} J Wesley: \textit{Thoughts upon the Present Scarcity of Provisions}, London, 1773. Wesley was a great dasher off of pamphlets – nowadays he would presumably be a blogger. But his ideas seldom go beyond ‘old Tory prejudices’ (Rack, 364).
\textsuperscript{196} Rack, 363.
\textsuperscript{197} MS Minutes, 1744, cited in Rack, 363.
\textsuperscript{198} Walsh, ‘Community of Goods’, 36. In this he was following family tradition: Rupp quotes Samuel Wesley Senior as an Oxford undergraduate giving to two orphaned children whom he met on a walk. \textit{Rupp op cit}, 301.
\textsuperscript{199} Rack, \textit{op cit} 363
be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression.\footnote{Sermon XC VIII, II, 1.} His sermon on The Use of Money is well known, with its three-part command to ‘get all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.’\footnote{Sermon L} A number of points can be noted from it – not least that this sermon was clearly preached to those who had money, albeit perhaps of the middling sort. Wesley allows for people to make money, and to this extent he conforms to the image of Methodism fitting the Weberian thesis of protestantism encouraging capitalism, but the growth of capitalism was far from his mind\footnote{M Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1905, ET 1930, London, HarperCollins Academic, 1991; Rack, 368}. The three elements of the sermon are of increasing importance for Wesley. Earning certainly is important, and Wesley frequently comments on the need for people to be always active\footnote{‘Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be trifling employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time in any place than is strictly necessary.’ Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev Mr Wesley and others from the year 1744 to the year 1789 [The Large Minutes], in Works (4\textsuperscript{th} ed.), London, Mason, 1841, Q 26 (1), p.297}. Saving is also an important point for Wesley, but not just as an end in itself: he is always concerned about how much better money might be spent on the needs of others – asceticism is good but it must be applied asceticism. And so he is constantly returning to the theme of stewardship\footnote{‘He placed you here, not as a proprietor, but as a steward’: Sermon XL IV On the Use of Money, III, 2}. We only have goods on trust from God, and must use them to his glory by aiding those whose well-being we shall be charged with at the last judgment.

The Lord of all will next enquire, “How didst thou employ the worldly goods which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve the body in health, in strength, and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? ....How didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, money? Not in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not in squandering it away in vain expenses...? Not hoarding it....? But first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family: then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it: by looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose substance

which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose, leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, receiving the afflicted according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? A father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as a means of saving souls from death?  

We have come across the term ‘stewardship’ in charity sermons and in other eighteenth century writing, but it seems to occupy a particularly key position in Wesley’s thinking. He named the people in charge of his societies ‘stewards’, and in the early days of Methodism their main task, apart from keeping the Society running, was to keep and distribute the funds. Stewardship also applied to individuals: Wesley repeatedly warns people against using money for themselves when they should be using it to help others. He is savage with those who claim that they can now afford to spend more on themselves:

Can you afford to waste your Lord’s goods, for every part of which you are to give an account?... Away with this vile, diabolical cant!..this affording to rob God is the very cant of hell. Do you not know that God entrusts you with that money (all above what buys necessaries for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind?

Again, we have heard the caveat that we must provide for our own families in other sermons, but Wesley clearly sets a much tougher test of need than any of those would. As Wesley got older and Methodism more established, he became increasingly concerned that Methodists ‘gain all they can, honestly and conscientiously. They save all they can, by cutting off needless expense.... But they do not give all they can, without which they must grow increasingly earthly-minded...’  

In his later sermons

205 Sermon LI: The Good Steward, III.5.
206 Sermon CXXVI: Danger of Increasing Riches, 12.
207 Sermon LXVIII: The Wisdom of God’s Counsels, 16.
and tracts Wesley increasingly bemoans the fact that Methodists were becoming wealthier and more respectable, and he traces this to the very success of the movement:

For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently, they increase in goods. Hence they proportionably increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away.

It is the perennial problem of any revolutionary movement, such as Methodism was, at least in Wesley’s eyes. How far his followers saw it in that light is a moot point. Chapels were built, and money which previously went to the poor was used to sustain buildings. Kent suggests that Wesley’s demands were too extreme to be widespread, and that as Methodism became established, people gave up the effort: ‘the goal was not holiness but respectability’.

Wesley, and to some extent Methodism, represents a radical rethinking of the evangelical enterprise, requiring not just a theology of salvation, whether for oneself or for others, but a seriousness which affected every part of the believer’s life-style, and, in Wesley’s own practice, with a preferential bias to the poor. To this extent, the attempt of Jennings and others to see him as a proto-liberation theologian have some validity. Yet what was possible for a small group of Oxford dons and students (who, when all was said, had pretty comfortable life support systems to care for them), and what might even be pursued by a group of super-committed Christians who sought to have all things in common, was not going to be realistic for a large denomination,

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208 Sermons CVII: On God’s Vineyard, V, 3-4; CXVI: Causes of the Inefficiency of Christianity, 8; see Jennings, 130ff, Rack 370.
209 J Wesley: Thoughts upon Methodism, 1786, cited in Jennings, 137.
representative of the middle classes of the new large industrial and commercial towns of Britain. But Wesley by the power of his preaching and personality, and by the influence of his and Charles’ writings, laid down a commitment to the poor which could not be ignored. Crucially, he gave a new impetus to the theology of charity, by freeing it from the semi-Pelagianism of early eighteenth century thinking, yet keeping it central within an evangelical quest for holiness. It is not a means of acquiring merit, nor even of pleasing God by doing His will: rather, as the believer grows in holiness the work and witness of the Spirit within empowers the growth of more charitable activity. Charity therefore benefits the giver in a real sense, quite separately from the effect which the charitable gift has on the receiver: it is not a gift-exchange trade off, but an exercise in which both sides are blessed by God. Hence the practice of charity is essential for all Christians in their individual spiritual growth, whether they are rich or poor. One point where this, for a time, became apparent, arose right at the end of Wesley’s life, with the development of Strangers’ Friends Societies.

**Strangers’ Friend Societies**

An interesting development from Wesleyan Methodism, in terms of the history of charity, was the growth of Strangers’ Friend Societies [SFS]. What started as a grassroots movement, from poor people to poor people very much on a face-to-face level, grew to a formalized structure which took root in a number of cities and large towns, moved away from its denominational roots, and eventually faded away around the mid-19th century. On the way, however, it influenced and was influenced by social and religious beliefs, including a closeness to Evangelicalism and shared critiques of the Old Poor Law, while its methods of work were similar to those adopted by a range of visiting societies as well as showing similarities to the strategies adopted by Thomas Chalmers, which we shall discuss in the next chapter, and which ultimately became central to much social work practice in the 20th century.
The story of SFS is quickly told\textsuperscript{211}. In 1785 John Gardner, a London Methodist, observed that there were many visitors to London who fell on hard times through poverty, illness etc, and had no one to support them: as non-residents they were not eligible for poor relief, and they had no family or friends near at hand to help. Gardner and his friends subscribed a small sum of money each week which they would give to a needy stranger, at the same time they would ‘read and pray with the afflicted’. His class leader was doubtful as to whether this was an appropriate activity, so Gardner wrote to Wesley for guidance: Wesley replied that this was an admirable activity, and gave them a guinea for their funds\textsuperscript{212}. This was, of course, nothing new in Methodism: Lloyd reports how the first Stewards’ Accounts of the London Society in 1744 listed ‘relief to the poor’ – presumably to Methodist members in many cases. As the century progressed the amounts given in relief could be up to half the entire income of some of the Societies, but this proportion reduced by the end of the century as expenditure on more elaborate churches increased.\textsuperscript{213} Again, giving to the poor increased consequent on the growth of more frequent communion and hence of more communion collections in the Church of England\textsuperscript{214}, but much of that would have been from the rich to the poor, whereas the poverty of many of Wesley’s followers, at least in London, and the demands he made on them, was unusual\textsuperscript{215}.

Wesley also emphasised the value of personal contact with the person helped: “how much better it is, when it can be done, to carry relief to the poor, than to send it! and that both for our own sake and theirs. For theirs, as it so much more comfortable in them, and as we may then assist them in spirituals as well as temporals, and for our own, as it is far more apt to soften our heart, and to make us naturally care for each

\textsuperscript{211} Valuable work has been done on the topic by Tim Mcquiban: see T S Alexander-Mcquiban: *British Methodism and the Poor, 1785-1840*, University of Birmingham Ph D thesis, 2000, and T. Mcquiban: ‘Friends of All? The Wesleyan Response to Urban Poverty in Britain and Ireland, 1785-1840’ in R P Heitzenrater (ed) *op cit*, 2002, 131-160


\textsuperscript{214} Rupp, *op cit*, 45

\textsuperscript{215} Lloyd, *op cit*, 126
other.”\textsuperscript{216} Certainly visiting could be a form of evangelism, or at least of spiritual growth and support, and it was used as such in a variety of visiting schemes in the late eighteenth century\textsuperscript{217}, but here there was no necessary primacy given to the evangelical end: these were people to be helped, in obedience to Christ’s command. Annual Reports of the SFSs always carried on the first page the text: ‘I was a stranger, and you took me in, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you cared for me, I was in prison and you visited me’ (Matt. 25: 35-6)\textsuperscript{218}.

The immediacy and personal nature of the response, linked to the shrewd identification of those who missed out on other forms of charity, were the key marks of the original SFS scheme. Clearly, it caught Wesley’s attention, and that of other people too, and the idea began to spread. Adam Clarke, one of the ablest of Wesley’s followers, picked up the idea, and it was probably from his promotion that the idea spread so widely. A society was established in Bristol in 1786\textsuperscript{219}: the early date is not surprising given the Wesleys’ connections there. But it was also soon found in Dublin, Leeds\textsuperscript{220}, Manchester, Liverpool\textsuperscript{221} and other places\textsuperscript{222}.

By 1800, however, things were beginning to change: the London Society was reorganised on a district basis, with committees of wealthier members, and the appointment of visitors who visited people in their own homes, and distributed cash and clothing\textsuperscript{223}. As the societies became more effective, and had more resources to distribute, a distance developed between the subscribers and beneficiaries, and more questions began to be asked about the desert of those who were to be helped. In

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{216} J Wesley, \textit{Journal}, 24\textsuperscript{th} Nov 1760, cited Mcquiban (2000) 39.  \\
\textsuperscript{217} H D Rack: ‘Domestic Visitation, a chapter in early nineteenth century evangelism’, \textit{Journal of Ecclesiastical History}, XXIV (4) 1973, 357-76: a number of schemes were tried out before 1800.  \\
\textsuperscript{218} Mcquiban, Thesis, 189.  \\
\textsuperscript{219} M Gorsky: \textit{op cit}, 116  \\
\textsuperscript{221} Founded 1789: M B Simey \textit{op cit}, 21  \\
\textsuperscript{222} Mcquiban, Thesis, 81  \\
\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Ibid}, 83-5
\end{flushright}
many ways, clearly, this had a very positive side: more people were helped, and those with the greatest need were more likely to be supported. However, the personal element, which was visible at the inception of the scheme had diminished, if not disappeared, and with it some of the spontaneity which we have identified as an element of agape.

But further developments also took place. The growth of evangelicalism had its effect on SFS, and their reports speak more of the spiritual side of their work after 1800. Brown sees this as an evangelical take-over of the societies (or at least in London) and certainly the subscription lists show numbers of wealthy titled Evangelicals.

Whether we should see this as a ‘capture’, in Brown’s term, is debatable: it might rather be both a sign of the growth of Evangelical ideas within Methodism as well as in the Church of England, and a pragmatic awareness on the part of authors of SFS Annual Reports of what sort of stories play well with the subscribers.

In other towns SFS became major means of distributing charitable relief, and consequently subscribers did indeed come from other denominations. Morris makes this clear in his study of Leeds: although founded by Wesleyan Methodists in 1789, it was generally supported by the middle class of all denominations by the 1820s, partly because the Methodists sought in their earlier years to avoid rivalry with the Established Church, but during the 1820s the Wesleyans became a more self-conscious denomination under Bunting and the Anglicans began their own visiting scheme which stressed their own denominational identity and activity. Meanwhile, the committee of the Benevolent and Strangers Friend Society took the opportunity, when the Old Methodist Chapel was demolished in 1837 to move its premises to a non-denominational base, in order to remove identity with any single group in the town. The Society acted as a general voluntary relief society for Leeds, operating in times of major trade depressions and during cholera epidemics in collaboration with the

\[224\] F K Brown, *op cit*, 237ff
Workhouse Board. Its importance declined during the 1830s, with the New Poor Law on the one hand and the tightening of sectarian boundaries on the other.  

One of the key elements of SFS work, as of other church relief societies, was the emphasis on home visiting. Some of this can be related to certain crisis events in the home, such as sickness or childbirth, but the home was also the point at which family needs became most visible. The growing division between home and workplace consequent on industrialisation increased the gender role differentiation between men and women, and meant that women were not only home makers, but also acted as the point of interface between the family and the middle class world of relief. Thus not only did women become the applicants for and recipients of charitable relief, but their middle class sisters became both the investigators and the donors of that relief. Charity became associated with domestic oversight.

As Morris recognises, ‘for a social class ...caught ideologically between the warnings of Parson Malthus against the damage done by indiscriminate charity on the one hand, and the Christian imperative to help the poor on the other, the need to guard against imposition was especially powerful.’ The combination of investigation, evangelization and charity provided a powerful model, and visiting schemes became increasingly common during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Venn established a visiting scheme in Clapham in 1792, and there were various other early examples, though Rack suggests that the first major recognisable example of a church district visiting scheme is Daniel Wilson’s scheme at St John’s Islington in 1812, and the

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225 Morris, op cit 172, 206, 205, 208ff, 268-9.
227 There was also a growing distinction between Relief Societies and mutual Friendly Societies. Middle class people, and especially women, were unwilling to attend meetings of the latter, since they were frequently held in taverns. (See Gorsky, op cit, 128)
228 Though it took a long time for men to trust women with the control of the money: see Gorsky, op cit, 166, Simey, op cit, 67-8
229 Morris, op cit, 205
Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association was established in 1843\textsuperscript{230}. From the standpoint of this discussion, one of the common themes is the emphasis on closer social links between different classes, and the continuing perception of charity as giving from the one to the other, and thereby maintaining the older sense of charity as good relations. James Kay\textsuperscript{231} sums up the value of visiting:

‘this ministration... chiefly by a visitation of the houses of the poor, ...purposes as its object, religious instruction, uninfluenced by sectarian spirit or opinions; the relief of the most pressing necessities of the poor, first by a well-regulated charity, and secondarily by instruction in domestic economy, exhortations to industry, admonitions concerning the consequences of vice, and by obtaining work for the deserving and unemployed. [It will also] act as a medium of communication and a link of sympathy between the higher and lower classes of society. [The visitor] might become the almoner of the rich, and thus daily sow the seeds of a kindlier relationship than that which now subsists between the wealthy and the destitute.’\textsuperscript{232}

Visiting thus provided both charitable and evangelistic opportunities, and the balance between the two was seldom self-evident: indeed, for many evangelical people it was a non-question: evangelical joy and financial support were equally things to be shared with others. The important thing was the personal, local, response to human need, which we shall find in the discussion of Chalmers’ work in the next chapter. On the other hand, as SFS became bigger and, as in Leeds, became general relief agencies for the town, social distance between giver and receiver expanded again, and distinctive Methodist emphases became subsumed into a more general, somewhat evangelical charity.

**Evangelicals and Slavery**

The evangelical revival, as we have already seen, was a series of events, rather than one single movement. Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century various

\textsuperscript{230} Rack, ‘Domestic Visitation’, 362-3  
\textsuperscript{231} Later Kay-Shuttleworth  
individuals and groups adopted an evangelical standpoint, and to some extent these groups corresponded and collaborated with each other. But at the end of the century there emerged a group, known at the time as the Clapham sect\textsuperscript{233}, who became the nucleus of a more self-conscious evangelical party, and who are usually designated by the term Evangelical, with a capital ‘E’. This group were mostly wealthy laymen – Buxton, Thornton, Hoare, Wilberforce – but including several clergymen within their group: Milner, Newton, Simeon, the Venns and others. The wider and narrower group of E/evangelicals shared central beliefs which we have already seen in Wesley: a core emphasis on the individual’s sinfulness and need for Christ’s atoning sacrifice and a consequent assurance of forgiveness. From this sprang a sense of serious commitment, both to mission and in humanitarian action.

This group of public men operated at a time of political conflict. There was a widespread belief in the need for reform, of Parliament, of the economy, and of many aspects of social life, at all levels of society\textsuperscript{234}. This demand for reform may be seen as part of a wider European movement, including the French Revolution, however, and the perceived excesses of that event, and consequent European wars, resulted in serious repression of political agitation in Britain, which lasted until 1830.

Wilberforce and his Clapham colleagues were people of their own time and class, and recent writers, such as Brown and Thompson, have criticised Wilberforce in particular as a reactionary, as did his contemporaries such as Cobbett\textsuperscript{235}. Like any other politician, Wilberforce had to support those whose support he needed for his own campaigns, and his range of activities included the frankly repressive, such as the

\textsuperscript{234} E Royle and J Walvin: \textit{English Radical Reformers, 1760-1848}, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1982
\textsuperscript{235} Brown, \textit{op cit}, E P Thompson, \textit{op cit} 1963. For a defence of Wilberforce, see Howse, \textit{op cit}, 127-37
Society for the Suppression of Vice\textsuperscript{236}, and others involving a considerable element of social control (the abolition of bull baiting and public hangings, Hannah More’s educational work in the Mendips), but also some showing a genuine concern for the condition of the poor, early Factory Bills, and of course, slavery.\textsuperscript{237}

It lies beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the abolition of the slave trade, and of slavery itself, in any detail. The historical interpretation of these events has changed considerably over the last fifty years. The traditional view of abolition as a wholly religious and philanthropic act, forced through almost entirely by Wilberforce, was severely attacked in the book by the Caribbean historian, Eric Williams: Capitalism and Slavery\textsuperscript{238} which argued that slavery was abolished because there was over-production of sugar from the Caribbean, while the profits from the former trade had already provided capital for the development of the industrial revolution in Britain. Although, as Anstey points out, this was certainly not the case which was argued by abolitionists, nor indeed do they, or their opponents, seem to have had any awareness of such an issue, Williams’ study opened up a wider debate, which most recently has centred on the role of Caribbean slaves themselves in their struggles for emancipation\textsuperscript{239}. More generally, there has been recognition that much of the groundwork for abolition had been achieved by Quakers, latterly supported by Thomas Clarkson, and by Granville Sharp, a fringe member of the Clapham Sect, well before Wilberforce came on the scene\textsuperscript{240}. However, our concern here is less with the tactics of the Abolition Committee and its local support groups, though that campaign itself is of considerable interest in

\textsuperscript{236} Brown (p84) rightly points out that enforcement of the Proclamation against vice was confined to the lower orders, but his claim (p5) that ‘the Evangelicals were concerned with no reform but the reform of vice and sin and of the infidelity that to their mind was the sole cause of vice and sin’ is a severe overstatement, as is evidenced in the range of causes which Wilberforce took up.


\textsuperscript{238} Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1944


the story of the development of voluntary associations\textsuperscript{241}, than with the underlying theology of Wilberforce and his friends.

Anstey argues that there was a shift in dominant paradigms of social philosophy from seventeenth century Hobbesian pessimism about the working of society, only sustained by autocratic government, to new ideas in the eighteenth century of liberty, benevolence and happiness\textsuperscript{242}. These ideas were developed in the writings of a range of philosophers and jurisprudents, such as Hutcheson and Blackstone, and including Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, and other leaders of the European enlightenment. The Evangelicals accepted these ideas, as giving focus to their work, but they reinterpreted them in terms of their own religious beliefs and experience: thus, liberty was predominantly the liberty that came from release from sin, into the liberty of the Sons of God, while happiness was to be experienced in doing God’s will, and acting benevolently in a way which echoed God’s own love\textsuperscript{243}. The abolition of slavery fitted neatly into this model:

Various though these philosophical exercises were, broadly speaking liberty was extolled: and slavery was thereby condemned; happiness was the great principle of utility: slavery thereby could only be found wanting; the duty of benevolence was asserted: a heightened response to the poor and the outcast was thereby induced.\textsuperscript{244}

These themes were found not only in philosophy, but also in theology. The debate with Deism had stimulated a more lively belief in the operation of Providence. As against the Deist belief that any revelation of God had come with the initial creation of the world, and that He could not therefore intervene further, orthodox preachers maintained that God continued to be active. It followed that Christians must endeavour to perceive where God is at work, and themselves to act in ways which were consonant with God’s designs. Even Berkeley’s idealistic theory of vision required that they should observe the working of “one wise, good and provident Spirit, which

\textsuperscript{241}It was arguably the first mass pressure group campaign, notable for the extent to which it involved women who, of course, were disenfranchised at that time.

\textsuperscript{242}R Anstey: \textit{op cit.} 96

\textsuperscript{243}Ibid, 198

\textsuperscript{244}Ibid. 119
directs and rules and governs the world....informing, admonishing and directing incessantly, in a most evident and sensible manner.”\textsuperscript{245} The same case was made in Butler’s \textit{Analogy}: God governs the world by fixed laws, which we can observe and must obey, being accountable to him.\textsuperscript{246} God’s progressive revelation, therefore, they maintained\textsuperscript{247}, has now been revealed to Christians, and we must act on it, both in duty to God, and because there is Biblical evidence of God’s judgement on those who oppress and enslave the stranger\textsuperscript{248}. Anstey comments that the idea of slavery and release from it resonated very strongly with the Evangelical experience of sin and redemption\textsuperscript{249}. Spiritual experience was the most important thing, but physical slavery ‘externalised’ the opposites of freedom and slavery, and gave an enormous impetus to the activities of their campaign.\textsuperscript{250} Evangelical theology can be criticised as being narrow, if by that we mean concentrating on a limited area of Christian belief, but within that it gave enormous depth and drive.

The experience of the slavery campaigns (along with their other campaigns such as the suppression of vice) also gave the Evangelicals a pattern of working. Unlike the Wesleyans, who had limited contact with the wealthy, or the Quakers, who tended to keep themselves to themselves, and were somewhat suspect to the wider community, the Evangelicals, though small in number, had access to politicians and other nationally influential figures. While Brown’s interpretation of their modus operandi is perhaps unduly cynical (‘the clear recognition that an idealistic procedure such as Wesley’s is a clear waste of time and that the reform of this world can only be brought about by the

\textsuperscript{247} Notably in T Scott’s \textit{Commentary on Holy Scripture} and in various works of Granville Sharp: see Anstey, \textit{op cit}, 160-62, 188-89
\textsuperscript{248} Thus G Sharp in \textit{The Law of Retribution}, London, 1776, cites Joel, Amos, Ezekiel 22.7, and Jeremiah 34.8-22, in Anstey, \textit{ib}, 184-5; see also Scott’s \textit{Commentary on Exodus 21.2-11}, cited \textit{ib.} 189. On God’s providential judgement on disobedient individuals and nations, see Wilberforce, \textit{Practical View}, 31
\textsuperscript{249} And cf Charles Wesley: ‘My chains fell off, my heart was free’ (201) ‘A slave redeemed from death and sin’ (30) in J Wesley: \textit{A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists}, London, 1780
\textsuperscript{250} Anstey, \textit{op cit}, 191
ways and means of this world...’) there is truth in his analysis of their recognition of
the effectiveness of their lobbying of those with power, and of how they built on their
success. At worst, it created a rather narrow party spirit, with a great deal of
overlapping between the governors and supporters of the many different societies
which the Evangelicals set up in the early part of the nineteenth century with members
of what Brown calls the Evangelical ‘moral directorate’ to the fore. Whether for
good or ill, it set the pattern for very many of the ever-expanding range of voluntary
charities and associations that flourished throughout the century, so that when Lord
Shaftesbury, the greatest moral director of all died in 1885, over 200 societies with
which he had been associated were represented at his funeral. It did not give
Evangelicals a monopoly of voluntary charitable associations, but it certainly gave
them a running start.

We can thus see how the evangelical revival introduced new elements into the
development of charity. The new theology, moving from Pelagian rewards to free
grace, was firmly held by its leaders, whether or not it was always accepted by their
followers, but the widened scope of charitable action, at a crucial time of British social
history, gave a strong impetus to the development of associational charities which was
already under way. Moreover, the pressure group tactics adopted later in the century
brought this new philanthropy to the notice of the policy makers, whose approach to
charity we shall consider in the next chapter.

251 F K Brown, Fathers, 4
252 This was, after all, the way of getting things done: Coram spent seventeen years collecting
petitions of noblemen and women to present to the King in order to obtain a Royal Charter for
the Foundling Hospital: McClure, op cit. 19-28
253 See Brown, op cit, 318, and chap 9 passim.
The date 1834 has the same iconic significance for the historian of social policy as 1066 has for the general public. In a sense, the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of that year is the point at which social policy ‘history’ begins: indeed, Hilton claims that British social policy starts in the 1830s. Of course, one could make as good a case for social policy beginning with the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, or the developments in the 1530s which replaced institutions lost in the dissolution of the monasteries, or indeed any number of other events. But certainly, the New Poor Law of 1834 was a watershed in the understanding of the role of the state in social policy, and raised questions about the nature of charity, and of Christian obligations to those in need, which still remain with us.

The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1832-4 (hereafter RCPL) and its concomitant Act of 1834, marked a significant shift in social policy. In many respects, of course, this shift had been coming over a long time, and the RCPL was the public statement of the new settlement. The change can be seen in a variety of ways.

First - and this is Hilton’s argument - it was the point at which the state definitely took lead responsibility for a range of central social issues – not only poverty, but also health and factory legislation. Criticism of the operation of private charity in the RCPL Report was indicative of the way in which the state was taking on the role of overseeing the whole range of provision, statutory or voluntary, although keen

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debates were to continue throughout the century and beyond as to where the boundaries of direct state intervention might lie.

Second, state policy was not primarily based on any sense of compassion for those in need, but was concerned with the social control of demoralised working masses, and was motivated less by pity for others than by fear for the well-being of the ruling classes. It was an inheritor of 18th century campaigns for the increase of morality, but the motivation was more clearly controlling than improving.

Third, this shift in state social policy had the support of many of the church establishment: as we shall see, two the key members of the RCPL were bishops, including its chair, and they were influential in getting the proposals accepted.

Fourth, while the churches saw and generally approved this new role for the state, their own role continued to be one of re-moralizing the poor, through the provision of an ever-increasing range of charities. Such charities were often directed more to the moral or religious than to the physical improvement of the recipient. The poor, meanwhile, continued to support themselves through mutual support, as they had always done. As Peter Mandler puts it:

At no point did the forms in which charity was offered match the forms in which it was needed. The task of the recipients was to fit themselves into the positions required by the donors at the moment of the transaction and then to apply the gift (so far as they were able) to their own real needs. 258

The introduction of the New Poor Law coincided with the high point of Evangelical influence in state and church. For the rest of the century there was growing diversity in the field of charity, not only in provision but also in underlying ideology, so that by the 1880s there were developments in socialist, altruist, Christian Socialist and non-Christian charity.

This leads us to a final point: the RCPL can also be seen as a point where ideas drawn from political economy and utilitarianism entered the mainstream of policy making, and where they were to remain with increasing importance for the rest of the century and beyond. We might see this as the beginning of an autonomous field of social policy making, with its own field of discourse and without any need to appeal to other moral or religious theories and ideologies – in effect, the professionalization of social policy.

How did these changes come about?

**Table 2: Population and Urban increase, 1781-1851**

*(a) Population increase, England, 1781-1851*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Population (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>7050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>8650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>11500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>13300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>16750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(b) Population of nine fast-growing towns, 1801 and 1851 (000s)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Population 1801</th>
<th>Population 1851</th>
<th>Average decade increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>140.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huddersfield</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackburn</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolverhampton</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Perceptions of the Social Environment

While it would be dangerous to overstate the point (we are after all thinking about the England of Jane Austen) the social perceptions held by the middle and upper classes were growing darker during this period. The population of Britain was beginning to grow rapidly, and much of that increase was to be found in urban settings (see Table 2). Without entering into the complex debates about the nature and extent of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, it is clear that by 1830 society was very different from fifty years before. In the country, there had been a widening division between the rich and the poor. Changes in agricultural practices, and the taking of much previously common land into wealthy private ownership, had led to very considerably expanded wealth on the part of some landowners (including clergy who had enclosed their glebe lands) while traditional yeomen smallholders had sunk to the status of agricultural labourers. There was thus a wider social gap between the rural rich and poor – including, again, between clergy and their parishioners, and the employed, rather than independent, status of the poor reduced their possibilities of producing their own food and other necessities. Consequently, when periods of agricultural slump occurred – as in the 1790s and the 1820s - they had no recourse but to turn to the parish for poor relief. Meanwhile, the same problems of low agricultural prices made it harder for the landowner ratepayers to meet the costs of poor relief. Agricultural unrest on the part of underemployed, dispossessed workers led to the Swing Riots of 1830-1⁴²⁵⁹, which convinced the government that urgent action had to be taken to reform the failing Old Poor Law system.

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But equally – perhaps more – important, was the growth of towns. As manufacturing took place increasingly in factory settings, more and more people moved from the country to the towns. This placed great pressures on towns, and we would do well to imagine them in terms of shanty towns in parts of the developing world today, with overcrowded housing, and a lack of basic services such as fresh water, sewage disposal, and health, education, and security services. Overcrowding was at unimaginable levels: William Duncan, the first Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool (and indeed for the whole country), quoted density figures which would work out at over 600,000 people per square mile. Infectious disease was of course rife, with four big cholera epidemics during the century, but this came on top of deep economic uncertainty for many families. Trade fluctuations, exacerbated in places like seaports by bad weather, meant that many workers could not be sure almost from day to day where their next meal was coming from, while in manufacturing areas people might be thrown out of work for long periods of time, especially in single-industry towns, where a trade shortage could lead to sudden demand for mass relief beyond informal or even local civic resources.

These conditions led to endemic poverty, which in its turn exacerbated lawlessness and disorder. Traditional public forms of support and control were clearly inadequate. The parish-based poor law had been designed for very different communities, and could only cope by refusing support to those who originated from other parishes: economic migrants coming to the cities for work were thus excluded, in much the same way that travellers fallen on hard times had been found to be in need by Strangers Friend Societies. Equally, informal neighbourly support was not to be relied on when people moved so much within towns: would they still be around when debts or other reciprocal help were to be called in? Michael Anderson, in a study of mid-19th century Preston which showed the frequency with which people moved addresses, concluded

260 M B Simey: *op cit*, 41-2. Mandler, *op cit*, gives a density of 750,000 per sq mile in Lower East Side, New York – ‘probably setting world records for population density not even matched by present day Bombay’ (p.9)

261 For the impact of recessions on the cotton industry, see M S Edwards: *Purge This Realm: a life of Joseph Rayner Stephens*, London, Epworth, 1994
that people would give help according to the degree of help required, the length of
time likely to elapse before return was required, and the likelihood of return, and
argued that only close kin were likely to fulfil all three criteria in the case of substantial
or long-lasting help\textsuperscript{262}.

For large towns were creating a mass society in a form which had previously only been
known in a very few cities, like London. Philanthropists and policy makers alike
recognised this, and were concerned about the problems which it created. First, there
was a loss of face-to-face social contact, particularly between people of different social
classes. This was thought to be most obviously the case in the administration of the old
poor law. There was a belief that in the recent (but unspecified) past, applicants for
poor relief had been well known in their local communities, and that the justices
administering relief would do so with a full knowledge of the applicants and their
families. This was in fact by no means always the case: by the mid-eighteenth century
social divisions were already such that in many cases overseers were being appointed
to take on such investigation for socially and often also geographically distant gentry\textsuperscript{263}.

But, as we have already seen, the need for the rich to have personal contact with the
poor to whom they gave charity was a common theme in sermons, and it became a
major plank of Chalmers' practice.

The division here was more than simply one of knowledge or social contact. The old
poor law still reflected, however distantly, a sense that the local community was
responsible for its own poor members, and that the poor law was thus an expression of
communal duty and communal solidarity. Once those links were broken – and, as we
shall see, there was a major shift in attitudes in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century – understandings
of the nature of the poor law, and of the state's relationship to the poor, would change
radically. Crucially, new ideas of political economy stressed economic relationships
between individuals, and denied any relationship based on a concept of 'rights'. The
poor became seen as a threat to society, both in terms of the demands which they

\textsuperscript{262} M Anderson: \textit{op cit} 1971.
\textsuperscript{263} See L H Lees: \textit{The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948.}
might make on the national economy, and also, as they became a more self-conscious working class, as a political threat to the ability of the wealthy to rule the country.

This political aspect had become more acute in the aftermath of the French Revolution, when subsequent wars with France kept the British economy on a war footing for a quarter of a century. Previous movements towards political reform which had appeared to be moving peacefully but powerfully towards a more democratic and inclusive concept of governance, stopped abruptly, and any attempts to improve their conditions on the part of the working classes were put down with severity. This repression continued in the fifteen years following the end of the wars, when the government was faced with the economic aftermath of war, coupled with the rapid growth of towns. Thus, politically and economically, immediate events of war and economic depression added to the long term social effects of industrialisation in creating a very different approach to charity from its former state.

**Intellectual Changes: Political Economy**

We have already seen how in the later 18th century there was some shift in the justification of charity from a largely theological underpinning to a greater emphasis on social benefit, for example, in Hanway’s Marine Society (see p.47) which both cleared the streets of lawless boys and strengthened the Royal and Merchant Navies, to the benefit of the nation. There was something of a midpoint in justification in the case of hospitals: society benefitted from the return of sick people to a healthy, earning workforce, but at the same time there was justification that patients were exposed to religious teaching while they were inmates.

In the early 18th century there had been deep protests at the amoral economics of Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*, which argued that private vices (the spending of the

264 See E Royle and J Walvin, *op cit*
rich) could lead to public benefit (employment for the poor). And it is noteworthy that when political economy did start to develop from the mid-18th century, it grew out of the study of theology and moral philosophy. Adam Smith was educated at Oxford under a scheme for the training of clergy in the Scottish Episcopal Church, (though he never seems to have had any intention of entering the church). He was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow and his first book was a study of that subject. In England, when university posts in political economy were established at Oxford, the early holders were all ordained clergy of the Church of England, since this was still a requirement to hold a fellowship at an Oxford college. Two of the most influential writers on the subject went on to become Archbishops – Whately at Dublin and Sumner at Canterbury.

Smith in particular sought to answer questions by non-theological, empirical study, and, whatever his religious beliefs may have been he can be regarded, says Dunn, as a ‘practical atheist’, in the sense that he did not need to bring theological issues into his work. He was concerned with the question of why wealth was differently owned and distributed in different countries, and he concluded that the growth of wealth in a country depends on the operation of an ‘invisible hand’: that the sum of all transactions becomes the wealth of a country. It followed that the more transactions there were, the greater that wealth would be, and he argued that this could be maximised when there was most freedom for all to participate in this process: all became ‘traders’, whether what they traded was goods or their labour. In claiming this he was arguing against older models of trade, in which it was believed that economic activity should be subordinate to other issues, whether that be control of entry to professions, or rights to trade with particular countries, or, crucially, the control of food prices. E. P. Thompson has described what he calls ‘the moral economy of the crowd’ in the 18th century, in which the people, with the greater or lesser concurrence of the

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266 D Winch: Riches and Poverty: an intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1750-1834, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 61ff
authorities, determined food prices in times of scarcity, rather than allowing the market to set its own (higher) price. The state acted as a paternalist protector of the poor.

Smith’s invisible hand appeared to function as a secular version of Divine Providence – and indeed later, more theologically inclined economists seem to have slipped into a more God-directed version of the process, which thus became a series of economic ‘laws’ operating in much the same way as Newtonian laws of physics. But – and here we come closer to issues of charity – what if there was insufficient provision of necessities of life for all? Here we come up against a second economist, and one whose influence was extremely strong in the early 19th century. Thomas Malthus was a clergyman, and one who was seriously seeking a theological way through his findings267. In opposition to the egalitarianism of William Godwin, Malthus argued that social inequality was necessary to ensure that people would work and that society would progress. Without the necessary urges of shortages, people would be unwilling to work, or to seek progress. Hedonism was contrary to social development, and in particular sexual indulgence, and consequent population increases, were especially harmful. Malthus’ calculations appeared to demonstrate that population would increase on a geometric progression, whereas food supply would only expand arithmetically, so that the larger the population the greater the shortfall in resources. The necessary consequence of this would be some violent, if providential, checks to population growth, such as war, disease, or famine, unless people were prepared to undertake voluntary action to reduce their birth rate. Any attempt at ameliorating the position of the poor, and especially if it resulted in additional relief to those with large families, was simply providing perverse incentives which would increase the vicious circle of over-population and consequent poverty.

267 Ibid, 23ff.
All this led to the growth of what Hilton calls Christian Economics\textsuperscript{268}. What was needed was a theodicy which would demonstrate that God’s creation was ultimately good, and for the benefit of all people – provided they obeyed his commands. To be sure, this offered some problems, since God was recorded as having told his creation to be fruitful and multiply, but it could be shown – and this was Sumner’s main argument – that God had provided clues in his creation which enabled people to learn the need for moderation and abstinence, and to discover ways in which they might increase productivity of agriculture and manufactures, as they developed a greater division of labour, and as societies, providentially divided into rich and poor, offered the poor an incentive to work harder, while the rich encouraged and educated the poor in their duties.

Christian economics attracted widespread attention: it is claimed that far more people knew Malthus through Sumner’s popularising of his ideas than from the original studies\textsuperscript{269}. And it clearly had direct relevance for the practice of charity. As had already been determined by the first generation of Evangelicals, the ultimate aim of charity was religious and moral improvement, rather than material benefit. Now the new economics demonstrated that this was not only evangelically desirable, but also necessary for future social development.

A further point was the extent to which earlier ideas of the rich holding wealth in stewardship for the poor was replaced by a belief in the sanctity of private property. This had the additional effect of undermining any last vestiges of concepts of rights to support for the poor. As James Stevens put it in 1831 (the date is significant: it was the time of the Swing agricultural riots) the rich should indeed seek to help the poor when they were in difficulties, but any such help must be voluntary: only thus could proper


social relations be assured between the rich and poor. Without that voluntary bond, either the rich held the poor in a type of slavery, or the poor responded by violence and insubordination\textsuperscript{270}.

There was a strong awareness that charity was a necessary activity for the rich and could, if performed spontaneously and responsibly to deserving cases, be pleasing to God, but givers must be very careful not to do anything which would reduce the independence of the poor, or the effects of the necessary spurs to good conduct of which economic theory spoke. We turn now to examine in more detail the thoughts of two of those who spoke most strongly for this new model, J B Sumner and Thomas Chalmers.

**John Bird Sumner**

The growing science of political economy, with its emphasis on individual choice and the personal consequences of individual decisions, challenged older concepts of communal duties and the obligations of the rich to the poor. As we have seen, the idea that benevolence was a matter of personal choice rather than a necessary requirement of one’s faith in God had already weakened these ideas, but here were arguments that claimed that what had appeared to be necessary acts of charity were in fact calculated to make things worse, whether for the individual recipient of charity or for society at large. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the debate over poor relief became more divisive. For some more traditional bishops, the argument that poverty was the inevitable lot of most people, derived from the Biblical claim that ‘The poor ye have always with you’ [Deut 15.11, Matt. 26.11], carried with it the duty also imposed in the same verse of Deuteronomy: “Thou shalt surely open thine hand

\textsuperscript{270} J Stevens: *The Poor Laws an Interference with the Divine Laws by which the Interests and Welfare of Society are Maintained*. London, Hatchard, 1831, 23-27
unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to the poor in thy land.” Bishop Horsley commented in a sermon of 1786 that attempts to deny relief to the poor were ‘contrary to reason, sound policy, and benevolent feelings of philanthropy’, and frequently seemed to come from those who were themselves well off.

But these ideas were falling out of fashion, and smart young episcopal writers and preachers were taking the new economics into account. Indeed, there was a need in terms of Christian apologetics to justify both the apparent selfishness of Smith’s invisible hand, and the harsh implications threatened by Malthusian population forecasts. Various responses were made, but the most celebrated was John Bird Sumner’s *Treatise on the Records of The Creation, and on the Moral Attributes of the Creator; with particular reference to the Jewish History, and to the Consistency of the Principle of Population with the Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity*. Sumner had two tasks to perform: to demonstrate that the inequality inherent in political economic theory was desirable, and to show that, despite Malthus’ gloomy forecasts, population growth could be controlled, and indeed lay within the plan of God.

The two issues fall together. The development of economic thinking in the mid-18th century was followed by a shift in theological models from natural theology, in which the nature of God was deduced from the creation of the world, to a theology based on an analysis of the nature of society. It was held that the most successful patterns of society were a revelation of the divine plan, and hence also of the divine nature.

But if the ordering of society is in accordance with the will of God, then how can we

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271 R A Soloway: *op cit*, 74.
272 Ibid., 75, citing S Horsley: *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, May 18, 1786*. London, Rivington, 10ff
273 London, 1816 (2 vols)
274 Several writers on this period have summarised Sumner’s arguments. This section draws particularly on R S Dell: ‘Social and Economic Theories and Pastoral Concerns of a Victorian Archbishop’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1965, 196-208
275 Dell, *op cit*, 198. But this derivation from social models also goes back at least as far as Pope’s *Essay on Man* – ‘whatever is, is right.’[1.294]. Such assumptions, as Dell points out, made it very difficult for theologians to question the nature of society.
explain the apparently hostile implications of Malthusian population theories? And why are human societies so unequal, in the enjoyment of the earth’s resources and the harshness of labour?

Sumner resolves these questions by arguing that human society functions most effectively when confronted by the spurs of competition. Inequality is therefore a necessary encouragement, as is the Biblical requirement of labour. It follows that society will function best when all are working to the best of their ability, spurred on by an awareness of the importance of their individual efforts. This carries the implications that families must ensure that they have the working power to sustain all their own members, and that they should not allow the population to increase beyond what they themselves can support. Labour generates its own rewards, and family incomes should not be artificially supplemented by poor relief or charity. Divine providence has ensured that this is how society will operate, and any apparent unfairnesses in this life will be resolved in the life to come, for which this is a preparation.

Sumner argues that inequalities are the best way of ensuring social development: “wherever equality is found to exist...[such as among the native Americans].. mankind are in the lowest and most savage state”

There is no incentive to develop in societies where all things are held in common, whereas with the introduction of private property there is a direct incentive to the individual to improve his lot. Furthermore, a system of rewards for the more energetic and competent members of society ensures that while they will flourish, others will of necessity have to undertake the more menial tasks which industrial society requires. Ideally, this model requires a gradual sliding scale of occupations, rather than a few very wealthy and many very poor people. Sumner acknowledges that the poor may have unpleasant lives: “the first prospect of a country far advanced in civilization, appals us by the vast disproportion

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276 Sumner: Treatise, ii, 32, cited in Dell, 198 (quoting from the third corrected edition)
277 Sumner is arguing here against the current egalitarian concepts of Rousseau and Godwin.
observable between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many.” However, this life is a period of trial, from which the poor should learn patient contentment, and either reflect with “cheerful equanimity” on the failings of their ancestors which have condemned them to the bottom rung of the social ladder, or discover ways of improving their lot. One might ask how contentment and social ambition fit together, but then Sumner distinguishes between poverty – the natural order of things for the majority – and indigence, the consequence of ‘intemperance and want of prudent foresight’

We can now see how Malthusian ideas fit into the overall picture. Malthus’ checks to overpopulation become spurs to individual ambition. The poor, but wise, man will see that he must exercise prudence and moderation if he is to advance, and is taught these important moral lessons by the operation of economic and social laws. The task of the better off is to ensure that these lessons are properly taught, so that all members of society may operate together: as a bishop, Sumner was an enthusiastic builder of churches and of associated schools to ensure that the mill operatives of the Diocese of Chester (which included Manchester and Liverpool) should be properly integrated into society. In his 1844 Charge Sumner acknowledges that

“We see wealth and poverty in close contact and violent contrast.” This is the inevitable course of things, especially at times when “the demand for employment is greater than the demand for labour. ... But like every other providential arrangement, the evils which belong to it have a corresponding remedy. In a community thus circumstanced, many possess both the leisure and the means to attend to wants which ought to be relieved, and to correct the irregularities.”

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278 Sumner, Treatise, i, 96, cited in Dell 199
279 Sumner, ibid, i, 102-3; Dell 200.
280 Sumner, i, 103-4; Dell, 200
282 J B Sumner: A Charge Addressed to the Clergy of the Diocese of Chester at the Triennial Visitation in May and June 1844. London, Hatchard, 22
This leads us on to the question of charity. Sumner did not believe that legislation could resolve problems of industrial poverty, and was dubious about the role of public relief. In an early article on the Poor Laws in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Sumner admits that “The poor, it must be acknowledged... present a problem of great embarrassment. Where so much wealth and so much penury is seen in opposition” a sense of bringing the extremes together appeals at first sight “to the best feelings of the legislator and the moralist.” However, experience teaches us that any legislative attempt to resolve this problem will create political mischief. First, relief to families disturbs the natural course of the population, by encouraging births beyond what a man can earn. “The natural arrangement is, that a man and his family should depend upon himself; should be supported by his own personal exertions; and knowing this” should consider what he can afford before marriage. Now however the question is not whether he can support them, but whether the parish will. “Nature has established an index, in the rate of wages, by which the wants of the society as to population may be clearly ascertained;” and to set this aside “is as pernicious in practice as it is unphilosophical in theory.”

Secondly, poor laws increase pauperism. There will always be more people seeking work than jobs available, and, unlike productive labour, charity does not produce goods as an end product: its output depends on the ability of those who pay for it, with demand always exceeding supply.

Catholic countries, in which the nature of benevolence is in every way misunderstood, afford... the most striking proofs that wherever gratuitous supplies are furnished, the demands soon rise above the means of meeting

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283 ‘Poor Laws’ in *Encyclop Brit* Supplement to 4th 5th and 6th editions. Edinburgh, Constable, 1824, 293-306
284 *Ibid* 295
them.... Rome, Naples, Cadiz and indeed all the principal cities of Spain are... equally remarkable for indiscriminate bounties and universal mendacity.  

Thirdly, Poor Laws undermine morality. People should learn to provide for themselves against bad times, rather than squandering their money on frivolities ‘most unsuited to [their] station in life.’ Ribbon weavers in Coventry had spent surplus earnings in “a most sumptuous manner upon poultry and other luxuries.” There seems to be an echo here of Hannah More’s objections to the conspicuous consumption of the glass workers of Weston: how dare the poor mimic the pleasures of the rich, rather than admire them from afar? The problem, for Sumner and Malthus, is that the poor do not understand the economic laws which necessitate their poverty: they never see that the blame lies with their own behaviour. Poor relief gives them a false sense of entitlement, whereas if they were “liberally relieved” by voluntary gifts from the rich, “the bonds which unite the rich and the poor would be drawn much more closely together.” Charity, in effect, becomes a means of social cohesion by withdrawing rights from the poor.

But do the rich still have obligations? Yes, towards God, and towards the maintenance of an ordered, Godly society. The individual Christian can respond freely to the divine demands in a way which lies beyond the capacity of the State. And so Sumner preached, and ultimately published, a series of sermons on Charity. Many of these are broadly charity sermons, either in support of particular institutions (public hospitals, a penitentiary, an asylum for offenders), missions, district visiting, or the provision of churches and schools. Sumner’s argument, though, is more specific than this might imply.

286 Ibid 297
287 Ibid 299
289 Sumner, op cit 300: he is citing Malthus.
He starts by acknowledging the perceived failure of public charity: the belief that

“a certain quantity of evil must exist in the world, which no efforts can overcome”, and more specifically that “the exercise [of charity] is not only useless, but absolutely injurious; that industry is restrained, and the moral character of the receiver lowered, by such assistance; so that it is rather our duty to repress than to encourage the feelings which induce us to relieve distress and want, when brought plainly before our eyes.”\(^{291}\)

This, he claims, is true of any attempts to subsidise wages, and the Speenhamland system had “inflicted equal mischief on the property and the morals of the land.”\(^{292}\) Where public charity may fail, however, “private charity is essential to the nature and condition of mankind.”\(^{293}\) The reason for this is partly a consequence of the living conditions generated by industrial urbanisation – and Sumner gives a number of references and examples of this, including housing conditions in the North-West – but is also because of the moral conditions which have arisen among these largely unchurched communities “to whom the sound of the Gospel is as strange as it was to the gaoler at Philippi”.\(^{294}\) Let the individual hear the gospel, and communal reformation will follow: charity will start with the provision of churches, followed by church-run schools.

The first need, from an evangelical standpoint, is to ensure that the poor hear the good news: “they perish without [Christ]; they have the sentence of death, eternal death in themselves which he alone can set aside.”\(^{295}\) And once they hear it, the Gospel is a blessing to the poor.

“It does not set aside labour; but the severity of labour is softened, and it ceases to be repulsive, when it is made a religious duty. So in regard to poverty. The Gospel does not banish poverty from the world: ‘the poor ye have always

\(^{291}\) Ibid, vi-vii
\(^{292}\) Ibid vii
\(^{293}\) Ibid viii.
\(^{294}\) Ibid xii
\(^{295}\) Ibid. 120
with you’, but it relieves its weight, and sends a cheering ray into the darkest cottage. All burthens are lessened by being shared; and the poor man’s lot was shared by Him, who is the author and giver of all wealth: ‘He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.’”

Religion “changes the character of poverty, and the condition of labour”; it “raises the poor out of the dust, that it may set them with princes, even the princes of the people [Ps 113: 7-8].” So, there is a long series of sermons on the need for new churches.

But, however religion may alter their perceptions of their earthly lives, the poor must not suppose that their actual physical conditions will be changed. Silver and gold may be offered in emergencies, but ‘no effort of man can take away the consequences of the first sin: - death, and all the pain and misery that leads to death: - labour, and all the pressure and want which enforces labour.’ We cannot hope to challenge the wage system, nor should we seek to do so. The laws of economics are part of the divine decree for society.

This is not, however, to let the rich off the hook. They are to exercise proper stewardship of their resources, not by utopian attempts at social reform, but in supporting the emergencies of life which will always occur:

‘the rich man who is ready to communicate must watch for opportunities: and he will not be long in finding much that he can do safely as well as kindly: he may smooth the bed of pain, he may soften the pillow of disease; he may add to the comforts of old age, he may relieve the widow, and be a father to the fatherless: and if he dares not augment the regular reward of labour, he may increase, without danger, the economical dole of public charity. Those gifts are injurious which may be securely reckoned on or confidently claimed... but when they descend like the summer shower, they cause the field which is

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296 Ibid, 133
297 Ibid 105
298 Ibid, Sermons 8-17
299 Ibid, 102-3
300 Ibid, 25, 100-101
rained upon to flourish, and yet the piece which is not rained upon does not wither.\textsuperscript{301}

Hence, the work of hospitals and similar institutions is to be encouraged.\textsuperscript{302} Charity of this nature will prove to be a rock underlying faith – not that there is any foundation of faith but in the death of Christ, but that the good works which flow from that faith ‘prove that we have a foundation to stand upon, when we profess our trust in Jesus Christ.’\textsuperscript{303}

It is tempting to write off Sumner, this Eton master whose brother’s friendship with the Prince Regent brought him preferment, and whose economic theories speak so conveniently to the rich and so condescendingly to the poor, but he may still be seen as one of those who started to ask serious empirical questions about charity, not just as it affects individual donors and recipients, but its impact on society as a whole. Such questions in their turn ask how far the individual should take into account these issues, as well as obedience to scripture or to theological models. Sumner’s involvement with the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1834, (see below) was certainly influential in these regards, but his division between public and private charity (and he was by no means the only person to make such a distinction) can be seen to have had the effect of removing a sense of communal morality from the Poor Law, with drastic effects on subsequent policy-making.

**Christian Economics in action: Thomas Chalmers**

If Sumner was influential in popularising Christian economic theory, his contemporary, Thomas Chalmers, won an equally large reputation as a practitioner of those same

\textsuperscript{301} Ibid, 25-6
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid, sermons 20-22
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid 28.
ideas, putting them into effect in inner Glasgow. He was born into a middle class family in 1780, and after a precocious academic childhood (he entered St Andrews University at the age of 12), he became minister of the parish of Kilmany in Fifeshire, where he underwent a strong evangelical conversion. From then on the saving of souls would always be given precedence over all else, but his active nature expressed itself from the start in schemes for a ‘Godly Commonwealth’\textsuperscript{304}, taking a communitarian approach to social affairs on a parish basis.

But Chalmers was also interested in political economy, and Malthusian economics were intermingled from the start with his communitarian theology, though Hilton suggests that Chalmers adopts Mathus’ position on restraining population growth primarily from a desire to subdue ‘the passionate flesh’: he was an economic individualist, but a moral paternalist.\textsuperscript{305} His ideal model was of a parish community, supporting one another on an informal, mutual basis.

This can be seen in an early project at Kilmeny, establishing a local fund-raising auxiliary branch of the Scottish Bible Society\textsuperscript{306}. In his pamphlet, \textit{The Influence of Bible Societies on the Temporal Necessities of the Poor}\textsuperscript{307} he argues against those who took the view that while there was so much poverty in Britain the poor should be encouraged to look after themselves rather than giving to others. On the contrary, says Chalmers, such ideas would only come from those who romanticise the poor. While he accepts that those who are themselves dependent on charity should not give to others, all others should be encouraged to give. Education and religion are the ways to reduce poverty, and inculcating habits of thrift through charity will contribute to this, as well as giving the poor the comfort of being able to participate in voluntary

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Hilton, \textit{Atonement}, 87ff}
\footnote{On the growth of these auxiliaries see F K Brown: \textit{Fathers of the Victorians}, 244-250}
\footnote{Cupar, R Tullis, 1814}
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giving. It builds up people’s characters: once givers stand on this higher moral ground, they will feel the shame more keenly if they then have to submit to becoming recipients of charity: it is the reluctance of the poor to become paupers which is the main barrier against the rise of pauperism. Encouraging charity on the part of the poor thus has the effect of restraining pauperism at the roots, and engenders attitudes of self-respect and frugality, as well as the educational benefit of learning more about the Society. Chalmers’ awareness of his parishioners’ attitudes is perceptive, though one has to ask how those who were not able to subscribe might have felt – or was the intention to use stigma as a means of control?

In 1815 Chalmers became minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow. Like other cities, Glasgow was expanding very rapidly – much faster than churches had managed to keep up: there were still only eight parishes, serving a population of 120,000 by 1815. The city was rapidly industrialising, particularly in the cotton trade and hand-weaving, and as was common, there were frequent periods of unemployment and distress among the workers. At the other extreme, the merchant class were increasing in strength and influence. There was a severe reduction in close proximate relations between the different classes such as had occurred in the old city, where people might have lived on different floors of the same tenement. Up to this point, a pattern of paternalism had survived, but now the wealthy were moving out to the new suburbs, while the old tenements were increasingly overcrowded by immigrants in search of work.

The churches, while aware of some of these social factors, and recommending the restoration of older paternalistic relations, did little to support the poor. Church attendance was largely an activity of the higher social classes, and there were few church schools. Poor relief was paid by the City Council through the Town Hospital,

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308 S. Brown: Chalmers, 97
309 Ibid, 96-7
and this was augmented by money from the parish churches, which was disbursed by the General Session on a city-wide basis.

Chalmers’ response to this was not just evangelical preaching, but his sermons and addresses also applied the Gospel to the merchants who made up his respectable congregation and dealt with issues which were of concern to them. His addresses on *The Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life* (1820) dealt with mercantile virtues and vices. The early chapters take a Wilberforcean approach to commercial virtues and their limits – ‘disjoined from God and therefore of no religious estimation whatsoever [they will not] lead to any religious blessing, either in time or in eternity.’ However, a key chapter in terms of charity is the fifth discourse, ‘On the great Christian law of reciprocity between man and man.’ Unexpectedly, Chalmers uses Matt. 7.12 – ‘whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do also to them likewise’ – as a means of limiting support for others, by urging moderation in people’s own demands: if your own demands are modest, you can only be expected to give modestly to others. This rather casuistic approach nevertheless allows Chalmers to urge his hearers to take this command seriously. We are to give up selfishness, and rely on our own industry, but not preying on those weaker than ourselves. If, he says, using the image of a steam machine flywheel regulator, we modify our demands, the whole social system will work more efficiently. Thus, limits are set for the charitable giving of the rich, and the poor are to be moderate in their demands. This latter is important: if a rich man fails to do his part, his selfishness will only corrupt himself, but too much demand by the poor is much more serious, taking from the inarticulate needy, and discouraging the rich from giving to anyone. The generosity of the poor is thus found not in giving, but in not asking for other than basic necessities, thereby freeing up basic gifts for those who are

\[311\] Chalmers and Collins, Glasgow 1820
\[312\] *Ibid*, 34
\[313\] *Ibid*, 156-7
needier: the selfless poor man is ‘in heaven’s eye ... the more illustrious philanthropist.’

However, there is no suggestion of any change in social status. ‘It is not by the abolition of rank, but by the assignment to each rank its duties, that peace and friendship and order will at length be firmly established in our world.’

As we would expect, Chalmers constructed social problems and their solution in terms of the models of political economy, and in particular the ideas of Thomas Malthus. As he himself comments, whereas the generation of Adam Smith had dealt with trade, Malthus, by concentrating on what was construed as human moral behaviour and its consequences, was addressing issues which were much more relevant to Christianity and the work of the church. The immediate problems in Glasgow were those of financial, social and physical deprivation, but how were these to be understood? For Chalmers and his contemporaries, poverty was not a social problem in itself: ‘the poor they had always with them.’ The major problem was seen to be the management of poor relief. Malthusians, as we have seen, were convinced that the present system of poor relief, based on rights rather than on morality, gave both general encouragement to the poor to rely on handouts rather than labour as a means of survival, and, more specifically, perverse incentives to population growth. The rising cost of the poor law was seen as all too clearly showing the direction in which things were going. In the unprecedented growth of large towns, with their associated problems of economic instability and environmental squalor, few if any had the analytical tools to understand how macro-economic events such as trade cycles impacted on city life, and how the

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314 Ibid 165
315 Ibid 168
316 ‘I consider you my ablest and best ally’ wrote Malthus to Chalmers in 1822 (Brown: Chalmers, 116) while Marx scathingly refers to ‘Parson Malthus and his disciple, the arch-parson Thomas Chalmers’ (Capital, Everyman edition 1930, II, 620)
317 Chalmers, Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, Glasgow, Chalmers and Collins, 3 volumes 1821-1826, I, 5
318 In Glasgow the cost of poor relief from the Town Hospital rose from £1420 in 1790 to £10,709 by 1814. Brown, Chalmers, 117
solutions to poverty and its associated needs lay beyond the individual’s power to avoid or resolve.

For Chalmers, change could only be achieved by changing individuals – a consequence, perhaps of his evangelical theology, though most non-evangelicals would probably have agreed. The poor needed to be set free from dependency on the poor law and encouraged to achieve independence for themselves, including the independence of Malthusian self-restraint. Such a change would have to be achieved by education, both from day schools and by the teaching of the Gospel. But it would also be achieved through mutual support: Chalmers sought above all to reproduce the voluntary charity which had been a feature of his rural ministry.

The parochial setting is crucial. In the first volume of Chalmers’ *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns* he places great emphasis on locality. If charity was to be based on individual social relations, then large towns should be subdivided to achieve these ends. He thus emphasised the importance of parishes of a manageable size, which he saw as being about 1000 residents, as opposed to the average 11,000 in Glasgow parishes at the time. He thus persuaded the City Council to carve a new parish of St John’s out of the existing Tron parish, with a population of 996 and Chalmers as minister, to show what could be achieved against destitution and godlessness on a voluntary basis in a small locality. The small population not only increased the likelihood of residents knowing each other, but it also enabled the minister to get to know his flock and, with a group of associates, he could start to have a significant impact on the lives of his parishioners.
When he proposed his new parish, Chalmers undertook to opt out his parishioners from all public relief systems, other than from voluntary giving by his own church\(^{319}\). The parish was divided into small patches, each under a deacon, who would get to know the families under their charge well. When they became aware of families in difficulties they would institute enquiries to establish the genuine extent of need and the availability of support from family and neighbours. Only when an exhaustive assessment had been made, and local resources explored, would the possibility of parochial help be considered. Only a minority of cases were so referred, and indeed many deacons felt it a point of honour not to make such claims. It must be remembered that the deacons were all recruited from the upper class members of the church: it was assumed that only the rich had leisure for such office, and perhaps too it was only they, as powerful outsiders, who had the status to allow them to behave in this way. Like Chalmers, the deacons were wedded to a system which would prove its effectiveness in not giving anything.\(^{320}\)

It would, however, also be the case in Chalmers’ belief that when the supply of poor relief from distant, impersonal agencies stopped, the poor would be more willing to help their neighbours – the more so because they knew people’s situations and could judge better what was needed, rather than applying for all they could get from the Town Hospital. Instead,

There would instantly break forth from innumerable fountains now frozen or blocked by the hand of legislation so many refreshing rills on all the places that had been left dry and destitute... as would spread a far more equal and smiling abundance that ever before over the face of society.\(^{321}\)

\(^{319}\) The few residents who were not members of the Church of Scotland presented a problem. It is ironic that by his part in splitting the Kirk through the Disruption of 1843, Chalmers effectively made it impossible that such a church based scheme would ever again be feasible.

\(^{320}\) The fullest and most critical modern account of the scheme is by R A Cage and E O A Checkland: ‘Thomas Chalmers and Urban Poverty: the St John’s Parish Experiment in Glasgow, 1819-1837’ *Philosophical Journal*, 13 (1976), 37-56.

\(^{321}\) Chalmers: *Christian and Civic Economy*, II, 55
In a sense, of course, the whole scheme was founded on a paradox: not only is it more blessed to give than to receive, but whereas the practice of charity is commended in the gospels and in the practice of the church, to *receive* charity is a much more dubious practice for one who has espoused Malthusian principles. Poverty, as we have seen, was regarded as inevitable, but the poor should not be allowed to fall into pauperism. Chalmers’ goal was a scheme which would achieve four elements: inculcating a sense of personal responsibility on the part of all parishioners, abolishing any sense of right to poor relief, encouraging support by family and neighbours, and doing all this within a *local* parochial system. The diaconal oversight was to be backed up by a teaching ministry, both from the pulpit and from day and Sabbath schools in the parish, to inculcate religious faith and morality.

‘Chalmers belonged to a middle class impervious to the sufferings of the poor. His insensitivity was not exceptional, but reflected attitudes almost universally held among his peers, attitudes which allowed the poverty of the workers to be ascribed to their “moral degeneracy”.’

322 Although he claimed success for the scheme, his figures do not take account of wider economic trends, such as a severe depression in the cotton industry in 1819. He was not without contemporary critics: in particular a senior Glasgow doctor, W P Alison, one of his sharpest critics, was to argue later that the scheme had contributed to malnutrition and higher mortality in the parish.

323 Although Chalmers argued that the poor were much more capable of developing self-help and mutual aid than was commonly supposed, it must be admitted that the St John’s scheme was in the long run a failure. What some few could achieve, could not be achieved by the majority, and whereas small numbers could be supported individually, the programme could not sustain a situation where very large numbers were in need, as during a trade recession. It is this inability to perceive the difference between rural and urban situations which is the real failure of Chalmers and those like

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322 Cage and Checkland, *op cit* 45

him who idealized rural face-to-face support systems and sought to transfer them to large towns. The very fact that Chalmers acknowledged that the support which the poor gave each other, substantial though it was, was yet insufficient, is in itself an admission of failure: if this mutualism was inadequate – and it was – then something more structured needed to be put in its place. The poor law, old or new, was insufficient because it was again based on the assumption that personal effort was the ideal, and that any public support should be secondary and deterrent. What was, and is, needed, was a system which humanised public support, and publicly supported mutual humanity.

And it is here, rather than in poor relief, that Chalmers’ influence was long lasting. The development of parish visiting, and the emphasis on locality, was not appropriate for financial relief as different areas of the city became richer or poorer, but individualising response to need which we have already seen in the development of Strangers Friend Societies and District Visiting Schemes, was part of Chalmers’ lasting legacy. In many ways Chalmers can be seen as a turning point in the history of charity. Before 1800, most charity was based on individual responses, without any clear policy which would look at the long term effects on the recipient. After 1834, the state took on responsibility to answer these long term questions, but only on its own punitive terms. However much one may criticise Chalmers’ practice, he confronts the question of how a Christian, in a Godly commonwealth, should proceed, not just individually but institutionally, placing the church in the centre of the picture. His solutions may have been limited, but he offered a structured approach from which issues could be analysed, and, far more than those who sought to return to a romantic paternalist view of society, set out a path for the future.

Chalmers’ ideas were very widely disseminated, and he achieved a very considerable reputation, both as an economic theologian and as a practical innovator: fifty years later C S Loch of the Charity Organisation Society was to hail him as one of the greatest British thinkers on charity. His actual practice was not successful for very long, but his ideas took root in America, and returned to Britain in the later 19th century.
How did these intellectual innovations and theological reworkings come together in practice? In an influential article of 1987, Peter Mandler shows a shift in attitudes among the ruling class from the paternalism of the late 18th century, drawing perhaps from Paley’s concepts of the rights of the poor, to a much more punitive and deterrent position by the 1820s. Technological change in agriculture, as we have seen, had led to widespread agricultural unemployment on an unprecedented scale, and when the agricultural market failed in the 1790s employers could not afford extra workers (much the same arguments, of course, would be made by manufacturers thirty years later). By 1815 harsher attitudes were developing towards the poor: the ‘natural order’, whether it derived from Adam Smith, Malthus or an evangelical belief in providence, laid down the workings of the labour market. It was assumed that employers were using all necessary labourers fairly, and that all honest workers could maintain their families by their labour: any claimants, therefore, must be undeserving. Property rights were the basis of all other rights, and the rights of the poor were wholly illusory: ‘by the nature of things theirs is a lower condition of employment, however menial, and it is an inversion of the order of things to make it the title to privilege of any kind.’

There was thus by the early 1820s a general acceptance of the need for major reform of the Poor Laws. Sturges Bourne, a liberal Tory, had chaired a select committee of the

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325 I have discussed this at more length in a paper to the Conference of the Voluntary Action History Society, September 2001: ‘Theorising Charity: the Bishops and the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act’. A shorter version was published in Voluntary Action, 5, 1, Winter 2002, 19-32. At the time I had not read Mandler’s work (see below) and I would want to revise my paper now.
327 Ibid, 137-8, 142
Commons on the issue in 1817. The sticking point had been the concept of a central system, which would have finally broken the concept of communal responsibility for the poor, but which by this stage was resisted mainly because it was seen as a threat to the autonomy of the local gentry who still retained some self-image of paternalism. By the early 1830s this attitude had changed, however. A further agricultural depression, and the Swing Riots of 1830-31, added to the reforming attitudes of the new parliament, created an attitude which both recognised the need for change, and expressed a readiness to impose punitive measures on the rebellious poor. The Royal Commission was appointed in 1832, and reported in 1834, accepting a central system of administration and regulations.

From the point of view of this discussion, one of the interesting points of the Royal Commission is that it was chaired by C J Blomfield, Bishop of London, and also had J B Sumner among its members. While Sumner, as we have seen, was a theorist\(^{329}\), Blomfield was a man of action\(^{330}\), and a dominant chairman\(^{331}\). Yet he also had clear views on the role of charity:

> It naturally happens, that in the process of moral improvement... individual sagacity or benevolence is almost always beforehand with the state. It is not only unshackled by the same restraints of form and custom, but it acts under the influence of higher and more sacred motives. It is generally considered that men’s temporal, not their spiritual interests, are under the care of the magistrate... No man can be ignorant in how great a degree religious conduct bears upon the welfare of society; and for this the state endeavours to provide on the one hand, by an established church, and on the other, by the enactments of the civil law. But these enactments do not, as indeed they cannot, touch the hidden springs of action... and they may perhaps be ...

\(^{329}\) In the debate on the bill in the House of Lords, Blomfield was able to claim that he represented the views of Sumner, and that this would ‘satisfy your Lordships and the public that nothing that I have consented to is either contrary to the law of God, to the dictates of humanity, or to the principles of justice.’ Hansard, Lords Debates, 8 August 1834, XXV 1087

\(^{330}\) His enemies called him a ‘bustling intermeddler’ (see M Johnson: *Bustling Intermeddler? The Life and Work of Charles James Blomfield*, Leominster, Gracewing, 2001). Chadwick, *op cit* gives a description of his efficiency and unpopularity (I, 133f). His correspondence in Lambeth Palace Library gives a picture of a committed, deeply involved bishop, concerned with schools, adult education and public health (See *Letters* 16, ff37, 41, 363; 43, ff 377-8)

\(^{331}\) ‘Till Blomfield comes’ wrote the Archbishop of York about the Ecclesiastical Commission, ‘we all sit and mend our pens and talk about the weather’. Chadwick, *op cit*, 133
injurious to the moral state of those who are directly affected by them... It is here, perhaps, that individual charity may tender its aid, and lead the way to those improvements ... which would escape the observation, and fail to awaken the sympathies, of those who are entrusted with the government of the state.  

Here we find Blomfield not only claiming a role for voluntary charity as innovator in developing services, but also proposing a relationship between church and state where the state is responsible for maintaining order but the church – and perhaps by extension other charities – modifies state policies in the interests of the individual’s welfare.

Blomfield was described as ‘a Right Reverend utilitarian’ and ‘an ecclesiastical Peel’ and he certainly had close affinities with both. He remained a loyal friend of Edwin Chadwick, the utilitarian secretary and driving force of RCPL, and took a keen interest in sanitary reform, raising issues, and possibly firing Chadwick’s bullets for him, in the House of Lords on several occasions. He seems to have had that sense of moral rectitude which goes with felicific calculus and cost-benefit analysis: if a course of action was going to be generally beneficial he would pursue it, without too much anxiety if some individuals suffered as a result. He recognised, he said, when he took on the chairmanship of the RCPL, that it would involve him in some obloquy, and he accepted that he was thought to recommend ‘unkindness towards the most interesting portion of the community’, but he believed that the proposals of the Commission, particularly with regard to the harsh and sexist bastardy clauses, ‘were better calculated than any other expedient... for improving the morals of the lower orders of the people, so far, at least, as they are connected with the vice of

333 Chadwick, op cit, 134
incontinency.’\textsuperscript{336} His son and biographer comments that it will not ‘be regarded as the least title to esteem in the life of a Christian bishop that he laboured to set the public charity of a nation upon a surer foundation.’\textsuperscript{337} Blomfield, one feels, would have been happy with that epitaph.

But had the new poor law established a surer foundation for public charity? From the start, the Commissioners had concluded that public relief was damaging to the economy and to individuals, and should be limited as far as was compatible with maintaining public order. Poor relief, and especially out-door relief, created limitless demand, and ‘the constantly diminishing reluctance to claim an apparent benefit, the receipt of which imposes no sacrifice, except a sensation of shame quickly obliterated by habit.’\textsuperscript{338} Private charity was potentially even more damaging, creating idleness and discontent, and giving people a wholly false sense of ‘rights’. Bedford was singled out for especial condemnation: the annual disbursement from a number of charities drew people from a wide area, and encouraged extravagance in the slightly better off, rather than saving.\textsuperscript{339}

Some relief there had to be, however. Preferably this should come from the family\textsuperscript{340}, but failing that the state would have to step in. But this would only be offered when there was clear evidence of the claimant’s destitution, and this evidence would be shown by the workhouse test. Relief would be offered, as far as possible, only in the workhouse, and conditions there would be based on the principle of less eligibility, that is, ‘that [the claimant’s] situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible [i.e., desirable] as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class.’\textsuperscript{341} Since this had to include a diet above starvation levels, it meant

\textsuperscript{336} Hansard, Lords Debates, 8 August, 1834: XXV, 1080, 1087
\textsuperscript{338} Poor Law Report (Checkland ed) 115-6.
\textsuperscript{339} Ibid, 121-3
\textsuperscript{340} Ibid, 115
\textsuperscript{341} Ibid, 335
that other aspects of life had to be made deliberately deterrent – harsh living and sleeping conditions, heavy, monotonous, unrewarding work, and, an element which was most feared by many, splitting up the family. If someone was prepared to accept this, then they must be destitute. It was surely with a strong measure of hypocrisy that the Commissioners could conclude that

Into such a house none will enter voluntarily; work, confinement, and discipline will deter the indolent and vicious; and nothing but extreme necessity will induce any to accept the comfort which must be obtained by the surrender of their free agency, and the sacrifice of their accustomed habits and gratifications. Thus the parish officer, being furnished with an unerring test of the necessity of applicants, is relieved from his painful and difficult responsibility; while all have the gratification of knowing that while the necessitous are abundantly relieved, the funds of charity are not wasted upon idleness and fraud.

Nassau Senior, one of the professional economists on the RCPL, claims that it was intended that the harsh system was only intended for those capable of work, and that the ‘impotent’ – those incapable of work by age or infirmity - should have separate and more generous provision. In practice, local Boards of Guardians took the cheaper option of paying out-door relief to many working people, and used the workhouse for the impotent: between 1848 and 1870 normally only 13-17% of inmates were employable, while 30-40% were non-able bodied and 40% were children. Even in its own terms, the new poor law failed to live up to any concept of charity.

So what of Charity?

The state had increased its contribution to social policy of necessity, but in a way which was deliberately uncharitable. The consequence was that voluntary charity still had a

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342 But see Thomas Hardy’s poem “The Curate’s Kindness”
343 Poor Law Report, 378
344 Ibid., 386 (my italics)
345 W N Senior: History of the Poor Law Commission (Senior’s diary of the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, with a prefatory letter to Lord Lansdowne). University of London Library, MS 173.
347 Deterrence has always been a strong element in public relief programmes, at least until the poor were enfranchised: see F F Piven and R A Cloward: Regulating the Poor: the functions of public welfare, London, Tavistock Publications, 1972, chap 1
large part to play. At its simplest, charity was there for the deserving (and indeed, that was probably always the case, though who determined desert, and on what grounds, varied over time). In some respects, the Poor Law was irrelevant to charity: new needs were discovered, new pioneers planned new services, and the charity scene became increasingly busy and confused, so that by mid-century increasing numbers of people were calling for a system of organisation. And although Christian Economics had prescribed a harsh but virtuous approach to charitable action, new shifts in theology, notably as the high point of evangelicalism was replaced by a more incarnational theology, led to different approaches, which, with the development of Christian Socialism, sought to ally the churches with the poor, rather than to impose economic predictions which the century increasingly proved to be incorrect.

**Epilogue: Bleak House, chapter XV**

It is difficult to imagine how an early Victorian might understand the idea of charity, but one of Dickens’ great gifts was an ability to express such ideas for his readers, and a key passage can be found in *Bleak House*. This chapter brings together a number of different facets of charity. There are the professional charity workers, Mrs Jellyby, totally tied up with her impossible schemes for Africa, her friend Mrs Pardiggle, an indefatigable distributor of tracts and exhorter of the poor, and their admirer, Mr Quayle. There is Mr Skimpole, who sponges off the charity of his friends. And there are the people of Bell’s Yard, a poor tenement area, where the orphans of a former bailiff look after themselves, with the help of their landlady, who forgoes the rent, and Mr Gridley, a plaintiff driven mad by the Court of Exchequer, who yet recognisesthe duty to support those more needy than himself. Into the scene comes Mr Jarndyce, a practical, private philanthropist, and his wards. He praises Mrs Blinder, the landlady.

“It’s not much to forgive ‘em the rent, sir,” she said; “who could take it from them?”
“Well, well!” said [Mr Jarndyce]. “It is enough that the time will come when this good woman will find that it was much, and that forasmuch as she did it unto the least of these...”\textsuperscript{348}

We cannot call Dickens in evidence of actual charitable practice, and indeed he has been criticised for making too much fun of Mrs Jellyby and the like. Jarndyce, like a number of other Dickens’ privately philanthropic characters, is really too good to be true. But Dickens spoke to his readers of their ideals, as well as of social evils. And this may not be too bad a picture of charity in England in mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{349}. Formal charity is not achieving as much as it would like to think, though there are many private individuals who are doing what they can. Meanwhile, as always, the poor are helping themselves, not from any self-aware theological motives, but because in their eyes it is natural humanity, and “it isn’t much”. Despite Chalmers’ fears, the uprooted working class are still bound together in mutual support, and, in Mandler’s phrase, they are making such charity as comes their way fit their real needs.

\textsuperscript{348} Everyman edition, 1956, p.194
\textsuperscript{349} Bleak House was first published 1852-3
Chapter 5: Charity in the mid-nineteenth century: the pattern shakes loose

Introduction

Up to 1830 most people would have held common beliefs about the aims and practice of charity. Certainly, there were some pioneers, like Chalmers, who were pushing the practice of church-based charity forward, and there were increasing numbers of people who were dissatisfied with the functioning of the old Poor Law, but these changes were flowing with the tide of public opinion. There might be disagreement about just who should be helped, and to what extent, but in general the purpose of charity, divinely instituted, was to offer relief to one’s fellows according to one’s own resources, but without in any way changing the fundamental ordering of society. Some charity was public, given by the national or local state, but much was private, and on the whole people approved of this. It was good that benefactors should directly see the fruit of their benevolence, rather than leaving it to anonymous administrators of dubious competence or probity. And direct checks on the needs of applicants for charity were probably best carried out by the givers themselves.

By the 1880s many of these certainties had, if not disappeared, at least become much less self-assured. The New Poor Law of 1834, while much more efficient than its predecessor, was based on the punitive workhouse test, and few would have described its actions as ‘charitable’ – indeed, the whole concept of a unified public and
private charity could no longer be held to apply. The state operated as an agent of social control: one might regard this as a good or a bad thing, but it did not sit easily with any Christian concept of charity.

And the rationale behind this shift in public action was also reflected in private action: what was a charitably disposed individual to do? The practice of making charitable gifts to individuals was increasingly frowned on, and alternative practices and motivations had to be found – religious in many cases, but with a widening range of alternative rationales.

Most important, all this was taking place in a rapidly changing social environment. The age of the squire and his lady overseeing the needs of the village was long since past. What was charity, and what were the social relations underlying charity, to be in an urban, anonymous, and increasingly democratic society? All these questions needed to be addressed.

This changing situation needs to be set in its social background.

The most obvious social change is the shift in the population of Great Britain, which almost doubled in this period, from just over 15 million to just under 30 million. But equally important was the question of where these people lived. In the early 19th century the majority of the population were still living in the country: in 1850 the balance shifted for the first time towards urban dwelling, and by the late 19th century Britain was certainly an urban nation. This, as Chalmers had found when he sought to apply rural systems of charity to an urban setting, made a great difference. Urban living, and perhaps still more urban working, implied a different set of social relationships. Traditional rural life had carried certainties of mutual obligations between neighbours which could no longer be relied on in a new urban setting, though
they would soon re-establish themselves as urban societies became more settled. And, as Chalmers and many other writers kept pointing out, the social, as well as the geographical, distance between the working and the middle classes was steadily increasing.

The nature of this anxiety can be seen in a review by Charles Kingsley in Fraser’s Magazine (April, 1848) of Elizabeth Gaskell’s first industrial novel, *Mary Barton*: “Do they want to know why poor men, kind and sympathising as women to each other, learn to hate law and order, Queen, Lords and Commons, country-party and corn-law leagues all alike – to hate the rich in short? Let them read *Mary Barton*." A similar sense of threat can be found in Disraeli’s *Sybil* (1845), not just in the celebrated remark about the two nations – The Rich and the Poor – but also in the description of the depressed small industrial town of Marney. Perhaps it is seen most strongly in Dickens’ *Christmas Carol* (1843) with the sudden irruption into the story of two poverty-stricken children hidden under the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present: “This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.” Compare this with Mary Carpenter’s argument for *Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes*. ‘The Perishing’ were those who, unless rescued, would inevitably turn to crime; ‘the Dangerous’ those who had already embarked on a criminal career.

Society, then, was changing, and bringing with it new, severe, and intractable problems. So much was clear. What was less clear was how this new society should operate, and how it could be made to do so. This raised questions about social class and inter-class relationships, about governance, and about the balance between collective and individual action. None of these questions had simple religious answers, though there was a tendency for church people to respond in an elitist manner:

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352 London, 1851
353 D.Owen: *op cit* 145
Coleridge’s concept of a Christian intellectual elite, a ‘clerisy’, cohered with an understandable sense of knowing best on the part of professional theologians and moralists, and felt itself challenged by the uninformed, radical views of the rising working class. Charity continued to be seen as a one-way process, from the generous rich to the grateful poor, and few if any writers of the period thought in terms of reciprocation, even while they applauded the mutual support which the poor ‘naturally’ gave to each other (‘kind and sympathising as women to each other’, in Kingsley’s phrase quoted above).

But what was the motivation of charity to be? In many ways, it was what it had always been: an unchallenged belief that benevolence to those in need was central to religious belief and practice. But could this hold in a period when religion itself was coming under attack? We must be careful not to over-state this. For most people, although they might be aware of distant challenges coming from Biblical scholarship and ‘science’ (more from geology than from Darwinism, despite Huxley’s *succès de scandale* at the Oxford Meeting of the British Association in 1860), religious beliefs and practice held as firm as ever. However, these questions were leading in intellectual circles to a sense of Matthew Arnold’s ‘withdrawing roar’ of the Sea of Faith, and this raised questions about the future of charity. Could morality be maintained without religion, and if so, how?

The bulk of this chapter will discuss these questions in the light of three men who cover this period: J S Mill, F D Maurice, and T H Green. None of these thinkers was primarily concerned with charity, and to some extent we have to deduce their attitudes to it from their general writing. But they all, in their different ways, had a very substantial impact on subsequent charitable thinking. However, before we move on to this, it is important to stress again that this chapter is predominantly tracing

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355 Chadwick: *op cit*, II, 9-11
356 *Dover Beach*, 1867
intellectual history. As Turner\(^{357}\) points out, much modern writing on this period has concentrated on ‘progressive’ ideas, and sees with hindsight a clear path to modern secular thought. But this was by no means apparent to Victorians themselves. Writers from Gladstone to R W Dale reflect a determination to bring religious values into the centre of political and social life, and these views were very generally held.

And these religious beliefs coloured the practice of charity. The nineteenth century was a period of enormous expansion in charitable organisations, most of which sprang from religious motivations, and which were often run according to rigorously sectarian lines. Schools were of course an obvious issue, where debate continued throughout the century and beyond, with nonconformists and Catholics unwilling to pay rates for children to be instructed in Anglicanism, but sectarian divisions applied both in making provision for their own members and in their outreach to others. The mid-century, for example, saw the growth of a number of homes for orphans and abandoned children: the Anglican Waifs and Strays Society, the Methodist National Children’s Home and Orphanage, a range of Roman Catholic homes, and so on, as well as the broader evangelical agencies such as Dr Barnardos\(^{358}\). Much of the work of the ragged schools movement was also evangelical, under the leadership of Lord Shaftesbury\(^{359}\). But sectarian approval could be needed for the support of other types of agencies too: Andrew Reed, a Congregationalist minister, helped to establish the Infant Orphan Asylum at Wanstead, only to find that his committee insisted on the children being taught the Church of England catechism, excluding the children of Congregationalists, and Reed moved on to set up another non-denominational home\(^{360}\). As the century progressed, philanthropic activity widened: housing became a large field of activity from the 1860s as towns became more settled and the working classes could afford at least some regular rents, while advances in medical science, particular surgery, led to a


\(^{358}\) Owen *op cit*, 158. There were also many orphanages for the children of deceased members of particular trades, such as bank clerks, police, merchant seamen and railwaymen, *ib*. 157

\(^{359}\) Owen, *ib*, 146ff, G B A M Finlayson: *op cit*, 251ff and *passim*

\(^{360}\) Owen, 158-9
great increase in hospital provision and activity, along with the growth of district nursing\textsuperscript{361}. Interestingly these last two fields show less obvious signs of denominationalism: the capital outlay and regular revenue needs were such as to require large collaborative efforts between philanthropists, commercial interests, educational bodies (the growth of hospitals was partly fuelled by the needs of medical students to get sufficient experience) and increasingly the local state.

We come now to the views of three thinkers who, in their very different ways, express characteristic approaches to these questions, and thus lead to recognisable patterns in late Victorian charitable practice.

\textbf{John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)}

Mill appears to us today as the epitome of secular intellectual thought in the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Writing in the 1930s, J M Keynes was able to include Mill in a succession of moral and social thinkers – Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, Paley, Bentham, Darwin and Mill\textsuperscript{362}. This view of Mill was not universally held in Mill’s own time, where he was regarded by some as a dangerous radical and free-thinker\textsuperscript{363}. This is not to argue that Mill does not merit inclusion as one of the foremost philosophers of this period, but it shows that our intellectual criteria over the last century have now settled at a point where it is natural to think of serious thinkers as progressive, liberal and secular, and to note that such criteria would by no means have gone unchallenged in 1873.

\textsuperscript{361} For a recent history, see Roy Porter: \textit{op cit} 1997
\textsuperscript{363} An obituary in \textit{The Times} by Abraham Hayward which attacked any attempt to put Mill in any intellectual pantheon brought forth a defence from Stopford Brooke, and led to major rows at the Athenaeum [Collini, 312-3].
Mill’s position in the intellectual milieu of the time, however he may have moved on, places him as the successor to the first generation of Utilitarians, and especially, for our purposes, with social reformers like Edwin Chadwick and Nassau Senior in relation to the Poor Law.

A fairly early paper on *The Claims of Labour* illustrates Mill’s views on poverty. First, he is highly critical of the ‘romantic’ view of the relief of poverty by a paternalistic squirarchy, such as that advocated by *The British Critic* and Disraeli and the Young England Party:

‘As, in the Stuart times, there were said to be Church Puritans and State Puritans, so now there are Church Puseyites and what may be called State Puseyites; men who look back with fondness to times when the poor had no notion of any other social state than to give obedience to the nearest great landholder, and receive protection; and who assert, in the meantime, the right of the poor to protection, in hopes that the obedience will follow.’

As a progressive utilitarian, and one who recognised that society is fundamentally changing, Mill could not accept such a backward looking stance. His own recommendations for improving the conditions of the newly urbanised workers lay more closely with those of his friend F D Maurice in terms of establishing workers’ cooperatives.

He was equally critical of attempts to alleviate the lot of the poor by well-meaning but economically inept schemes for improving the lot of the workers. There are, he said, new schemes ‘in which possessors of property are to resume their place as the paternal guardians of those less fortunate; and which, when established, [are] to cause peace and unity throughout society, and to extinguish, not indeed poverty – that hardly seems to be thought desirable – but the more abject forms of vice, destitution

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364 *Sybil* was published in the same year as Mill’s paper.


and wretchedness.’ 367 Large proposals are made – indeed, he suggested that if there was a unanimous attempt at improvement there could be as large a body of public opinion as arose for the abolition of slavery – but the outcomes were scanty. However, people argued that ‘it is the proper function of the possessors of wealth, and especially of labour and the owners of land, to take care that the labouring people are well off’ 368 by paying good wages, boycotting bad employers, limiting working hours, offering good housing at reasonable rents, and so on. The aim was to create what Robert Owen (1836) called ‘A New Moral World’. But, Mill argued, such goals could only be achieved by creating conditions of near slavery, such as obtained in Russia or the West Indies, and would require state powers, among other things, to restrict family size.

This was unacceptable, because Liberty was for Mill the key to any future social advances. 369 Improvement would come when enough people had sufficient understanding of what was required to achieve the Utilitarian goal of the greatest good for the greatest number. Mill had a great belief that people could be taught moral improvement. In an early address to the London Debating Society (2nd May 1828) he declared his belief in people’s capacities, arguing from the examples of ordinary people who had become willing martyrs for their beliefs, because they valued ‘religion, conscience, or public opinion’ 370 and placing his own belief in the value of public opinion. If enough people were educated to understand public issues properly, they would insist on leadership which responded to these, rather than to ‘to give men any credit for making great sacrifices at other people’s expense, or for being philanthropic at a distance and prudent at home; not to think that charity consists in

367 Mill, ‘Claims of Labour’, 372
368 Ibid 373
369 “The spirit of improvement is not always a spirit of liberty, for it may aim at forcing people; and the spirit of liberty, in so far as it resists such attempts, may ally itself locally and temporarily with the opponents of improvement; but the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty.” [On Liberty Works XVIII, 272]
370 Works, XXVI, 432
making laws to take away bread from the poor and subscribing a few pounds annually to some institution for giving it to them.’

So where does this leave the practice of charity? On the one hand, Mill seeks to encourage individual effort, and the development of strong characters, and like most mid-Victorians, favours self-reliance and hence minimal charitable support. On the other hand, needs would always exist, and it was clear that the state had a duty to sustain subsistence in all its citizens: it did this for felons in prisons, and it could not therefore offer less to anyone else. But by the same token, anything beyond this should lie within the province of private charity: ‘What the state may and should abandon to private charity, is the task of distinguishing between one case of real necessity and another’. Private charity could give more to the more deserving, but the state must act by general rules: it could not undertake to discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving indigent. It owed no more than subsistence to the first, and could give no less to the last. ‘Private charity can make these distinctions; and in bestowing its own money is enabled to do so according to its own judgement.’

The exercise of charity is more than to give alms so that people may ‘gratify their feelings of compassion, or ... discharge what they think their duty by giving their superfluity to alleviate the wants of individual sufferers.’ To practise charity usefully ‘requires the education, the manifold preparation, the knowledge and thinking powers of a skilled administrator’ - ideas which one finds exemplified later in the best work of the Charity Organisation Society, and which show the succession of ideas from early Utilitarianism to C S Loch.

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371 *Principles of Political Economy*, V, xi, 14, in *Works*, III, 962
372 ‘Claims of Labour’, 372
373 *On the Subjugation of Women*, *Works*, XXI, 339
But perhaps Mill’s most important contribution to the understanding of charity lies in the way in which he both popularised and provided a critique of Auguste Comte’s concept of altruism. Comte coined the term himself, with the associated motto, *vivre pour autrui*. In Mill’s understanding, believed in a total and inescapable moral duty, which was expressed towards humanity as a whole. A duty directed towards others in need, in Mill’s view, was preferable to duty to God, since God cannot need our actions, whereas our fellows undoubtedly do. In this sense, Comteanism becomes a religion, and, Mill argued, an effective one, though it has been noted that Mill himself never joined with the Churches of Humanity in Britain.  

In adopting Comte’s religion of humanity, Mill sought to preserve the ethical dimensions of religion, while jettisoning the dogmatic and metaphysical elements. He recognised the importance of imagination in inspiring people to advance their moral ideas and commitments, and he sought to add to Comte’s ideals narratives of those who have struggled against evil, giving a dynamic force to what in Comte was a static rhetoric.

Why is this important? Mill shared with social critics like Carlyle the belief that industrialisation had led to a decline in social relationships between different groups, but unlike those who looked back to some ‘good old days’ he accepted both the benefits and the inevitability of modern industrial life. But the answer would not come from encouraging people to take a felicific calculus approach to life: that approach would rather lead people to concentrate on calculating and seeking those things which were most likely to benefit themselves.

374 *Auguste Comte and Positivism, Works, X, 335*
375 *A P F Sell: Mill on God: the pervasiveness and elusiveness of Mill’s religious thought, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, 174-5*
376 *C Heydt: Rethinking Mill’s Ethics, London, Continuum, 2006, 9, 81-92*
How then was charitable action to be achieved? A religion of humanity contained one element: that of offering a wider ideological goal than could be achieved in purely selfish terms. But a further step was required: how are we to understand and respond sympathetically to the needs of others? Heydt discusses how Mill’s concept of moral education was based on the use of imagination, which would both help the learner to an empathetic understanding of the needs of others, and inspire a response based on a sense of common humanity, and of commitment to the good of all. Imagination was J S Mill’s great addition to the earlier rationalistic utilitarianism of Bentham and of Mill’s father.

In this respect, Heydt\textsuperscript{377} gives a telling quotation from Rorty. Why is it, Rorty asks, that different social groups should react differently to the needs of others (he instances the behaviour of Jews in Denmark and Italy, compared with those in Belgium)? He concludes that those who help their neighbours more are those who identify more closely with them, and, he suggests, increasing a sense of solidarity might become a goal of social policy:

‘In my utopia, human solidarity would be seen not as a fact to be recognised by clearing away “prejudice” or burrowing down to previously hidden depths but, rather, as a goal to be achieved. It is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow-sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people.’\textsuperscript{378}

Solidarity, rather than a charity \textit{de haut en bas}, was to be one of the discoveries of the later nineteenth century. But it is already found in the attempts of the early Christian Socialists, Maurice, Kingsley and Ludlow, to try to work with the working classes in the aftermath of Chartism – and, it must be admitted, to show them the errors of their ways. Giving, even of solidarity, appears to be a one-way traffic.

\textsuperscript{377} Op cit, 101-2
\textsuperscript{378} R Rorty: \textit{Contingency, Irony and Solidarity}, Cambridge University Press, 1989, xvi, and see 189-91
This, then, leads us to our second major thinker:

**Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872)**

Maurice is widely, and rightly, regarded as a giant of mid-nineteenth century English theology, yet the cause of this celebrity is difficult to establish. Contemporary hearers and readers expressed conflicting opinions, reflecting their puzzlement as to his meaning, yet frequently concluded that nevertheless here was a great man who had important things to say. He was born a Unitarian, but later became an Anglican priest, though he never fitted into any of the church parties of the time – indeed, he had a great fear of being tied down to any rigid pattern of belief: he was more a Platonist than an Aristotelian in his thinking, seeking new ideas and ways of looking at things, rather than codifying them — and this, he believed, was Christ’s way too:

“I find Him beginning His pilgrimage on earth as a questioner...and urging men to seek the truth where they may find it... I believe that Christ has been asking questions from that day [when he questioned the doctors in the Temple as a child of twelve] to this; that He is asking questions of all of us, divines and laymen, now;... I am greatly afraid that when we try to silence any of these questions we are trying to silence the voice of Christ, in others and in ourselves.”

Maurice’s fear of being tied down to any particular party line is a reflection of his belief that the duty of the theologian is to pursue the understanding of God wherever it leads him. He expressed this in a well known letter to J M Ludlow (Sept 24th 1852)

379 ‘Maurice threw his being into his books. From their pages his person stood out lovable and earnest, a person to whom God was all. During the next decades theology... would approach God as the burning bush, with shoeless feet and the awe of supernatural numen. It would see through a glass darkly, probing and searching, eschewing pride and hesitant of assurance.... But Maurice was no sage pontificating aloft. You listen to a mind engaged with the dust of back streets.... The ground of his ideas was compassion for simple men. [Chadwick: op cit, I, 546] See also A R Vidler: *The Theology of F D Maurice*, London, SCM Press, 1948, 7-11
381 F D Maurice: *What is Revelation?* Cambridge, Macmillan, 1859, 29-30
...My own deep conviction that that theology is not (as the schoolmen have represented it) the climax of all studies...but is the foundation upon which they all stand. And even that language would have left my meaning open to a very great, almost an entire, misunderstanding, unless I could exchange the name theology for the name GOD, and say that he himself is the root from which all human life, and human society, and ultimately, through man, nature itself, are derived.

...My business, because I am a theologian, and have no vocation except for theology, is not to build, but to dig, to show that economy and politics... must have a ground beneath themselves, that society is not to be made anew by arrangements of ours, but is to be regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony the only secret of its existence in God.... The Kingdom of Heaven is to be the great practical existing reality which is to renew the earth and make a habitation for blessed spirits instead of for demons.

To preach the Gospel of that Kingdom, the fact that it is among us, and is not to be set up at all, is my calling and business... by proclaiming society and humanity to be divine realities, as they stand, not as they may become....

This is what I call digging, this is what I oppose to building. \[382\]

Maurice is thus not simply digging about for traces of God: he is seeking to identify the Kingdom of Christ which, he believes, is already established. His focus is on the nature of God as creator and father, rather than on the narrow concentration, in his view, on Christ as redeemer of evangelical religion \[383\].

Maurice was caught up fairly briefly in Christian Socialism, mainly through an approach from J M Ludlow \[384\], a layman who had been in Paris during the 1848 revolution, and had been strongly influenced by the ideas of French socialists \[385\], in particular ideas of...

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\[383\] See his comments on Spurgeon’s preaching (*Life*, II, 346-7) Maurice is highly critical of Spurgeon’s concentration on sin, but thinks it better that congregations should hear this than nothing at all. But ‘if he should waken up to the perception of a God of absolute love, his popularity will probably vanish.’

\[384\] The story of Ludlow’s contact with Maurice is told in a number of places, including Ludlow’s own autobiography (London, Cass, 1981), and in M Reckitt: *Maurice to Temple, a century of the social movement in the Church of England*, London, Faber, 1947.

associationism put forward by Fourier, Buchez and Lammenais. Many of these ideas (particularly those of Fourier) were based on highly formalized and utopian communities, but their concepts of worker co-operatives which would give participants an interest and pleasure in their work appealed strongly to those who, like Maurice and Ludlow[^386^], were appalled by what they considered the mechanistic approach to labour of the factory owners of the industrial revolution. Joined by Charles Kingsley, they sought to correct what they thought were the false goals of the Chartists, and established a series of Tracts, *Politics for the People*, which sought to educate working men into a better understanding of their true needs. Kingsley provided the rhetoric:

> Workmen of England! You say that you are wronged. Many of you are wronged, and many besides you know it... You have friends...who love you because you are their brothers, and who fear God, and therefore dare not neglect you.... Friends, you want more than Acts of Parliament can give you. The Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, the Poor Man, who died for poor men, will bring it about for you, though all the Mammonites of the earth were against you. A nobler day is dawning for England, a day of freedom, science, industry. There will be no true freedom without virtue, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God, and love to your fellow-citizens[^387^].

Ludlow provided the facts, evidence, and practical ideas. Maurice provided the moral leadership. The movement lasted for little over three years. But its long term impact far outlasted that period. In practical terms, work with cooperatives continued through the activities of Ludlow, who became the first Registrar of Friendly Societies. Kingsley, ‘the most romantic of all the romantic idealists of the age[^388^] went on to find other dragons to slay. Maurice, whose reputation with working men increased enormously when he was dismissed from his Professorship at King’s College, London[^389^], helped to found the Working Men’s College and taught there for a time, but finally withdrew to a Cambridge professorship and the study of theology which was his true vocation.

[^386^]: And many others, from Carlyle to Dickens and Mrs Gaskell.
[^387^]: Placard displayed in the London streets, 12 April, 1848; cited in Reardon, 1980, 207.
[^388^]: Chadwick, *op.cit.*, I, 351
[^389^]: Immediately for his views on eternal and everlasting punishment, but he had already been investigated by the college authorities for his connection with Christian Socialism: Chadwick, *op.cit.*, I, 361-3, 545-550; see also *Life*, II, 163-209.
But before we consider the influence of Maurice’s wider theological ideas, we should consider his understanding of socialism. Such a non-party man was obviously going to have difficulties with socialism as a political programme, and indeed Maurice’s approach to socialism was wholly ethical in character. In a dialogue “between Somebody (a person of respectability) and Nobody (the writer)” he states “I seriously believe that Christianity is the only foundation of Socialism, and that a true Socialism is the necessary result of a sound Christianity.” He goes on to identify this socialism with that of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Louis Blanc, but it is doubtful how far he knew these other than through Ludlow. For Maurice socialism is a means of achieving human happiness through the pursuit of co-operation, whereas he sees competition as anti-socialist and un-Christian. However, socialism will only work, he argues, when underpinned by that Christianity which has preserved society from dissolution over the centuries, and which is created and sustained by God.

Given his belief in the divine origin of true, church-based society, Maurice is understandably uninterested in schemes for radical social and political change. A series of conferences with working men had been established by Ludlow and Maurice in 1849, but by the early 1850s they had lost their way, and a further conference on ‘What are the relations which should exist between capital and labour?’ in 1852 never took place because Maurice disliked the terms ‘capital’ and ‘labour’, wishing instead to discuss men, their duties and relationships. In a letter to Ludlow of the same year he wrote:

‘What I have to say ... is that the reorganisers of society and the conservators of society are at war because they start from the same vicious premises; because they tacitly assume land, goods, money, labour, some subjects of possession, to be the basis of society, and therefore wish to begin by changing or maintaining the conditions of that possession; whereas, the true radical reform and radical conservation must go much deeper and say: “Human relations not only should lie, but do lie beneath all these, and when you substitute - upon one pretext or

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390 Christian Socialism, Tracts on Socialism 1, London 1849, reprinted by CSU, n.d.
391 Life, II, 113
another - property relations for these, you destroy our English life and English constitution, you introduce hopeless anarchy.’

A month later (April, 1852) he summed up a conference on trade unions by accusing them of selfishness and exclusivity:

‘They might say to working-men, and he thought it would be kind to say to them: We have been selfish, we have been exclusive, and we have suffered in consequence of being so. Now do you benefit by our experience. Only in that sense could he call upon working-men to be better than other men. He would say to the members of trades-unions, if you have the principles of fellowship at heart, you must diffuse them as widely as possible, and thus convert the union into an association.’

It says much for Maurice’s personal standing that his audience was prepared to listen to comments like this, but we need to remember the deep belief in the moral standing of selflessness of the time, not only in Comte, but generally.

To understand these views we have to realize that much of Maurice’s teaching, and indeed the central theme of his most influential work, *The Kingdom of Christ*, was based on the belief that Christ’s kingdom already exists on earth: “The Church is... human society in its normal state; the World, that same society irregular and abnormal. The world is the Church without God; the church is the world restored to its relation with God, taken back by Him into the state for which He created it.”

The state, therefore, is only being truly itself when it recognizes that it is part of God’s plan. Clearly there will be times when the state will need re-ordering, but this is not primarily a matter of political change. Ideally, the two will work together.

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392 *Ibid*, 114
393 *Ibid*, 117
harmoniously, the state dealing with formal external relationships through legal arrangements, while the Church will deal with personal, spiritual matters. But this requires a united church, not the church divided into denominations and parties: these may ‘bear witness to the existence of a divine order’, but only in a very partial way, and there is a need, particularly among younger Christians who are not too set in their ways, to work for the coming of a more inclusive church, whether among sects or ‘in one of our awful manufacturing districts’ where the churchman must be aware of the overwhelming needs of the people, but also aware of the infinite love of God for these same people. This is no place for a church ‘which was looked upon, and almost looked upon itself, as a tool of the aristocracy...and forgot to testify that man as man is the object of his Creator’s sympathy’ : for these people the message must be “God has cared for you, you are indeed his children; his Son has redeemed you, his Spirit is striving with you; there is a fellowship larger, more irrespective of outward distinctions, more democratical, than any which you can create; but it is a fellowship of mutual love, not mutual selfishness, in which the chief of all is the servant of all.”

These words, always true but especially so in this age, combine the message of the Catholic and of the Evangelical, and both offer the progressive ideas of the liberal and the maintenance of social order which the politician expects of the church. The ideas are surprisingly prophetic of the development of settlements and missions of the late nineteenth century, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

The churchman who accepts this mission will be active, enlisting his wealthier parishioners to serve their poorer neighbours, moving away from a party or class or sex based model of society to one ‘held together by sacramental bonds’. It was with this belief in the practical implications of the Gospel that Maurice became engaged in Christian Socialism and adult education, but equally it was this insistence on inclusivism and mistrust of party labels which made him an ineffective social

397 Vidler, op cit, 191ff
398 Kingdom of Christ, ii, 328
399 Ibid II 329-337
400 Though there will be different roles for women, of course – this is 1842!
401 Kingdom of Christ, II, 337
activist, and which left a difficult legacy for his successors. In a society which was becoming increasingly factional and politicized, and where voting numbers counted, Maurice’s old-fashioned mistrust of democracy and belief in a universal, mutually supporting society in which class distinctions might be irrelevant, but where there was no suggestion of remedying social injustice, was an ideal too far for most social reformers.

When it comes to the actual practice of charity, Maurice shows himself aware of the total duty of the Christian to care for the unfortunate. In a charity sermon for District Relief and Provident Societies preached on the Sunday after Christmas 1857

he starts with the question “When a beggar asks alms of me, for the love of Christ, can I safely hold back my hand?” Some will say that this is the response of God who showers his blessings indiscriminately, while others will argue that such behaviour undermines society. But, says Maurice, a belief in the incarnation requires us to take every individual seriously, and ‘there can be no fear of our regarding the race of man, or any individuals of that race, with too much of affection and sympathy.’

If the Gospel story is true, then Jesus never turned away from any in need, and he went to those who needed him most, drawing no distinction between bodies and souls. He called forth ‘the true manhood of the poor degraded creatures to whom He came; he awakened them to their glorious parentage’. But if by giving alms we are making it too easy for people to live their present, miserable lives, then we are not helping them to achieve the life which God intended for them. We must therefore seek to help them in ways which will raise them up. This will not be easy: every case must be examined individually, with careful consideration – hence the value of bodies like District Relief Societies which can undertake this detailed work. And by giving through such bodies, while Christians are still fulfilling their individual duties, they are generating thanks from the recipients not for themselves, but for the Church as a whole: they are thus more fully representing the body of Christ in what they do. They ‘are only God’s

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403 Op cit, 74
almoners'\textsuperscript{404}, aware that they can never show God enough gratitude for what he has done for them, or adequately understand his purposes.

It is significant that this sermon brings in the theme of incarnation, for this was to be a key element in Maurice’s thought which would be picked up by the next generation, particularly Westcott and Gore.

What then is the importance of Maurice? We might see him as a contextual theologian, seeking to discern God in the social conditions of his time, and asking what the proper Christian ethical response might be to what he observed. Confronted, as were his contemporaries, with the apparently intolerable but insoluble conditions of urbanisation and industrialisation, his response, to some extent arising from his chance meeting with Ludlow, was to adopt what seemed to him to be the ethical lessons from socialist ideas, and from these to erect an ethic based on mutualism and cooperation, and deriving from a belief in the over-riding importance of relationships in human society. Having established links with some working class people, he proceeded to try to persuade them of the relevance of this ethic for their own lives, without examining how far such attitudes were precisely those which contributed to their current conditions\textsuperscript{405}.

There is a common theme in this, going back to Butler and Chalmers: social problems are seen in terms of the breakdown in personal relationships between the different classes, creating attitudes of ignorance and condemnation on the part of the wealthy and of truculence and resentment on the part of the poor. The solution is thus posited as being one of restoring those relationships, one of the underlying themes of the understanding of charity at all times. Society in its various forms – family,

\textsuperscript{404} Ibid 79
\textsuperscript{405} He was not, of course, alone in this: the same position was taken by much of the early settlement movement, and most notably of course in Arnold Toynbee’s final address to the working men of East London (see chap 6)
neighbourhood and nation – is seen as God-given, and in Maurice’s theology this is expressed through the church when it is true to its nature. The Kingdom of Christ has been established, and it is for men and women to adopt it in their own lives. True Christian living is expressed in terms of relationships between individuals, rather than in any centrality of soteriological beliefs. This has been presented to us through the revelation of the Incarnation, which takes central stage in Maurice’s underlying theology.

Stated like this, Maurice can appear naive, and it raises the question of how much of a contribution he really made to the development of social theology. But we must be careful not to read him with too much hindsight. Maurice was reflecting, and reflecting on, commonly held Christian understandings of society, and his theology thus gave form to what many of his contemporaries were groping after, and helped to shape the ideas of the next generation of social theologians: Westcott, Scott Holland, Gore, Scott Lidgett, Dale and many others.

**Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882)**

Green, Tutor of Balliol and Whyte’s Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, was both a typical product and a spokesman of his age. Brought up in an evangelical household, he retained a sympathy and love for Christianity while being unable to accept many of its traditional credal beliefs. He sought to reconcile what he saw as the abiding values of Christianity with a non-supernatural philosophy, and in particular he was anxious, like George Eliot, to preserve the moral teaching of Christianity. By the combination of teaching, personality, and personal practice, Green’s influence was great. Generations of Oxonians, and particularly of Balliol men, entered public service, in Britain or the empire, as a result of his teaching. But Green also, directly or indirectly, influenced many other major actors in late Victorian and Edwardian political and social life.
through to men like R H Tawney and William Beveridge, and his ideas were spread by university teachers such as Caird at Glasgow and MacCunn at Liverpool.

Green was able to express the ideals of the age very successfully: as Collini comments, ‘Green’s moral philosophy was an exceptionally systematic expression of the sensibility which found something repugnant even in the hint of self-regarding actions’. However, he continues, it was not that Green was an original thinker in this respect, but that he expressed the existing moral views of the time more effectively than anyone else. Scott Holland, one of Green’s pupils, wrote: ‘He gave us back the language of self-sacrifice and taught us how we belonged to one another in the one life of organic humanity. He filled us again with the breath of high idealism.’ Against the dominant utilitarian beliefs which, despite J S Mill’s claims for morality, always ran the risks of condoning individualistic hedonism, Green offered a new, clean doctrine of selflessness, and his writings were widely welcomed by churchmen of all parties.

Green’s philosophy was based on Idealism, developed from Kant and Hegel. It was, Turner argues, a position which enabled the clerisy to challenge utilitarian and materialist thought, by emphasizing “metaphysical questions in philosophy, historicist analysis of the past, the spiritual character of the world, the active powers of the human mind, intuitionism, subjective religiosity, the responsibility of individuals for undertaking moral choice and action, the relative and even absolute importance of communities and communal institutions over individual action or rights, and the shallowness of any mode of reductionist thought.” In the 1870s there was a shift from critical rationalism, based on Biblical criticism, Comtean positivism and altruism, scientific thought and radical individualism - in effect a reaction against Mill’s dominant position for the previous generation. In Green’s thought, especially in his

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406 Collini, op cit, 82-3
408 ‘Bishop [Edward] King thought that Green allowed me to believe again in a soul’. Chadwick, op cit, II, 114
410 Turner, 324
posthumous *Prolegomena to Ethics*,\(^{411}\) any understanding of reality derives from our own consciousness, rather than from the world of phenomena. Any system of morality derives not from empirical study, but from a sense of another, spiritual world.\(^{412}\) A sense of God directs us to a universal consciousness, from which our moral ideas start to develop. Morality is thus not just a matter of individual choice, but relates to ‘The Common Good.’\(^{413}\) “Some sort of community, founded on such unity of self-consciousness, on such capacity for a common idea of permanent good, must be presupposed in any groupings of men from which the society that we know can have been developed. To the man living under its influence, the idea of the absolutely desirable, the effort to better himself, must from the first express itself in some sort of social requirement.”\(^{414}\)

Gouldstone argues that Green remained strongly influenced by his evangelical background, and sought to express basically Christian beliefs in a way which would enable those who could no longer accept Christian dogma and history to follow its ethical teaching. Following Baur and other writers of the Tubingen school, Green believed it was no longer possible to accept the miracles recorded in Scripture, or the dogmatic formulations of the early church. Instead, an immanent God was to be found in the aspiration for an ideal life which exists in every man and woman. This excluded the evangelical quest for personal salvation, and concentrated instead on the development of the moral sense through selfless action in this world.

Green wrote little which was explicitly theological, but we can see something of how his philosophical and ethical approach works out in the two lay sermons which he delivered to Balliol undergraduates in 1870 and 1878\(^{415}\). In the first, on *The Witness of God*, Green develops the idea that our understanding of Christ is based not on the

\(^{411}\) Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1884  
\(^{412}\) Ibid, para 54  
\(^{413}\) Ibid, chap 3  
\(^{414}\) Ibid, para 202  
\(^{415}\) London, Longmans Green, 1883
historical narrative of his earthly life, but on his expression, through his death, of the ‘wisdom of God, which is righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In other words, He constitutes in us a new intellectual consciousness, which transforms the will, and is the sources of a new moral life.’ (p. 8). Green is not trying to re-express the idea of the atonement in new language, but rather to look for the reality which lies behind the death of Christ: ‘For the truth of any practical idea the only possible evidence is its realisation’. As the primary Christian idea is that of a moral death into life... so its realisation, which is the evidence of its truth, lies in Christian love – a realisation never complete, because for ever embracing new Matter, yet constantly gaining in fulness.... Charity never faileth; and in the higher life of the Christian society we may recognise it and make it our own.’ (p.16) But this we must find for and in ourselves: ‘it is in himself and in his thought, which yet is the truest sense a revelation, and a revelation through Christian influence, that each of us finds God, if he finds him at all.’ (p.32-3). And this becomes real in our lives through the exercise of charity. ‘Charity... is constructive. In the temple of Christian fellowship, where no man seeks his own, but every one another’s good; in the fabric of true knowledge, which without figure of speech is the work of the same spiritual yearning; charity is building a presence-chamber of God, which, though filled with his fulness, may yet, so far as the same charity is within us, be no other than the chamber of our own heart.’ (p.35) And how is this to be realised for us? Charity is not the activity of the few – of the missionary or other heroic figure. ‘It is not in the outward cast of a life, but in the way of living it, that the spirit of a man is shown. There are those about him in whose character, though with no outward mark of distinction, and perhaps under a surface of yet unconquered weaknesses, the love of God and the brethren is the ruling power. All he has to do is to share in the higher spirit of such men.’ (p. 37). But there can be failures from achieving this: ‘looseness’, ‘habits of luxury and indolence’ and forms of self-conceit (43-45). Green thus brings the Christian concept of *agape* (which for him is more than benevolence and different

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416 Green is using the term ‘realisation’ here both in the sense of grasping an idea, and, more importantly, giving reality to an ideal.

417 There is a fictionalised account of one of Green’s lay sermons in Mrs Humphry Ward’s *Robert Elsmere*, pp.60-61, describing how Robert is moved by the strong moral tone of the sermon even where he is unable to follow the intellectual argument, and the evidence of Green’s impact on his pupils suggests that this is an accurate account of the way people were inspired by him.
from the Evangelical concept of redeeming love) into line with the contemporary belief in the centrality of selflessness which we have already seen in Mill and others. Faith – and hope – may be lost, but for Green charity never fails.

How is this selfless response to the highest within us to be put into effect? There is some evidence from Green’s own practice, in his involvement in Oxford City Council and School Board, and in sharing in temperance campaigns. Despite his non-dogmatic religious position, Green sought to give a philosophical justification to the classic Victorian themes of expanding citizenship and social reform based on Christian values. He praised the concept of the Reformer, from his undergraduate essays onwards to his posthumously published *Prolegomena to Ethics*, in which he described the reformer as one who is ‘something of an Idealist. He must have an idea, which moves him to seek its realisation, of a better order of life than he finds about him….It is an idea to which nothing real as yet corresponds, but which, as actuating the reformer, tends to bring into being a reality corresponding to itself.’ The ideal model derives from the individual’s response to the developing immanent sense of religious morality, but it is to express itself in social action. Green writes of the "Christian worker", who devotes himself, un-noticed and unrewarded, at the risk of life and at the sacrifice of every pleasure but that of his work, to the service of the sick, the ignorant and the debased; this ‘moral heroism’ has widened and enhanced social morality compared with that of the ancient Greeks: ‘The hopelessly sick, are being tended; the foolish and ignorant are being treated as rational persons; human beings whom a Greek would have looked on as chattels, or as a social encumbrance to be got rid of, are having pains bestowed on them which only a faith in unapparent possibilities of their nature could justify.’ And yet this self-denial is not just a response to the world as it is, but reflects a duty to work for a progressively better society. It is noteworthy, as Richter points out, that Green and his disciples saw the selfless giving which is the end-point of

418 Richter, *op cit*, 292
420 T H Green: *Proleg Eth*, para 299, pp. 357-8, cited in Richter, 317
421 *Ibid* paras 258-9, pp 305-6
his ethics as a means of building up solidarity between the social classes – but with the morality handed down from the selfless middle class to the working class who are to be encouraged to follow this same path.

This can be seen very clearly, in the life of Green’s pupil and disciple, Arnold Toynbee, and in the fictitious character of Robert Elsmere, the eponymous hero of Mrs Humphry Ward’s best-selling novel. Elsmere is an evangelical clergyman, taught by Green (‘Professor Grey’) who loses his formal Christian faith after exposure to German critical theology, but who then works in a Unitarian mission in the East End, forms alliance with thinking working men, and dies of overwork. In many ways Elsmere’s end echoes the real life story of Arnold Toynbee, who gave up his Oxford economics teaching to offer his skills to the workers of East London. In his last address to his East London audience he launched into a remarkable apologia and appeal to his hearers to accept the spirit of self-giving which had driven his own life.

‘We are willing’ he said ‘to give up the life we care for, the life with books and those we love. We will do this, and only ask you to remember one thing in return. We will ask you to remember this – that we work in the hope and trust that if you get material civilisation, if you get a better life, you will really lead a better life. If, that is, you get material civilisation, remember that it is not an end in itself. Remember that man, like trees and plants, has his roots in the earth; but like the trees and plants, he must grow upwards towards the heavens. If you will only keep to the love of your fellow men and to great ideals, then we shall find our happiness in helping you, but if you do not, then our reparation will be in vain.’

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422 Richter, *op cit* 323
424 A Toynbee: *Poverty and Progress*, 53-4: First pub. as a pamphlet, and later as an appendix to 1894 edition of *Industrial Revolution* [Longmans, London]. Cited from A Kadish: *Apostle Arnold: the Life and Death of Arnold Toynbee, 1852-1883*, Duke University Press, 1986, p.210) Richter *op cit* (324), points to another passage from Toynbee which places similar constraints on improving conditions for the working class: ‘High wages are not an end in themselves. No one wants high wages in order that working men may indulge in mere sensual gratification. We want higher wages in order that an improved material condition, with less anxiety and less uncertainty as to the future, may enable the working man to enter on a purer and more
In an earlier part of his address, Toynbee told his working class audience that ‘we (the middle classes) have neglected you: instead of justice, we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy we have offered you hard and unreal advice, but I think we are changing. If you would only believe and trust us, I think that many of us would spend our lives in your service.’ In this context, ‘charity’ is clearly less than self-giving, as it is less than justice: we are presumably to see it as some form of thoughtless dole from superfluous wealth. One of the difficulties in discussing late 19th century attitudes to charity is to identify what meaning should be attached to it. For Loch and the Bosanquets, for example, it almost invariably carries these casual, negative connotations. Green himself, as we have seen, used the term favourably (‘charity is constructive’) holding to the values of his Evangelical upbringing 425. But how is an agapeistic way of life to be worked out, if not in terms of the extreme self-giving of a man like Toynbee? And if such a way of life is to be focussed on relieving the social problems of the poor, what is to be the role of the state in such activity? It is here that, while Green’s teaching was undeniably influential, it was also ambivalent, and allowed his disciples to take very different positions. Green himself, like Maurice and the Christian Social Union, favoured cooperative activities among the working class 426. The moral values of cooperation clearly fit in with Green’s own values of self-giving service, but they also suited the broader values of the time – self-help by the poor, and shared values between workers and employers.

But the question remained: what of those who were apparently unable to help themselves? The Bosanquets robustly answered that there were no such people, that all, if they tried hard enough, could save themselves 427. Others, though, including Toynbee, held that the state must take some action, whether this was to regulate the

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425 Richter, op cit 312
426 Ibid 324ff
terms of employment or to make provision for those who could not earn for
themselves.\textsuperscript{428}

Green himself could recognise the classic contemporary questions about poverty: ‘A
man may be asking...: "Was I right in relieving that beggar yesterday?".... In relieving
the beggar was he not merely compounding with his conscience for his self-indulgence
in shirking the trouble which a more judicious exercise of benevolence would have cost
him; or merely giving himself the pleasure of momentarily pleasing another, or of
being applauded for generosity, at the cost of encouraging a mischievous practice?’\textsuperscript{429}. But by 1880 many thoughtful people would have recognised the inadequacy of
handing small change to a beggar, rather than seeking to resolve the problem of why
he was a beggar in the first place, and taking steps to alleviate that situation
fundamentally. This throws up a series of questions: how is one to establish the
beggar’s fundamental needs, and the best way to deal with them? How much
knowledge is needed of what services are available? Should the beggar be taught how
to deal with these circumstances himself in the future? Should the giver be taking
action to ensure that better services are available in future to prevent this kind of
destitution occurring – in the Webbs’ words, by draining the swamp rather than
rescuing individuals from it? And, in default of the time (on both the giver’s and the
beggar’s part) to achieve all these laudable activities, is the beggar better or worse off
with that casual gift?

It was these questions, in effect, which fuelled the debates about poverty from 1880 to
1914. Green did not live long enough to be confronted with the detailed issues, and in
any case, he did not set out to answer such practical questions. He shared his
contemporaries’ beliefs in the moral importance of self-help in building up character,

\textsuperscript{428} Toynbee was one of those who saw that thrift itself could be problematic: ‘thrift may often
brutalise a man as much as drink... A man may make huge efforts to save and raise himself,
and so become narrow and selfish and careless of his fellow-men.’ (\textit{Poverty and Progress}, 52,
cited in Richter \textit{op cit} 338).
\textsuperscript{429} Green, \textit{Prol. Eth.} para 305, pp.364-5
and we can certainly read this off from his whole Idealistic morality. But he also recognised the value of state institutions, and of at least some collective state intervention in social matters\(^\text{430}\), and indeed held that involvement in such things was part of one’s civic duty. The division of his disciples over the relative weight to be given to these two elements of his teaching could be interpreted as a common dichotomy of political morality. Yet there is something more to it than that. Green was clear that morality did have a place in politics, and this was a long-standing theme in British politics – not least because of his teaching.

**Intermezzo: charity in the mid- and late-19\(^\text{th}\) century**

*This chapter has focussed on ideas of charity rather than on changes in practices. As a bridge passage between this and the next chapter which describes in particular the growth of the Charity Organisation Society and its critics, the following section gives a brief description of how charitable practice developed in the later part of the nineteenth century.*

The Victorian sense of innovation can be clearly seen in the growth of charities. Structures had evolved during the previous century, and now people were prepared to put them into effect to meet an apparently inexhaustible series of social needs. Several factors help to account for this. The growing complexity of society, with increasing numbers living in large urban settings, both magnified issues and pointed up structural as well as individual causes for their problems. More information was gathered and disseminated about issues than ever before, although William Booth was to title his

\(^{430}\) See Green’s active and critical role as an Assistant Commissioner for the Taunton Commission on Secondary Education for an example of his very firm response to what he saw as the failure of state provision. (Richter, *op cit* 352-359; A Vincent, ‘Introduction’ to Vincent (ed): *The Philosophy of T H Green*, Aldershot, Gower, 1986, pp.15-16)
book *In Darkest England*[^31], with the implication that people knew no more of their own country than they did of ‘Darkest Africa’ described in H M Stanley’s contemporary best seller. This was the age both of government ‘Blue Book’ reports, and of individual studies ranging from the journalism of Mayhew, Stead and Sims to the pioneering sociological studies of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree.[^32]

Similarly, the study of economics had greatly developed, and there was a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of large scale events like trade cycles on individuals. As always, greater knowledge led to louder calls for action, and governments and other social institutions were called on to respond to what in previous periods would have been regarded as the inscrutable workings of providence[^433]. Along with greater economic literacy went a growth of political heterodoxy and radicalism: the centrality of the private ownership of property was no longer unquestioned, as it had been, for example, by Copleston in the 1820s. This carried implications for government action (and hence for greater political pressure on government to take action) and even for the reform of charities, which might involve over-ruling the wishes of original testators. Slowly, and against opposition from many vested interests, not least in the Established Church, the Charity Commission was founded, both to attack abuses of the system[^434] and to some degree to apply charitable resources to current needs, sometimes over-riding the traditional doctrine

[^32]: Extracts from a number of these writers can be found in P Keating (ed) *Into Unknown England 1866-1913: selections from the Social Explorers*, London, Fontana 1976
[^434]: Trollope’s *The Warden* (1855) was based in part on the scandal which arose from the behaviour of the Revd the Earl of Guildford who, as warden of Holy Cross Hospital in Winchester, having provided adequately for the inmates and property, enjoyed the remainder of the substantial income himself. His father, Brownlow North, successively bishop of Lichfield, Worcester and Winchester, was notoriously elevated to the episcopacy at a very young age (30), by his brother, the Prime Minister Lord North, who observed that while his brother was young to be a bishop, by the time he was old enough ‘I might not be Prime Minister’.
of cy-près, which normally requires that if a charity cannot achieve its original aims it should be applied to the nearest feasible object.\textsuperscript{435}

At the same time social distance was growing between the classes, and it was easier, and more effective, to subscribe to a cause than to try to help an individual personally: we have seen this in the growth of Strangers’ Friend Societies, and also seen how difficult Chalmers found it to buck this trend. Institutional solutions to problems were seen to be more effective, with the growth of professional skills and knowledge in a range of fields – medicine and public health, education, housing, social work and so on. And in all this the sense of social duty, initially deriving in many cases from evangelicalism\textsuperscript{436} but now, as we have seen, spreading over an ever-wider range of motivations, ensured that there were very many people willing to subscribe and often take an active role in the work of charities. One very important group who became more active socially as charities grew was women, who became increasingly important as the century progressed, and gave a base from which many well-known social pioneers developed – Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Mary Ward and many others. This had the effect of not only emancipating themselves, but of bringing their views of social need to the fore, and thereby giving the work of many charities more emphasis on women and children.\textsuperscript{437}

\textsuperscript{435} See Owen, \textit{op cit}, chaps 8 and 11.

\textsuperscript{436} There is an interesting comment by R W Dale (unfortunately undated) which indicates that for him, and other socially reforming ministers, the evangelicals had lost touch with social issues: ‘We are living in a new world, and Evangelicals do not seem to have discovered it. The immense development of the manufacturing industries, the wider separation of classes in great towns – a separation produced by the increase of commercial wealth – the new relations which have grown up between the employers and the employed, the spread of popular education, the growth of a vast popular literature, the increased political power of the masses of the people, the gradual decay of the old aristocratic organisation of society, and the advance, in many forms of the spirit of democracy –have urgently demanded fresh applications of the eternal ideas of the Christian Faith to conduct. But evangelical Christians have hardly touched the new ethical problems which have come with the new time.’ Cited in A Briggs: \textit{Victorian Cities}, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1963, 200.

\textsuperscript{437} Harrison, \textit{op cit}, 238f. And more generally, see F Prochaska, \textit{op cit}, 1980.
The growth of charities is reflected in a well-known statement by Sir James Stephen: ‘Ours is the age of societies.... For the cure of every sorrow by which our land or our race can be visited, there are patrons, vice-presidents and secretaries. For the diffusion of every blessing of which mankind can partake in common, there is a committee.’

Nor was this profusion of patrons and vice-presidents insignificant. In an age when social mobility and respectability were eagerly sought by the growing middle and upper working classes, the opportunity to rub shoulders with those a few rungs higher up the social ladder was not to be missed, and charity dinners with the great and good gave a boost to genuine commitment to the cause – there were after all plenty of causes to go round, and donors and activists could choose one near to their hearts without worrying too much about missing out on one or other charity celebrity.

The strength of charities can be seen in a variety of ways. Financially, by the 1860s London charities were raising as much as the Poor Law system for the whole of England and Wales, while in the 1890s middle class families were spending more on charity than any other item of household expenditure other than food, and half of working class families subscribed weekly to charities and a quarter gave regularly to churches and chapels. A good deal of the working class giving would probably have been for institutions like hospitals, which by the end of the century relied heavily on broad-based giving.

And what were these charities? The later 19th century was a period when many of the present major charities – Barnardos, National Children’s Homes (now Action for

439 Owen, op cit, 166. The system seems similar to the fund-raising dinners of American political parties today.
441 Harrison, op cit, 217
442 Prochaska, op cit, 358.
443 B Abel Smith: op cit, 135ff
Children), NSPCC, and a variety of large hospitals, universities and other institutions were founded. But we should not thereby forget very many more local charities. Indeed, one of the problems of coming to terms with Victorian philanthropy is precisely this plethora of foundations. Most were eminently appropriate bodies, but they each had their own area of concern, and the competition which this engendered gave rise to criticisms which Harrison summarises under four heads: *inefficiency*, arising from fragmentation and the participation of volunteers on their own terms; *ignorance* of the root causes of people’s needs, allied to a reliance on prayer rather than planning in seeking to meet those needs; *insufficiency* of provision, made worse by competition for limited finance and volunteers; and the growing sense that charity was *insulting* to those who were increasingly arguing for help as a matter of right rather than of charitable whim, and which has led to criticism of charitable effort, some of it justified, as a means of social control where what is needed is social change.

As it was, there was a tendency for charities to become ever more specialized: orphanages and homes of rest were set up for everyone from seafarers to newsvendors, and not forgetting the substantial provision for middle class people fallen on reduced circumstances. Many of these, recorded by Heasman, were founded by evangelicals, while the list of charities which marched in procession at Lord Shaftesbury’s funeral comes to over 200. There were deputations from the Homes and Refuges and Training Ships, from the Costermongers’ Societies, from Missions and Charities, each with their craped [sic] banners emblazoned with such words as these: “Naked and ye clothed Me”, “a stranger and ye took Me in”.

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444 Prochaska, *op cit*, 359
445 *Op cit*, 240ff
446 Prochaska, *op cit*, 374-5
447 K Heasman: *Evangelicals in Action*, London, Bles, 1962: her chapters include the provision of ragged schools, children’s homes and orphanages, provision for teenagers, prostitutes, prisoners, soldiers and sailors, and a range of conditions of sickness, age etc.
The list includes not only the expected charities and missions, but also the factory workers of Bradford, remembering his work on factory legislation, the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trades, the Indian Female Normal Schools Society, the Tonic Sol-fa College, the Railway Mission, the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Association, and the Artisans, Labourers and General Dwellings Association. These two hundred charities were all bodies in which Shaftesbury had active involvement, and there were many others who also attended the funeral.

Shaftesbury was a strong believer in the values of voluntarism, and was hostile, for example, to state involvement in housing⁴⁴⁹, but the role of the state was steadily increasing. But while it was recognised that the state had duties to its citizens – think back to Mill on the state’s duty to feed prisoners⁴⁵⁰ - there was yet a general sense that a bureaucratic state was not well suited to tease out the needs of individuals, and that these needs were often too personal to be safely enshrined as rights. From this attitude derived the Goschen Minute of 1869⁴⁵¹: G J Goschen, as President of the Poor Law Commission, proposed that the role of the Poor Law authorities should be strictly limited to those who were destitute, and that any needs beyond that – in effect for the ‘deserving poor’ – should be tested and administered by charities. This shared responsibility between statutory and voluntary agencies, has been frequently cited by the voluntary sector, though the nature of the division has seldom been clear cut and agreed on both sides.

Motivation for charitable work continued to be predominantly Christian, but, as we have seen, other types of charitable action began to develop, and with it other justifications for such work: greater secular understanding of the causes of poverty and distress led on the one hand to utilitarian arguments for state action in public health and education, making the case that this would not only benefit the poor, but that a

⁴⁵⁰ See p 147
⁴⁵¹ Poor Law Board, 22nd *Annual Report*, 1870, pp 9-12.
healthier, better educated work force would benefit the national economy and would, incidentally, reduce expenditure on poor relief. On the other side, the growing political strength of the working classes shifted arguments for such work away from charity to discourses of justice and social and political rights. While many charities, and most notably the Charity Organisation Society, bitterly opposed the rights approach to social policy, this shift, supported, as we shall see, by the Christian Socialist movement, had the effect of marginalising charities, and placing greater emphasis on state provision.

But it was not only state action which was changing the understanding of charity. Although many working class people were supporters of traditional charity, they were also increasingly engaged in mutual aid societies of various forms. A recent obituary of Colin Ward, an anarchist writer on town planning, makes this point very clearly, citing from a lecture he gave at LSE in 1996: ‘When we compare the Victorian antecedents of our public institutions with the organs of working-class mutual aid in the same period, the very names speak volumes. On the one side the workhouse, the poor law infirmary, the National Society for the Education of the Poor in Accordance with the Principles of the Established Church; and on the other the friendly society, the sick club, the co-operative society, the trade union. One represents the tradition of fraternal associations springing up from below, the other that of authoritarian institutions directed from above.’ The poor had always had to provide for themselves, and still do so: they may, as Conybeare, put it, have “breath[ed] an atmosphere of charity”, but the sources were very varied: there was the relief provided by the poor law and other agencies of the state, and there was the ever-increasing range of voluntary charitable activity which the poor learned to respond to.

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455 Conybeare: Charity of Poor to Poor, cited in Prochaska op cit 365
in appropriately deferential if sometimes hypocritical ways\textsuperscript{456}. But over-riding all these was the support which the poor gave to one another. It was this mutual support which Chalmers wished to preserve and sanctify, it was this which Engels observed helped the new urban working classes to survive in the 1840s\textsuperscript{457}, and it is indeed this which still helps so many people to survive today\textsuperscript{458}. Any account of charity must bear this in mind, even though it is so hidden from history.

\textsuperscript{458} I recall an FSU worker in the 1970s commenting on how women in poor areas survived on a complex system of loans and gifts depending on which day of the week different people received benefits: it showed an ability to handle a complex system, she said, which would have put many government agencies to shame.
Chapter 6: Charity in the late 19th century

The final chapter of this discussion shows the development of a growing range of approaches to charity, and indeed to very different understandings of what charity is or should be. Both extreme positions would challenge the very concept of charity: for the Charity Organisation Society the common practice of charity demoralised its recipients, while to socialists charity was used as a substitute for the justice which the poor demanded. But when it comes to practice, we see a range of positions held by seriously committed people, trying in a variety of ways to come to terms with a complex society and, as those in the early part of the century had turned to political economy as a tool to understand society and formulate their attitude towards it, now the nascent social sciences and ‘Blue Book’ government reports provided them with a new set of conceptual tools. We shall explore this through the work of the Charity Organisation Society, in particular the views of CS Loch and of Bernard and Helen Bosanquet, the increasingly independent line taken by Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, and the development of a variety of organisations committed to Christian Socialism.

CS Loch

I start with Loch, the most systematic thinker about charity since Chalmers (and who himself thought that Chalmers was the only seriously practical thinker about charitable theory since Aristotle and St Paul)\textsuperscript{459}. A student of Green, he was much more influenced by Green’s concept of individual integrity than by other aspects of his philosophy\textsuperscript{460}. Ill health prevented him from taking up his first career choice of working for the Indian Civil Service, and he turned to voluntary work in London, graduating in 1875 to the Secretaryship of the COS, a post which he held until 1914. A brilliant lobbyist and administrator, he stamped his views on the society in a series of

\textsuperscript{459} CS Loch: Charity and Social Life, London, Macmillan, 1910, 198
\textsuperscript{460} H G Matthew: ‘Charles Stewart Loch’. In Oxford National Dictionary of Biography, 2004
reports and papers, though this self-identification with the Society resulted in his tending to take criticism personally.

With Bernard Bosanquet, Loch was the theorist of the COS. Much of his writing was ad hoc and relatively ephemeral, but he wrote a major review of the history of charity for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (10th edition, 1902) which was later expanded into a book, *Charity and Social Life* in 1910. Loch was himself a deeply religious man, as his diary, preserved in the University of London, indicates  and he was concerned to show how religion and charity interlinked, but he was also ready to be critical of how religion, and especially the belief that charitable action would ensure a reward for the giver, had undercut the true meaning of charity. He emphasised that true charity was not philanthropy or almsgiving, but a careful consideration of what was best for the recipient.

Though individualistic in many of his ideas, Loch was always conscious of the impact of charitable action on society, and how, therefore, its practice must always take into account its moral impact, both on the individual and on society as a whole. As for Green, so for Loch: society is a social organism – there is such a thing as society. To maintain social morality as a whole the COS were prepared to put individuals – unfed children, impoverished sick and old people – at risk, rather than undermine family responsibilities. It is easy to dismiss the COS as unfeeling, but this is to lose sight of much of the detailed casework which it performed  as well as its broader concept of charity. COS practitioners might write of the work in different ways – ‘thorough charity’, ‘scientific charity’ and so on, but they had a common goal, which could almost

461 There is no space here for a full discussion of Loch’s religious beliefs. I have discussed it in J Lansley: ‘Changing Explanations for Charitable Motivation in the mid-19th Century’, paper given at the Conference of the Voluntary Action History Society, Liverpool, July 2008. A short summary of Loch’s beliefs, drawn from his diary, is given in an Appendix, p.224

be traced back to the evangelical movement via the later nineteenth century emphasis on ‘character’: to change the lives of individuals from within. And they all held as an article of faith that this would not be achieved by monetary relief. For Loch and his followers there was a great gulf between charity and philanthropy.

Charity, for Loch, had to be a thought-out practice. It might result in the spontaneous response to need which is often associated with agape, but only when the actor had learned the skills involved. Charity is ‘A principle of the good life…a mood or habit of mind and an endeavour. From it, as a habit of mind, springs the social and personal endeavour which in the widest sense we may call charity….In so far as [the habit of mind] has been gained, the endeavour is founded on an intelligent scrutiny of social conditions and guided by a definite purpose’ 463. Charity thus requires an awareness of how society operates: ‘the charity of the religious life, if rightly understood, cannot be inconsistent with that of the social life.’ 464 This in its turn requires an understanding of those social institutions which enable society to operate effectively, and for Loch the key institution is the family – ‘the source, the home and the hearth of charity.’ 465 Loch is dogmatic on the importance of character and the family: they are givens, which underlie his whole argument, but which are taken for granted rather than discussed, and to that extent we may take them as axiomatic of (non-socialist) social thought at the time. The first we can trace back to Green, the second is simply assumed. To be fair, while Loch had read some early sociology, notably Durkheim, as well as the empirical studies of Booth and Rowntree, he had little opportunity to study non-European anthropology, and most of his material derives from classical Greece and Rome and the history of Western Europe. Like Chalmers before him, he assumes existing social institutions and divisions without question.

463 Loch, Charity and Social Life , 1. Note how close this definition of charity is to the contemporaneous emphasis on ‘character’.
464 Ib., 2
465 Ibid., 7
Loch argues that any approach to charity which is not based on the family and the adoption of sound economic principles will inevitably lead to social weakness and dependency on the part of those who receive it. Thus, in ancient Greece, and still more in Rome *annona* and other relief schemes led to a demoralised poor with a slave mentality. He likens *annona* to the Speenhamland system: they became established as a right and demoralised the poor, a half-way house to slavery while simultaneously undermining the Roman economy. However, Loch also sees a role for charity in purifying and moralising religion, as the two become entwined in the performance of civic duties. Loch sanctifies Roman virtues, as adapted to late Victorian society, in much the way in which those virtues were inculcated in the public schools: people were to lead honourable lives, devoted to the service of their country and their fellow men and women – but they needed to take account of economic laws.

At this point in Loch’s account, Christianity enters the scene, and fundamentally changes the nature and understanding of charity. And here we have a clear account of Loch’s own religious position, which in many ways resembles Green’s. Christ introduces a new concept of religion: “Be ye therefore perfect as your father in Heaven is perfect”. The ideal is focussed outside the natural world, but given its comprehensible focus in the person of Christ, the one who is the Mediator, but who ‘Gives of life and thought in full overrunning measure, and what he gives he counsels others to give in a like absoluteness of spirit. He gives new currency to the old saying – to love one’s neighbour as oneself. He cares for children, for the weak, the fallen and the unhappy…. In him is solved the mystery of the relation of man to God, man made perfect, God now more clearly understood as Father’. And the Spirit of Christ is passed on to his followers, who inherit ‘Gifts of goodwill or graciousness (*charismata*), or functions of service, or aptitudes forthcoming according to the needs of the

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466 *Ibid*, chaps IV-XI
467 See, for a fictitious example, ‘Regulus’ in Kipling’s *Stalky and Co*. London, Macmillan,1899
468 Loch, 1910, Ch XV, 168-82
469 *Ibid*, 169
470 *Ibid.*, 170
Gifts are made through Christ, and are used by and for his church. But the highest gift of all, above these charismata, is the gift of agape, ‘the compound mood of goodness, complete in the largeness of its sympathy, in the insight of its discernment, and the infinity of its nature’ 472. The one who is recognised as Saviour of the world is one who will judge the world according to how people have treated the poor: ‘The Christ is materialized into the claimant petitioner for help. The petitioner is spiritualized into a claimant Christ. In the ardour of the thought, the heart is set on fire; and so the first step is gained – to feel it as a paramount duty, as a hot and inspiring affection, to love one’s neighbour’ 473. And this belief is carried forward by the Fathers of the Church: by Augustine who turns John’s statement that God is love to “Charity is God” 474 and by Bernard: “God is charity. Therefore rightly is He called charity, both God and God’s gift. So charity gives charity: the ‘substance’ produces the ‘accident’, the being the act.” 475 And this remains central to Christianity: ‘Though the task in detail and somewhat in purpose be different now, love or charity in fact remains an essential part of Christianity.’ 476 But these same values have been adopted by others from outside the sphere of Christianity: ‘To use the Pauline phrase, “God shewed it unto” others also.’ 477

Loch’s understanding of Christianity is thus founded on an idealism to which a practical response is required, very much along the lines of Green’s *Lay Sermons* and other writings. In his subsequent discussion of the practice of charity by the church he is often critical of how charity has been applied, but he never questions the centrality of charity in the Christian life. His criticisms are that as the church has grown as an organisation, the practice of charity has become institutionalised. What should be a reaching out to the individual in need, identifying what those needs are and responding in the most effective way, has been routinised and based wholly on alms-

471 Ibid, 171-2
472 Ibid, 178
473 Ibid., 178
474 Ibid., 180, citing *Homilies on the First Epistle of John.*
475 Ib., 180-181, citing Bernard *Epistle xi.*
476 Ibid 181-2
477 Ibid 182
giving. Loch is particularly disapproving of the extent to which monasteries were
treated as major agencies of charity: their unquestioning giving led to a 'stagnant
concept of charity', while their very existence encouraged a pattern of charity out of
touch with his ideal of the family⁴⁷⁸.

But equally harmful in Loch’s eyes was the development of an emphasis on the value
of charity to the giver, rather than to the receiver: he quotes Chrysostom’s preaching
to the rich, “If there were no poor, the greater part of your sins would not be removed:
they are the healers of your wounds⁴⁷⁹” – without, of course, asking whether
Chrysostom would have used the same terms had he been preaching to the poor. This
emphasis on the necessity of alms, Loch believed, inevitably led to a growth in
pauperism at any point in history. Even after the reformation, when charitable relief
passed from the church to the state, attempts to codify entitlement led to a sense of
rights to charity, recreating the failures of the Roman annona.⁴⁸⁰. At least voluntary
charity is limited by its capacity to raise funds, but the state can be viewed as a
bottomless purse, always susceptible to demand, while at the same time reducing
people’s willingness to give voluntarily. This was, of course, a key point in Chalmers’
approach to charity, and Loch follows this position closely.

Ultimately, Loch’s problem is how to sustain the poor without disturbing the social and
economic structure. He has a clear eye for the failings of charity, and a true sense of
Christian vocation towards the unfortunate, but his awareness of the dangers of
indiscriminate help leaves him with small scale, detailed case-work as the only
effective option. At its best, this was what the COS had to offer, and it is to the practice
of social casework that we now turn.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 231-3
⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 205, citing Chrysos. Hom. xiv
⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 308
It does not lie within the scope of this thesis to give a detailed account of the work of the COS\textsuperscript{481}: rather, it seeks to explore the ideas underlying their practice. And here we immediately run into problems, because both ideas and practice differed over time, and between committee members and practitioners. In particular, there is a division between COS as a society for the suppression of mendicancy by ensuring close cooperation between charities and the exposure of fraud, and the support given to individuals through the Society’s own casework. I shall concentrate on the latter, but the former, and the sometimes intrusive questioning which casework gave rise to, gave the whole COS movement a negative image among the poor which sustained, if it did not originate, the negative feelings towards ‘charity’ which still obtain today.\textsuperscript{482} But I turn now to two of the COS’s most thoughtful supporters, Bernard and Helen Bosanquet.

\section*{Practical Charity: Helen and Bernard Bosanquet\textsuperscript{483}}

In the writings of Helen Bosanquet and her husband Bernard we see how the ideals of the COS could be put into practice. In particular, in Helen’s writing, there is a total concentration on the impact of social work action on the individual. Unless that impact is positive, both for the individual and, through its example, for other members of the

\textsuperscript{481} See, for example, C L Mowat \textit{op cit}, and more recently R Humphreys, \textit{op cit} and J Lewis \textit{op cit}, 1995
\textsuperscript{482} For a fairly recent description of how some of the old attitudes remained, see J E Meyer and N Timms \textit{op cit}. The debate over rights and charity can be seen in the challenge by disabled activists (‘Piss on your charity’) to the negative portrayal of disability by the television Telethon appeal in 1992 (see Rebecca Atkinson, \textit{Guardian}, 2 November, 2006).
\textsuperscript{483} Helen Dendy, the daughter of a Manchester manufacturer, was a mature student at Cambridge (Moral Science Tripos 1889) and then went to work for the Charity Organisation Society in Shoreditch. She married Bernard Bosanquet in 1895 and shared with him a belief in Idealistic principles and their application to the practice of social work. I shall refer to her throughout as Helen Bosanquet. See Jane Lewis: \textit{Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England}, Aldershot, Edward Elgar, 1991, chap 3 and A M McBriar: \textit{An Edwardian Mixed Doubles: the Bosanquets versus the Webbs, a Study of Social Policy 1890-1929}, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987
local community, it should not happen. There is no value in charity which, while it relieves the moral sense of the giver, has no improving effect on the recipient – indeed, it will almost always be positively harmful, since it will make recipients more dependent on charity, and less able to help themselves.

Much of Helen’s writing is thus concerned to show the outcome of charity. True charity must start with an awareness of its outcomes, and writers like Helen Bosanquet and Octavia Hill insist on the need for ‘thorough’, ‘practical’ or ‘scientific’ charity – as did the COS itself. To achieve this, Helen Bosanquet insists, social workers must have a thorough knowledge of the lives and neighbourhood of those they seek to serve, but must also have a specific knowledge of the individual seeking help: she is insistent that each case must be considered in its own terms. 484 It is not enough to treat people in the mass – ‘the poor’ – since it is not only a person’s economic or social situation which must be considered, but also the individual’s character which is important. Indeed, for the Bosanquets, character is the crucial factor.

This followed from their belief in Idealist philosophy: the mind and the will are seen as the key elements in achieving social change 485, and this is linked to the common late nineteenth century belief in the centrality of character 486. With sufficient strength of character, they believed, the individual could overcome virtually any obstacle, and by the same token dependence on others was the ultimate failure from which people must be rescued. Indiscriminate charity, which relieved people of their own responsibilities was thus in the long run deeply harmful both for the individual and for others who were influenced by the examples of those who got by without helping themselves. Bernard Bosanquet sets out this position in a book of 1895:

The individual member of society is above all things a character and a will, and ... society as a whole is a structure in which will and character “are the blocks upon which we build.” Among the influences which operate upon the will ... of

484 H Bosanquet (1896)
485 Lewis, op cit, 147
486 See Collini: op cit. Chap 3
course [are] some that are due to material or economic conditions. At any given moment such circumstances are apt to present themselves as fixed quantities and irresistible causes; but in watching the social process life by life, and generation by generation, the skilled observer becomes aware that circumstance is modifiable by character, and so far as circumstance is a name for human action, by character alone.  

The modern reader may question some of the assumptions here – as did many readers, particularly socialists, at the time. In particular, the appeal to the long run – ‘generation by generation’ may be of little comfort to any one individual: as J M Keynes observed, ‘In the long run we are all dead’. In the short run, material circumstances may indeed be fixed, and arguably circumstances are not consequent on human action. At times, the Bosanquets appeared to be forced into extreme positions in making their argument, virtually denying that there were any social problems which could not be met by individual will power.

It might be assumed that the Bosanquets, like other COS members, were opposed to giving any sort of help, but this was far from the case. Helen had worked for the Shoreditch branch of the COS for some years, living among the people whom she served, and her writings reveal a real understanding and sympathy for them. She was particularly aware of the needs of women, and concerned that they should have a better chance of developing their own lives and careers rather than just serving the needs of their families or eking out a poor existence as widows.

But any help has to be effective. Both Bernard and Helen start from the economic realities of the time: where an industry is in decline, people should be encouraged to turn elsewhere rather than encouraged to wait for ‘something to turn up’ – and charities which help people to set up their own businesses may be simply depressing

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488 See reference to The Strength of the People note 423 at p 164
489 See, for example, the chapter on ‘The Sunny Side’ in H Bosanquet, 1896
490 Ibid, chap 4, and see also Lewis, op cit, 168ff
market values to a point where others in employment suffer loss of wages. Helen Bosanquet gives a picture of economic inevitability:

I like to picture humanity as a great army pressing on towards an invisible goal, and guided by a wisdom not its own. No power can stay its course nor alter its direction, and those who try to turn aside on their own little paths of self-indulgence, or who will not keep step with their comrades, or falter with failing strength, are cast down and trampled underfoot. It is with these that we have to deal in our charitable work, and what we have to do is not to make their fall easy, but to raise them to their feet again, to turn their faces towards the light, to lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. How can we do this unless we understand their mistakes better than they do themselves, and can point out the path in which they have to tread?

This is an interesting passage, not least in the way in which it presupposes a ‘general will’, which Bernard Bosanquet discusses in the last chapter of the book from which this quotation comes. Although Idealist philosophy starts from the mental processes of the individual, people have more ideas in common than they often realise, since they are set in the same environment, although this common will is constantly shifting as circumstances change, and this is the ultimate source of freedom. Helen Bosanquet is assuming here (and most Victorians would have agreed with her) that society is progressing in a positive direction, and that the outcome of the general will is a greater wisdom than that possessed by any one individual. This appears to imply an economic inevitability which cannot be challenged by the activity of charity. The task of charity is to bring people back to economic realities and independent life.

492 Dendy, op cit, 179.
494 Collini sums up Bosanquet’s position: “Freedom lies in conforming to our real will; our real will is identical with the general will; the general will is embodied in the state.” S Collini: “Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State: Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England, 1880-1918”, Past and Present 72, 86-111, 1976.
495 Despite the apparent allusion to Isaiah 35.3
This carries with it the need for people to be made to respond to economic disciplines: a workman who has too easily been supported by charity after throwing away ‘place after place’, might have done better for the discipline of ‘a little wholesome starvation’ early in his career, which would have taught him the need for self-discipline.\footnote{Dendy, \textit{op cit.}, 173} And such discipline should affect the whole family: giving financial support to the children of a drifter and drinker may help the one family, but neighbours may learn that they too can avoid responsibility for their children, ‘and so the mischief spreads down the street like an epidemic.’\footnote{[Helen] Mrs Bernard Bosanquet (1896)72-3.}

Charities may thus make things worse, rather than better, and churches are, in Bosanquet’s view, some of the worst offenders. She quotes from a parish church newsletter:

\begin{quote}
Our experience leads us deliberately to avow it as our belief that by far the greater part of our population regard the Church simply and solely as an institution with enormous wealth at its disposal, and the clergy as a body of – ‘mostly fools’ – who have been ordained for the express purpose of running about the parish with a can of soup in one hand and a half-cwt. of coals in the other.\footnote{Ibid, 202. For a more balanced view of the work of the clergy and churches see C Booth: \textit{Life and Labour of the People of London}, Third Series, Religious Influences, Volume 7, Summary, London, Macmillan, 1903, 406ff}
\end{quote}

We should not perhaps take this quotation too seriously – plenty of churches and clergy have felt this at times – but it does sum up much of the COS view of the churches and the charitable. At best, they are gullible, at worst they are either thoughtless or patronising:

\begin{quote}
The Lady-Bountiful spirit is [an aspect] of [the] desire to perpetuate the dependence of one class upon another. I once showed to an old lady, much given to good works of the Lady-Bountiful order, how some \textit{protégés} of hers who were constantly on the verge of starvation might be placed in possession
\end{quote}
of a small but regular and sufficient income. “My dear”, she said, “I don’t think it is a good plan, they would get too independent; I like them to come to me when they are in difficulties and ask me for what they want.”

It is important that, if help is given, it should be effective. The COS soon found that the use of terms such as ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ were resented, and workers like Helen Bosanquet tried to replace them with words like ‘helpable’ – could this person be helped to become independent (or, if necessary, supported in the long term) with resources available? If so, it was essential that sufficient resources should be put into the work: inadequate resources, such as a one-off sum of money which would quickly be spent with nothing to show for it, would simply make things worse, because it would encourage people to look to others for help, rather than trying to help themselves. There was a great deal of criticism in COS circles of appeals from the Lord Mayor and others for support for the poor during periods of trade depressions because they were not adequately supervised, and largely went on pleasure and luxuries rather than saving for the future.

For a constant theme in Victorian charity discourse is on the extent to which the poor wasted their money, especially on drink, though sometimes on any pleasures. There is a puritanical streak in much writing, including a revealing passage from Loch’s diary, in which he criticises a passage in Dickens’ *Sketches by Boz* in which Dickens had given a coin to a ballad singer. But what, asks Loch, will happen tomorrow? ‘Better to have died yesternight than to have received from you that pittance and bought the dram that has kept her alive – to live on possibly till her death is registered at the workhouse as “disease of the lungs” or God knows what, “accelerated” by starvation and cold.’ It is perhaps reasonable to imagine that the ballad singer herself would sooner have postponed her death, and enjoyed the temporary respite that the dram might have provided.

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500 See R Whelan: *op cit*
501 C S Loch, *Diary* (University of London Library MS 801.1) 17th Sept 1877
502 Cf Dickens: *Our Mutual Friend*, (1864-5) chap 11: ‘The man of meek demeanour intimated that truly it would seem from the facts, as if starvation had been forced upon the culprits in
afforded, but this tended not to be an option offered to the poor, at least before Mr Doolittle’s claim for the Undeserving Poor:

I’m one of the undeserving poor: that’s what I am. Think of what that means to a man. It means that he’s up agen middle-class morality all the time. If there’s anything going, and I put in for a bit of it, it’s always the same story: ‘You’re undeserving, so you can’t have it.’ But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow’s that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don’t need less than a deserving man: I need more. I don’t eat less hearty than him; and I drink a lot more. I want a bit of amusement, cause I’m a thinking man. I want cheerfulness and a song and a band when I feel low. Well, they charge me just the same for everything as they charge the deserving. What is middle-class morality? Just an excuse for never giving me anything.\textsuperscript{503}

Improving the poor

There is an emphasis on charity as a means of enabling the poor to improve both their material and their moral positions. The charitable do not want to be taken for a ride: they want to feel that their giving – and sometimes self-giving – is meeting ‘real needs’, without always asking how the recipients themselves might classify their needs. We have seen an extreme example of this in the life of Arnold Toynbee in the previous chapter. His appeal was strong, especially when reinforced by his example, and it is perhaps unfair to criticise it, but Toynbee and his fellows did not carry through the question of what it would mean to live a life of extreme self-giving – agapeistic if you like – for working class people. In the end, their ideas were to be formed from political

\textsuperscript{503} G B Shaw: \textit{Pygmalion}, London, 1914, Act II. When Higgins offers him £5, Pickering says: ‘He’ll make bad use of it, I’m afraid.’ But Doolittle replies: ‘Not me, governor... There won’t be a penny of it left by Monday: I’ll have to go work same as if I’d never had it. It won’t pauperise me, you bet. Just one good spree for myself and the missus, giving pleasure to ourselves and employment to others, and satisfaction to you to think it’s not been throwed away.’ Doolittle would have loved mediaeval funeral doles.
rather than religious ideologies, based on solidarity rather than individual sacrifices, and the impact of working class solidarity on the Liberal party 1906-14 was to form the route for social reform in the early twentieth century.

Toynbee’s self-sacrifice was extreme, but not unique: Edward Denison had died after similar experiences of living in the East End in 1870, and they were followed by many other young men – not to die, but to live for a time in the East End and other poor parts of London in settlement houses. Much of this arose from the work of another clergyman, Samuel Barnett, and his wife, Henrietta, who founded Toynbee Hall, the doyen of London settlements, named in honour of Arnold Toynbee, who had worked with the Barnettts.

**From charity to practicable socialism: Samuel and Henrietta Barnett**

Barnett had begun his career as a strong believer in the work of the COS. He was appointed vicar of St Jude’s Whitechapel in 1872, with the warning from the Bishop that “It is the worst parish in my diocese, inhabited mainly by a criminal population, and one which has, I fear, been much corrupted by doles.” At the same time he married Henrietta Rowland, one of Octavia Hill’s ‘best workers’. She was later to describe his work:

> In the minds of many people he lives as a social reformer, as an active Poor Law administrator, as an ardent educationalist, but he was all these things and many more, because his one never-sleeping desire was to help people to live their lives in relation with God.

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506 *Ibid.*, 76.
Barnett rapidly adopted a policy of not giving money to anyone, contrary to the expectations of his parishioners and much to their annoyance. Mrs Barnett found it hard to maintain this:

On a freezing night, with the north wind tearing down Commercial Street, human brothers, and worse, human sisters slept on the clean hearth-stoned Vicarage steps, and one dared not give them the fourpence for the doss-house bunk, or even the twopence for the rope lean-to.... But Mr Barnett never wavered. He saw, without a shade of reservation from pity, that a man’s soul was more important than a man’s suffering, and held that it was spiritual murder so to act as to nullify for him the results of his own actions.... Believing then [my italics] that all misery was the result of wrong-doing, he thought that to relieve it without reforming the character which had caused it, was but to interrupt God’s methods of teaching mankind.  

It is not clear what meaning is to be given to ‘then’: is it a synonym for ‘therefore’, or does it refer to a period of Barnett’s ministry? Certainly, as we shall see, while Barnett retained a strong belief in the importance of character, his understanding of misery following wrong doing was to be challenged in the years to come.

While Barnett might not give money, however, he was clear that poor people must be supported, and established a system to this end:

I will tell you our plan. When someone comes begging, I myself see him, talk to him, and send him to the COS, who investigate the case, not so much with a view of finding out the applicant’s deserts as to show us, from his past life, the best means of helping him in the present. A committee... meet on Friday evenings, before which the man is summoned to appear. Perhaps it proves to be the best plan to give him efficient assistance in the shape of a substantial gift, or a loan; perhaps the most hopeful way of helping him will be by a stern refusal. In neither case does our watchful care cease. When there has been no interference we have seen success in our efforts – the family has commenced to save; the children sent to school; the girls to service; but when visitors, no less kind, but less wise, have come in with their doles of sixpences, or their promise of help, we have seen the chains of idleness, carelessness, and despair fall again around the family... Money pauperises the people; time, given as a

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child of God to those who, if degraded, are still our brothers, will ennoble and strengthen them." 508

Barnett’s aim was ‘decreasing not suffering, but sin’: it was the impoverishment of people’s lives, whether by drink or by ‘anything which mars the grandeur of human life’ which ‘must be brought under a converting influence’. Thus, people must also be given access to art, music and literature and ‘the knowledge which makes the whole world alive and binds together the human family by ties of common interest; the religion which raises men [and lets them see] those who on earth have done the will of their Father in heaven.’ 509 This raised the question of the environment in which people were living: ‘the walls of degrading and crippling environment hid from many the light of truth’ wrote Mrs Barnett: “‘Throw down the walls,” he cried. 510 At first this involved providing art exhibitions and concerts at St Jude’s (leading to the establishment of the Whitechapel Art Gallery) but later it led to housing improvements, under Octavia Hill, and to the event with which Barnett is most associated, the foundation of the Toynbee Hall Settlement in 1883. By this point the social problems under which the poor people of Whitechapel were living – housing, employment, education – were being addressed: improving people’s characters was no longer enough. Recognising and responding to ‘the equal capacity of all to enjoy the best’, as well as long-term planning should also be part of the principles of poor relief 511. Although I have not found a direct reference to the passage, there is surely a sense that Barnett was inspired by Jesus’ saying in John 10.10: ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.’

Over time Barnett also came to recognise that many social issues lay outside the capacity of local people to deal with them: ‘That evils exist is not to be denied... Dock labourers, who by the law of averages cannot hope to get four days a week at 3s a day, tailoresses who cannot get more than 3d for a boy’s suit if it is to be sold for 4s 10d;

508 From a parish report of 1874 in Barnett, Life, 83-4
509 Life, 75-6
510 Ibid 76
511 Life, 83, quoting the introduction to the second edition of S and H Barnett: Practicable Socialism, London, Longmans, Green, 1894
these, and many others, endure evils not to be described in words.\footnote{Life, 623, quoting a parish report of 1884} Barnett was influenced not only by his own experiences, but by other contemporary reports on poverty, such as those by G R Sims and Andrew Mearn’s \textit{Bitter Cry of Outcast London}\footnote{Mears’ pamphlet was published in 1883 to build up support for the work of the London Congregational Union in the ‘Rookeries’, an area of dilapidated housing standing more or less on the present site of the London School of Economics: \textit{plus ca change}… It is reprinted in full in Keating, \textit{op cit}.}.

It was this growing understanding of the structural factors which left so many in poverty which led the Barnetts to split from the COS. There were various issues involved. In part, Barnett felt that the COS had become ossified in its own dogmas, and failed to appreciate how society was changing. ‘Scientific charity’, he thought, had created ‘a working man too thrifty to pet his children, and too respectable to be happy’\footnote{Arnold Toynbee similarly believed that too much emphasis on thrift and respectability made for hard attitudes towards people’s fellows – see p.164 above.}; ‘the life of the thrifty’ in such terms was a sad life, ‘limited both by the pressure of continuous toil and by the fear lest this pressure should cease and starvation ensue.’\footnote{S Barnett: ‘University Settlements’, in S and H Barnett: \textit{Practicable Socialism}, London, Longmans 1895, 165; cited in Humphreys (2001) 172.} He pursued the argument in a paper, “A friendly criticism of the COS” at a meeting of the COS Council in June 1895\footnote{In \textit{Charity Organisation Review} August 1895} , arguing that the COS should recognise the need for state action over such issues as unemployment and retirement pensions – policies which were anathema to Loch\footnote{See Mowat, (1961), 127.}. But more generally, Barnett saw how working class organisations needed to be brought into any solution to the problems of the poor. It was for this reason that local residents were involved in the inquiries on social needs carried out by Toynbee Hall. Ultimately, and here he begins to show overlaps with the Christian Socialist movement, he believed that the state must take a larger role in the solution to social problems, and that charity on its own would never be enough. The ‘\textit{Practicable Socialism}’ which the Barnetts advocated was
not any sort of political ideology: it was a belief that collective state action was what would work. The rich and the poor must be made to work together, and the ministers who would change the habits of the rich will have to preach the prophet’s message about the duty of giving and the sin of luxury, and to denounce ways of business now pronounced to be respectable and Christian...For some time it may be the glory of a preacher to empty rather than to fill his church as he reasons about the Judgement to come when “t'wopence a gross to the matchmakers will be laid alongside of the 22 per cent to the shareholders”, and penny dinners for the poor compared with the sixteen courses for the rich.518

But for Barnett, charity is in the last resort a matter of personal response to a fellow child of God:

If we loved God we should never dare to throw a coin to one of His children and hurry on our way to more important business; we should never insult with gifts of coal or groceries those whose hearts are breaking for want of sympathy; we should not degrade with excuses and gifts those who were longing to be honoured by anger and punishment.519

The Barnett520 came from a traditional COS position, taking poverty seriously but insisting on personal reformation, but moved on, as a result of their experience of life in the East End and awareness of the economics of employment there, to the conclusion that state action was not only necessary to achieve effective solutions, but that such involvement was also a recognition of the Biblical imperative to social justice. Much the same position was taken, in various forms, by the groups of people who made up the second generation of Christian Socialists.

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518 Barnett: *Life*, 654
519 *Ibid*, 665
520 This thesis does not discuss Henrietta Barnett’s later work in housing reform.
Christian Socialism in the late 19th century: Incarnationalism and the Christian Social Union

The Christian Social Union [CSU] was not a direct development from the publication of *Lux Mundi*\(^{521}\), though it was founded in the year of that book’s publication, 1889. There were, however, links between the two. Both could be seen to derive from Maurice’s theology of the Kingdom of Christ and the Fatherhood of God, and to some extent from the moral Idealism of Green, who had taught both Scott Holland and Gore, the leaders of the CSU. *Lux Mundi* was an attempt to restate Tractarian theology in a way which would meet the needs of a new generation who had accepted the issues raised by Biblical criticism and Darwinism, while at the same time keeping the Catholic faith\(^{522}\). Its authors were for the most part a group of younger Oxford men who met together for what Scott Holland, their most irrepressible member, called a Holy Party at which they discussed theological issues. Thus J R Illingworth’s essay on ‘The Incarnation and Development’\(^{523}\) sought to argue that the coming of Christ among us as a man was compatible with belief in evolution, and with contemporary science. The Incarnation was a decisive moment in the history of the world, which demonstrated the wholly new possibility of atonement in our moral experience, and which could be treated as an observable moral fact, not as any kind of fabulous miracle. But, significantly, the Incarnation made our earthly life of primary importance:

The Incarnation opened heaven, for it was the revelation of the Word; but it also reconsecrated earth, for the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us. And it is impossible to read history without feeling how profoundly the religion of the Incarnation has been the religion of humanity. The human body itself ... acquired a new meaning ... in the light of the Word made Flesh; and thence, in widening circles, the family, society, the state felt in their turn the impulse of the Christian spirit.\(^{524}\)


\(^{522}\) See Chadwick, II, 100-104

\(^{523}\) *Lux Mundi*, 179-214

\(^{524}\) Ibid, 211-2
Illingworth’s essay is indicative of a fundamental shift in theological thinking – deriving from a range of sources, but not least from Maurice’s emphasis on the Kingdom of Christ. The key to understanding of the mission of Christ is no longer wholly centred on the impact of the atonement on individual believers, as in evangelical theology. There is now more emphasis on the Incarnation and the Kingdom of God, and the need to build that Kingdom on earth, not just for individuals but for the whole of society. The Christian Social Union was a working out of this, an attempt to put into practice the implications of an incarnational religion, taking the humanity of all people seriously.

Scott Holland and Gore were fortunate in persuading B F Westcott, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Canon of Westminster, who was shortly to be made Bishop of Durham, to become President of the newly formed society. Westcott has had a mixed press, and is often accused of woolliness in his writing, but in this, as in many things, Westcott bears a strong similarity to Maurice. Although the two men held chairs at the same time at Cambridge, Westcott always maintained that he had not been influenced by Maurice, or read much of his work. If this is the case, and there is some debate on this, we must at least see them as contemporaries absorbing much of the same zeitgeist. They are both agreed that as theologians their task is to reflect their understanding of God with the inevitable vaguenesses and loose edges of such a task. Both too were deliberately non-party men, who wanted to follow the truth where it led them, rather than following any set school of thought. And both believed in the importance of cooperation rather than of competition.

526 But see note 527 below for his reading of Maurice’s Social Morality
528 Vidler, op cit. Westcott throughout his life used a phrase learned as a schoolboy in an art history lesson: ‘Look, it has no outline. There is no outline in nature.’ Patrick, op cit 69 ff.
In the early part of his career Westcott established a reputation as a Biblical scholar (with a particular and revealing interest in the Johannine writings), working with his friends Lightfoot and Hort on the Greek text of the New Testament, and serving on the committee which produced the Revised Version of the Bible in 1880. His appointment in 1883 to Westminster, at that time partly surrounded by slum districts, led to his taking a much more prominent interest in social issues, reflected in his volume of Westminster sermons: *Social Aspects of Christianity*. Here he expressed his existing interest in the religion of the Incarnation, but started to apply these more immediately to the social conditions of his time. In particular, he argues for the importance of the Incarnation for our earthly life:

*If the Word became flesh, the brotherhood of man is a reality for us, if the Son of God was crucified, the fall, and with it the redemption, are realities for us, if the Son of man rose again from the dead, the eternal significance of our short space of labour is a reality for us....*  

Christ sets before us in Himself, in what He has done and is, a final revelation of the relation of man to man, of the actual condition of humanity, of the destiny of life .... The brotherhood of man ... rests upon the present and abiding fatherhood of God.

The first group of sermons follow Maurice’s pattern in *Social Morality*, working out from the individual and the family to the state and finally to the whole human race. In

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529 Charles Booth’s 1889 map of poverty in London (*Life and Labour of the People*, Vol 5, London, Macmillan, 1893) shows a number of streets marked in black (extreme poverty and criminality) and dark blue (very poor) off Great Peter Street in Westminster. Westcott would also have been very close to the Millbank Penitentiary  
530 B F Westcott: *Social Aspects of Christianity*, London, Macmillan, 1887. The Preface is interesting: Westcott says that his appointment gave rise to the ‘power of old thoughts’ (p.v) about social issues; he also writes of his debt to ‘two writers who are not often joined together...Comte and Maurice. In the summer of 1867 I was able to analyse carefully the *Politique Positive*, and I found in it a powerful expression of many salient features of that which I had long held to be the true social embodiment of the Gospel, of a social ideal which the faith in Christ is alone, I believe, able to realise. Two years later I read Maurice’s *Social Morality*. Few books can teach nobler lessons; and I should find it hard to say how much I owe to it directly and by suggestion.’ (p.xii)  
531 *Social Aspects*, 8, my italics  
532 Ibid, 8-9  
533 F D Maurice: *Social Morality: twenty-one lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge*, London, Macmillan, 1872
the second group, Westcott starts to apply these beliefs more specifically to social issues, and to community life. He equates the characteristics of the Kingdom of God – “not eating and drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” – with the social principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, in the context of the fatherhood of God.

[These principles] tell us that the community and not the individual is the central thought in the life of men. They tell us that the fulfilment of duties and not the assertion of rights is the foundation of the social structure. They tell us that the end of labour is not material well-being, but that larger, deeper, more abiding delight which comes from successfully ministering to the good of others. They tell us that over all that is transitory in the form of the kingdom, over all the conditions which determine its growth, there rest the light, the power, of an Eternal Presence. 534

Westcott continued to urge this belief when he moved to Durham in 1890. In an address to the clergy in 1892 535 he points to the Incarnation and the Fatherhood of God as central to our social life:

The Incarnation proclaims that the Gospel of Creation has been fulfilled in fact and moves forward to a complete accomplishment.... Our Father... expresses briefly what the Incarnation has wrought for us as men.... The words...point to a personal relationship between God and man which each man is set to realise in life; they shew that we share this potentially with all other men; and the fact that Christ charges us to claim the double fellowship with God (‘Father’) and fellowship with man in God (‘our Father’) is an assurance that through his help we can obtain it. So we face our work, sons of God, brothers of men; and this double master-thought – one thought in two aspects – will help us in dealing with our personal duties in regard to ourselves and in regard to others, as heirs of God’s love and called to fulfil a human ministry. 536

Having established this ‘touchstone for our theories of social intercourse’, Westcott goes on to apply this to recent reports on social conditions in East London 537:

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534 Westcott, op cit, 90-91
536 Ibid, 54-5
537 Presumably Charles Booth’s Life and Labour of the People of London, London, Macmillan. Volumes 1-3 of Booth’s monumental work had been published in 1891, though some of the findings were reported from 1889 onwards
When we count up the 100,000 individuals, the 20,000 families, who lead so pinched a life among the families so described, and remember that there are in addition double that number who, if not actually pressed by want, yet have nothing to spare, we shrink aghast from the picture.\textsuperscript{538}

And he urges his hearers to consider and gain evidence about housing conditions in their own diocese.

Westcott believed that things could be changed, if people only had the will to do it, and he continued his address with a criticism of the economic orthodoxies of his day:

There was a time when Economists would have said that such an effort was hopeless. Wider experience has taught us another lesson. The institutions of society and the motives of men which determine the facts summarily described as “economic laws” are liable to alteration... These have been changed in the past, and are still liable to change. On the other hand men are stirred to energetic action by other impulses than the hope of gain... The power of love, the power of the Incarnation, has hitherto hardly been invoked as the sovereign principle of Christian action.\textsuperscript{539}

One is reminded of the enthronement and subsequent sermons of another Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, nearly a century later.\textsuperscript{540} Alan Wilkinson remarks of Jenkins’ preaching at Durham that ‘he did not believe that politics could “bring in the Kingdom of God”, and he supported “pragmatic, consensus politics”. In the 1980s what counted for the poor was that someone in authority shared their anger.’\textsuperscript{541} Something of the same could be said about Westcott. It was his task, if not to be angry, then at least to remind people that another way of action was possible, but it was not his role to put that into action.\textsuperscript{542} What he did, very effectively for his generation, was to relate social conditions to a theology which took the whole nature of society as being under the hand of God. In so doing for the whole church, he also inspired and expanded the membership of the CSU.

\textsuperscript{538} Westcott, \textit{op.cit.}, 65
\textsuperscript{539} \textit{Ibid} 65-6
\textsuperscript{542} But his mediation in the 1892 Durham miners’ strike, like Manning’s in the London dockers’ strike (1889) showed a sympathy with workers which was a major step forward for the episcopate. See Patrick, \textit{op cit, passim}. 
Socialism, for Westcott, was not any kind of doctrinaire political philosophy. It was rather the antithesis of individualism:

Individualism regards humanity as made up of disconnected or warring atoms. Socialism regards it as an organic whole, a vital unity formed by the combination of contributory members, mutually interdependent.\(^{543}\)

Socialism differs from Individualism both in method – cooperation as against competition, working for common ends rather than private gain – and aiming for service rather than individual advantage.

Socialism seeks such an organization of life as shall secure for everyone the most complete development of his powers; individualism seeks primarily the satisfaction of the particular wants of each one, in the hope that the pursuit of private interests will in the end secure public welfare.\(^{544}\)

In a perfect world both methods would lead to the same end, but in this world we must limit the powers of the individual and stress the need for interdependency. We must be aware that we are impoverished if we only act as individuals.\(^{545}\) Such a goal is not tied to any one political system, and although Westcott suggested that 'every power, every endowment, every possession is not of private use, but a trust to be administered in the name of the Father for their fellow-men'\(^{546}\) he was far from advocating nationalisation, or indeed any specific programme. Rather, he was wholly concerned with the ethical and religious implications of socialism. And, he believed, social change along these lines, although it appeared impossibly visionary, might be within reach. He saw trade union solidarity as a sign that people were willing to work together: what was needed was to expand this. But the preacher’s task is to get the fundamental message across:

The thoughts of a true Socialism – the thoughts that men are “one man” in Christ, sons of God and brethren, suffering and rejoicing together, that each

\(^{543}\) B F Westcott: ‘Socialism’, an address to the Church Congress at Hull, 1890, in Westcott: *Incarnation and the Common Life*, 223-237, 226

\(^{544}\) *Ibid*

\(^{545}\) *Ibid* 226-7

\(^{546}\) *Ibid* 228
Westcott’s vision of socialism was similar to that of Maurice (see pp 152-3) and it is easy to criticise both for political naivety. Norman comments that Westcott’s ‘description of Political Economy, of the system of “Individualism”, is rather a model of his own devising: it is far too unsubtle, an intellectual foil with very little real existence.’ No doubt this is true in terms of economic history. But that is to misunderstand Westcott’s audience, who were not economists but clergy who might well have believed such stereotypes, and to misunderstand his task, which was, as Norman acknowledges in a later book, to popularise and make safe these ideas within the church: ‘Westcott’s service to the cause of Christian Socialism was in the end an enormously important one precisely because he inspired men who would otherwise have been antagonistic to take it seriously.’

Much the same could be said of the Christian Social Union as a whole. It was essentially a consciousness-raising body for the Church of England, making people aware of social issues and of the relevance of these to their Christian faith. Its aims were

- To claim for the Christian Law the ultimate authority to rule social practice.
- To study in common how to apply the moral truths and principles of Christianity to the social and economic difficulties of the present time.
- To present Christ in practical life as the Living Master and King, the enemy of wrong and selfishness, the power of righteousness and love.

\[547\] Ibid. 232-3
\[548\] E Norman op cit, 1976, 182
\[550\] P D’A Jones: *op cit*. 177
This placing of Christianity not simply in the sphere of individual faith and practice, but for the whole of society, was already taking root in Anglican theology. W H Fremantle’s Bampton Lectures of 1883 on *The World as the Subject of Redemption*\(^{551}\) are symptomatic of a wider movement to recognise the importance of the whole world as the subject of Christian concern, and not just individual salvation\(^{552}\). A number of those who would become leaders of the CSU, including Scott Holland, had addressed the Lambeth Conference of 1888, and the Bishops had agreed to an encyclical deploring ‘excessive inequality in the distribution of this world’s goods, vast accumulation and desperate poverty side by side... The Christian Church is bound, following the teaching of the Master, to aid every wise endeavour which has for its object the material and moral welfare of the poor.'\(^{553}\) The time was ripe for such a body.

But what sort of body was it to be? It was an Anglican and, like many Anglican organisations of that time, a Eucharistic, body which at its peak in 1906 had 6000 members, many of them clergy.\(^{554}\) It has been compared to its contemporary, the Fabian Society\(^{555}\), and it had a similar role, studying issues, informing its members, seeking to influence those in power, and gently moving society in the direction of its beliefs in the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Occasionally it moved into direct action,

\(^{551}\) London, Rivingtons, 1885. The first lecture starts off: ‘The purpose of this course of lectures is to restore the idea of the Christian Church as a moral and social power, present, universal, capable of transforming the whole life of mankind, and destined to accomplish this transformation.’ (p.1) Fremantle was a disciple of Maurice and a founder of the Charity Organisation Society. Chadwick (II, 280-281) comments on Fremantle’s extreme optimism: the final chapter on ‘Realizing the Ideal of a Christian World’ includes in its synopsis the following remarkable statement: ‘Family life, especially in England, is well on the way to perfection. There are however two dangers – (1) the tendency in France and America to limit the duty of parentage and (2) The social evil.’ (xvii: see pp.338-41) The dangers alluded to appear to be birth control and venereal disease, though they are wrapped up in the most coy and general of phrases.

\(^{552}\) See P D’A Jones, *op cit*, 173-6

\(^{553}\) *Ibid.*, 175

\(^{554}\) A Wilkinson, *op cit*, 46

\(^{555}\) *Ibid.*, 45
such as encouraging its members to support employers who treated their workers well. It held conferences and passed resolutions, few of which had much effect.\(^{556}\)

The more activist Christian Socialist organisations, such as Stewart Headlam’s Guild of St. Matthew [GSM] or the Church Socialist League, were critical of the CSU’s woolliness, but it would be wrong to condemn it for what it was not. As Jones points out, its great achievement was to bring social issues into the mainstream of Anglican thinking in the period up to the First World War and indeed beyond – and to ensure that thinking was genuinely social and not just about individual morality\(^ {557}\). To do this effectively it had to attract a wide audience, and that meant that it had to deal in broad generalities with which most people could agree. Bodies like the GSM with a small membership of like-minded radicals could afford to take more extreme lines, and indeed to do so was their raison d’être. There was also, in the attitudes of people like Headlam, a strong desire to shock their more conservative brethren, and one gets the feeling that Headlam was probably never happier than when justifying his interest in dancing and music hall to his Bishop, or supporting Charles Bradlaugh or Oscar Wilde. ‘Holier than thou’ is not confined to the pious: ‘more radical than thou’, especially when linked to ‘more ritualistic than thou’, must have given a lot of fun and satisfaction to people like Hancock, Headlam, Marson and Adderley, as well as sustaining them in their serious commitment to the poor of their parishes\(^ {558}\).

\(^{556}\) One critic (F L Donaldson) characterised the CSU “Here’s a social evil: let’s read a paper on it.” (Jones 220) and Scott Holland commented ruefully on the death of King Leopold of the Belgians that his treatment of African people of the Congo had always been good for a ‘safe’ condemnatory resolution which everyone could agree on. *Ibid.* 222. It all sounds a bit like the reformist bodies which J S Mill criticised – see p 145-6

\(^{557}\) Jones, *op cit*, 217-224

The second generation of Christian Socialists was multi-faceted: it was divided and sometimes competitive denominationally, and it ranged from the mildly melioristic to the extremely radical in terms of political ideology and praxis. As we have seen, the CSU, because of its size and range of members, was committed to a broad and consensual approach to social problems. At best, though, this did not prevent it from having a fairly clear social analysis, which can be found in Scott Holland’s ‘Handbook’ for the CSU, *Our Neighbours*. Scott Holland begins with a recognition of the interconnectedness of the whole of human society, through what we would now call globalisation: we are dependent on people for the things which make up our lives which come from across the globe. In times past, we could know those on whom we depended, but now, with urbanisation and globalisation, this can no longer be the case. Therefore, we can no longer express our sense of obligation and our duty of charity only to those whom we know: we have to express it to the whole of human society, and this inevitably means using political tools. Christians thus have a duty to become involved in politics, for a society based on Christian values must ensure that ‘the weak shall not suffer from the strong, nor the advantage of some be won at the cost of serious damage to others. [Society] undertakes to see to it that all are regarded as neighbours who have obligations to one another, and that none shall be forgotten in the hubbub, or trodden down in the scrimmage.’ In a Maurician way, the answer to the perennial question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ is – everyone. Charity is about face to face relations overcoming the barriers of class, as Butler and Chalmers would have recognised, but it is also about acknowledging the wider implications of social obligations, which Richard Titmuss recognised in his question ‘Who is my stranger?’

But Scott Holland also recognises the importance of the Incarnational theology of Westcott and Gore: ‘If we believe in the Incarnation, then we certainly believe in the

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560 Op cit, 132
entry of God into the very thick of human affairs, [and our faith] is the assertion that God and man cannot be kept in separate compartments.\(^{562}\)

It is easy to see Scott Holland’s political views as naive and optimistic. He acknowledges that younger writers of the time, like Schweitzer and Tyrrell, were critical of incarnationalism as too humanistic, and that it must be redressed by a more apocalyptic theology\(^{563}\), and bearing in mind the date of this book, 1911, one must acknowledge the truth of this criticism, but the strength of the incarnational analysis has struck deep into British theology.

In his Gore lecture of 1998, Rowan Williams summarises the position deriving from Maurice as follows:

> The Incarnation manifested Christ as the head of all humanity, in whom all people in their social and familiar relations were “included”. The state and the family were already, in some sense, in the Church, because they belonged to the “Kingdom of Christ”... The natural relationships of human beings are re-established on firm foundations by God’s assumption of human nature, and so getting these relationships right, allowing them to achieve proper fruition and mutual balance, is a matter of clear theological significance. The Church as a distinct institution is provisional, existing until the natural order of human society has been fully penetrated by the saving presence of God...\(^{564}\)

Williams shows how criticism of this position has been developed by writers like Moltmann, and makes his own comments that Maurice and his followers can too easily allow a normative shift whereby current patterns of family and nation are assumed to be exactly those decreed by God: ‘the doctrine of the Incarnation has come to be functional to a particular social order; and this entails that a criticism of that order in family and society will involve a criticism of the doctrine, and the decay of

\(^{562}\) Ibid, 144-5

\(^{563}\) Ibid 148-9

the social pattern will make the doctrine less believable.... It gives us very little *theological* ground for asking awkward questions about the social realities of belonging, let alone for suggesting that there is a rather fundamental Christian vocation of *not* belonging, in families, nations, patriarchal “organic” states.\textsuperscript{565}

Williams goes on to argue that Jesus came to form communities for mission, ‘different from what we ordinarily think of as “natural” communities: we do not live in given social settings, but rather – through that very understanding of incarnation – to be critical of it, and to create new communities, based indeed on common yet liberating charity.\textsuperscript{566}

Within the Church of England there was a range of Christian Socialist bodies lying at various points along what we would now call the left wing of politics. The CSU as we have seen was a generalist body. The Guild of St Matthew was too much tied up with Headlam’s own personality to become a widespread movement, though it did kick-start a lot of early involvement in sacramentalist left-wing Christian activity. The Church Socialist League, founded in 1906, was a tougher body, responding to the growth of the Labour Party, and owing some of its Northern roots to involvement by members of the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield. Here were churchmen who for the first time took working class politics, and the need for the Church to be engaged with them, seriously: “Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice”, was the motto which it adopted in 1912.\textsuperscript{567} Two years earlier members of the League had helped in the election campaign which saw George Lansbury enter parliament\textsuperscript{568} and he became president of the league in 1912. He led a procession of five hundred people, preceded by a processional cross, to Lambeth palace, calling on the Bishops to support the cause of unemployed workers. Such public action at a time of serious labour unrest caused deep alarm in some episcopal quarters, though it also brought in new members to the League, such as M B Reckitt and R H Tawney.\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{565} Ibid. 228
\textsuperscript{566} Ibid, 231ff
\textsuperscript{567} Jones, *op cit*, 258
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid 269
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid 270-273
However, the outbreak of the First World War made a fundamental shift in the political map, and the League never regained its previous influence.

A weakness of Christian Socialism at the turn of the century was the internecine fighting between its different branches. Within the Church of England there were, as we have seen, a number of different groups, differing in ideology and to some extent churchmanship. The nonconformist churches also had their groups, such as the Christian Socialist League, led by the great Baptist, John Clifford\(^{570}\). There were other free churchmen, such as the Congregationalist, R W Dale who preached a form of municipal Christian duty in Birmingham at the time that Joseph Chamberlain was making that city a showpiece for progressive local government. In Wesleyan Methodism there was the Forward Movement led by Hugh Price Hughes and J Scott Lidgett whose leadership respectively of the West London Mission and the Bermondsey Settlement were examples of wide-ranging church social action, as well as the more political involvement of Peter Thompson and S E Keeble. \(^{571}\)

The area over which these various bodies divided most disastrously was state education, and in particular the Education Bill of 1906. The admittedly thorny questions of how to fund church schools, and what should be the nature of religious education created deep divisions between the Anglicans, led by Gore, and the nonconformists, led by Clifford. Headlam, characteristically, was in favour of a wholly

\(^{570}\) See Jones, 330-48. But there was also a Nonconformist Anti-Socialist Union, dedicated to “exterminate socialism from Church and State”, based at Baptist Church House (Jones 392).

secular system of state education. The division absorbed much energy which Christian Socialists could have put into much more fruitful activities.  

What, then, are we to make of this episode of Christian Socialism? Certainly, it did much to raise awareness of social issues within the churches, and may have had some moderate effect in persuading the leaders of political socialist movements that the churches and their members were not wholly reactionary. There was a range of institutional developments within the churches, most notably the Settlement movement, which were deeply educational for some of their residents, even if their impact on the communities within which they were situated must have been only moderate in many cases. But by recognising an educative and collaborative function, seeking to help build up local working class people’s own social and political competences, they went beyond the traditional moral rescue strategies of earlier evangelical social action – and indeed of much early Christian Socialist work. 

But there is more to it than that. We have seen emerging, most notably through Maurice, a strand of theology which takes a wider understanding of Christian social involvement than earlier Evangelical social work. Vital though the work of someone like Barnardo was, it did not offer any kind of theological or prophetic critique of the society of his time. Here were children who needed saving, whether from physical suffering or spiritual ignorance. It was enough to get on with the task, without asking whether society as a whole was properly structured. Maurice, in his complex and tentative way, started to change that. His belief that the Kingdom of Christ could be here already on earth, linked to the later growth of Incarnational theology led by Illingworth, Gore and Westcott, led to an increasing belief that theology was about the whole of society, and not just about individuals. Such a belief requires that Christians take the nature of society seriously, and it might well of itself have led to greater involvement in social reform on the part of the churches. Although, as Rowan Williams

572 Jones, 205-12
shows, their social understanding may itself have failed to be sufficiently critical and prophetic, it was a start.

What perhaps made a crucial difference to the pattern it took was the growth of social science, and of governmental awareness of social issues. This was not wholly new, of course: we have seen how the understandings of political economy affected the development of social theology in the early nineteenth century. But now economics was giving place to sociology, and there was a much wider range of social theories to choose from. Marxism, French socialism, Comtian positivism were mingled with early empirical studies which came to a peak in the poverty studies of Booth and Rowntree at the end of the century. Further, there was a much wider readership for these studies: they were no longer the preserve of politicians or philosophers, but were also being read by a whole new range of working class activists.\textsuperscript{573}

It is out of this social mix that Christian Socialism emerged. With all their limitations and vested interests, the Christian Churches were nevertheless aware of their duties towards the poor – and of how much more God was committed to the poor than they were. In reading this material I have been constantly struck by similarities between the Christian Socialist movement and the development of Liberation Theology in the 1970s and 1980s. There is the same sense of getting back to basics, the same half-understood gurus, the rediscovery of new sections of the scriptures, the mix of naivety about the possibilities of the poor and the sense that they need setting on the right paths, the same inevitable disappointments, but also the sense of new hope for the Church as a whole – and of liberation, if not for the world, then at least for those engaged in the struggle – and wouldn’t we have been weaker without it?

\textsuperscript{573} It is interesting to consider how some ideas, such as Henry George’s theories of land tax, became so popular and widely read – and how disillusioned those readers were when Arnold Toynbee attacked their hero.
Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

Since this thesis is in a historical format, the conclusion is based on two historical narratives, first of the theology, and secondly of the practice, of charity. It is, however, important to recognise that there are other underlying narratives running at the same time, and influencing both of these. One of these wider themes, taken for granted to a large extent, is the broader narrative of social history – the story of a society which became increasingly urbanised and industrialised, and where the bulk of the population moved from being deferential agricultural workers to forming a self-conscious urban working class, gradually achieving the franchise (though not of course for women until the following century) and exercising increasing political influence.

The second theme, discussed in the introduction and occasionally appearing thereafter is that of gift and control. The giver makes claims over the recipient, either for an equivalent but non-identical gift, or to acknowledge an indebtedness which cannot be returned. In both cases the gift signifies and facilitates an ongoing relationship. Such a model challenges any simplistic supposition that giving is always virtuous. For in anthropological analysis there is, in Mary Douglas’ phrase, no such thing as a free gift\(^{574}\), but rather a series of shifts of power in a relationship. It is the recognition that giving is not just a moral end in itself, but also has an impact on the recipient, which informs much of the narrative of this thesis. As we have seen, in 1700 charity discourse was almost wholly about the benefit to the giver, whereas by 1900 concern was almost wholly focussed on the receiver, with the question of whether that receipt was beneficial or not. Neither of these takes sufficient account of the classic descriptions of agape.

The third underlying theme, following on from the last, is that of noblesse oblige. We have seen in Roman history how gifts attached people to powerful givers as clients, but also how the wealthy were expected to give to society, in order to justify their position as social leaders. This same concept can be seen in 18th century charity sermons. The wealthy should regard themselves as stewards of those gifts with which God had blessed them, but the fact of this blessing also legitimated their position in society, by virtue of their benevolent, condescending activities. It carried with it powers of social control, and the maintenance of an ordered, hierarchical society. Again, while this may be charitable, it is not agape.

The Narrative of Theology

The main narrative, however, has been that of the theology of charity, and that has involved identifying the underlying rationale for Christian behaviour which is more often taken for granted than analysed. The review of charity sermons showed how in the early 18th century there was still quite a strong theological element in some versions of noblesse oblige, which looked back to an older, quasi-feudal society in which people’s place and duties were firmly prescribed, but this was changing. What Butler and other philosophers did was to seek to justify such behaviour in terms of the new Lockean philosophy rather than of traditional Biblical theology. Benevolence, wishing well to others and acting on their behalf, was justified in terms of a ‘true’ understanding of human nature. It is a free-standing emotion, cool in its choice of beneficiaries but not purely calculating about public good in its choice of help, and ranging from the ‘by chance’ element in the parable of the Good Samaritan to the calculating benevolence of gifts to a formal association. Charity sermons are generally pitched at the wealthier sections of society, and contain elements both of voluntarism and of noblesse oblige, but they do not, generally, speak of a necessary response by the hearer to the overwhelming love of God. Butler may tell you that benevolence goes with the grain of human nature, but it is up to you to decide how far to respond.
This changes with the evangelical revival. The love of God demands a response from those who hear the message, and one aspect of that is a warm charity to those in need. Evangelicalism called forth a lively, and at best loving, response to those to whom its followers reached out as to unique children of a loving God. In Wesley’s own practice, this showed itself, among other ways, in social action: the foundation of schools and orphanages, as well as encouraging his followers to be charitable both in action and attitude to others. The Stranger’s Friend Societies, at least in their early stages, are a good example of Wesleyan charity coming up from below, as the response of individual Methodist classes and societies. This is still, though, in a period when most charity was likely to be local and informal, or where charitable donations would follow fairly well-established patterns. It is not easy to determine whether much Wesleyan or other early evangelical charity was notably different from patterns of charity elsewhere, and, if evangelicals appeared to be more charitable than their neighbours, whether this was a consequence of what I have called seriousness in religion rather than something specifically evangelical. Evangelical theology, however, moved away from a quasi-Pelagian emphasis in charity sermons on the merits to be acquired by givers to a belief that charity, following conversion, should rather be seen as evidence that the convert was indeed now reconciled to God and able to respond to the Christian’s calling to care for others.

The more obvious shift in Evangelical charity – and the use of the capital letter is deliberate – is when the ‘Saints’ or Clapham Sect, with Wilberforce to the fore, started to use political pressure to achieve charitable and moral ends. The work of the Anti-Slavery Society and of the Proclamation Society are both in their different ways illustrations of how effective this was. We can see here an example of how charitable practice affected Christian praxis. The 18th century was a period of growing associations at all levels of society, and charities were certainly not immune to this development. Associations were the new way of forming effective charities, and they followed a common pattern, just as modern charities may take particular forms for
legal or fiscal reasons. The Anti-Slavery movement became such an effective force partly because the Quakers had such a wide national network, which allowed local branches to be established very quickly. Methodism was initially a connexion not only of preachers, but of local societies. Greater ease of travel and other communications, including a developing press, spread ideas more rapidly. The idea of charity schools was popularised widely, and promoted by bodies like the SPCK, and fundraising could be promoted on a national basis, including for the work of overseas missions.

Second generation evangelicalism reacted much more directly to social conditions than previous schools of theology – again, a sign of how society itself was changing. In particular, evangelical seriousness linked with an awareness of the religious ignorance and, to evangelical eyes, moral depravity of so many of the poor, when added to the growth of associational pressure bodies, gives a background to F K Brown’s interpretation of Wilberforcean religion, even if this is not the whole story. In this world, charity was expressed primarily not in terms of financial or material support but in religious and moral instruction, and in helping people to come to terms with their station in life.

Charitable action took place within a belief in the providential direction of society, while also recognising that the other was ‘a man and a brother’ who often needed help. It is not, then, surprising that the next step was the development of Christian Economics in the work of Sumner and of Chalmers. Greater awareness of social conditions, added to the beginnings of empirical social science – economics and demography – gave more direction to concern for an effective moral base to society. God had not just given us insight into human nature, as Butler suggested, but into the workings of the whole of society. As with the physical sciences in the late 17th century, so now with economics, it was possible to identify laws which determined the working

\[575\] For a modern interpretation of this trend see P Di Maggio and W W Powell ‘The Iron Cage Revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organisational fields’, American Sociological Review, 48 (1983), 147-60
of society, and which God was now enabling people to discover. Sumner’s *Treatise* was a serious attempt, based on historical and current empirical evidence, to understand how God intended society to operate, while at the same time prudentially resolving the dangers of overpopulation which Malthus had identified. Charity, though important, was only relevant if it encouraged people to behave appropriately, and consequently much of the institutional charity which Sumner sponsored involved churches, schools and hospitals. Evangelical religion, with its belief in this life as a time of testing, allowed justification for social inequalities.

Chalmers picked up the same themes, but with more direct concern about the moral direction of the poor. He valued the mutuality which the poor of his parish practised, seeing in this a proper response to the resources which God made available to his people. This mutuality could be shared with others through wider associations, such as Bible Societies. But what he would not countenance was any idea that the poor had rights: such beliefs undermined the truths of Malthusianism, leading to the assumption that someone, somewhere (and the more distant the more bottomless the pit of resources), would supply their needs: distant gifts did not carry the same implication of the need for repayment. For Sumner and Chalmers and their followers, evangelicalism fitted well with the intellectual ideas of their time, and their writings could be seen both as apologetic and as setting moral standards for their time.

Those standards were however being applied in a changing society, in which the working classes were no longer content to have their place in society dictated by the traditionally powerful. The 1840s in particular were a period of extreme suffering among the new industrial classes, and the consequent deep resentment was expressed in Chartist agitation. This, and contemporary French socialism, were introduced by J M Ludlow to F D Maurice, who had already, in *The Kingdom of Christ* begun to explore a different way of understanding society from that of the evangelicals. The emphasis was no longer that of rescuing individuals from a sinful world, but rather a belief that God had created this world for humankind, leaving them the task of seeking to create
Christ’s kingdom for all people now. Maurice’s understanding of socialism was limited, and his social remedies often impractical, but his willingness to discuss with working class people, and particularly his support for the Working Men’s College, in many ways prefigured the commitment of young graduates to the settlement movement thirty years later. Here was a theology which started with the recipients’ needs, rather than with the gifts of the wealthy, and shared in forming new alliances, both intellectual and political, based on new ideas of liberty and justice.

Maurice had urged younger Christians to go, in a non-sectarian spirit, to work in the new industrial towns. The second generation of Christian Socialists responded, aided by the theology of the Lux Mundi group. Instead of a belief in the sinfulness of fallen humanity, there was now a sense that it was society which was sinful – what Beatrice Webb identified as ‘a new consciousness of sin ... that the industrial organization which had yielded rent, interest and profit on a stupendous scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for the majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain’\textsuperscript{576}. For many Christian Socialists the guilt lay with the Church, rather than with those traditionally identified as sinners. At best, this had a positive effect on the church at large, from Westcott in his generalised but acceptable theology, to the civic and political theology of Dale, Price Hughes and Scott Lidgett, and the popularisation of social issues of writers like Scott Holland, through to the more revolutionary attitudes of the Guild of St Matthew and other movements. Christian Socialism was too fissile and too socially optimistic to last, and it lost much of its influence after World War I, but it can be seen as a new point of linking with charity praxis, especially in calling for fundamental social change rather than band-aid for individuals.

Meanwhile, secular ideas of charity were also changing. For first generation utilitarians there was the hope that society could be planned to operate in a rational way, to the benefit of most people, but it remained to J S Mill to ask how people were to be

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{576} B Webb: My Apprenticeship, London, Longmans, 1926, 179}
inspired to work to this end, and by what moral code. Mill’s adoption and popularisation of Comte’s altruism fitted with the utilitarian question of the value of charity. If there was no divine merit to be gained from charitable acts, then such acts would have to be judged in terms of their benefit to the recipient. The true altruist was the one who acted wholly to the other’s benefit, and this theme continued, though with a Pauline tinge, in Green’s idealism. But, of course, the decision as to what would benefit the recipient remained with the donor. Even when Toynbee at his most impassioned declared that the rich had given the poor charity instead of justice, it was still his own brand of altruism that he looked to the poor to reciprocate with. Charity was still to be judged in terms of deserving need.

We thus find two types of theological development. On the one hand, there is ‘pure’ theology, both evangelical and Maurician, which works outward from the nature and love of God and concludes from this that certain types of agapeistic response are required. On the other hand, there is a theology, sometimes apologetic, which responds to contemporary dominant ideas. Thus, Butler challenges Hobbes’ view of human selfishness, and offers an ethical theology which accords with the early enlightenment ideas of the time, of a model of human nature with built-in benevolence. Sumner and other Christian Economists are concerned to justify a world apparently under threat of Malthusian extinction.

The position in the later nineteenth century is more complex. There was a quest for disinterested altruism, which supports the idea of non-theistic charity. Others, meanwhile, turned to a concept of social justice, for which charity is an inadequate substitute. Theology, then, can influence ideas of charity, but often in the context of wider social and political perceptions of the human condition. But how far does this affect the practice of charity?
The Narrative of Charity Practice

Up to the early 19th century theology and charity still operated from a common model of a hierarchical society supported by a theology which required in exchange that the rich should provide basic alms for the poor who were ‘always with them’. For most people, it would have been inconceivable to justify charity in any other terms. The paradigm parable was that of the sheep and the goats, with the promise of reward to the givers, with thanks to the poor who thus gave the rich the opportunity to act charitably.

But clearly, other factors were at work, and the narrative of charity began to turn increasingly on its effects on the receiver. In the early 18th century most charity was personal, occasional, even spontaneous – at best, an act of momentary agape, though much no doubt contained elements of self-congratulatory ostentation. The growth of associational charities modified this, not necessarily in the motivation of the givers, but in the direction of the gift, which had to appeal to a wide range of subscribers. We might hope that, at its best, this would create a form of structural agape, and this might well describe the acts of a man like Coram, but wider accountabilities created a need for wider motivation: the ambiguities of Andrews’ title, Philanthropy and Police, shows that society needed ordering, and implies that social control was an element of philanthropy, even while it worked for social improvement. Associational charity made possible the development of pressure groups, including the Anti-Slavery Society, but also imposed morality through the work of the Proclamation Society and its successors.

577 The 18th century could be seen as an age of associations – from Wesleyan connexionalism to burgeoning charities and friendly societies.
578 In the sense of administrative policy (see p 47)
One element of this was to encourage mutuality among the poor. Changes in agricultural and industrial employment meant that they were more dependent on a wage economy than on small-holding, at a time when it was widely believed that there was much fuller understanding of economics, and that low wages were inevitable. Malthusianism required restraint from the poor, and an acceptance that poverty would be always with them.

Nineteenth century social policy up to the coming of the working class franchise was largely controlling or utilitarian (public health provision, for example, was in Chadwick’s argument more effective as a means of reducing poverty than the Poor Law)\textsuperscript{579}. Charity practice was more varied. On the one hand, demand from donors was for order and for benevolence, whereas from recipients it was for justice, and the meeting of their perceived needs. The provision of charity depended on resources, on knowledge of needs, and of methods of responding to them. This required an organisational base to deliver services, whether the Poor Law or the mix of charities, from large to small, from ‘professional’ to wholly voluntary. It was also influenced by the growth of professional skills among doctors, teachers, social workers (from District Visitors to COS workers), and the accountability of those workers to their employers and subscribers.

The rationale for charitable action in the nineteenth century thus increasingly depended on a professional knowledge base rather than on religious or other external ideologies, an independence which was made easier by the development of secular altruistic beliefs, whether utilitarian or idealistic. Charity was apparently secularised and professionalised, but those running charities still acted very much within dominant ideas of the time: the poor were to be moulded – re-formed in fact – according to middle class values.

This, though, is to impute a simple model of charity development to what was a much more complex range of organisations and styles of work. Most charities were still small, local, and wholly run by volunteers. The majority in the nineteenth century were evangelical in outlook, and concerned entirely with the needs of individuals. But at the other extreme, there were schools, hospitals, and other large institutions, some run by charismatic individuals, such as Barnardo, and others by churches. Indeed, the most obvious thing about charity in these two hundred years is its growth in sheer numbers, in the shift from informal to formal benevolence and in the widening of the social classes giving to charity, which by the end of the period included working class contributors to such items as regular hospital collections.

All this, of course, is part of a move towards a formalisation of the welfare system, which itself makes for a complex story. We cannot now address the comparative question of why the UK adopted a model of a mixed, non-insurance based, welfare state. Part of the answer relates to Britain’s early experience of industrialisation, the fear of the financial burden of pauperism, and the extreme size of the Poor Law, which, almost by accident, was by the end of the 19th century running the largest public hospital system in Europe. The Goschen Minute of 1869 (see p 171) was symbolic of the development of a niche market for the voluntary sector among the ‘deserving poor’, though there were very many charities, particularly evangelical ones, which reached a much lower group of people in need, for whom desert was not an issue.

But despite the evangelical dominance (and perhaps because many of these charities were not affiliated to any one denomination) charities were not the preserve of any one single state church, as happened in some European countries, and neither was there the ‘pillarisation’ of denominational provision which one finds in countries like Germany and Holland. Rather, the history of conflict over church schools at the end of the century suggested a society which would rather not have religious dominance of welfare. We thus have a strong, religiously motivated but not religiously governed
voluntary sector, with many independent bodies and with an ideological split between those which emphasised their duty to the deserving poor, and others which took a broader view of the needs of the working class. In 1900 the sector was strong, and showed signs of growing, but by the 1930s it was clear that this would only continue in partnership with a growing statutory sector, and with growing state finance. The 19th century picture of charity does not appear to follow that of theological thinking, and its ideologies are a mix of religious and secular. So what conclusions can we draw from the interplay between the two?

The Interplay between Them

In some ways, the narrative seems to be of a growing divide between charity and theology. In the early 18th century there was congruence between the two: theological benevolence was reflected in the work of the new associational charities, with charity sermons providing a mid-point between theology and practice. The benevolence paradigm sat comfortably in a hierarchical society, and the two sides were in an easy, symbiotic relationship.

With the development of evangelicalism in the second half of the century things become more complex. The personal call to seriousness or ‘vital religion’ was allied to a desire to bring the Gospel message to those newly identified as living outside the sphere of mainstream religion. But these Godless classes in growing cities and new industrial areas were also perceived by many people as a threat to the social order, and approaches to charity become more linked to social control as the century progresses, until the Wilberforcean meld of evangelical religion, compassion for the oppressed, the reform of morals and political repression (in the light of the French Revolution and subsequent wars) became the new dominant theological paradigm. It is tempting to see this whole movement as an example of the dominant social classes

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responding to a perceived threat against themselves by adopting first a theology, and secondly an approach to charity which strengthened their own position, and of course both Wesley and Wilberforce have been criticised by writers such as E P Thompson and F K Brown very much in these terms. But to rely wholly on this model is to take too simplistic an approach to a complex set of issues. On the one hand, while the evangelical revival did have a repressive side, it was much more than that, and we have seen that Wesley took a much more accepting approach to the poor than was common in his time. And politically, it is by no means clear that, without the French Revolution, there would not have been a more reformist approach to British politics than was actually the case. The abolition of slavery, complex though it was, contained genuine elements of belief in the importance of freedom, which was widespread in the 1780s, even if they took a long time to resurface after the Napoleonic period.

We are thus confronted with what we should indeed see as the interplay of a variety of inputs, rather than a simple imposition of reactionary power. Ideas and practice influence each other, rather than there being one single dominant thread. In particular, evangelicalism can be seen as enlivening and spreading the idea of agape to one’s neighbour further than the intellectual and formal top-down benevolence of Butler and other early 18th century thinkers, and paving the way for further developments, particular in the work of Chalmers.

The other side, though, is the repressive outcome of early 19th century social policy, culminating in the New Poor Law, which was indeed backed up by dominant Christian Economic theology. Together, the two strands of evangelical thought created a strong but limited tradition of charity while continuing to respond to fear of social unrest and social change. The conflict between these two continued, but at the same time charitable and other agencies took on a life of their own, dominated by professionals applying their own understandings of social policy, whilst theology, in its more radical manifestations, moved, as we have seen, towards a prophetic proclamation of justice.
for the poor. Throughout, though, there was the basic belief that all people matter to God, and therefore to others.

We can see the complexities of the interplay in the debate over the relative importance of charity for the giver and the receiver. Clearly, there was a shift from the one to the other, but how far was this driven by theological change, and how far by the instrumental operation of charities? Certainly, the fact that associational charities were competing with one another forced them to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of their outputs, and this comes to tie in with its utilitarian relevance for political economy, and it is also clear that as charity became more professionalised, there was a greater awareness of its outcomes. But the shift to evangelical theology led to a greater concentration on the needs of the recipient, rather than a Pelagian concern with the reward to the giver. This had a permanent effect on theological understandings of charity, and helps to explain why so many evangelical charities were founded in the nineteenth century.

What are the Goals of Charity?

We have seen that the debate about charity has swung between two poles: its value to the giver and its value to the receiver – and we could add to this its value to society at large. The value to the giver, if we discount a Pelagian belief that God will reward our good deeds, is best expressed in Butler’s argument that in acting charitably we are best expressing our own human nature. While we may not accept this in terms of deterministic psychology, we may nevertheless believe, in John Harrod’s term, that ‘The end of human life is to be found within our mutual flourishing...in just and decent relationships.’ A way of life which is directed to the good of others can empirically be seen to be a fulfilling and happy life, just as much, or more than, a hedonistic, materialist life, and it contains many positives for society as a whole. To aspire to such a life is a rational life-choice.

581 J Harrod: Weaving the Tapestry of Moral Judgement, Peterborough, Epworth, 2007, 120
If, in so doing, one is also responding to one’s experience of and belief in the love of God, that faith will give believers an example and motivation for charitable behaviour, and may indeed, if they follow Nygren and other theologians of love, give them access to grace which will strengthen and direct this love into proper channels, in imitation of the love of God seen supremely in Christ.

But having said that charity is both divinely ordained and good for the believer who follows an agapeistic life, we still have to consider the effect of the gifts of charity which we offer on the recipient. We need to move beyond the cheap political thinking which results in demands that people should be compelled to undertake community service. Why should the helpless old have to suffer the unwilling help of the delinquent young? Any charitable gifts must be in a form which will liberate the recipients, rather than enslaving them, in Loch’s terms. This implies that the recipients should, wherever possible, be able to choose the help offered, and be enabled, if appropriate, to reciprocate to others, rather than to the initial givers.

Such giving may take place in a variety of ways. One, which is stressed by a number of the authors we have considered, and especially Chalmers, is by creating closer primary links between people, so that they will respond in a ‘neighbourly’ fashion to those in need in their immediate locality. Many writers, from Butler onwards, stress the problems of growing social and physical distance between the haves and the have-nots, though we should note that simply giving charity from the rich to the poor may exacerbate rather than reduce such social distance. But there is clearly a link to be explored between charity, community, and indeed communitarianism. As Chalmers’ Glasgow experiment showed, not all needs can be met locally, but the generation of

583 See Lansley: Reciprocity, op cit (1990)
social capital, by liberating people’s capacity to give reciprocal help in their local communities, is of major importance to society.

At the other extreme is the anonymous gift. Richard Titmuss discussed an extreme form of this in his book, *The Gift Relationship*, which deals with blood donations. Donors cannot have any say as to who should receive their blood, nor does the recipient know who gave it. It is simply an expression of giving to society, because, ultimately, a giving society is a good society, and people decide not to be free riders on the system. Titmuss expanded this to a wider argument, that people living in a welfare state should still be able to make personal, supererogatory donations to their fellow citizens.

We have already seen how Scott Holland argued that our neighbours may be found throughout the world, and this is reflected in many World Development charities today. Some of these sprung up in the aftermath of war, including the Save the Children Fund, which offered help to children in defeated European countries after the Second World War. So did an apparently quixotic scheme, headed by Victor Gollancz and Eleanor Rathbone, which demanded of the government that people should be allowed to donate some of their food coupons to those starving in Germany. Susan Pedersen comments:

> In the grand scheme of things, these food parcels may have been only a drop in a well of need, but they did more (as Rathbone would have predicted) to re-knit bonds of humanity and fellow-feeling between Britons and Germans than many larger, more institutional, efforts.

This is charity, certainly. It was perhaps less than justice, but justice was not within the reach of givers. It was more than giving to establish power, and it had a value totally

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585 R M Titmuss: *op cit*
586 S Pedersen: *op cit*, 373
separate from whatever motivated the givers. Whether the givers saw it in those terms, it was spontaneous, indifferent to value, creative and the initiator of fellowship – in short, it was agape\textsuperscript{587}. Augustine would have known that it came from God, the source of all love.

But in what forms should charity be recognised? We have seen how, in most of the period studied, charity has been seen as a one-way gift, of greater or lesser sensitivity, occasionally sacrificial, but seldom reaching beyond benevolent kindness. Slowly, there emerges a recognition that charity involves justice, and that these are not abstract concepts but ideologies of praxis within a specific social context. The development which we have traced runs in an inverted Y shape with ideas of ‘scientific charity’ diverging from attempts at social justice in the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

At a time when discussions of the place of the third sector in civil society have once again come to the fore, whether in terms of citizen contributions to the Big Society and the role of charities in service delivery, or out of questions of whether and how human happiness derives as much or more from giving as from receiving, it is important that we should continue to seek to understand and practise agape-charity and shalom-justice. It is hoped that this study, in itself an exercise in Maurician digging, may provide part of the base from which such further explorations may be launched. There are plenty of areas for further historical research in this field, some listed on page 12 above, but ultimately the creation of the just, charitable society must remain the goal.

Charity is a social virtue: like all gift exchanges, it is about relationships. The Prayer Book recognised this when it spoke of those who are “in love and charity with [their] neighbours” – whether those are face to face neighbours or ‘strangers’. It involves mutuality and community, and Milbank is surely right in recognising that it also reflects the relationship within the Trinitarian Godhead. The immediate content of charity may vary: much of what was once thought of as charity is now seen as a necessary state response to citizens’ human rights. The church, since the second generation of Christian Socialists, and at many other times as well, has moved from simple giving to

\textsuperscript{587}See p 18 above
the prophetic proclamation of the need for justice. But the gift of God, the gift to the other, the liberation of the other to give again – all these remain: now abideth faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of these is charity. (1 Cor. 13.13).
Appendix: The theology of CS Loch

Loch, says Jane Lewis, ‘was a strongly committed Christian.'\(^{588}\) His diary, a copy of which is in the University of London Library, gives plenty of evidence of Loch’s deep religious sense, but this needs unpacking to understand how it relates to attitudes of the time. The most obvious element in Loch’s religion is a deeply ingrained sense of duty. In an introspective diary entry \(^{589}\) of 1877, he asks: ‘What can I do to make my life more joyful, less anxious, to act up to my resolutions, without worry or strain?’ He sets out all the tasks he believes he should be doing, but accepts that he will not achieve them all. ‘You will’, he tells himself, ‘check black thoughts, by sharp flashes of faith in God – you will abase yourself, not in half-heartedness, but wholly and like one who knows he is one among millions and among a countless host of beings perished and beings to come. So these things, to know my fellow-men, to learn our country’s laws, to know the thoughts of the “artists” of the earth, to do daily work humbly, worshipping the sun while one digs in the field, praying and working and believing always – these things I would do without distraction, very cheerfully and very patiently. May I do so in all steadfast truthfulness, the words being writ to bind me thereunto.’ His pattern day describes this earnest life: ‘Up at 6. 6.30 to 8 hard and daily bread reading. Breakfast by 8. 8.30-9 reading of Bible, “Imitation of Christ” or any other books which have the stamp of greatness and will teach one how to live rightly. Then the daily accounts. Then off to the office till 6. At home again by 6.30 (Ah! could it be so) a tea to be ready then [tea, toast and a perfectly boiled egg]. Then with the brain and body refreshed and yet at ease we should read, S[ophia] and I, together or separately, some book, according to the standard of wise choice. Then at 9.15 supper;

\(^{588}\) J Lewis: op cit., 1995, 28
\(^{589}\) C S Loch, Diary, (University of London Library MS801) 15 April 1877
and then some book of casual temporary importance; and bed at 10.15.' But the pressures of work will seldom allow this.

Similar duties should be taken on by others, accepting the pressures of the world and the limitations which this imposes (the language of commitment, conversion and suffering is significant): ‘There are various conversions; the young man has to lay aside his individuality, merge his revolutionary ideals in the slow progress of an aged world; the young find their position and throw their power into the life work of the nurture of children or in some more public work; those in sorrow have at one time or another [eg through bereavement, afflicted in body or estate] to realise that religion is the religion of sorrow – the cheerful self-denial which is a wise sorrow and the peace which the world cannot give.... The affliction of body or estate requires other healing as well as that of money or food or physic.’ ‘Practical Charity’ is based on ‘sympathy, the suffering with those to whom the loving act is done’, whether in the relief of material need or mental affliction. Whatever faith people may profess, it is ‘consoling to find how similarly good people act... Do and thou shalt learn is a most Christian maxim.’ And not only Christ, but great men – Paul, Thomas à Kempis, Carlyle – ‘all preach one doctrine – the death of self, the life of God.’

Loch believed that a religious motivation was necessary: ‘To get the right men [for local action] a religious basis must be found. The men will only come forward if they feel they have a mission. The exposition of our work is a bare crust: they must be partakers in the unity of the spirit, the “humanity” which underlies it.’ There is an interesting side comment that local COS Committees should have ‘officers of the stamp of liberal curates’ despite the expense. Perhaps the liberal curates might have shared the views of a later one of their number, Frederick D’Aeth, who commented on the frustration of church work in Leytonstone in the early 1900s:

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590 Diary 9 Sept 1877
591 Diary 19 Sept 1879
592 Diary 14 Sept 1876
593 Ibid.
594 Diary 12 Sept 1877
595 Diary, 30 April 1877
596 Diary 20 Sept 1876
The whole neighbourhood is dull.... the place is a sort of byway...out of the mainstream of the traffic of life, the uncared for, unknown, dull, commonplace folk, who are swept aside by competition with keener intelligences and more vigorous characters, and settle down here...to inefficiently toil and die....What is the work that the cleric or social worker finds ready for him?’

D’Aeth finally left the church in 1905, and moved to Liverpool, where he became the first lecturer in Social Science at the University, and then the founder Secretary of Liverpool Council for Voluntary Aid.\textsuperscript{597}

Religion, then, is a motivator of duty: but what are the beliefs that inform religion? Here we find Loch following very much the style of thinking of his teacher, T H Green. Like Green, Loch is trying to work out an idealist, dogma-free religion, without miracles\textsuperscript{598}. Traditional Christianity may be challenged by Biblical studies and scientific discoveries\textsuperscript{599}, but for Loch there is an underlying religious sense located within the mind, but which can be expressed in non-dogmatic terms so that a ‘Christianity of atheism’ is possible\textsuperscript{600}. ‘Christ realises His work and His Kingdom as not of this world – i.e., not material: His mission is to bring this Kingdom on to the earth.’ It does not apply to some future state, but exists ‘now, within us’; ‘it is spiritual and present and to come on earth. And our father in heaven is not a being far away but one working in us.’ This father is power personified (though Loch does not clarify the nature of this power except that God is ‘the good, working’): Jesus spoke of it as ‘Father’ – ‘a word full of true meaning’, whereas the scientific word power is somehow to denigrate it.\textsuperscript{601}

Prayer is an expression of the meaning of life, not petitions for material things. “‘Our Daily Bread” is a prayer for sufficiency from those who have given up all, who are risking all, a wish that they may have such sustenance as is necessary for that.’ There is no element of selfishness in this prayer: it is rather ‘a longing, the expression of the


\textsuperscript{598} \textit{Diary}, 20 July 1879

\textsuperscript{599} \textit{Diary} 29 Nov 1879

\textsuperscript{600} \textit{Diary} 4 Oct 1881

\textsuperscript{601} \textit{Diary} 29 Nov 1879
life’s work, in words, the earnest desire that it may be frustrated by no trespass or
temptation, that the will of God and the working out of the good, may be done
without let or hindrance through us and by us. ⁶⁰² Prayer thus becomes central to
religion: an appeal to the force and father within us, linking us to all men [and women]
and to all creation, apprehended through the mind. Prayer is appealing to God within
us. ‘This will seem to be praying to oneself, and in a sense it is: it is appealing to the
greater, higher nature within us, the nature which in different degrees and under
different conditions all creation has.’ So prayer is not so much petition as longing.
Prayer puts us in a state for the doing of good. The real efficacy and power of prayer
thus remain; the necessity for it as a means of being good is plain... the truth of its
spirit, all that is has ever done or can do for those who pray is inalienable; it is a fact of
nature, which cannot be set aside. ⁶⁰³

For Loch, then religion becomes very much a sense of an internal power, linking the
individual to a universal ideal of social goodness, and obliging people to commit and
direct their lives to these ends. The links to Green’s philosophy, and, to some extent, to
Maurice’s concept of the Kingdom of Christ already existing within the world, are plain.

But this also means that true charitable work is very demanding. As in his other
writings, Loch is scathing in his diary about those who see giving a little relief as an
easy option⁶⁰⁴. Nor is Christianity a soft option – or if it is, then it must be rethought:
‘Justice and the laws of nature are the facts of the world. Be unjust, evil follows. Break
the laws of nature, misery follows. Of the iron sway of the law... there is no dispute. It
is, and the concept of God, the being of all things is one with it: God, being and law are
one, and without thought is no being. If Christianity runs counter to it so much the
worse for Christianity. What is the meaning of Christianity, then? ....It seems to be that
it deals with those who fail to keep the law. It says to each ask yourself, have you kept
the law in your own life or adopted a lower standard than was consciously within your
reach?... Most will answer, “I have not done what I should. Hence my weakness now.”
Christianity replies “Humble yourself, be as a little child. Justice is not just for self-

⁶⁰² Ibid
⁶⁰³ Ibid.
⁶⁰⁴ Eg., Diary 17 Sept 1877
gratification’s sake. Laws are enforced for the people’s good: else they are in fact no laws... . So put yourself under the laws again, fully and humbly as best you can. God’s presence is in you. Be humble, re-attach yourself. So will your misery be lost, though the return to life is a stiff business.'

And clearly this sense of guilt at failure to achieve enough is always present in Loch’s self-examinations: the sense of ‘despair of living with the mind of Christ is so heart-breaking, and the conviction of my sin is so piercing and disappointment of failure, of not doing what one hoped, of having tottered and stumbled and debased oneself in the very brightness of my ideal is so bitter.... And, Lord, as this woe is great to me, grant that ... I may be called to be thy apostle, I care not how, in what smallest sphere, to preach this truth which those who should preach to us do not tell us. Instead of precept and law we must have this. Here alone is peace – thy peace, Lord.' It is interesting that those whom Loch quotes as having come through this sense of unworthiness come very much from the Puritan tradition – Fox, Bunyan, Milton and Cromwell.

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605 Diary 22 Sept 1880
606 Diary 13 Sept 1877
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