

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The Honourable and Reverend Baptist Wriothsesley<sup>1</sup> Noel (1798–1873)<sup>2</sup> was a towering figure in nineteenth-century English Evangelicalism whose influence has been undervalued since his death, by Anglicans because he seceded to the Baptists at the height of his ministerial career and by Baptists because his secession has been the major fact they have remembered. Since then, aspects of his emphases have been recalled in various discussions but not his overall significance. As a corrective of this neglect, this book examines his life and ministry in relation to the Church of England, the Baptist denomination,<sup>3</sup> and English Evangelicalism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Pronounced by the family today ‘Roths-lee’ with a short ‘o’.

<sup>2</sup>. Different years have been proposed in the past and evidence for these being correct will be presented in due course.

<sup>3</sup>. There were historically two main Baptist denominations, the Particular and the General Baptists. Particular Baptists held the Calvinist doctrine of a limited, or particular, atonement and General Baptists the Arminian doctrine of a universal, or general, atonement. In 1832 the Particular Baptists changed their confessional stance in favour of becoming a broader Evangelical body, though some maintained the older position in their churches. Noel associated with them. The two bodies united in 1891. For further information see J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), ch.5, pp. 96–157.

<sup>4</sup>. In view of the increasing use of ‘Evangelical’ as a synonym for ‘zealous’, the term will be capitalised in this study as an indication of its reference to a distinct religious movement.

Noel was an aristocratic minister with a remarkable reputation for saintliness. The Scottish Disruption minister Thomas Brown said of him, 'He was one of the most estimable and lovable of men, whose "memory is blessed"'.<sup>5</sup> In the Evangelical Alliance Annual Report for 1873 his death was noticed and it was said of him, 'It is not easy to name anyone more highly or universally esteemed during a long career than Mr Noel'.<sup>6</sup> From 1826 to 1849 he ministered within the Church of England and from 1850 until his retirement from local church leadership in 1868 within the Baptist denomination. An immensely popular preacher,<sup>7</sup> he was also an intellectual who published some ninety books and pamphlets, two thirds of them devotional in nature and the remainder dealing with religious or political controversies, in particular Protestant orthodoxies or rejections of Roman Catholic and Tractarian beliefs, and social and ecclesiastical reforms. The American scholar Grayson Carter has reckoned that 'by 1848 nine of his published works had sold over 108,000 copies, making him one of the most popular religious authors of the Victorian era'.<sup>8</sup>

During his Anglican period Noel would become an internationally known preacher, a respected controversialist, a royal chaplain, and a prominent Evangelical whose advice on social and religious affairs was widely sought, including by the British government. From the mid 1830s onward, Noel built ever closer relationships with his Nonconformist ministerial neighbours in London while turning an increasingly critical eye upon his own tradition. Paradoxically, during the same period he also sought to build his Anglican identity, leading to his appointment in 1841 as a royal chaplain. Nevertheless, he grew increasingly disillusioned with the Church of England. In 1848 he resigned his ministry and in 1849 seceded. Within a few months he underwent credobaptism before entering

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<sup>5</sup> Many testimonies to his character will be found in this study. This one comes from Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption 1843* (Edinburgh: MacNiven and Wallace, 1893), p. 534.

<sup>6</sup> *Evangelical Christendom*, vol.XXVII, 1873, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene Stock, the late-nineteenth-century historian of the CMS, recorded Baptist Noel and his older clerical brother Gerard as 'two of the most powerful speakers and preachers of the day' but singled out Baptist not only as the greater of them but as one of the greatest Anglican preachers of the century. See Stock's *History of the Church Missionary Society* vol.1 (London: CMS, 1899), p. 259. According to one newspaper report, he was the most highly regarded English preacher by Merle D'Aubigné (*The Atlas*, Saturday 19 February 1848, p. 10).

<sup>8</sup> Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c.1800–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 314, fn. 9.

the Baptist ministry. He would remain nationally famous and successful, an advocate for Evangelicalism, the key leader in London of the 1858–63 revival and twice was elected as chairman of the Baptist denomination. Yet, by the time of his death his star had completely fallen. There was not even produced the usual ‘tombstone biography’ beloved of Victorians, perhaps because his family would not give access to his private papers because they had not agreed with Noel’s move into Nonconformity.

A more personal reason for his neglect will also be explored in this study. Baptist Noel, it will be argued, was a man without followers, a lone figure at the end of his life because he was a lone figure throughout it, a man drawn by his independence of character and sense of personal honour to disagreeing not only with his theological opponents but with his Evangelical friends as well, though with unfailing courtesy to both. He was more a luminary than a leader. This neglect meant that his significance came to be overlooked and then forgotten. Noel did not simply die but was effectively deleted from the story of Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century despite having been a remarkably important figure within it.

Evangelicalism is now generally accepted in scholarly studies as a movement characterised by four emphases in biblicism, activism, conversionism, and crucicentrism: the so-called ‘Bebbington quadrilateral’.<sup>9</sup> Although that encompasses the Evangelicals with which this study will be mainly concerned, it is necessary to realise that it encompasses also people they would not themselves have recognised as fellow Evangelicals. One sure indication of this was the doctrinal basis of the body designed to provide a place of mutual recognition and cooperation, the Evangelical Alliance, drawn up at its foundation in 1846 to provide a minimal statement of commonly agreed Evangelical convictions. Furthermore, the term will apply not to the Anglican Evangelicals alone, but to all those who held the same concepts of atonement and personal conversion, both Anglican and Nonconformist, because as Bruce Hindmarsh has convincingly argued, they all belonged to the same theological movement and even a spiritual network that straddled denominational boundaries,<sup>10</sup> the latter point especially being emphasised by John Wolfe.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 2, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chs. 1–3, pp. 77–103.

<sup>11</sup> See the diagram of Evangelical interdenominational relationships in John Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843–1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 24.

I will use various terms to describe Evangelicals working together across denominational boundaries. 'Interdenominational' will describe cooperation between people of different denominations without them lessening their commitment to their own tradition. 'Pan-denominational' will describe cooperation between people without them regarding such denominational allegiances. 'Non-denominational' will refer to cooperation between people in movements which included within their purpose or practice creating events or bodies independent of, but not hostile to, denominational allegiances. 'Undenominational' will refer peculiarly to congregations or individuals that eschewed entirely any identification with a denominational structure.<sup>12</sup>

Noel, rather than being all his life a non-denominational or at least pan-denominational Christian as portrayed by previous scholars, progressed through an original interdenominational approach to fellow Evangelicals to a pan-denominational one while still an Anglican and may, late in his life, have adopted an even looser attitude. He was a man whose choices had more to do with obeying principle than with pleasing people, though concerned *about* people he certainly was.

Noel received virtually no scholarly attention until comparatively recently, even if one includes older works written since his death. Three articles appeared a generation ago in the *Baptist Quarterly*. In 1963 Kenneth Short discussed Noel's social conscience and courage as a controversialist<sup>13</sup> and in 1966 he analysed Noel's engagement in fighting against the 'Corn Laws'.<sup>14</sup> In 1972 a young David Bebbington provided the very first general, if brief, assessment of his life and work, in which with solid research on limited sources he represented the key to understanding Noel as him being 'undenominational'<sup>15</sup> throughout his ministry.<sup>16</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup>. See the essay by Tim Grass, 'Undenominationalism in Britain, 1840–1914' in Pieter Lalleman, Peter J. Morden and Anthony Cross (eds), *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2013), ch.5, pp. 69–84.

<sup>13</sup>. K.R.M. Short, 'Baptist Noel', *BQ*, vol.XX (1963), pp. 51–61.

<sup>14</sup>. K.R.M. Short, 'English Baptists and the Corn Laws', *BQ* vol.XXI (1966), pp. 309–20.

<sup>15</sup>. Using my categories the term 'non-denominational' rather than 'undenominational' better expresses Bebbington's meaning, though I shall argue that Noel, in his mature life, was more committed to a pan-denominationalist approach to cooperation.

<sup>16</sup>. David Bebbington, 'The Life of Baptist Noel: Its Setting and Significance', *BQ* vol.XXIV (1972) No.8, pp. 389–411. The limitation of this otherwise

1972 Clyde Binfield published a history of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in which he paid considerable attention to the important role of Noel in its early years.<sup>17</sup> Roger H. Martin, in his 1983 study of pan-denominational societies mentions Noel and his father-in-law, Lord Barham. He notes that Noel was among the leaders of the Bible Society<sup>18</sup> and was even considered as a potential secretary for the Religious Tract Society,<sup>19</sup> and notes the involvement of Noel's father-in-law but significantly not Noel in the London Society for the Promotion of Mission to the Jews (popularly known at the time as *The Jews' Mission* even though there were others). Noel was decidedly not a pre-millennialist.<sup>20</sup>

Donald M. Lewis, in his survey of urban evangelism in London,<sup>21</sup> pays attention to Noel's influence on pan-evangelical strategies and to his social concerns, though he wrongly ascribes Noel's secession to a change of mind over paedo-baptism.<sup>22</sup> He also traces the upsurge in Anglican Evangelical urban mission, especially from the 1820s onward, to the increasing popularity of pre-millennialism;<sup>23</sup> but as noted above Noel remained a postmillennialist while exercising one of the most significant such Anglican ministries in London. In 2016, Noel received mention in the modern editorial content of a collection of nineteenth-century essays on baptism, one of which was written to answer Noel's arguments for credobaptism.<sup>24</sup> Apart from these, it will be shown in what follows that, with one major exception, there has been little interest in him other

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excellent article is that it was written before the discovery in 1977 of a large collection of family papers, in which various items throw a different light on several of his conclusions.

<sup>17</sup> Clyde Binfield, *George Williams and the YMCA: A Study in Victorian Social Attitudes* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Roger H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795–1830* (London: Scarecrow, 1983), p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> It is of interest to note that Martin supplies in an Appendix forty-one short biographies of leading Evangelicals of the era under his discussion but does not include Baptist Noel despite mentioning his prominence several times.

<sup>21</sup> Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness: Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London 1828–1860* (London: Greenwood, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>24</sup> David W. Layman (ed.), *Born of Water and the Spirit: Essays on the Sacraments and Christian Formation: John Williamson Nevin, Philip Schaff and Emanuel V. Gerhart* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

than a modest acknowledgement of his concerns for the alleviation of poverty and for social reform, notice of his secession and credobaptism, and a more recent focus on Noel's sacramental views during his Baptist phase. The major exception is the inclusion of Noel in a discussion of the Gorham Case by Grayson Carter in *Protestant Secessions*.<sup>25</sup> Dealing especially with Noel's growing disaffection with the Church of England and eventual secession, Carter provides a significant overview of his life and work.

In addition to the work which has focussed on Noel directly, there are occasional historical items referring to Baptist Noel elsewhere. General surveys of Free Church history mention him, notably those written by Bogue and Bennett<sup>26</sup> and Skeats and Miall.<sup>27</sup> Also, there is a little from within Anglican circles and somewhat more from Baptist ones. To these we now turn.

### *Relation to Anglican scholarship*

Regarding Anglican writings, we may begin with the late-nineteenth-century history of Anglican Evangelicalism by the high-church cleric W.H.B. Proby, *Annals of the Low-Church Party in England, Down to the Death of Archbishop Tait* (London: J.T. Hayes, 1888). Noel is mentioned three times: as the opponent of John Bate Cardale, one of the earliest supporters of Edward Irving's teaching on 'supernatural' gifts;<sup>28</sup> as a member of the Parker Society Committee;<sup>29</sup> and as a secessionist to the Baptists.<sup>30</sup> Four notable early twentieth-century accounts exist of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism. In 1901, the strongly

<sup>25</sup> Grayson Carter, *Protestant Secessions*, pp. 312–55.

<sup>26</sup> David Bogue and James Bennett, *History of Dissenters from the Revolution to the year 1838* (London: Adams and Co., vols. 1 and 2 1833, vol.3 and 4, 1839).

<sup>27</sup> H.S. Skeats and C.S. Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891* (London: Alexander and Shephard, 1891).

<sup>28</sup> W.H.B. Proby, *Annals of the Low-Church Party in England, Down to the Death of Archbishop Tait* (London: J.T. Hayes, 1888), gives a description of the Irving episode which is interesting for his sympathy with Irving's position but critical view both of Noel and the Bishop of London at the time (vol.1, pp. 314–40).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 508.

Evangelical Bishop of Durham, Handley Moule (1841–1920), provided an anecdotal account of ‘the Evangelical School’ of the previous century. He did not mention Baptist Noel and identified the Earl of Shaftesbury (1801–85), as the natural ‘party leader’ after the deaths of the two outstanding figures in the early decades of the century, William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and Charles Simeon (1759–1836).<sup>31</sup> The great London preacher and Evangelical polemicist of the time was, in Moule’s opinion, William Goode (1801–68), who was vicar from 1835 until 1860 of a succession of parishes in the City area of London and Dean of Ripon thereafter.<sup>32</sup>

Goode was certainly a very capable writer who produced a well-respected paedo-baptist apology<sup>33</sup> just after the publication in 1849 of Noel’s work advocating credobaptism. Goode was also the editor for some years of the ‘moderate’ Anglican Evangelical periodical *Christian Observer*, but neither his publications nor his preaching nor his influence can be compared for popularity with those of Noel. Another work of Anglican Evangelical history was produced by G.R. Balleine in 1908. He provided two items of information about Noel:<sup>34</sup> that he was one of several leading Anglicans who opposed the anti-Apocrypha party in the Bible Society; and (mistakenly) that his secession was a reaction to the so-called ‘Gorham Case’, in which an Evangelical cleric took his high-church bishop through the ecclesiastical courts, charging him with refusing to institute him on inadequate grounds. The bishop had repudiated his Evangelical interpretation of the Book of Common Prayer declaration that after baptism an infant is regenerate, holding the alternative sense that baptism was the sacramental bestowal of eternal life.<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, the ex-Evangelical Tractarian, the Right Hon. George W.E. Russell produced in 1915 *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement*. Russell noticed Baptist Noel for three things. Firstly, he considered that

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<sup>31</sup> Handley G.C. Moule, *The Evangelical School in the Church of England: Its Men and Work in the Nineteenth Century* (London: James Nisbet, 1901), p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Although it is tempting to wonder as much, I have found no evidence that one of Goode’s promotions, in 1849, was intended to fill the gap in central London Anglicanism created by Baptist Noel’s secession.

<sup>33</sup> William Goode, *The Doctrine of the Church of England as to the Effects of Baptism in the Case of Infants* (London: Hatchard, 1849).

<sup>34</sup> G.R. Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), p. 134.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

when Noel wrote against paedo-baptism at the time of his secession, he fell into a common Evangelical ‘misapprehension’ that there was no distinction in traditional Anglican belief between baptismal regeneration and a later experience of conversion.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, he acknowledged that Baptist was ‘conspicuous in the world’s eye’.<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, he included him in a (very incomplete) list of nineteenth-century Protestant seceders from the Established Church.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, L.E. Elliot-Binns<sup>39</sup> published in 1928 a study of Evangelicalism in the Church of England.<sup>40</sup> Though an able scholar, he neglected to mention Baptist Noel at all, effectively dismissing him from Anglican Evangelical history.

More recent studies of Anglican Evangelicalism are more helpful, Noel being noticed by three scholars especially. Peter Toon, in his 1979 review of mid-nineteenth-century Evangelical responses to Tractarianism, briefly acknowledged Noel’s influential opposition to the Tractarian movement.<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith, in his survey of Anglican Evangelicalism covering the period from 1734 until 1984, made passing references to Noel as an enthusiast for open-air preaching and as a supporter of the Ragged School movement.<sup>42</sup> Nigel Scotland, in his survey of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism published in 2004, gave examples of his concern for social action and concluded that he was among the foremost Anglican social reformers of the period.<sup>43</sup> Little or no attention has been given to his prominence in Anglican life.

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<sup>36</sup> G.W.E. Russell, *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement* (London: Mowbray, 1915), p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>39</sup> The name of this author is confusing because Elliott was both one of his Christian names and part of his hyphenated surname: Leonard Elliott Elliott-Binns.

<sup>40</sup> L.E. Elliott-Binns, *The Evangelical Movement in the English Church* (London: Methuen, 1928).

<sup>41</sup> Peter Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833–1856* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979).

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734–1984* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), pp. 170, 205.

<sup>43</sup> Nigel Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age 1789–1901* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), see p. 204 especially.

## *Relation to Baptist scholarship*

Turning now to Baptist scholarship, G. Holden Pike (1834–1910<sup>44</sup>) mentioned Noel three times in his biography of C.H. Spurgeon, published in 1894. He presents Noel as principled, saintly, and warm towards Spurgeon<sup>45</sup> despite Noel's rebuke of the great preacher when Spurgeon sparked the Evangelical Alliance 'baptismal regeneration controversy' by denouncing Anglican Evangelical clerics as hypocrites for reciting the Prayer Book declaration that a baptised child is regenerate.<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, nothing is to be found until 1963 and then again in 1972, as mentioned above. Even the ex-Baptist Union (BU) minister who founded the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, E.J. Poole-Connor, when he wrote a history of English Evangelicalism first published in 1951, failed to notice the significance of Baptist Noel as a fellow supporter of secession as a form of protest about matters of theological principle (from different denominations, of course) or even as a prominent Anglican Evangelical and then a prominent Nonconformist advocate of theological orthodoxy.<sup>47</sup>

When he wrote his magisterial history of British Evangelicalism, Bebbington took the opportunity to locate Noel in the context of the Evangelical movement.<sup>48</sup> He drew particular attention to him as an Evangelical leader, social reformer, critic of the Established Church and opponent of Tractarianism. Another Baptist historian did as much for

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<sup>44</sup> The date of Pike's death has previously not been noted in scholarly literature but I found obituaries in 1910 newspapers.

<sup>45</sup> Spurgeon's brother James remained on good terms with Noel, for example seeking to persuade him to preach at the Baptist church in Croydon in 1870 (James Spurgeon to Baptist Noel, 19 July 1870, Exton Archive: DE 1797 /1/89/1).

<sup>46</sup> G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 6 vols (London: Cassell and Co, 1894; reprinted in two volumes – Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> E.J. Poole-Connor, *Evangelicalism in England*, (Worthing: Henry E. Walter Ltd., originally 1951, revised edition 1966). For his summary of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism see pp. 204–13. Poole-Connor focusses only on Charles Simeon, William Wilberforce, Bishop J.C. Ryle and the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury in an admittedly sketchy overview of Anglican Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century. Noel's significance to all of these leaders will be discussed in due course.

<sup>48</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 121, 162.

Noel in relation to Baptist life. J.H.Y. Briggs, in his survey of nineteenth-century Baptist life published in 1994, recounted his main denominational activities, though noting also his social concerns and his prominence within the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>49</sup> Other Baptist writers have taken an interest in particular aspects of Noel's life and thought. Ian Randall, in the history of the Evangelical Alliance he wrote jointly with David Hilborn, has drawn attention to Noel's significance as an important early committee member and advocate<sup>50</sup> while Kenneth J. Stewart's study of the Francophone Evangelical revival mentioned Noel as a prominent supporter of the work.<sup>51</sup> Recent interest in Noel's sacramental theology has also been shown. Anthony Cross regarded it as essentially Calvinist in nature,<sup>52</sup> although the Canadian scholar Stanley K. Fowler has rightly noted that Noel went so far as including credobaptism as an essential element of biblical conversion;<sup>53</sup> and Peter Morden has contrasted Noel's more Calvinistic view of baptism with the symbolic view held by Spurgeon, in his exploration of Spurgeon's spirituality.<sup>54</sup>

### *Noel's social and religious context in the early nineteenth century*

The Irish Tractarian hymnwriter Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–95) published in 1848 her famous children's hymn, 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. In a sweeping dismissal of the social reforms that had taken place over the previous twenty years, she wrote:

*The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,*

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<sup>49</sup> Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>50</sup> Randall and Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), pp. 22, 31, 47, 61, 78, 80, 161.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth J. Stewart, *Restoring The Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the Francophone 'Reveil' 1816–1849* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Anthony Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism 2* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 25; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 156–57.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: the British Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Peter Morden, 'Communion with Christ and his people': *The spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2010), pp. 87–89.

*God made them, high or lowly,  
And order'd their estate.*<sup>55</sup>

The reality was that the emancipation of Nonconformists and Roman Catholics followed by the passage of the Great Reform Act of 1832 had already made it probable that further social change would follow, and rather at the expense of 'the rich man in his castle' – or at least at the expense of his political power. Noel would have hoped so. It will be shown in due course that in his mature years he became as liberal in politics as he was conservative in theology.

### *Revolution and reform*

Three crucial legislative pressures demonstrate a need for the kind of reforms for which Noel stood. One was government concern about a violent revolution, a concern that persisted for some fifty years after the Reign of Terror in France.<sup>56</sup> A second was the recognition that, even in the absence of revolution, reforms were necessary to assuage the growing anger and frustration both of middle- and working-class people over their political impotence and social exclusion.<sup>57</sup> Finally, there was the growing dissatisfaction of Catholics and Dissenters. Their emancipation became an urgent political issue from around 1800, the Dissenters because they would grow tenfold over the next thirty years, and the Catholics because in the following year<sup>58</sup> over four million Irish people, most of them Roman Catholic, became British subjects through the Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Cecil Frances Alexander, *Hymns For Little Children* (London: Joseph Masters, 1848: 4th edition 1851), p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Royle provides a radical assessment of this threat in *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the threat of revolution in Britain 1789–1848*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed examination of these issues, see also Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State* (3rd edition, Harlow: Longman, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> The Act of Union between Ireland and Britain was passed in 1800 but the Act came into force in January 1801.

<sup>59</sup> A useful overview of these developments may be found in Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II*, vol.2 (London: SCM, 1997). See especially ch. 7: 'Dissenters and Roman Catholics: The Road to Emancipation', pp. 249–85.

## *Evangelical trends within Anglicanism*

Political currents were not alone, however, in shaping English life at the beginning of the new century. John Wolffe has shown that Evangelical trends then were the great religious force of the time.<sup>60</sup> As the Tractarian leader Henry Liddon (1829–90) recalled in old age:

The world to come, with its boundless issues of life and death, the infinite value of the one atonement, the regenerating, purifying, guiding action of God the Holy Spirit in respect of the Christian soul, were preached to our grandfathers with a force and earnestness which are beyond controversy. The deepest and most fervid religion in England during the first three decades of this century was that of the Evangelicals.<sup>61</sup>

No doubt there were social as well as religious factors which favoured the growth of Evangelicalism. The spread of literacy created a market for Evangelical books and tracts, and the personalised message of the Evangelical gospel found a new audience not just because Enlightenment ideas spread about the value of individual thought and judgement but as more than sixty per cent of the people were less than twenty-four years old during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> To this might be added the Romantic emphasis on the individual, though Evangelicals would be ‘hoist by their own petard’ in terms of connecting with contemporary culture when Tractarianism burst forth from Oxford University in 1833 to claim eventually many of their sons and daughters.<sup>63</sup> In the earlier decades of the century, however, Evangelicalism was a powerful social as well as religious movement, concerned with issues of social justice as well as with spirituality. Boyd Hilton repeatedly takes account of Evangelical political engagement during the first half of the nineteenth century, such as the economic theories of the Scottish

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<sup>60.</sup> See John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006).

<sup>61.</sup> H.P. Liddon, *Life of Pusey*, vol.1 (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1894), p. 235.

<sup>62.</sup> Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?* p. 5.

<sup>63.</sup> David Newsome, *The Parting of friends: The Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993 originally published London: John Murray, 1966), pp. 1–15. See also Ian C. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1976), p. 194.

divine Thomas Chalmers,<sup>64</sup> and even the influence on parliamentary debates concerning the poor laws of theological millenarianism of various kinds.<sup>65</sup> Hilton extensively explores the Evangelical influence on early nineteenth-century English politics in his 1986 study *Age of Atonement*.<sup>66</sup> However, beneath a common agreement about Evangelical essentials, there ran several tensions. Some of these will now receive attention in view of their impact on Evangelical life.

### *The decline of Calvinism*

Calvinism was perhaps predominant among Evangelicals generally at one time, but by 1800 it had splintered as a theological movement into a variety of parties, something which would undermine fatally its strength in Evangelical life. Perhaps the most important of these divisions concerned differences between what the Dissenting historians of the time, Bogue and Bennett, described within Nonconformist life as ‘Ultra’ (or ‘high’) and ‘moderate’ or ‘modern’ Calvinists.<sup>67</sup> English Calvinists had been divided over certain issues since the Puritan era, most notably whether divine sovereignty in salvation precluded inviting sinners to accept the gospel promise of salvation in Christ. High Calvinists did preclude it while moderate Calvinists did not, accepting that both divine sovereignty and human responsibility were biblical, if paradoxical, doctrines: as ‘free offers’ of salvation were to be found in Scripture they should be issued.<sup>68</sup>

The debate to which Bogue and Bennett referred was rather different in being a new attempt to reconcile the two doctrines using especially arguments put forward by the American theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–58). The Ultra (or ‘high’ or, as it would later become denominated, ‘hyper’) Calvinist party stressed the sovereignty of God to the practical exclusion of human responsibility, a position which frequently led

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 340–42.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 397–406.

<sup>66</sup> Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

<sup>67</sup> Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters*, vol.4, p. 343.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the moderate Calvinism of John Bunyan (1628–1688) in his 1681 sermon on Jn. 6:37, ‘Come and welcome to Jesus Christ’. Of the offer of the gospel he argued that responding to its invitation was a sign rather than a contradiction of divine sovereignty in election: George Offor (ed.), *The Works of John Bunyan*, 1854, reprinted Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991, pp. 240–99.

to such things as not only making no 'free offer' of salvation when preaching to unbelievers but despising human learning in theology and claiming instead that the Holy Spirit alone could reveal the meaning of Scripture; and theoretical, and in some cases practical, antinomianism.<sup>69</sup> Bogue and Bennett used the terms 'moderate' and 'modern' Calvinism interchangeably to describe the new approach, most notably represented in Nonconformity by the Baptist pastor-theologian Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)<sup>70</sup> and the Welsh Congregationalist theologian and first editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*, Edward Williams (1750–1813).<sup>71</sup> 'Modern' Calvinism posited that freewill was genuinely free within its own limitations without denying the ultimacy of divine sovereignty, thus delivering otherwise high Calvinists not only from doctrinal obstacles to evangelism but from its practical neglect. Callum G. Brown has described the Evangelical movement that emerged from that change as having several important characteristics lying behind its remarkable growth. These included especially an ability to make Christianity appealing on a personal basis through its 'conversion narrative' when the older authoritarian reinforcement of religious belief began to fail; the fact that the increasing strength of Dissent enabled people to question the monopoly on truth of the state Church; and the incredible energy of Evangelicals in pursuing what Brown terms its 'salvation economy'.<sup>72</sup>

The same division existed within Anglican life. Thomas Scott (1747–1821) expounded essentially the same 'modern Calvinism' as Fuller<sup>73</sup> while hyper-Calvinism was also a presence. Robert Oliver has noted that the Independent minister William Huntington (1745–1813) 'had his admirers

<sup>69.</sup> For a detailed consideration of this controversy see Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2003); also Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: from John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006) especially chs.5–7, pp. 89–145.

<sup>70.</sup> Fuller published in 1785, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (Northampton: T. Dicey, 1785).

<sup>71.</sup> Williams published in 1809, *The Equity of Divine Government and the Sovereignty of Divine Grace* (London: J. Burditt, 1809).

<sup>72.</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001). See especially chs.2 and 3, pp. 16–57.

<sup>73.</sup> Scott revealed his support for Fuller et al, in his 1797 study *The Warrant and Nature of Faith in Christ Considered, with some Reference to the Various Controversies on that Subject* (London: Jaques and Thomas, 1797).

in the Church of England. Amongst ministers these included Robert Hawker of Plymouth, David Doudney, sometime editor of the “Gospel Magazine” and Samuel Adams,<sup>74</sup> vicar of Thornton, Leicestershire.<sup>75</sup>

### *The influence of Charles Simeon*

Early Anglican Evangelical Calvinists were usually moderates. By the turn of the century, however, Calvinism in general was undergoing decline within the Established Church in favour of the less systematic approach to theology of Charles Simeon. He was an admirer of moderation in dogma, adopting not only a lower view of Calvinism but a higher view of churchmanship than had the previous generation of Evangelical clerics, several of whom he met after his conversion while an undergraduate, notably John Newton (1725–1807) and John Wesley (1703–91).<sup>76</sup> Simeon advocated a closer adherence to biblical than theological terminology and emphasised teaching a doctrine in direct proportion to the significance he perceived for it himself within Scripture.<sup>77</sup> Simeon was also a meticulously loyal Churchman.<sup>78</sup> In

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<sup>74</sup> An interesting fact is that Richard Cecil (1748–1810), who will appear later in this narrative as the cleric who established St John’s Proprietary Chapel as an Evangelical centre in London, was briefly a curate at Thornton in 1777 but moved the same year to Lewes. See Richard Cecil, *Remains*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1876), p. x. and CCed (theclergydatabase.org.uk) entry for Richard Cecil (CCed ID No.9900). This has Cecil a curate only at North and South Rauceby in 1776 and then rector at Lewes from 1777. Cecil’s sister in *Remains* says that Cecil was seconded by his Rauceby incumbent to Thornton in between those appointments. CCed also wrongly dates the end of Cecil’s ministry as 1834 whereas he died in 1810.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Oliver, ‘Historical Survey of English Hyper-Calvinism’ *Foundations* 7, November 1981, pp. 8–18.

<sup>76</sup> The Evangelical bishop Handley Moule, in his short biography of Charles Simeon published in 1892, has an interesting account of Simeon, then recently ordained, meeting the aged John Wesley; they discussed Calvinism and Arminianism and found common agreement (see the republished and slightly edited version published as *Charles Simeon* (Christian Focus: Fearn, Ross-shire, 1997), pp. 80–83.

<sup>77</sup> Moule, *Charles Simeon*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>78</sup> Bishop Moule thought that he even declined the label ‘Evangelical,’ but this seems improbable.

public he remained polite about Nonconformists but in private was critical. He wrote to a fellow cleric on one occasion that all too often 'the clergyman beats the bush and the Dissenters catch the game'.<sup>79</sup> On another occasion, discussing in 1835 the viability of planting a new village church, Simeon wrote to a friend that:

some villagers are also opening a Dissenting Meeting there. ... But there is room enough for them and me too. Seven thousand people may fill three or four places of worship. ... My fear, however, is that they will contract sentiments and habits unfavourable to good government and to all the Established Institutions of the land.<sup>80</sup>

He regarded Dissent as a threat to the social fabric of the nation.

Simeon created a veritable army of like-minded clerics through his influence on university students during his long tenure as Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, from 1783 until his death over fifty years later.<sup>81</sup> In view of that, two remarkable facts about Noel will be discussed in due course. The first is that Noel, although a student at Cambridge when Simeon was at the height of his influence, seems not to have followed him. Noel never abandoned Calvinism or committed himself to Simeon's rather obsessive preoccupation with the Jews' Mission. The second is that, although Simeon noted promising Evangelical students in his diary, he never mentioned Noel. This is significant for several reasons. His Evangelical society – the so-called Simeonites or 'Sims'<sup>82</sup> – was organised formally in 1813, only a few years before Noel went up to Cambridge. Further, Simeon took note of each student who attended his meetings, no doubt especially aristocrats and socially prominent people with connections to the Clapham Sect (as was the case with Noel

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<sup>79</sup> William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Revd Charles Simeon, M.A.* (London: Hatchard, 1847), p. 139.

<sup>80</sup> Simeon to Carus, 21 August 1835 (from correspondence catalogue: Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge). For evidence that Simeon represented many Anglicans in his views see Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, p. 12 and especially fn. 14.

<sup>81</sup> K. Short is therefore wrong to judge that there was 'only a slight impact' made by Evangelicals within Anglicanism (K. Short, 'Baptist Wriothsley Noel: Anglican-Evangelical-Baptist', *BQ*, vol. XXII, pp. 51–61), p. 52.

<sup>82</sup> See further Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 89.

through his parents and grandparents).<sup>83</sup> When the fact is added that Noel was already an enthusiastic and gifted young Evangelical when he went up, Simeon's silence about him must be regarded as deliberate and significant.<sup>84</sup>

### *An anti-Evangelical campaign in the Established Church*

One further and important aspect of the relationship between Calvinism and Anglican Evangelicalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century requires attention. Ford K. Brown has shown that an anti-Calvinist campaign (Calvinism being wrongly assumed to be representative of Evangelicalism<sup>85</sup>) began around 1800 when Church leaders realised that, despite the Methodist exodus, an alternative Evangelical movement remained and was growing rapidly.<sup>86</sup> An attack on Calvinism was begun in consequence by several senior clergy, on two mistaken assumptions. The first was that Calvinism represented Evangelicalism and the second that hyper-Calvinism represented Calvinism. Its leading protagonist, George Pretyman Tomline (1750–1827), until 1820 Bishop of Lincoln and then of Winchester, thought he was unchurching all Evangelicals by declaring that a true Anglican decisively ‘rejects all claim to private

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<sup>83</sup>. A Cambridge undergraduate in the 1820s recalls that at his tea parties Simeon greeted each individual and wrote down their names to remember them personally. See Abner Brown, *Recollections of Charles Simeon's Conversation Parties* (London: Hamilton Adams and Co., 1863), p. 53.

<sup>84</sup>. A similar silence is notable in William Knight's substantial biography of Noel's Cambridge contemporary Henry Venn. In his *Memoir of Henry Venn* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1882), Knight provides several anecdotes of Venn meeting well-connected Evangelical student contemporaries, but no mention is made of Baptist Noel. Indeed, there is no reference to Noel at all.

<sup>85</sup>. Isaac Milner recalled in later years of these attacks, ‘Nothing can be more unfair or uncandid than to represent the Evangelical clergy as being all Calvinist’. See Mary Milner, *The Life of Isaac Milner consisting of portions of his correspondence and other writings hitherto unpublished* (London: John W. Parker, 1842), p. 448.

<sup>86</sup>. Ford K. Brown describes the Calvinist controversy in ch.5 of his work, *Fathers of the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 156–83.

revelation, all pretensions to instantaneous and forcible conversion, and to the sensible operation of the Spirit'.<sup>87</sup> The anti-Calvinist campaign lasted for some twenty years, a period indicated by the editions of Tomline's book, *A Refutation of Calvinism*. It was first published in 1803 and went through eight editions, the final one in 1823. A lengthy explanatory clause was added to the book title, which was intended to be an attack on all Evangelicals by including the statement that:

The doctrines of Original Sin, Grace, Regeneration, Justification, and Universal Redemption are explained and the Peculiar Tenets maintained by Calvin upon these points, are Proved to be Contrary to Scripture ... and to the Public Formularies of the Church of England.

More widespread opposition grew throughout the first decade of the century, becoming a major cause of prejudice against the Evangelical movement in the Church. Anglican Evangelicals did become less Calvinistic in general, though Simeon may have been more influential in that, but there was another significant consequence. As their loyalty to the Establishment came under question, they began to distance themselves from their Dissenting friends, as will be shown below.

### *Tractarianism: an anti-Evangelical campaign from within?*

From its outset the Tractarian movement was variously interpreted. David Newsome is convinced from his study of the Wilberforce family and their connections with Manning and Newman that 'in many ways the Tractarians appeared – in the early stages of the Oxford movement – to be the continuators of the Evangelicals'.<sup>88</sup> Gladstone, himself an Evangelical turned Tractarian, spoke rather of an immediate divide between the two schools of thought.<sup>89</sup> Both perspectives are true. There were plenty of Evangelicals who understood from the early days of Tractarianism that it contained a tendency away from the Evangelical definitions of

<sup>87</sup> George Pretyman Tomline, *A Refutation of Calvinism* (London: 6th edition, 1812), p. 73.

<sup>88</sup> Newsome, *The Parting of Friends*, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> W.E. Gladstone, *Gleanings of Past Years* vol.VII Miscellaneous (London: John Murray, 1879), p. 224.

personal conversion and inward spirituality, as did Noel. But there were also Evangelicals, especially perhaps from upper-class backgrounds, who considered the Tractarian Movement to concern itself only or mainly with ecclesiology and so as supportive of their Evangelical parents' desire to revitalise spiritually the State Church, as did the Wilberforces. There were also those who found in Tractarianism a more intellectual and cultured expression of personal faith than in the Evangelicalism of their generation. Gladstone was one such convert to Tractarianism.<sup>90</sup>

It is certainly the case that the individualism inherent in Evangelical emphases on personal conversion and the right of private judgement regarding biblical interpretation undermined the notion of an authoritative church and validated the undermining of the Established Church by Dissent. Tractarianism at first seemed to add to, rather than subtract from, traditional Evangelicalism: the incarnation added to their emphasis on the cross, providing thereby a theological model for the divine and human elements of the true church; the sacraments as explained by the Tractarians seemed to add a churchly element to the inward means of grace, rather than subtract Evangelical experientialism, and the addition of the early fathers to favourite Evangelical exponents of the Bible linked Evangelical revivalism with the early church in what might be described as a restorationist vision of a spiritually vital and, it was claimed, authentically apostolic church. Nor should one ignore that the Tractarians were more Romantic than Enlightenment in their cultural affinities whereas Evangelical theology was Enlightenment-oriented, though a Romantic streak developed in turning conversionism into Romantic experientialism and in a love of one ancient people at least – hardly noble savages but certainly a pre-modern nation and culture – the Jews.

### *Relations between Anglicans and Dissenters*

The Anglican biblical commentator Thomas Scott eventually entered the controversy over Calvinism to defend the moderate version he represented, issuing a two-volume reply to the Bishop of Lincoln.<sup>91</sup> It was extensively reviewed with pleasure by the *Evangelical Magazine*. However, the reviewer made one telling remark about Scott:

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<sup>90</sup>. David Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 51–56.

<sup>91</sup>. Thomas Scott, *Remarks on the Refutation of Calvinism by George Tomline* (London: Hatchard, 1811).

we trust it will not be deemed disrespectful, or savouring of party-fondness, if we observe, that Mr S. has attributed that judicious and sober Calvinism which he so ably defends, too exclusively to the Evangelical clergy. We assure him that the majority of Calvinistic Dissenters ... are not discordant to his views, except, perhaps, in stating the mode of redemption.<sup>92</sup>

Stating this well-known fact in this way was a polite criticism that Scott had become nervous of saluting his old friends in Dissent. It was indicative of a general trend, and one that caused pan-denominational cooperation to unravel,<sup>93</sup> even though the creation of such bodies reached its zenith during the first two decades of the century.<sup>94</sup> Martin's work in *Evangelicals United* demonstrates the effect on pan-denominationalism of the cooling attitude of Anglicans.<sup>95</sup> They became increasingly unwilling to work within the non-denominational London Missionary Society (LMS) leading to the creation in 1799 of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Between 1810 and 1815 they came to dominate several pan-denominational societies.<sup>96</sup> In 1811 they made the 'Jews' Mission' exclusively Anglican. Of the most prominent societies only the Religious Tract Society<sup>97</sup> always remained clearly pan-denominational, perhaps because there were no ecclesial implications arising from publishing

<sup>92</sup>. *Evangelical Magazine*, 1812, p. 182.

<sup>93</sup>. A good discussion of this trend may be found in Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, ch.1: 'Divided Evangelicals', pp. 9–45.

<sup>94</sup>. Over 90 new societies were commenced then, compared with half that number in the previous two decades according to R. Philip Roberts in *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and the Evangelical Revival 1760–1820* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1989), p. 193.

<sup>95</sup>. In *Evangelicals United*, Martin details the development of four major Evangelical societies, three of which witnessed deteriorating Anglican relations with Dissenters.

<sup>96</sup>. See Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 369. Lewis makes a similar case with regard to the London City Mission being under effective Anglican control despite its constitution providing parity of representation between Anglicans and Dissenters in *Lighten Their Darkness*, p. 57.

<sup>97</sup>. The importance of the RTS is shown by Bradley in *The Call to Seriousness*, p. 42. He records there that the RTS at its fiftieth anniversary could report that during its existence it had printed 500 million tracts and was then producing from its central depository some twenty million publications a year.

gospel tracts with Dissenters.<sup>98</sup> Noel would have, in his early years of ministry, nothing to do with the Jews' Mission, somewhat to do with the LMS, more to do with the Bible Society, and most to do with the Religious Tract Society. In his mature years of pan-denominational work after 1835 his focus would change to supporting agencies he deemed capable of creating not just a new spirit of cooperation but a new spirit of cooperation *for evangelism*, notably the London City Mission (LCM) and the YMCA. Evangelism rather than unity became his primary passion, despite his prominence in the Evangelical Alliance.

As the century progressed, Dissenters also began to assert their denominational identities. The Baptist Union was founded in 1812/13, though it was refounded in 1832, without its previous Calvinist doctrinal basis.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Congregationalists formed a Union in 1831.<sup>100</sup> Dissenters became increasingly assertive in political life about their denominations as they became increasingly denominational in outlook, by and large favouring the Whigs, while Anglican Evangelicals generally supported the Tories. Slow though their progress was, Nonconformist progress toward political recognition can be measured by legislative changes in their favour. Even before they became more aggressive the

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<sup>98</sup> An interesting description is given of the Clapham Sect members' negative view of Dissent in the high churchman G.W.E. Russell's recollections of his Evangelical background in *The Household of Faith* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), pp. 227–29. In response to Thackeray's portrayal of the Clapham Sect members as Nonconformists in *The Newcomes*, Russell recalls hearing Lord Macaulay express indignation at the misrepresentation of his parents. Russell adds his own memory of his grandparents' faith to declare, 'As a matter of fact, they were convinced and resolute Church-people' and even goes on to speak of the original Clapham people having to endure 'a horrid glimpse of a Baptist lady who lived at Clapham – a kind of Uitlander among the Evangelical Church-folk ...' (p. 228). The denominational distance between Anglican and Dissenting Evangelicals during the early decades of the nineteenth century was considerable. Note that this included London Anglicans, although Bebbington thinks otherwise in his article on Noel in *BQ*, vol. XXIV (1972) No.8, p. 391.

<sup>99</sup> See the First Objective of the revised Baptist Union Constitution of 1832. E.A. Payne discusses this in *History of the Baptist Union* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1958), pp. 59–63.

<sup>100</sup> See R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), ch.5, pp. 187–224.

old anti-Puritan Conventicle and Five-Mile Acts were repealed in 1812, followed in 1813 by extending the Act of Toleration to Unitarians.

The seventeenth-century Test and Corporation Acts were repealed in 1828, ending the most basic of the old Nonconformist disabilities. Growing pressure from Dissenters thereafter led in 1836 to a new Marriage Act which provided for weddings to take place elsewhere than in Established Church premises, as was already the case for Quakers and Jews. A further period of reform would take place from the 1850s onwards, regarding Nonconformist burials in 'consecrated ground' (1852), liberty – for Anglicans as well – for religious services to be held outside registered premises (1855), the admission of Jews to parliament (1858), non-Anglican right of attendance at grammar schools (1860), and the general abolition of credal tests between 1850 and 1882 for various privileges – especially to study, and later to hold academic posts, at Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>101</sup>

### *Anglican Evangelicals and political conservatism*

It is commonly observed by social historians that Anglican Evangelical social reformers in the nineteenth century were generally paternalistic Tories rather than radicals calling for fundamental change. Even the reforming Whigs were led by aristocrats who assumed their right to political leadership as they supported the limited extension of the franchise. Furthermore, the threat of the French revolution, sustained by the Napoleonic wars, created a lasting fear of a working-class uprising.<sup>102</sup> Into this political mix, Evangelicals intruded a renewed interest in pre-millennialism when many of them identified Napoleon as the 'Antichrist' whose coming marked the commencement of the 'end times' which would precede the visible return of Christ.<sup>103</sup> The eccentric Evangelical politician and banker Henry Drummond (1786–1860) even

<sup>101</sup>. See John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain, Religion and National Life 1843–1945* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 43–47.

<sup>102</sup>. The case for this is put convincingly by Edward Royle in *Revolutionary Britannia?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>103</sup>. See Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II*, vol.2: 1689–1833, pp. 256–60. Works on pre-millennialism were reviewed regularly in *EM* during the Napoleonic wars but declined significantly afterwards, although Hylson-Smith traces new influences after that period through which the system attracted fresh attention.

declared that the Great Reform Act of 1832 presented a stark choice between 'Christ and Antichrist'.<sup>104</sup> Such Evangelicals supported Toryism as a means of resisting the devil, no less.

### *The Establishment status of the Anglican Church*

Until around 1800, the Established Church retained its overwhelming domination of English religious life, despite the long-established presence of 'Old Dissent' as well as of English Catholicism. Several forces then began to make themselves felt, the combined effect of which would change the face of English Christianity over the next fifty years. One of these, as previously mentioned, was the exponential growth of non-Anglican church life. Another was the pressure for Church reform. The Churches of England and Ireland came under scrutiny over the many abuses arising from inequalities in clerical stipends, the practice of holding plural livings, and the excessive incomes enjoyed by bishops. The scale of the problem was embarrassingly documented by the 'Black Book' of 1831.<sup>105</sup> The situation in Ireland drew special criticism because there were almost as many bishops there as in the English Church for a tiny fraction of its membership, which was the mainspring behind the Irish Church Temporalities Bill in which was proposed the administrative and financial restructuring of the Church of Ireland. The number of bishoprics would be reduced from twenty-two to twelve, and the very large stipends thus

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<sup>104</sup> Carter, *Protestant Secessions*, p. 166, quoting from the *Morning Watch*, (1832), p. 237.

<sup>105</sup> John Wade (1788–1875) wrote the lengthily titled *The Extraordinary Black Book : an exposition of the United Church of England and Ireland ; civil list and crown revenues; incomes, privileges, and power, of the aristocracy, privy council, diplomatic, and consular establishments; law and judicial administration; representation and prospects of reform under the new ministry; profits, influence, and monopoly of the Bank of England and East-India Company; with strictures on the renewal of these charters; debt and funding system; salaries, fees and emoluments in courts of justice, public offices, and colonies; lists of pluralists, placemen, pensioners and sinecurists; the whole corrected from the latest official returns, and presenting a complete view of the expenditure, patronage, influence and abuses of the government in church, state, law and representation*. This work of some 700 pages was first published in 1820 but was reissued in 1831 by E. Wilson in London to put pressure on the government in favour of a reform of parliament and church.



Exton Hall today  
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Gainsborough

saved were intended for redistribution among the parish clergy to improve their often-impooverished condition. Noel supported the Act, concerned as he was to alleviate the poverty of the Irish Anglican clergy. One public demonstration of his support was to contribute to a volume of sermons by prominent Evangelicals, the proceeds of which

were dedicated to that purpose.<sup>106</sup>

When Parliament decided to bring about church reform, Keble preached his famous 'Assize Sermon' at Oxford University, accusing the State of an improper control over God's Church. The Tractarian movement has been regarded as coming to birth with this event,<sup>107</sup> leading to a new vision of Anglicanism as a Catholic rather than Protestant tradition and eventually to some of its leading exponents converting to Rome. As previously noted, David Newsome regards the Oxford Movement as an Evangelical revival due to the prominence within it of Evangelical people and their continuation within it of their emphasis on personal piety,<sup>108</sup> but this is not a fair description of the movement. An essential element of Evangelical belief was that saving grace was the immediate work of the Holy Spirit while the Oxford Movement traced His work to the Church through its sacramental and liturgical life.

Others questioned the nature of the Establishment from the opposite perspective, either calling for a more inclusive Church as did Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) (and Noel at one point in the late 30s),<sup>109</sup> or leaving the Anglican Church in favour of a stricter Protestant and Evangelical

<sup>106</sup> *The Irish Clergy: a Series of Fifty Discourses* (London: L.B Seeley and Sons, 1833).

<sup>107</sup> Although George Herring, *What Was The Oxford Movement?* (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 45–47 presents the Assize Sermon as part of a process which began at least as far back as 1828.

<sup>108</sup> David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends*, pp. 5–15 especially.

<sup>109</sup> See further Carter, *Protestant Secessions*, pp. 315–24.

identity as did the founders of the Plymouth Brethren and those who joined 'Old Dissent', especially the 'Strict and Particular' Baptists.<sup>110</sup> Another political factor emerged in the first half of the century with the mass immigration of Irish Catholics, the effect of which was to disturb the slumber of English Catholic life and lead eventually to the creation of a Catholic episcopate in England. Roman Catholicism moved into the mainstream of English life, despite lingering anti-Catholic attitudes in British culture.<sup>111</sup> The two 'convert Cardinals' from Evangelicalism – Newman and Manning – would provide a new image of Catholic life in England as a genuinely spiritual alternative to Protestantism in general and Evangelicalism in particular.

By the 1850s, therefore, it was no longer possible for even its most ardent advocates to be confident that the Church of England was stable as an institution, ethical in its practices, or clear in its identity. Nevertheless, Evangelicalism, within and without the State Church, became innovative and 'an enormously diverse movement ... among all social classes and a range of Protestant denominations'.<sup>112</sup> There was aggressive evangelism in all classes of society; campaigns to impact public life with Christian principles, such as political involvement, the reform of public morals, the spread of education, the care of the urban poor both spiritually and practically; the Anglican Evangelical campaign to win the Church of England; and the drawing together of Evangelicals in societies which embodied common causes for Anglicans and Dissenters alike. Yet there were, as will emerge in this study, also divisions within denominations and mistrust between them.

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<sup>110</sup>. See Carter, *Protestant Secessions* chs. 6 and 7, pp. 195–321.

<sup>111</sup>. See Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, pp. 111–15.

<sup>112</sup>. Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, p. 18.