Ministering to a Changing World: Local Church Response to Societal and Cultural Change, Slough 1890-1974

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Abstract

Secularisation, or the reducing social significance of religion in the twentieth century, has been widely researched in terms of 'demand' factors, but less so on the 'supply-side', considering the contributory effects of the strategies and actions of religious organisations themselves. Local studies have largely focused on established urban centres in the nineteenth and early twenty centuries. This thesis examines 'supply-side' factors in a local study of Slough, which exemplified communities around London that grew rapidly as industrial development shifted to the south-east after WWI. This rapid growth and accompanying demographic change posed major challenges for the churches. However, while some churches struggled, others responded effectively and grew strongly. Organisational structure, leadership, congregational support and theology all affected a church's fortunes. The ability to mobilise practical and financial congregational support was a major factor. The availability of finance, while always a challenge, could be a sign of support for the church's mission. Focusing on the young was not simply necessary for replenishing church membership, but a core means of building a church community for all ages. Changing social attitudes towards duty and choice, combined with increasing leisure options, posed a further major challenge. A Christianity defined by social norms or political priorities could seem one choice amongst many, but churches that focused on attracting attendance, offering a welcoming congregational experience with authentic spiritual encounter were attractive. The thesis takes a quantitative approach, and finds that relative to population, overall adult religious adherence was stable before WWI, declined substantially in the interwar years, and stabilised again after WWII. However, the picture was not uniform; Protestant denominations declined relatively, albeit at differing rates; Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism flourished; and there was significant institutional proliferation after WWII. Overall, the thesis contends that churches were key agents in their own fortunes, and secularisation was not inevitable.

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Abbreviations

BH	Baptist Handbook, published annually by Baptist Union of England and Wales: cited edition shown as BH [year], [page]
BRO	Berkshire Record Office
Crockfords	Crockfords Clerical Directory, published annually: cited edition shown as Crockfords [year]
CBS	Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies
CUP	Cambridge University Press
CY	Congregational Yearbook, published annually by Congregational Union of England and Wales: cited edition shown as CY [year], [page]
Day's, Palmer's	Slough Directory published annually from 1906 to 1914; publisher known as Palmers 1906-1911, Day's 1912-1914
HJ	Historical Journal
Holy Bible	Quotations are from the King James Version (KJV)
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JRH	Journal of Religious History
Kelly's	Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire; cited edition shown as Kelly's [year], [page]
MOH	Slough Medical Officer of Health; annual reports cited as MOH [year]
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre
OS	Ordnance Survey
OUP	Oxford University Press
[parish] [year]	Oxford Diocese visitation return: see Church Records below
PEP	Political and Economic Planning [consultancy]
SE	Slough Express (also published as Windsor Slough and Eton Express)
SLLS	Slough Library, Local Studies Archive
SO	Slough Observer (also published as Windsor Slough and Eton Observer)
VCH	Victoria History of the Counties of England

Church records

Triennial visitation returns for Church of England, Oxford diocese for the period 1890-1974 are found in OHC, MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.355 -2300. Full details by year are shown in the Bibliography. In the main text, Clergy returns are abbreviated to: '[parish] [year]'; Rural Dean returns as '[parish] RD [year]'.

Declaration

I declare this thesis is my own unaided work and I have not submitted it for a degree at the University of Oxford or at any other university or institution. Some research contained in Chapter 3 which was previously submitted for the degree of MA in History at the Open University, 2014, has been revised and rewritten for this thesis. Some research in Chapters 1, 2 and 4 has been separately published by the author in academic journals and is acknowledged accordingly.

Word Count

The word count of this thesis, including footnotes, but excluding front matter and bibliography, is c. 100,000 words.

Introduction

Five times during the interwar period, the Bishop of Oxford asked his clergy what efforts they were making to deal with religious apathy and a range of social problems. If the eighteen parishes of South Buckinghamshire are any guide, the question nonplussed its recipients, or was deemed unworthy of reply; three-quarters of clergy failed to respond on the form returned to the Bishop. Most others answered, in effect, 'what we do already'. One clergyman – unwilling to give no answer – ventured plaintively: 'what can be done?'.[1]

Twenty-five years later, another highly experienced local clergyman faced a Palm Sunday congregation numbering precisely one. He concluded it was no longer what could be done, but that something must be done – and that the only person who could do it was himself. Two years later, after making significant changes in his ministry, he looked out over a regular congregation of one hundred.[2]

The decline in adherence to formal religious institutions during the twentieth century is often attributed to external factors such as industrialisation, urbanisation, the increasing role of the state in welfare, education and local government, and the 'modernisation' of thought and attitudes. The institutions themselves can often appear as passive bystanders in the face of massive demographic and social change. But were the churches, their ministers and congregations, powerless to influence either specific events or the direction of travel? This study is concerned with examining whether they could and did; and with what measurable effect.

It is also based on the conviction that most people's experience of organised religion in this period was both personal and local: experience of a local church and its minister; or of family, friends and acquaintances either linked with a church or with reasons why they were not. And personal events where organised religion was either found to be helpful and relevant – or not.

[1] 'Langley 1936'.
[2] Guy Daniel, *The Enemy Is Boredom* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

This thesis therefore takes the form of a local study of Slough, a town representative of one of the fastest growing areas of the country, exemplifying many of challenges faced by the churches in the first three quarters of the twentieth century.

While the examples above were from the Church of England, others could be quoted from other denominations, and this study examines all churches and churchmanships, where records allow. It also covers a long period – as many trends cannot properly be observed within shorter timeframes. It focuses not only on the formal ministry, but also on church members and congregations: those who were committed and welcoming, and those who were not. The study also considers the churches' engagement with local society and culture, the message they presented, and how it changed over time away from the weekly obligation 'to give 60 minutes to God, and to put up with what you do not like when you get to church'.[3] Again, the thesis explores whether cause and effect can be discerned – whether, on all the levels to be examined, human agency can be seen to have had a material effect, either positively or negatively, on the outcome known as secularisation.

Secularisation

The marginalisation of mainstream religious belief and practice in England over the last century and more is part of a wider debate about the reduction in the social significance of religion, or secularisation, defined by one of its major proponents as:

> the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of their time, energy and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; and the gradual replacement of a specifically religious consciousness ... by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic, and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact description and, with it, the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations.[4]

[3] 'Burnham RuriDecanal Conference', *SO*, 4 May 1934.
[4] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in sociological perspective* (Oxford, 1982), p 149, as quoted in J. C. D. Clark, 'Secularization and Modernization: The Failure of a "Grand Narrative"', *HJ*, 55 (2012), 161–94, p. 178.

Many aspects of secularisation are contested. A recent survey argued: 'the absence of agreement on its definition, characteristics, timing, causes or applicability to particular places or cultures, makes secularisation handy in argument through widespread application ... it has survived because of its weaknesses'.[5] However, there can be little doubt that, however it came about, there has been a substantial decline in quantifiable commitment to mainstream Christianity and its institutions over the past century and more.

Peter Brierley has analysed a range of commitment levels from nominal affiliation to active involvement. In 1900, while 86% of the population were 'Christian', 32% were in church 'membership', and 19% attended church. Using 'membership' as a measure that implied some active commitment, Brierley calculated the active Christian community at 8.3 million in 1900, rising to a peak of 10 million in 1930, before declining to 6 million in 2000. Relative to population, there was a steady decline from 32% in 1900 to 13% in 2000. Importantly for the historiographical debate, this analysis showed a slight increase in membership in absolute terms in the 1950s – although flat relative to population – before absolute and relative decline resumed from the 1960s onwards.[6]

However, Brierley's analysis also showed that treating 'churches' as a monolithic whole did not tell the whole story. In absolute terms, Anglican church 'membership' peaked in 1930, while the peak for Roman Catholics was in 1970. Baptist church membership also peaked in 1930 but declined thereafter at half the rate of the Anglicans. And Pentecostal and Orthodox church membership grew steadily throughout the twentieth century.[7]

[5] Callum Brown and Michael Snape, *Secularisation in the Christian World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 1.
[6] Peter Brierley, 'Religion', in *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 652–57.
[7] Ibid., 654–55.

The reasons for any decline have been more hotly debated. Until the 1970s, most academics believed the decline began in the middle of the nineteenth century, 'that the principal causes were the twin processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, and that its greatest public legacy was the faithless mass of modern British working-class society'.[8] Since the 1970s, some have challenged this view, maintaining that participation in organised religion grew in the later nineteenth century, 'economic transformation and social conglomeration were often the spurs to renewed, or even quite novel, religious organisation, and ... working-class participation in this activity was far deeper and far more prolonged than the conventional wisdom allowed'.[9] These views have been termed, respectively, 'orthodox' and 'revisionist'. [10]

The ongoing debate has triggered a series of historiographical reviews – either as stand-alone articles, or as introductions to various books.[11] Two articles by Jeremy Morris, written in 2003 and 2012, provide a good overview.[12] In 2003, responding to Callum Brown's influential *The Death of Christian Britain*, Morris categorised secularisation in Britain in three strands, termed institutional marginalisation, institutional attenuation, and cultural displacement.[13]

Institutional marginalisation is 'the progressive disentanglement of established religion in Britain from structures of local and national government, and the corresponding evolution of approaches to social and educational policy that were largely divorced from explicit religious commitment'. Jeffrey Cox and Morris himself analysed this process in two local studies – Cox emphasising

[8] S. J. D. Green, 'Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914', *Journal of Religion* 79, no. 3 (July 1999): 482.
[9] Ibid., 483.
[10] Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, 'Secularization: The Orthodox Model', in *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, ed. Steve Bruce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Callum Brown, 'A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change', in ibid.
[11] for example, S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c.1920-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), chaps 1 & 2.
[12] Jeremy Morris, 'The Strange Death of Christian Britain: Another Look at the Secularization Debate', *HJ* 46, no. 4 (2003): 963–76; Jeremy Morris, 'Secularization and Religious Experience: Arguments in the Historiography of Modern British Religion', *HJ* 55, no. 1 (2012): 195–219.
[13] Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2001); Morris, 'Strange Death', 972–76.

increasing state provision, Morris emphasising the increasing role of local government.[14] For Stephen Yeo, this transition created a 'crisis' for churches in Reading from 1890 to 1914.[15]

Institutional attenuation is 'the commonly received picture of slowdown in church attendance growth in the late nineteenth century, and then gradual, albeit fluctuating, decline for the first half of the twentieth century'. Alongside this slowdown in attendance, however, 'occasional conformity' - baptisms, marriages, confirmations – remained significant rites for many who were not regular churchgoers, and families regarded themselves as 'linked by association' to churches if only one member was, for example, attending Sunday School.[16] Researchers have speculated that, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, church growth was largely through endogenous growth (the religious socialisation of the children of existing churchgoers) rather than exogenous recruitment by conversion.[17] They have also concluded that churchgoing began to 'thin out', as it competed with the rise of leisure culture. However, again belying monolithic explanations, the experience of decline varied widely.[18]

Institutional attenuation did not mean churches could not be large, lively, important, attractive social institutions. In some areas, churches continued to show all the signs of growth they had manifested more widely in an earlier age well into the twentieth century. For example, Rex Walford established that in the inter-war years, forty-nine new parishes were established in the North London suburbs, more Anglican churches than cinemas were built, around a quarter of the population were at least occasional attenders, and that many of these churches grew rapidly to

[14] Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (New York: OUP, 1982); Jeremy Morris, *Religion and Urban Change, Croydon, 1840-1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1992).
[15] Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).
[16] Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c.1880-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), chap. 4.
[17] Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 6,118ff.
[18] Morris, 'Strange Death', 974.

be substantial institutions.[19] Factors such as population growth, church strategy or inspirational leadership could all change the local experience of seemingly inevitable decline.

The third strand – cultural displacement – is Morris' preferred term for what Brown termed 'The Death of Christian Britain' and Simon Green 'The Passing of Protestant England'.[20] Morris accepted an analysis of institutional revival and vitality until the late nineteenth century, followed by slowdown in growth, and then gradual decline. However, separately from formal institutions, aspects of Christian identity remained central to the British way of life into the 1960s, before losing ground as an accepted moral and spiritual standpoint. Christianity has become 'culturally displaced', but elements of Christian identity and expressions of belonging remain pervasive today.

Morris warned against explanations that emphasise the decline of community, rather than 'constant mutation in the form of community'.[21] Secularisation arguments tend not to properly account for changes within religious communities themselves, nor the ways in which they interrelate with other social groups: 'careful study of the role of religion in particular communities does not bear out a straightforward process of 'decline', but persistence and transformation'.

One aspect of this 'transformation' that has attracted significant study is the extent to which popular beliefs have diverged from orthodox Christian doctrine.[22] In his social study of late Victorian London, Charles Booth found clear evidence of this disconnection.[23] Combining Booth's research with other sources, Jeremy Cox and Sarah Williams found a strong shared religious culture in inner London which persisted until at least WWII.[24] The popular religion which was at

[19] Rex Walford, *The Growth of 'New London' in Suburban Middlesex (1918-1945) and the Response of the Church of England* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).
[20] Brown, *Death*, 2001 and 2nd edition, 2009; Green, *Passing*.
[21] Morris, 'Strange Death', 975.
[22] Cox, *Lambeth*; David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), chap. 6; Terence Thomas, ed., *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986* (London: Routledge, 1988); Williams, *Religious Belief*.
[23] Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: Third Series, 7 Vols* (London: MacMillan, 1902).
[24] Cox, *Lambeth*; Williams, *Religious Belief*.

its core combined recognisably Christian rituals with a mixture of magical remedies and word-of-mouth folk wisdom about the supernatural.[25] It defined the popular understanding of what it meant to be truly religious, to sin, and to be moral, and was a key part of the community's ethical base – 'religion formed part of the symbolic system of meaning by which this community was constituted'.[26] However, this belief system increasingly diverged from 'active church-oriented Christianity' and as a result, 'the churches promoted a piety which was … very different from the kind of diffusive popular religion of non-churchgoers' and 'popular Christianity had long ago abandoned the notion that regular churchgoing was essential for a Christian'.[27] Cox concluded that the disappointments felt by churchmen and the social elite hid the true importance of religion in Victorian society, and 'excluded the possibility of an alternative religious style within working-class life, culture and community'.[28]

While Cox and Williams focused on the early twentieth century, Grace Davie has explored the extent to which religious belief depended on 'belonging' to a church or other religious institution, in post-war Britain.[29] More recently, however, Steve Bruce concluded that such 'popular' religion and mainstream religious institutions are inseparably linked: ''popular religion is … doubly vulnerable to secularisation: it is directly eroded by secularising forces and it is indirectly undermined by the decline of the Churches. Without an institutional core, a popular religious culture cannot be sustained'.[30] In his local study of Yorkshire, Simon Green had similarly reflected: 'perhaps ... they stopped believing because they stopped going'.[31] If this is so, and Williams' conclusions about the significance of popular religion to community formation in the first half of the twentieth century still have merit, then 'the decline of the churches in early twentieth century

[25] Williams, *Religious Belief*, chaps 3, 4.
[26] Ibid., 11–13.
[27] Cox, *Lambeth*, 276, 270.
[28] Ibid., 268–69.
[29] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1994).
[30] Steve Bruce, 'Secularisation, Church and Popular Religion', *JEH* 62, no. 03 (2011): 543.
[31] S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870–1920.* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 390.

Britain turns out to have been very significant' in the evolution of the social climate.[32] Indeed, a major premise of Green's subsequent analysis of religious decline is that the key causes lie much earlier than the 1960s, as proposed by Callum Brown.[33]

In *The Death of Christian Britain*, Brown maintained that despite the familiar long-term story of decline, a healthy level of church adherence persisted well into the twentieth century; but that irreversible decline was decisively triggered in the 1960s by the sexual revolution and its effect on women. Not only did Brown posit a later date for the onset of decline, he also proposed something of a Christian revival in the fifteen years following WWII.[34] Whether later researchers have agreed with Brown or not, they have been obliged to respond to him.

In response, Green reaffirmed his earlier conclusion that the 1920s and 1930s were the key decades.[35] While there was a modest resurgence in religious adherence in the 1950s, this was only a temporary blip in long-term decline, and 'Britain had ceased to be a Christian country by 1960'.[36] For other historians, 'the Christian 'revival' of the immediate post-war years ... when a national church found itself able to carry and symbolize the hopes of a nation, and when state and religion could act in harmony ... is actually better understood as a nostalgic 'restoration''. [37] In practice, the resurgence was illusory: '... the apparent unity of an Anglican-dominated new Elizabethan age was another lid placed over a cauldron of differences which had been bubbling away long before the war'.[38] This left the church ill-prepared to face the challenges to come: 'the world of deference, conformity and respectability came to a stuttering halt between 1960 and

[32] Ibid.
[33] Green, *Passing*.
[34] Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2009), 170–75, 187–92.
[35] Green, *Age of Decline*; Green, *Passing*, chaps 2, 3.
[36] Green, *Passing*, 32.
[37] Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto, eds., *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012), 12; Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-2000*, 4th ed. (London: SCM, 2000), 444.
[38] Woodhead and Catto, pp. 12-13.

1975. In these 15 years, a complex revolt of ideas, cultural forms, youth and sexuality overtook much of the Western world ... nowhere more ... than in mainland Britain'.[39]

Hugh McLeod accepted a diagnosis of the 1960s as a 'crisis' or 'hinge' decade, but argued that 'the change in women's identity and social role, as proposed [by Brown]', was, on the one hand, too specific, and on the other hand 'modernization, the concept favoured by many historians, and especially sociologists is too sweeping and generalized an explanation' for the crisis.[40] Rather, he argued for an explanation that included long-term preconditions such as increased religious toleration, intellectual critiques of Christianity, political emancipation, and changes in ethical thinking; the effects of more immediate social changes, such as post war affluence, a decline in collective identity (which affected not just the churches, but secular forms such as trade unions and youth clubs), the rise in individual freedom, and the sexual revolution; and the impact of specific events, movements, and personalities, such as the Vietnam War and Vatican II.[41]

However, while McLeod comments that 'developments within the churches played a major role in precipitating the crisis', there is little focus on impact, perceptions and church agency at a local level.[42] For Green, however, the roots of twentieth century religious decline lie in the collapse of what he termed 'the associational ideal', which:

> insisted that the Christian faith was sustained in and through the Christian Church. ... it placed the highest premium on the maximisation of the Church's membership ... it extolled the virtuous means of ... a common association through which men and women might be taught the rudiments of the faith; by which they might be induced to join societies dedicated to the faith; and finally from which they might be emboldened to spread that faith through mission, bands and tracts.[43]

[39] Callum Brown and Gordon Lynch, 'Cultural Perspectives', in Woodhead and Catto, *Religion and Change*, 333
[40] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 260.
[41] Ibid., 258–60.
[42] Ibid., chap. 9; Matthew Grimley, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', *Twentieth Century British History* 19, no. 3 (1 January 2008): 384.
[43] Green, *Age of Decline*, 181.

This 'ideal' can be traced back to at least as early as the aftermath to the 1851 religious census. For Horace Mann, the census showed widespread non-attendance by the urban working classes, who were 'unconscious secularists' who needed 'the restraints and consolations of religion', but who were inhibited by class distinctions, poverty, apathy in addressing social issues, and distrust of churchmen. In addressing these issues, it would be necessary to take the gospel invitation to people 'in their own haunts' through 'aggressive Christian agency'.[44] The churches responded vigorously through church and chapel building programmes, establishing working class services and mission halls, and forming a wide range of voluntary organisations. This was 'the golden age of voluntary religious association, through ... innumerable societies to convert, educate and reform the world'.[45] While some activities were specifically devotional, others were for education or welfare, and particularly later in the century, included essentially secular leisure activities.

All this energy had a positive impact on the social conditions of the working classes – 'the work they do is marvellous, and its influence on the lives of the whole population, very great'[46] – but as Cox noted, the impact on their spiritual lives was not as intended:

> The churches intended to persuade the entire nation to attend Sunday services and there indoctrinate churchgoers with Anglican or Nonconformist values. Instead they persuaded only a proportion of the upper and middle classes to attend church and created a vast parochial and philanthropic network which provided the sacraments and social services to the working class and the poor.[47]

As a result, Green concluded: 'some time during the 1920s the local religious classes lost heart' because 'society as a whole had ceased to be ... in any meaningful sense, religious, and ... beyond even the very best efforts of a committed Christian minority to save it'.[48] In creating an essentially secular social and welfare provision, the pursuit of the 'associational ideal' had triggered

[44] Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, pp. clxviii-clxii.
[45] Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 295.
[46] Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: Third Series Religious Influences Vol 7 Summary* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 414–15.
[47] Cox, *Lambeth*, 6.
[48] Green, *Age of Decline*, 380.

secularisation from within the church. The decline of the churches after WWI was therefore 'the product as much of an internal deficiency within modern religious organizations as of the external pressures which had been brought to bear on them during the past fifty years and more', so that people 'stopped believing because they stopped going' to church, not the reverse.[49] This 'constituted the basis of modern decline' and 'its legacy remains to this day'.[50]

Internal Secularisation

Green's analysis may point towards 'internal secularisation', but according to Morris in 2003, historians had largely ignored approaches that 'assume no significant change in religious need, but instead locate the causes of church decline in the various strategies adopted (or refused) by churches themselves'.[51] Subsequently, he commented that 'a refreshingly different reading of British religious history might come into view' through a focus on 'the adaptive strategies of churches in the modern period, as they sought to 'modernize' their ministries, liturgies, missionary, and educational methods and bureaucracies to cope with the challenges of rapid social change'.[52]

One of the most trenchant characterisations of internal secularisation is by Steve Bruce, attributing the decline in church adherence from the 1960s onwards to theological roots:

> ... the churches [enthusiastically] collude[d] in their own demise ... jettison[ing] much Christian belief and ritual in the hope that imitating secular culture would make them more attractive ... vicars vied with each other to argue that socialism, communism (indeed any secular 'ism') was really more Christian than Christianity. ... the churches succumbed to a lay version of the rationalising spirit that had pervaded academic theological circles since the start of the century. God became some vague higher power or just our own consciences; the Bible became a commonplace book of ethical and moral guidelines for living; miracles became natural phenomena misunderstood by ignorant peasants; Christ became an exemplary prophet and teacher; and heaven, hell and salvation became psychological states.[53]

[49] Ibid., 387, 390.
[50] Ibid., 387.
[51] Morris, 'Strange Death', 964–65.
[52] Morris, 'Secularization and Religious Experience', 197,219.
[53] Steve Bruce, 'Secularisation in the UK and the USA', in *Secularisation in the Christian World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 207.

But this is a generalisation treating 'churches' as a monolithic whole. To the extent it has weight, it applies principally to churches governed by liberal theology. McLeod noted different outcomes for conservative churches.[54] Looking specifically at evangelical churches, with a very different soteriological outlook, Atherstone and Maiden found 'many and numerous' examples of evangelical Anglican churches growing in the context of overall decline in Anglican attendances. They attributed this to a generally conservative moral stance to the 1960s changes, a greater emphasis on lay ministry, flexibility in liturgy and worship, house groups and the growing influence of the charismatic movement.[55] Very different core theological beliefs drove very different church programmes with very different outcomes. Christian Smith cautioned against 'law-like generalizations' – in a review of several empirical studies from the USA, 'some showed one thing, some showed another, and some were just unclear' – and concluded that in a religiously plural culture, several apparently contradictory trends may be visible in different contexts.[56]

Dominic Erdozain developed the 'internal secularisation' thesis in two recent works. In a case study of the YMCA, he traced a change in primary focus from young men's spiritual and mental condition to their physical and social welfare in the forty years preceding WWI.[57] He located the reasons in faulty theology – 'a shift from an 'internal' concept of sin to an 'external ' notion of vice'.[58] The traditional evangelical message of salvation by faith had been reduced to certain behaviours – total abstinence, 'muscular Christianity', and forms of 'holiness' – and church ministry focused towards socialising and welfare. It was not that churches should ignore social

[54] McLeod, *Crisis*, 208–13; Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Joseph B. Tamney, *The Resilience of Conservative Religion: The Case of Popular, Conservative Protestant Congregations* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).
[55] Andrew Atherstone and John Maiden, eds., *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century: Reform, Resistance and Renewal* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 17–21.
[56] Christian Smith, 'Future Directions in the Sociology of Religion', *Social Forces* 86, no. 4 (June 2008): 1577–80.
[57] Dominic Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), chap. 4.
[58] Dominic Erdozain, 'The Secularisation of Sin in the Nineteenth Century', *JEH* 62, no. 01 (2011): 59.

issues but that a demythologised message ultimately lost its power. He concluded 'such ethicised Christianity, part crusade and part soirée, was a shadow of its former self' and ultimately led to 'something more damaging than bitter resentment, something no religion can survive, which is gentle disdain'.[59] Again, the churches – and in this case, specifically evangelicalism - had created their own internal mechanism of secularisation. [60]

However, internal secularisation could be attributed not only to strategic and theological choices, but also financial and organisational matters. While stressing that no one explanation can account for churchgoing decline, Robin Gill argued that financial and logistical stress caused by church overbuilding in the late nineteenth century was a contributory factor.[61] The 'precarious financing' of voluntary organisations is also part of Green's analysis.[62] Morris identified shifting patterns of philanthropy in Croydon: as secular projects proliferated – hospitals, schools, parks - the wealthy spread their giving, as well as their social support and management skills, across both church-based and secular 'good works'.[63] Over the long term, this meant that, for example, church schools were underinvested in compared with state schools. Some recent research has analysed this further, concluding that 'the passing of a certain generation of wealthy philanthropic businessmen' undermined the financial basis of several large Anglican mission organisations in the later nineteenth century.[64]

The examples quoted to date tend to focus on the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. One of the few historical local studies that covers the post-war period is Ian Jones' study of Birmingham.[65] Jones' focus was the challenges churches faced in dealing with multiple generations with very different experiences and expectations, particularly within declining

[59] Ibid., 85–86.
[60] Ibid., 59.
[61] Robin Gill, *The 'Empty' Church Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 203.
[62] Green, *Age of Decline*, 181.
[63] Morris, *Croydon*.
[64] Sarah Flew, *Philanthropy and the Funding of the Church of England, 1856-1914* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 5.
[65] Ian Jones, *The Local Church and Generational Change in Birmingham, 1945-2000* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2012).

congregations. He found churches that understood the challenges and responded creatively with new forms of worship and association aimed at the young and less committed – a move from 'reverent dignity to expressive informality' – albeit with mixed results.[66]

In Jones' analysis the religious socialisation of the young becomes a major factor in any long-term decline in church adherence. This is also explored by Brown and McLeod.[67] Gill estimated that, nationwide, the proportion of under-fifteens in Sunday School fell from over 50% in 1911 to around 10% in 1979.[68] He calculated that this 'collapse' in child involvement could account for virtually all the decline in church adherence seen in the second half of the twentieth century – as older members died, they were simply not being replaced by the young.[69] Consequently, during the twentieth century the demography of churches shifted from being predominantly young to predominantly middle-aged and old. Although Jones, McLeod, and Brown detected an acceleration in the post-war period, the decline of Sunday Schools has a much longer-term history, as Gill demonstrated; likewise, the related problem of translating Sunday School involvement into long-term church membership.[70] As Doreen Rosman noted, 'churches depended on graduates to refill pews vacated by those who died. This was where the Sunday Schools failed to deliver. The majority of their pupils never became regular worshippers.' [71] One historian, reviewing the period before WWI, attributed this to: 'the intensely Biblical religiosity of the Sunday Schools [becoming] light years away from the realities of the new century. The poverty of resources, untrained leaders and poor materials all assisted the decline'.[72] Teachers and note-writers trivialised and infantilised the theology of the Scriptures, with the result that young

[66] Ibid., 106–11.
[67] McLeod, *Crisis*, 203–8.
[68] Gill, *Empty Church*, 225.
[69] Ibid., 147–48.
[70] Green, *Age of Decline*, chap. 5.
[71] Doreen Rosman, 'Sunday Schools and Social Change in the Twentieth Century', in *The Sunday School Movement: Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools*, ed. Stephen Orchard and John Briggs (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 151.
[72] Philip Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780-1980* (Redhill: National Christian Education Council, 1986), 202.

people increasingly concluded 'Sunday School was not an initiation into a life of religious association but rather a vehicle for transient religious experience'.[73] Again, a diagnosis that points to internal deficiencies – theological, financial, organisational – within religious institutions themselves.

Some reviewers have pointed to a change in the role of Sunday Schools in an age of widening secular educational provision – 'the anxiety to retain large numbers of children in Sunday School and to renew church membership from this pool of young talent is an entirely different motive from that which animated the [movement's founders]'.[74] And perhaps from that which animated a child's parents. Non-churchgoing parents might send their children to Sunday School for a variety of reasons – from a pragmatic 'to get them out of the house', to 'learning about God', to 'religion by deputy'.[75] In later years parents might increasingly feel that the latter two obligations could be fulfilled through religious education within the state system.[76] But if parents – churchgoers or not – did send their children to Sunday School, then that represented a missional opportunity, which the Schools struggled to capitalise on.[77] The reasons are explored in Chapter 6 below.

These reasons could include the training of teachers, curriculum and materials, and poor facilities, but for Philip Cliff, the decline of the Sunday Schools is symptomatic of a wider issue:

> the decline of the living church community, and ... the failure of the generations to transmit a visible and interpreted faith to their children. It takes only two generations to de-christianise a people'.[78]

The primary influence on a child's Christian faith was seeing that faith lived out at home and in the community: 'the class-room is no substitute for the family, and that family of families, the

[73] Green, *Age of Decline*, 254.
[74] Orchard, *Sunday School Movement*, xv.
[75] Rosman, 'Sunday Schools', 152–53; Williams, *Religious Belief*, chap. 6.
[76] Orchard, *Sunday School Movement*, xiv.
[77] Cliff, *Rise and Development*, 178–82; Orchard, *Sunday School Movement*, xv–xvi.
[78] Cliff, *Rise and Development*, 322.

Church'. [79] If so, a major contributor to secularisation could be a lack of internal authenticity of Christian churches and organisations.

Ecclesiastical Historiography

If a case can be made for internal secularisation as a major contributory factor to long term religious decline, then approaches that focus on the internal workings of denominations and churches may shed light. The tendency to make general statements about 'the churches' as if all churches were alike, when they can differ markedly in denomination, theology, leadership, style of worship, funding, location, class, and so on - has already been noted.

A recent handbook outlines four approaches: anthropology, sociology, organisational studies, and theology.[80] Of these, the first two are commonly used for community studies within sociology, seeking to understand the underlying pattern of values, beliefs and behaviour, and how a group interacts with other social groupings.[81] 'Organisational studies' analyses the structure, leadership, governance and financing of the local church. Finally, theology – specifically how it drives why, what and how the church does what it does.[82]

However, focusing at the congregational level may say more about the relative attractiveness of different churches, and the consequent recycling and/or concentration of a diminishing number of the faithful, than about successful strategies for reversing overall decline. Bruce has recently re-emphasised the value of the local study to the debates about secularisation: 'the great virtue of ... community studies is that they involve bounded populations. This is important because even when scholars of religious change quantify their observations ... too often there is no baseline against which the phenomenon can be assessed or the extent of change measured.'[83] In revisiting

[79] Ibid., 202-203,322.
[80] Helen Cameron, *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook* (London: SCM, 2005), ii.
[81] Ibid., 13.
[82] Ibid., 15–17.
[83] Steve Bruce, 'Religion in Ashworthy 1958-2011: A Sociology Classic Revisited', *Rural Theology* 11, no. 2 (1 January 2013): 92.

a number of ethnographical studies originally published in the 1950s and 1960s, he found no evidence that increased religious diversity had slowed the overall experience of religious decline; that occasional conformity had 'disappeared', and little quantitative support for the 'believing without belonging' thesis.[84] However, he also found those committed to church life showed, if anything, increased levels of commitment. Churches continue to have a respected role in community life, particularly in rural areas; but this should not be confused with the strength of underlying religious belief.[85]

Some of the local studies reviewed above have addressed these issues, and this review has emphasised them rather than focusing on wider societal and cultural influences on secularisation. However, except for Jones' Birmingham study, local studies focusing on the churches' agency end at or before WWII. Even in this earlier period, there are opportunities to examine not just what churches did, but why they did it. Monolithic explanations ('the churches'), or those derived by analysing elite pronouncements, do not address how similar programmes and methodologies were disseminated locally, not just in hierarchical church structures, but in highly decentralised ones like the Baptists. Investigating these differences involves studying the major denominations and other movements within the Christian Church in England, particularly focusing on how developments might have impacted local congregations. The historiography includes works on denominations, pan-denominational movements, and Christian ministry and worship.

The historian approaching these topics must decide whether such histories are of an institution, its senior leadership and other 'professionals', or its members. For example, Ian Randall is clear that his Baptist history is intended to be a history of Baptists, even of 'Baptist life', not the Baptist denominational organisation.[86] This might be appropriate for a relatively small denomination with

[84] Steve Bruce, 'A Sociology Classic Revisited: Religion in Banbury', *The Sociological Review* 59, no. 2 (May 2011): 201–22; Steve Bruce, 'Religion in Gosforth, 1951-2011: A Sociology Classic Revisited', *Rural Theology* 11, no. 1 (1 January 2013): 39–49; Bruce, 'Ashworthy'; Steve Bruce, 'Post-Secularity and Religion in Britain: An Empirical Assessment', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 3 (1 October 2013): 369–84.
[85] Bruce, 'Banbury', 222.
[86] Ian Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), 4–5.

a formal membership practice, but how does such an approach translate to the Church of England, of which potentially anyone could be a 'member'? Some historians' choices are explicit – Kenneth Thompson's approach is institutional, Matthew Grimley's on the church-state relationship and understanding at a senior level. [87] Others are implicit – the denomination viewed through the pronouncements of its senior leaders, or its more vocal ministers: certainly part of the story, but possibly at the cost of views from ordinary members.

Adrian Hastings' history of twentieth century Christianity analysed the churches in three groupings – Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Free Churches. Churchmen might claim divine ordinance for their church organisation, but Hastings highlighted divisions that might owe more to human judgement and preference. The historic Free Churches - Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists – might have originally been differentiated on points of doctrine, they had developed somewhat along class lines. [88] The Free Churches and the Church of England were broadly Protestant in doctrine but divided on whether Church authority was to be mediated through monarch, parliament and bishops, or through a local congregation free 'to be religious in the way they believed God wished them to be.' [89] But 'freedom of one sort can so often involve bondage of another'. The 'unfree' national church allowed considerable internal diversity, in which Anglo-Catholicism could not only co-exist alongside evangelicalism, but could thrive as the century progressed. The Free Churches, however, could exhibit 'a profound internal lack of freedom ... [with] next to no room for the deviant and the dissident and a very large number of negative commandments'. So two sorts of freedom, or rigidity: and 'it was the tragedy of the Roman Catholic church' in the period before the Second Vatican Council 'to combine both forms

[87] Kenneth Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform: The Organizational Response of the Church of England to Social Change, 1800-1965* (Oxford: OUP, 1970); Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).
[88] Hastings, *English Christianity*, chap. 6.
[89] Ibid., 111–14.

of unfreedom'. [90] This study explores how these perceived 'rigidities' affected local perceptions of the churches.

According to Hastings, there were five ways 'in which Christianity has responded not unsuccessfully, to a formidable series of challenges, intellectual, social and political'. [91] Firstly, there was the growth of a new religious culture in mid-century. Secondly, major changes in Roman Catholicism following the Second Vatican Council helped pave the way for greater ecumenism. Thirdly, ecclesiastical hegemony reduced, and lay involvement increased, partly driven by internal funding and recruitment pressures, and partly by theological and societal changes. Fourthly, during the century the church moved from a primary focus on personal spirituality and morality, to an increasing focus on worldwide social justice and advocacy. Finally, there was a shift in religious identity away from a predominant English Protestantism.

The intellectual upheavals of the early 1960s accentuated a divide between the 'modernists' who accepted that 'the mechanisation of the world picture and the rise of a technological culture have proved incompatible with the supernatural elements of Christianity', and had adapted their theology accordingly, and the 'anti-modernists' who had rejected this judgement. [92] After the initial dominance of the former view, the latter view gained increasing confidence in the latter part of the century, leading to an upsurge in evangelical and charismatic groups. Liberal theology was popular with theologians, but not with ordinary churchgoers; while 'Pentecostalism was largely ignored by the theologians, but captured plenty of pastors. In the seventies, as a consequence, the gap between theologians and pews was greater than ever'. [93]

Perhaps 'the gap between theologians and pews' was not the only gap. A persistent theme of Roger Lloyd's history of the twentieth century Church of England is how schemes conceived at a

[90] Ibid., 114.
[91] Ibid., xvi–xxii.
[92] Ibid., 583.
[93] Ibid., 584.

national level – and the subject of elite pronouncements - might founder at parish level. [94] This could be through lack of resources, as the number of ordination candidates failed to keep pace with population growth, or through inefficient allocation. [95] It could also be due to clergy resistance to plans handed down from above – 'it is ... the vicars and rectors in their parish churches – and not their bishops, who are the real arbiters ... if they say No, there is nothing more to be said until they change their minds'. [96] Of the 1950s, with lay involvement increasing, Lloyd commented: 'whatever view might be held of the ministry of the laity ... the parish could not operate either pastorally or evangelistically without its clergy, nor move far in any direction apart from their leadership'.[97]

So potentially there was a gap between bishops and local clergy. But even more seriously, a gap between the pulpit and the pew: 'before there can be a mission there must be an evangelistic message, and ... large sections of the modern world had given notice that if this message was what they supposed it to be they would not be able to heed it'. [98] This was not through lack of effort – both 'traditional methods', and various experiments and innovations, 'were proving themselves impotent to reach the minds of those who ... might be supposed to be the most 'valuable' of all to God'. [99]

Lloyd's analysis was published before the impact of the 1960s upheavals seen as so significant by Brown, McLeod and others could be fully assessed. He characterised a Church of England where parish ministry had not changed greatly from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s. Writing forty years after Lloyd, Mark Smith agreed with an analysis of stasis until the 1960s, but went on to describe significant later changes, with the impetus of social change and the pan-denominational charismatic renewal revitalising evangelical parish practice. Other contributions

[94] Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England, 1900-1965* (London: SCM, 1966).
[95] Ibid., 147-153,336; see also Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (London; Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984).
[96] Lloyd, *Church of England*, 147.
[97] Ibid., 514.
[98] Ibid., 595.
[99] Ibid.

in the same volume addressed ways in which Anglican parish ministry and practice could be influenced horizontally rather than vertically or hierarchically, through groupings of clergymen from similar theological viewpoints.[100]

Ian Randall's history of the Baptists in the twentieth century used the *Baptist Times* as the primary source, and reads as a commentary on what Baptists leaders and members considered important at particular times, including debates over 'ministry, the nature of spiritual renewal, aspects of worship, and ecumenical involvement'.[101] Randall highlighted ongoing concerns over the decline of Sunday Schools, reinforcing comments made above; but also highlighted internal disquiet over core spirituality in the 1920s and 1930s, although there were concerned voices from the beginning of the century. [102] This could result in 'much programme and little power'.[103] Randall has further researched evangelical spirituality in the inter-war years.[104] However, a weakness acknowledged by Randall is common to all such studies – the lack of source material on what was actually happening week by week in Sunday services and how this developed over time, if the editors and readers of the *Baptist Times* did not consider this to be worthy of comment.

While Randall's focus was on Baptists, not the denomination, Davies, George and Rupp's history of the Methodist Church was commissioned by the denomination. While the focus is on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the twentieth century analysis is dominated by the 1932 union. Methodist Union was 'a blend of triumphalism and idealism', but also driven by concern over decline in numbers and the need to channel resources for mission most effectively.[105] But a

[100] Mark Smith, 'Evangelical Parish Ministry in the Twentieth Century', in Atherstone and Maiden, *Evangelicalism and the Church of England,* 206–26; David Bebbington, 'The Islington Conference', in ibid*,* 48–67, 268–96; Martin Wellings, 'The Anglican Evangelical Group Movement', in ibid, 68–88; Andrew Atherstone, 'The Cheltenham and Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen', in ibid*,* 109–35, 297–310.
[101] Randall, *English Baptists*, 1–12, 257.
[102] Ibid., 160-161,207-208.
[103] Ibid., chap. 4.
[104] Ian Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918-1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999); Ian Randall, '"Take My Life": Evangelical Spirituality and Evangelical Identity', in *British Evangelical Identities Past and Present: Vol. 1: Aspects of the History and Sociology of Evangelicalism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Mark Smith (Milton Keyns: Paternoster, 2008), 215–37.
[105] Rupert Davies, Alfred George, and Ernest Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 3 (London: Epworth, 1965), 333–40.

merger of churches did not have 'the teeth which a commercial or industrial merger would have had', and the rationalization of chapels and circuits on which its success depended happened only to a limited degree. 'In the higher echelon of the Church the union was smooth and beneficial' but 'at a local level ... Methodist Union provided no really new ideas about church organization ... [and could not] guarantee effective union where it really matters, where the Christian meets the non-Christian'.[106]

A chronological approach, such as that employed by Lloyd, Randall, and Davies *et al*, can obscure how churches are driven as much by long term ideas, patterns and perceived truths as by the prevailing social and cultural climate. The *Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* is therefore organised by ecclesial forms, worship, spirituality, mission, theology and ethics.[107] More focused is Sell and Cross's thematic survey of twentieth century British nonconformity. The chapters on Liturgy and Worship, and Evangelism and Spirituality, provide a helpful backdrop to studies of local congregations. [108]

Denominations have often formed around different understandings of church structure or practice, but other theological movements cross denominational boundaries. Evangelicalism is the most obvious of these: but at varying times, the holiness, temperance, ecumenical and charismatic movements have all been pan-denominational. For example, evangelical Anglicans and Baptists may feel more at home in each other's services than in non-evangelical settings within their own denomination.

David Bebbington's authoritative history of evangelicalism described a 'quadrilateral' of four characteristics of evangelical belief – conversionism, activism, Biblicism and crucicentrism.[109]

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[106] Ibid., 3:340.
[107] William Abraham and James Kirby, *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).
[108] Norman Wallwork, 'Developments in Liturgy and Worship in Twentieth Century Protestant Nonconformity', in *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alan Sell and Anthony Cross (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 102–31; David Bebbington, 'Evangelism and Spirituality in Twentieth Century Protestant Nonconformity', in ibid, 184–216.
[109] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–17.

Evangelicalism's self-image may be of holding on to timeless Biblical truth, but in interpreting how these four 'constants' are to be interpreted and related to a contemporary world, 'evangelical religion in Britain has changed immensely' in both its outward focus and its internal principles regarding theology and behaviour. [110] These adaptations caused tensions, particularly as evangelicals debated how to respond to declining influence from a mid-nineteenth century high point. [111] Rather than a simple division between 'liberals' and 'conservatives', as the twentieth century progressed Bebbington identified a 'broadening continuum of Evangelical opinion', from conservative Brethren and Baptists to liberal Congregationalists, with Church of England evangelicals and Methodists between.[112] This had the effect of undermining the clarity of the traditional evangelical message and its aim of changing the lives of individuals.[113] Through the best of intentions – to make the Christian message more accessible – in Free church life 'these oblique strategies for mass evangelisation, in fact, turned into secularizing influences ... the chapels [response to] the social challenge of the times ... contributed to their decline.' [114] The resurgence of evangelicalism in the later twentieth century can be traced to a coming together of the conservative end of the evangelical spectrum – particularly Anglicans and Baptists.[115] The Billy Graham crusades of the 1950s and 1960s served as one focal point; the growth of the conservative Inter Varsity Fellowship at the partial expense of the more liberal Student Christian Movement was another.[116]

[110] Ibid., 271.
[111] Ibid., 180.
[112] Ibid., 228.
[113] Bebbington, 'Evangelism and Spirituality', 190–95.
[114] Ibid., 191.
[115] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, chap. 8.
[116] Ibid., 258–61; Ian Randall, 'Billy Graham, Evangelism, and Fundamentalism', in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones (OUP, 2013), 173–91; Gerald Parsons, 'Contrasts and Continuities: The Traditional Christian Churches in Britain since 1945', in *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945 Volume 1: Traditions*, ed. Gerald Parsons (Routledge, 2012), 47–48; David Goodhew, 'Understanding Schism: The 1950 Peace Summit between the Student Christian Movement and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship', in Smith, *British Evangelical Identities,*215–37.

Bebbington's 'continuum' of evangelical belief leading to a lack of clarity could be extended to wider Christian theology, beliefs and practice. Christian groups often make clear statements about 'right and wrong', but such pronouncements are often most vociferously contradicted by other Christian groups. Such disagreements could contribute to external perceptions of inconsistency, and as discussed in this study, give credence to unorthodox versions of Christian belief – or popular religion.

Theological divergences might stay within the broader evangelical movement or become separately identifiable. The holiness movement arose within the last quarter of the nineteenth century: partly in reaction to the diminishing influence of evangelicalism noted above, some evangelicals turned inward, becoming, in Bebbington's view, 'an introverted subculture'.[117] The holiness movement was in turn one of the roots from which the Pentecostal movement developed, as the search for sanctification developed into a seeking after the power of the Holy Spirit.[118]

While the holiness movement has largely been reabsorbed into mainstream evangelicalism, Pentecostalism – either in its denominational forms or as a movement within and across the mainline historic denominations – was the most rapidly growing part of the Christian church worldwide at the end of the twentieth century.[119] In Britain, its origins date from before WWI, but significant impetus was provided after WWII by Caribbean immigrants who brought their Pentecostalism from their original home countries. While retaining the core Protestant theological framework, the distinctive beliefs of classic Pentecostalism are contained within the Foursquare Gospel of Christ as Saviour, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and Coming King - in contrast with Bebbington's evangelical 'quadrilateral'.[120] The appeal of Pentecostalism is the

[117] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 180.
[118] William Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 5–8.
[119] Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea -The Protestant Revolution: A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (London: SPCK, 2007), chap. 15.
[120] Kay, *Pentecostals*, chap. 5; McGrath, *Dangerous Idea*, chap. 15.

promise and expectation of an immediate, ongoing and powerful experience of a living and engaged God, an appeal that extended into the mainstream denominations in a 'charismatic renewal', beginning in the early 1960s.[121] This prompted many 'renewed' churches to reform structures and practices for worship, ministry and prayer, making them more accessible, contemporary, and expectant, even where the more overt charismatic expressions were absent or had ceased to be so prominent.[122] However, this became a further source of internal division with churches that had not experienced, or had rejected, such 'renewal'. This study considers local Pentecostal and 'renewed' congregations in Chapter 5.

Leadership

Lloyd's comment on the crucial importance of the Anglican clergyman to the local expression of church could equally apply to Catholic or Free Church ministers. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that there are few historical studies of the twentieth century ministry, or of developments in pastoral care. [123] Kenneth Brown found early twentieth century nonconformist ministers conducting a fragile existence, often requiring spells of secular employment to make ends meet: but 'the majority soldiered on ... in obscurity ... amid discouragement and privation, and under a multitude of depressing influences.' [124] Lloyd's comments on the persistent shortfalls in Anglican staffing have been noted already: in a national church with shrinking financial resources, Hastings writes apocalyptically of the plight of the late 1940s vicar: 'trapped with diminished income in some vast historic vicarage with the servants gone, the curate gone, the

[121] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, chap. 7; Stephen Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), chap. 5.
[122] Hunt, *Charismatic Movement*, chap. 4; Jones, *Local Church*, chap. 4; Ian Jones and Peter Webster, 'Expressions of Authenticity: Music for Worship', in *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives*, ed. Jane Garnett et al. (London: SCM, 2007), 50–59; Ian Jones and Peter Webster, 'New Music and the "Evangelical Style" in the Church of England, c. 1958-1991', in Smith, *British Evangelical Identities,* 215–37; Smith, 'Evangelical Parish Ministry', 223–25.
[123] two questionnaire-based exceptions are Stewart Ranson, Alan Bryman, and Bob Hinings, *Clergy, Ministers and Priests*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); and Kay, *Pentecostals*, but these lack any analysis.
[124] Kenneth Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 168.

Church school gone, only the damp rising ... he could seldom afford a car but was left with a cheap bicycle, peddling laboriously up a country lane ...'. [125] For good or ill, ministry increasingly seemed less a career option than a calling.

While this introduction has steered away from 'grand narratives', Hastings argued for 'secularisation' as potentially a cleansing and renewal of the church. He referred to 'waves' of religious enthusiasm in the two millennia since the birth of Christianity, interspersed by periods of retreat.[126] At the end of a 'wave', with religion and the secular closely integrated, religion could become secularized, and society over-burdened with dated religious structures. Hastings argued that the end of the nineteenth century was one such: for many, their religion consisted of 'a conformity with convention reflecting only the most attenuated belief'.[127] During the retreat after the wave, 'society thrusts religious things away ... enabling religion once more upon its own ground, desecularized ... [freed to] resume its missionary task.' Hastings speculated that the history of the churches in the twentieth century is of 'a cutting down of the old wood of religious structure' following a nineteenth century wave of enthusiasm.[128] The churches in the twentieth century had certainly not made life easier for themselves, with much theological navel gazing about the nature of their message and mission: but it was against this background that Hastings concluded that the last hundred years had been characterized by 'movements of renewal and positive change ... in which Christianity has responded not unsuccessfully, to a formidable series of challenges, intellectual, social and political'. [129] A new local study will shed new light on the accuracy or otherwise of Hastings' judgements.

[125] Hastings, *English Christianity*, 437–38.
[126] Ibid., 670.
[127] Ibid., xvi.
[128] Ibid., 586, 670.
[129] Ibid., xvi–xxii.

Slough

As already noted, the secularisation debate has been underpinned by several local studies, including London boroughs and large towns and cities.[130]However, these were generally communities established well before institutional religious decline became evident. Most studies end in the early twentieth century, with very few examining the mid to late twentieth century.[131]

The interwar years saw Great Britain's economic centre shift from areas dominated by heavy industry towards the South. New industries located themselves close to the major markets of London and the South East rather than close to natural resources. As the balance of employment shifted, major economic migration ensued, prompting growth of new towns in the South East, and the outward spread of the London conurbation. Further impetus was given to these trends in the 1950s through the Greater London Plan.

The town that most exemplified these socio-economic trends was Slough, twenty miles due west of Central London. Attractive to the new industries, it was the fastest growing town in England in the mid-twentieth century, attracting migrants from most parts of the UK. After the war, it experienced significant migration from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent. Rapid change created a dynamic and diverse community: but conversely, brought with it many social, economic and planning challenges.

Slough therefore allows Morris' themes of institutional marginalisation and attenuation to be studied in a town whose growth post-dated the onset of nationwide decline in church attendance, whose religious institutions were never as central in providing services as those in larger, longer established towns and cities, and which experienced the rapid social change identified by Morris as a qualifying factor. Such a study can identify and examine 'the adaptive strategies' actually deployed by the churches in this environment. By extending the study into the

[130] Cox, *Lambeth*; Green, *Age of Decline*; Morris, *Croydon*; Williams, *Religious Belief*; Yeo, *Religion*.
[131] Jones, *Local Church* is an exception: but again surveying a well-established city.

1970s, the posited post-war 'revival', and subsequent 'crisis' in the 1960s, can be examined. An extended study can also further explore the positive and negative impacts of generational continuity on church life – for example, how churches simultaneously ministered to those born half a century apart.

While there is of course merit in looking at the larger picture – there has clearly been a nationwide shift in the social status and significance of the Christian religion and its institutions, not just an aggregation of thousands of individual instances – the local study is particularly appropriate when studying churches. The local church undeniably 'remains the axis of collective identity for most practising Christians'.[132] Even where churches have struggled to engage with a wider group of the 'religious', it could be a symptom of a wider problem of 'associational disconnection' - a lack of engagement with forms of communal activity generally. The local study can test the proposition that 'the status of congregations becomes ... a barometer of cultural change rather than the death-knell of Christian Britain'.[133]

Sources and Methodology

This thesis examines the most significant of Slough's churches, and their linked institutions, in three groupings – Anglican, Nonconformist, and Roman Catholic. The approach is largely chronological – up to and including WWI; the interwar period; and the thirty years after WWII. The analysis considers local demographic and cultural changes – Slough's rapid industrialisation, significant incoming migration, housing development, and the development of both formal and informal community structures. The challenges posed by the two World Wars, and other national and international events are also considered. The study examines differences and commonalities in programmes, teaching, theology, demography, leadership, facilities, and funding of churches, both individually and by grouping.

[132] Mathew Guest, 'Reconceiving the Congregation as a Source of Authenticity', in Garnett et al., *Redefining Christian Britain*, 63-64.
[133] Ibid.

A wide range of source material has been consulted, within a chronological framework largely provided by two local weekly newspapers. Church news was comprehensively reported on until at least 1950, often backed up by editorial comment. Additional sources include local directories, town council records and plans, church and parish magazines, denominational yearbooks, diocesan and local church records, and church histories - especially those written within the living memory of participants. Anglican visitation returns provided insight into the thinking and motivation of individual clergy.

Summary and Focus

In summary, this thesis contributes to the ongoing debate about twentieth century secularisation in the United Kingdom by arguing that, in Green's phrase, 'the internal deficiencies within modern religious organisations' have been unduly neglected in understanding what occurred and, possibly, why. The 'internal deficiencies' highlighted include: vision and leadership, both at local and national level; organisation and finance, again both local and national; and congregational behaviour and spirituality.

While some deficiencies were long term, the thesis argues that two 'external pressures' particularly challenged the churches and highlighted those deficiencies. Firstly, there was a discernible rise in the sense of choice, at the expense of obligation and duty, in the years after WWI; coupled with an increase in social and leisure alternatives. Secondly, the south east of the country experienced exceptionally rapid urbanisation in the interwar years, affecting millions of citizens in the south east and (although beyond the scope of this study) potentially the areas from which they relocated.

The thesis therefore argues for three key periods in twentieth century secularisation in the south east – up to WWI, when adherence was relatively stable; an interwar period when adherence declined substantially; and a post WWII period where adherence was again relatively stable, but where the losses of the interwar years were not recovered. The churches moved from

being central to the community to being just one of many social institutions, with a corresponding loss of community leadership and influence.

However, within this overall picture, the thesis demonstrates that some movements and churches grew, often substantially, while others declined – highlighting the agency of church leaderships and congregations. Mainstream Protestantism generally declined, Catholicism grew; an emphasis on authentic Christian spirituality was supported, but social Christianity – some called it nominal - was increasingly seen as a choice not a social or cultural imperative. The search for authenticity led to a fragmentation in the religious landscape after WWII, not so much 'believing without belonging' as a search for groups that authentically offered both.

The wide scope of the study means that, apart from the major arguments outlined above, it interacts with many existing studies, several of which have been highlighted in this Introduction. When substantiating its main argument, and challenging or affirming those of other studies, this thesis seeks to ground its conclusions in the available data, giving both a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

The thesis begins with two chapters introducing Slough and providing an overview of organised religion in the town across the period of study. Three chronological chapters follow, corresponding to the key periods highlighted above. Two thematic chapters follow, dealing with the church's interaction with the young, and the nature of its message. Other thematic material is covered in earlier chapters, sometimes extending beyond the strict chronology of those chapters. The thesis closes with conclusions.

Chapter 1 Slough – A Representative Town?[1]

In popular culture, Slough has become a byword for a certain kind of urban awfulness. Linkages with 'the slough of despond' and one of Sir John Betjeman's most famous poems have proved irresistible to many a journalist or social commentator. A 1961 *Economist* article about road safety opens in characteristic fashion:

> Slough is a long, thin industrial town (in the very tail of the long thin county of Buckinghamshire) on the circumference of Greater London. Six miles long, two broad, stripped along the Great West Road, there can be few more dispiriting places in Britain. Its peri-urban sameness, its air of routine desolation, its hopeless, snuffling, dribbling-mackintoshed population seen on the bleakest of Slough days recall the famous invocation of the most determined of small town lovers: 'Come friendly bombs and Fall on Slough! It isn't fit for humans now'[2]

This prompted a respondent to question whether the writer had 'been through Brentford, Staines, or Kingston' before making his judgements.[3] In fact, writing in 1937, Betjeman was not so much condemning Slough as interwar urbanisation and industrialisation in general: 40 years later, he conceded 'we used to drive from lovely countryside into Slough so naturally it appeared ugly ... but ... it must be better than those dreadful tower blocks in London.'[4]

Writing two years after Betjeman, George Orwell complained about migration – 'a kind of enemy invasion ... people flooding in from Lancashire and the London suburbs' and vulgarity:

> And the newness of everything! The raw, mean look! Do you know the look of these new towns that have suddenly swelled up like balloons in the last few years, Hayes, Slough, Dagenham, and so forth? The kind of chilliness, the bright red brick everywhere, the temporary-looking shop-windows full of cut-price chocolates and radio parts.[5]

Many similar examples could be quoted, up to the present day. For example, the 2001 BBC2 drama The Office, satirising turn of the century office life and management, was set in Slough: the

[1] Some material previously published in Grant Masom, 'Not Fit for Humans? Social and Economic Change in Slough 1919-1951', *Local Population Studies*, no. 97 (Autumn 2016): 44–60.
[2] 'Down among the Sloughmen', *Economist*, 11 March 1961; John Betjeman, *Continual Dew* (London: John Murray, 1937).
[3] 'Despond in Slough', *Economist*, 18 March 1961.
[4] 'Sir John Boosts Gray Appeal', *SO*, 23 September 1977.
[5] George Orwell, *Coming up for Air* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001) Part IV 1.

title sequence is a montage of concrete buildings on a grey day, particularly showing the Trading Estate where the fictional Office is located.[6] But such examples work only because Slough represents something more substantial than a mere play on words. More serious journalists have identified this: in 2007 and 2017, BBC Panorama was devoted to Slough as a prime example of a town affected by immigration.[7] And the examples extend beyond journalism and popular culture: Slough has been regularly referred to by academics and policy makers as exemplifying many twentieth century urban and social trends, and organisational responses to them. All localities have their own particularities, and it is for the local historian to highlight them; but some places represent something wider and more general. This chapter will explore how and why Slough is such a place.

Slough is also representative of the specific themes of this thesis. Rapid industrialisation in the south east – particularly in and around London - posed significant challenges for all institutions.[8] The churches were no exception. Speaking for the Church of England – although his words could have been on behalf of any of the established denominations - Archbishop Lang told the Church Assembly in 1935:

> This problem of making spiritual provision for the populations of the new districts which were being formed in many parts of the country was the greatest that had been presented to the Church in our generation. It might almost be said to be one of the greatest ever presented to the Church of England in the course of its long history ... some dioceses ... were almost breaking down under the magnitude of the problem.[9]

The diocese of Oxford, in which Slough was located, was one of 'a dozen or more' so affected. It was estimated that 17 million people in England were 'out of touch with any Christian body', a

[6] 'The Office - BBC Two', BBC, accessed 31 March 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/; *The Office Opening Titles*, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/.
[7] 'Immigration: How We Lost Count', 23 July 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6908390.stm; 'Life in Immigration Town, Panorama - BBC One', BBC, 27 February 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08h4y03.
[8] A. D. K. Owen, 'The Social Consequences of Industrial Transference', *The Sociological Review* a29, no. 4 (October 1937): 331–54.
[9] 'Church Assembly: Problems of the New Areas', *Times*, 19 June 1935.

number that 'would inevitably increase'.[10] Lang continued in somewhat apocalyptic terms: 'unless it was dealt with now, the [immense] problem would never be overcome later'.[11]

If the Archbishop's words serve as one theme of this thesis, they also highlight the deficiency in coverage of local studies of twentieth century religion and society. The debate has been largely underpinned by local studies of London boroughs and other large towns and cities.[12] However, these were generally communities established well before institutional religious decline became evident. Most studies end in the early twentieth century, with very few examining the mid to late twentieth century. Where rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have been studied, the focus has been on the nineteenth, not the twentieth, century, and typically in the North of England. Exceptions are Rex Walford's study of interwar North London, Ian Jones' study of Birmingham, and Richard Sykes's study of the Black Country.[13] However, Walford's study is limited to the Church of England, and does not venture beyond WWII; the focus of Jones's study is on generational transfer within established churches and Christian communities; and Sykes's study is of popular religion, rather than church agency, within long-standing communities. This study of Slough focuses on the role played by churches and their congregations within a community subject to the rapid socioeconomic change experienced by many similar communities in the twentieth century.

Industrialisation – A Second Wave?

The interwar years saw the industrial landscape redrawn, as older industries such as coal mining, iron and steel, shipbuilding and textiles declined, and newer industries such as electrical engineering, aircraft and motor vehicles grew, often substantially. The older industries were located close to raw materials or energy resources: for the newer industries, with higher value added, considerations such as proximity to markets were more important. Improvements in road

[10] 'Seventeen Million English "Pagans"', *SO*, 1 November 1935.
[11] 'Problems Of The New Areas'.
[12] Cox, *Lambeth*; Green, *Age of Decline*; Morris, *Croydon*; Williams, *Religious Belief*; Yeo, *Religion*.
[13] Walford, *New London*; Jones, *Local Church*; Richard Sykes, 'Popular Religion in Decline: A Study from the Black Country', *JEH* 56, no. 2 (April 2005): 287–307; see also: Bruce, 'Banbury'; Bruce, 'Ashworthy'; Bruce, 'Gosforth'.

transport increased the flexibility of industrial location. While 'in theory this could have led to a wider geographical distribution of industry ... in a country as small as Britain it meant that the new industries could be located where the greatest comparative advantage then lay' – which favoured proximity to London. In the absence of policy initiatives to the contrary, therefore, 'virtually all' new employment opportunities were created in the South-East and, to a lesser extent, the Midlands.[14] Consequently, one contemporary report calculated that between 1923 and 1938, the proportion of total UK employment located in the South and Midlands increased from 47 to 54 per cent.[15]

In practice, Government policy in the 1920s and early 1930s encouraged people to move to areas of new employment, rather than encourage new industries to locate in the so-called 'depressed areas', experiencing high unemployment due to declining older industries. Substantial internal migration from industrial areas in Wales, Scotland and northern England resulted – between 1923 and 1936 net migration into the South and Midlands was 1.1 million people.[16] Accommodating the migrants, as well as natural population increases, resulted in significant urban expansion, particularly in the London area. At a more localised level, newer industries tended to locate away from the centre of conurbations, encouraging out-migration and 'urban sprawl'.[17]

By the mid-1930s, concerns over the impact on both the communities that migrants left, and those in which they arrived, triggered academic debate and major policy reviews.[18] Two highly influential reports recommended a policy of 'decentralisation or dispersal, both of industries and industrial population' from 'congested urban areas', and a curb on the outward growth of

[14] Dudley Baines and Robert Woods, 'Population and Regional Development', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, ed. Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson, vol. 2 (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 52-53.
[15] PEP, *Report on the Location of Industry* (London: PEP, 1939), 7.
[16] David Feldman, 'Migration', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 204–5.
[17] G. R. Allen, 'The Growth of Industry on Trading Estates, 1920-39, with Special Reference to Slough Trading Estate', *Oxford Economic Papers* 3, no. 3 (October 1951): 272–300.
[18] Owen, 'Social Consequences'; Feldman, 'Migration', 204–5.

London.[19] These proposals fed into post-war planning, most notably the 1944 Greater London Plan (GLP). The GLP's social goals were explicit: firstly, decent housing and social facilities; secondly, community cohesion; thirdly, protection from unconstrained urban sprawl; and fourthly, to limit the growth of London.[20] The plan proposed a series of eight new towns, plus expansion of several existing towns, all within a 30-mile radius of London.[21]

As noted, Slough was seen in contemporary debate to exemplify the trends outlined above, and it was one of the expansion towns identified in the post-war London planning. This chapter examines the causes of the town's growth, the logistical, planning and social challenges that arose, and some responses by local government and industry. Aspects of the lived experience in the town are explored and related to the contemporary policy debate.

Population Growth

Figure 1 shows Slough's population growth from 1891 to 1971, compared with Reading and Wycombe. Reading is a long-standing industrial town, around twenty miles due west of Slough. The Wycombe urban area includes High Wycombe, ten miles north-west of Slough, a longer established town which was the largest in Buckinghamshire until overtaken by Slough in the 1920s, and several nearby villages.

Figure **2** normalises these figures, showing that Reading's population grew roughly in line with national averages. Wycombe grew substantially, but Slough grew significantly faster than its near neighbours and the national urban average from the end of WWI. The reasons for this growth spurt are explored below.

[19] PEP, *Location*; Montague Barlow, 'Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population. Report', Command Papers; Reports of Commissioners (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 40 1939), Feldman, 'Migration', 205.
[20] Peter Self, 'The Evolution of the Greater London Plan, 1944–1970', *Progress in Planning* 57, no. 3–4 (April 2002): 145–46.
[21] Ibid., 151–52.

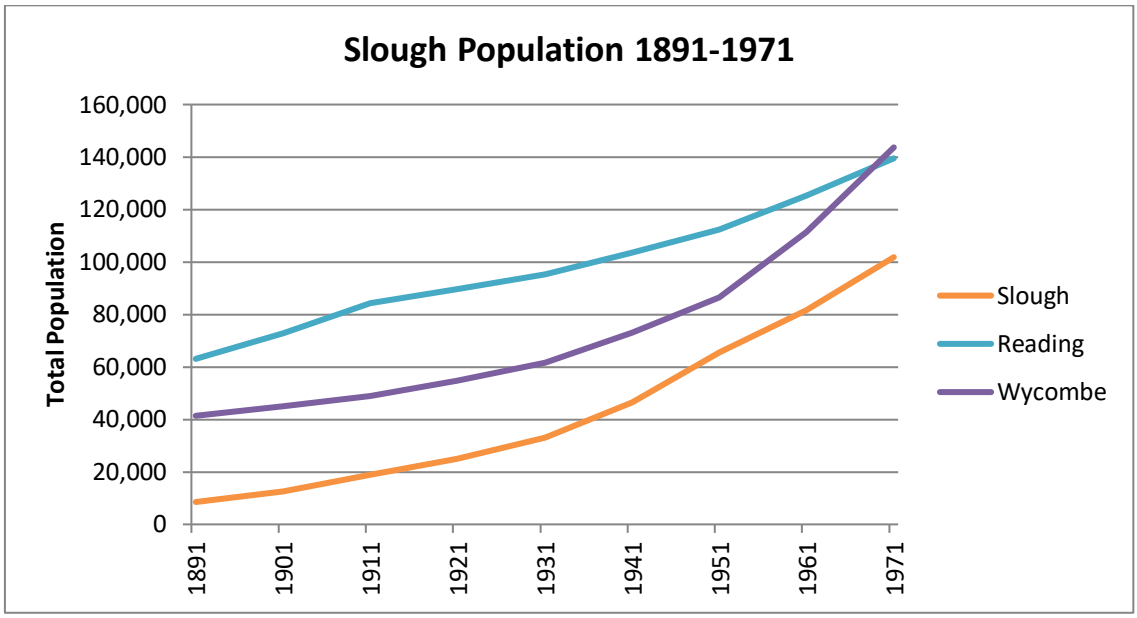


Figure 1: Slough Population Growth 1891-1971[22]

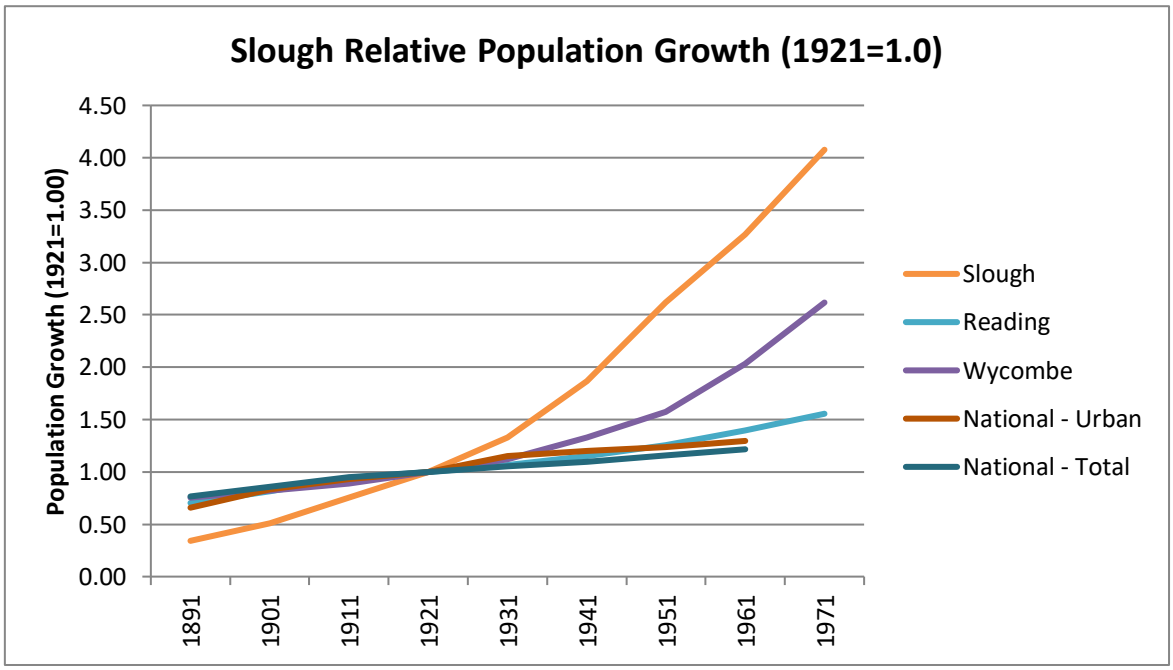


Figure 2: Slough Relative Population Growth 1911-1961

[22] www.visionofbritain.org.uk, figures for High Wycombe MB, Reading MB, Slough MB, [accessed 6 August 2015].

Slough's development also drove wider population growth within Buckinghamshire, as shown in Figure 3. In the 30 years up to the 1921 census, Buckinghamshire's population grew at the same rate as the rest of England: but in the next 30 years, it grew 45 per cent faster – the third fastest of any English county.[23] The 1951 County Census Report divided the county into three areas to analyse growth in this latter period. The 'Buckingham Group' in the north was a largely rural area with no significant conurbation; the central area, or 'High Wycombe Group', included the Wycombe and Aylesbury urban areas; and the south, or 'Slough Group', comprised Slough and Eton Urban Districts, and Eton Rural District.[24] Eton Rural District was an eight mile wide ring to the west, north, and east of Slough, including villages that acted as 'dormitories' for the town. Between 1921 and 1951, the Buckingham Group remained largely rural with no significant urban development, and as Figure 3 shows, the population was static. The High Wycombe Group grew 56 per cent, with growth driven by the expansion of commuter communities along the main railway line into London Marylebone. The Slough Group, representing only 18 per cent of the population in 1921, grew by 143 per cent and contributed 44 per cent of the county's growth over the period.

[23] *Census 1951 England and Wales: County Report Buckinghamshire* (London: HMSO, 1954), xii Hertfordshire and Sussex West grew faster.
[24] Ibid., xii–xiv.

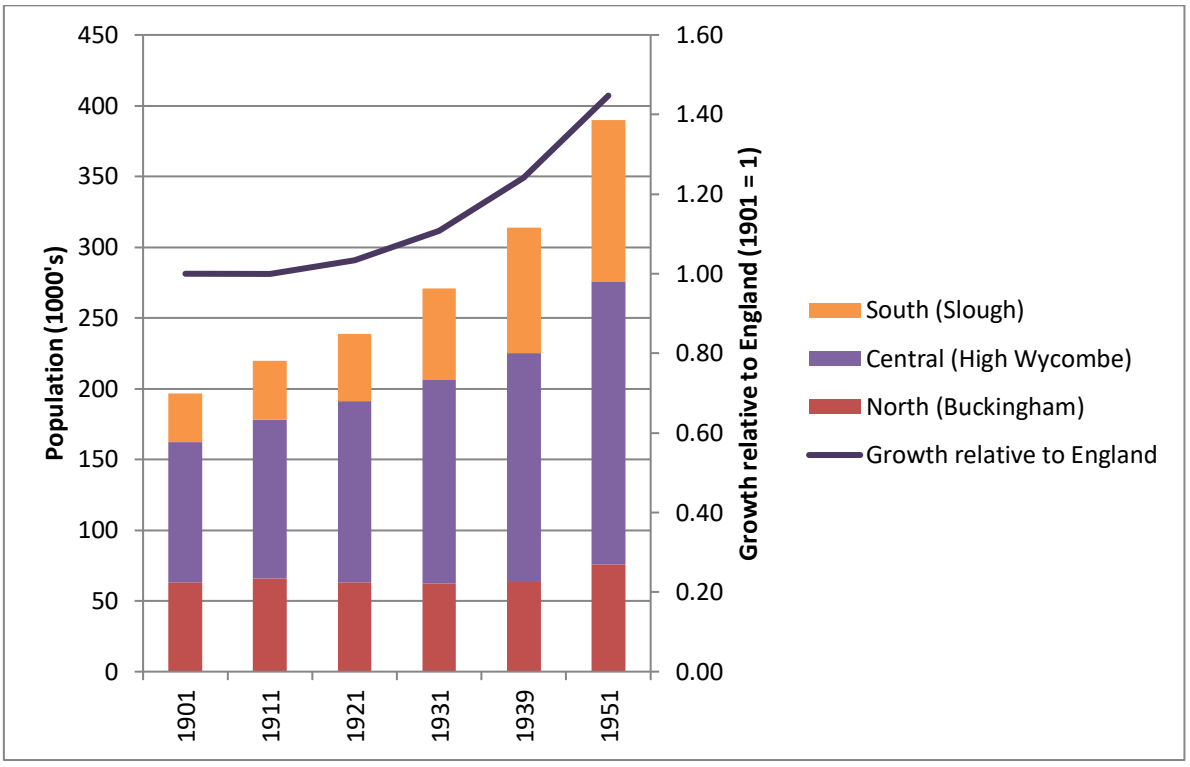


Figure 3: Buckinghamshire Population 1901-1951[25]

Growth slowed after this, as the town had reached the limits imposed by the Green Belt.[26] Comparing Figures 1-3, three distinct phases are discernible. Up to 1920, Slough had a mixed economy, growing to a population of around 20,000, with inward migration from the immediate locality. The second phase began with the formation of the Trading Estate in 1920. Rapid industrialisation followed, with the population trebling to around 60,000 in 1945 through natural growth (including absorbing some outlying villages) and significant migration.[27] Following WWII, the third phase continued the interwar trends but differed in the efforts made by local government and London County Council (LCC) to plan for the town's continued growth. These three phases are analysed in more detail below.

[25] *Census 1921 England and Wales: County of Buckingham* (London, 1924), 1 Table 2; *1951 Census Buckinghamshire*, xiv Table A.
[26] Buckinghamshire County Council, 'Slough & District Town Map Review' (January 1966), 4, L574:71, SLLS.
[27] Minoprio & Spencely and P.W. MacFarlane, 'Slough Advisory Plan', September 1950, 3, L574:71, SLLS.

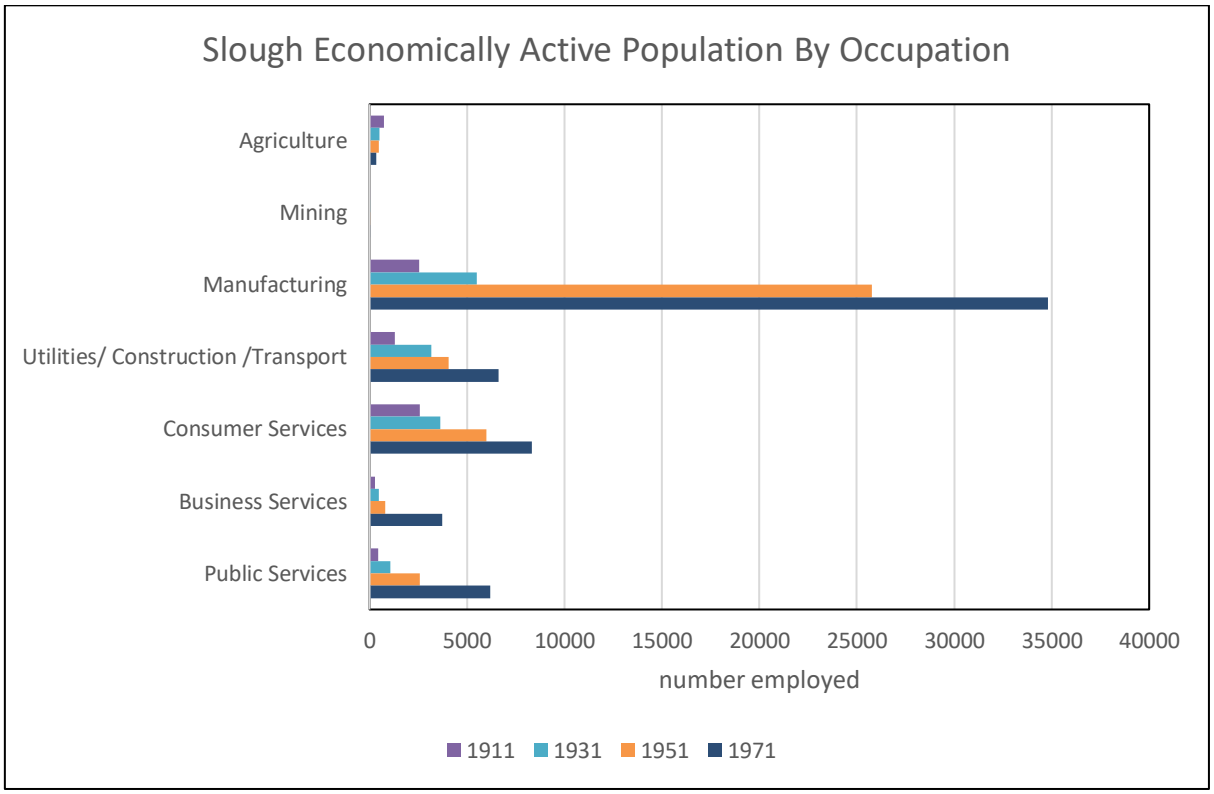


Figure 4: Slough Residential Population by Occupation[28]

Figure 4 shows the occupations undertaken by the residential population, showing the dramatic increase in employment and the transformation into an industrial town as the century progressed. The numbers of residents employed, and the nature of their employment, had implications for the churches' ministry that are explored below. Likewise, the age make-up of the population had implications – particularly the numbers of children and young people - which are explored below, and particularly in Chapter 6. A further significant factor was how the population settled during the different phases of development.

[28] URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10032751/cube/IND_SECTOR_GEN, accessed 30/01/2018

Location and pre-First World War development



Figure 5: Slough 1903[29]

Location and communications were key to Slough's growth. Figure 5 shows Slough in 1903, located midway between Maidenhead and Uxbridge, twenty miles west of Central London. The Great Western Railway (GWR) main line from London to Bristol passed through Slough, and the Great West Road (A4) ran through the middle of the town. A branch of the Grand Junction Canal connected the town to the canal network. According to a Government minister in 1918, this meant that if a location was needed 'within 25 miles of London ... near the great thoroughfares of the road, the canal, and the Great Western Railway ... [serving] all the chief manufacturing centres ... affording easy facilities, without going through London', then Slough 'was the only place ... that would satisfy these conditions'.[30] The town's marketing used similar arguments: a 1951 brochure referred to its 'natural advantages of proximity to London, accessibility from ports and large centres , a level site, clear air and room to expand' and as being 'London's Western industrial centre'.[31] The Barlow Report concluded 'possibly places like ... Slough while more distant from the centre and outside Greater London should also for some purposes be regarded

[29] OS 1903, Sheet 19
[30] 'War Office and Farm Land', *Times*, 13 June 1918.
[31] 'Slough Festival 1951' (Slough & District Chamber of Commerce, 1951), L574:90, SLLS.

as part of the London conurbation'.[32] As well as local businesses, many UK and international companies reached similar conclusions, as seen below.

The railway was key to Slough's growth before WWI. According to the VCH in 1905, 'it is ... mainly to the railway that Slough owes its modern development ... the modern town has grown up to meet the railway traffic.'[33] In 1914, the local council described the town as 'largely residential', as proximity to London made commuting possible.[34] But Slough was not a major 'railway town': although the GWR provided 13 per cent of male employment, twice as many men were employed by the GWR in Reading than in Slough; and many railway employees were commuters. Indeed, the town had no dominant employer or industry – such as, for example, Huntley and Palmer in Reading, employing 15 per cent of the workforce, or the furniture industry in High Wycombe, employing 38 per cent of the workforce.[35] Slough had a mixed economy, performing many of the functions of a traditional market town.

A relatively large construction sector was driven by house-building in a 'rapidly increasing town': in 1911, a third of houses were less than ten years old.[36] Brick-making, using deposits of London clay to the north and east of the town, was longstanding, but accelerated from the 1840s.[37] Apart from local construction, the railway provided bulk transport to other markets until the Grand Junction canal extension reached Slough in the 1880s. The Nash family, owners of the main brick company, became major benefactors in the town.

Agricultural employment included several nurseries located within the town's boundaries.[38] The town was surrounded by several large farms with 'extremely prosperous' owners.[39] A weekly cattle market operated in the town centre from the 1860s. While agriculture began to reduce as a

[32] Barlow, 'Royal Commission', 7.
[33] William Page, *A History of the County of Buckingham*, vol. 3, VCH, 1905, 301–2.
[34] MOH 1913, 4, SLLS.
[35] *Census 1911*, vol. X: Occupations (London, 1914), 386–387,424–425.
[36] Page, *VCH Vol 3*, 3:301–2; MOH 1913, 4, 11.
[37] VCH vol 2, pp. 114-115.
[38] Maxwell Fraser, *History of Slough*, 2nd ed. (Slough: Slough Corporation, 1980), 98.
[39] Ibid.

proportion of the local economy in the period before WWI, absolute numbers employed remained constant.

There were three major manufacturing employers. G.D.Peters was established in the 1850s, manufacturing components for railway carriages. Formed in the 1840s, Elliman's produced an embrocation for treating minor injuries in animals and humans. James Elliman became a major benefactor to many civic projects until his death in 1924. James Horlick established the first European factory for the eponymous beverage in Slough in 1908. But in 1911, manufacturing employment was significantly less than the national urban average of 33 per cent.[40]

At this stage, then, Slough was far from an industrial town. The economy had several distinct components – a strong service sector, underpinned by railway traffic; an active construction sector; a growing manufacturing base; and a stable agricultural sector.

These advantages led to Slough's population growing 31 per cent between 1901 and 1911.[41] This was not solely organic growth: it was estimated that between 1901 and 1911, an average of 1.4 per cent growth per annum arose from the excess of births over deaths, and a further 1.3 per cent per annum from net migration.[42] Even at this stage, Slough attracted significant numbers of new residents.

Post First World War Industrialisation

Decisions made in the closing days of WWI would transform Slough into an industrial town 'hardly recognisable' as 'the small cross-roads town' of 1920.[43] In 1918, the War Department procured a 660-acre farmland site west of Slough to be the main repair depot for military motor vehicles.[44] Construction continued after hostilities ended, but costs and timescales escalated and

[40] http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10001043/cube/INDUSTRY_GEN, [4 August 2013].
[41] *Census 1911 England and Wales: Summary Tables* (London: HMSO, 1914), 37.
[42] MOH 1913, 24–25.
[43] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 1.
[44] 'War Office and Farm Land'.

the plan was regularly criticised as a waste of public money.[45] In early 1920, Government sold the site and its stock of vehicles to a private consortium. Although 'the public would rejoice to be quit of the Slough Depot', *The Times* presciently concluded 'in the hands of sound business men this ill-starred undertaking ought to become a great success and might even be the nucleus of a widespread process of industrial development in the Thames Valley'.[46] The site would become the Slough Trading Estate, owned by Slough Estates Ltd.[47]

The new company continued to sell refurbished military vehicles until the stock was exhausted.[48] However, the long-term business model was relatively new – a privately funded 'trading estate', which leased ready-made factories to manufacturing firms on attractive terms and with all facilities provided – utilities, canteens, social centres, and later, a health service. Companies freed up financial capital and gained flexibility to adapt to changing market needs.[49] This proved popular with companies relocating from depressed areas of the country, international companies establishing UK operations, or businesses in the 'newer industries'.[50]

Growth was rapid: there were 24 tenants in 1924 and 210 in 1938.[51] One company relocated its entire 500-strong workforce from Warrington, quoting the difficulty in finding 'suitable accommodation' in the North-West and the availability of 'unlimited space [and] extensive buildings already in existence' in Slough.[52] Citroen Cars began manufacturing in Slough in 1925 and continued until 1966.[53] The introduction of import tariffs in the early 1930s made manufacturing in the UK, rather than importing goods, more attractive for foreign companies,

[45] 'The Slough Motor Depot Scandal', *Times*, 23 July 1919.
[46] 'The Sale of the Slough Depot', *Times*, 8 April 1920.
[47] 'Slough Estates Limited', *Times*, 21 September 1926.
[48] Michael Cassell, *Long Lease! The Story of Slough Estates, 1920-1991* (London: Pencorp Books, 1991), 36.
[49] 'Slough Estates', *Times*, 4 April 1928; Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 39.
[50] PEP, *Location*, 7-13,106-108.
[51] 'Slough Estates, Limited', *Times*, 11 April 1935; Barlow, 'Royal Commission', 285.
[52] 'Warrington Works for Slough', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1923.
[53] Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 53.

and Slough was an ideal location.[54] Well known US companies to establish UK headquarters on the Estate were Gillette, Johnson & Johnson, Black and Decker, and Mars Confectionery.

As the Estate grew, Slough Estates planned that no tenant would account for more than 6 per cent of its total rental income, to spread risk.[55] Slough therefore developed a base of many small to medium-sized firms, rather than a few large well-known employers, and trade unions had difficulty in gaining traction.[56] This created a fluid jobs market, where it was relatively easy for workers to change jobs: but also easier for employers to recruit lower paid youth or female labour.

The Trading Estate's success attracted widespread interest.[57] In 1939, both the PEP and Barlow Reports included case studies and incorporated the development of 'trading' or 'industrial' estates in their recommendations.[58] By the late 1930s, several similar estates had been established, and others followed WWII. By 1939, though, Slough Trading Estate – 'unquestionably the prototype of most subsequent development' - still provided approximately 60 per cent of the employment on all such estates around the country.[59]

The success of the Trading Estate stimulated wider development of Slough as an industrial centre, and by 1939 the Estate provided only 60 per cent of industrial employment in Slough.[60] In 1919, a paint factory was opened, later known as ICI Paints, manufacturing Dulux. Ladybird, a large supplier of children's clothing to Marks and Spencer and Woolworths, was established in 1932. In 1938, Hawker Aircraft began manufacturing in Langley, the eastern part of Slough. However, most of the new small to medium-sized employers were not well-known names.

[54] 'Slough Estates, Limited', *Times*, 13 April 1933; Allen, 'Trading Estates', 283.
[55] Barlow, 'Royal Commission', 284.
[56] Mike Savage, 'Trade Unionism, Sex Segregation, and the State: Women's Employment in "New Industries" in Inter-War Britain', *Social History* 13, no. 2 (1 May 1988): 209–30.
[57] For example, 'The Industrial Drift', *Times*, 8 June 1935.
[58] PEP, *Location*, 106–8; Barlow, 'Royal Commission'.
[59] Allen, 'Trading Estates', 297.
[60] Ibid., 280.

By WWII, Slough had undergone twenty years of rapid industrial expansion. When the town received its Royal Charter in 1938, *The Times* commended it as a 'great manufacturing centre ... a smart and prosperous centre of industry ... that has found work and wages for so many people from all parts of the country'.[61]

Figure 6 shows Slough in 1938. The GWR and Windsor branch line are marked. Also highlighted are the A4 Great West Road, running through the middle of the town, and the Slough Trading Estate, two miles west of the town centre.

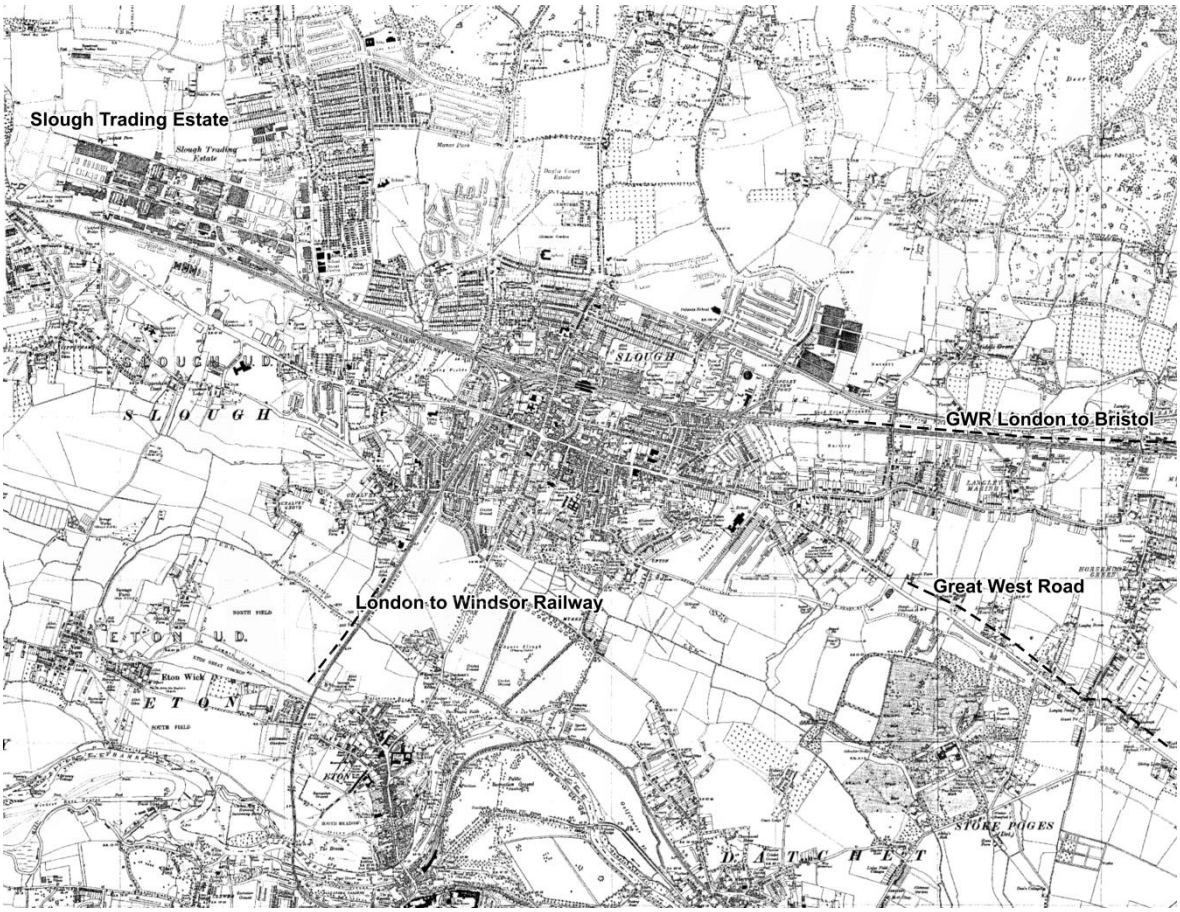


Figure 6: Slough 1938[62]

Further impetus to growth was provided by WWII. Slough's community of light industrial companies, particularly focused on precision engineering, became a key armaments producer

[61] 'The Slough of Rejoicing', *Times*, 15 September 1938.
[62] OS County Series 1938 Buckinghamshire

during the war years.[63] The Hawker factory was an obvious example, but many other small to medium sized companies were refocused on producing the components needed for the war effort – such as casings for the Spitfire's Merlin engines.

The town's workforce substantially increased: by 1942, 40,000 people were employed in the war effort on the Trading Estate alone – double the pre-war figure.[64] While many of these additional workers were temporary, the 1950 plan found that some stayed, or identified Slough as a place to migrate to post-war when new housing estates were built.

Figure 4 showed Slough's transition to an industrial town through its residential occupations. However, another measure of local employment is the fivefold increase in the number of workers registered at Slough Labour Exchange between 1923 and 1939 – substantially larger than the doubling of the residential population indicated by the Census.[65] Employment in Slough stimulated growth not only in the town, but in nearby communities.

Social Class	**I**	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**
	%	%	%	%	%
England and Wales (all)	3.3	15.0	52.7	16.2	12.8
Buckinghamshire (all)	4.7	15.8	53.0	15.0	11.6
Bucks Urban Districts (all)	3.3	13.6	58.9	12.0	12.2
Slough Municipal Borough	3.1	13.4	57.6	12.8	13.1
Bucks Rural Districts (all)	6.0	17.9	47.1	17.9	11.0
Eton Rural District	8.8	21.1	44.7	15.6	9.8

I Professional Occupations
II Intermediate Occupations
III Skilled Occupations
IV Partly Skilled Occupations
V Unskilled Occupations

Table 1: Social Class Distribution 1951[66]

[63] Cassell, *Long Lease!*, chap. 8.
[64] Ibid., 90.
[65] Allen, 'Trading Estates', 280.
[66] *1951 Census Buckinghamshire*, xli–xlii, 52.

Table 1 shows the occupational mix from the 1951 Census for both Slough and Eton Rural District, the surrounding area. The Census presented occupation as a measure of social class. Eton Rural District had a higher proportion of residents with professional and intermediate occupations – the Census concluded that 'considerable numbers' of these worked in Slough, or commuted into London.[67] The PEP report commented, 'neither Slough nor the trading estate ... can claim aesthetic merit', but the town was surrounded by attractive villages and middle-class amenities. If Slough was uncongenial, there were plenty of convenient residential alternatives.[68] Unsurprisingly, 'workers' lived in the town: 'managers' tended to live outside. The 1950 Plan concurred, 'Slough is predominantly a working-class community'.[69]

These trends accelerated with greater availability of public and private transport: in 1966, only 56 per cent of those employed in the town lived there, the remainder commuting in from Windsor, Maidenhead, West London and elsewhere.[70]

As the century progressed, therefore, the nature of community became more complex – with communities based around both residence and workplace. Schools as another trigger for community formation are examined later.

Post Second World War Development

[67] Ibid., xlii–xliii.
[68] PEP, *Location*, 107.
[69] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 8, 148, 160.
[70] Bucks CC, 'Slough & District Town Map Review', 18.

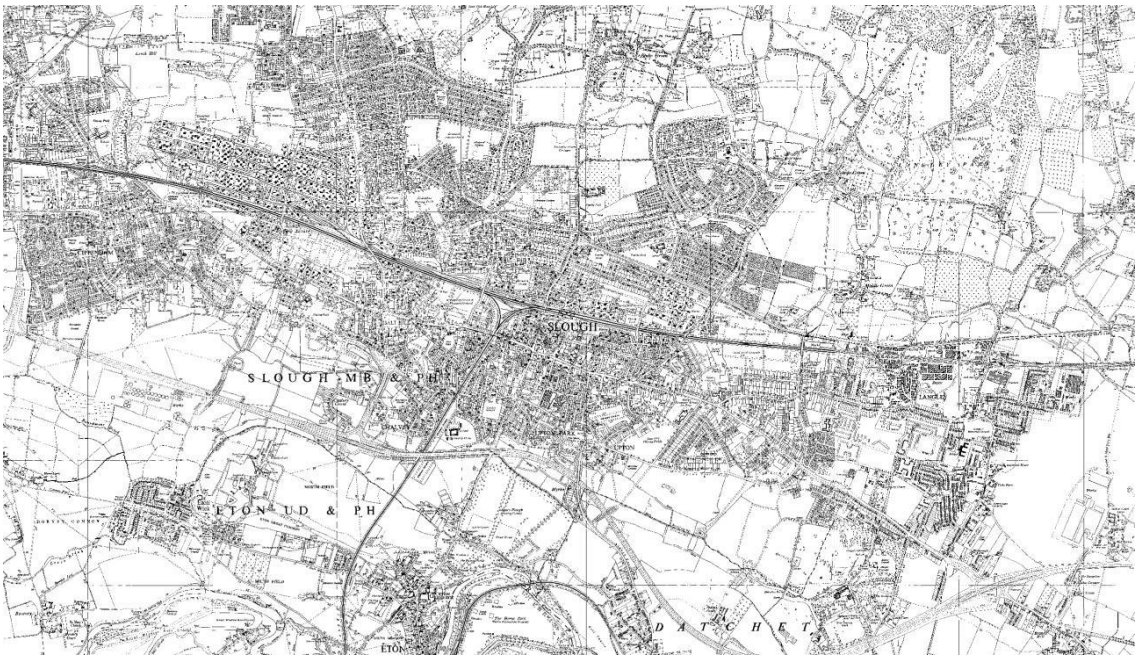


Figure 7: Slough 1961[71]

The twenty-five years following WWII followed the pattern of interwar industrialisation, with a consequently rapid increase in employment in skilled manufacturing, as shown in Figure 4. Unemployment in Slough was low – 1.3% in 1951 and 3.2% in 1971, against national averages of 1.9% and 4.0% respectively. [72] In practice, any unemployment was due to skills imbalances: there was an over-supply of jobs in the area, and many incomers commented on how easy it was to find work.[73]

Two factors differentiated the town's post-war development. Firstly, Slough was a designated reception town for post-war London 'overspill'. From the mid-1950s 20,000 new residents settled on new LCC estates in Langley to the east and Britwell to the north-west of the town.[74] Figure 7 shows Slough in 1961, with post-war housing development clearly visible when compared with Figure 6. This migration out of London was driven by the availability of jobs; but labour market

[71] OS 1961 National Grid Tile SU98SE
[72] http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/units 10032751, 10061325; cube CENSUS_UNEM; accessed April 1, 2015.
[73] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 3; Bucks CC, 'Slough & District Town Map Review', 21.
[74] 'Migration from London', *Times*, 6 December 1949; 'Housing Estates at Slough: £8m L.C.C. Scheme', *Times*, 17 December 1949.

shortages increasingly attracted migrants from further afield. Most notably, from the mid-1950s, Commonwealth immigration significantly affected the town's demography.

Migration

If Slough exemplified the rise of new industries and relocation of employment to the South-East, it also exemplified interwar migration. Rapid industrial expansion could only be achieved by access to enough labour: Slough became an employment 'magnet', the local workforce being complemented by substantial voluntary migration from other parts of the UK, including the depressed areas.[75] By 1929, the rapid growth in employment in Slough attracted attention from several national newspapers.[76] The *Daily Mail* wrote:

> Unemployment decreases in the very areas where workers increase. In London, for instance, it has diminished in the five-year period from 9 per cent to 5 per cent ... Slough, however, is the most remarkable of all cases and may claim to be the hardest working town in all England. Employment has increased by 60 per cent, and unemployment is only 1 per cent of its population, which means that it is virtually non-existent.[77]

Government policy played some part: the Ministry of Labour opened a Training Centre with 400 places for 'men from the depressed mining areas of South Wales and the North' – the first such centre in the South-East.[78] Over the next three years, 2,611 young men were trained and released into the workforce.[79] But migration was primarily driven by market forces not Government intervention.

In 1950, a detailed plan for Slough's redevelopment was published.[80] This included a survey of 910 households, covering topics such as household composition, place of origin, year and reason for migration, and views on the town's character, facilities and amenities. This provided detailed insights into the town's development since WWI.

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[75] 'Slough as the Mecca of Job-Seekers', *SO*, 11 May 1928.
[76] Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 58–59.
[77] 'Changing England. March of Industry South', *Daily Mail*, 12 February 1929.
[78] 'New Training Centre', *Times*, 17 June 1929.
[79] Savage, 'Trade Unionism', 223.
[80] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan'.

According to the Plan, between 1921 and 1947 the excess of births over deaths contributed 10,200 of the town's population growth. However, growth by net migration was three times higher at 33,200.[81] Table 2 shows that 70 per cent of heads of household were born outside Slough. While the four largest migrant groupings were from London, Wales, the North East and North West, 'almost all parts of Britain were represented'.[82] Three macro-trends are discernible: migration from Wales and the North driven by depression in heavy industrial areas; out-migration from London; and thirdly 'an influx from country areas' due to 'pre-war depopulation of rural areas owing to agricultural depression.'

Birthplace	Slough	London	Wales	N East	N West	Scotland	Midlands	Other
Household head (%)	29.8	24.2	16.2	10.1	3.9	1.7	1.1	13.0
All population (%)	40.5	21.5	8.7	4.8	4.7	2.1	3.4	14.4

Table 2: Birthplace of Slough Residents, 1951[83]

Table 2 also shows the 1951 Census analysis, which recorded birthplaces individually rather than by household head. The higher percentage shown as born in Slough is due to migrants settling and subsequently having children, recorded as born locally. The Census analysis may therefore under-represent migrant sub-communities with a strong sense of identity with their place of origin (for example, Welsh migrants). However, both the Town Plan and the Census show the extent of migration and its diverse origins.

Welsh migration began in the early 1920s, and continued throughout the 1930s.[84] The main drivers were word of mouth and family connections: 'people used to write home and say there were jobs, and other members of the family would come'.[85] An article in the *Western Mail*

[81] Ibid., 3.
[82] Ibid., 6.
[83] Slough Advisory Plan 1950, 135ff; *1951 Census Buckinghamshire*, 41, Table 19.
[84] Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 36.
[85] Maxwell Fraser, 'Slough 1901-1971: Interview with Mr Ivor Price', 1977.

described Slough as 'a haven of security, a place where they can win a livelihood – not a "Slough of Despond" but of hope and cheer'.[86]

The new migrants did not settle evenly across the town. Initial patterns of migrant settlement and new housing development broadly correlate. Figure 8 shows Slough's development from 1900 to 1930. The 1950 survey found that migrants were virtually non-existent in the pre-1900 developments, bounded to the north and west by the railways.[87] However, there were high concentrations of Welsh people on the new housing estates north and west of the original quadrant - 47.5 per cent on one estate, 33 per cent on another, and 23 per cent on another. Even after new estates were built, the Welsh tended to congregate in the pre-1930s areas. For one arrival in the 1930s, it felt like 'a third of Slough was Welsh'.[88] As well as congregating together, Welsh people brought Welsh culture – the language, chapel, and Male Voice Choir.[89]

[86] quoted in: 'Slough's New Nickname: New South Wales', *SO*, 1 January 1937.
[87] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 10–14.
[88] '*Norman Stevens*, Migration to Slough, 2014, http://mygration.org.uk/stories/MY0008 accessed April 20, 2015.
[89] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 7; Fraser, 'Mr Ivor Price'.

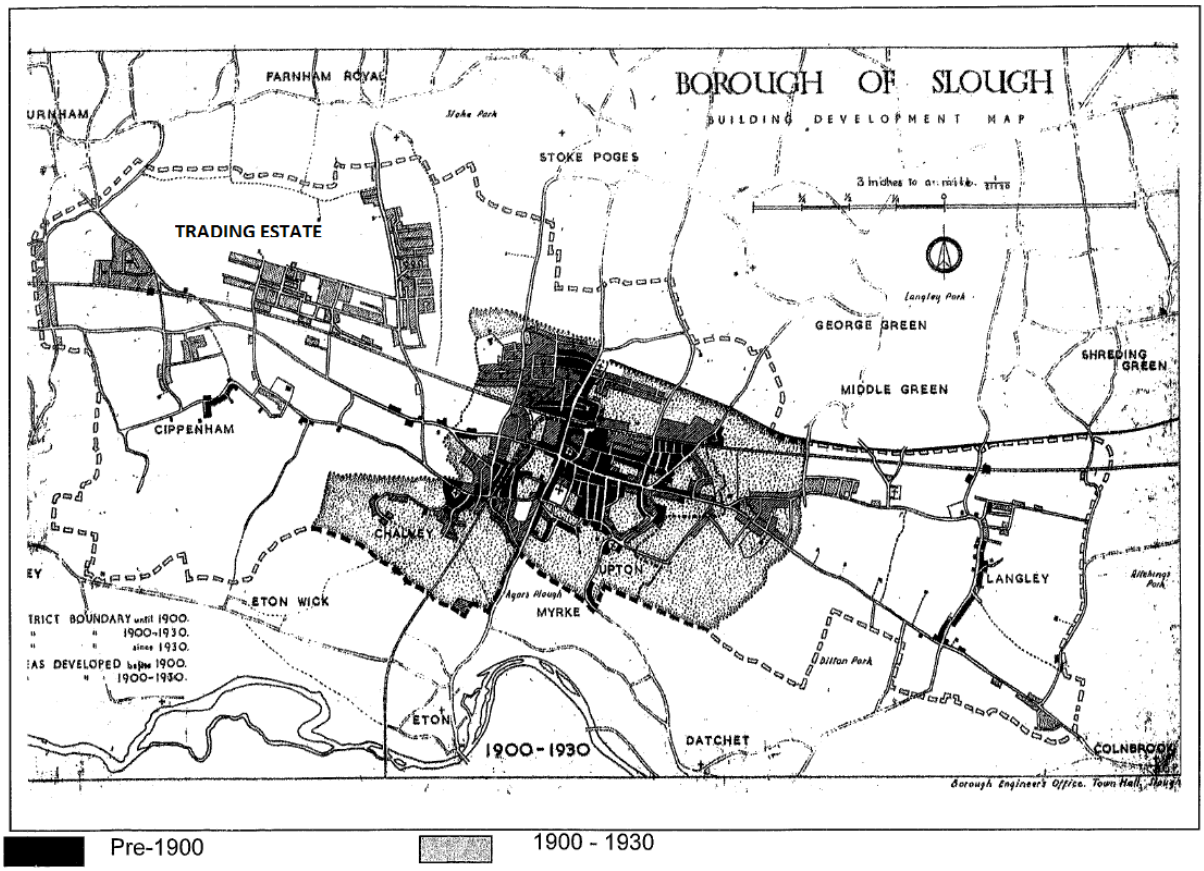


Figure 8: Slough Development 1900-1930[90]

While the Welsh were the earliest significant migrant cohort, Table 2 shows that by 1950, migrants from London outnumbered the Welsh by 50 per cent. While migration from the depressed areas was significant, historians have noted 'the majority of new jobs in the south-east were usually taken by people from within the region'.[91] Figure 9 shows the town's development between 1930 and 1948. On three estates built during this period, there were high concentrations of Londoners: 44, 56, and 59 per cent respectively. [92] The railway facilitated commuting in both directions - while many residents commuted into London, many Londoners commuted to Slough. Even with concessionary fares, there were strong economic reasons to relocate as housing became available. There were also lifestyle choices: 'the desire to get out of London and live in "the country"'.[93] Others arrived in the war years through evacuation or having

[90] *Slough Building Development 1900-1930* (Slough: Borough Engineer's Office, n.d.), SLLS.
[91] Baines and Woods, 'Population', 54.
[92] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 10–14.
[93] Ibid., 136.

been bombed out.[94] Many commented on the quality and amenities of the housing when compared with the run-down areas of East and North London which they had left.[95]

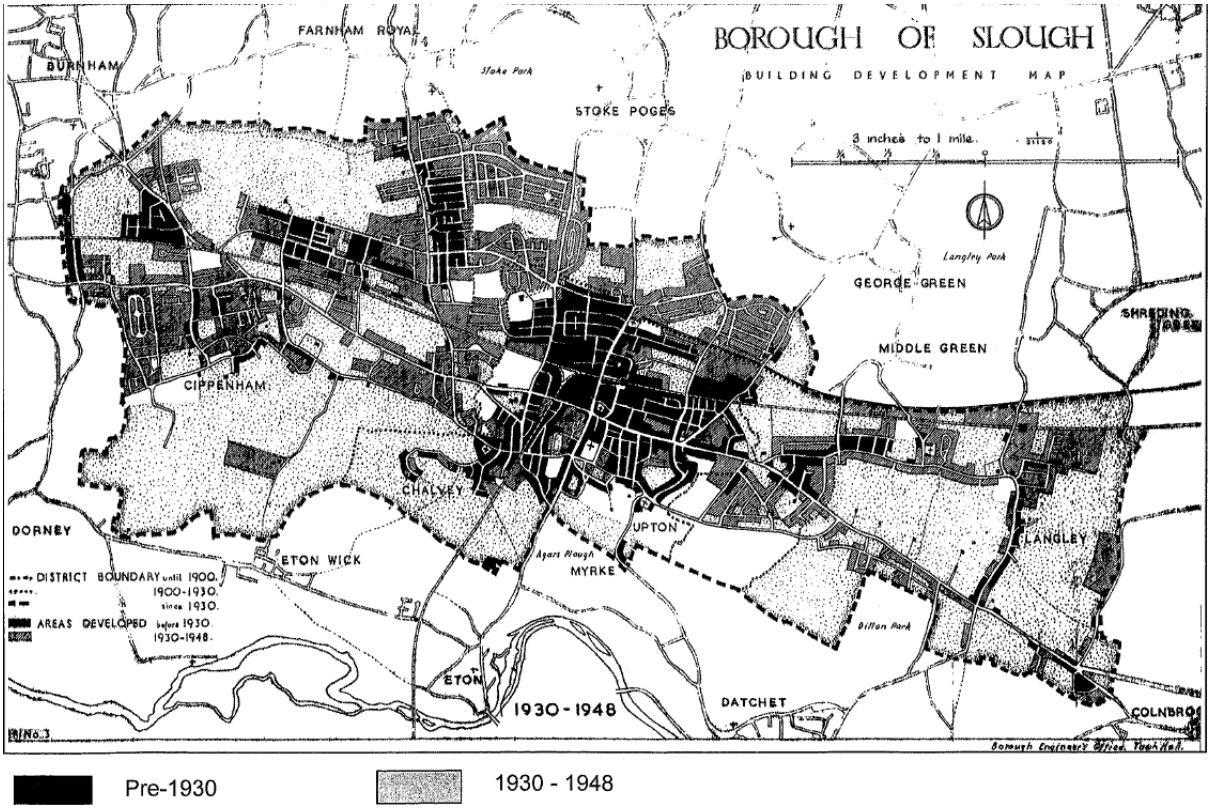


Figure 9: Slough Development 1930-1948[96]

The temporary expansions of the town's workforce during and immediately after wartime were obviously exceptional. However, even during the substantial interwar population growth, migration was not simply a story of people moving to an area of high employment, finding jobs, and staying. Despite rapid employment growth, more workers arrived than there were jobs available. When growth briefly stalled in the early 1930s, unemployment peaked at 13 per cent of the working population.[97] In 1938 Slough Estates reported that although firms on the estate had provided employment for 15,000 people from the distressed areas, 7,000 had subsequently 'returned to their native haunts'.[98] Including dependents and other family members, the numbers

[94] Ibid., 148.
[95] for example, *Christine Small*, Migration to Slough, 2014, http://mygration.org.uk/stories/MY0006.
[96] *Slough Building Development 1930-1948* (Slough: Borough Engineer's Office, n.d.), SLLS.
[97] 'Thousands of Jobs', *SO*, 15 January 1932.
[98] 'Location of Factories', *Times*, 4 February 1938.

moving in either direction were clearly large. In 1949, while the total population remained static year-on-year at around 66,000, during the year 5,300 people moved into the town and 5,500 moved out.[99]

Commonwealth Immigration

Surveys such as the 1950 Town Plan consistently found Slough to be welcoming of migrants. Interwar migration was overwhelmingly from within the United Kingdom, and the post-war influx of Londoners on to the new LCC housing estates has already been noted. But a significant change began in the mid-1950s, when the first West Indian migrants arrived. Thereafter, 'immigrants' was the common local term for non-white migrants from the Commonwealth, and they arrived at a rapid rate – with profound implications for all local communities and institutions, including the churches.

	United Kingdom		Ireland		Commonwealth		Rest of World		Total
1951	63248	95.2%	1306	2.0%	514	0.8%	1403	2.1%	66471
1961	74157	91.8%	2282	2.8%	1954	2.4%	2388	3.0%	80781
1971	72575	83.3%	2595	3.0%	8770	10.1%	3135	3.6%	87075
1981	77693	80.3%	2461	2.5%	13278	13.7%	3283	3.4%	96715

Table 3: Slough Population by Birthplace 1951-1981[100]

Table 3 shows that the proportion of residents born outside Britain and Ireland increased from 3 per cent to 17 per cent within thirty years. As noted above, the census figures tend to underestimate the ethnic mix, as children born to immigrant families are listed as born in the UK. The same might apply to Irish families – relevant to the fortunes of the Roman Catholic church, discussed further in Chapter 5. In addition, a 1966 report on racial integration speculated that 'coloured' immigrants (by which the report meant those of West-Indian, Indian and Pakistani

[99] MOH 1951, 12, SLLS.

[100] Census 1951 England and Wales: County Report Buckinghamshire p41 Table 19; Census 1961 England and Wales: County Report Buckinghamshire p18 Table 8; Census 1971 England and Wales: County Report Buckinghamshire Part I p33 Table 13; Census 1981 England and Wales: County Report Berkshire Part I p17 Table 10

descent) might have been under-estimated by the 1961 Census by 50 to 300 per cent, due to 'the only marginal adequacy of current Census enumeration methods, which fail when confronted by the deliberate withdrawal of large numbers of immigrants into anonymous security'.[101]

In early 1955 around 200 West Indians were working in Slough.[102] By 1963, there were an estimated 1,800 West Indians, 2,100 Indians, and 600 Pakistanis; and in 1967, there were around 1,500 West Indians, 4,000 Indians and 3,000 Pakistanis – meaning that 'about one in 10 people in Slough is coloured', a higher proportion than suggested by the Census.[103] Another 1967 report put the number of immigrants even higher, at 10,500; by the end of the 1960s, this had grown to perhaps 13,000.[104] As with interwar migration, arrivals did not settle evenly across the town, but tended to congregate near those of similar backgrounds and heritage. In 1968, 45 per cent of the 300 pupils at one school in Chalvey were from immigrant families.[105] The town encouraged the trend: in the mid-1970s, an Overseas Welcome Committee was formed, with a 60-page guide for those contemplating migration.[106]

Infrastructure

Rapid population growth caused severe infrastructure problems – 'too many people had come in too rapidly'.[107] Housing was a problem for at least 50 years after WWI. As one 1930 report angrily put it, 'Slough could not house all these thousands of workers. Where were they all to live? "Wherever they damn well can" seems to be the answer of the local authorities.'[108] While perhaps harsh, this highlighted the conundrum of how to balance job creation, labour force

[101] William H Israel, *Colour and Community: A Study of Coloured Immigrants and Race Relations in an Industrial Town*, 2nd ed (Slough: Slough Council of Social Service, 1966), 8–9.
[102] 'West Indians Will Be Welcome Here', *SO*, 18 February 1955.
[103] Israel, *Colour and Community*, 9; 'Tenth Of Slough Is Coloured', *SO*, 12 May 1967.
[104] 'Danger Ahead With Second Generation Immigrants', *SO*, 28 April 1967.
[105] 'Our School', *SO*, 29 November 1968.
[106] E.G. Dashwood-Evans, 'Slough: Guide to Overseas People Arriving at London Airport' (Overseas Welcome Committee, March 1975), SLLS.
[107] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 7.
[108] Design and Industries Association, *The Face of the Land: Year Book 1929-30*, ed. Harry Peach and Noel Carrington (Allen and Unwin, 1930), 133–34.

mobilisation, and local infrastructure that so exercised policy-makers in the 1930s and 1940s. [109] In interwar Slough, infrastructure planning clearly lagged behind: not unreasonably, the council did not foresee the rapid expansion of the Trading Estate and planned measured development on 'Garden City' lines.[110]

National studies calculated that 72 per cent of total interwar housing provision was from the private sector, with a rapid increase in municipal housing from the 1930s.[111] Similarly in Slough, it was not until 1931 that vision and public finances allowed the council to respond to pressing housing needs.[112] By 1934, new house-building was keeping pace with population increase, with the council funding 30 per cent of new houses.[113] Total housing provision however remained predominantly private – by 1948 council houses were still less than 20 per cent of total housing stock.[114]

Post-war development based on the 1950 plan caused 'a considerable fall' in overcrowding and increased open spaces. In 1957, the local council reported that council-owned housing had grown to around 7,000 homes, enough to house one-third of the town's population, with a waiting list of 1,500 people, or 2 per cent of population.[115] However, ten years on, the 1966 Town Plan noted that 'the insatiable demand for houses' could lead the improving trend to reverse.[116] New waves of immigration from Commonwealth countries created new problems. The 1966 Plan highlighted 'a particular problem of overcrowding' amongst these groups, with the local authority's ability to plan effectively hampered by the uncertain Census figures noted above.[117] The shortages potentially caused inter-racial tensions – echoing pre-war tensions when Welsh migrants had

[109] e.g. Self, 'Greater London Plan', chap. 2.
[110] 'Slough's Garden City', *SO*, 21 April 1923.
[111] Barlow, 'Royal Commission', 67–68.
[112] 'Slough in 1931', *SO*, 1 January 1932.
[113] MOH 1934, 3,17, CBS.
[114] MOH 1951, 31.
[115] *Slough Official Guide and Industrial Review*, 4th ed. (London: Pyramid Press, 1957), 55–56.
[116] Bucks CC, ''Slough & District Town Map Review', 4.
[117] Ibid., 17; Israel, *Colour and Community*, 8–9.

seeming preference on council house waiting lists.[118] In 1963 the local MP commented wearily 'the housing situation never seems to diminish'.[119]

The local authority response similarly lagged other planning imperatives. The 1950 Plan commented: 'Slough has often been described as a problem town' and concluded 'many of the social problems were intimately connected with lack of proper physical planning in the past'.[120] Apart from housing, the social problems listed included insufficient schools, facilities for youth, and community facilities in general. Lack of community facilities caused difficulties for adult migrants in inter-mingling and generally 'settling down': younger people felt more 'part of the community' – perhaps because of friendships made through school.[121] Overcrowded housing created disincentives to spending leisure time at home: but lack of alternatives meant, for example, cinemas were also overcrowded – as some people sat through the same programme twice.[122]

The local authorities faced many challenges, therefore. However, local businesses depended on the availability of skilled labour: and Slough Estates' entire business model was based on attracting such businesses to its Trading Estate. In 1936, Slough Estates' Chairman, Noel Mobbs, referred to 'the growing need for social amenities in new industrial areas' given the tendency for increased leisure time, and the responsibility of employers to 'bring happiness, sociability, and "something to do" into the lives of [their workers]', recognising that 'the necessary limitations of public authorities' would not be able to bear the full cost of providing these.[123] One response was the £45,000 Community Centre next to the Trading Estate, built in 1937 with funding by local businesses.

[118] 'Housing Shortage Foments Race Hatred', *SO*, 13 April 1962.
[119] Alan Hodge, 'Eton, Slough and Shaw', *Financial Times*, 7 February 1963.
[120] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 3.
[121] Ibid., 7.
[122] Ibid.
[123] 'Slough Estates, Limited', *Times*, 24 April 1936.

The Centre included extensive indoor and outdoor sports facilities and a wide range of clubs and societies. Within six months of opening there were 5,000 members, with up to 1,500 attending each evening. As well as supporting the initial capital cost, local businesses paid a levy per employee to support the running costs of the Centre, and the County Council funded a junior section and a nursery school.[124] In 1951, over 150 firms participated.[125] *The Times* proclaimed the scheme 'a notable example to the whole country' and it attracted two royal visits in the first year.[126] As Betjeman and Orwell ranted, the Queen was beating the King at darts.

Benevolent or far-sighted employers looking after their employees was hardly new, of course: but most of the well-known examples were funded by a single large employer. Some larger Slough firms provided staff centres and sports fields, but this left 'the great majority of Slough's working population', employed in small to medium-sized firms, without such facilities.[127] The Centre was distinctive in its scale, and the co-operation of many businesses in funding an independently directed facility which benefited all. Apart from providing leisure facilities, there were hopes it would improve community cohesion – sorely needed in a town which 'is not so much an organised community as a jumbled collection of comparatively new settlers with exceedingly little cohesion among them'.[128]

However comprehensive the Centre's provision, it highlighted the lack of alternatives. Busy though it was, many residents did not use it. For those living in Cippenham or Langley, it was too far away; some wanted their social life to be separate from the workplace; some thought it too working-class; others wanted more handicrafts, arts, educational or intellectual activities. Without the Centre, though, the town 'would have been destitute of social provision in the

[124] 'Slough Estates [1937]'; 'Slough Social Centre', *Times*, 29 September 1937; *Activities in the Slough Community Centre:* (Slough Social Fund, 1951).
[125] *The Community Centre Chest* (Slough Social Fund, 1951).
[126] 'Queen Mary's Visit to Slough', *Times*, 27 April 1937; 'Royal Visit to Workers' Club', *Times*, 18 December 1937.
[127] For example, 'Horlicks New Staff Building', *SO*, 18 February 1938; 'A Noteworthy Experiment', *SO*, 8 January 1937.
[128] 'A Noteworthy Experiment'.

immediate pre-war period'. There was a good, but small, central library, but no branch libraries. The town lacked large central halls for dinners, dances and other large-scale events; and smaller halls where local clubs and societies could meet. There was a shortage of green spaces and children's play areas.[129]

But there was not a complete absence of leisure-time provision. There were flourishing local sports leagues, Slough F.C. to support, and a greyhound stadium.[130] The four cinemas seated over 7,000 in the mid-1950s. The 1950 Town Guide listed around 60 clubs and societies, 20 youth organisations – many with several branches – and clubs covering 16 sports. This was in addition to employer or church-based groups.[131] By comparison, a 1914 town guide listed four.[132]

So perhaps the problems can be overstated, as the downsides of success. For the Slough Chamber of Commerce, 'to many people coming from the older industrial towns, [Slough] appears to be a garden city' whose various amenities made it 'as pleasant a place to live in as any in the country', and dismissed the developmental issues as 'minor blemishes'.[133] This might seem rather lofty, but was borne out by the post-war survey – while bemoaning the social problems, migrants enjoyed

> the choice of employment for men; employment opportunities for women; better opportunities for young people ... cleanliness compared with heavy industrial areas, the proximity to Windsor, Eton and London ... the country surrounding Slough ... [and] the freer atmosphere of its cosmopolitan life (e.g. as compared with a Welsh mining village) ... the "likes" outweighed the "dislikes" because ... Slough became a "land of opportunity" to the unemployed[134]

It was not only in leisure that employers were introducing new initiatives. Just after WWII, the Slough Industrial Health Service was set up, again initiated by Mobbs and Slough Estates. This provided not only assistance for industrial injuries, but general medical support for all Trading

[129] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 8–9.
[130] Fraser, *Slough*, chap. 13.
[131] *Slough Official Handbook and Industrial Review,* 1st ed. (London: Pyramid Press, 1948), 37–41.
[132] *Day's Slough and District Directory* (Windsor, 1914).
[133] 'Slough Festival 1951'.
[134] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 7.

Estate employees and their families.[135] In 1957, 179 firms were involved, with 17,748 employees enrolled and 41,000 cases a year being treated.[136] 60 per cent of cases were classified as 'non-industrial' conditions that might have seemed the responsibility of the fledgling National Health Service.[137] Mobbs argued that employers should not only ensure workplaces were safe but that employees were fit physically and mentally for work: the service was therefore funded by employers, rather than employees.[138] Mobbs was a businessman: he argued this was a good investment in 'a profitable as well as a humanitarian project'.[139]

Mobbs is an example of how, in a small town, the influence of individual civic, religious, or business leaders could be significant. *The Times* entitled his obituary 'The Development of Slough'.[140]He clearly had a social conscience, but was known as a 'hardnosed' businessman and big spender whose weekend parties were legendary.[141] Hardnosed maybe; but he attributed the building of the Social Centre 'in no small measure to the urgent insistence of the late Rector of Farnham Royal'.[142]

Leadership from within the religious communities – whether confined to the spiritual community, or exercised more widely, as here – is explored in ensuing chapters. Two other businessmen had a significant impact in the earlier stages of the town's development, however. James Elliman has already been mentioned: as the *Slough Observer* put it, 'his princely generosity has placed Slough in the possession of assets which might well be the envy of towns ten times the size'. [143] These 'assets' included the main public halls, the fire station and all associated equipment, the Drill Hall, 26 acres of parkland and playing fields, donations to local hospitals, and

[135] 'Health in Industry', *Times*, 14 September 1948; 'Reinforcing the Health Service', *Times*, 30 November 1951; *Slough Centre 1951*, 12–14; 'The Slough Industrial Health Service Ltd: Tenth Annual Report 1956-1957', (Slough Industrial Health Service, 1957), SLLS.
[136] 'Slough Industrial Health Service 1957', 3-7,62-66.
[137] Ibid., 64.
[138] Ibid., 6.
[139] Ibid., 7.
[140] 'Sir Noel Mobbs: Development of Slough', *Times*, 27 November 1959.
[141] Cassell, *Long Lease!*.
[142] 'Correspondence: Religion at the Social Centre', *SO*, 24 November 1944; Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 74.
[143] 'Death of Mr James Elliman', *SO*, 29 March 1924.

significant support for the parish church.[144] Algernon Gilliat (1837-1925) was the managing partner of the family merchant bank in the City of London.[145] He moved to Stoke Poges – immediately north of Slough – in 1879. While also a major benefactor to the town, the church was his primary focus – particularly the development of the new parish of St Paul's. Gilliat was a strong evangelical Christian, related by marriage to the Clapham sect.[146] The differing ethos and emphases of these three men illustrate the changing role of Christianity and the church in twentieth century urban development.

Children and Young People

The Introduction noted that historians have identified the religious socialisation of children and young people as key to long term church health. Figure 10 shows the numbers of children, divided into four age brackets, according to the decennial census. Unsurprisingly, the huge increase in population included similar increases in the young, with the largest proportional increase taking place in the interwar years. Adjusting for evacuee children recorded in the 1939 registration, the resident young population more than trebled between 1921 and 1939.[147] Coupled with increases in the age range for compulsory school attendance and increased provision for secondary school attendance, school provision was a major challenge for the local authority. Less obviously, this was an even greater challenge for the churches, whose dominant position in providing elementary school education in 1901 eroded rapidly under financial and demographic pressures. Apart from school provision, the churches also faced the challenge of socialising these children, whether through Sunday Schools or other youth-based activities, with significant resourcing and financial implications. These themes are explored in detail in Chapter 6.

[144] Ibid.
[145] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat', *SO*, 31 January 1925.
[146] Ibid.
[147] 'Slough's Evacuees Arrive', *SO*, 8 September 1939.

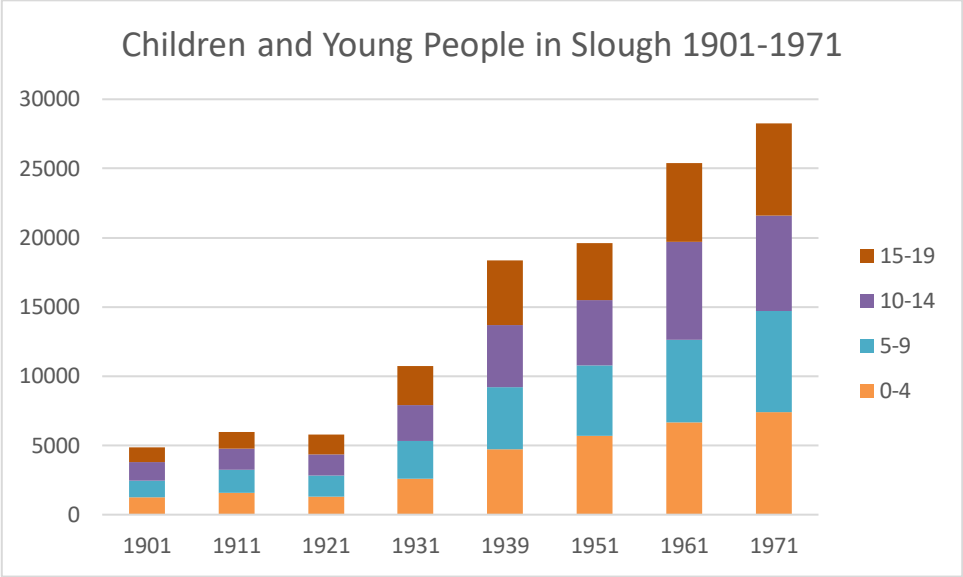


Figure 10: Young people in Slough 1901-1971[148]

Also relevant to the churches' ministry was the extent to which, alongside workplace and residence, schools were a further significant sub-community within the town – not just for children, but their parents too.

Just as migrants were not spread evenly across the town, neither were young people. In the 1951 Census, 0-19 year olds represented 29.5% of the total population.[149] However, the 1950 Town Plan found that 41 per cent of the residents on the council estates were under 21, compared with 29 per cent on the private estates.[150] Also, on the council estates there was an average of 4.8 occupants per house, compared with 4.0 on the private estates. This suggests there were more young families on the working-class council estates.

The 1950 Plan specifically identified lack of facilities for children and young people within the generally inadequate provision for social and leisure activities. There were ongoing problems in recruiting sufficient paid and voluntary staff to assist in youth and sports clubs.[151] Lack of facilities

[148] http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10032751/cube/AGESEX_85UP, accessed 4 August 2013.
[149] http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10032751/cube/AGESEX_85UP, accessed 4 August 2013.
[150] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 135–87.
[151] 'How To Keep Youth On The Rails', *SO*, 18 January 1946; 'Shortage of Clubs For Under 14s', *SO*, 22 November 1957; 'Youth Service Urgent Need For Workers', *SE*, 5 March 1971.

was linked to various problems with juvenile delinquency, although there is no reason to suppose that Slough was unusual in this respect.[152] A 1952 report, and subsequent five year study, identified various issues experienced by local working-class 'teenagers' – health, education, incidence of broken homes, tensions with parents and so on; but a high level of disposable income due to the flourishing employment market in the town.[153] Later, there were increasing signs of social trends visible elsewhere, including a greater independence of spirit amongst the young; and issues arising from the 1960s changes in social attitudes.[154]

But this was inadequate, rather than non-existent, provision. The main national young people's organisations were all represented. Scouts and Cubs were established before WWI, and by the early 1970s there were 16 troops across the town, along with 6 Boys Brigade companies.[155] The Girl Guides were established in 1915, and by the early 1970s there were 22 Guides and Brownies companies. By the 1950s, there were Air, Army and Sea Cadets; St John's Ambulance and various other groups: and local authority youth clubs spread across the town.[156] Several of the uniformed organisations had their roots within the churches: these and other children's and young people's activities organised or influenced by the churches are explored in Chapter 6.

Civic Identity and Cohesion

Slough may have been a "land of opportunity" according to the 1950 Plan, but surveys showed something was missing. On matters of civic identity and community spirit, Slough did not score highly. As one incomer said, 'you can be proud of a dirty northern town but you can't be proud of Slough'.[157]

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[152] 'Too Much Juvenile Crime', *SO*, 9 January 1942.
[153] 'Spotlight on Slough's Teenagers', *SO*, 15 August 1952; Martin Edward Meakin Herford, *Youth at Work: A Five-Year Study by an Appointed Factory Doctor* (London: M Parish, 1957).
[154] 'Twice As Many Unmarried Mothers In 10 Years', *SO*, 24 February 1967; 'Shock Report On Slough's Teenage Brides', *SO*, 10 January 1969.
[155] Fraser, *Slough*, chap. 13.
[156] *Slough Guide 1957*, 51.
[157] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 8.

A 1942 survey conducted by the WEA and a local newspaper, noted: 'the characteristic that strikes the outsider almost at once ... here is a town with very little civic consciousness, with no centre to the life of the people and with no long tradition in which all have shared ... its social life has many features normally associated with a rural area'. Too many arriving too quickly had resulted in a lack of cohesion: 'the people themselves have come from all over the country ... large groups of Welsh, Irish and Northcountrymen ... have almost submerged the original inhabitants'.[158]

In 1945, Slough Civic Society ran an essay competition entitled 'The Slough I Want', which attracted a large entry. Submissions mostly identified the same lack of planning, infrastructure and facilities that the 1950 plan would highlight. One comment from a Junior Section essay spoke for many: 'the Trading Estate is efficient, but facilities for activities other than work are inadequate'.[159]

The 1950 plan noted that the lack of a central civic consciousness left people to search for an identity elsewhere – perhaps in sub-communities based on place and date of origin. There were other sub-divisions – around private or council housing, workplace, or schools.[160] Also, as the town absorbed outlying villages such as Burnham, Cippenham and Langley, 'the village' address could unite new and old residents alike. For example, 'everyone speaks of living in Burnham in contrast to Slough ... while keen to see Slough improved'. The importance of place – or possibly snob value – was not just for the private resident: 'the businessman type said it was positively injurious to their interest to have 'Slough' on their notepaper instead of Burnham, Bucks'.[161]

All three surveys sought the answer in mobilising a community response: 'the basis for reconstruction is there', 'the real Slough is to be found, like any other worthwhile place, in the

[158] 'Slough: Its Present and Its Future "The Basis for Reconstruction"' (SE, 1943), 3–4.
[159] 'The Slough I Want'.
[160] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 4,135.
[161] Ibid., 138.

hearts and minds of the community ... Slough is what we will it to be' and 'a deep fund of interest and goodwill exists ... Slough is a young town and can bring to the task before it energy and confidence'.[162]

After the 1950 Plan, there were no community surveys as wide ranging, but various focused reports give a picture of Slough's life over the next twenty-five years. One 1965 Confederation of British Industry report reprised the reasons for Slough's success listed in the 1950 Plan: an advantageous location and facilities for industry, a flexible and skilled labour force, proximity to markets, especially London, but close to pleasant countryside, and so on.[163] It concluded that despite Government incentives to relocate to the North of England, for many companies 'if they had to expand they would rather rent more factories on the [Trading] estate than move to other areas'. Commenting on a 1967 PEP report, which had described the town's record on racial integration as 'enlightened', the *Slough Observer* proclaimed: 'resilient Slough, which painlessly absorbed its influx of Welsh, Scots and Irish in the thirties, has adapted itself well to the flood [sic] of coloured immigrants'.[164]

Official channels were, of course, inclined to accentuate the positive, and there were some dissenting voices: one Londoner who moved to Slough as a child in the 1950s recalled tensions between existing residents and the new arrivals, perhaps exacerbated by pressure on facilities.[165] Two residents condemned the town's ugliness, as it spread and absorbed villages like Burnham.[166] Slough undoubtedly had a variety of infrastructure issues, but for a rapidly growing town, with a highly mobile population and a constantly evolving demographic, these seemed to have been managed without major social dislocation.

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[162] 'Basis for Reconstruction', 16; 'The Slough I Want', 9; 'Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 1.
[163] 'Manufacturers Still Love Slough Best', *SO*, 19 February 1965.
[164] 'Danger Ahead'.
[165] Charles Jenkins, 'Slough Station, Station Jim & Strange Looking Buses', Stories of London, accessed 22 April 2015, http://stories-of-london.org/.
[166] 'This Faceless Town This Urban Amoeba', *SO*, 28 January 1972.

Summary – Slough – A Representative Town?

This, then, was a rapidly growing and changing town. It was ideally placed on the periphery of London as macro-economic forces directed industrial development towards the south-east. Private sector initiative capitalised on these opportunities and rapid industrialisation created significant increases in employment. This attracted a constant influx of migrants from depressed areas of the country and those moving out of London: most of its inhabitants were within one or two generations of being newcomers. But 'too many people arriving too quickly' overwhelmed the ability of local authorities to plan effectively. Interwar development occurred without enough forethought for what makes a community, a place to live, rather than just a place to work. Employers began to fill the gap, but until at least the 1950s, there was a shortage of community and leisure facilities which made it difficult to meet people, 'settle down' and feel a sense of belonging. This impacted community cohesion and civic identity: while being a 'land of opportunity' as far as jobs were concerned, the town was said to 'lack a soul'. Social problems inevitably caused friction and some delinquency amongst different groups. Planners took note and sought to apply the lessons to post-war development, particularly in and around London. But there were new challenges: after WWII, 20,000 Londoners were resettled on two massive new housing estates: and waves of Commonwealth migration began.

These problems were not unique to Slough, and the town was often chosen as a prime example of national trends. It presented a powerful picture of a free market response, successful in developing businesses and creating employment. People voluntarily came in their tens of thousands, keen to make a new life. Economic migration had created a relatively prosperous town.

The challenges – financial, logistical, and human - faced by local government, schools, housing, leisure facilities, and so on – also applied to the churches. Archbishop Lang warned about the scale of the challenge and the extreme pressures it applied to churches in the South East. But there were also many opportunities for churches to play significant roles in the lives of Slough's

residents. Churches were a major focal point for people to meet and form friendships, particularly in a town with so many newcomers. Clubs and associations associated with the churches could be a major part of the social scene, particularly – although not exclusively – for children and young people. The social problems associated with rapid growth presented opportunities to provide leadership and deliver practical solutions alongside the local authorities or businesses. In a country broadly adhering to a Christian consensus, certainly at the beginning of the period being studied, church leaders were natural community leaders. If there was a sense of anonymity and lack of cohesion in a town that was growing perhaps too rapidly, churches might be a natural place for community formation. These challenges and opportunities, and how the churches responded to them, are explored chronologically in Chapters 3 to 5, and thematically in Chapters 6 and 7. But in the next chapter, the religious landscape of Slough is explored.

Chapter 2 Organised religion in Slough[1]

In July 1933, the Rector of Hitcham, a small parish to the west of Burnham, wrote on his visitation return to the Bishop of Oxford:

> The trouble with Hitcham parish is: 1. that 7/8 of the people live far away from the church 2. that they are new people in new houses working in London or elsewhere & not desiring parochial connection 3. that the 1/8 old population & well to do especially dislike the 7/8 & are most unwilling to do anything for them. This is making the necessary work of getting churches or church halls for the population along the Bath Road very difficult.[2]

His comments demonstrate the practical reality of the challenges facing the local churches that were highlighted in the last chapter, due to the dramatic influx of population into interwar Buckinghamshire. These included a clash between 'incomers' and established residents, a lack of facilities for church work, and – for the Anglicans at least - a parish system out of step with new demographics. In the debate about 'believing and belonging', some apparently did not want to 'belong', some that did were not welcomed; but for others, there was simply nothing to 'belong' to.

A year later, writing in his parish magazine, he identified a further challenge: 'most churches find considerable difficulty in making both ends meet', but most parishioners believed 'that the Church is rich and ought to rather be giving than receiving money'.[3] These were no isolated moans: the Rector was also a highly respected and longstanding local Rural Dean, and he was voicing concerns shared by many local ministers – not just in the Church of England, but across the denominations.

This chapter gives overview of the organised Christian landscape of Slough – denominations, churches, congregations and leaders – and how this changed over time. Firstly, some overall

[1] Some material previously published in Grant Masom, 'Parishes under Pressure - The Church of England in South Buckinghamshire 1913–1939', *JRH*, 12 January 2018, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12493.
[2] 'Hitcham 1934'.
[3] 'Rural Dean of Burnham on Finance', *SO*, 14 September 1934.

statistics are presented. This is followed by a summary of the fortunes of the major denominational grouping – firstly, the Church of England; secondly, the Roman Catholic Church; and thirdly, the Free Churches. The section on the Church of England includes an examination of the Anglican parish system, as the strengths and weaknesses of this underpin much of the wider story. The section on the Free Churches includes the main historic denominations, and a proliferation of other church groupings, particularly in the period after WWII. In each section, the level of adherence is examined over time. Finally, at the end of the chapter some preliminary conclusions are drawn regarding overall church adherence and 'secularisation' in Slough.

Some comments on definitions and focus are made at this point. The focus of this study is on organised religious institutions and groupings – and for the major part of the time period studied, 'religious' was synonymous with 'Christian'. However, after 1960 Commonwealth immigration brought in substantial numbers who came from a non-Christian heritage. This resulted in new religious groupings – Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and so on – which are outside the scope of this study. Some numerical adjustments to the notionally 'Christian' community are made where needed to make statistical comparisons valid. The term 'church' is often used interchangeably with 'organised religion' or 'religious institution'. The potential confusion with the word's use to mean a religious building is clarified where the context requires.

The statistics of church adherence

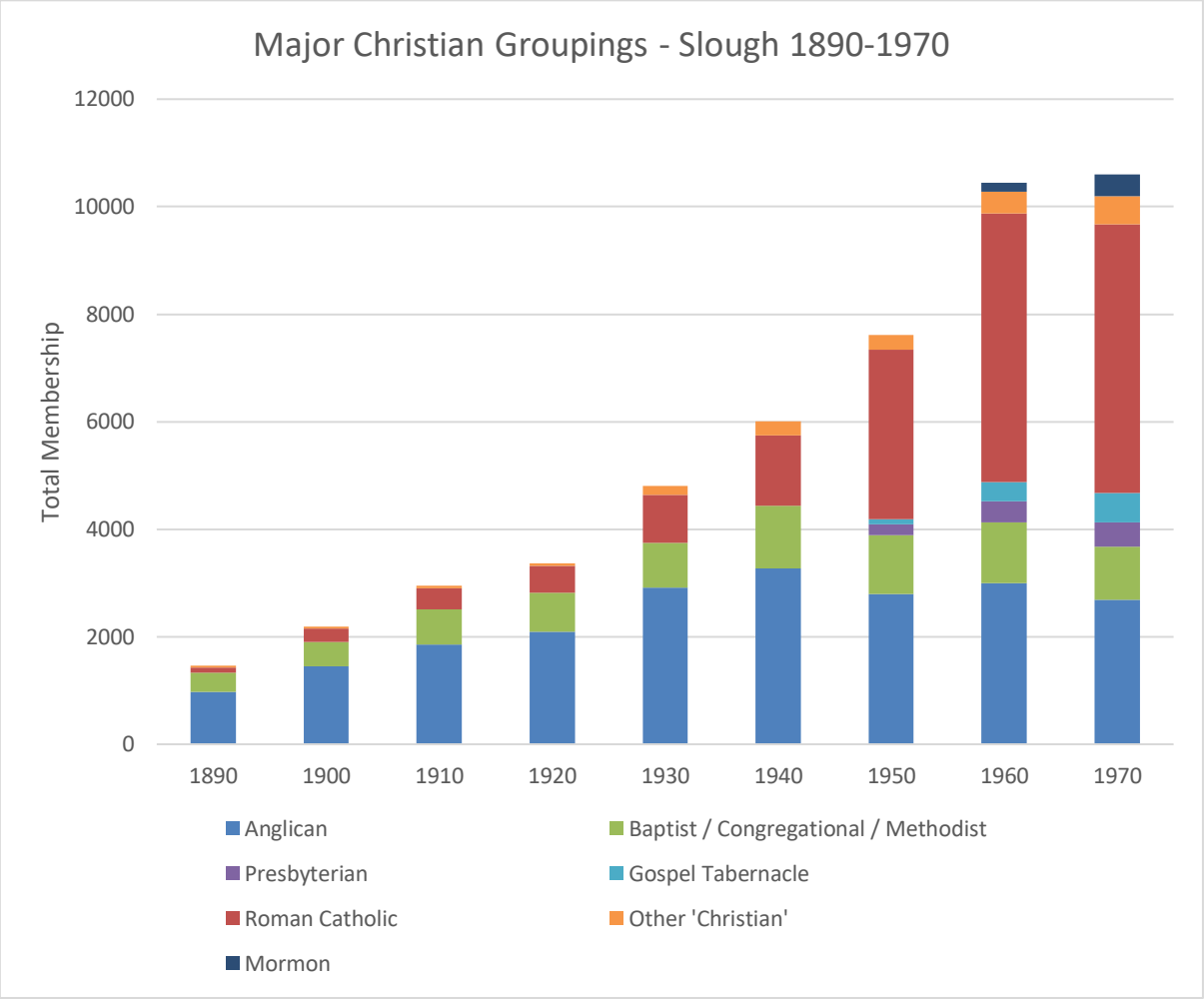


Figure 11 Total membership of Major Religious Institutions, Slough 1890-1970[4]

Figure 11 shows the estimated absolute membership of the key Christian groupings in Slough, also including the Mormons. How to measure adherence consistently is problematic, given - amongst other things - different theological understandings of membership of a Christian community, and the availability of data. A full discussion is outside the scope of this study, but can be found in the work of Peter Brierley, Robin Gill, and Clive Field.[5] The estimates for 'membership' calculated here broadly follow the definitions used by Peter Brierley in 2000 – namely, electoral rolls for Anglicans (from 1920), adult population for Roman Catholics (assuming

[4] Summary graph: Anglican as Table 4, Figure 22; BH 1890-1970; CY 1900-1970; Methodists, Presbyterian, GT as Figure 29; Roman Catholic, Other, Mormons compiled from *Slough Observer* sources.
[5] Brierley, 'Religion'; Gill, *Empty Church*; Clive D. Field, *Britain's Last Religious Revival?: Quantifying Belonging, Behaving and Believing in the Long 1950s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Clive D. Field, *Secularization in the Long 1960s: Numerating Religion in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2017).

a high level of mass attendance), and formal membership for nonconformist churches.[6] Given the difficulties, the data are best used for comparisons between groupings within a period, and trends over time.

Three overall themes that can be discerned from Figure 11 are the overall increase in absolute adherence; a rise in membership of mainstream Protestantism (Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist) until around 1940, and then a flattening thereafter; and a continual rise in Roman Catholicism, with a major increase after WWII. The net result is that Slough shifted from being an overwhelmingly Protestant town before WWI to one where the Protestant denominations accounted for perhaps only 40 per cent of adherents by 1970. A further theme is the fragmentation of the non-Catholic groupings after WWII.

In the period covered by Figure 11, the population of Slough increased tenfold, however – so an absolute increase in adherence was to be expected. When adjusting for population, a different picture emerges – shown in Figure 12.

[6] Estimates for Anglican 'membership' before 1920 are discussed in Chapter 3.

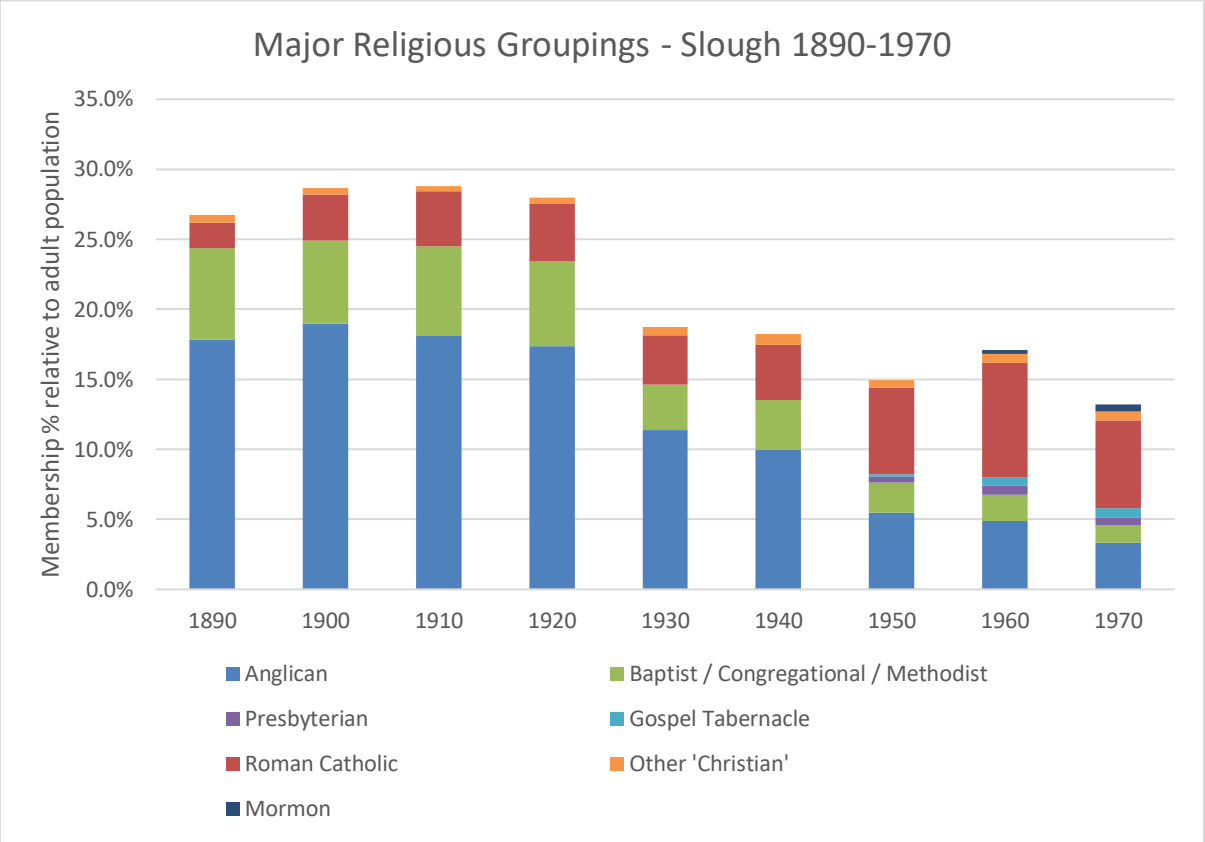


Figure 12 Membership of Major Religious Institutions Relative to Population, Slough 1890-1970[7]

Here, three phases can be clearly seen, roughly corresponding to the three periods of Slough's development outlined in Chapter 1. In the first period, up to and including WWI, the churches were central to community life. This is explored in Chapter 3. The second period, up to and including WWII, is the first phase of Slough's industrialisation, with all the attendant planning, institutional and social issues. The churches found their central position in community life under severe challenge and became increasingly marginalised. This period is explored in Chapter 4. In the final period, after WWII, the churches had been displaced from any central position they may have occupied by right, or in default of any alternative. Their responses are analysed in Chapter 5.

Before and up to the end of WWI, church adherence broadly kept pace with population growth. During this period, the population doubled in thirty years, growth that would have been considered substantial if it were not for what followed. Church adherence was between 25 and

[7] See Figures 1,11

30 per cent of the adult population (calculated from the census data as those aged over 15 years old). Overall, church adherence seems to have matched population growth in the period between 1890 and 1918, regardless of the denominational grouping. However, there were variations in the fortunes of individual churches, with some growing rapidly, while other, longer established churches remained static or declined, as seen in Chapter 3.

In the interwar period, all church groupings struggled to keep pace with the town's rapid growth. Church adherence dropped substantially relative to population, from around 28 per cent in 1920 to around 18 per cent in 1940. Particularly marked was the drop in Anglican adherence, from 17 per cent to 10 per cent. The major nonconformists – Baptist, Congregational, Methodist – dropped from 6 per cent in 1920 to 3 per cent in 1930, before recovering to around 4 per cent in 1940 – the result of church planting initiatives discussed briefly below and in detail in Chapter 4. Here, then, is the statistical backdrop to Archbishop Lang's warning about church provision for the new and expanding urban areas in interwar Britain, referred to in Chapter 1. Whether the lower 1950 figures are an extension of interwar decline or reflect a reduction specifically due to WWII is unclear but is discussed later.

After WWII, overall adherence averaged roughly 15 per cent. A major variable is how the Catholic community is calculated – and given that this accounted for 50 per cent and more of the total, any fluctuations should be treated with caution. However, it seems clear that any percentage fall between 1960 and 1970 correlates with the increasing proportion of the population originating from the Indian subcontinent – so in terms of the notionally 'Christian' part of the population, religious adherence was roughly stable in the period after WWII. The static absolute figures seen in Figure 11 meant that the major Protestant denominations lost ground

relative to population, but the growth of new groups and in Catholicism meant that total adherence remained constant.

Of these new groups, two are shown specifically – the Presbyterians, and the Pentecostal Gospel Tabernacle, both established locally during WWII. The others include both mainstream groups such as the Salvation Army and Christian Brethren, and groups or sects with varying levels of Christian orthodoxy, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. Finally, the Mormons are shown separately – small in overall terms, and not 'Christian' even in an unorthodox way, but significant after 1960 in their rapid growth within traditionally Christian parts of the community.

The final summary chart, Figure 13, compares the trajectory of church adherence across the major groupings in Slough with Peter Brierley's national figures for church 'membership' mentioned above.[8]

[8] Brierley, 'Religion'.

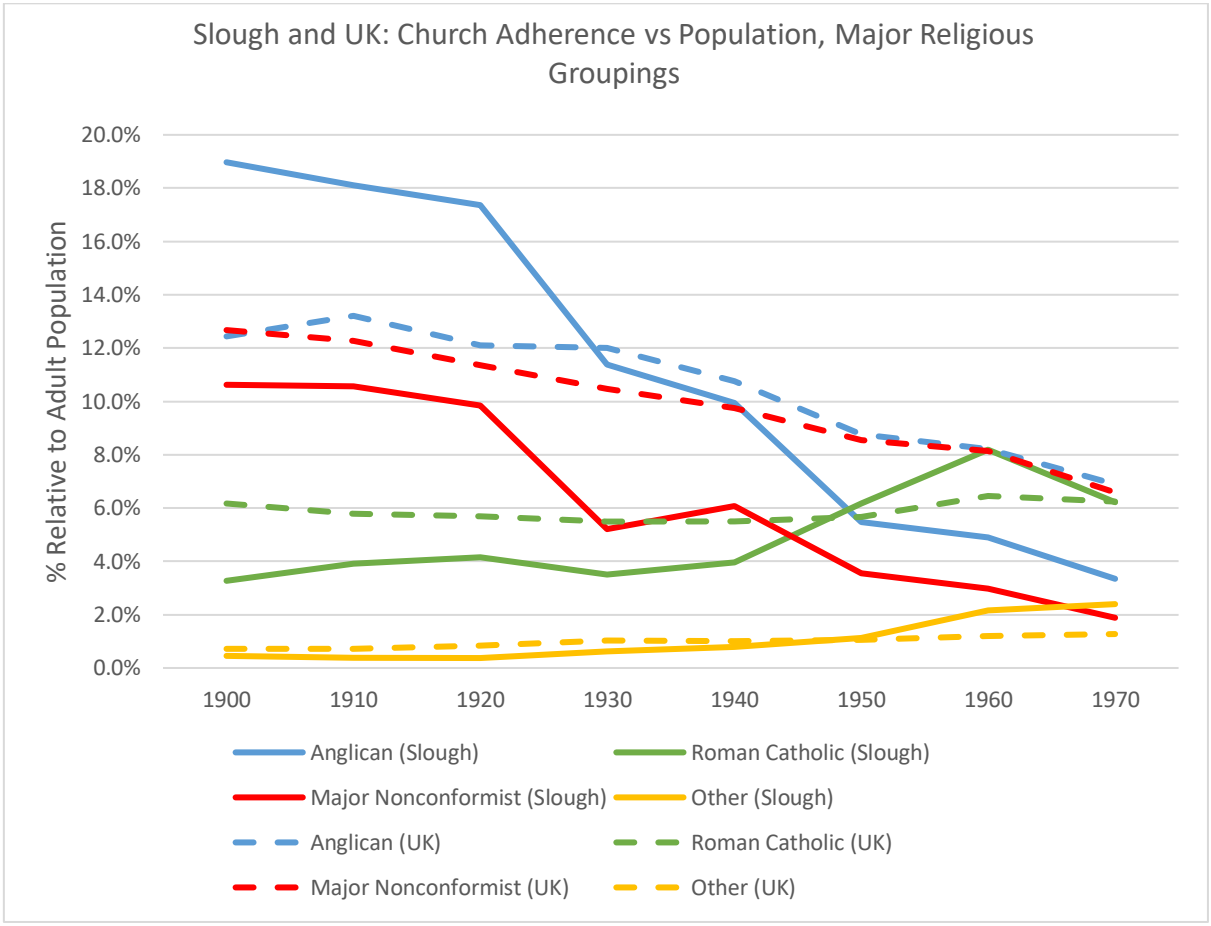


Figure 13 Religious Adherence in Slough vs UK, 1890-1974

The general trajectory of each grouping is similar for both Slough and the UK. For the major Protestant groupings – Anglicans and major nonconformist denominations – the rate of decline was faster in Slough than for the UK. This study suggests this was because of exceptionally rapid urbanisation, particularly in the interwar years, exacerbated by structural weaknesses in the Anglican parish system and allocation of clergy. It also suggests the overall decline in Protestant adherence may have been due to internal spiritual and theological factors, which could have been applicable more widely than solely in Slough, and which are explored in Chapter 4. In the 'Other' category, Slough's higher than average growth after WWII is explained by the two dynamic new entrants mentioned above.

The Roman Catholic percentages and trajectories are similar, particularly when the variabilities mentioned above are considered. While, as already noted, a detailed discussion of the merits of

different approaches to measuring adherence is beyond the scope of this study, an example of the variabilities can be seen by comparing Brierley's UK figures with Callum Brown's. For 1960, Brierley uses a figure of 2,626,000 for Catholic adherence, while Brown uses a figure of 1,942,000.[9] Such variances can hide even relatively significant trends. Therefore, one of the recurring themes of this study is that the ability to mobilise financial resources is a good measure of support for different churches – impractical on a national level, but feasible in a local study. In Slough, Roman Catholic adherence broadly kept pace with population growth throughout; and the seriousness of that adherence was demonstrated by the significant levels of financial support raised for new schools, churches, clergy and housing, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The Utility of Religious Institutions

This discussion on religious adherence is complicated by issues of definition. But the term 'religion' itself has various meanings in different contexts – sometimes several meanings at once. It is primarily used within this discussion to mean organised religion, and where personal religion is referred to, it generally applies to individuals within the congregations of churches and their various organisations and activities. What is clear – and referred to by other writers, although using different terminology – is that organised religion, and churches, performed several functions – civic, cultural, social, and spiritual. At the end of the nineteenth century, differentiating between these different functions would have been difficult, if not meaningless. By the late twentieth century period, the differences were more distinct – one sign of secularisation.

The civic utility of religion is the role of the churches in the delivery of services such as education and welfare. What might be called the cultural utility of religion is the sense of Britain as a Christian country – the decline of which has been the subject of, in particular, studies by Callum Brown and Simon Green.[10] The social utility of religion, or of religious institutions, is in

[9] Ibid., 654–55; Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 1st ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2006), 25.
[10] Brown, *Death*, 2009; Green, *Passing*.

facilitating community – at various levels: friendships, mutual support, the transfer of skills and knowledge (for example, in motherhood and child-rearing), clubs and societies, and contributing to wider community cohesion. And finally, the spiritual utility of churches was of course a (if not the) primary role – congregation, worship, and teaching.

Religious 'Utility'	Church at the Centre 1890-1918	Church under Challenge 1919-1945	Church at the Margin 1945-1974
Civic	Initially high, but declining - % Church school places - % reduction in voluntary welfare provision	Declining rapidly, but new Roman Catholic schools in late 1930s	Very low – except for several new Roman Catholic schools
Cultural	High – 'a Christian country'	High but consensus threatened	Increasing multiculturalism
Social	High	Significant, but increasingly 'one of many'	Declining in places – but key to Catholic and Presbyterian (Irishness and Scottishness)
Spiritual	Maintained relative to population growth	Declining relative to population	Maintained relative to population growth, but proliferation and changing allegiances

Figure 14 Institutional Religious Utility in Slough, 1890-1974

Figures 11-13 have sought to quantify religious adherence in Slough, and Figure 14 seeks to do so (albeit tentatively) in qualitative terms as an introduction to what follows.

Over the period of this study, the civic utility of religion declined enormously, in Slough as in the UK – what Morris called the 'institutional marginalisation' of the churches, as services such as education and welfare became the preserve of local government.[11] A notable exception, however, was in the preservation and expansion of Roman Catholic schools. The social utility of churches is not so much a picture of decline, as proliferation – churches were the most significant

[11] Morris, 'Strange Death'.

such institutions in the late nineteenth century, but eighty years later, while still significant, they were just one of many.

Spiritual utility is the most problematic category in Figure 14, given the difficulties in measurement. As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis is focused on, in Morris' words, approaches that 'assume no significant change in religious need, but instead locate the causes of church decline in the various strategies adopted (or refused) by churches themselves'.[12] Any assessment in what follows assumes that the spiritual needs of individuals remained constant, therefore, and 'spiritual utility' reflects how organised Christianity responded to and met those needs. One of the major themes of this study is that while organised religion in Slough remained a significant factor throughout, there were stories of advance and decline within the different churches and denominations, and that the relative 'spiritual utility' of those institutions was a factor in their fortunes.

What seems clear is that the civic and social utility of churches declined, if only in relative terms, as secular alternatives proliferated –what Morris termed 'institutional marginalisation'. This might be considered relatively benign if the spiritual and cultural utility of 'religion' remained strong – that is, avoiding what Morris termed 'institutional attenuation' and 'cultural displacement'. If this can be established, then debates about 'decline' need to be nuanced accordingly.

This chapter continues with a summary of the fortunes of the major religious groupings over the period, introducing several themes which are explored in more detail in the following chapters. It begins with an extended discussion of the Church of England's parish system, followed by briefer summaries of the Roman Catholic and Free churches.

[12] Ibid., 964–65.

Church of England

The Church of England was the dominant religious grouping in the town at the beginning of the period – whether viewed socially, culturally, or in terms of affiliation. As seen in Figure 12, around 18 per cent of the adult population attended an Anglican church reasonably regularly, or two thirds of all churchgoers. In theory at least, the Anglicans were best placed to meet the huge demographic challenges outlined in the previous chapter – a strong pre-existing position in the town and the surrounding villages that it would shortly absorb, and the organisational capacity to direct financial and human resources where they were needed. In contrast, the Free Churches were decentralised, without the wider organisation to take an overall strategic view, and largely dependent on raising funds locally to fund any expansion. Only the Roman Catholic church had the same strategic potential of the Anglicans, but only after WWII did it have the local capacity to have significant impact.

However, despite these potential advantages, by the end of the period the proportion of Slough's adult population attending an Anglican church had dropped to 2 per cent. How the Church lost its dominant position, and whether that reflected an absolute loss in affiliation or a space created for other religious groupings to occupy, is one theme of this thesis.

In 1931, the Diocese of Oxford comprised 657 'largely rural' parishes, making it the largest diocese in England: London was next, with 614.[13] The diocese's three archdeaconries corresponded to the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire, shown in Figure 15. Two suffragan bishops, for Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, shared the pastoral and administrative load with the Bishop of Oxford.

[13] Thomas Banks Strong, *Visitation Charge of the Bishop of Oxford at the Diocesan Visitation, 1931* (London: OUP, 1931), 1.

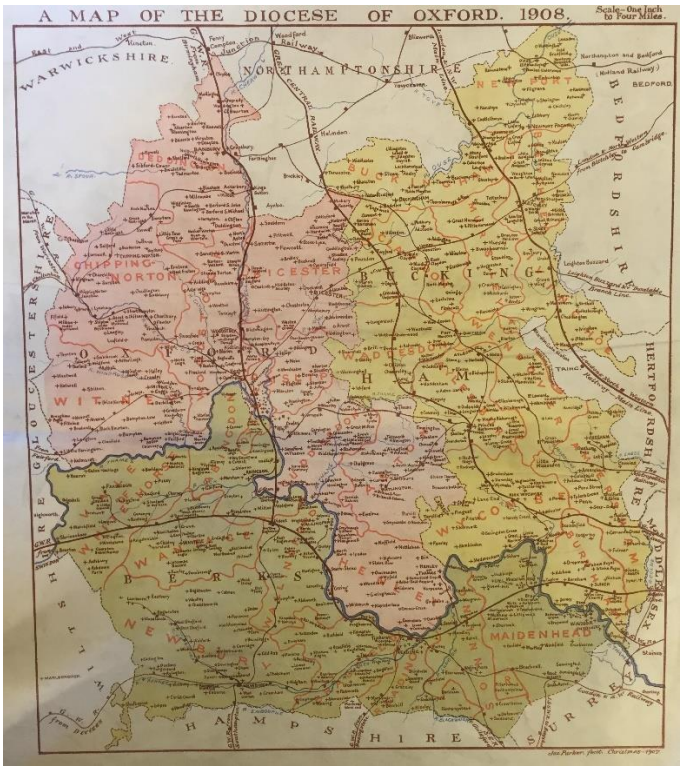


Figure 15: Diocese of Oxford, 1908[14]

Eighteen ecclesiastical parishes at the southern end of the Buckinghamshire Archdeaconry formed the Burnham Rural Deanery, shown outlined in Figure 16.

[14] *A Map of the Diocese of Oxford 1908*, 1:253,440 (J. Parker, 1908), © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

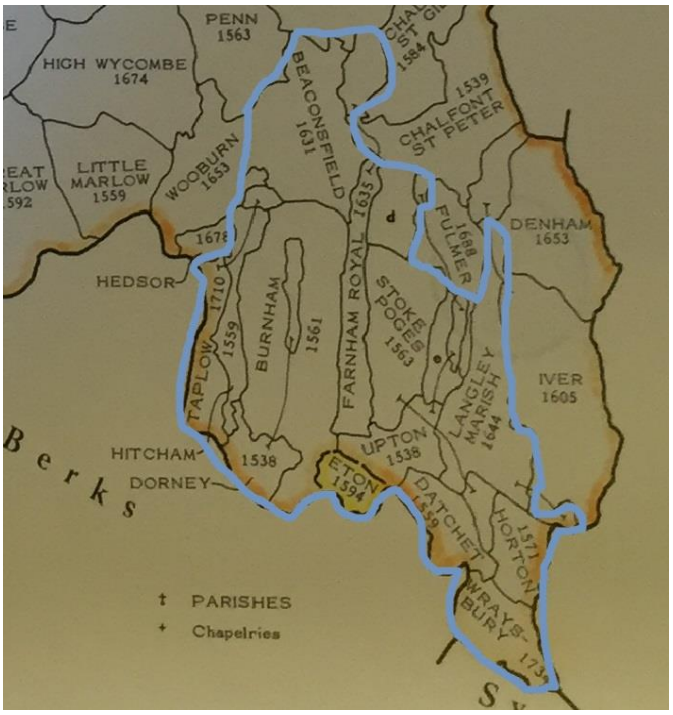


Figure 16: Burnham Rural Deanery, c 1908[15]

The map shows sixteen of the ecclesiastical parish boundaries. No map has been found which includes Colnbrook, east of Slough, formed in 1852, and Slough St Paul's (hereafter St Paul's), formed in 1905 from parts of Stoke Poges and Upton-cum-Chalvey (hereafter Upton) parishes.[16] Otherwise, the parishes in the deanery were mostly medieval foundations with boundaries reflecting contemporary agricultural land use.

[15] Cecil R. Humphery-Smith, *The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1984).
[16] Daniel, *Enemy*, 2; Rev. A.A. Dowsett, *The Parish of St Paul's Slough 1906-1942* (Slough, 1942).

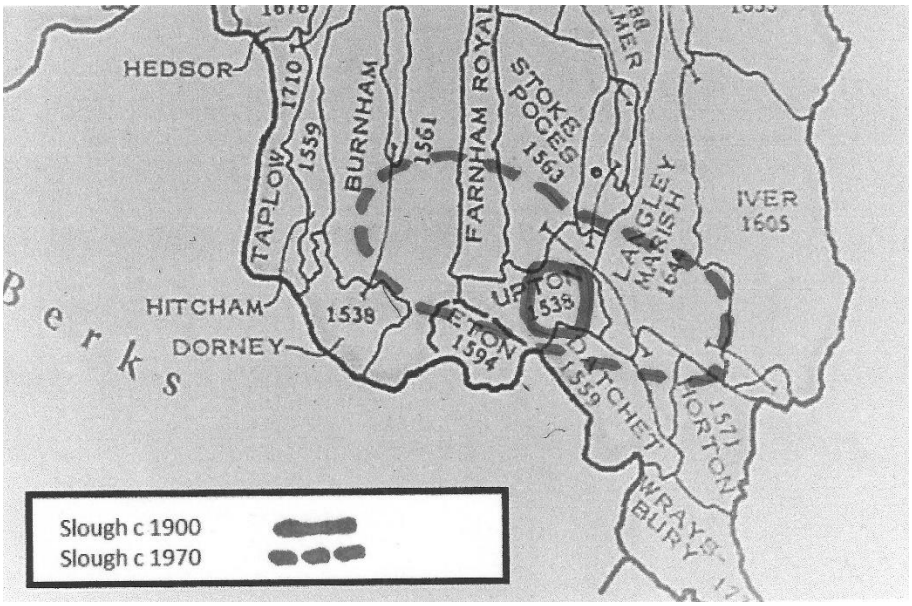


Figure 17: Burnham Deanery Parishes and the Growth of Slough

Figure 17 shows how Slough, initially located entirely within Upton parish, grew into seven other parishes during the twentieth century – Burnham, Colnbrook, Farnham Royal, Langley Marish (or Langley), St Paul's, Stoke Poges and Wexham. Other parishes – Datchet, Horton, Taplow and Wraysbury – although falling outside the boundaries of Slough, were affected by 'ribbon development' along the Great West Road (also known as the Bath Road, or A4) and the main line railway into London Paddington.[17]

[17] explored further in Masom, 'Parishes under Pressure'.

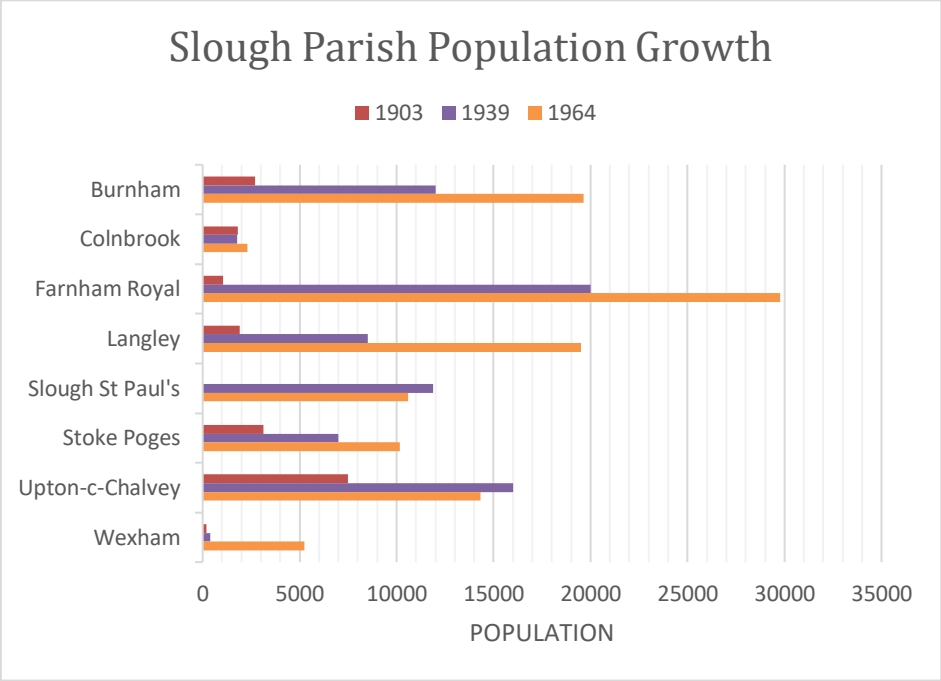


Figure 18: Slough Parish Population Growth c 1900-1970[18]

Figure 18 shows how the population of each parish varied over the study period. The impact of Slough's growth is clear – most extremely in Farnham Royal, an historically rural parish which saw an increase in population from around 1,600 in 1923 to 30,000 in 1964. At the end of the period, growth was beginning to impact Wexham to the north: and was later to impact Colnbrook as the town grew eastwards. The Church of England's parish system struggled to adapt, as Archbishop Lang had warned in 1935.[19] The Church faced three problems – a general shortage of manpower, particularly following WWI; considerable resistance to changing the allocation of clergy away from the historic, largely rural, parish structure; and lack of finance to fund new parishes.

Clergy allocation

[18] Crockfords 1903, 1939, 1963/4
[19] 'Problems Of The New Areas'.

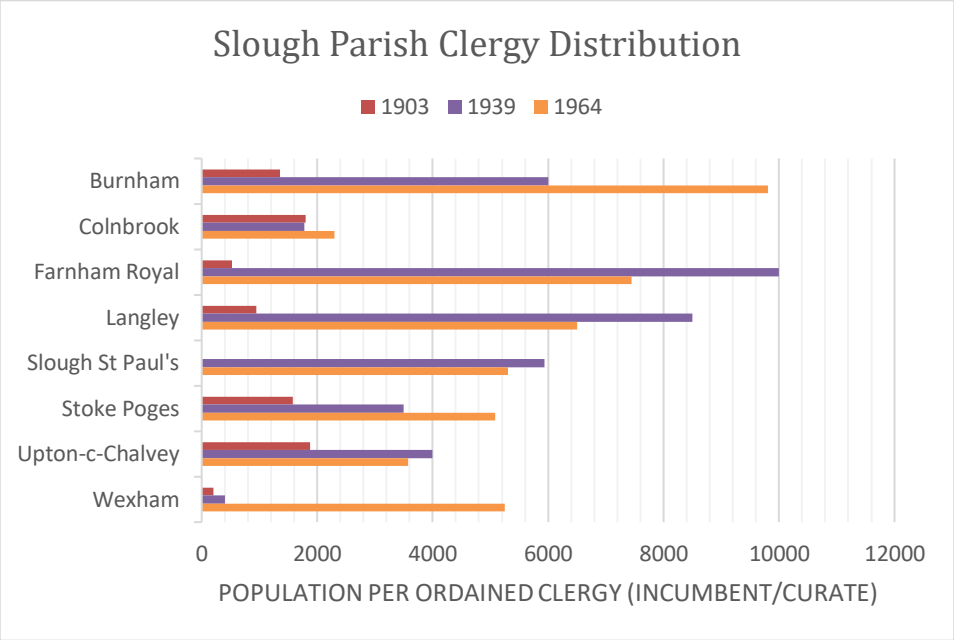


Figure 19: Clergy Allocation - Slough Parishes[20]

Clergy were allocated by parish, not according to population. Figure 19 shows the ordained clergymen (incumbent and curates) serving in each parish over time. Between 1903 and 1964, the average workload increased from 1,300 to 5,900 parishioners per clergyman in Slough's urban parishes. Meanwhile, workloads were considerably less in the rural parishes just outside Slough – the incumbent at Hedgerley served 323 souls in 1939. In the same year, the rector of Wexham had only 398 parishioners, although as Figure 19 shows, this changed dramatically over the next twenty-five years. These issues were not unusual – nationally, there were 11,000 parishes with a population over 5,000 being managed by a single clergyman. 40 parishes had populations over 40,000.[21]

The parish was, of course, at the centre of the Church's organisation. It represented not only an administrative entity, but also a theological one – an expression of how the Church saw itself in relation to the people it sought to serve. As the Bishop of Buckingham said in 1933:

> What was called Institutional Christianity ... stood for a communal idea of religion, as a home, a family and a society ... Everything indicated that the Christian parish was a force in that

[20] Crockfords 1903, 1939, 1963/4
[21] for more analysis, see Masom, 'Parishes under Pressure'.

> direction. Institutional religion was then the church with her visible society, ministry, episcopate, sacred books, sacraments, schools etc, all necessary for her existence. Her task was to enrol, enlist ... to that community of life[22]

This 'visible society' required churches, clergy and church schools to be located where people lived – according to the Bishop, people had 'a right to expect' these from the Church of England.[23] But in Slough, and elsewhere in the south-east, new communities sprang up in line with economic drivers, with little reference to the historic parish structure. The problem was recognised: well before Archbishop Lang's 1935 address, the Archbishop's Committee on Church Finance had reported in 1911 on the need to redistribute church resources in line with societal needs.[24] But it was one thing for the 'great and the good' to identify the problem, another for solutions to be implemented: as Roger Lloyd put it, 'it is ... the vicars and rectors in their parish churches – and not their bishops, who are the real arbiters ... if they say No, there is nothing more to be said until they change their minds'.[25]

Clergy and Finance

The Church of England's central funding bodies have been studied by historians, but otherwise the availability (or otherwise) of finance at local level is an underexplored area of church history.[26] Finance was not the only contributor to the Church's difficulties, but it was a significant one. Inevitably, the first call on finance was existing clergy and buildings. Thereafter, financial shortfalls limited all aspects of the Church's outreach - the number and quality of ordained clergy; building churches and church halls in new areas; building or extending church schools; and social

[22] 'The Bishop of Buckingham and the Growth of Slough', *SO*, 19 May 1933.
[23] 'Bishop of Buckingham on Church Problems', *SO*, 24 May 1935.
[24] Herbert Edwin H. Coombes, *The Church and Financial Reform, a Summary of the Report of the Archbishop's Committee on Church Finance, and Its Message to the Parochial Clergy.* (London: Church of England, 1912).
[25] Lloyd, *Church of England*, 147.
[26] Geoffrey Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964); Andrew Chandler, *The Church of England in the Twentieth Century: The Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform, 1948-1998* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006); Sarah Flew, 'Money Matters: The Neglect of Finance in the Historiography of Modern Christianity', in *The Church on Its Past*, ed. Peter D Clarke and Charlotte Methuen, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 430–43.

and welfare provision for parishioners. Financial concerns were also a major distraction from other work.

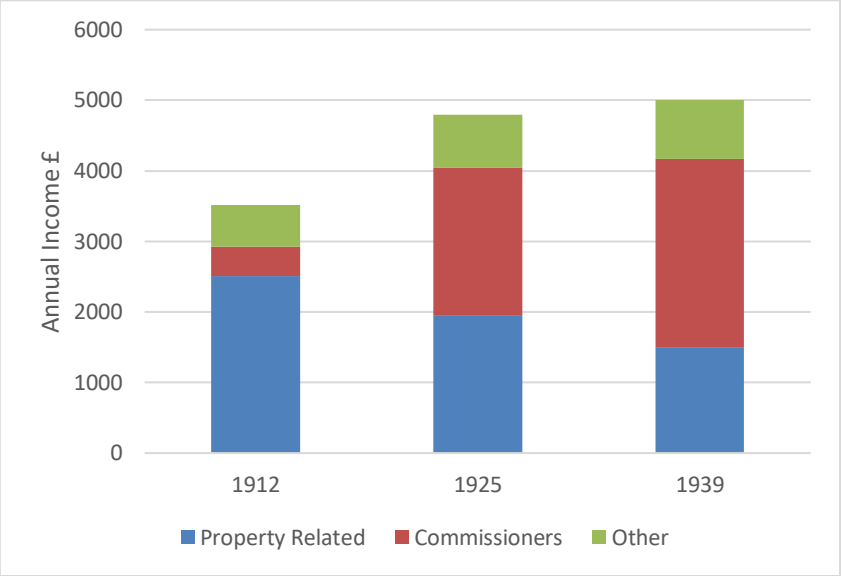


Figure 20: Slough Parish Livings[27]

Broadly, the Church had four sources of funding – central funds, local income from church property, funds given by parishioners for ordinary parish expenses, and donations for special projects such as church buildings. Focusing first on the cost of maintaining an incumbent, Figure 20 shows the total combined annual livings of the 8 Slough parishes for the interwar period. Property-related income comprised the tithe, glebe and rents which had financed the church for centuries. Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (together, the Commissioners) were central sources of funding, directing support to underfunded or new parishes. Other funding included fees and offerings. Some of the increase from the Commissioners represented responsibility for local property being passed from parish to central management: but overall funding increased 42 per cent over the period.

[27] Crockfords 1912, 1925, 1939

In years past, such an increase would have helped fund the new parishes, churches and clergy needed to serve the new centres of population. Indeed, in the last century the Church of England had so reacted, with some success, when facing similar shortcomings of the historic parish system in the industrializing North.[28] But the growth in funding from these sources was progressively capped by changes in legislation, so almost the sole effect was to bring the livings in poorer parishes up to minimum levels. By 1928, these were centrally mandated at a minimum of £300 per annum for a parish with 300 or more souls, and a minimum of £400 for a parish with 4,000 or more souls.[29] These were by no means over-generous: even after the rebalancing, the vicar of Colnbrook complained 'we are desperately poor', resorting to 'begging' to make ends meet.[30] Of course, housing came with the job: but old vicarages often became costly burdens, and some were sold.[31] And raising livings did nothing to address inefficient resource allocation. In 1939, the 'living' per 1,000 head of population ranged from around £1,000 in small Hedgerley and Wexham to £40 or less in the next door, but far more populous, Slough parishes.[32]

As already noted, these financial challenges had been recognised. In 1911, the Archbishop's Committee identified 'an exaggerated parochialism which could not see beyond the needs and rights of the parish, and was wholly incapable of dealing with changed conditions'.[33] *The Times* commented that 'the parochial system, both the strength of the Church of England and its chief claim to continue in partnership with the nation, is at the same time the source of its administrative weakness', which could mean that, far from drawing people to the Church of England, it was a 'fruitful source of Congregationalism'.[34] To address the weaknesses, the report proposed that income be redistributed through new Diocesan Committees, which would allocate

[28] for example, Mark Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth, 1740-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
[29] Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 508–10.
[30] 'Colnbrook 1936'.
[31] 'The Slough Rectory Sold', *SO*, 3 October 1928.
[32] *Crockfords* 1939.
[33] 'Church Finance [1]', *Times*, 20 September 1911.
[34] 'Church Finance [2]', *Times*, 20 September 1911.

funding to archdeaconries, deaneries, and finally to parishes. This would complement the basic living and form the basis of a local parish budget. But the scheme depended on increased lay giving in parishes, a proportion of which would be remitted to the diocese to redistribute it where most needed. *The Times* commented 'it is to be hoped that the Anglican layman will [hear] a clear summons'; a letter-writer agreed, noting that the summons was both for money and practical support.[35] The conclusions and implications of the report were widely disseminated, and were a regular topic within the Burnham Rural Deanery conferences thereafter.[36]

The impact of the financial challenges can be seen in Figure 21, which shows the annual income and expenditure for five separate years between 1896 and 1935 for Upton, one of the wealthiest parishes in Buckinghamshire. Under the new arrangements, Upton faced a seven-fold increase in diocesan contributions between 1896 and 1935, while overall income only increased by 50 per cent. While Upton was able to meet its increased diocesan contributions, other parishes were not, and contributions regularly fell short of what was required. In 1926, for example, Burnham Deanery paid only £668 of its £921 diocesan contribution.[37] A 'Poor Livings Fund' was intended to address the shortfall, but the deanery raised only 50 per cent of the budgeted amount.[38] The centrally coordinated redistribution of resources fell well short of what was required, therefore.

[35] Ibid.; 'Church Finance', *Times*, 25 September 1911.
[36] Coombes, *Church and Financial Reform*; 'Church Finance', *Slough Chronicle*, 7 June 1912; 'Ruri-Decanal Conference at Slough', *SO*, 31 May 1913.
[37] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 26 November 1937.
[38] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 18 November 1932.

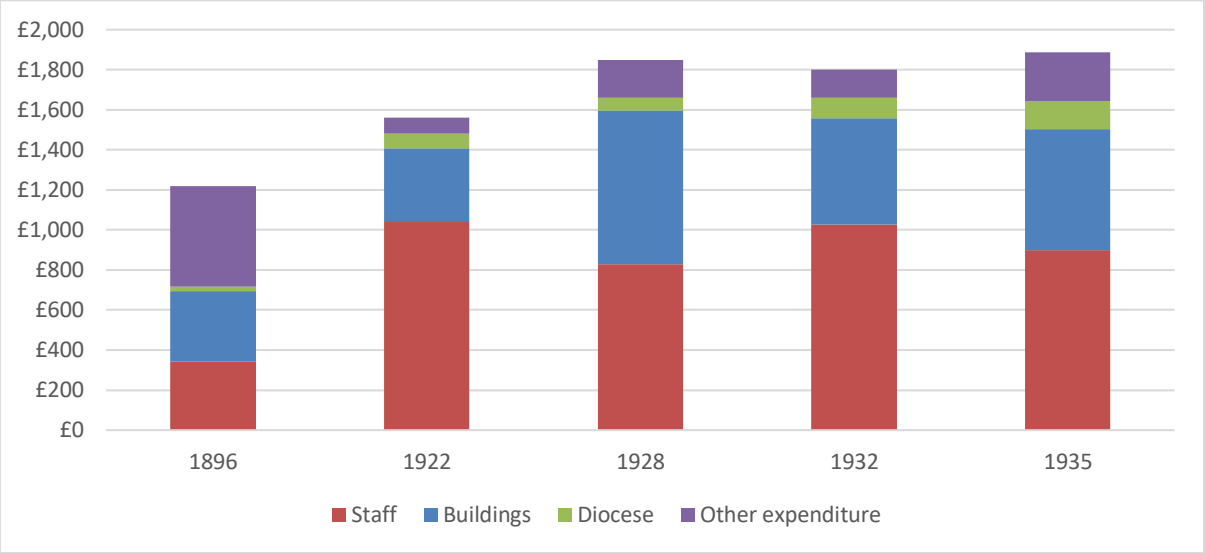


Figure 21: Expenditure from local raised income, Upton-cum-Chalvey 1896-1935[39]

Increased diocesan contributions were but one pressure on budgets, however. In Upton, by far the largest proportion of the budget was absorbed by staff costs and maintenance of buildings, as Figure 21 shows.

Apart from the incumbent (funded separately from the living), the parish budget maintained three curates throughout the study period. The effect of uprating curates' salaries, coupled with rising repair and maintenance costs, is clear. Although overall expenditure increased by 50 per cent from 1896 to 1928, post-war expenditure on staff increased by 163 per cent. Taken together, expenditure on buildings and staff increased from 57 to 80 per cent of the total. Not only was there no increase in manpower as the parish population doubled, there was a significant absolute and proportional reduction in expenditure on outreach activities – missions, children, welfare. And post-war income declined from peak levels - no detailed accounts for 1916 have survived, but the overall income reached the 1916 level of £2179 only once in the next 25 years.[40] There

[39] *Accounts Upton-Cum-Chalvey Parochial Funds Societies Charities 1896* (Slough, 1897); 'The Maintenance of Three Slough Churches', *SO*, 13 January 1923; 'Slough Parish Church Council]', *SO*, 6 April 1928; 'St Mary's Parochial Church Council', *SO*, 25 March 1932; 'St Mary's Parochial Council', *SO*, 3 April 1936.
[40] 'The Parochial Financial Report', *SO*, 9 June 1917.

were regular financial crises – particularly in the immediate aftermath of WWI, and in the late 1930s.[41]

Despite the financial pressures, with four churches in the parish, Upton could keep three curates fully employed, and had a good reputation as a training location. Elsewhere, there were both availability and financial constraints. As Slough expanded into the southern part of Stoke Poges parish, the incumbent needed two curates to look after three churches and a parish population approaching 8,000. However, when the single curate at Stoke Poges left in early 1938, there was great difficulty in finding someone to replace him: and having two curates was unaffordable.[42]

Finance affected parish effectiveness in other ways. Clergy pensions were in disarray before the reforms initiated by the 1911 report, and there was little incentive for a clergyman to retire without private means to fall back on. Wexham was an extreme example: in 1909, the rector died aged 97, after 63 years in post. The last 25 years of his life were spent in a nursing home, during which he paid a curate-in-charge to manage the parish.[43] He set an unfortunate precedent: over the following 30 years, three further rectors of Wexham died in post. But the perils of retiring were illustrated in Stoke Poges: when the vicar retired in 1926, aged 66, the parish failed to pay its share of his £200 a year pension – another example of local lay giving failing to respond to the 1911 'summons'.[44]

If there was little incentive for a clergyman to retire, it was almost impossible to remove him if he was underperforming. This might not matter in a small parish: but it mattered a great deal in rapidly growing parishes at the forefront of the Church of England's challenges. As Slough began to expand, three parishes were in the hands of incumbents who were ineffective in their

[41] 'St Mary's Budget: Big Deficit', *SO*, 7 January 1938.
[42] 'Three Churches, 8000 People - And One Clergyman', *SO*, 11 February 1938.
[43] 'Wexham: Death of the Rector', *SO*, 24 December 1909.
[44] 'Stoke Poges RD 1927'.

superiors' opinion. In Burnham in 1927, the Rural Dean informed the Bishop: 'it would be for the good of the parish & priest in my opinion if there could be a change here': but the incumbent served 21 years until 1937.[45] After the 69-year-old rector of Farnham Royal was forced to retire due to ill-health, the Rural Dean wrote 'the parish ... is in great need of ... a capable & energetic man who will face it ... [the rector] was not able to cope with it at all & much time has been lost'.[46]

Likewise in Langley, one of the largest parishes in the deanery: 4,000 acres and a population of 3,200 in 1921. Until Slough began to expand into the parish, there was no major centre, and communications were poor. In 1927, the Rural Dean wrote: 'this parish is very difficult. It has no curate ... blocks of population are all over the place & houses are springing up rapidly. It is not being coped with but it is difficult to see how it could be'.[47] The incumbent complained repeatedly of lack of assistance, but none was forthcoming.[48] He remained in post for 28 years, eventually retiring in 1940 aged 73. The unsuitability and lack of manpower, and the logistical challenges, had measurable impacts. The lack of contact with parishioners meant the electoral roll was only 2 per cent of population, by far the lowest in the deanery.[49]

But when young men did arrive, particularly with young families, the financial pressures meant they often moved on quickly. At Langley (1909) and Wexham (1919) incumbents exchanged parishes with much older men looking for a quieter setting as they approached retirement.

Several of the parishes in the deanery had incumbents hardly in the prime of life, therefore. Not only was there a direct impact on parish work, and the Church of England's traction in rapidly growing areas, but it also impacted on fund-raising. Commenting generally on the obvious

[45] 'Burnham RD 1927'.
[46] 'Farnham Royal 1928'.
[47] 'Langley RD 1921'.
[48] 'Langley 1931'.
[49] 'Langley RD 1933'.

inefficiencies and injustices in the current parish structure, a senior layman commented in 1909: 'It is useless for the leaders of the church to ask for more funds while these scandals continue'.[50] Even after the 1911 summons, there was limited improvement in overall income in a wealthy parish like Upton, as Figure 21 shows. The problem was widespread: at the Burnham Deanery Conference in 1923, a finance committee reported 'nearly every parish pleaded the difficulty of collecting money. It was so universal the Committee were able to rule it out'.[51] The comment was met with laughter.

There were various reasons: the perception of inefficiency and waste, and the further perception noted at the beginning of this chapter, that the Church was wealthy, regardless of what any report might say. Another is mentioned below, that demographic change unfavourably affected the Church's traditional supporter base. Yet another was a sense that the historic relationship between the clergy and the community they were in theory serving was breaking down. At the 1923 Conference, the Rural Dean complained that the lack of response was 'proof of the horrible truth which is often urged that the laity of the Church of England do not care when they are sweating their clergy and underpaying them'.[52]

The problems continued, despite repeated exhortations along similar lines in the following years. By 1952, the Bishop of Oxford was warning of clergy cutbacks.[53] And in 1957, the Oxford Diocese spelled out the stark reality: of the Church's income across the diocese, 93 per cent came from ancient endowments and the Church Commissioners. Only 7 per cent came from present-day congregational giving.[54]

[50] 'Mr Roland Green on Church Finance', *SO*, 3 July 1909.
[51] 'Church Conference at Slough', *SO*, 27 October 1923.
[52] Ibid.
[53] 'You May Find You Haven't Got A Vicar Any More', *SO*, 3 October 1952.
[54] 'Letters To The Editor: Pay Of The Clergy', *SO*, 8 March 1957.

This lack of support was repeatedly compared by Anglican churchmen to the much greater support given by nonconformist memberships.[55] Another comparison could have been with Roman Catholic parishioners. Both are referred to below.

Enfranchising the Laity

Clergy numbers and allocation were only one part of the Church's resourcing challenges, however. In 1911, the Archbishop's Committee outlined the need to encourage and empower the laity to undertake more of the workload.[56] This was a recurring theme within the Burnham Deanery, perhaps especially so for work amongst children and young people. However, in 1922 the Rector of Beaconsfield commented 'it was not yet understood [by parishioners] that it was impossible for these things to be worked by two or three people'. It was key that the laity understand 'they had just the same responsibility as the clergy although it might lie on different lines', but although some laity were fully engaged, most were not.[57] The commitment levels required seemed 'too exacting and austere for the easy-going standards of those who would like to take their religion comfortably'.[58] Some parishes were more successful in mobilising manpower - St Paul's was the only evangelical parish in the deanery, and emphasised personal responsibility in serving the church both practically and financially.[59] Here the challenge was slightly different: the Vicar of St Paul's highlighted the 'shortage of workers willing to take responsibility – "helpers" are plentiful but leaders scarce'.[60]

A shortage of committed lay people also reflected the area's changing demographics. The Church of England had depended on the resources and spirit of service of the committed middle and upper classes: but urbanisation and industrialisation triggered changes that adversely

[55] for example, 'Church Finance'.
[56] 'Church Finance'.
[57] 'Church Conference at Slough', *SO*, 20 May 1922.
[58] 'That The Devil May Not Reign', *SO*, 2 February 1940.
[59] activism. 'the expression of the gospel in effort' is one of 4 marks of evangelicalism identified in Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 16.
[60] 'Slough St Paul 1924'.

affected church support. In 1927, the vicar of Horton – just east of Slough - noted: 'the big houses are going & church support falling in proportion ... the parish has suffered frightfully by the deaths of many of the best church people & by the removals of others'.[61] He went on to complain that: 'their places have been taken by ... people utterly indifferent. I may say there is not one of the large houses in the parish which is really Church & in my long experience I have never known a parish like it'. Similar comments were regularly made in the annual financial reports for Upton parish.[62] In Farnham Royal, a wealthy supporter of the parish church explicitly moved away because 'the industrial development of Slough' meant the area was 'no longer suited to the purposes of a large country residence'.[63]

Apart from increased lay participation, perhaps the available clergy might have been allocated more evenly across the area. Another Archbishop's Commission recommended that assistant clergy should be redistributed to urban areas, and that at least 1,000 small parishes should be amalgamated – where 'small' meant less than 500 souls. This was discussed extensively by the Deanery in 1931.[64] Unsurprisingly, the four parishes with populations of less than 500 viewed the report as 'looking through town spectacles'. In brotherly solidarity, the conference rejected the Commission's recommendations, arguing the goal should be to raise funds for additional assistant clergy, not reallocate those currently funded more efficiently. It was estimated that 10 additional assistant clergy (or a one-third increase) were needed in the deanery, mainly in Slough.[65]

[61] 'Horton RD 1927'; 'Horton 1928'.
[62] 'St Mary's Parish Annual Meeting', *SO*, 31 March 1933; 'Raising Money For St Mary's', *SO*, 14 July 1939; 'The Four Churches in St Mary's Parish', *SO*, 12 April 1934.
[63] 'Sir Gomer Berry Leaving The District', *SO*, 18 October 1929.
[64] 'Ruri-Decanal Conference at Slough', *SO*, 22 May 1931.
[65] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 29 April 1932.

Electoral Rolls

The difficulty of finding a consistent measure of religious adherence was mentioned in the Introduction. A full discussion of the various approaches can be found elsewhere – for example, in Peter Brierley or Clive Field's work.[66] The problem is particularly acute for the Church of England where, in theory at least, anyone baptised as a child 'belonged' to the Church. Brierley highlighted an almost continuous spectrum of commitment – from those who, following their baptism, had no further contact with the Church of England, except perhaps for attending weddings and funerals; through to those who attended regularly and supported the church financially and with practical help. Using baptism as a measure of affiliation, for example, Brierley calculated the Church of England 'community' nationally as around 70 per cent of the population in 1930; but using other measures, active 'membership' of the Church of England as only 11 per cent in the same year.[67] Unlike in the nonconformist churches, there is no formal process of 'membership' of the Church of England; various data used by the Church, and in the literature – Easter communicants, weekly attendance, or membership of the electoral roll - are consulted at various points in the chapters that follow. All of these have drawbacks: not least, at the local level, the lack of consistent availability of data over time.

In 1924, a deanery-wide survey was carried out – part of a wider diocesan initiative. The full report of the survey results has unfortunately not survived, but its conclusions were reported to Rural Deanery Conferences in May and July 1924.[68] This described infant baptism as almost universal, with 60 per cent going on to confirmation; Easter communicants at around 11 per cent, and regular attenders similar at around 10 per cent. The data are broadly consistent with Brierley's national figures, therefore. Unfortunately, there were no similar surveys subsequently, so it is impossible to analyse changes over time.

[66] Brierley, 'Religion'; and see also Field, *Britain's Last?*, chap. 2.
[67] Brierley, 'Religion', 652, 654.
[68] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 24 May 1924; 'Ruri-Decanal Conference at Slough', *SO*, 5 July 1924.

However, one measure that was consistently recorded over time was the electoral roll. Following the establishment of Parochial Church Councils (PCC's), every parishioner 18 years old or over had the 'right' to vote in PCC elections, if they were not in communion with any other church. It was the 'responsibility' of the PCC to keep a roll of electors so they could exercise that right.[69] Being on the roll involved no commitment to financial or practical support, or regular attendance – simply that the parishioner signed a form. The electoral roll was an indicator, then, of how many people the Church of England was in contact with in each parish.

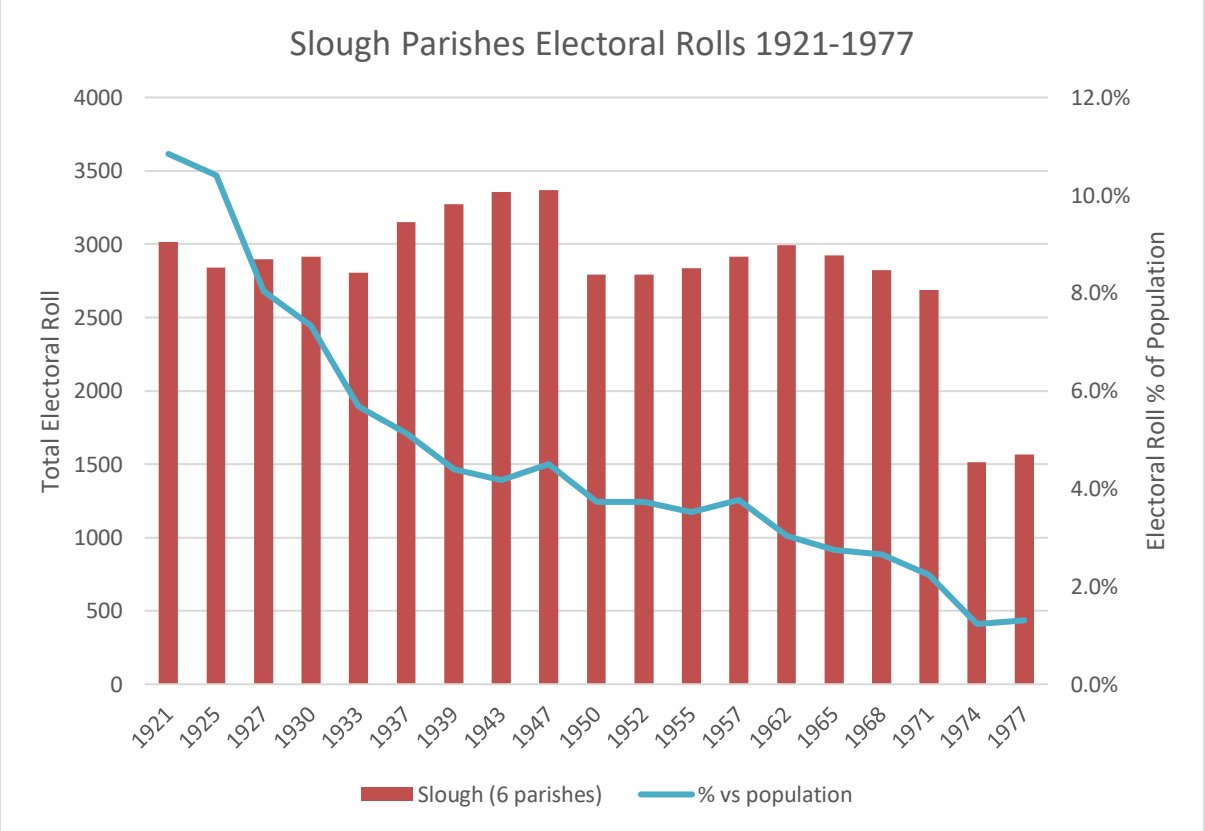


Figure 22: Slough Parish Electoral Rolls 1921-1977[70]

Figure 22 shows the electoral rolls for the six largest Slough parishes from when the data began being reported to the end of the study period. This is considered further in Chapters 4 and 5, along with the data for communicants, but three trends can be noted here. Firstly, the absolute

[69] 'The Bishop's Charge to Clergy and Laity', *SO*, 16 May 1930.
[70] Crockfords, Oxford Diocesan Yearbook or Calendar, 1921-1977

numbers reported remain roughly constant up until 1971. The increases during WWII, and the substantial drop between 1947 and 1950, should be treated with caution - many parishes simply repeated their pre-war electoral roll figures during the war years, probably due to lack of resources. The significant drop after 1971 reflects a change in diocesan policy whereby financial contributions were linked to the size of the electoral roll, so the incentive shifted from expanding to minimising the electoral roll. Secondly, regardless of these distortions, there was a continuous decline relative to population. Thirdly, the overall percentages were significantly less than the national averages – which were 15 per cent in 1927, falling to 9.8 per cent in 1947, and 8.5 per cent in 1961.[71] This was visible evidence of the loss of traction in the new urban areas that Archbishop Lang had warned about.

Such a proportional reduction could be explained by declining 'interest' in institutional religion in wider society. If this were the case, similar declines would be expected in other major denominations – which are considered below. But this study contends that the difficulties highlighted – the inflexible parish system, and insufficient, unsuitable or poorly allocated clergy - also had measurable impacts on the Church's traction. Later chapters will also consider the extent and impact of some clergy being out of touch (or sympathy) with their parishioners.

Church Extension

Two other consequences of the Church's financial constraints were the difficulties in funding new churches and schools. The 'parish ideal' as outlined by the Bishop of Buckingham in 1933 required both to be located within, or at least close to, centres of population.[72] In the case of new churches, the Church eventually matched supply and demand – but mainly because demand did not increase, and in fact declined proportionally, as Figure 22 shows. A somewhat impoverished achievement, then; but a better outcome than in the case of church schools, where there was

[71] Field, *Britain's Last?*, 25.
[72] 'Growth of Slough'.

both an absolute and proportional loss in accommodation and influence, which are discussed further in Chapter 6.

In the interwar years, the shortage – and misplacement - of churches and church halls was a nationwide problem: Oxford was one of 'a dozen or more dioceses' experiencing huge shifts and increases in population.[73] The problem was particularly acute in and around Oxford, Reading, Tilehurst, Banbury and Didcot as well as South Buckinghamshire.[74]

There were pressing needs in the Burnham deanery. In Farnham Royal parish in 1921, the villages of Farnham Royal and Farnham Common were around 2 miles apart, with a combined population of 1,600. Each community had a local church - one seating 340, the other 250. By 1939, not only had the population grown to 20,000, but this had occurred in the previously unpopulated south of the parish – three to four miles from the nearest church. By the early 1930s, this pattern of insufficient accommodation, poorly located, was being repeated in all the urbanising parishes – Beaconsfield, Burnham, Langley, Stoke Poges, and – as already noted – Hitcham.[75]

There was a good response from landowners. Land was either donated, or sold at substantially below market rate, in Burnham, Farnham Royal, Stoke Poges and St Paul's. But erecting even a small church hall was expensive – new halls in Burnham and Farnham Royal cost around £750 each.[76] The 300 seat church on the Manor Park estate in Slough, within Stoke Poges parish, cost £1,300.[77] More substantial structures were costlier still – a large brick hall at St Paul's cost £5,000, and a larger church planned for Farnham Royal cost £8,000.[78] However, the Diocesan Church

[73] 'Seventeen Million Pagans'.
[74] 'Need for Church Extension'.
[75] 'Growth of Slough'.
[76] 'New Cippenham Church Hall', *SO*, 9 March 1934; 'St Michael's Mission Bazaar', *SO*, 23 December 1932.
[77] 'New Church at Manor Park', *SO*, 8 June 1934.
[78] 'The Gilliat Memorial Hall', *SO*, 3 November 1933.

Extension Fund was consistently undersubscribed, and fundraising was not helped when the first £3,000 raised in Buckinghamshire was spent in Oxfordshire.[79] So the diocesan fund contributed only £150 to the Manor Park church, for example.[80]

The onus for funding these buildings therefore fell locally: and how parishioners responded could indicate levels of local support for the church. The foundation of St Paul's parish, and its church, had originally been funded in 1906 by a wealthy benefactor, Algernon Gilliat. But after his death, the parish comfortably raised the £5,000 for its parish hall, and £750 for a Sunday School hall on a new housing estate, from its wholly working-class population. Conversely, 'wealthier' Burnham struggled to raise funds for a new church in Cippenham, although the land had been donated: and the church required at the southern end of Hitcham was never built.[81]

The requirement for new premises was particularly imperative in reaching children – otherwise, it was impossible to run children's services and Sunday Schools. In Cippenham, for example, 'the work was losing ground' because there was nowhere to house children's work. The Bishop of Buckingham outlined the long term consequences - 'they must attract the young to the Church'- but more widely 'if no provision was made for those new populations in the near future', the parish system intended to serve everyone would break down, and 'there would be no desire for the things that mattered ... it was not a matter of doubtful utility, but of vital importance for God's people'.[82]

One example of the above discussion is Wexham parish, not included in the figures in Figure 22, but already mentioned due to its later incorporation into Slough. In 1957, the parish population

[79] 'Diocesan Church Extension Fund', *SO*, 30 March 1934; 'Need For More Churches', *SO*, 10 April 1936.
[80] 'New Church at Manor Park'.
[81] 'Another Generous Gift to St Paul's Church', *SO*, 19 April 1935; 'Cippenham: Congregation Meeting', *SO*, 9 February 1940.
[82] 'Growth of Slough'.

was 586, of which 120 – or 20 per cent - were on the electoral roll. Coincidentally, the parish church seated 120. Over the next five years, new Slough housing estates extended northwards, with 4,500 new residents located in the south of the parish. But in a reprise of Hitcham twenty-five years earlier, the new estates were over a mile south of the ancient village and church. Although technically in Wexham parish, there were few reasons for the new residents to look north: schools, clubs, leisure and other facilities were all in Slough. Wexham's electoral roll increased to only 173 – with the proportion falling to 3 per cent of parish population.[83] A new church hall was eventually opened in 1964, after which youth work and other activities were started, arguably too late to participate in the early stages of community formation on the new estates. By 1971 the electoral roll had fallen to 139, and was to fall further to 105, or 2 per cent of population, in 1974 – again fitting within the capacity of the parish church.[84]

Wexham was just the latest example of local struggles – seen earlier in Burnham, Farnham Royal, Hatcham, Langley, and Stoke Poges. This chapter started with the comments of the rector of Hitcham on the difficulties; more succinct was the response of the vicar of Stoke Poges to the Bishop's question 'are there any special hindrances or difficulties besetting you in your work?' 'The change of the parish from a country one to an industrial area', he replied.[85]

The Church of England's traditional role was therefore under severe pressure. The Bishop of Buckingham had outlined the parish ideal – a 'community of life' with the Church at its centre – but the experience of many parishioners fell well short of this ideal. The parish 'offer' stretched resources to the limit and beyond, but when changes were proposed, they were resisted. In protecting the 'status quo' in smaller parishes, new urban communities were under-served: and urban parish ministry was directed towards maintenance rather than mission. While there was some addressing of the issues in the post war period – younger, more energetic clergy with fresh

[83] Oxford Diocesan Yearbook 1957, 1962, 1971, 1974
[84] 'Wexham 1964'.
[85] 'Stoke Poges 1936'.

ideas; new church buildings serving the Britwell and Langley estates; new parishes and 'conventional districts' in the urban areas – the Church of England had lost significant ground which was never to be made up, as Archbishop Lang had predicted.

But the Church's problems were not simply organisational or financial. Indeed, the lack of financial support could be a symptom as much as a cause – prompting the question of why people seemed unwilling to support the Church. Later chapters will explore the extent to which the church's decline could have been due to how relevant it seemed to everyday life and concerns, or whether churches were places of spiritual encounter – the 'spiritual utility' referred to above.

Roman Catholicism

If the Church of England in Slough is a story of a church being displaced from being at the centre of community life to its margins, the story of the Roman Catholic church is almost the reverse – from very small beginnings in the 1880s, to possibly Slough's largest single worshipping group in the 1970s.

Roman Catholicism came to the modern town in 1830 through the foundation of Baylis House, a Catholic boys boarding school. Later, a community of Jesuit priests arrived in 1884, establishing a house known as St Joseph's. St Joseph's was taken over by Bernadine nuns in 1897, becoming St Bernard's Convent. St Bernard's would later play a major role in the secondary education of Slough girls, and the St Joseph's name would likewise be associated with other Catholic schools. The chaplain of Baylis House, Father Clemente, went on to become Slough's first resident priest in 1888, serving at the church of St Ethelbert's; and the chaplain at St Bernard's would serve as an assistant until the number of Catholics in the town began to expand in the 1930s. Father

Clemente was well respected, and the town appears to have been largely free of sectarian rancour.[86]

These were small beginnings, and there were few Catholics in the area before WWI. St Ethelbert's parish covered almost the entire area of Eton Rural District (or the Anglican Burnham Rural Deanery), but in the 1880s, there were only five Catholic families in Slough, and 200 individuals in the entire parish.[87] When the new Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert was consecrated in 1910, it was said that the new building, seating up to 600 people, was 'completely adequate for seating the whole parish at one Mass'.[88]

The Roman Catholic community began to grow as the general population influx of the interwar years included Irish incomers, either directly from Ireland or from the North West and London.[89] As early as 1924, the school attached to St Ethelbert's had to be enlarged, and in 1932, the growth was such that the first assistant priest was appointed.[90] In 1934, the Bishop of Northampton confirmed 180 candidates, and in 1937 a 2,000-strong procession celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi marched through the town's streets.[91] The major draw was jobs on the Trading Estate, so families mainly settled on the new estates in the Farnham and Burnham areas. By 1939, around 1,300 Catholics lived within St Ethelbert's parish.[92] But the greatest expansion in the Catholic community occurred during and after WWII – in 1963, an estimated 5,000 Catholics lived in Slough, and 15,000 in the original St Ethelbert's parish; and the proportion of children baptised as Catholics was estimated at one in six, up from one in eighteen in the 1930s.[93]

[86] 'Sudden Death of Father Clemente', *SO*, 27 July 1918.
[87] 'The Roman Catholic School-Chapel', *SO*, 8 August 1885.
[88] Kelly's 1915), 179; 'Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert: Golden Jubilee Magazine 1910-1960', 1960, L574.27, SLLS; 'St Ethelbert's Jubilee', *SO*, 22 April 1960.
[89] Patrick Carey, 'The Parish of Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert, Slough: A Brief History 1885-1985', 1985, SLLS.
[90] Ibid.
[91] 'Great Week for Slough Catholics', *SO*, 9 March 1934; '2000 in Corpus Christi March', *SO*, 4 June 1937.
[92] 'Big Gathering Of Catholics', *SO*, 16 December 1938.
[93] 'St Ethelbert's Jubilee'; 'Every Sixth Slough Baby Is A Roman Catholic Now', *SO*, 4 January 1963.

The influx prompted the creation of new parishes: between 1915 and 1980 the original St Ethelbert's parish was divided into seven. The post war expansion is examined in Chapter 5, and given the importance attached to specifically Catholic education, schools are examined further in Chapter 6. The establishment of new parishes involved considerable financial cost – for churches, schools, housing for priests, as well as salaries and other normal running costs. Given the funding struggles of the Church of England, explored above, the commitment of predominantly working-class local Catholics to this expansion, particularly in the post-war period, compares favourably to the mainstream Protestant denominations.

As Figure 11 shows, by the 1960s the Catholic 'minority' may have represented approaching half of all church attendance in Slough on an average Sunday. Descriptions of 'institutional marginalisation' – or 'believing without belonging' – need to be consequently nuanced. But there were signs that the Catholic expansion was slowing, or coming to an end, towards the end of the study period. Whether this was because of reduced adherence, or a lower number of Catholics in the town due to the ongoing demographic changes highlighted in Chapter 1, is not clear.

Free Churches

The history of Slough's nonconformist, or Free, churches is one of increasing proliferation. In 1890, nonconformity was represented by three Methodist chapels – two Primitive Methodist and one Wesleyan – two Congregational chapels, and a Christian Brethren assembly. By 1970, there were fifteen identifiable Christian groupings represented, some with several congregations - at least forty congregations of varying sizes across the town.

Within this proliferation, there are various sub-histories of advancement and decline. Even in a rapidly expanding town like Slough, it was not the case that 'a rising tide lifts all boats': some denominations grew faster than population growth; others grew in absolute numbers but shrank relative to population; and others shrank in both absolute and proportional terms.

The difficulties in measuring church adherence in a consistent way, particularly over time, have already been mentioned above. Peter Brierley's analysis has also been discussed.[94] When discussing church 'membership', Brierley used the electoral roll for Anglicans, while acknowledging this requires little active commitment, and attendance at Mass for Catholics. But 'membership' is a key Free Church concept, requiring active commitment, expensive both in time and money. Given that 'membership' had similar meanings for the main nonconformist denominations, and there was some consistent reporting of membership over time, it is used in the following discussion.

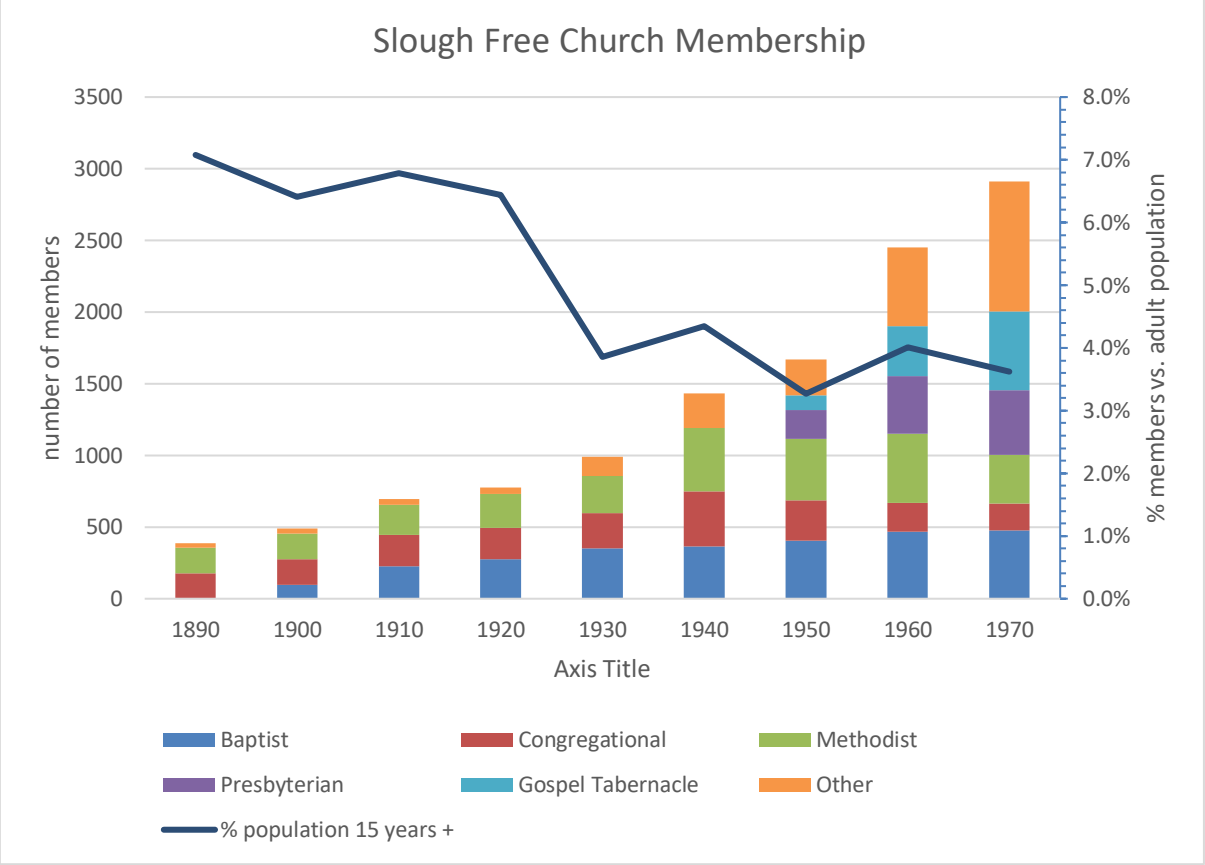


Figure 23: Slough Free Church Membership 1890-1970[95]

Figure 23 shows the estimated membership of the key 'nonconformist' Christian groupings in Slough across the study period. The main denominations – Baptist, Congregational, Methodist

[94] Brierley, 'Religion'.
[95] BH 1890-1970; CY 1900-1970; Methodist as Figure 30; GT, Presbyterian as Figure 29; *Slough Observer*.

and Presbyterian – are self-explanatory. The Gospel Tabernacle was a Pentecostal (Assemblies of God) church established during WWII, whose growth is considered in detail in Chapter 5. 'Other' includes a variety of groups – both orthodox Christian (Brethren, Salvation Army, various black Pentecostal churches) and less orthodox Christian groups or pseudo-Christian sects (Jehovah's Witnesses, Quakers, Spiritualists) and the Mormons. Other major religious groups – for example, Jews, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs – are not included, although their numbers became significant from the 1960s onwards due to Commonwealth immigration. Some data can only be estimated, due to the shortage of verifiable figures for the 'other' category.

Four trends are clear from these data. Firstly, until 1940 around 85 per cent of Slough's nonconformist Christians were members of either a Baptist, Congregational or Methodist church. Thirty years later, only one third were. Secondly, absolute numbers increased throughout. Thirdly, there was a significant drop in membership relative to population in the 1920s – that is, during the early stages of the town's rapid interwar growth. And finally, if the orthodox and unorthodox 'other' groupings are included, Free church 'membership' remained roughly constant relative to the adult population from around 1930.

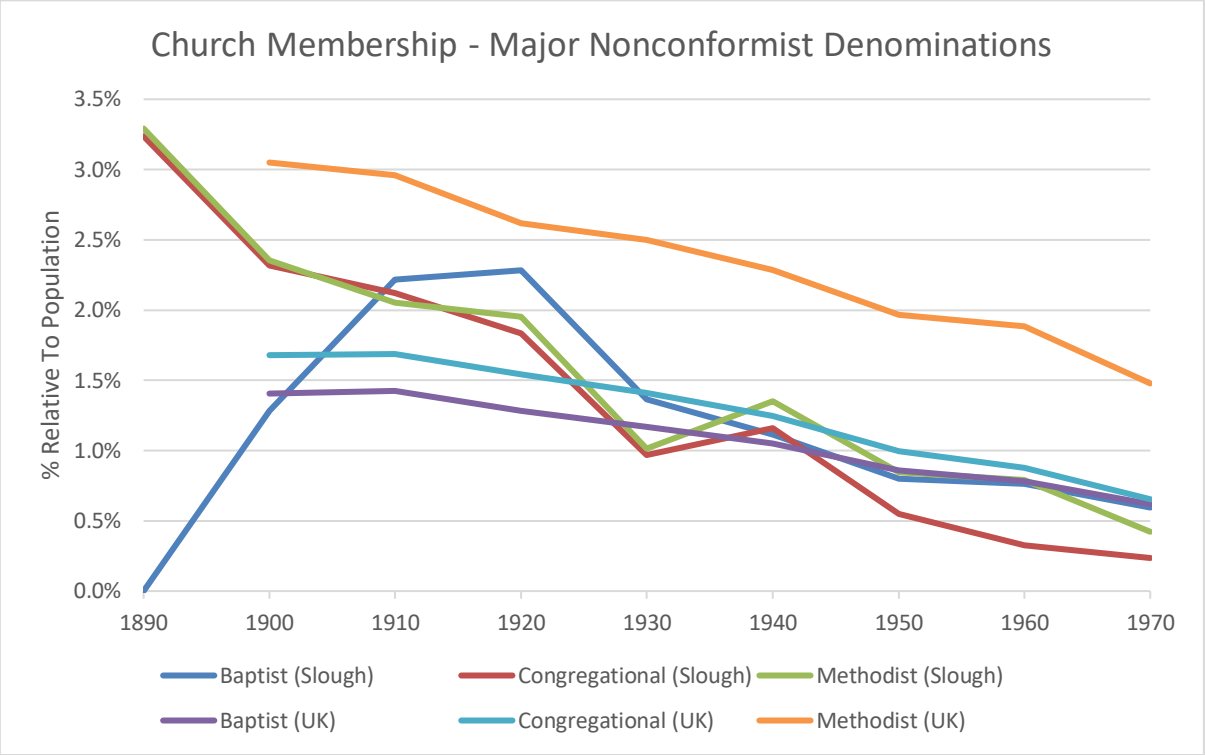


Figure 24: Free Church Membership vs. Population 1890-1970 - Major Denominations[96]

Figure 24 shows the membership of the Baptist, Congregational and Methodist denominations, relative to Slough's adult population. The figures for the UK, as calculated by Peter Brierley, are also shown for comparison.

The three denominations had differing fortunes in Slough. The absolute number of Baptists grew throughout, although after rapid early growth they declined relative to population. The absolute numbers of Methodists grew steadily before flattening after WWII, and then declining sharply during the 1960s. Relative to population, the numbers declined throughout. Congregational membership grew more slowly than the other two denominations, reaching an absolute peak around 1940, and then halved over the next thirty years.

Comparing these figures with the UK data, some local factors are evident, which are discussed briefly below and then in more detail in the coming chapters. Other trends are clear. After their initial growth, the proportion of Baptists in the town approximated to the national average and

[96] UK figures adapted from Brierley, 'Religion', 654–55.

declined at the same rate from around 1930 onwards. The proportion of Methodists declined more sharply in the period before WWI, and overall was consistently less than the national average. However, from WWI onwards, decline was at roughly the same rate as nationally. Comparing Figure 23 and Figure 24, between 1890 and 1970, Congregational membership fell from around the same to half that of the Methodists, and decline was faster than the national average.

Finally, while the three major denominations declined relative to population after WWII, overall 'Free' church membership remained constant relative to population because of the growth of the new groupings shown in Figure 23. These new groupings include other orthodox Christian denominations – particularly the Assemblies of God and Presbyterian churches – and much less orthodox alternatives, most notably the Mormons. In either case, there seemed to be a desire to 'belong' to a corporate worshipping body, rather than an individualistic 'believing without belonging'. This is discussed further in Chapter 5, along with whether such growth could be sustained in the longer term, and whether it arose more as a short-term reaction against the perceived shortcomings of the major denominations or in response to entrepreneurial activity by the new groups. This fragmentation is again broadly consistent with Brierley's figures, where only minority Christian groupings show both absolute and relative growth after WWII. Of the major denominations, only the Roman Catholics showed absolute growth in this period, according to these figures.[97]

Membership is not as definitive a measure for Free churches as might first appear, however. Becoming a member required a high level of commitment, and the new member had to be approved and 'welcomed' into membership – which might take some time. Membership might also be for adults only, whereas, for example, Sunday School teachers or helpers might be young people considered not old enough to be members. Formal membership tended to lag attendance

[97] Ibid.

and other measures of commitment in growing churches, therefore. The converse is true in stagnating or declining churches – leaderships were reluctant to remove the less committed from the membership roll until it was clear there was no further meaningful commitment to the local congregation. For example, the minutes of the Leaders' Meetings at the Methodist Central Hall contain regular debates on this point, and periodically there was a 'cull' of lapsed members from the roll.[98]

In the chapters that follow, various other indicators will also be used where appropriate – weekly attendance (where this is reported), number of sittings, or attendance at Holy Communion. But a consistent theme of this study is that other, less often used, measures of commitment are the willingness of congregation members to support the church financially, subject to their means – both on a regular basis, and for 'one-off' projects such as a new building – and in serving the church practically in its various activities, and that a key measure of the effectiveness of the church's leadership was their ability to envision and motivate the congregation to support the church in these ways.

The emphasis of this study is on the 'supply side' – that is, those factors over which churches had some measure of control. These factors are a combination of local and national issues. Focusing on these is not to diminish in any way the severe external challenges the churches faced locally due to the dramatic growth in population from the interwar years onwards, nor any wider social or cultural challenges. But the very fact that there are differences in fortunes between Christian groupings suggests that the story of decline is not simply due to 'irresistible' external factors.

One local factor is how churches responded to the increase in population. All three major denominations sought to expand their facilities - initially locally, and then further afield, as the town expanded. In the period leading up to WWI the town was relatively small, and all churches

[98] 'Methodist Central Hall, Slough: Minutes of Leaders Meetings 1949-1972', 1972, DMS69, BRO.

were reasonably accessible. The challenge here was in providing enough physical capacity for Sunday services and other activities, and in mobilising enough workers to support the various activities of the church. These challenges applied above all to the Sunday Schools. Chapter 3 explores how different churches responded; broadly, those churches that were able or willing to provide both the physical and human resources to accommodate the growth in population fared better than those that did not. Given the significant financial cost involved in providing new capacity, the extent to which church members were motivated to support these expansions provided some indication not only to the wealth of the congregation, but also the level of commitment. Chapter 3 argues that commitment could reflect the quality and charisma of the main church leader, and how outward looking (or 'mission-minded') the church was. At this stage, expansion would have been to accommodate both organic growth – the natural increase in congregation due to the excess of births over deaths – and some growth due to inward migration.

The interwar period saw the town expand rapidly with new housing estates being built some distance away from existing churches. The challenge here was no longer about extending, or replacing, existing church buildings, but in 'planting' new churches on the new estates. These churches were primarily for 'incomers', rather than the families and friends of existing church members, providing an even greater challenge to how 'mission-minded' the church was. Not only were the calls on financial and practical commitment greater, but they were for the benefit of outsiders – whose very presence might be resented, as the Rector of Hitcham reported in the quote at the head of this chapter. And given the decentralised structure of the Free churches, there were financial and organisational constraints on how far even the most 'mission-minded' church could expand. The period after WWII was to some extent a continuation of this, particularly on the large new LCC estates at Britwell and Langley.

The most mission-minded grouping were the Baptists; but they were also the most decentralised. In Baptist churchmanship the local congregation has absolute pre-eminence. The 'denominational' body, the Baptist Union, along with other central Baptist institutions, was a

federation of wholly independent churches. Chapter 3 traces the early growth under an energetic minister in the period before WWI. As at the Anglican St Paul's, the message was strongly evangelical; but unlike at St Paul's, there was no major benefactor and funds for several building expansions were raised wholly from the working-class congregation.

As the town expanded, the Baptists were the most active in extending their reach into the new centres of population, as described in more detail in Chapter 4. Church plants in Langley and Cippenham were successful, based initially on a strong Sunday School, developing later into a full range of church services. Both churches grew to the point where they were able to sustain their own minister, and new buildings were funded. Eventually, both churches became independent of Slough Baptist, and continued to flourish in the post WWII period, covered in Chapter 5.

Not all Slough Baptist's attempts at church planting were as successful. A congregation established next to the Trading Estate foundered quickly. Initially more successful was the Marystrong Free Church, established in 1929 close to the new Manor Park estate to the north of the railway. As with Cippenham and Langley, a strong Sunday School was at the core; but Marystrong never managed to grow a strong committed adult membership, finances were a continuing challenge, as also was staffing the Sunday School. By the mid-1930s, the church was operating independently and increasingly focused on the Welsh community. Long term decline set in after WWII, and Chapter 6 traces the church's continuing struggles to recruit committed members and to staff its Sunday School, until it eventually closed in the early 1980s.

Overall Baptist growth stalled in the 1950s, and then declined in the 1960s. At Slough Baptist, there are clear signs this was due to the church not embracing new movements in worship – family-friendly, the use of new music styles, and, later, the influence of the charismatic movement. Some existing members were lost to the Gospel Tabernacle, as well as new arrivals or young people looking for 'something more'.

The Congregational denomination had similar beliefs to the Baptists as to the pre-eminence of the local congregation and was much longer established in the town. At the beginning of the study period, in 1890, the Baptist church had not been formed; but Slough Congregational had around 150 members and a Sunday School around 300 strong, with sections in Slough and Chalvey. The Baptists needed to raise substantial funds for a new church, subsequent expansion, and Sunday School buildings; but the Congregationalists already possessed a large church and a Mission hall in Chalvey which housed part of the Sunday School. While each Congregational denomination bore financial responsibility for its own operations and expansion, it differed slightly from the Baptists in that both the national Congregational Union, and the local area group, maintained funds for supporting new or struggling churches in strategic areas. Superficially, therefore, this was a church and denomination significantly better placed than the Baptists to adapt to the growing population of Slough.

However, as Figure 24 shows, in the period up to WWI, the Congregational church was already experiencing absolute and relative decline. Church membership was a serious commitment in both the Baptist and Congregational denominations, requiring regular attendance and both practical and financial support, and therefore enables comparison between the two churches. In the period 1898 to 1913, Congregational membership remained constant while the town's population grew by 44 per cent. Sunday School enrolments actually fell, from 350 to 256. In the same period, Slough Baptist's membership and Sunday School enrolments both trebled.[99] The Baptists established a new congregation and constructed or extended three church buildings, but the Congregationalists were unable to fund desperately needed enhancements to their Sunday School facilities until well into the 1920s.

Similarly, after WWI the Congregational church's attempts to reach out into the new housing estates met with less success than other churches. As the Baptist church plant in Langley was

[99] CY 1899, 214; CY 1914, 207; BH 1914, 47.

flourishing, the much longer established Congregational hall was struggling and eventually closed. Elsewhere, a Congregational plant on the Upton Lea estate, in the Anglican parish of St Paul's, flourished in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but then began a decline which resulted in closure by 1960, while the St Paul's church plant – known as Christchurch Upton Lea - continued well into the 1970s.

While, therefore, the Baptist and Congregational churches had similar approaches to church governance, and were located quite close to each other, they fared very differently within the same community – suggesting that internal factors were significant. In Chapter 3, and particularly Chapter 4, issues of leadership, congregational unity, and core spirituality that may have contributed to these different outcomes are examined.

If there were different experiences of growth and decline between denominations, the different experiences at the various Congregational churches – Slough, Langley, Upton Lea and Burnham - again point to internal factors being as important as the external demographics. Churches benefited from focusing on children and young people for two reasons – in the short term, in attracting families to worship there; and in the longer term, transferring young people into longer term commitment and membership. Churches in central Slough undoubtedly struggled with being located away from the new estates where new families were most likely to settle. But simply being located within that 'catchment area' was not enough. Energetic leadership, an attractive Sunday School programme with appropriate facilities, and young people's groups were all required; but sustaining this in the longer term required an ability to continually replenish the small army of workers needed, and to maintain momentum through the inevitable ministerial changes that occurred every few years. This required a critical mass of members committed to supporting the church financially and practically.

The most successful in negotiating these challenges was Burnham, where a Congregational chapel had been long established, as in Langley. However, unlike in Langley, the church was able

to adapt and grow as the village expanded rapidly after WWI, eventually to be absorbed into Slough. The key factors were an energetic young minister, and a growing Sunday School that became an integral part of the church's outreach to the newly arrived families. In the 1890s, Burnham Congregational's membership was around one-fifth of Slough's; but by the 1970s, decline at Slough and growth at Burnham meant the latter was around double the former. The potential factors at play are considered in detail in Chapter 6.

Like the Congregationalists, the Methodists were long established, with meetings starting in the 1840s. By 1890 there were Primitive Methodist chapels in Chalvey and central Slough, and a Wesleyan chapel in Slough. Unlike the Congregationalists, none of the chapels was large enough to cope with any expansion as the town grew. The Chalvey Primitive Methodists decided to expand, opening a new building in 1901.[100] However, like other Free churches, the church had no major benefactors and had to raise funds from a congregation of relatively low-income members. Servicing the debt and maintenance costs of the new building were a continual drain on resources until the loan was finally paid off in 1942.[101] Perhaps the Chalvey struggles deterred the other two chapels: apart from the Wesleyans adding a temporary schoolroom, no other major new church building took place before WWI. By comparison, the Baptist church had undertaken three rounds of church building, built a Manse for their pastor, and paid off all the resulting debt by 1913.

Figure 24 shows the main reason for the difference - while Baptists grew their church membership, and therefore their funding capacity, well into the 1920s, membership at all three Methodist chapels remained static in the period leading up to WWI. The reasons for this are explored in Chapter 3.

For Methodists nationally, the great prospect in the 1920s was Methodist Union. In Slough, this involved the merging of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist churches in the centre of town,

[100] 'New Primitive Methodist Church at Chalvey: Opening Ceremony', *SO*, 13 April 1901.
[101] Ibid; Methodist Church Circuit.

and the opening in 1932 of a new Methodist Central Hall.[102] This was built in a style intended to appeal to people who would not otherwise enter a church. Other Free Church expansions had been subject to the commitment of the local congregation, but like other Central Halls, a major part of the cost was donated by the Joseph Rank Foundation. In the approach to Union, local Methodist congregations had been static or declining but there was a surge in attendance and new members at Central Hall, reflected in Figure 24.[103] However, within a few years congregations and membership at Central Hall both declined.[104] Despite the congregation not needing to find the substantial part of the capital funding, finances were tight and a church of over 200 members consistently struggled to fund more than a single pastor – whereas, for example, at the Baptist church there were two and sometimes three full-time ministers.[105]

After the initial growth spurt, membership at the Central Hall declined to the point where congregations were dwarfed by the size of the building. By the early 1960s the valuable central site was attracting attention from property developers and was eventually sold in 1966. The monies raised were enough not only to purchase a new site but also to build a new church and meeting rooms that were sufficient for the then congregation.[106]

This experience of Methodist Union in Slough seems consistent with the national picture – of great excitement followed by a slow process of disillusionment and decline. An official history of the denomination describes the motivations behind Union as 'a blend of triumphalism and idealism' - but also concern over decline in numbers and the need to channel resources for mission most effectively.[107]But a merger of churches did not have 'the teeth which a commercial or industrial merger would have had', the rationalization of chapels and circuits happened only to a limited degree, and 'at a local level ... Methodist Union [could not] guarantee effective union

[102] 'Opening of Methodist Central Hall', *SO*, 11 November 1932.
[103] 'Slough Central Hall: Departure of the Rev R Brighton', *SO*, 13 August 1937.
[104] 'Basis for Reconstruction', 14.
[105] 'Departure of the Rev R Brighton'.
[106] Colin Shepherdson, 'St Andrew's Methodist Church Slough: Silver Jubilee 1966-1991', 1991, SLLS.
[107] Davies et al, *History of the Methodist Church*, vol. 3, 333–40.

where it really matters, where the Christian meets the non-Christian'.[108] With limited rationalization of existing chapels, and initial growth followed by returning decline, Slough provides evidence to support these judgements, as discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

The increases in both the absolute and relative Methodist membership between 1930 and 1940 shown in Figure 23 and Figure 24 were not wholly due to the Central Hall, however. The Methodists also expanded on to the new housing estates – particularly with the opening in 1935 of another new church on the Manor Park estate.[109] This grew rapidly to a membership of around 150 within 7 years, and although it then declined to around 100 by 1960, it remained stable thereafter.[110] There is a comparison between this church, which flourished, and Marystrong – serving the same estate, and established earlier – which struggled. There are again signs that leadership was key; and the support given within the Methodist Circuit to the minister at the new church. Other 'plants' in Cippenham and Britwell were less successful, however.

The efforts of the three main nonconformist denominations are considered further in the coming chapters. But as already noted, both the absolute and relative membership of these churches declined after WWII, while other Free church groupings grew. The most notable of these was the Gospel Tabernacle, under the charismatic and energetic leadership of a young Welsh ex-miner, which is considered further in Chapter 5. But also significant was the Presbyterian church, established in 1941 to serve mainly the Scottish diaspora.[111] By 1970, its membership had outgrown the total Congregational and Methodist memberships, and was rivalling the total Baptist membership in the town. This church had a role at the heart of a minority community, rather as the Roman Catholic church was at the heart of the Irish community. It is notable that

[108] Ibid., 3:340.
[109] 'The New Church in Hampshire Avenue', *SO*, 6 September 1935.
[110] Methodist Central Hall, 'Notes on the History of Windsor, Maidenhead and Slough Methodist Circuits', 2004, DMC19, BRO.
[111] 'First Presbyterian Service', *SO*, 20 June 1941.

both the Gospel Tabernacle and Presbyterian churches grew rapidly at a time when other ministers were describing Slough as a spiritual desert.[112]

The appeal of the two churches was very different. The Gospel Tabernacle's message was Pentecostal, with an emphasis on the active presence and intervention of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Presbyterian message was Reformed, similar in theology to the Congregationalists – with whom they would merge in 1972 at a national level to form the United Reformed Church. And while the Tabernacle stood somewhat apart from the other churches in the town, the pastor often being openly critical of other ministers, there was a close working relationship between the ministers at St Mary's, Methodist Central Hall and the Presbyterian church. Church growth seemed to be possible in very different settings and theologies.

The 'lack of enthusiasm' referred to above applied to some within the churches, as well as those outside who were apathetic. Another Methodist minister drew unfavourable comparisons with the zeal of the non-orthodox Christian groups becoming active in the town: 'we may laugh at their beliefs, but ... are we Methodists showing one tenth of the zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses who go from door to door?'[113] Again, from Figure 23, it can be seen that the enthusiasm of the sects achieved results. The Mormons were particularly successful, claiming 160 baptised members in 1962 and 400 in 1974.[114]

Community Leadership

The commentary thus far has focused on the churches themselves, rather than the community within which they operated. Before WWI, church leaders were amongst the most significant, and perhaps the most significant group, of community leaders. After WWII, while still respected leaders, they were one voice among many – including leaders within the local council, sports and

[112] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 24 August 1956.
[113] 'Methodist Central Hall Pastoral Newsletters', 1958, no. 17, DMS69, BRO.
[114] 'Catholic Family Of Eight Join The Mormons', *SO*, 23 March 1962; 'Mormons Want Slough Chapel', *SE*, 18 January 1974.

social clubs, and young people's groups. Before WWI, the local press was generally supportive of church leaders; after WWII, their opinion could be critiqued like that of any other community leader – sometimes supportively, and at other times critically. The coming chapters will trace some examples of this change in leadership and influence.

Summary - Secularisation in Slough?

In summary, the story of the churches in twentieth century Slough is not a uniform story of 'institutional attenuation and marginalisation', or of 'decline'. While the external pressures – population growth, new housing estates, a shift towards a largely working-class population, immigration and multiculturalism – were common to all, individual fortunes varied markedly. There is strong evidence that 'internal deficiencies', including: vision and leadership; organisation and finance, and congregational behaviour and spirituality, played a significant role in negatively affecting those fortunes. Conversely, churches with energetic leadership and highly motivated and committed congregations grew, often substantially and quickly – perhaps at the expense of other churches, but also in new, unchurched settings. The ability to finance new buildings and ministers to reach out to the new housing estates, and to mobilise large numbers of lay volunteers to staff a church's activities – particularly its Sunday Schools – was a major factor. Churches that had significant social or cultural utility – at the heart of a community, whether that be a housing estate, a village, or an ethnic group – prospered where others with no such role declined.

Overall, church adherence seems to have matched population growth before WWI, regardless of the denominational grouping. Likewise after WWII, albeit with considerable fragmentation and a shift away from the established Protestant denominations. However, in the interwar years, while the town grew rapidly, all church groupings struggled to keep pace and there was a substantial drop in adherence relative to population, although not in absolute numbers. The Anglican decline was particularly marked. This chapter suggests significant contributors to its decline were the structural weaknesses regarding the parish system and the allocation of clergy.

But the three major nonconformist denominations also all declined relative to population – with some variance in their respective fortunes – suggesting other factors were at play. Chapter 4 will investigate these further.

The statistics therefore point to three key periods in twentieth century secularisation in the south east – up to WWI, when adherence was relatively stable; an interwar period when adherence declined substantially; and a post-WWII period where adherence was again relatively stable, but where the losses of the interwar years were not recovered. The churches moved from being central to the community to being just one of many social institutions, with a corresponding loss of community leadership and influence.

Chapter 3 1890 -1918: Church at the Centre

As discussed in the Introduction, the debate about the decline in adherence to organised, mainstream Christianity in England has been underpinned by local studies of substantial urban centres in which the churches had established a central role well before any onset of decline in religious observance. These churches subsequently experienced institutional marginalisation, whereby they were displaced from their previously central roles in the delivery of educational, welfare and governance services; and attenuation, as adherence to organised religion declined from the late nineteenth century onwards.

However, Slough is an example of many towns and cities formed after the transfer of any formal welfare provision from churches to secular structures was well under way. In such communities, churches could not have been 'displaced' from a role they never had. Likewise, churches might not have suffered 'attenuation' to the same extent if they never had the large congregations observed elsewhere. The question becomes whether the churches attained a pre-eminent role in these newer communities, and if so, why; and whether they subsequently suffered marginalisation and attenuation, and if so, why.

An indication of the significance of churches in Slough's community life before the Great War, and the reduction in that significance over the next forty years, can be found in the various directories focused on the town. In the first town guide, published in 1909, churches are listed ahead of any public institutions in the description of the town's amenities.[1] The first two illustrations are of the churches at Langley and Farnham Royal. Likewise, in Kelly's county-wide directories, churches are listed ahead of any public institutions in the description of the town – more prominent than the impressive Leopold Institute, with its 600-seat public hall, library, games, reading and other meeting rooms.[2] However, in the 1949 town guide, churches are listed

[1] *Slough Borough Guide* (Slough, 1909).
[2] Kelly's 1911, 177–78.

behind government institutions, utilities, housing and shopping. The 1950 Town Plan devotes three short paragraphs out of 187 pages to the churches, the 1966 Plan none.[3]

More evidence can be found in the first local directory to be focused purely on the town, published annually from 1906 to 1914.[4] Again, in the 1914 edition, the first institutions listed are churches and chapels, ahead of local government, schools, banks, utilities, benefit societies and the freemasons.[5] And this was not just an institutional significance; in the 1913 edition, four full page photographs of community leaders are included, three of them local clergy – the Rector of Slough, Chairman of the Urban District Council, Roman Catholic priest, and Congregational minister.[6] These were the only pictures of local notables published in the nine editions of the directory.

The Rector is prominently shown immediately before the main section of the directory.[7] As shown in Figure 25, apart from his role as a religious leader the Rector was a senior leader in the town's secular leisure and welfare organisations. Following his ecclesiastical appointments, he is listed as Chairman of the local School Boards and Managers, President of the Leopold Institute, President of Slough Cricket Club, President of Slough Nursing Fund, and a member of the Windsor Hospital Committee. And he was not alone: the benefactor of St Paul's church was Chairman of Slough Football Club and the YMCA, and heavily involved in the committees of local schools, hospitals and even the local allotment society.[8] Similar examples could be given for other ministers and clergy; religious leaders had significant leadership roles within the community.[9]

[3] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 119–20; Bucks CC, 'Slough & District Town Map Review'.
[4] Palmer's 1906; Day's 1914.
[5] Day's 1914, 1–10.
[6] Day's 1913.
[7] Ibid.; opposite page 1.
[8] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'.
[9] See also Alistair Beecher, 'Keeping the Faith: Church and Community in Alresford c.1780-1939' (unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

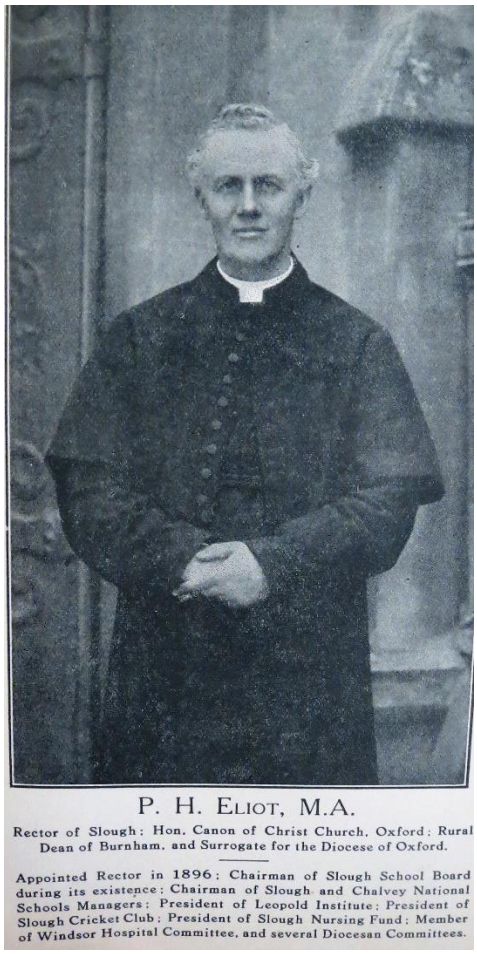


Figure 25: Rev P H Eliot, c 1912

At the 1891 census Slough's population was 8,535; twenty years later, it had grown 75 per cent to 14,892.[10] This growth post-dates the point at which, nationally, church attendance began to decline relative to population.[11] However, in 1891, the town was served by 10 churches and chapels, while in 1914, it was served by 12 – including five major new buildings which had substantially increased not only the quantity of church accommodation but also its quality and suitability. This chapter considers whether Slough's churches were conscious of the sense of 'crisis' and disappointment elsewhere, and if so, whether this influenced their strategies. It also examines whether the role Slough's churches performed as community institutions was noticeably different from communities whose churches had at one time been more central. In

[10] www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10002126, accessed 19/02/2018; any differences with figures in Chapter 1 are due to redistricting to provide fair comparisons.
[11] Morris, 'Strange Death', 975.

developing such a role, the relative importance of external influences and the initiative of local 'agents', both clerical and lay, is examined. This tests the scope for individual agency to counteract the seeming inevitability of change. The period covered facilitates comparisons with the other studies referred to in the Introduction and above. Finally, the chapter will suggest the degree to which Slough illustrates existing models or provides an alternative model, given the different context in which the forces of change and growth operated.

There were no formal surveys of church attendance in Slough within the period covered by this chapter, or in the decade before or after. Much reporting of church events, both in church records and the local press, was qualitative. One statistic that can be determined, however, is church seating capacity. The link between capacity and attendance is problematic – a key argument in Robin Gill's analysis is that overbuilding of churches in the second half of the nineteenth century led to huge overcapacity as adherence declined.[12] However, in Slough the six major construction projects between 1890 and 1914 were major civic events, extensively reported in the local press – from the planning stages through to opening and inauguration. These reports included details of capacity, budgets and debt levels, and give indications towards the impact of church initiatives, growth in church attendance relative to population, and differences in the fortunes of the different churches. The churches' ability to finance their activities also provides indications of the numerical growth and income levels of their membership, and therefore their funding base.

Table 4 shows the total church seating capacity in Slough at the beginning and end of the study period. Anglican figures are deliberately conservative, including free seats only – the respective capacities of St Mary's and St Laurence were substantially higher when rented seating is considered. The seating at St Peter's and St Paul's was all unrestricted. The Free Churches include the Baptist, Congregational and Methodist churches. Otherwise, figures are contemporary

[12] Gill, *Empty Church*.

estimates and can vary from source to source; but provide good indications as to maximum capacity.

The Christian Brethren assembly is included for completeness, although little is known apart from the times of the two Sunday meetings.[13] No church records survive, and (uniquely among the local churches at the time) there was no reporting in the local newspapers.

[13] Day's 1914, 10.

		1891		1914	
		seats	vs pop'n	seats	vs pop'n
Anglican	St Mary's	500		700	
	St Peter's	280		280	
	St Laurence	194		194	
	St Paul's	150		684	
			13.2%		12.5%
Roman Catholic	St Ethelbert's	250	2.9%	600	4.0%
Baptist	Slough			600	4.0%
Congregational	Slough	450		450	
	Chalvey	120		200	
			6.7%		4.4%
Methodist	Primitive, Ledgers Rd	150		320	
	Primitive, William St	150		150	
	Wesleyan, Herschel St	200		200	
			5.9%		4.5%
Brethren	Hencroft St	?		?	
TOTALS					
	Anglican	1124	13.2%	1858	12.5%
	Roman Catholic	250	2.9%	600	4.0%
	Free Churches	1070	12.5%	1920	12.9%
Total church accommodation		2444	28.6%	4378	29.4%
Population (at 1891 and 1911 Census)		8535		14892	

Table 4: Church Accommodation in Slough, 1890-1914[14]

Some initial conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the churches were substantial institutions, with seating capacity for over a quarter of the town's population. However, even this was less than the national average: Robin Gill calculated that in 1881, total church seating in large towns was 41 per cent of total population, including Free Church seating at 26 per cent of total population.[15] In Slough, the established and Free Church groupings were of similar size. Secondly, overall capacity grew roughly in line with population growth. Whether church leaders reacted to numerical

[14] Kelly's 1895, 145–46; Kelly's 1924, 189–91; 'New Baptist Chapel at Slough: Opening Services', *SO*, 22 April 1905; 'New Church at Slough: Consecration and Dedication to St Paul', *SO*, 17 November 1906; 'The New Roman Catholic Church at Slough: Consecration and Opening Ceremonies', *SO*, 23 April 1910.
[15] Gill, *Empty Church*, 229–32.

growth or proactively expanded capacity ahead of increases in attendance, is considered below, along with whether there is evidence of Gill's 'over-building' thesis. Thirdly, while some new churches were built, and others expanded or replaced, some were not. And finally, these figures do not include rooms used for Sunday Schools – a key consideration throughout this study.

The main Anglican church was St Mary's, parish church of the historic parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey, from which the town of Slough was formed. The parish included two older churches based in the historic hamlets of Upton and Chalvey, now daughter churches of St Mary's. St Mary's occupied a central place in the community, and was attended by many of the town's elite, including the Nash brick-making family, the landowning Charsleys, and the factory-owning Ellimans.[16] As already noted, the Rector was perhaps the principal community leader in the town.

As Slough grew, the parish church became a symbol of civic pride, although raising capital was a struggle.[17] Eventually, £28,000 was raised to fund a new tower, spire and bells, which opened in 1913.[18] James Elliman's £10,000 donation was key to raising these funds. On completion, the emphasis was on a new building appropriate for Slough's size and growth: the *Slough Observer* described it as 'a handsome building of which the town may well be proud'.[19] Figures are not available to show whether this rebuilding was matched by increased attendances. However, other reports indicated that St Mary's spiritual outreach was growing: there was a Mission Room at Salt Hill, in the west of the parish: and to the north, at the Wellington Street Mission Room, 'worshippers ... are becoming increasingly numerous, and they are looking forward to the time when they will have a Mission Church in the locality.'[20]

The story of St Paul's, the other large Anglican church, was rather different. St Paul's was a new parish north of the railway, formed in 1904 by amalgamating parts of the parishes of Upton-cum-

[16] Fraser, *Slough*, 82–83.
[17] Ibid.; Kelly's 1899, 153.
[18] 'The Completion of Slough Parish Church', *SO*, 21 June 1913.
[19] Ibid.; 'Completing Slough Parish Church: Enlarged Nave Dedicated', *Slough Chronicle*, 14 June 1912.
[20] 'Harvest Festivals at the Slough Churches', *SO*, 7 October 1905; 'St. Mary's Mission, Slough: The Fourth Harvest Festival', *SO*, 24 September 1910.

Chalvey and Stoke Poges.[21] The origins of the new parish date to around 1870, when Miss Kate Buée, the St Mary's district visitor, began holding mothers' meetings and formed coal and clothing clubs in the area north of the railway. Over the next twenty years, this part of the town expanded to two to three thousand residents, growing north into the southern end of Stoke Poges parish.[22] The inhabitants were working-class – initially, the men were workers in the brickfields then lying north and east of the town, and later workers on the railway or at G.D.Peters.

Algernon Gilliat, a wealthy businessman from a long-standing evangelical family, moved to Stoke Poges in 1879; and from 1882, began working with Miss Buée, holding small evangelistic meetings for local railway and brick workers in a cottage north of the railway.[23] From 1885 Gilliat funded a corrugated iron Mission Room and a curate-in-charge within Stoke Poges parish, and later, around 1893, a separate schoolroom.[24] There was substantial growth, based on an overtly evangelical message, an active men's temperance meeting, and a strong family focus: in 1906, the Sunday School contained over five hundred children.[25] Discussions on the new parish began around 1901, and Gilliat committed to financing a new church building and the vicar's stipend once it was formed. The new church building, consecrated in 1906, cost over £10,000 with seating for around 700.[26] The church continued to grow: in 1913, communicants had grown 34 per cent over the previous five years, missionary charity-giving funds had increased by 80 per cent and the deficit on the church maintenance fund had reduced by 84 per cent.[27] In this case, therefore, church adherence and capacity expanded together.

[21] 'New Ecclesiastical Parish at Slough', *SO*, 24 December 1904.
[22] 'History of St Paul's Church', *SO*, 11 February 1905; 'New Church at Slough'; Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 7–28.
[23] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'.
[24] 'Stoke Gardens Mission Room', *SO*, 10 January 1885.
[25] 'Stoke Gardens Mission Hall', *SO*, 21 January 1893; 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 21 July 1906.
[26] 'New Church at Slough'; Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 9.
[27] 'Sale of Work at Slough', *SO*, 31 May 1913.

The early history of Roman Catholicism in Slough has been covered in Chapter 2. The chapel that served as the Sanctuary until 1910 was one part of a converted warehouse, the other half forming the Catholic elementary school and a hall. Two wealthy local Catholics funded the purchase of a piece of land in the centre of the town in 1889, and in 1907, the Lady Superior of the local convent made a gift of £8,000 to fund 'a more worthy Roman Catholic Church in Slough'.[28] Again, as noted in Chapter 2, the new church was far larger than was needed at the time - 'completely adequate for seating the whole parish at one Mass'. Within a few years, however, it was being used for multiple services on a Sunday, and within 25 years would be outgrown by the Catholic influx covered in Chapters 2 and 5.[29]

St Ethelbert's is the one church in Table 4 where capacity is not a good guide to adherence or attendance, therefore. However, the impact of the Catholic church went beyond simple numbers attending. The priest, Father Clemente, became a major community figure, widely respected for his work in his school and amongst the poor. The Soup Kitchen that he began in 1886 ran every year until his sudden death in 1918, serving up to 10,000 meals to the poor each winter, and engaged significant support across the community.[30]His funeral was a major civic event, attended by local dignitaries and clergy from all the churches.[31]

The three main Free churches had differing fortunes. As at the Anglican St Paul's, the fastest growing was the one established latest. The first Baptist meetings in Slough took place around 1889, much later than in nearby towns – Wycombe, for example, had two large Baptist churches by 1845.[32] The delays may have been due to interpersonal issues – a critical factor in churches with a congregational model of governance.[33] The initial members were not wealthy – their first

[28] Fraser, *Slough*, 85; 'New Roman Catholic Church'.
[29] Kelly's 1915, 179; 'Golden Jubilee Magazine'.
[30] 'Golden Jubilee Magazine'.
[31] 'Sudden Death of Father Clemente', *SO*, 20 July 1918.
[32] BH 1896, 205.
[33] Fraser, *Slough*, 87; Victor Chudley, *The People of Windsor Road: The History of Slough Baptist Church, 1894-1994* (Slough: Slough Baptist Church, 1994), 1.

landlord insisted on two years' rent in advance, through concerns over the church's creditworthiness.[34] The church was formally constituted in 1894, with seventeen members and a Sunday School of twenty-five, and expanded rapidly. In 1904 there were 130 members and a Sunday School of 148.[35] A temporary church seating 160 was built in 1892, but was quickly 'crowded out' and expanded to seat 300 in 1897.[36] Even then, 'many people had to be turned away each Sunday for lack of room'. As with St Paul's, the message was evangelical, and there was an energetic minister. After a new 600-seat church was opened in 1905, growth continued: by 1913 membership had grown to 265 and the Sunday School to 248.[37]

Despite no major benefactors, and a working-class congregation, the growing membership increased the funding base so that the outstanding debt on the new church was paid off within thirteen years, despite the intervention of the War.[38] As with St Paul's, adherence and capacity expanded together.

Slough Congregational Church was established in Chalvey in the 1840s. A larger church building was constructed in 1853 to seat up to 700 (later revised to 450) at a time when the membership was only 58, and the Chalvey chapel was sold to the Primitive Methodists.[39] Although around half the cost of £2,000 was raised prior to construction, the congregation struggled to pay down the remaining debt. There are no indications as to regular attendance, although the town's historian records that the ambitious building 'was fully justified in later years'.[40] However, in the period 1898 to 1913, Congregational membership grew only from 170 to 183 while the town's population grew by 44 per cent. Sunday School enrolments fell, from 350 to 256. In the same period, Slough Baptist's membership and Sunday School enrolments both trebled.[41]

[34] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 1.
[35] BH 1896, 184; BH 1904, 270.
[36] 'New Baptist Chapel'.
[37] BH 1914, 47.
[38] 'New Baptist Chapel'; 'Baptist Church', *SO*, 19 October 1918.
[39] Fraser, *Slough*, 85.
[40] Ibid.
[41] CY 1899, 213; CY 1914, 207; BH 1914, 47.

The pros and cons of using Free Church membership as a marker were discussed in Chapter 2, but the Baptists and Congregationalists were two churches with very similar approaches to church governance, both holding to a Reformed theology, and located quite close to each other. The membership and Sunday School figures show how the two churches fared very differently within the same community. It is possible that the very similarities between the two made the 'weaker' Congregational church more open to competition from the 'stronger' Baptists.

Both the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists were long established. The Wesleyan chapel was constructed in the town centre in 1847; a Primitive Methodist chapel in Ledgers Rd, Chalvey, seating 150, was acquired from the Congregationalists in 1854, and another corrugated iron chapel built in William St, in the town centre, in 1877.[42] By the turn of the century, the Ledgers Rd membership was 60 and the Sunday School 150 strong, and the building was not large enough to accommodate Sunday School scholars staying on for the morning service.[43] A new church, to accommodate 320 people, and a Sunday School of up to 300, opened in 1901.[44] St Paul's and the Baptists had prospered following expansion of facilities, but Ledgers Rd struggled financially. As with the other Free churches, it had no major benefactors, and had to raise funds from a congregation of relatively low-income members. At the opening, only £1,200 of the projected £2,800 was secured, and servicing the debt and other building costs were a continual drain on resources in the coming years.[45] By 1905, major repairs were required: between 1905 and 1914, repairs and loan interest were equal to all other expenditure.[46] With no growth in general income between 1900 and 1913, several bridging loans were needed and the overall debt had increased by 1914. The outstanding debt was not paid until 1942.[47] By comparison, by 1913 the Baptist pastor's salary was greater than the entire income of the Primitive Methodist church, and the

[42] Fraser, *Slough*, 86–87; Colin Shepherdson, 'The Ledgers Road Story', 1991, 2, SLLS.
[43] Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 2–3.
[44] 'New Primitive Methodist Church at Chalvey: Opening Ceremony'; Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 4–6.
[45] 'Primitive Methodist New Church: The Stone-Laying Ceremony', *SO*, 30 June 1900.
[46] 'Ledgers Rd Primitive Methodist Church Balance Sheets 1899-1914', DMS68-1B-2, DMS68-1B-4-1/2/3, BRO.
[47] ibid, 'Why Christianity Is a Minority Movement', *SO*, 18 December 1942.

Baptists had purchased a Manse as well as paying down debt on their new building.[48] Very limited membership figures are available for the Methodists: by 1933, Ledgers Rd's membership was 84, up from 60 in 1901; substantially less growth than for the Baptists.[49]

The William St chapel was small, and badly needed upgrading: but under the same minister as Ledgers Rd, perhaps the funding struggles at that church caused its neighbour to be cautious. The Wesleyans also saw the need to expand. A new site in a prime position was bought for £1,150 – a considerable sum - in January 1905, and a 1906 circular pointed out 'the inadequacy of our current accommodation', unchanged while the town's population had increased fourfold, and appealing for funds to build new premises.[50] A temporary hall was opened in 1907, at a cost of £150, giving much needed additional space for the Sunday School and other activities; but with the intention of building a new church as soon as funds were available. Making even these financial commitments, and various other unspecified difficulties, caused some 'fear and trembling' in the congregation members who were wholly responsible for the funding.[51] By 1914, sufficient funds had not been secured, and no new building took place. Both the Wesleyan and William St building projects were deferred until after WWI, and indefinitely as Methodist Union became a possibility.[52]

In summary, the twelve churches listed by directories in 1914 were all significant institutions in the town, regardless of denomination, but their individual fortunes varied markedly. Overall, church attendance seems to have grown in line with population growth in the period between 1890 and 1914. However, two churches formed during the period grew rapidly, while other, longer established churches remained static or declined relative to population. The financial resources available to different churches varied widely – St Mary's raised £28,000 to finance its

[48] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 42, 52.
[49] Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 16; 'Opening of Methodist Central Hall' circuit membership records have not survived.
[50] 'The Proposed New Wesleyan Church for Slough', *SO*, 7 July 1906.
[51] 'Opening of the Wesley Temporary Hall', *SO*, 5 January 1907.
[52] 'Ledgers Road Rally', *SO*, 8 October 1926.

expansion, but Slough Primitive Methodist struggled for forty years to repay a £1,000 loan. All churches had to raise funds for their operations and any capital projects from within the community, and so major benefactors could significantly influence a church's fortunes. While all churches faced the same opportunities and challenges, dynamic leadership and committed lay agency were key. And finally, these churches performed a variety of functions within the community – as civic institutions, social centres, and sources of welfare and education. The question is why the churches attained, and apparently maintained, this central position.

Sunday Schools

The churches' interaction with children is considered first. Sunday Schools were, of course, key to this response – 'perhaps the most important ... of nineteenth-century religious and educational subjects'.[53] Jeffrey Cox noted, 'hardly anyone escaped some kind of religious indoctrination in Sunday Schools'.[54] The period covered by this chapter was the high watermark for Sunday School attendance nationally: between 1891 and 1911, Robin Gill estimated that around 51 per cent of all children in England and Wales were enrolled.[55] Before this period, both absolute and proportional enrolments were rising: afterwards, they both fell.

Historically, Sunday Schools had fulfilled several functions, including providing basic literacy. By the late nineteenth century, however, with increasingly widely available state schooling, their primary role was providing 'a basic religious education, one that was often informed by the late eighteenth-century emphasis on salvation through faith'.[56] In addition, Snell described them as 'key agencies in the inculcation of orderliness, punctuality, sobriety, cleanliness and related virtues governing personal behaviour and social discipline' – the characteristics of good and

[53] K.D.M. Snell, 'The Sunday-School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture', *Past and Present* 164, no. 1 (August 1999): 122.
[54] Cox, *Lambeth*, 268–69.
[55] Gill, *Empty Church*, 225.
[56] Snell, 'Sunday-School Movement', 129–30.

orderly citizens. But their community influence went wider: they were major social and recreational centres:

> Their libraries, teachers' meetings and conferences, 'charity sermons', Whitsun outings, 'treats' and prizes, processions ... music, singing classes, Bands of Hope, anniversary festivities, football clubs, mutual improvement societies, needlework classes, sick, clothing, benefit and burial clubs, funerals and other activities played an exceptionally important role in many districts.[57]

Snell's analysis is focused on the early to mid-nineteenth century. But, somewhat later, Slough's churches followed a similar pattern. Most churches provided Sunday Schools, with a large proportion of the town's children enrolled.

The 1891 census recorded 35.2 per cent of the nation's population as children aged fifteen or under: in 1911 the proportion was 30.7 per cent.[58] As Table 2 shows, Slough followed these trends - in 1891 children represented 36 per cent of the town's population, and in 1911, 32 per cent.

	1891		1911	
	total	vs pop'n	total	vs pop'n
0-4 years	1020		1585	
5-9 years	1028		1664	
10-14 years	1019		1502	
All children 0-14	3067	36%	4751	32%
Population	8535		14892	

Table 5: Slough Children 1891-1911[59]

Table 6 shows the estimated size of the main Sunday Schools compared with the total numbers of children recorded by the 1891 and 1911 censuses. These estimates have been compiled from a variety of sources – Baptist and Congregational denominational records, reports of annual meetings for the Methodists, and reports of the annual 'treats' for the Anglicans. No reports are available of any Roman Catholic and Brethren Sunday School activity.

[57] Ibid.
[58] Gill, *Empty Church*, 225.
[59] www.visionofbritain.org.uk, accessed 30/06/2013

		1891		1911	
		scholars	vs total	scholars	vs total
Anglican	St Mary's /St Peter's	570		804	
	St Paul's	200		600	
	All Anglican	770	50%	1404	59%
Baptist	Cippenham	0		27	
	Slough	0		210	
	All Baptist	0	0%	237	10%
Congregational	Chalvey	90		163	
	Langley	120		98	
	Slough	230		92	
	All Congregational	440	28%	353	15%
Methodist	Wesleyan	147		144	
	Primitive - Ledgers Rd	110		153	
	Primitive - William St	78		70	
	All Methodist	335	22%	367	16%
Total Sunday School scholars		1545		2361	
% vs total children 0-14 years		50%		50%	
% vs total children 5-14 years		75%		75%	

Table 6: Slough Sunday School Enrolments, 1891-1911[60]

Overall, these estimates are consistent with Gill's national figures – around 50 per cent of children in Slough up to the age of 14 years were enrolled in, or associated with, a Sunday School. Given the obvious incentive, attendance at annual 'treats' or outings shows the lowest level of commitment, but up to 70 per cent of children aged between five and fourteen attended them. Infants were usually catered for separately. For example, in 1908 the annual treat for St Mary's and St Peter's Sunday Schools involved a party of 720 (including teachers and other adult helpers). Separately, a tea for 'over 300 infants who were too young to be taken to Burnham

[60] BH 1914; CY 1899; CY 1914; 'Church Sunday School Treat', SO, 6 August 1892; 'Church Sunday School Treat', SO, 1 August 1908; 'Stoke Gardens Sunday School Treat', SO, 6 August 1892; 'St Paul's Sunday School Treat', SO, 26 June 1909; 'Congregational Sunday School Anniversary', SO, 13 April 1895; 'Slough Wesleyan Sunday School', SO, 28 May 1892; 'Slough Wesleyan Sunday School', SO, 19 May 1906; 'Chalvey: Primitive Methodist Sunday School', SO, 26 July 1890; 'Primitive Methodist Sunday School', SO, 30 May 1896; 'Ledgers Road Primitive Methodist Church: Sunday School Anniversary', SO, 24 June 1911; 'Sunday School Anniversary', SO, 24 January 1914.

Beeches' was provided in the Rectory grounds.[61] As a comparison, in 1903 there were 1,845 places for children in Slough's elementary schools.[62]

Apart from the children, a considerable number of adults were involved too. Running the weekly Sunday schools required a considerable team, with average class sizes of eight to ten children. In 1911, there were 33 teachers in the Congregational Sunday Schools for 353 scholars, 31 teachers at the Baptist Church for 237 scholars, and 22 teachers at the Wesleyan Church for 144 scholars.[63] In 1914, therefore, apart from around 2,400 children enrolled, plus infants, there were possibly as many as 300 Sunday School teachers in the town. Special events, such as the annual treats, required even more adult help. For example, in July 1908 the annual treat for St Paul's Sunday School required 100 teachers and helpers to look after a group of 600 children, and transport from the church to Burnham Beeches required 33 vehicles, lent for the day by 31 local businesses.[64]

As this might indicate, the annual Sunday School outings were major affairs in the town's calendar. In this period, Burnham Beeches was the destination of choice for most of the Sunday Schools. This ancient woodland, about five miles northwest of the town centre, had a large open grassy area suitable for playing games and other activities. In 1892, around 1,000 children went during one week, on three separate trips.[65] As the town expanded, the numbers grew – in 1906, Burnham Beeches was taken over on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon in six consecutive weeks as, successively, the Baptist, Wesleyan, Congregational, St Paul's, St Mary's and Burnham Congregational Sunday Schools all made the journey.[66] There is no record of the Primitive

[61] 'Church Sunday School Treat [01/08/1908]'.
[62] Kelly's 1903, 153.
[63] CY 1913; BH 1912; 'Wesleyan 19/05/1906'.
[64] 'St Paul's Sunday School Treat', *SO*, 25 July 1908.
[65] 'Wesleyan School Treat', *SO*, 6 August 1892.
[66] 'Baptist Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 30 June 1906; 'Wesleyan Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 7 July 1906; 'Slough Congregational Sunday School', *SO*, 14 July 1906; 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing [1906]'; 'Church Sunday School Treat', *SO*, 28 July 1906; 'Burnham: Congregational Sunday School + School Treat', *SO*, 4 August 1906.

Methodist churches' treats that year, although they made the pilgrimage to Burnham Beeches regularly in other years. While not every report gives party sizes, a reasonable estimate is that around 2,500 children, teachers and helpers were involved across the six trips – around 20 per cent of the town's population. Transporting the children required up to forty horse-drawn wagons or (later) motor vehicles, lent by local businesses, which often supported several outings regardless of denomination. The processions, 'gaily decorated with flags and banners', as shown in Figure 26, began in the town centre, taking a circuitous route to Burnham Beeches.



Figure 26: Slough Wesleyan Church Sunday School Outing 1910

On arrival, the normal format was lunch, followed by free play, organised sports, prize-giving, and tea. Afterwards, the procession retraced its steps to the town centre after a long day's enjoyment. In 1906, the St Paul's outing began at 9.45 a.m. and did not return to the church until 8.30 p.m., where 'a large crowd of parents and friends welcom[ed] the merry party home'.[67] As

[67] 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing [1906]'.

one participant commented thirty years later: 'the Sunday School outings to Burnham Beeches were an institution never to be forgotten by those who took part in them'.[68]

By comparison, a typical works outing was much smaller. The Elliman's factory outing was forty people in 1897, and the Slough and District Cooperative Society seventy people in 1902. Apart from the Sunday School events, the biggest social event in the town was the annual Summer Excursion: in 1907 the party that visited Bournemouth was 750 people strong.[69]

Apart from these outings for the children, some of the biggest social events for the whole town centred around the Sunday Schools. 'Entertainments', whether purely to show off the children's work, or more overtly for fund-raising, attracted large audiences. In early 1906, the parish church took over the large Public Hall at the Leopold Institute, seating 600, for two fund-raising events for the 300 to 400 strong Sunday School at St Peter's. The afternoon event attracted 'a fair attendance', but in the evening 'the hall was crowded'.[70] As the report makes clear, there was significant effort in organising such an event, but also financial risk – 'the expense of hiring the school and providing the prizes … is naturally considerable' – but the organisers' hard work and confidence was rewarded with a profit of £8 for the funds. The following month, at the Baptist Church, it was a fund-raising entertainment given by the Christian Endeavour Junior department for the Organ Fund, followed 2 weeks later by the annual Sunday School prize-giving – both events attracting 'excellent' attendances.[71] In March, it was the turn of the Congregational and Wesleyan churches, and so on through the year.[72] Sunday School anniversaries involved well-attended services, teas and prize-giving. As just one of many potential examples, the 1911 Ledgers Rd Primitive Methodist Sunday School anniversary was celebrated with three services,

[68] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 27.
[69] 'Messrs Elliman's Employees Outing', *SO*, 10 July 1897; 'River Excursion', *SO*, 12 July 1902; 'Slough Summer Excursion', *SO*, 13 July 1907.
[70] 'Entertainments at the Public Hall', *SO*, 6 January 1906.
[71] 'Entertainment at Slough', *SO*, 10 February 1906; 'Baptist Sunday School', *SO*, 24 February 1906.
[72] 'Slough Congregational Sunday School: Entertainment by the Scholars', *SO*, 17 March 1906; 'Slough Wesleyan Sunday School', *SO*, 17 March 1906.

and in the evening 'the church was crowded, chairs having to be placed in the aisles and in every available spot'. The annual meeting the next evening was preceded by a tea with a hundred seated.[73]

Of course, while these were high points, the main focus of Sunday Schools was on Sunday attendance. The Nonconformist churches all ran both morning and afternoon classes, and reported attendances, although inevitably lower than the full roll, were high. For some families, church on Sunday was an all-day commitment. For example, at Ledgers Road in 1907, of 100 children on the full roll, 84 attended in the morning and 92 in the afternoon.[74] At other churches the all-day commitment was weaker, although average attendances were still high. In 1898, of the 266 scholars at the two Congregational churches, 130 attended in the morning and 220 in the afternoon. Children got extra marks and were more likely to get prizes if they attended twice in the day. But there were signs of changing attitudes even at this stage - at Slough Congregational , of 180 on the roll, only 70 attended in the morning, and the policy was changed so that those 'prevented from attending more than once a day' could also get prizes.[75] Thirty years later, there were clues as to why the habit was declining at this church at least – the Sunday morning congregation tended to be of the higher classes (what the speaker termed 'pretty big swells') and the evening service was attended by 'common, ordinary folk'.[76]

However, while Sunday activities were the focus, the programme extended through the week. Several churches ran branches of the Band of Hope – a junior temperance movement – and Christian Endeavour, a holiness movement, which met on weekday evenings. At the Baptist church, the Band of Hope met on Mondays and the two sections of Christian Endeavour met on Mondays and Wednesdays respectively.[77] The Congregational Sunday School included evening

[73] 'Ledgers Rd Sunday School Anniversary [1911]'.
[74] 'Chalvey: Primitive Methodist Sunday School Anniversary', *SO*, 15 June 1907.
[75] 'Slough Congregational Sunday School', *SO*, 21 May 1898.
[76] 'Scathing Address On Churchgoing', *SO*, 19 October 1928.
[77] Palmer's 1908.

entertainments, a well-stocked library, and a gymnasium for older boys.[78] As Snell observed, these were 'major social and recreational centres' throughout the week.[79]

So whether it was for weekly, special or annual events, Sunday Schools represented the main organised activities for children up to the age of around 11 years, outside formal education – and a major social focus for their parents. In fact, there are few records of contemporaneous alternatives of any significance. Unsurprising, then, that as the town grew, there was increasing demand for Sunday School places – as seen in Table 6 – and the corresponding pressure on space. Two comments from 1914 are typical. The Congregational Sunday School in Chalvey 'was practically turning children away for want of accommodation': of the 150 scholars, fifty had to meet in the scullery in very poor conditions.[80] At Williams Street Primitive Methodist, there were seventy scholars: 'they had not room for more'.[81] These were long-standing complaints – in 1893, the Congregational Sunday Schools' annual report commented: 'as the schoolroom was inconveniently crowded the next progressive step should be the building of a new and larger schoolroom'.[82]

As noted earlier, these churches were unsuccessful in raising new building funds. However, where churches were able or willing to invest in premises, growth in overall membership and Sunday School enrolments seemed to go hand in hand. In 1895, Slough Baptist had thirty-two members, and twenty-six enrolled in the Sunday School, a ratio of 1.2:1.[83] In 1913, after extensive new building, including schoolrooms, membership had grown to 265, and the Sunday School to 231 – a ratio of 1.1:1. Similarly at St Paul's, where the Sunday School was a major part of the work from its inception in the 1880s. By 1906, there were around 500 in the Sunday School, around double the number five years previously. The additional capacity provided by the

[78] 'Slough and Chalvey Congregational Sunday Schools: Anniversary Services', *SO*, 11 May 1901.
[79] Snell, 'Sunday-School Movement', 130–38.
[80] 'Chalvey Congregational Sunday School', *SO*, 27 June 1914.
[81] 'Sunday School Anniversary [24/01/1914]'.
[82] 'Slough Congregational Church Centenary Brochure', 1935, 2, L574.28, SLLS.
[83] BH 1896, 184; BH 1914, 47.

new church supported a school of around 600 each year from 1908 to 1914.[84] It appears that many children also attended services with their parents; one visiting preacher commented particularly on 'the large proportion of young people usually present'.[85] By contrast, at the Congregational Church the lack of investment was matched by a relatively static membership – growing from 170 in 1898 to 183 in 1913, and Sunday School enrolments - growing from 250 to 256.[86]

The costs of expansion were significant, being borne almost exclusively by the congregations; and not without risk – as seen at Ledgers Road. Only at St Paul's was there a major benefactor who underwrote the costs of new building. The 'fear and trembling' mentioned at the Wesleyan church is an open expression of the nervousness felt by some; the inability to raise funds another sign. The Sunday Schools were staffed by unpaid volunteers, and the work was hard, with regular turnover of teachers and lack of support from parents: for one Methodist 'at times it had been very uphill work'.[87]

An example of the challenges of scholar turnover and teacher recruitment was at the Wesleyan church. In 1906 the Superintendent reported that the Sunday School roll of 144 included 52 new enrolments and 28 departures since the previous year.[88] Amongst them, 13 children had left the area 'for situation', that is, to enter domestic service.[89] These losses were critical 'because it was from those schools they got most of their Church members, and therefore most of their Christian workers'.[90] The most obvious way for a graduating Sunday School scholar to serve in the church was as a teacher or helper – so unsurprisingly, one immediate effect of the 'leakage' of

[84] 'St Paul's Sunday School', *SO*, 20 January 1906; 'St Paul's Sunday School Treat [1908]'; 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 25 July 1914.
[85] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 6,11,27.
[86] CY 1899, 213; CY 1914, 207.
[87] 'Ledgers Rd Sunday School Anniversary [1911]'.
[88] 'Wesleyan 19/05/1906'.
[89] Ibid.
[90] 'Slough Wesleyan Sunday School', *SO*, 23 June 1895.

graduating scholars was ‘we lack sufficient teachers’. Despite this, in the same year, 22 teachers served in the Wesleyan Sunday School.[91]

Why, then, did congregations take the risks? Snell summarised a variety of motivations for the establishment and development of Sunday Schools. Some historians saw them as ‘agencies of middle-class moral and political influence, or even indoctrination’ whereby behavioural standards were imposed on the working classes. Others believed that they were 'indigenous institutions of the working-class community rather than an imposition on it from the outside'. Snell focused on their role in protecting the future of denominations in a competitive religious market, as church growth shifted from external recruitment to primarily organic growth from the existing church family:

> For the future success or otherwise of any denomination it was absolutely vital that the denomination teach its children the principles and tenets of its faith, and that it incline them strongly towards denominational obedience ... Sunday schools ... were the major means by which this was undertaken. [92]

Cox made a similar point: ‘in a pluralistic society, religious organisations must recruit or die’.[93] This may well be true as a *post facto* rationalisation, but there is little evidence in Slough of external pressure to ‘protect’ the denominational future, and it is hard to see why this would motivate the working-class members of many Slough churches. Rather, these were individuals, and individual churches, making decisions as to whether and why they provided additional facilities for Sunday Schools.

Recruitment was certainly in local churchmen’s thinking, but declared as a missional motivation – to recruit, or ‘socialise’, children into the Christian family, a motivation independent of denomination. For a Congregationalist in 1895 ‘the Sunday School was meant to bring the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ ... to the little children’.[94] For a Methodist in 1911, the purpose was ‘the

[91] ‘Wesleyan 19/05/1906’.
[92] Snell, ‘Sunday-School Movement’, 137–38.
[93] Cox, *Lambeth*, 228–29.
[94] ‘Congregational Sunday School Anniversary [1895]’.

training of the boys and girls for Jesus'.[95] This could be part of a wider missional focus on parents and families - as one Congregational minister put it: 'every Sunday School was a link with hundreds of homes ... children became passports to the home, and the first link that bound the church to the neighbourhood about it was the children in the Sunday School.'[96] If churches did not focus sufficient attention on the Sunday School, 'things would very likely go wrong'. And of the growth at St Paul's, the local Bishop commented: 'its careful attention to the spiritual welfare of the young has been a factor of primary importance'.[97]

If these are insights into the motivations of church leaders and congregations, parents may have had other motivations. For some, it might have been simply 'to get the children out of the house on Sunday.'[98] Local churchmen knew this – 'some parents sent their children in the morning because they were in the way of the cooking, and in the afternoon in order that the parents could have a little quiet'.[99] In these cases, parents can hardly have been unaware of the churches' intention to 'teach the children about Jesus'. Perhaps they felt that regardless of other motives they were still 'doing the right thing' in religiously socialising their children.

Others may have been seeking something more positive from the church. Some might genuinely be seeking a Sunday School in which their children would be educated in their parents' faith. However, given the all-pervasive social reach of the Sunday Schools outlined above, other parents could have enrolled their children primarily for reasons of friendship and social life – not just for their children, but themselves. And those who were involved as teachers or helpers were knit even more closely into the social fabric of the church. Such churches had high social utility. Whatever their motivations, there was a 'free market' with several Sunday Schools in the town for parents to choose from, in the absence of any strong denominational bias. The data suggest

[95] 'Ledgers Rd Sunday School Anniversary [1911]'.
[96] 'Congregational Sunday School Anniversary [1895]'.
[97] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 5.
[98] Cox, *Lambeth*, 80–81.
[99] 'Primitive Methodist Sunday School', *SO*, 20 June 1908.

that those churches that invested in their Sunday Schools facilities grew their adult membership in the short term. Chapter 6 investigates whether such investments were necessary for churches to grow their membership in the longer term too.

Church Schools

Although churches engaged with large numbers of children through Sunday Schools, this was not their only involvement with children's education. 'The importance of founding the education of the young on a religious basis' was regularly asserted whenever education was discussed in church circles.[100] If anything, some Anglicans saw religious education in the day schools as more important than the Sunday Schools in inducting children into the faith, and specifically the Church. 'After the Church, the schools should be next in importance', the Rural Dean urged his colleagues in 1922.[101]

For many children in this pre-War period religious education delivered by Church of England clergy was a key part of their day school experience. In 1890, there were 1,525 elementary school places in Slough, of which 1075 (71 per cent) were in Church of England schools, and 130 (8 per cent) in St Ethelbert's Roman Catholic school.[102] There were no Free Church denominational schools. However, between 1900 and 1914, the predominance of church schools in Slough was eroded – by 1914, the Council had built an additional 1,255 non-denominational elementary school places, so Anglican school places were now only 39 per cent of the total.[103]

There was a clear difference in the role of the two main Anglican churches. The Church schools were in Upton parish, and although new secular schools were built, St Mary's continued to have a major role in governing the schools in the centre of town.[104] However, there were only Council

[100] 'Association of Church School Managers and Teachers (Burnham Deanery)', *SO*, 17 October 1908.
[101] 'Church Conference 5-1922'.
[102] Kelly's 1899, 155.
[103] Kelly's 1915, 181.
[104] *Accounts Upton-Cum-Chalvey 1896*, 9.

schools in the new parish of St Paul's, and the church had no role in the delivery of religious education. Even in Upton, the challenges of competing with better funded secular schools began to be felt in this period. The Rector acknowledged that 'the new schools have the advantage of better premises and all the latest improvements', while urging parents to continue to send their children to the Church schools, because it was only there that 'special attention is given to Definite Religious Teaching [of] the Faith of Jesus Christ definitely and distinctly'.[105]

But it was not just facilities that came under the spotlight, but the quality and professionalism of religious teaching – not just in schools, but in the churches too. One Slough churchman observed: 'children were being taught by the best methods in the day schools, and if Sunday School teachers did not adopt some of these methods they could not expect to be successful' and another emphasised 'the great necessity of freshness in the teaching' of religion in the Church schools.[106] Cox made similar observations in his Lambeth study, and also commented that the privileged place the Anglican church had enjoyed in education 'could not compensate for lack of money'.[107] The longer-term implications of this shift towards more secular provision are considered in Chapter 6.

The Transition to Adulthood

Children attended Sunday Schools until their early teens: thereafter the assumption was they would join the main body of the church. By the late nineteenth century, this transfer was seen as problematic: as one minister put it:

> that something is needed to maintain the interest of young people who leave the Sunday School, and foster their attachment to the Church, is fully recognized. What that something is, it is not easy to say. The one thing needful has probably not been found as yet.[108]

[105] 'Chalvey Schools: To the Parents of the Scholars', *SO*, 30 May 1914.
[106] 'Primitive Methodist Sunday School [1908]'; 'Church School Managers'.
[107] Cox, *Lambeth*, 80–81.
[108] Joseph Bainton, *The Congregational Handbook: Being a Guide to the Administration of a Congregational Church* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1897), 114.

Earlier in the nineteenth century, Cox had found that normal practice was to run Sunday School classes alongside the main worship services, which might mean children not getting into the habit of regular church attendance.[109] In Slough, some Sunday Schools ran before the main services, or in the afternoon to allow attendance at the services, while others ran alongside the adult service with separate occasional young people's services.[110] Most explicitly, the intention of the new Ledgers Road church was to provide capacity for children to join their parents in the main church after Sunday School. But this had limited success: in 1911 it was reported that 80 per cent of scholars failed to transfer to adult membership of the church.[111]

Apart from attempting to encourage regular Sunday church attendance, there was concern nationwide about keeping teenage boys engaged between leaving school at thirteen or fourteen years old until becoming eligible to join adult groups around the age of seventeen.[112] This led to the formation of uniformed organisations – beginning with the Boys' Brigade (BB) in 1883, and its Anglican equivalent, the Church Lads' Brigade (CLB), founded in 1891. These promoted the concept of 'muscular Christianity', expressed in the BB's purpose as 'the advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness'.[113]

Chapter 6 contains an extended discussion on the role of uniformed organisations, covering the full period of the thesis. In the 1890s, the concerns in Slough were those seen nationally: 'the difficulty of keeping in touch with the lads of the parish ... felt by almost all church workers'.[114] A branch of the CLB was formed in 1899, its aim being 'to foster in the lads what is now felt to be so sadly lacking ... [the qualities of] good honest, sterling, straightforward men ... and above all ... the spirit of God-

[109] Cox, *Lambeth*, 228–29.
[110] Day's 1914, 2.
[111] 'Ledgers Rd Sunday School Anniversary [1911]'.
[112] John Springhall, 'Building Character in the British Boy: The Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents, 1880-1914', in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 52–74.
[113] Ibid., 53.
[114] 'Church Lads' Brigade', *SO*, 18 March 1899.

fearing churchmen'.[115] By 1901 the Slough A Boys Life Brigade (BLB) company – a Free Church-based initiative similar to BB – was established in 1907 by a Baptist Church member, and had forty-two recruits by 1911.[116] Later, Slough's churches were prominent in the establishment of the Boy Scouts. The first troop in the town was set up by St Paul's in 1908, and in its first year gained twenty-four recruits.[117] By 1914, there were four Slough troops, three of which were affiliated to the Anglican churches.[118]

Apart from Sunday School, the Free Churches focused on purely religious clubs, such as Christian Endeavour and Band of Hope. For younger children, there was reasonable take-up – of the 180 enrolled in the Baptist Sunday School in 1909, eighty were enrolled in the junior section of Christian Endeavour, and 120 in the Band of Hope, with their midweek commitments.[119] However, as they transferred to the Senior Sections, older children went one of two ways – either becoming church members, and actively involved in Sunday School teaching or the choir, or ceasing to attend – which was 'deeply regretted, but …[they were hopefully] not lost to the army of God's workers'. Even when a club was established for wider social reasons, there were significant constraints on activities and membership: a Primitive Methodist Young People's Club established in 1910 was 'for recreation without being contaminated with the influence of the world' and was limited to regular church attendees.[120]

Alongside the churches, the local branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in 1902, and by the end of its first year had forty-six members, growing to over 200 by 1914.[121] The facilities included lecture, reading, writing and games rooms. A wide range of team

[115] Ibid.
[116] 'Slough Baptist Church: Thankoffering Day', *SO*, 28 September 1907; 'Boys' Life Brigade', *SO*, 25 May 1911.
[117] 'St Paul's Branch of Baden-Powell Boy Scouts', *SO*, 8 May 1909.
[118] 'St George's Day At Slough', *SO*, 25 April 1914.
[119] 'Thankoffering Day [1907]'; 'Slough Baptist Church', *SO*, 20 March 1909.
[120] 'Ledgers Rd Primitive Methodist Church: Minutes of Trustees' Meetings, February 1909-November 1961', 1961, DMS68-1A/2, BRO, 8 March 1910.
[121] 'Young Men's Christian Association: First Annual Meeting of the Slough Branch', *SO*, 25 April 1903; 'Slough and the Y.M.C.A.', *SO*, 15 April 1905; *Day's 1914*, 13–14.

sports and other games were organised, with activities on most evenings 'so that young men would not be able to say they did not know where to spend their evenings'. While supported by the churches and overtly Christian in its origins, at its inception the chairman sought to differentiate the YMCA from young men's clubs organised by the churches.[122] Dominic Erdozain has traced the evolution of the YMCA nationally from its strongly evangelical roots towards a more secular focus by the onset of WWI.[123] There are signs of this development in Slough: the YMCA was said to be 'unsectarian', and formed 'to improve young men mentally, spiritually and physically … to help [them] go straight'. [124] In 1914 it described itself as 'a social club with a definitely Christian, but interdenominational basis'. [125]

In conclusion, churches were among the main institutions in Slough providing services for younger children. More than half of all children in the town under fifteen years old were enrolled in Sunday School, and the various events were a major part of their lives. For children and parents, church was a major focal point in building communities of those at a similar stage in life. As children entered their teens, there was concern about how to 'hold on to' them and transfer them to the adult ranks of the church, particularly in the case of boys. While the churches provided various clubs and societies, young people's movements such as the YMCA and Scouts emerged as alternatives to specifically church-based groups. Although these groups had a 'spiritual' element, their objectives were more widely social and recreational than the overtly religious church groups. In time, a wide range of purely secular sports and other entertainment options became available in the town, and the data indicate that churches had difficulties translating their primary role in young families into long-term adherence of children, particularly boys, as they reached maturity.

[122] 'First Annual Meeting'.
[123] Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*.
[124] 'First Annual Meeting'.
[125] Day's 1914, 13–14.

The Churches and Adults

Many adults were linked with churches through their children – however peripherally - but this was far from the full extent of their involvement with adults. This section explores the range of other social and welfare activities the churches pursued, and the extent to which they faced competition from secular clubs and societies.

The shortage of alternatives for children to the Sunday Schools and all the attendant activities has been noted. But for adult men, secular social and sporting options were increasing. In 1909, *Palmer's* directory listed ten sports clubs – including football, cricket, golf, hockey, quoits, cycling and athletics – and there were active local football and cricket leagues.[126] There were four musical and dramatic societies, two political clubs, a photographic society, circulating library, the various facilities of the Leopold Institute, and evening classes run by the Slough Higher Education Committee. The Slough Drill Hall and Gymnasium was 'one of the most completely equipped in the country' and hosted the Slough Volunteers and a company of the Bucks Territorial Forces. While some of these clubs and societies probably catered for the middle class, there were Working Men's Clubs in Chalvey and Langley, and there were, of course, public houses. GWR workers could also participate in employee-only clubs. In 1910, the first Picture Hall opened, and was followed by two others in the next two years.[127] And as noted in Chapter 1, James Elliman donated and developed the 26 acres of the Salt Hill Playing Fields.[128]

If considered purely from a social perspective, therefore, churches were facing 'competition' even in this pre-WWI period – at least, on days other than Sundays. At this stage, communal life on a Sunday was dominated by the churches. As previously seen, several Slough churches had invested in increased capacity in their main sanctuaries and schoolrooms. These facilities were fully utilised on Sundays with services, Sundays Schools, Bible Classes and other meetings. For

[126] Palmer's 1909, 10–12.
[127] Fraser, *Slough*, 125–26.
[128] 'Obituaries: Mr James Elliman', *Times*, 24 March 1924; 'Death of Mr James Elliman'.

some, Sunday was a day spent wholly at church – attending both in the morning and evening, or in the children's case, both Sunday School classes.

But, perhaps conscious of the growing number of alternatives, churches increasingly recognised a need for relationships amongst their congregations to be developed through a series of midweek meetings and activities. In 1905, the Baptist Church began a Men's Own meeting which met on Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings.[129] The group was affiliated to the National PSA (Pleasant Sunday Afternoon) movement, and was aimed at the working classes - 'men that formerly wasted the Sabbath Day', who were 'of the class who toil and spin', and for whom 'this day was like an oasis in ... their lives'.[130] The Men's Own became 'well established as one of the social and religious factors of Slough', and over its first four years, membership was between 100 and 150, with average attendances between seventy and eighty. Although the club had religious roots, its programme included 'healthy recreative games ... varied with music and refreshment', and was open to all, reaching 'those who did not attend any place of worship'.[131]

The Baptists also established a Women's Own meeting on Monday afternoons. Echoing the PSA motto, the meetings were of a 'bright and sisterly character', including singing, recitations, and a short talk, and were open to all.[132] In 1908, average attendance was around fifty, growing to eighty by 1913. Around one hundred attended the anniversary meetings.[133] Both the men's and women's groups provided practical as well as spiritual mutual support. The Men's Own Mutual Benefit fund provided for those unable to work through illness – in 1909, £41 10s was distributed amongst twenty-five sick members. The Women's Own also established a Provident Fund, which

[129] 'Slough Baptist Church: The Men's Own', *SO*, 15 September 1906.
[130] Ibid.; 'Prize Day at the Slough Men's Own', *SO*, 26 October 1907.
[131] 'Men's Own at the Baptist Church: Anniversary Meetings', *SO*, 18 September 1909.
[132] 'Slough Women's Own', *SO*, 19 October 1907: the PSA motto: 'brief bright and brotherly'.
[133] 'Slough Women's Own: First Anniversary', *SO*, 17 October 1908; 'The Women's Own', *SO*, 11 October 1913.

in 1911 amounted to £20 14*s.* for the eighty-nine members, and provided practical support for mothers, including having their own maternity supplies.[134]

Similar groups were opened in most of the other churches. Within the Church of England, the nationwide organisation for men was the Church of England Men's Society (CEMS). St Mary's began a branch of the CEMS in 1906, again with a mixture of spiritual and recreational activities, and an added focus of service in the community.[135] Over the next few years, around 200 men were regularly enrolled. Commitment was high on Sundays, special occasions and concerts, but the society struggled to keep men's interest for other meetings. A Bible Study Group which began with twenty attendees had to be abandoned through declining attendance. Although the objective was for men to be 'specially banded together, and thus feel their brotherhood', some relationships were clearly tenuous: in 1909 a quarter of subscriptions went uncollected, perhaps because some men had left the town unnoticed.[136] The churches apparently had little problem attracting men and women to these groups, but maintaining their interest or turning it into committed adherence was more problematic.

If the churches felt the need to arrange special meetings for men, more practical matters drew the women of the church together. 'Sales of Work' were a key feature at all the churches. For example, for the Primitive Methodists the Annual Bazaar was a key fund-raising event to clear the church building fund deficit.[137] In 1911, 'Sale of Work' contributed £36 (22 per cent) of £167 total church income. Similarly, the Congregationalists used Sales of Work to clear the church account deficit and fund structural alterations – one 1908 bazaar raised £40.[138] This was a major collective effort – involving a working party of twenty-four women, the Girls' Guild, and a choir of thirty Sunday School members, directed by two other women. It was a similar story at the other

[134] 'The Women's Own'.
[135] 'Church of England Men's Society: Slough Branch', *SO*, 14 July 1906.
[136] 'Church of England Men's Society: Annual Meeting of S. Mary's Branch', *SO*, 24 July 1909.
[137] 'Bazaar at the Ledgers Road Primitive Methodist Church', *SO*, 28 October 1911.
[138] 'Slough Congregational Church: Christmas Festival and Sale of Work', *SO*, 5 December 1908.

churches. As one Methodist lady put it, 'the churches would not be what they were but for the women. Wonderful things were done with the needle'.[139]

The descriptions above show how communities formed around the core activities of the churches, in addition to those that formed around the children's work discussed earlier. The question is how significant these church-centred friendship circles were relative to others in the town, as alternative social and recreational opportunities appeared.

One yardstick could be how often different activities were reported in the local newspapers. Church-based activities consistently filled significant column inches throughout this period – as a cursory search of, say, any month's issues in 1906 would confirm. But such a search could also indicate the increasing significance of alternatives, at least to the middle-class readership. For example, reports mentioning the Ohio or Black Diamond Minstrels, a popular operatic troupe, increased from around 4 per annum in the 1890s to around 15 per annum in 1905 and 1910.[140] But such reports rarely contain any quantitative information as to regular participation.

Perhaps a stronger indication of the extent of such social circles is provided by the Slough Summer Excursion. Each year, the town went on a day's excursion by train to the seaside. Between 1905 and 1914, Bournemouth, Brighton, Eastbourne, Margate, Portsmouth and Weymouth were all visited. There was nothing religious about these trips – the day out included the beach, sea bathing, the local baths, winter gardens, steamer trips and electric tram trips.[141] Up to 1,000 people participated – a significant proportion of the town's population. While there were groups from local employers and the Council, the largest groups were church-based: for example, in 1907:

> The Slough Summer Excursion … took place on Monday, when about 750 availed themselves of the opportunity of spending a long day at Bournemouth … The large parties were the Slough Church Choirs (about 120), Farnham Church Choir, Fulmer Church Choir, Langley Church Choir,

[139] 'Bazaar [28/10/1911]'.
[140] www.sloughhistoryonline.co.uk, searches of *SO*, 'Black Diamond' and 'Ohio', accessed 1 March 2018
[141] 'Slough Summer Excursion [13/07/1907]'; 'Slough Summer Excursion: A Long Day at Brighton', *SO*, 17 July 1909; 'Slough Summer Excursion: A Long Day at Eastbourne', *SO*, 19 July 1913.

> Iver Church Choir, Hitcham Church Choir, Datchet Church Choir, Stoke Church Choir, Miss Wallis's party from Iver (about 70), Mrs Lionel Hanbury's party (Stoke Mothers' Meeting), Mrs Eliot's party (Old Girls Club), Messrs Headington and Sons' employees (Slough), Messrs Burfoot and Butler's employees (Slough), while a large number of compartments were reserved for private parties.[142]

But the churches' main concern was not to develop social circles. The church family needed to encourage each other in right behaviour, to 'keep the faith' – and apart from Sunday activities, this was nowhere more apparent than on the question of temperance.

The promotion of temperance was not solely confined to the churches – the GWR, for example, had its own temperance society – but the churches were by far the main proponents.[143] The most prominent church group was the Church of England Temperance Society (CETS): of over 900 mentions of temperance in the *Slough Observer* between 1890 and 1914, 600 relate to the CETS.[144] Its declared aims were the 'union and cooperation on perfectly equal terms between those who use and those who abstain from intoxicating drinks' and 'the promotion of habits of temperance, the reformation of the intemperate, and the removal of the causes which lead to intemperance'.[145] Given the uncompromising stance taken by churchmen – 'there was not a single evil which was doing so much harm in this England of ours as the evil of strong drink' was a typical assertion – possibly as much division as cooperation was promoted.[146] But the temperance crusade was popular in the town, with large attendances at meetings. Apart from preaching messages about the evils of drink, temperance groups promoted circles of mutual friendships and encouragement – in 1908, the St Mary's branch of the CETS organised thirty-four meetings, including fourteen social evenings, seven public meetings, three lectures, a river excursion, specific men's and women's meetings, and four quarterly admission services.[147] The children's Band of Hope classes were closely linked – the intention was to train children in temperance

[142] 'Slough Summer Excursion [13/07/1907]'.
[143] 'Great Western Railway Temperance Union', *SO*, 8 May 1909.
[144] http://www.sloughhistoryonline.org.uk, search on 'temperance' 4 October 2013.
[145] 'Slough, Eton and Windsor Notes', *SO*, 31 October 1903.
[146] 'C.E.T.S. Entertainment at Slough', *SO*, 11 December 1909.
[147] 'Slough and the C.E.T.S: Annual Meeting of the St. Mary's Branch', *SO*, 24 October 1908.

habits, and then encourage continuance of those habits in adulthood through the CETS. 230 children were enrolled in St Mary's Band of Hope classes in 1908, with regular attendances of 150.[148]

The CETS meetings at St Mary's could be off-putting to working men, but an attempt to establish a separate Slough Workmen's Temperance Club foundered after two years.[149] But at St Paul's, a temperance message to the working classes was a key part of its message. Long before the formation of the parish, a regular Temperance meeting was seen as important as the Sunday School.[150] At the 1893 annual meeting, the speaker spoke 'as a working man to working men' and prompted 20 to 30 men to 'sign the temperance roll'.[151] The work continued after the new parish was formed, with a regular series of talks and 'entertainments' including recitations and musical performances.[152]

The Free Churches were no less committed to the temperance cause. Again, the approach was a combination of teaching children, preaching to adults about the evils of drink, and arranging social clubs and activities that provided an alternative to the attractions of the pub. At the Baptist Church, the Men's Own group included temperance teaching in its programme, and a branch of the Women's Total Abstinence Union was active from 1898.[153] A system of 'temperance circles' was implemented, whereby members would be part of a circle of ten people who would hold each other accountable for temperate behaviour. In 1909, when total church membership was 211, there were 164 people in seventeen such circles.[154] Again, the Band of Hope was an important part of the temperance strategy – in 1913, of total Baptist Sunday School enrolments of 231, 125 belonged to the Band of Hope.[155]

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[148] Ibid.
[149] 'Presentation', *SO*, 12 May 1900.
[150] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 11.
[151] 'Stoke Gardens Mission Church', *SO*, 25 November 1893.
[152] 'Church of England Temperance Society (St Paul's Branch)', *SO*, 11 November 1905.
[153] 'Women's Total Abstinence Union', *SO*, 6 March 1909.
[154] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 39.
[155] BH 1914, 47; 'Slough Baptist Church Band of Hope', *SO*, 25 October 1913, 8.

Anglican churches further catered for what Cox termed 'diffusive Christianity', and Williams 'occasional conformity' – observance by the wider community of the rites of passage around birth, marriage, and death. At St Paul's, baptisms took place each Wednesday before the midweek service, or once a month on Sunday afternoon after the Sunday School.[156] Although the developing 'popular religion' observed by Cox and Williams was increasingly separate from organised religion and regular Sunday worship, the churches therefore facilitated some of its key features, contributing to the strong community values that it engendered.[157]

Apart from forming communities based around Sunday worship, midweek clubs, and the temperance crusade, churches were engaged in the wider community through welfare activities. While direct poor relief was administered by the Board of Guardians – one of three Buckinghamshire workhouses was in Slough – the Anglican churches were heavily involved in visitation of the poor and indirect relief. At St Mary's, visitation was carried out by around forty female volunteers – both married and unmarried.[158] Almost all were subscribers to various church-administered welfare funds, and their addresses indicate they were from the middle and upper classes. In 1896, £290 (24 per cent) of St Mary's total expenditure of £1218 was in welfare payments – including coal and clothing clubs, maternity support, a Women's Help society, and food provided through grocery tickets.[159]

One of the largest welfare expenditures was the Slough Nursing Fund, administered by St Mary's, which funded two full-time nurses and a nursing home. Its activities were widespread but did not expand as the town grew. In 1900, there were 5,000 visits and 226 cases nursed in the home, of whom 168 were 'sick poor' treated free of charge: in 1914, there were 4,000 visits, and of 246 cases treated, 189 were free of charge.[160] If numbers were static, funding was too: despite

[156] Cox, *Lambeth*, chap. 4; Williams, *Religious Belief*, chap. 4; *Palmer's 1909*, 1–3.
[157] Ibid.
[158] *Accounts Upton-Cum-Chalvey 1896*, 4.
[159] Ibid., 19.
[160] 'Slough Nursing Fund: Annual Meeting of Subscribers', *SO*, 31 March 1900; 'Slough Nursing Fund: The Annual Meeting of the Subscribers: Report and Balance Sheet', *SO*, 2 May 1914; *Day's 1914*, 11.

growth in the town's population and prosperity, it proved difficult to increase the number of traditional subscribers or replace those who had died.[161] The Rector, as chairman of the Fund, commented that this applied to 'a great many institutions in the town'. From 1900 to 1914, costs increased 25 per cent due to additional nursing home staff, and the increase was met by extra donations from sports clubs, friendly societies, local businesses and the Summer Excursion.

The Free Churches did not have the financial resources to engage in the levels of general welfare undertaken by St Mary's. Excluding fund-raising for the new building, the annual income of the Primitive Methodist Church between 1900 and 1914 averaged £150, around half what St Mary's spent on welfare payments alone.[162] However, the Free Church congregations were drawn from the poorer sections of the community, and so in working within the church family they could argue they were directly benefiting the needy.[163] Likewise, St Paul's did not replicate St Mary's network of district visitors, but concentrated its relief efforts largely within its own working-class congregation - 'the coal and clothing clubs were a great help to the poor in very hard times'.[164] Apart from the men's and women's meetings already referred to, the Congregational and Primitive Methodist churches ran weekly mother's meetings: and at St Paul's, mothers and children used 'to flood' the church at the Monday afternoon meeting.[165]

Perhaps the most visible poor relief activity was the soup kitchen run by St Ethelbert's from the 1880s until Father Clemente's death in 1918, targeting 'the deserving poor of all denominations during the winter months, especially poor children'.[166] Given the Catholic Church's very limited financial resources, this work was dependent on voluntary donations of bread, vegetables, meat, coal, clothing and boots. The soup kitchen ran twice weekly between December and mid-March, and demand was significant: in one exceptional week in 1894, there were 600 recipients on

[161] 'Slough Nursing Fund', *SO*, 21 March 1908.
[162] Methodist Balance Sheets.
[163] see Cox, *Lambeth*, 53–59 for similar distinctions in Lambeth.
[164] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 28.
[165] Day's 1914, 2–3; Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 27.
[166] Palmer's 1909, 10; Day's 1914, 13.

Tuesday, and 600 again on Thursday: of which 500 were children.[167] Numbers of meals served varied according to donations – around 7,000 servings in the 1894 season, falling to 3,000 in 1900, then rising to 8,000 between 1909 and 1914. The soup kitchen gained widespread community acceptance: it was one of the United Friendly Societies' four supported charities in 1913, along with two local hospitals and the Nursing Fund.[168] Father Clemente's work overrode normal biases: 'his benevolence was quite unsectarian ... and he thus gained the respect and esteem of the whole town and neighbourhood'.[169] His traditional Catholic funeral was attended by Anglican, Baptist, and Congregational ministers, the Chairman of the Council, various other local dignitaries, and the route was lined by Boy Scouts.

The churches also facilitated basic financial services. In the early twentieth century, there were three banks in the town, two building societies, and several friendly societies – five in 1909, rising to seven in 1914.[170] The friendly societies provided savings, loans and insurance facilities, focusing on occupational or class groups meeting weekly or monthly, and were typically branches of national networks such as the Friends of Labour, United Patriots or Ancient Order of Foresters. However, these organisations provided poor coverage to the less well-off, the lower classes, those not in any occupational group, and women.[171] Church-based societies operated within this context, providing informal savings and loan clubs. As well as dispensing relief, the St Mary's district visitors acted as collectors for coal and clothing clubs through which people could budget for the cold weather.[172] The Wesleyans organised weekly men's and women's slate clubs, and the Baptist Mutual Benefit Society and Women's Own Provident Fund also met weekly.[173] These societies provided a means of saving for special occasions – a wedding, or Christmas – or simply

[167] 'St Ethelbert's Soup Kitchen', SO, 20 January 1894; 'St Ethelbert's Free Soup Kitchen', SO, 31 March 1900; Palmer's 1909, 10; Day's 1914, 13.
[168] 'Slough Friendly Societies Church Parade', *SO*, 18 October 1913.
[169] 'Sudden Death of Father Clemente'.
[170] Palmer's 1909, 8; Day's 1914, 9–10.
[171] Cox, *Lambeth*, 75.
[172] *Accounts Upton-Cum-Chalvey 1896*, 8.
[173] Palmer's 1909, 2–3.

for a 'rainy day', and were more trusted than a pawnbroker or slate club run at the local pub.[174] They also provided opportunities for the exchange of information on family budgeting.

As noted, the churches were not the only organisations in the town offering leisure and recreational activities, with the opportunity for social interaction. But church activities and societies overlapped with these organisations. Wesleyan and St Paul's teams played in the local cricket league, Reverend Eliot was chairman of Slough Cricket Club, and Algernon Gilliat was chairman of Slough Football Club. Church bands and orchestras were one of the main opportunities for the musically-minded: both the Congregational and Wesleyan churches ran regular concerts throughout the winter, for example.[175] However, many secular sporting activities were primarily for fit young men, and others were subject to subscriptions which excluded the less well off. The wide range of clubs and societies ran by the churches collectively reached a larger number of people in the town than other organisations, as shown by the groups attending the annual Slough Summer Excursion. Church groups were accessible to even the lowest income groups, with either no or low subscriptions. Even in the relatively well-off St Mary's, the annual CEMS subscription was only 1s, compared with the Leopold Institute's subscriptions of 8s to 21s per annum.[176]

Even late in the period of study, there were fewer than twenty paid clergy in the town. A huge army of voluntary workers was therefore needed to maintain the range of activities. Alongside the need to mobilise financial support, therefore, churches also needed to mobilise and coordinate large number of volunteers. But willing volunteers were not enough: enthusiastic, visionary and capable leaders were also required. The CLB had the necessary leadership and became established in the town: the BB – a more widespread movement nationally - failed to find the necessary leadership, and no branch was established. The Slough Workmen's Temperance

[174] Cox, *Lambeth*, 75.
[175] Palmer's 1909, 10–12.
[176] Ibid.; 'CEMS [14/07/1906]'.

Club initially prospered, then foundered through lack of leadership. While many of the initiatives implemented by Slough's churches were like those run in many churches up and down the land, individual agency was a key factor.

At St Paul's, Algernon Gilliat and Kate Buée showed the effect of lay agency and initiative even within a hierarchical ecclesiastical structure. They were perhaps examples of Victorian 'types'. Algernon Gilliat was 'rich, religious, and respectable' - Harrow-educated, a partner in the family merchant bank, and married to an aristocrat. His elder brother was variously Governor of the Bank of England and a Member of Parliament.[177] The family had a strong evangelical heritage, linked by marriage to the Clapham Sect of the early nineteenth century. Gilliat's wealth largely funded St Paul's during his lifetime, and significant legacies from his £160,275 will also benefited the church.[178] He was a churchwarden for forty-four years, and heavily involved in Sunday School work.[179] Kate Buée was a religious spinster whose life revolved around the local church, with no other occupation shown in the various censuses. It was her evangelistic work which led to the formation of St Paul's, and she played an energetic role in church life thereafter. In the twenty-five years up to WWI, she received over four hundred references in the *Slough Observer*, in connection with fetes, cake stalls, Sunday School outings, mothers' meetings, and so on.[180] Gilliat saw her as key in founding the church and erected a memorial window to his 'fellow worker'.[181] However, her death passed unremarked in the local press, while Gilliat's obituary covered five newspaper columns.[182]

While Algernon Gilliat's philanthropy was firmly focused on the church, James Elliman's was spread more widely. *The Times* estimated the value of his gifts to Slough at £100,000, including the Drill Hall, fire station and equipment, the Salt Hill Playing fields, and land for the Leopold

[177] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'; 'Obituaries: Mr J.S.Gilliat', *Times*, 16 February 1912.
[178] 'Deaths: Mr Algernon Gilliat', *Times*, 21 April 1925.
[179] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'.
[180] http://www.sloughhistoryonline.org.uk, search on 'Buee', 31 July 2013.
[181] 'St Paul's Church Slough: Unveiling and Dedication of Two New Windows', *SO*, 11 February 1922.
[182] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'.

Institute.[183] While his donation to the rebuilding of St Mary's was key, he saw it as investing in the civic infrastructure of Slough rather than as a specifically religious contribution. The £174,347 in his will was largely left to his family and workers in the Elliman's business. He was an example of donors who might in previous decades have funded the social and welfare work of the church, but increasingly directed their giving to emerging civic institutions.

But it was not only lay agency which differentiated the fortunes of individual churches. Charismatic leadership by the clergy was a significant factor.

Leadership

A continuing theme through this study is that a church's ability to mobilise the necessary financial and human resources could reflect the congregation's commitment to its mission. Another theme is that the charisma and credibility of the church's leader was a primary factor in motivating the congregation. Father Clemente's example, transcending sectarian boundaries in his work amongst the poor, has already been noted - but the number of Catholics in the town before WWI was relatively low, and the building of St Ethelbert's was funded by a single donor. In this period, therefore, perhaps the two most notable church leaders were the Rector, Rev Eliot, and the Baptist Pastor, Rev Cousens.

An indication of the Rector's persuasive abilities came at a Rural Deanery Conference in 1913, when the discussion centred around the poor state of church finances within the deanery. A senior layman said he had only two suggestions to remedy the problems. Before moving on to his serious suggestion, he outlined the first:

> To lend the Rector of Slough for an indefinite period to the other parishes in the Deanery. He would go round like a circulating library … after a few weeks endowments and gifts of £1,000 would flow in to the parish of his temporary residence, and when the needs were supplied he would be passed on to the next. This is a good suggestion but hardly practicable …[184]

[183] 'Obituaries: Mr James Elliman'; 'Deaths: Mr James Elliman', *Times*, 21 June 1924; 'Death of Mr James Elliman'.
[184] 'RD Conference [1913]'.

The local newspaper reproduced many verbatim examples of the Rector's charisma. One was at a crowded Parish Tea at the Public Hall in 1908, when in an address punctuated by numerous rounds of applause he brought together various themes: bringing up the young in the faith: the need for lay, and especially parental, support; financial support for the newly launched Parish Church extension appeal; and inclusion and solidarity with God's worldwide family.[185]

There are fewer verbatim examples of Rev Cousens' appeals. But that the Baptists grew faster, and were better able to resource that growth financially, than the Congregationalists or the Methodists was due in no small measure to his energetic and persuasive leadership. It is also noticeable that both the fastest growing churches in the town, St Paul's and Slough Baptist, were the most overtly evangelical. Some words of appreciation on his retirement linked his evangelistic focus and fund-raising ability:

> …during his 36 years as their Pastor Mr Cousens has received into the fellowship of the church more than 800 people by transfer and after Believer's Baptism, and that in the same period the large sum of £12,000 has been raised for aggressive church work, an amount which was quite apart from the general funds of the church.[186]

In an editorial written on the same occasion, the *Slough Observer* eulogised the leadership shown:

> We have been in a position, as a local newspaper, to observe as plainly as most people the activities of the various churches in the town, and we can say with truth that we have never seen a more striking example of enthusiasm, devotion to professed principles, continuous effort, and capable organisation than in the case of the Rev Theo Cousens at the Slough Baptist Church.[187]

Summary and Conclusions

As Slough grew, its churches reproduced the 'vast parochial and philanthropic network which provided the sacraments and social services to the working class and the poor' that Cox observed in Lambeth in the late nineteenth century.[188] On the eve of WWI, there were few signs of

[185] 'Parish Tea at Slough', *SO*, 29 February 1908.
[186] 'Rev Theo Cousens to Retire', *SO*, 1 September 1933.
[187] 'Notes by the Way: Rev Theo Cousens', *SO*, 8 September 1933.
[188] Cox, *Lambeth*, 6.

institutional decline. In fact, the churches were central to community life. As the town had doubled in population over the past quarter century, the churches had expanded proportionately. Five new buildings had opened over the previous twelve years. Up to 70 per cent of the town's children were involved in Sunday Schools, and 43 per cent of state school places were in church-governed schools. Churches were full on special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Sunday School anniversaries. Hundreds of adults were involved in voluntary activities, including Sunday School teaching, choirs and orchestras, mother's meetings, welfare distribution, and poor visitation. Churches were the focal point of numerous friendships and social circles.

It is difficult to disentangle those activities that were 'religious' from those that were 'social' – indeed, as Cox noted, to the late Victorian or Edwardian mind, such distinctions might have been meaningless.[189] But whatever people's motivations in attending church-based activities, their response showed that churches were meeting a felt need in the lives of many hundreds of people.

While Churches clearly responded to observed needs within the town, there was no external compulsion for them to expand in the way they did. On the contrary, expansion was costly and had to be financed from within the congregation. For some churches the cost was considered too high: for the Primitive Methodists, it proved to be a heavy burden for many years. Apart from finance the wide range of activities required significant personal commitment from many volunteers. While social conformity and obligation might be a partial explanation, particularly amongst the middle and upper classes at St Mary's, there were clearly strong internal motivations within the churches to take on these commitments - summarised by Morris as 'a framework of shared assumptions about inclusiveness, mission, commitment, and voluntarist ethics'.[190]

[189] Ibid., 48.
[190] Morris, 'Strange Death', 966.

Mobilising this army of volunteers required committed, charismatic and capable local leadership. There was scope for individual agency to prompt significant variations in institutional fortunes.

Likewise, there was no compulsion for people in the town to support the activities the churches organised. There was a wide range of other institutions, clubs and activities in the town, but none with the scale and reach of the churches. The voluntary nature of this association is demonstrated by the differing fortunes of the churches. Targeting very similar, largely working-class communities, St Paul's and the Baptists attracted support, expanding more rapidly than overall population growth: while Congregational and Methodist membership remained static and declined relative to population. There was a 'free market' across all town institutions and amongst the churches themselves.

Taken as whole, then, in 1914 Slough's churches had not experienced the 'crisis' discovered by, for example, Stephen Yeo in nearby Reading.[191] However, there were signs of institutional marginalisation and attenuation. While the numbers of church school places remained constant, the proportion had reduced from 79 per cent to 43 per cent over the period. The new non-denominational schools were better funded with more up-to-date facilities. The Nursing Fund, a mainstay of the town's welfare provision at the beginning of the period, was unable to attract additional support and its impact halved relative to population growth. If the churches looked outwardly healthy, there was attenuation within their ranks. There was significant drop-off as children finished Sunday School but failed to transition to committed adult church membership. While there were many active adult church groups, maintaining the interest and commitment of teenage and adult men was a continuing challenge.

Slough's churches did subsequently experience significant marginalisation and attenuation, as later chapters will show, while exploiring the timing, extent and inevitability of such decline.

[191] Yeo, *Religion*.

Chapter 4 1919-1945: Church under Challenge[1]

The last chapter traced a period of significant population growth in Slough, during which the town's churches built and maintained a role as significant community institutions, separate from the formal institutions of local government and education. While some churches fared better than others – demonstrating that individual and corporate agency within church congregations and leaderships were significant factors in their fortunes – Christian adherence seems to have kept pace with the growth in population. It could be argued that the onset of decline, or secularisation, noted in other local studies had not been experienced – or at least not yet.

This chapter examines a period when the centrality of Slough's churches in community life came under severe challenge, both from external pressures such as population growth and changing social attitudes, but also from within. The chapter will also test the experience in Slough against some of the historiography surveyed in the Introduction, particularly by Dominic Erdozain, Simon Green, and Adrian Hastings.

Erdozain's work proposed a nineteenth century 'internal secularisation' of theology that reduced the message of salvation by faith to certain behaviours and directed church ministry to socialising and welfare.[2] He quoted a senior Congregationalist, writing in 1891: 'the Church is coming to be regarded as a friendly club ... the conception that its members form a spiritual body, of which the life is Christ, vanishes away', and concluded: 'such ethicised Christianity, part crusade and part soirée, was a shadow of its former self' and ultimately led to 'something more damaging than bitter resentment, something no religion can survive, which is gentle disdain'.[3]

[1] Some material previously published in Masom, 'Parishes under Pressure'.
[2] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin'.
[3] Ibid., 85–86.

At the end of the period covered by this chapter, Mass Observation found attitudes close to this 'gentle disdain' in its survey of 'Attitudes to Religion':

> This broad and uninterested tolerance of religion is common – much more so than hostile feelings. Many people look upon religion as something quite harmless and purely personal – an innocuous hobby, like collecting stamps. One of the results of this attitude is that these same people often feel that religion is exceeding its legitimate grounds if it "interferes" with more practical matters. Religion to them is all right in its place, but it shouldn't get involved in everyday affairs outside the private life of believers.[4]

The interwar period was key in another analysis of 'internal secularisation' referred to in the Introduction, Simon Green's study of industrial Yorkshire. For Green, the roots of twentieth century religious decline lie after WWI, in the collapse of 'the associational ideal' – 'a common association through which men and women might be taught the rudiments of the faith'.[5] This is a similar concept to the need for effective churches to have both spiritual and social utility – both 'believing' and 'belonging'. This collapse was the result of strategic errors - 'the product as much of an internal deficiency within modern religious organizations as of the external pressures which had been brought to bear on them during the past fifty years and more', so that people 'stopped believing because they stopped going' to church, not the reverse.[6]

Finally, Adrian Hastings described the position of the churches nationally immediately after WWI as precarious:

> There did already exist an immense boredom, a conformity with convention reflecting only the most attenuated belief. The Christianity of the Edwardian age was a sitting duck, simply waiting to fall victim to an amalgam of world wars, scientific self-confidence and the advance of a consumer society … Christianity retained both the intellectual strength and the charms to go on holding some of the ablest modern minds and loveliest of hearts, but it had become a personal holding. By and large, the social Christianity that held popular sway in England at the start of the century had no such power. Challenged by modernity, it was destined to crumble.[7]

[4] Mass Observation, *Puzzled People: A Study in Popular Attitudes to Religion, Ethics, Progress & Politics in a London Borough* (London: Gollancz, 1947), 84.
[5] Green, *Age of Decline*, 181.
[6] Ibid., 387, 390.
[7] Hastings, *English Christianity*, xvi.

This appears to be a 'demand side' analysis – a passive 'sitting duck' church powerless in the face of enormous external forces. But there are hints too of internal weakness or attenuation. This chapter provides a local analysis that can be compared with Hastings' national summary.

The interwar years saw the transformation of Slough into an industrial town and the consequent dramatic increase in population. Chapter 2 considered the logistical challenges faced by the Church of England particularly in responding – a combination of national and local factors. But in the immediate post war period the Trading Estate was yet to be established – and in its first few years would be outside the town's boundaries. The council's vision was for steady development along 'Garden City' lines.[8] In terms of the town's logistical development, these years were a continuation of the pre-war period analysed in Chapter 3, therefore. But there were signs that the social and cultural landscape had changed significantly, at least in clergymen's eyes.

For example, speaking at Slough Baptist Church in early 1922, a Baptist Union Superintendent spoke of the post war spiritual climate.[9] During the War, and in the years following, 'a secular spirit had been abroad' and a materialism that prompted people to aim at 'high wages and big profits, and those things that were secular'. The churches were not immune, and this had contributed to 'a deadness in the churches', along with an 'absence of the spirit of surprise and wonder concerning the things of God' as post-war life returned to mundane levels compared with the 'glut of sensation' of the war years. To combat this, churches needed to demonstrate the authenticity and relevance of 'experimental religion … Christian experience centred around Jesus Christ'; without this, there would be a lack of power in the church's message that no amount of good organisation could overcome. This 'absence of the profound experience of Jesus Christ that we were suffering from' meant that many were unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to serve God and the church, resulting in shortages of local preachers, Sunday School teachers, missionary candidates, and trainees for the Baptist ministry. This particularly applied to young

[8] 'Slough's Garden City'.
[9] 'Slough Baptist Church: New Year's Meetings', *SO*, 7 January 1922.

people.[10] These thoughts might seem routine breast-beating, particularly for an evangelical preacher at the start of a New Year, but these themes would recur across the denominations in the coming years.

Two other, often interlinked, themes were increasing leisure options and the appropriate use of Sundays. While there was evidence of increasing numbers of those seeing Sunday primarily as a day of leisure before 1914, Anglican parish visitation returns show a loosening of obligation during the war years. Wages from war work were significantly higher than for work on the land, so 'an outing' on a Sunday was affordable. Sunday might also be the only 'day off' from war work, and if the husband was at the front the mother might need to stay at home to look after the children.[11]

Four themes, then – a 'secular spirit', increasing affluence and leisure time, pressure on Sunday observance, and authenticity in Christian life and worship. More detail on the Anglican perspective on these can be found in the interwar Oxford Diocese triennial visitation returns, which regularly asked for clerical views on a range of social, moral and spiritual issues – specifically housing, poverty, intemperance, unchastity, betting and gambling, religious indifference, and Sunday observance.

Complementing these periodic returns was a comprehensive study of social attitudes, produced in 1924. The Bishop of Oxford had asked each deanery to conduct such a survey, discuss the results in the Deanery Conference, and then present a consolidated report. The Burnham Deanery considered its report in two sessions in 1924: unfortunately, neither the original questions not the original report have survived, but the findings were reported in some detail.[12] As the survey was completed by incumbents and, in some cases, the PCC, its results are far from

[10] Ibid.
[11] 'Slough St Paul 1918'; 'Stoke Poges 1918'.
[12] 'RD Burnham 1924'; 'RD Conference 1924'.

an independent view of prevailing attitudes, but they provide a valuable insight into the clerical mind and how this might differ from wider society.

Summarising the prevailing spiritual climate, the report outlines attitudes like those found by Jeffrey Cox and Sarah Williams in their studies of London boroughs, referred to in the Introduction above.[13] Virtually every child was baptised as an infant, and about 60 per cent went on to be confirmed.[14] People welcomed prayer when they were ill, said a formal bedtime prayer, and wanted a Christian funeral. But fewer children were attending Sunday School, in the absence of 'compulsion' by many parents, and regular church attendance was a minority activity. Religious indifference was reported as widespread, with lack of Sunday observance being its symptom:

> No sense of religious obligation connected with the keeping of Sunday is found in the majority of people, and of the minority most are at best 'oncers'. The commonest idea of Sunday is that it is the day of recreation and rest – the one free day on which one does what one likes all day. The old conventional idea of what one must, what one may, and what one may not do on a Sunday have [sic] almost disappeared …[15]

Across the deanery, average estimated Sunday attendance in 1924 was around one tenth of the population.[16] Easter communicants in the deanery were around 11 per cent – similar to diocesan figures – but regular communicants only 'a small proportion' of this. There were loyal church people: others who attended occasionally, for the major festivals – but the vicar of St Paul's reported 'quite 60% of adults do not attend a place of worship' at any time.[17] However, the clergy maintained those who attended were more committed than hitherto, with a stronger witness: 'there is really more real religion than thirty years ago, and the religious are more really religious … the religion of the religious is obviously more convincing to the irreligious than it used to be'.[18] If this is to be believed (and there is clearly reason for caution, given the potential for the report to be self-serving), then the reduction in regular attendance could at least in part be due to a

[13] Cox, *Lambeth*; Williams, *Religious Belief*.
[14] 'RD Conference 1924'.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] 'Slough St Paul 1922'.
[18] 'RD Conference 1924'.

decline in attendance by 'nominal' Christians, who previously attended for reasons of conformity or social obligation rather than religious sensibility.

The picture was not uniform – attendance was higher in the smaller village parishes. In little Dropmore, just outside Slough, 50 per cent of population regularly attended church until the mid-1930s.[19] This may have been due to the church continuing to be the social centre of a small parish with few alternatives - as well as the clergyman having one of the smallest numbers of souls under his care: just 317 at the time of the survey.

The clergy were also asked to report on prevailing moral attitudes. The survey gave a generally positive view, particularly after the perceived laxness of the war years. 'The war has had a very bad effect on many women and girls – there have been sad cases of immorality, and there is great laxity of control among the elder lads and girls' was a typical comment.[20] Later, standards were 'very much higher than of old and still rising'. There were reductions in gluttony and drunkenness, improvements in 'purity' (or unfaithfulness and illegitimacy), mutual understanding and friendliness; and improved clothing, nourishment, health and cleanliness, particularly among the working-class. Parental laxness amongst this class was, however, 'universally remarked' – although 'very many youths and maidens [were] leading their lives in purity, honour and self-respect'.[21] There was significantly increased leisure time, and people spent this mostly 'reasonably and harmlessly' and often 'profitably' tending allotments, in healthy sport and exercise, watching football or going to the cinema, reading, art or other 'sensible amusement'.

The survey was presented as a unified report, and little dissent is recorded in the reports of the Deanery discussion. However, visitation returns show that not everyone agreed – although this might say as much about the clergyman as his parishioners. For example, most clergy saw relatively few problems in 'Intemperance and Unchastity' and 'Betting and Gambling' – the vicar

[19] 'Dropmore 1928'; 'Dropmore 1931'.
[20] 'St Paul 1918'.
[21] 'RD Burnham 1924'; 'RD Conference 1924'.

of Dropmore commenting in 1928, 'I consider the parish is rather singularly free from these difficulties'.[22] However, in Eton in 1931, the vicar reported 'open and unashamed fornication in the fields especially on Sundays'. [23] A new vicar was appointed before the next visitation return was made in 1934, and perhaps less censorious (or observant) than his predecessor he, like deanery colleagues, found no special problems on these matters.[24]

According to the clergy, the moral climate reflected a public morality governed by 'custom, public opinion, expediency and interest' that fell 'far below the Christian standard'.[25] This begs the question of what exactly the 'Christian standard' was. The Bishop of Oxford had described 'temperance, soberness and chastity' as 'the responsibility of every communicant'.[26] But much of the 'Christian standard' seemed to relate to 'duty' – to attend church on a Sunday, to bring one's children up in the Christian faith, and community service. All these were under pressure.

Given that the survey was requested by the Bishop, these comments can be read against the Bishop's own analysis given in the visitation charge to his clergy two years before.[27] Here, he had highlighted three particularly challenging trends for the Church. Firstly, there were 'the abnormal circumstances' in which young people now in the early twenties had spent their formative years:

> The suspension of effective discipline at home and at school, the excitement and the restlessness, the general acceptance of the maxim that nothing matters as long as we win the war, the disregard of the value of money, and the opportunities for earning wages on a scale undreamt of before.[28]

Secondly, there was the increase in leisure time and options, or as he put it: 'the marked advance in our day of the pursuit at all costs of amusement'.[29] And thirdly, there was the perceived relevance and authenticity of the Church to the average person. Generally, this did not

[22] 'Dropmore 1928'.
[23] 'Eton 1931.
[24] 'Eton 1934
[25] 'RD Conference 1924'.
[26] 'The Bishop of Oxford at Slough', *SO*, 5 November 1921.
[27] Hubert Murray Burge, *A Charge given at His Primary Visitation to the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Diocese of Oxford, by Hubert, Bishop of Oxford.* (Oxford: A T Broome, 1922).
[28] Ibid., 33.
[29] Ibid., 34.

attract hostility: in fact, he said, 'I often wish there was more of it' – rather, the reaction was simply apathy. It was often said that the Church 'satisfies no need of which I am conscious; it does no work which could not be equally well done by a State department'. And there was little evidence within congregations to challenge this view: 'what offends them is the unreality of membership on the part of members of the Church' – a lack of passion and commitment 'in doing what your Lord and Master asks and enables you to do for Him' on the part of people who could be passionate and committed in 'pursuit of material prosperity and pleasure'. Nominal adherence was under the public spotlight: 'I doubt if ever in this Country members of the Church have been so clearly challenged to make good the reality of their membership'.[30]

The Anglican conclusions, more detailed though they may be, are strikingly like the Baptist Superintendent's quoted at the beginning of this chapter. While changing secular attitudes were condemned, there was soul-searching as to whether the church provided an authentic alternative.

One early example of this outward condemnation by church leaders was a June 1922 letter signed by all the Free Church ministers, deploring the 'growing neglect', 'improper use' and 'profanation' of Sunday – by 'indulging' in river trips, playing games, unnecessary journeys, and 'amusements that cause extra labour for others'. They maintained this was not only wrong but caused problems for 'weaker brethren': apparently, 'Sunday games are proving a real stumbling block to many people'. There was no room for such things on a Sunday, as there was time for such recreation on 'the weekly half-holidays' and 'long summer evenings'. These trends had 'recently become so marked'.[31]

One of the signatories, the Congregational minister, returned to these themes when speaking at Slough Baptist Church six years later, and linked them with some of those raised by the Baptist

[30] Ibid., 34–35.
[31] 'Sunday Observance at Slough', *SO*, 17 June 1922.

Superintendent.[32] In its attitudes towards organised religion, it was ‘a different world in every way’. Social conventions had changed - it was no longer 'fashionable ... the proper thing to do' to attend church, and those who did were often looked upon as 'a little bit weak, wet, and silly'. Anyone who opposed leisure activities on a Sunday - tennis, golf or motoring – was regarded as 'an early Victorian stick-in-the-mud or killjoy'. However, the preacher did not see this as ‘antagonism to Christ’ but as indifference to organised religion. While they might deplore these attitudes, ‘the thing that is injuring us more than anything’ was the apathy within in the church, where many church members stayed away from services 'on the merest pretext'. The 'man in the street' saw this as hypocrisy – ‘these people are not genuine … they say one thing and they do another’. If the church was to regain its pre-eminence, 'we must show that our religion is practical'.[33] It is perhaps noteworthy that the examples of Sunday recreation chosen by the minister sound somewhat middle class – rather than playing football, tending allotments, or other ‘sensible amusements’ referred to in the 1924 Burnham Deanery survey.

While internally there may have been concern about the authenticity of Christian congregational life, the public face of the church continued to be unsympathetic to changes in social attitudes. For example, while clergymen privately acknowledged that drunkenness was not significant, new licensing applications were resisted almost automatically. This alienated even supporters like the editor of the local newspaper (a churchgoer and generally overtly supportive of the local clergy). In a year when only 30 convictions for drunkenness were recorded in a town of 50,000, ‘there was the usual four-square opposition [from] certain religious denominations to anything and everything which was applied for, which is rather a pity’.[34] This was an attempt to introduce ‘a measure of unofficial prohibition from motives of general hostility’ to alcoholic drink.

[32] ‘Rev A E Rowlinson on Sunday Observance’, *SO*, 3 October 1928.
[33] Ibid.
[34] ‘The Brewster Sessions’, *SO*, 6 February 1931.

The vicar of St Paul's admitted that 'the stand that had to be taken ... did not necessarily make for popularity'.[35]

While the clergy's responses may seem overly Puritanical, they were undoubtedly reflecting a large body of public opinion. In 1924, the Urban District Council banned children from using swings, slides and see-saws in public parks on Sundays, because they should be attending Sunday School instead. To be consistent, the playing of tennis, cricket and football were also banned. The Chairman of the UDC was reported to have 'expressed the feelings of everybody' when saying that 'none of them wanted to be kill-joys, but Sunday must be Sunday'.[36] An editorial in the local newspaper commented approvingly on the decision.[37]

However, at times, the church's response to new attitudes seems to twenty-first century eyes to verge on the hysterical. Some twelve years later, in April 1940, a local firm's sports club made an application to play cricket in a public park on Sunday afternoons. Opposing the application, Slough Baptist's then minister maintained that 'the great spiritual values of life are being threatened as much by the paganism of our own people as the menace of Hitlerism and Stalinism'.[38] This was just the latest in a succession of public debates over official sanction of Sunday recreation – whether the playing of games, or the opening of cinemas on Sunday evenings – in which the tone rapidly became intemperate.[39] One bad-tempered sequence of exchanges caused the local newspaper to appeal for restraint, lest 'in the course of the fray religion ... be torn to pieces'.[40] The charge of being 'killjoys' was too easily invited – one letter-writer commented 'may I gently suggest to these opposers of Sunday recreation that they are taking the right way to depopularise their movement ... [this] protest will not bring these young people to

[35] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 36.
[36] 'Slough Urban District Council', *SO*, 19 July 1924.
[37] 'Sunday in the Salt Hill Playing Fields', *SO*, 19 July 1924.
[38] 'Condemnation of Sunday Cricket', *SO*, 12 April 1940.
[39] 'Our Churches and Sunday Games', *SO*, 8 August 1930; 'Sunday Cinemas: An Appeal to Both Sides', *SO*, 22 May 1936; 'Sunday Cricket in Parks Controversy', *SO*, 19 April 1940.
[40] 'Sunday Cinemas: An Appeal to Both Sides'.

church' – rather, it would breed a lifetime 'of bitter opposition'.[41] The Rector of Upton was concerned that some opposition could be seen as narrow-minded and sanctimonious, rather than Christian - 'a confusion of the Jewish Sabbath with the Christian Sunday'.[42]

The question was whether preventing people going to a cinema or playing field on a Sunday would mean they attended church instead. One Roman Catholic priest was doubtful:

> we shall never get the bulk of the people back to Christ and the practice of religion by Acts of Parliament or County and Urban District laws, or by dour repression of innocent and harmless amusement. Many of these people have no opportunity of enjoying God's fresh air and sunshine except on a Sunday.[43]

This latter point caused disagreement amongst local ministers – as noted above, the Free Church ministers maintained there was enough time for leisure activities during the rest of the week. The evangelical vicar of St Paul's – often more in sympathy with Free Church ministers than his Anglican colleagues – agreed: 'there are six days in which to labour and enjoy oneself. The seventh day is the Lord's day and must be spent in prayer and rest'.[44] The Rector of Upton, however, cautioned: 'surely no decent games or amusements which are good on weekdays *are in themselves* wrong on Sundays [which] for some people [presents] the only opportunity for such recreation' - but such activities should take place after midday, in accordance with 'the principle that Sunday is first and foremost a day of worship'.'[45]

The Rector was repeating a position that had been outlined by the Bishop of Oxford eighteen years earlier, when the 1922 Diocesan Conference had agreed that while Sunday worship should be 'the first duty of all professed Christians', games and recreation on a Sunday were not incompatible with Christian practice, if not involving paid labour.[46] However, the distinction – that potentially, a proper observance of Sunday could involve both attendance at public worship, and

[41] 'Christian Kill-Joys', *SO*, 1 May 1931.
[42] 'Rector's Opinion on Sunday Cricket', *SO*, 17 May 1940.
[43] 'Sunday Games', *SO*, 26 September 1930.
[44] 'Condemnation'.
[45] 'Rector's Opinion'.
[46] 'Oxford Diocesan Conference', *SO*, 28 October 1922.

some recreational activities - was often lost in 'taking a determined stand' against 'the appalling disrespect today for the Lord's Day'.[47] And also often lost was the sense that people now felt they had a choice over how they spent their discretionary time, and that the churches must now attract people who had formerly attended by custom.

The internal debate oscillated between those who felt the churches needed to attract people on a Sunday, and those who emphasised the 'duty' people had to attend, regardless. The latter view prevailed at a 1934 Anglican Deanery Conference, which considered 'what was the object of going to church?' The majority concluded it was people's 'duty to attend a house of prayer regularly, and to back up their incumbent, even if they did not agree with him' – or did not 'feel like' going or found church services dull. The obligation was to 'give 60 minutes to God' every week 'and to put up with what you do not like when you get to church'.[48]

The alternative view was that people now had a choice, requiring the church to make itself appealing. The 1928 Deanery Conference considered 'How can people be brought back to Church?'. The main speaker maintained that although the nation was spiritually hungry, people did not attend church because services were unappealing – poorly prepared, not addressed to their audience, but prepared by college-educated clergy who spoke a language their congregations did not understand. People came to Harvest services because they understood them. The clergy needed to think of themselves as 'missionaries', to reach out and 'seek the lost', encouraging them to ask questions. He maintained that 'the working classes would come to church if they were asked to do so' – attracting applause from the assembled laity. Attracting the young was important, and social gatherings where people could mix, form relationships and 'belong'.[49]

[47] 'Bishop of Buckingham at St. Mary's Church', *SO*, 3 May 1929; 'The Bishop of Buckingham at St. Mary's Church', *SO*, 9 January 1931.
[48] 'RD Conference 1934'.
[49] 'The Power of the Sermon', *SO*, 23 November 1928.

Ministers must lead, but congregations needed to respond. The 1937 Deanery Conference again emphasised that clergy must preach accessibly, visit and encourage people to come to church: but the onus was also on the congregations to 'see that their lives testified effectively to the value of spiritual things'.[50] However much organisation the church did, it was useless without 'the earnest, devoted, whole-hearted individual who was out for the salvation and edification of souls to the glory of God'.[51] Churches needed to be places of vital encounter and demonstration of spiritual reality.

That some Anglican churches were not was the subject of 'amazingly frank' comments at the 1940 deanery conference.[52] The new Rural Dean maintained that many clergy 'dread Sunday mornings – we don't know if anyone is going to turn up' and 'you would find it very difficult to find ten people in any parish who really believe God is God, who would go to church for the glory of God and not for themselves' and 'the priest ... dare not make any pessimistic remarks because he will be called gloomy'. His answer was to set up prayer 'cells' in each parish. At the same conference, the main speaker again referred to the importance of credible and inspirational clergy – but many people's view of the clergy was that they were 'consecrated conjurors or professional prigs'.[53]

This diagnosis was not confined to the Anglican churches. Addressing the local Congregational Union in 1937, the Chairman identified similar problems in some Congregational churches. Lack of spirituality was the root cause of the church's problems: 'for the great majority of Church members, religion was an observance, not an experience', and worse still, bad relationships in some churches meant that 'spiritual growth was not only impossible but was actually in the

[50] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 7 May 1937.
[51] 'Growth of Slough'.
[52] 'Parish Priests Dread Sunday Morning', *SO*, 24 May 1940.
[53] Ibid.

process of extinction. In most cases, it was obvious that the basic idea of Christian fellowship was being violated'.[54] His address was apparently 'received with acclamation'.

It is obviously impossible to be definitive about how spiritually 'alive' some congregations were. The priority given to prayer might be one measure, and of course all churches would have had formal prayer as a routine part of their Sunday worship. The Anglican visitation returns are notably lacking in mentioning prayer – although there were few questions that required an explicit response. Prayer was apparently initially a popular response to WWI, but the ensuing stasis had 'a deadening effect spiritually' and prayer is rarely mentioned subsequently.[55] In 1929, the Rural Dean acknowledged that prayer was difficult even for the clergy, with all the distractions of the day.[56] The unfailingly enthusiastic vicar of St Paul's report that 'the parish has had a wonderful lesson in Trusting God in the provision of the money in answer to prayer for the Gilliat Hall' is unique in 79 interwar responses in linking prayer and providence.[57]

If there were signs that some churches fell short in terms of spiritual encounter, there were also signs that the human side was lacking. 'Christian fellowship' implies both spiritual encounter and human warmth and welcome – a combination of the social and spiritual utility referred to in Chapter 2, or in a later catchphrase, both 'believing and belonging'. In 1921, scathing comments regarding this were made at an Oxford Diocesan Conference for Lay Readers.[58]

The opening speaker maintained that there was 'a practical failure to accomplish the purpose of the church ... the fellowship practised and taught by Jesus Christ was almost non-existent'. In some Anglican churches at least, class seemed part of the problem. Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) must be active in breaking down barriers:

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[54] 'Minutes of the Annual Assembly, 14th April 1937', in *Statistics, Reports &c for the Year Ending 31st December 1937* (Berks, South Oxon & South Bucks Congregational Union, 1937); 'Induction of Mr F T Smallwood', *SO*, 23 April 1937.
[55] 'Slough St Mary 1914.
[56] 'The Need For Prayer', *SO*, 29 November 1929.
[57] 'Slough St Paul 1934.
[58] 'Oxford Diocesan Lay Readers Conference', *SO*, 23 July 1921.

> what [people] really wanted was to understand the meaning of Christian fellowship in their own parishes. They must begin by doing away with social distinction. Only thus would they be able to break down the feeling against the Church among the masses. Nearly all the appointments in churches, including churchwardens, etc, were given to persons of social or business position. The poor man or labourer had no chance.[59]

Further evidence of this can be seen in 1918, when the vicar of Stoke Poges commented that 'war time has certainly decreased the churchgoing, but chiefly among the poorer people'. Some reasons have already been mentioned – the pressures of war work, increased disposable income, and the need to look after children on Sundays – but class was seen as a significant factor:

> The poorest class increasingly realize that their social inferiority is more brought home to them at Church than elsewhere, not because the rich are unkind but because at Church they are brought face to face with richer people whom they do not meet elsewhere.[60]

At the beginning of Chapter 2, the lack of welcome shown to working-class incomers in Hitcham parish was also noted: 'the 1/8 old population & well to do especially dislike the 7/8 & are most unwilling to do anything for them'.[61] Similar issues were reported much later in next door Dropmore parish, as seen in Chapter 5.[62]

Superficially at least, class barriers might not be so much of an issue in the Free churches. But here again there was evidence of exclusivity. At Ledgers Road Methodist in 1942 – on a joyous occasion, the final repayment of the debts taken on in building the new church in 1902 – one speaker reflected on 'Why Christianity is a Minority Movement' by noting how some people despised their 'smug little chapel meetings'. He hoped they would not fall back into 'smug, self-satisfied respectability' when the war was over. And again, he echoed the themes already noted above in addresses to the Baptists and Congregationalists – that declining church attendance 'has probably been due to our own lack of enthusiasm. If we do not make churchgoers enthusiastic, how can we expect that people outside the church are going to be enthusiastic?'.[63]

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[59] Ibid.
[60] 'Stoke 1918'.
[61] 'Hitcham 1934'.
[62] 'Dropmore 1958.
[63] 'Why Christianity Is a Minority Movement'.

Leadership

The previous chapter discussed how the quality of leadership could affect the fortunes of churches in the pre-war period. But in the interwar period, the role of leadership was, if anything, even more important. As social conventions changed, churches could no longer rely on people attending out of duty alone. The visible focus of a church was its ordained leader, who needed to direct their church to be appealing in, and to, a community where people increasingly felt they had choices. But leadership was also key to mobilising the internal resources – human and financial – to maintain the church's programmes.

While these factors were evident before WWI, the interwar years would accentuate them. The town's expansion would challenge congregations' willingness to provide support and resources for their church's ministry not only to their local community - people they broadly knew, and who knew them - but to incomers they neither knew nor lived amongst.

Chapter 3 highlighted the leadership role of Rev Eliot and Rev Cousens in the growth of their respective churches – one at the establishment heart of the town, the other in building the most rapidly growing Free church. The other rapidly growing church in the pre-war period, in numerical terms at least, was the Anglican St Paul's.

At a parish tea in 1921, the church's benefactor, Algernon Gilliat, outlined the reasons for the church's success: good organisation, good facilities, 'hearty' and enjoyable services, a large Sunday School with good leadership, and a team of 'earnest and devoted workers'. But all this needed the right leader in overall charge of the church:

> The men who had been called to minister to them had been men of God, and under their guidance the work had expanded to what it is today … They were thankful that they had such a leader as they had in their present Vicar, who had the power of rallying round him workers who were moved by the Holy Spirit.[64]

[64] 'Parish Tea at Slough', *SO*, 8 January 1921.

Upton, St Paul's and Slough Baptist may have counted themselves fortunate in the quality of their ordained leadership. But not all churches were so lucky. Again, simply from the availability or otherwise of source material, the Anglican visitation returns provide the most evidence. Chapter 2 showed that even internally, the view was that some clergy in strategically significant parishes were unsuited to the task they faced. But there is other evidence of clergy being out of touch, or sympathy, with their parishioners.

For example, returns from successive vicars in Colnbrook indicate how the incumbent, and the way he performed, might impact attendance. The vicar who served from 1885-1920 attracted a 'very small congregation', which he attributed to the rise of Sunday leisure activities. His successor (1921-1932), however, saw local indifference as 'the result of many years' neglect'. But in turn, a new vicar (1932-1943) attributed low attendance to his predecessor's ritualism: 'the late incumbent forced the pace as regards ceremonies ... with the result that the village was more or less alienated & a few who like the services came from adjoining parishes. I have tried to remedy this & at same time to keep both parties'.[65] His actions seem to have met with some success: on his departure, parishioners were warmly appreciative and parish finances, previously in crisis, were 'very satisfactory'.[66] Even more strikingly, Chapter 5 will show how a later vicar radically changed his approach and saw a dramatic improvement in church attendance in a short time.

There are other examples of Anglican clergy struggling to engage with their parishioners. In 1928, the vicar of Hedgerley, a rural parish next to Farnham Royal, reported 'I have been nearly eleven years and am disheartened. I do not seem to make any impression on the heathenism of the place. All my people quite friendly but I cannot persuade them to perform the most ordinary

[65] 'Colnbrook 1909'; 'Colnbrook 1922'; 'Colnbrook 1934; 'Colnbrook RD 1913.
[66] 'Colnbrook's Vicar Leaving', *SO*, 18 December 1942; 'Colnbrook Church Meeting', *SO*, 28 April 1944.

Christian duty'. And again there is evidence that the incumbent himself made a difference to attitudes - his successor was described as 'universally loved and respected by his parishioners'.[67]

At the 1928 Deanery Conference, clergy had been urged to think of themselves as 'missionaries', to reach out and 'seek the lost', and also to make churches places where people could mix, form relationships and 'belong'.[68] Perhaps the very reason why this was urged (and met with applause from the assembled laity) was that this characterised so few of the clergy. Many, on the contrary, seemed demoralised and directionless. As they considered the indifference around them, the predominant response was puzzlement and inaction: 'what can be done?' spoke for most.[69] 'I can only teach plainly, visit & look after the young' said one: in the absence of increased resources, 'we are doing little more than hold the fort in this parish' said another.[70]

Some parishes in the deanery were more active. For example, Upton and Beaconsfield were able to resource a wide range of activities. But the most visible contrast was at St Paul's. There, the vicar saw only opportunities:

> There would appear to be no special hindrances or difficulties in this parish for which we are very thankful to God. "A great door effectual" seems to be opening and I trust that God's rich blessing will attend all the work done in His name.[71]

As already noted, the vicar's leadership also extended into mobilising finance for the building of a new church hall.[72] This was particularly noteworthy as the church's major projects had been largely underpinned by Algernon Gilliat until his death in 1925.[73] The working-class congregation needed to be motivated to 'fill the gap' – which they appear to have consistently done, well into the early 1940s. New projects included not only the new church hall but the building of

[67] 'Hedgerley 1928'; 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. E. Makeham', *SO*, 17 November 1933.
[68] 'Power of the Sermon'.
[69] 'Langley 1936'.
[70] 'Colnbrook 1928'; 'Wraysbury 1936',
[71] 'Slough St Paul 1928'.
[72] 'St Paul 1934'.
[73] 'Death of Mr Algernon Gilliat'.

Christchurch, a 'daughter' church on the Upton Lea Estate, and buying a house for the curate-in-charge.[74] So 'missionary' leadership could not only be outward, but also inward, in mobilising both human and financial resources.

This resourcing meant that St Paul's was able to run a large programme of activities apart from its worship services - youth clubs, Scouts, Guides, separate men's and women's meetings and the Mother's Union.[75] Its Sunday School was the largest in the deanery: the annual treat regularly attracted 600 children, together with parents and teachers. A *Slough Observer* editorial described it as 'an eloquent annual testimony to the important position the Church occupies in the life of the parish'.[76] However, as noted, St Paul's could still only count a minority of parishioners as regular attenders - although these were probably the most committed in the deanery.[77] Perhaps the rigour of evangelical religion, and the strong stand the vicar took on temperance and Sunday observance, attracted as much as it deterred.

Demographic Challenges and Leadership

This chapter has focused on the social and spiritual leadership roles the churches played in community life. But in the pre-war period, the church had both a civic and a cultural role – and the clergy were its representatives in performing those roles. In the discussion above, there is the sense of the clergy becoming out of sympathy with at least part of the community on issues such as temperance and Sunday leisure activities. But before the war the churches had been leaders on issues such as poverty, housing and welfare. In the interwar period the Anglican visitation returns and the 1924 Deanery survey give the fullest range of clergy perspectives on the social challenges and how they were responding.

[74] '£1000 Anonymous Gift for St Paul's Church', *SO*, 10 March 1933; 'Another Generous Gift to St Paul's Church'; 'St Paul's Vicar and Astounding Answer to Prayer', *SO*, 22 March 1940; '£1000 Gift Towards New Church', *SO*, 11 June 1943; 'Vicar Receives Anonymous Gift', *SO*, 3 December 1943; 'Another £1000 For St Paul's', *SO*, 25 August 1944; 'No Deficits at St Paul's', *SO*, 13 April 1945.
[75] 'Slough St Paul 1936'.
[76] 'St Paul's Treat', *SO*, 18 July 1930.
[77] 'Another Generous Gift to St Paul's Church'.

In interwar Britain, there was no shortage of challenges to respond to. Chapter 1 described a 'second industrial revolution', in which industrial change and economic depression shifted employment and population to the south east. In the urbanising parishes in and around Slough, the flood of migrants overwhelmed existing housing capacity. Rents went sky-high and overcrowding was rife until council houses started to be built in reasonable numbers in the mid-1930s.[78] In the village parishes, some cottages were condemned as slum dwellings, causing problems of a different sort. While Slough was generally a place of high employment, the closure of the Government Motor Depot after WWI, and the Great Depression of the early 1930s, caused high unemployment and consequently extreme poverty for some.[79]

As discussed, lack of finance and manpower inhibited the churches' core ministries in providing a social and spiritual centre to community life. But the resource constraints affected the perception of churches more widely. Purely in population terms, there was massive change over the period; but there were obviously also significant changes within the community, and the sub-communities within it. Before WWI, church leaders were amongst the most significant, and perhaps the most significant group, of community leaders. After WWII, while still respected leaders, they were one voice among many – including leaders within the local council, sports and social clubs, and young people's groups. Before WWI, the local press was generally supportive of church leaders; after WWII, their opinion could be critiqued like that of any other community leader – sometimes supportively, and at other times critically.

One example of this loss of perceived leadership has already been discussed, in the reaction to leisure activities on Sundays. Another was the response to local poverty - a practical instance being the organisation of soup kitchens.

[78] Masom, 'Not Fit for Humans?'
[79] 'The Relief of Distress in Slough', *SO*, 19 November 1921; 'How Slough Is Helping Its Unemployed', *SO*, 25 November 1932.

Despite being generally a 'place of opportunity' that people were drawn to because it offered employment and a place to start a new life, poverty afflicted some residents at various times. Before WWI, most efforts to address this were led by the churches – most eye-catchingly through the Roman Catholic soup kitchen mentioned in Chapter 3.

Later, in the immediate post-war dislocations, thousands of men were left unemployed following the closure of the Motor Repair Depot to the west of the town, and before the Trading Estate became the employment hotspot it was later to be. At the initiative of the Baptist Church, soup kitchens for the unemployed were set up by the churches in the winters of 1921-1923, with no other agencies involved. The kitchens were not needed as Slough entered years of expansion and prosperity, but when the Great Depression struck in the early 1930s, soup kitchens were again opened to meet the needs of destitute families, running in the winters of 1933 and 1934.[80] In contrast to the earlier initiatives, these kitchens were set up by a secular body, the Slough Social Services Council, with widespread support from the council and local employers.[81] Churches were supportive but peripheral, with no representation on the committee. However, St Paul's made its hall available for one of the kitchens, and many church members supported the work.

A small example, maybe, but indicative of how the churches shifted from a position of leadership to being one of many social institutions in the town. To some extent this was a question of the churches having a diminishing civil utility, as outlined in Chapter 2; but where there was an opportunity to provide leadership in responding to the challenges of social change, it seemed limited by finance, resources, vision, or energy. In another example, in 1931 the Rector

[80] 'A Visit to the Stoke Road Soup Kitchen', *SO*, 13 January 1933; 'Soup Kitchen Committee Meeting Final Report', *SO*, 20 April 1934.
[81] 'Helping the Unemployed', *SO*, 17 March 1933.

of Upton noted that the housing problems outlined above were 'very urgent', but his response was 'we are doing what we can to back up local efforts' – supporting, but not leading.[82]

And even where the churches were able to provide leadership in effecting significant social change, they did not always receive credit for it. As described in Chapter 1, the Slough Social Centre was a breakthrough in employer provision of leisure and recreation facilities for the community, not just locally but on the national stage too. This was seen very much as the initiative of Noel Mobbs, Chairman of Slough Estates. In the middle of WWII, an unseemly squabble erupted over whether the churches should be expected, or allowed, to run an evening service at the Social Centre. The Baptist and Central Hall ministers maintained they had been prevented from doing so by the Centre management. That there should be any visible dispute was likely to be to the detriment of the churches, and in closing the exchange, it was Mobbs who maintained the high moral ground; wishing to avoid 'recrimination' but insisting that 'the development of a Christian spirit' was one of the founding principles of the Centre. And despite the Centre's desire not to be competitive with the local churches; the local Anglican curate had been given a free rein to work among the youth who attended the Centre.[83]

This squabble was particularly unfortunate since Mobbs himself attributed the building of the Social Centre 'in no small measure to the urgent insistence of the late Rector of Farnham Royal'.[84] Providing further background to this, the Trading Estate's historian describes how 'a slightly startled Mobbs' was admonished by the said Rector:

> You know, you should be ashamed of yourself; you have all these people walking about in the streets in the evenings and committing crimes and it is all because you do not make any provision for their spare time. If you provided amusement for them in the evenings, this juvenile crime which is so prevalent would cease.[85]

[82] 'Slough St Mary 1931'.
[83] 'Letters to the Editor: Religion at the Social Centre', *SO*, 17 November 1944; 'Correspondence: Religion at the Social Centre'.
[84] 'Correspondence: Religion at the Social Centre'.
[85] Cassell, *Long Lease!*, 74.

And so it proved following the establishment of the Centre – but not generally attributed to the positive influence of church leaders.



Figure 27 Slough Social Centre - c 1937[86]

Church Extension

Thus far, this chapter has focused on internal factors within the churches that could have applied regardless of how quickly Slough's population was growing. But one of the main themes here is how that population growth placed additional strains upon the churches. The structural problems that the Anglican church experienced in adapting the parish structure to the growing town have already been discussed in Chapter 2. Given the Anglican Church's reach and resources, at least in theory, this was probably the main reason for any loss in traction the churches experienced in the new areas. Existing churches were typically not close to the new centres of population; the Church of England was unable to respond organisationally and financially to build new churches and place additional clergy in those areas; and demographic change disrupted the Church's existing supporter base, as people moved away from the area.

[86] *Slough Social Centre, Farnham Road, Slough*, *1937*, I1995, SLLS.

However, the Free Churches also had the opportunity to extend their reach on to the new housing estates, and in some cases an existing footprint from which to build. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the efforts of the three main nonconformist denominations to respond to the new opportunities and challenges.

The Baptists had been the most energetic in growing their church in the pre-war period. Even before the great post-war expansion, the Baptist Church extended its reach. A Gospel Mission had been established in Langley in 1899, with a Missioner funded by a local family.[87] No details of membership are available, but by 1913 there was a Sunday School of 230 children plus an unknown number of infants.[88] When the Missioner's funding ceased following the death of his supporter, the Gospel Hall was 'adopted' by Slough Baptist Church in 1914, and the Missioner became a funded Assistant Minister under the authority of Slough's Baptist's pastor.[89] This meant that the Baptists had a base from which to build as Langley started to expand from the late 1920s. In 1934, the church's membership was 47, with a large Sunday School of 194 children and 18 teachers. This was considered sufficient 'critical mass' for the church be able to 'stand on its own feet', and in that year it became independent of Slough Baptist, to be known thereafter as Langley Free Church.[90] This 'success' contrasts with the struggles the Anglicans were experiencing (covered in Chapter 2) and also the Congregationalists, covered below.

Another Mission was established in Cippenham, then a small village to the west of Slough, in 1899: this time directly by the Baptist Church itself. Again, the work began around a Sunday School, with teachers supplied locally and from the parent church. Growth was more modest than in Langley; in 1913, the Sunday School was 40 strong, with 3 teachers.[91] An old Army hut was taken over in 1920, and extended in 1923, providing more space for the Sunday School, which

[87] 'Pastor Earl's 33rd Anniversary', *SO*, 29 April 1932.
[88] 'Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 9 August 1913.
[89] 'Death of Pastor Earl', *SO*, 22 March 1935.
[90] 'Free Church for Langley', *SO*, 14 December 1934.
[91] BH 1914, 47.

had grown to 120 scholars and 13 teachers by 1934. Slough Baptist members contributed £215 to the former and at least £80 to the latter costs.[92] Apart from this financial support, until 1932 ministry at the church was also supplied from Slough Baptist. On the Langley Missioner's retirement that year, Slough Baptist appointed an assistant minister, initially with responsibility for both Langley and Cippenham, and then solely Cippenham after Langley became independent.[93] Further support was given in1940 through the building of a new Church Hall seating 240, at a cost of £1250.[94] Following the pattern set by Langley, the church became independent after WWII, to be known subsequently as Cippenham Free Church.

Here, then, are two examples of church plants established because of the perceived need to provide a church presence in an unserved area; nurtured and supported by a mother church, in financial, ministry, and practical ways until they reached self-sufficiency. After becoming independent, the Langley and Cippenham churches both continued to flourish.

Given the decentralised Baptist nature of organisation, it is not surprising that Langley and Cippenham sought to become independent, rather than remaining under the direct supervision of Slough. However, as noted in Chapter 2, the need for mutual support was recognised in the mid-1940s through the formation of a local 'Fellowship' of five Baptist churches – Slough, Cippenham, Langley, Datchet and Wraysbury. Of these, Slough was by far the largest and provided some pastoral oversight and leadership to the smaller churches.[95]

Not all Slough Baptist's attempts at church planting were as successful. The first housing estate established after WWI to house workers for the new Trading Estate was in converted Army huts and known as Timbertown. This 'temporary' housing continued to be utilised until the estate was demolished in 1939.[96] The Baptists began holding services in the Recreation Hut in late 1927, and

[92] 'Cippenham: New Gospel Mission Hall', *SO*, 10 July 1920; 'Cippenham: Opening of Extension to Mission Hall', *SO*, 9 June 1923.
[93] 'New Pastor Welcomed at Langley', *SO*, 30 September 1932.
[94] 'Cippenham Baptists' £1250 Hall', *SO*, 19 April 1940.
[95] 'Baptist Fellowship Meeting', *SO*, 17 March 1944; Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 114.
[96] 'Demolition of Timbertown', *SO*, 6 January 1939.

initially attracted congregations of around 100. For unclear reasons, attendances declined rapidly, and despite attempts to revive them, the services were discontinued in mid-1930.[97] One possible difference between this and the Langley and Cippenham church plants is that the impetus, and the initial nucleus, for the latter may have come from existing church members who already lived in those two villages: this was unlikely to be the case at Timbertown.

Initially more successful was a new church established close to the new Manor Park estate to the north of the railway. Named after a 92-year-old lady who donated sufficient funds to buy the site and make a partial contribution towards building costs, the Marystrong Free Church was opened in 1930.[98] Sited about a mile from the Baptist Church, Marystrong was built because parents on the new estate felt the journey was not only too far to take their children to the Baptist Sunday School, but also included a notoriously dangerous crossing of the Bath Road. Although established and initially funded by the Baptist church, Marystrong had Congregational and Methodist trustees, and occasional preachers from St Paul's Anglican church. At its opening, it described itself as 'promoted by Baptists, but open to all denominations'.[99] This un-denominationalism was commended as a generous and far-sighted act at the time, but it may have meant that the church was not sufficiently nurtured under 'a mother church' as Langley and Cippenham had been.[100]

Initially, the investment seemed justified: within a year, the Sunday School was attracting up to 190 children each week, and the two Harvest Festival services in 1931 both attracted a congregation of over 200.[101] However, these attendances were not converted into committed membership, with church membership on the fourth anniversary only 19; and by the sixth anniversary, the Pastor commented that the 'church could not boast of very much apparent

[97] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 82.
[98] 'Opening of Marystrong Free Church', *SO*, 21 February 1930.
[99] 'New Free Church For Slough', *SO*, 4 October 1929.
[100] 'Notes By The Way: Slough's New Church', *SO*, 4 October 1929.
[101] 'Record Broken At Marystrong Church', *SO*, 11 September 1931; 'Harvest Festival at Marystrong Free Church', *SO*, 25 September 1931.

success', with no increase in membership and a financial deficit.[102] Under new leadership from 1938, congregations grew again and were high during the war years, but as seen in Chapter 6, the church continued to struggle with recruiting committed members and in particular staffing its Sunday School.[103] One challenge was that around 48 per cent of the Manor Park estate residents were Welsh incomers. There was pressure to run services, and Sunday Schools classes, in the Welsh language, which the church eventually responded to. Despite this, a specifically Welsh church was established in competition to Marystrong in 1939.[104] Eventually, the two Welsh churches merged in the mid-1940s under the Welsh Congregational denomination, known thereafter as the Marystrong Welsh Church.[105] The extent to which Marystrong had drifted from its un-denominational beginnings is indicated by Slough Baptist's decision to begin running a Sunday bus service to its Sunday School, apparently in competition to that at Marystrong, and despite having established the church.[106]

Chapter 3 highlighted a contrast between the Baptists' energetic advance and the struggles of the more established Congregationalists to provide more and better facilities to cope with the increasing population. Specifically, the Congregational church was unable to raise the necessary funds to upgrade its Sunday Schools until well into the 1920s. Similarly, the church's attempts to reach out into other areas of the town met with less success than the Baptists. A Congregational Hall in Langley, opened in 1850, was primarily used for a Sunday School, attracting around 150 children in 1900 and 100 in 1914.[107] After WWI, the Sunday School dwindled and was eventually closed in the mid-1930s. Notably, the Congregational Mission declined while the Baptist Langley Mission grew over the same period.

[102] 'Marystrong Free Church Fourth Anniversary', *SO*, 16 March 1934; 'Filling the Empty Pews', *SO*, 6 March 1936.
[103] 'New Pastor for Marystrong Free Church', *SO*, 11 February 1938; 'Marystrong Pastor Leaving Slough', *SO*, 1 September 1939; 'News From Slough Churches', *SO*, 5 November 1943.
[104] 'Welsh Church Established in Slough', *SO*, 7 October 1938.
[105] 'Attempt to Unite Welsh Churches', *SO*, 23 February 1945.
[106] 'Baptist Bus Starts Running on Sunday', *SO*, 16 July 1937.
[107] CY 1899; CY 1914.

The Congregationalists were also active on the Upton Lea Estate, in the Anglican parish of St Paul's. This initiative was the subject of an agreement between the Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists at the Slough Free Church Council that they would not seek to compete with each other's church extension initiatives.[108] So Cippenham and Langley were by then seen as Baptist territory; the area around Hampshire Avenue – north and west of Manor Park – as a Methodist preserve; and Upton Lea was to be a Congregational initiative. The estate was developed in the mid-1930s, and by 1938 it was estimated there were 2,000 children and young people living there.[109] Both the Congregational church and St Paul's initially established Sunday Schools, raised funds for new halls, and subsequently grew new congregations on the estate.[110] Both flourished initially; but while the St Paul's 'daughter' church – known as Christchurch – continued to attract a Sunday School of 60 children, a well-attended family service, and a group of young people, into the 1970s, the Congregational Hall began to decline in the 1950s and closed around 1960.

The key contributor to the Congregational church's ministry on Upton Lea was a retired Congregational minister who moved to the area on finishing his active ministry in 1937. Described as 'always a young people's man', he died in 1947; coincidentally or not, the Sunday School enrolments declined steadily after that date.[111] While limited information has survived, it can be inferred that both the Upton Lea Congregational Mission and the Baptist Langley Mission grew while there was focused and energetic leadership. However, the Baptists seem to have been able to maintain momentum in Langley after the retirement of the initial leader, while the Congregationalists were unable to do the same in Upton Lea.

More detailed information has survived for another chapel, which after initial difficulties became a successful self-sufficient church. The history of Burnham Congregational Church

[108] 'New Upton Lea Sunday School', *SO*, 4 November 1938.
[109] 'Sunday School For Upton Lea', *SO*, 5 August 1938.
[110] 'New Upton Lea Sunday School'; 'Upton Lea Congregationalists', *SO*, 10 January 1941; 'Sunday School For Upton Lea'; 'The Church in Upton Lea', *SO*, 14 April 1939.
[111] 'Ministers Deceased: Dorling, Frederick William Robertson', in CY 1948, 492.

illustrates the themes of children's work, energetic and empathetic leadership, and outside financial support. This church was supported financially by the denomination and had to report annually on progress; while giving specific insight into the life of one church, these reports also shed light on the potential struggles of other nonconformist chapels where limited information has survived.[112]

The chapel in Burnham was established in 1891, and for its first forty years was relatively small. Membership grew initially and peaked at around 65 with a Sunday School of 60 in 1908. Over the next few years the church struggled, experiencing 'many trials and tribulations', the chapel falling into a bad state of repair, and membership declining to 30 in 1918. The impression is of a relatively elderly church. Membership decline was attributed to death or people transferring away from the area - of the 30 members in 1922, 8 were 'non-resident'. Pastors usually moved on through 'retirement'. A gap in ministry tended to impact attendance; for example, after the retirement of one pastor, in 1913 average congregations were 32 against a membership of 41; but a year later, with a new pastor appointed, congregations had increased. But overall, the struggles continued, and when the then pastor retired in 1923, it was decided not to replace him but to operate under the supervision of the church in Maidenhead for several years. At this point, the trajectory was similar to other small nonconformist chapels – a congregation barely at critical mass, struggling to cope with disruptions such as the loss of key members or a pastor; and experiencing a slow decline relative to population.

As WWI finished, the annual reports noted that the district was 'rapidly changing from a rural to an industrial centre' with the development of the Government Motor Depot to the south. As this developed into the Slough Trading Estate, new housing estates to the south and east of the village began drawing in in many young adults and families by the later 1920s. It was eventually

[112] The following discussion is supported by district reports for Burnham in *Report of the Berks, South Oxon & South Bucks Association of Independent Ministers & Churches,* published annually by Berks, South Oxon & South Bucks Congregational Union, 1901-1927.

decided to appoint a new pastor, who joined in January 1928 and remained for ten and a half years.[113] Under his leadership, the church grew to around 100 members, with a Sunday School of similar size, by 1940. Within months of his ministry beginning, money was raised for essential repairs to the chapel, and a project begun to build a new hall, opened in early 1929, to provide more space for the Sunday School. The total debt of £1200 on repairs and the new hall was cleared by late 1932, and the church also reported satisfactory operating income for that year – particularly remarkable given the financial struggles and low annual income of preceding years.[114]

The leadership provided by the new pastor was later eulogised by the longstanding church secretary as being 'no comparison' to his three ministerial predecessors; on his retirement, notably warm tributes were paid to his godly character, empathy, and ability to motivate and mobilise both the church's membership and wider community support. His leadership led to an increased unity and spirituality within the congregation too – church meetings which 'had not always been as harmonious as some of them would wish' under previous ministers were 'more like devotional services' while nevertheless being efficient and businesslike.[115] This was in contrast to the lack of spirituality noted in other Congregational churches by the Chairman of the local Congregational Union, referred to above.

Importantly, given the fragility of smaller congregations seen elsewhere, it seems that by 1939 Burnham had sufficient critical mass to cope with subsequent ministerial changes and other challenges. It did not subsequently experience numerical decline to the same extent as the much longer established Slough church, nor its Upton Lea satellite, with membership maintained around 100, and the Sunday School growing to around 200 children, into the mid-1960s.[116] Decline at the Slough church meant that Burnham was then around double its size.

[113] The following discussion is supported by district reports for Burnham in ibid., 1927-1940.
[114] 'New Congregational Hall For Burnham', *SO*, 15 February 1929; 'Burnham Congregational Church Hall', *SO*, 25 November 1932; 'Burnham: Congregational Church', *SO*, 20 January 1933.
[115] 'Burnham Bids Goodbye to Rev Danzy Sheen', *SO*, 24 June 1938.
[116] *Berks, South Oxon & South Bucks Congregational Union 1968*.

There is clear evidence of the difference that the right leadership could have. But having the right support in the early years was also key – as seen elsewhere in the successful Baptist plants in Cippenham and Langley, and the struggles at Marystrong. Burnham was seen as a church extension initiative by the local Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Congregational Union, which provided a grant of around 40 per cent of annual costs up to WWI, and increased support further to cope with increased ministerial stipends after WWI.[117] As the church's fortunes improved from the late 1920s the church became more financially viable, but was still receiving a denominational grant of up to 15 per cent of total annual expenditure until at least 1940.[118] Outside support was therefore key to the church achieving critical mass. But this could only go so far: a committed local congregation was above all the key to a church's success. Practical evidence of this is seen in the willingness of its membership to support significant new building projects in the early 1930s, and then again when expansion was required in the 1960s – again in some contrast to funding struggles at the larger Slough church.[119] Money could be a barrier to expansion, but also a symptom of local support and commitment.

Common themes can be discerned in the Baptist and Congregational initiatives in the growing areas of the town. For the Methodists nationally, the major preoccupation in the interwar years was the implications and aftermath of Methodist Union; but before considering the local experience of Union for Slough's Methodists, a successful Methodist church plant is considered which reinforces themes observed in the successful Baptist and Congregational initiatives.

As noted above, in the late 1930s the main Free churches divided the new areas of the town into what might be termed 'spheres of influence'. For the Methodists, this meant the estates to the north of the centre and east of the Trading Estate, in and around Manor Park. This was supported by the local Methodist Circuit, but particularly the Central Hall.[120] Hampshire Avenue

[117] *Berks, South Oxon & South Bucks Congregational Union 1923,* 12.
[118] Ibid., 1939.
[119] 'New Congregational Hall For Burnham'; 'Go Ahead For New Church', *SO*, 2 June 1961.
[120] 'New Methodist Church for Slough', *SO*, 31 August 1934.

Methodist began initially as a 'School-Church', formed around a Sunday School with attendant services, as was the consistent pattern across the town. Meetings and classes initially took place in a local school, beginning in 1934, with a new church opened at a cost of £4200 in 1937. A large hall, to be used for the Sunday School and as a young people's centre for the locality, was opened in 1939 at a cost of £5300.[121] This latter initiative received significant grants from the National Fitness Council and an 'anonymous donor' – possibly the Rank Foundation. A young minister was appointed to appeal to the youth of the area – it was said that 'youth at the helm' was 'the maxim for Slough Methodists'.[122]

So again, a successful church plant was centred around a children's work, with denominational support to get it established, and investment in facilities for services and in particular young people. But notably, the need for such a church, and the keys to its success were outlined in terms that recall Archbishop Lang's comments about the 'new areas':

> All over the country the Church is becoming a necessary fact in the life of the new areas. People flock to them from the distressed parts of Britain, and they find themselves alone and without friends. They haven't any neighbours, and what we have to do is to make our Central Halls social centres, places which will help keep together the social life of the new areas. What we must try to do is to make a spiritual centre for the people who live around and about them.[123]

Here is a reference to the social and spiritual utility that a successful church could still aspire to deliver to its local community. Perhaps it can be inferred that Burnham Congregational's impact was similar. Like Burnham, Hampshire Avenue had a committed congregation – the church was able not only to staff a growing Sunday School, but also branches of the Boys Brigade, Girl Guides and Brownies, and by 1936 the church's young people had 'visited more than two thousand homes in an effort to bring the Church before the community'.[124] Evidence that the church filled a need in the area is its rapid growth to 156 members by 1942.[125] There is a direct comparison with

[121] 'The New Hampshire Avenue Church', *SO*, 29 October 1937; 'New Methodist School And Institute', *SO*, 10 November 1939.
[122] 'All Change at the Methodist Churches', *SO*, 9 July 1937.
[123] 'Stone-Laying of New Methodist Church', *SO*, 8 May 1936.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Methodist Central Hall, 'DMS69 1A/2'.

Marystrong – around half a mile away - set up five years earlier to serve the same community, but which had struggled to establish itself.

Further Methodist church extension initiatives that followed WWII are covered in Chapter 5. But the main story of the interwar years for Methodism in Slough, as nationally, was Methodist Union.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, while both the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists had long been established, their membership had remained static as the town's population grew significantly. Possible reasons were a failure to expand facilities at two churches, but conversely, the financial drain caused by an ambitious building project at the third, Ledgers Road. The stasis continued into the post-war period – in the 1920s, attendances at the Wesleyan church were described as 'very thin'.[126] Chapter 2 traced a continuing decline in Methodist numbers relative to population until around 1930.

Methodist Union brought with it not only the excitement of a new venture, but also massive external financial support. In Slough, Union involved the merging of the Wesleyan church and the Primitive Methodist chapel in the centre of the town, and the opening in 1932 of a new Methodist Central Hall on Wesleyan land.[127] The Central Hall was built in the style of such Halls in other towns and cities, consisting of two large meeting halls and other rooms, and a row of shops fronting the street, the rent from which was intended to partially fund church activities. It was intended to appeal to people who would not otherwise enter a church: 'it is like an open air meeting with a roof on'.[128] Like other Central Halls, between a half and two-thirds of the £30,000 cost was donated by the Joseph Rank Foundation, with the balance made up from the sale of the

[126] 'Departure of the Rev R Brighton'.
[127] 'Opening of Methodist Central Hall'.
[128] '"Pagan" Slough', *SO*, 4 December 1936.

old sites, from locally raised funds, and borrowing. It was said that 'upon no church in Christendom has money been poured out as money has been poured out here'.[129]



Figure 28 Methodist Central Hall, Slough - c 1935[130]

While in the approach to Union, local Methodist congregations had been static or declining, there was a surge in attendance and new members at Central Hall.[131] There was undoubted excitement over the new venture, but perhaps as importantly there was a young, engaging minister – Rev Reginald Brighton - with a lively preaching style and who focused on the young people's work. There was a full range of the usual activities for children – Sunday School, uniformed organisations, and guilds – but the focus extended also to the main services.[132] Under Rev Brighton's leadership, 'in few churches in Slough can be seen such youthful congregations', the evening services being particularly well attended, with up to half being 'strangers to the church'.[133] The church was rarely full for the morning services however; and after his departure,

[129] Ibid.
[130] *Central Hall, High Street, Slough*, 1935, SLLS.
[131] 'Departure of the Rev R Brighton'.
[132] 'Slough Methodist Central Hall', *SO*, 13 January 1933.
[133] 'All Change'.

Central Hall congregations and membership both declined. Ten years after opening, 'membership had declined tremendously', falling from 270 in 1937 to 213 in 1942.[134] Despite the congregation not needing to find most of the capital funding, the local debt of around £5,000 outstanding on the opening of the hall had been reduced by only £1,132 five years later – an unfavourable comparison with the commitment shown by smaller memberships at Burnham Congregational and Hampshire Avenue Methodist. Apart from capital projects, general finances were such that a church of over 200 members consistently struggled to fund more than a single pastor – whereas, for example, at the Baptist church there were two and sometimes three full-time ministers.[135] Amongst other things, the lack of manpower was blamed for the church's inability to deliver effective pastoral care.[136] The ongoing challenges at Central Hall, and its subsequent retrenchment, are considered in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, Ledgers Road Methodist remained independent. The sources are silent as to the reasons; no doubt the church's location in Chalvey, about a mile away from Central Hall, was seen as justification. The investment made in their new church, covered in the last chapter, and the fact that the central Slough Primitives and Wesleyans partly saw Union, and the Central Hall, as solving their respective capacity issues, may have been another. The church did reconsider merging with its larger neighbour in the early 1960s, however, as seen in Chapter 5. During the 1920s and 1930s, Ledgers Road had a membership of between 70 and 80, and a Sunday School of around 150 in 1919, declining to around 100 in 1940.[137] At this size, the church was sufficiently large to be self-sufficient; but too small to consider church extension. Its membership declined relative to the overall population of the town, but probably remained static relative to the local population of Chalvey.

[134] 'Basis for Reconstruction', 14; 'All Change'; Methodist Central Hall, 'DMS69 1A/2'.
[135] 'Departure of the Rev R Brighton'.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 16.

The experience of Methodist Union in Slough seems consistent with the national picture – of great excitement followed by a slow process of disillusionment and decline. An official history of the denomination describes the motivations behind Union as 'a blend of triumphalism and idealism' - but also concern over decline in numbers and the need to channel resources for mission most effectively.[138]But a merger of churches did not have 'the teeth which a commercial or industrial merger would have had', and nationally, the rationalization of chapels and circuits on which its success depended happened only to a limited degree. In their Methodist church history, Davies et al. comment: 'in the higher echelon of the Church the union was smooth and beneficial' but 'at a local level ... Methodist Union provided no really new ideas about church organization ... [and could not] guarantee effective union where it really matters, where the Christian meets the non-Christian'.[139] Union was therefore 'a rather elderly achievement' for the new denomination's septuagenarian leaders. Another historian attributed Union to a leadership that 'tended to lack vigour, drive or new ideas'.[140]

In Slough, the Hampshire Avenue church was successful, but not because of Union. Union combined two of the pre-existing Methodist churches, but Ledgers Road stayed independent and remained roughly the same size as previously. There was an initial surge in Methodist membership at Central Hall, but in a relatively short time membership and attendances declined, and across the town Methodism's decline relative to population resumed its long-term trend. This is explored in the next chapter. There was indeed no evidence locally that Union had solved any of the denomination's long-term issues or provided new energy for growth.

In fact, by the 1960s local folklore had it that the Central Hall had been an unwanted imposition by the denomination's central leadership. According to the then minister, it was 'the hall the Methodists didn't want', and when the developer's offer for the building and site was received,

[138] Davies et al, *Methodist Church*, 3:333–40.
[139] Ibid., 3:340.
[140] Hastings, *English Christianity*, 263–64.

they 'were glad to be rid of the hall' and could build the church they 'had been waiting 32 years for'.[141] There is no mention of such reservations at the time; and folklore conveniently overlooked not only the struggles the two merging churches were experiencing before Union, and the massive enthusiasm at the Central Hall's opening, but also the very significant financial support. Without this, not only would the Hall not have been built, but the later St Andrew's church which replaced it as the site for Methodist worship in the town centre.

Conclusions – A Church Under Challenge

This chapter began with Hastings' description of the precarious position of the churches nationally immediately after WWI – hidebound by convention and duty, lacking spiritual life and 'simply waiting to fall victim to an amalgam of world wars, scientific self-confidence and the advance of a consumer society'.[142] It went on to identify four themes that concerned local church leaders – a 'secular spirit', increasing affluence and leisure time, pressure on Sunday observance, and authenticity in Christian life and worship.

In examining these, some factors already identified in the last chapter have consistently recurred, and if anything more prominently. In new or changing situations, the need for charismatic and energetic leadership was key – both in appealing to those outside the church, and in mobilising those within it. Financial support was clearly required to build new churches and recruit additional clergy, but churches with the right leadership noticeably mobilised greater financial as well as human resources. In the one case where significant external financial support was available for a new building, the church still struggled to fund day-by-day activities, despite these being at a lower level than other nearby churches with smaller memberships.

Whether or not the spiritual strength of a congregation can be purely attributed to the church's leader, there is clear evidence that a lively and welcoming congregation was key in attracting and

[141] 'St Andrew's Church Is Opened', *SO*, 16 December 1966.
[142] Hastings, *English Christianity*, xvi.

retaining non-members. Clergy themselves placed the responsibility with their congregations; congregations were quick to attribute growth to the effects of good leadership. The answer probably lies with both, and where both were present, growth resulted. Planting churches on the new estates was challenging, but churches like Burnham Congregational, Cippenham Free, Hampshire Avenue Methodist and Langley Free were all nurtured and became self-sufficient during the period. Conversely, an established church such as Slough Congregational was seen to have severe relational dysfunction at its heart, and began to decline in absolute, and not just relative, terms.

And in this local setting, comparisons abounded – on the new estates, the above churches prospered, while the Langley Congregational and Timbertown Baptist plants failed. Marystrong flourished, struggled, recovered, and then struggled again. In the town centre, while the Baptists flourished the Congregationalists struggled. Their respective fortunes also affected the support they could give as 'mother churches' to the new churches on the estates. Also in the centre, the Methodists struggled, flourished for a time after the Central Hall was built, and then began to decline in absolute and relative terms.

These differences suggest that Hastings' generalisation, while perhaps true as a national average, and specifically true for some churches and Christians in a local context, was not true for all. Internal factors affected external fortunes.

The chapter also began with Erdozain's work on theological 'internal secularisation', resulting in a harmless social Christianity that might provoke 'gentle disdain' rather than opposition.[143] The analysis suggests the 'indifference' consistently reported by Slough's churchmen was real enough, and echoed that found nearby by Mass Observation in 1947.[144] It is easy to say in hindsight that to counteract such attitudes churches needed to demonstrate their relevance to everyday life, both

[143] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin', 85–86.
[144] Mass Observation, *Puzzled People*, 84.

to individuals and to the wider community. Given this, to reinforce perceptions that church leaders were more concerned to maintain 'Christian standards' and to repress apparently harmless leisure and amusement, than to attract by the liveliness of their services and quality of community, was counter-productive. In a culture where choice was gradually increasing at the expense of obligation and duty, church adherence would increasingly become a question of appeal, authenticity and relevance. This supports Erdozain's analysis and extends it into the mid twentieth century.

There is also much support in this chapter, and the analysis of the weaknesses of the Anglican parish system in Chapter 2, for Simon Green's characterisation of church decline as 'the product as much of an internal deficiency within modern religious organizations as of the external pressures which had been brought to bear on them during the past fifty years and more'.[145] Green went on to conclude: 'some time during the 1920s the local religious classes lost heart' because 'society as a whole had ceased to be ... in any meaningful sense, religious, and ... beyond even the very best efforts of a committed Christian minority to save it'.[146]

There is perhaps less evidence here for this as a general conclusion. Rather, this was a period which shone a light on what the term 'Christian' meant in practice. For many, they not so much 'lost heart' as saw no need to make the financial and personal commitments being requested. And it was one thing to make those sacrifices for one's family and neighbours, another to support outreach to incomers they neither knew nor cared about. Others were prepared to make such sacrifices. Perhaps the period is therefore better characterised by a 'sifting out' – a clarifying of who 'the committed Christian minority' were, those for whom civic and cultural utility were not the primary core of authentic Christianity.

[145] Green, *Age of Decline*, 387, 390.
[146] Ibid., 380.

In summary then, this chapter has covered a period of severe challenge for the churches. Chapter 1 outlined the extraordinary growth of Slough, and the challenges that this posed for the churches, not only in this town but in others affected by the significant shift to the south east of the country's demographic centre of gravity. Chapter 2 highlighted the financial, organisational and logistical challenges and the extent to which the churches failed to respond adequately to them. But this chapter has highlighted issues where the churches' problems were not simply organisational. In a climate where the pre-war pre-eminence of churches as social hubs came under challenge, new leisure opportunities were responded to in censorious and judgemental terms. Churches needed to attract, rather than assume people would attend by default, but both clergy and lay churchpeople could seem sanctimonious, exclusive and unwelcoming. The clergy might put indifference and lack of Sunday observance down to distractions: but perhaps too few churches were places of spiritual encounter, but alienating and seemingly irrelevant to the concerns of everyday life. Perhaps it was the church that seemed an unnecessary distraction - relevant for the key events in life: births, marriages and deaths; and for support in times of illness or other crises. And the benevolent, if rather remote, God of a Christian country should be appropriately acknowledged at Christmas, Easter and Harvest – examples of Williams' 'occasional conformity'.

There were exceptions – energetic and empathetic ministers attracted support. While some churches struggled to fund expansion, others funded new churches and halls. But overall, this was a period of institutional marginalisation and attenuation. The next chapter will consider the responses of a church at the margin, rather than at the centre, of community life.

Chapter 5 1946-1974: Church at the Margin

At the end of the period covered in the last chapter, the churches – or rather, the mainstream Protestant churches – found themselves increasingly at the margins, rather than at the centre, of the community. One illustration has already appeared at the beginning of Chapter 3 – from being seen as the most significant community institutions before WWI, the churches merited only three short paragraphs out of 187 pages in the 1950 Town Plan, and none at all in the 1966 Plan.[1] This chapter will consider how the churches responded: and will focus on some 'success' stories against the backdrop of widespread institutional weakness and decline.

The chapter will also consider historiographical themes highlighted in the Introduction. These include the rise of religious pluralism; the privatisation of religion, or 'believing without belonging'; when and to what extent Britain ceased to be a 'Christian country'; and the trajectory of religious decline – specifically, whether there was a religious revival in the 1950s, and whether the 1960s represented a discontinuity or a continuation of that trajectory.[2] Particularly influential has been Callum Brown's *The Death of Christian Britain*, which proposed something of a Christian revival in the fifteen years following WWII, with subsequent irreversible decline from the 1960s being triggered by the sexual revolution and its effect on women.[3] Later writers, whether or not they have agreed with Brown, have framed their views in response: for example, while agreeing the 1960s were a 'crisis' or 'hinge' decade, Hugh McLeod found Brown's analysis insufficiently persuasive, arguing instead for an explanation on 'three levels: the long-term preconditions, the effects of more immediate social changes, and the impact of specific events, movements, and personalities'.[4] The long term preconditions included increased religious toleration, intellectual critiques of Christianity, political emancipation, and changes in ethical thinking. More immediate

[1] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 119–20; Bucks CC, 'Slough & District Town Map Review'.
[2] Brown, *Death*, 2009; Brown, *Religion and Society;* Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 1994; Garnett et al., *Redefining Christian Britain;* McLeod, *Crisis*; Green, *Passing*; Woodhead and Catto, *Religion and Change*.
[3] Brown, *Death*, 2009, 170–75, 187–92.
[4] McLeod, *Crisis*, 258.

social factors included post war affluence, a decline in collective identity, the rise in individual freedom, and the sexual revolution. Specific events included the Vietnam War and Vatican II.[5] This contrasts with Simon Green's analysis, which locates the causes of later decline in the 1920s and 1930s, as considered in the last chapter.[6] While there was a modest resurgence in religious adherence in the 1950s, this was only a temporary blip in long-term decline, and 'Britain had ceased to be a Christian country by 1960'.[7]

In these various analyses, the local agency of the churches is largely absent.[8] In one of the few local studies covering the post-war period, Ian Jones focused on the challenges churches faced in dealing with multiple generations, particularly within declining congregations.[9] He identified three broad groupings – a 'pre-war generation', born before 1930, for whom church life was an integral part of their cultural experience; a 'post-war generation' born between 1930 and the 1950s, for whom church life was more a matter of personal choice; and a 'post-1960s'generation, who grew up in a post-Christendom, pluralist culture, where children who had been 'religiously socialised' were in a minority.[10] Churches that responded creatively with new forms of worship and association aimed at this latter generation experienced mixed results.[11] But such responses were arguably too late to prevent a 'large nominally Christian penumbra of the occasionally and conditionally conforming' drifting away from church in increasing numbers.[12]

This chapter will examine these themes and others that might have seemed as, or more, relevant to the town's churches at the time. The implications of migration overrode almost all others. 20,000 Londoners arrived over a 10-year period on the two LCC estates; from the 1950s,

[5] Ibid., 258–60.
[6] Green, *Age of Decline*; Green, *Passing*, chaps 2, 3.
[7] Green, *Passing*, 32.
[8] Ibid., 9–10.
[9] Jones, *Local Church*.
[10] Ibid., 177–79.
[11] Ibid., 106–11.
[12] Ibid., 185.

arrivals from the Caribbean and then the Indian sub-continent dramatically changed the demographics of some parishes; the overall population of the town grew significantly, but increased social mobility created new challenges. The established Protestant denominational churches struggled to grow, and in many cases declined, despite overall population growth: but new groupings proliferated – some recognisably orthodox, others more sect-like in character. Two case studies show significant traction within Slough's working-class population arising from two very different spiritual visions – Pentecostal and Roman Catholic. Within these generalisations, there continued to be wide divergences between individual churches – highlighting ongoing themes of leadership, vision and theology; and questions about to what extent decline reflected decreasing social, rather than religious, utility.

Membership and Adherence

Responding to Brown's claims of a 'religious revival' in the 1950s, followed by a collapse in the 1960s, Clive Field has produced two recent studies which substantiate a more gradualist story of decline, reinforcing Robin Gill's earlier analysis.[13] Field found that Anglican electoral rolls – a wide definition of adult 'membership' – fell in both absolute and relative terms throughout the 1950s. Easter communicants, however, rose by 25 per cent between 1947 and 1962, to around 7 per cent of population in 1956, remaining flat thereafter.[14]

Chapter 4 showed that electoral rolls for the 6 Anglican parishes covering Slough remained roughly constant in absolute terms, but declined substantially in relative terms, during the interwar period. A broad conclusion was that the church had retained 'its own' but had been largely unable to attract new adherents as the population trebled. In Chapter 2, Figure 22 showed that absolute figures remained roughly constant after WWII until after 1971, when the linkage between electoral rolls and diocesan contributions encouraged a reassessment of electoral roll membership. But again, rolls declined steadily relative to population – from 4.5 per cent

[13] Field, *Britain's Last?*; Field, *Long 1960s*; Gill, *Empty Church*.
[14] Field, *Britain's Last?*, 100.

immediately post-war, to 1.2 per cent in 1974, with no evidence of either a 1950s recovery or a 1960s collapse.

Another measure of Anglican adherence is the numbers attending communion, or the Eucharist. Table 7 shows the numbers of communicants from the 1958 and 1964 visitation returns – the only surviving sources of such parish level data. While the weekly average number of communicants rose in absolute terms, it remained roughly constant relative to population. Easter communicants decreased slightly in absolute numbers, falling from 3.8 to 3.0 per cent of population. Again, there is no evidence either of a 1950s recovery, or a 1960s collapse; and for both electoral rolls and communicants, the figures fall short of Field's national averages.

	1958					1964						
	pop'n	Easter	%	av'ge	%	pop'n	Easter	%	Xmas	%	av'ge	%
Burnham	16591	488	2.9%	89	0.5%	19625	234	2.0%	362	2.5%	55	0.5%
- St Andrew's, Cippenham							159		119		48	
Farnham Royal	18736	489	2.6%	127	0.7%	29784	414	2.2%	479	2.4%	143	1.0%
- St George's, Britwell							106		130		75	
- St Michael's, Whitby Rd							125		110		70	
Langley	7747	410	5.3%	110	1.4%	22000	447	2.0%	557	2.5%	130	0.6%
Slough St Paul's	11877	327	2.8%	104	0.9%	10602	238	2.2%	198	1.9%	60	0.6%
Stoke Poges	8949	497	5.6%	80	0.9%	10176	540	5.3%	610	6.0%	*90*	*0.9%*
Upton-cum-Chalvey	13523	741	5.5%	205	1.5%	14314	568	4.0%	594	4.1%	184	1.3%
	77423	2952	3.8%	715	0.9%	106501	2831	2.7%	3159	3.0%	855	0.8%

Table 7: Anglican Communicants 1958 and 1964[15]

However, when looking at the spiritual health of their parishes, good incumbents looked more widely. In 1966 the vicar of Datchet, a parish immediately to the south of Upton, was a senior

[15] From visitation returns, 1958 and 1964. Stoke Poges average for 1964 estimated. 1964 percentages for Burnham and Farnham Royal include daughter churches, as separate population data not available.

clergyman who would later be Rector of Upton and Archdeacon of Buckingham. Addressing the annual parochial meeting, he welcomed increased communicants at major festivals, but almost immediately dismissed them: 'I don't think we ought to attach much significance to these figures: just compare them with the population ... and remember that about a quarter are baptised Anglicans'.[16] Of far more significance was regular attendance. Communicants had doubled over the past 8 years, partly due to an increased number of families attending parish communion, and more convenient service times: but were still only 2 per cent of population.[17] This 'lapsing' of Anglicans after confirmation was the real concern; and much of it was in the congregation's hands: 'the responsibility of every member of the Christian community'. Around the village, churchgoing was in 'pockets' – 'which suggests that the example of one or two families can have a very great effect on neighbours'. Echoing the thoughts of the vicar of St Paul's twenty years earlier, reported at the beginning of this chapter, the key question he posed was whether the church community was 'doing enough to keep people in the church, quite apart from the bigger issue of whether we are missionary-minded enough to attract them in the first place'.[18] This vicar was of very different churchmanship to the vicar of St Paul's: but during his incumbency, from 1963 to 1976, electoral rolls increased by 50 per cent relative to population.[19] Again, this does not substantiate any macro analysis of 1950s recovery and 1960s decline; but rather, indicates the beneficial agency of a good incumbent and committed congregation.

If any global trends can be discerned from the data in Figure 22 and Table 7, they seem more consistent with Archbishop Lang's words to the 1935 Church Assembly, referred to in Chapter 1:

> This problem of making spiritual provision for the populations of the new districts which were being formed in many parts of the country was the greatest that had been presented to the Church in our generation. It might almost be said to be one of the greatest ever presented to

[16] 'Datchet: Vicar Calls For More Church Attendance', *SE*, 22 April 1966.
[17] 'Earlier Services So Families Can Have Outings', *SO*, 1 March 1963.
[18] 'Datchet: Vicar Calls For More Church Attendance'.
[19] Crockfords, Oxford Diocesan Handbook

> the Church of England in the course of its long history ... some dioceses ... were almost breaking down under the magnitude of the problem.[20]

And further comments from the Chairman of the Oxford Diocesan Church Extension Fund: 'if the problem is not tackled now, it will be impossible, humanly speaking, ever, to recover the lost ground'.[21] Whether or not it was impossible to achieve a different outcome, the post-war electoral roll figures are one way of quantifying the consequences of the virtual collapse of the parish 'offer' to large numbers of residents of interwar Slough.

Locally, any changes are consistent with the fine grain of such an analysis, with all its ups and downs. For example, the two energetic priests-in-charge of St George's Britwell and St Michael's Whitby Road in the southern part of Farnham Royal had some success in building committed new congregations on the rapidly expanding estates next to the Trading Estate. Communicants kept pace with population growth, although electoral rolls remained flat. But as Table 7 shows, the figures were painfully low – very much churches 'at the margin'. On the other side of town, a new vicar in Langley, installed in 1949, was able to 'turn around' the parish in the first 10 years of his incumbency. The electoral roll doubled to 4 per cent of population and Easter communicants rose to the levels seen in adjacent Stoke Poges and Upton. After 17 years in post, he pointed to one of our preferred measures of commitment – that apart from day to day parish finances being in good health, £45,000 had been raised for capital projects during his incumbency.[22]

Next door, the number of communicants in St Paul's was significantly lower relative to population – but as the only evangelical parish in the area, it would have viewed 'success' rather differently. Using finance as a yardstick, St Paul's fared well - being the most successful parish in raising funds for church extension and other purposes. The sharp drops in communicants in 1964 in St Paul's and Upton, the two parishes least affected by the building of new housing estates in

[20] 'Problems Of The New Areas'.
[21] 'Seventeen Million English "Pagans"'.
[22] 'Langley: The Joys Of Vicarhood', *SO*, 10 June 1966.

this period, can also be attributed to another local factor – a significant demographic change due to Caribbean and Indian sub-continent immigration, as seen below.

Further qualitative evidence of the Church of England being as marginalised as these data indicate is not hard to find. In 1946, addressing a congregation of 50, drawn from his parish of 20,000, the Rector of Farnham Royal proclaimed 'I often think that if the attendance at this church does not improve I shall go and preach in the streets of Manor Park'.[23] A few months later, in a debate about whether a new church was needed for the Manor Park estate, a councillor estimated the regular attendance at St John's Farnham Common as 12, and at St Mary's Farnham Royal (the parish church) as 20; both exceeded by Manor Park Spiritualist church's 30.[24] In 1948, the Farnham Royal Church of England school was transferred to the Local Education Authority (LEA), as there was insufficient support to pay for needed alterations and upgrades – in marked contrast to local support for a new Roman Catholic school, built less than a quarter of a mile away.[25] This was no exception; two of the three Church of England elementary schools in Upton were similarly transferred in 1950.[26] And so on, across Slough and throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

It is a recurring argument of this study that people's willingness to give financially, as well as in terms of their time, is perhaps a better measure of true commitment and adherence than the measures normally cited. This was true for all denominations: as the Methodist Central Hall minister proclaimed in 1957: 'the problem of Church finance ultimately resolves itself into a perfectly simple question – "How deeply do I care whether there is a Church or not"'.[27] Although difficult to analyse at a macro level, the benefit of the local study is that the churches were

[23] 'May Leave Pulpit And Preach In The Streets', *SO*, 15 March 1946 There is no record of whether he did so.
[24] 'End Of "Open Spaces Or Church" Dispute', *SO*, 2 August 1946.
[25] 'Church School Taken Over', *SO*, 5 November 1948; 'Fine New Catholic School Opened', *SO*, 9 August 1940.
[26] 'Chalvey Church School To Be Condemned', *SO*, 21 April 1950.
[27] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 3.

working within the same community of people: and therefore different levels of support should indicate different levels of willingness rather than capacity.

The organisational and financial challenges of the Church of England were considered in detail in Chapter 2, with the attendant problems. The long-running issue of Anglican clergy poverty came to the fore again immediately after WWII. Many incomes were now 'less than those of an average farm worker', it was claimed, and a 'penny for the parson' scheme was launched, aiming to raise 1d per week from 'every baptised member of the Church of England' across the diocese of Oxford.[28] The plan was to raise £25,000 across the diocese within 6 months.[29] This was considered reasonable: firstly, that it was asking significantly less than the weekly cost of treats like the cinema, cigarettes, or a drink at the pub; and secondly, 'there must be many people in all parishes' who would be willing to support such a scheme, given the use made of the church for weddings, baptism and funerals.[30] Apparently not: a year later, only £5,000 of the anticipated £25,000 had been raised, with only £86 coming from the parishes in and around Slough.[31] Three years later, the scheme was raising about £7,000 per year across the diocese, a quarter of what was needed, with the Bishop warning that clergy numbers would have to be reduced.[32] The threatened retrenchments – or reorganisations – were painfully slow in coming, due to the inertia in the Church's structure. It was not until the early 1970s that some smaller parishes around Slough were amalgamated with larger neighbours. In the meantime, the consequence was to slow down church extension and clergy provision in the town's expanding areas – arguably contributing to the loss of traction shown in Figure 22. Again, this contrasts with the Roman Catholic success in motivating the working-class population of Slough to support its efforts, as seen later.

[28] 'Slough Launches Penny For The Parson Scheme', *SO*, 28 May 1948; 'The Chances Are That - Your Vicar Is Too Poor To Take A Holiday', *SO*, 10 February 1950.
[29] 'Penny For The Parson'.
[30] 'News And Views Of The Churches', *SO*, 13 February 1948; 'Penny For The Parson'.
[31] 'Help Poor Clergy Fund Gets Little Support', *SO*, 24 June 1949.
[32] 'You May Find You Haven't Got A Vicar Any More'.

If the Church of England was increasingly marginalised, perhaps the mainstream nonconformist denominations would perform better.

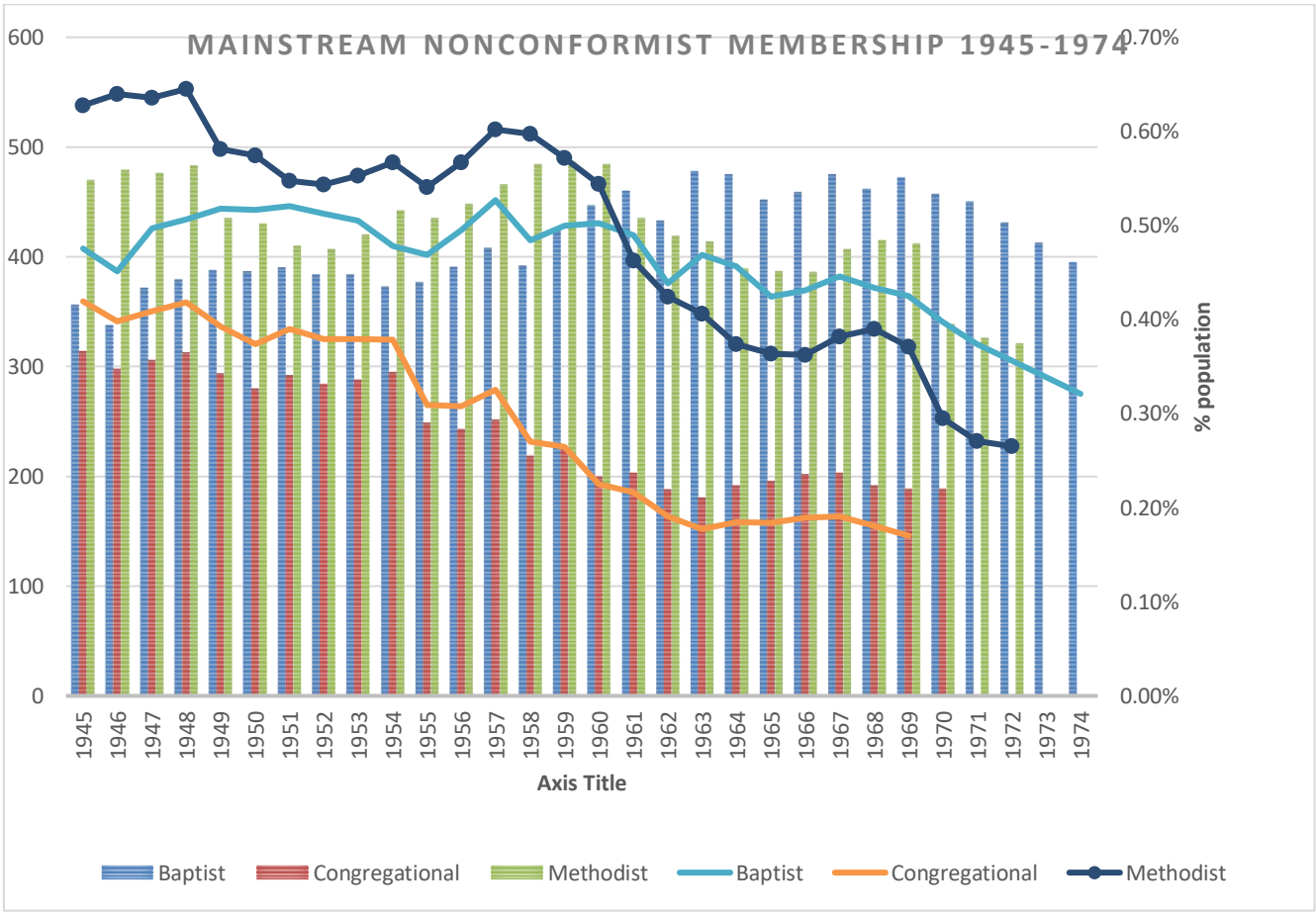


Figure 29: Slough Nonconformist Church Membership 1945-1974[33]

Figure 29 shows the combined membership of the four Baptist churches – Slough, Langley, Cippenham and Britwell; three Congregational churches – Slough, Burnham and Upton Lea; and four Methodist churches – Central Hall, Cippenham, Hampshire Avenue and Ledgers Road, shown by denomination. In absolute numbers, the Baptists grew slowly in the twenty-five years after the war, starting to decline in the early 1970s. Methodist membership stayed relatively flat, before again starting to decline in the early 1970s, while Congregational membership declined steadily. There were variations between churches – generally, churches in the centre of town

[33] BH 1945-1974; CY 1945-1970; Methodist as Figure 30.

remained at best static, with any declines offset by growth in some of the church 'plants' on the new housing estates.

Relative to population, Baptist membership remained constant at about 0.5 per cent before starting to decline slowly from the mid-1960s. Methodist decline began a few years earlier, while Congregational decline relative to population was constant across the period. These data differ somewhat from Field' national analysis – of declines relative to population in all three denominations between 1945 and 1963, of 16 per cent for the Baptists, 19 per cent for the Congregationalists, and 5 per cent for the Methodists. [34]

As with the Anglican electoral rolls, the figures support neither a 1950s recovery, nor a 1960s collapse: local factors are more persuasive in explaining any variations. From the mid-1950s, the growth of the Gospel Tabernacle – the subject of a Case Study below – made 'deep inroads' into the membership of the mainstream denominations, according to the Baptist Church's chronicler.[35] The church claimed 80 members in 1948, 400 in 1964, and 600 in 1974.[36] The Presbyterian church, established in 1941 and largely serving the Scottish diaspora, claimed 200 members by 1950 and 400 by 1962.[37] These two churches' combined membership of around 800 in 1964 compares with a reported 1056 for the Baptist, Congregational and Methodist churches. Table 8 shows that the combined membership of these five groupings grew in absolute numbers, and relative to population remained roughly constant at around 2 per cent for the twenty-five years after the War. And as seen below, if the effects of Commonwealth and Catholic migration are considered, the proportion of the notionally non-Catholic Christian population committed to these five groupings may have increased.

[34] Field, *Britain's Last?*, 30–31.
[35] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 119.
[36] 'Church Doubles Membership', *SO*, 23 January 1948; W T H Richards, *'Build My Church': A Fascinating Story about the Pioneering & Establishing of a Church through Personal Evangelism* (Slough: Gospel Tabernacle, 1964), 60; 'That Old Fashioned Religion In A New-Fashioned Way', *SO*, 13 September 1974.
[37] 'Scots Now Have Their Own Church', *SO*, 10 February 1950; 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 9 February 1962.

	Baptist (reported)	Congregat'l (reported)	Methodist (reported)	Presbyter'n (est)	Gospel Tabernacle (est)	Total (est)	Combined Relative to Population
1950	387	280	430	200	100	1397	1.9%
1960	447	200	484	400	350	1881	2.1%
1970	457	189	339	450	550	1985	1.7%

Table 8: Major Free Churches, Slough 1950-70[38]

And these were not the only non-established churches to grow significant congregations: in 1972, the Jehovah's Witnesses claimed a membership of 134, the Seventh Day Adventists over 100; the Salvation Army and various West Indian congregations were also significant.[39] The Free Church 'story' in post-war Slough is more consistent with diversity, transference or fragmentation than decline.[40]

Comparing Figure 22, Figure 29 and Table 8, the nonconformist denominations might therefore seem to have negotiated the post-war years rather better than the Anglican churches, in purely numerical terms. However, the levels of adherence fall below Field's estimates for 1963, of approximately 9 per cent of population for both the Anglicans and the Free Churches (taken as a group) for this level of commitment.[41] The conclusion might be that all churches lost traction relative to the massive population expansion of the town in the interwar years; that for the Anglicans, the continuing mismatch between resources and the expectations of the parish system

[38] BH 1950-1970; CY 1950-1970; Methodists as Figure 30, Presbyterian as note 37; GT as note 36.
[39] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 20 October 1972; 'Around Slough Churches', *SE*, 22 January 1971; 'Salvation Army March To New HQ', *SE*, 20 September 1968.
[40] John Wolffe, 'Towards the Post-Secular City? London since the 1960s', *JRH*, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12447 is a recent article making similar points.
[41] Field, *Britain's Last?*, 29ff,103.

resulted in continuing marginalisation, while the combined Free Churches saw some growth relative to population, but with significant divergences between different groupings.

Methodist Churches

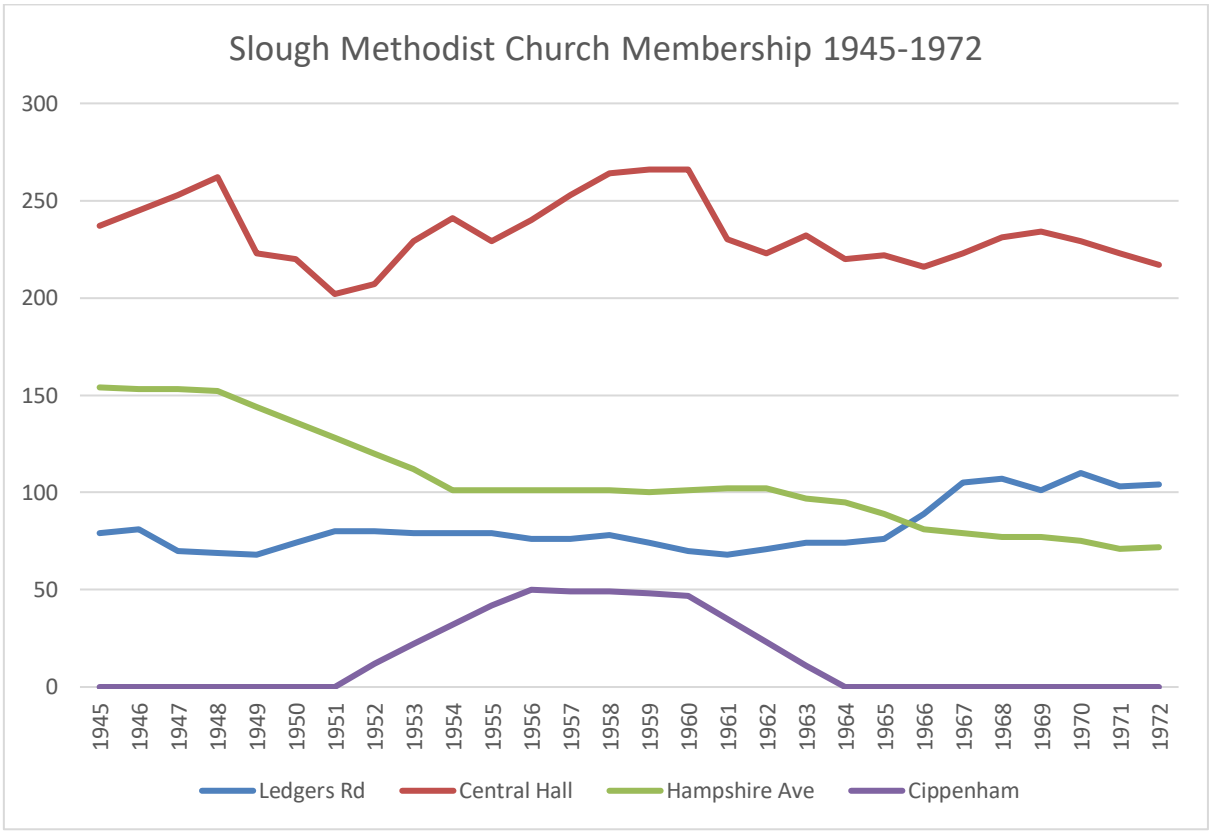


Figure 30: Slough Methodist Church Membership 1945-1972[42]

Even such a summary disguises differences between different churches of the same denomination, or in similar locations and targeting similar demographics. The Baptist and Congregational churches are studied in the next chapter; but Figure 30 shows the post-war membership figures for the four main Methodist churches in the town – Central Hall, Hampshire Avenue, Ledgers Road, and Cippenham.

[42] *Slough Observer*; Colin Shepherdson, 'The Ledgers Road Story', 1991, Slough Library; Colin Shepherdson, 'St Andrew's Methodist Church Slough: Silver Jubilee 1966-1991', 1991, Slough Library; Methodist Central Hall, 'Notes on the History of Windsor, Maidenhead and Slough Methodist Circuits', 2004, DMC19, BRO.

The Central Hall is considered in some detail below. The absolute membership of Ledgers Road was relatively flat, but declines in Sunday School attendance and ongoing financial concerns led to a proposal from the local Circuit that the church be merged with Central Hall – around 1 mile away to form one strong central Slough congregation. This was rejected by the membership in 1963, and the church subsequently grew in the later 1960s - probably due to being welcoming to Commonwealth immigrants.[43] Meanwhile, the membership at Hampshire Avenue, 'a strong church' during the War, with a significant Welsh contingent boosted by war workers on the Trading Estate, declined by one third in the early 1950s.[44] After 'flattening out' in the later 1950s, the membership began a slow decline which continued after our study period ends. This appears to have been due to an ageing congregation with a declining youth work – for example, the Boys Brigade company, previously flourishing, closed in 1959 – that transferred insufficient members into the main membership to replace those lost through death or moving away.[45] This is considered further in the next chapter. Meanwhile at Cippenham, a well-funded church closed within 10 years, because 'it was being poorly supported'.[46] Why this was is unclear – but perhaps churchgoers saw better alternatives: nearby, the Baptist Cippenham Free Church and the Anglican St Andrew's were doing well.

Some differences between individual churches can be attributed to demographic factors, therefore. But might there be other factors – about internal dynamism, leadership or vision, which might also be at play? In his wider Baptist history, Ian Randall traced internal disquiet over core spirituality in the 1920s and 1930s, which could result in 'much programme and little power'.[47] Chapter 4 highlighted evidence of this lack of internal spiritual vitality in the local Congregational and Methodist churches.[48] But it appears there were similar issues for the local

[43] Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 11.
[44] Methodist Central Hall, 'DMS69 1A/2'.
[45] Ibid.; 'Hampshire Avenue Methodist Church Leaders' Meeting/ Church Council Minutes', 1977, DMC67, BRO.
[46] 'Cippenham: Former Church May Become Youth Centre', *SO*, 18 February 1966.
[47] Randall, *English Baptists*, 160-161,207-208.
[48] 'Induction of Mr F T Smallwood'; 'Why Christianity Is a Minority Movement'.

Baptists. Addressing Slough Baptist Church in 1941, the president of the Baptist Union challenged the congregation: 'in the Church itself, discourse was intellectual rather than inspiring and there was a deplorable lack of joyousness in worship', and the congregation needed to take the initiative in inviting their friends and by setting a Christian example.[49] The churches regarded themselves in poor spiritual shape as they entered the post-war era, therefore.

Minutes of the regular meetings of Leaders and Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall shed light on this, and how the membership figures in Figure 30 can be interpreted. There is evidence of a loss of internal vitality, and a steady decline throughout the 1950s. As early as 1949, the Leaders considered how to encourage lapsed or irregular members – a regular topic thereafter.[50] In 1951, they concluded that many on the membership roll – then 202 – were 'not truly members' in terms of their commitment.[51] There was reluctance to remove members from the roll, but to clarify 'self-severance' when people did not re-engage with the church despite encouragement. The apparent increase in the membership shown in the early 1950s should be seen in this light. There were occasional 'culls' of the roll – 28 were removed in 1949, bringing the reported number down to 223 – and a steady trickle of removals of 'lapsed' members – 5 in 1952, 7 in 1955, 4 in 1956.[52] Of those who remained members, many were 'too elderly' to meet, however.[53] Sunday morning congregations declined: in 1951, the services were moved from the 1,000 seat main hall to the 600 seat second hall – the leaders drily observed ' there was a low risk of overcrowding' through this move, apart from special services such as Remembrance Sunday - when the normal congregation was expanded by civic considerations, rather than increased piety.[54] By 1958, regular congregations were around 200; attendance at a 'Seven Lessons And Carols' service in December 1958 was noteworthy for attracting 450 to 500.[55] Weekday

[49] 'Ald Bowyer At Baptist Church', *SO*, 3 October 1941.
[50] 'Leaders Meetings', 21/11/1949.
[51] Ibid., 29/6/1951.
[52] Ibid., 3/12/1952, 23/2/1955, 7/3/1956.
[53] Ibid., 29/6/1951.
[54] Ibid., 29/11/1951.
[55] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 17.

attendances also declined – it was hard to persuade people to attend prayer meetings, and there were 'even fewer' at some other meetings; in 1956, a Fellowship weekend attracted a low attendance.[56] Eventually, in 1962 the tip-up seats in the Main Hall were replaced by 300 chairs 'thus finally reducing the capacity from 1,000 to 300 in 30 years'.[57] And using one of our preferred indicators of commitment, finances were a constant source of concern - 'the constantly recurring financial crisis' was one minister's 'chief anxiety about our church'.[58]Subsequently, of course, the Central Hall – now far too large – was sold in 1966 and a new 250-seat church built nearby.[59]

The Leaders regularly considered this spiritual malaise and what could be done about it. As might be expected, their meeting minutes tend not to focus on any negative analysis but rather on the agreed actions. However, one minister used his monthly pastoral newsletters to regularly chide indifferent members. There was a difference between being 'committed' and 'just coming to church' – between being a 'family member' and an 'interested spectator'. [60] But some members simply did not even come regularly, not attending for 'weeks and months' –'if all of us regarded our Church membership as lightly as some people do, there would be no Church left for us to go to on those few occasions when we decide to be present'.[61] Indifference to Christianity in wider society was directly related: 'I believe that the answer to the apathy of this generation is to be found in the missionary enterprise of all Christian people, and not simply in the zeal of ministers of religion, though that does count enormously' – echoing other views quoted already in this chapter.[62] And in this church at least, he felt it was seriously lacking:

> why is it that in these latter days we leave such personal evangelism to cranks and fanatics, to people whose Gospel, we are convinced, is a perversion of the genuine thing. We may laugh at their beliefs, but ... are we Methodists showing one tenth of the zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses who go from door to door?[63]

[56] 'Leaders Meetings', 2/9/1953, 25/5/1955, 6/6/1956.
[57] Shepherdson, 'Is It Only 25 Years', 47.
[58] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 9.
[59] '£80000 Methodist Church Is Opened', *SE*, 16 December 1966.
[60] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 8.
[61] Ibid., no. 24,13.
[62] Ibid., no. 17.
[63] Ibid.

In other signs of apathy, a 'Focus on Discipleship' campaign during Lent 1961 was generally viewed to have 'failed'.[64] There were problems recruiting suitable class group leaders – in 1964, the minister had 60 in his Class Book, and felt he needed 3 or 4 new leaders to be able to cope adequately. Consequently, 'the failure of the class meeting accounted for the lack of fellowship in the church' – although one could question which was cause or effect.[65]

Due to this lack of missionary zeal, one 'big failure' of the church was seen by the Leaders to be the 'lack of friendliness towards newcomers from the general body of church members'.[66] The over-large Central Hall did not help – people used to smaller churches found it impersonal – and existing congregation members might appear clique-y; 'I find the Central Hall people very friendly in a casual sort of way, but I never really got to know anybody'.[67] One minister speculated that 'many hundreds of people in Slough have "tried" the Central Hall and drifted away from us' in consequence.[68] The mobility and rootlessness of Slough's population did not help – 'not a very fertile soil for the Church to grow in' and some formerly committed church members might take the opportunity of moving into the town to 'slip into complete anonymity' church-wise: which might be seen as somewhat contradictory diagnoses.

Coming as they do from the church's official records, these comments reflect the leadership's side of a story. In one of the few congregational memoirs to have survived, however, one London couple remembered choosing to worship at the Central Hall because it had been more welcoming than other churches they had visited – 'many totally ignored us'. They had been very active in both their previous churches, but despite the welcome they received, on arrival at the Central Hall they 'did what many others have done before and since, we "laid low" and enjoyed a quiet time' – which, judging from the memoir, they seem to have very much enjoyed. [69] The husband

[64] 'Leaders Meetings', 7/6/1961.
[65] Ibid., 2/3/1964, 9/9/1964.
[66] Ibid., 29/6/1951.
[67] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 37.
[68] Ibid., 31.
[69] Shepherdson, 'Is It Only 25 Years', 76.

was one of the Society's Stewards. If this attitude was indeed widespread, then the church's ministry would indeed have suffered through a shortage of willing lay workers.

The Central Hall's membership figures in Figure 30 can therefore be seen in a different light. Generally, membership declined – albeit slowly – in the post war period, becoming more elderly; commitment declined, reflected in lower attendances; the congregation became scattered across the town and less committed to fellowship meetings outside Sundays; this had a double effect on newcomers – existing congregation members used Sundays as their opportunity for fellowship with friends, and so were less likely to look out for – or even recognise – the newcomers; and there were fewer fellowship opportunities for those newcomers in any case. This was a church 'hollowing out', or stagnating, if anything; certainly not one experiencing any 1950s resurgence followed by a 1960s Armageddon.

The Central Hall documents are noteworthy in the continuity of the concerns – going back to the end of WWI at least: concern over perceived apathy and indifference to the church, and the effect of changing social attitudes to leisure, the use of Sunday, and certain moral issues. In this church at least, concern over the 'sexual revolution' is notably absent.

The Central Hall's records are by far the most complete to have survived for this period – whatever the denomination. But there were signs elsewhere that weakening church commitment was due in part to wider social change. In 1941, the president of the Baptist Union had spoken to the Baptist Church of attendances declining because new housing estates were too far away for children to walk to church; the effect of smaller families, so that the children of church officials alone no longer 'made up a respectable congregation' (and, one might surmise, in which there was therefore a stronger element of obligation – or even compulsion), and wireless services giving the less committed an alternative to Sunday worship.[70] In 1955, the Central Hall leaders had linked lack of midweek attendance to the distances that some lived from the church, and

[70] 'Ald Bowyer'.

debated whether the solution was to offer transport, or to set up 'cottage meetings' on the estates where people lived.[71] At Slough Baptist, the minister wrote in the January 1957 church magazine:

> When our church was built, it was in the middle of a neighbourhood area – all walked to church, time was plentiful, everyone knew everyone else intimately and after worship opportunity was taken for conversation in which friendship in the Lord was deepened and strengthened. Now all has changed. Traffic and commerce is all about us, worshippers travel by bus and are more concerned about the bus queue after the service. Attendance in the week is rare, and they scarcely know each other.[72]

While the Central Hall's membership declined very slowly during the post-war period, Slough Baptist's membership remained static at around 250 over the next few years, despite the town's growth: the increase in overall Baptist numbers shown in Figure 29 was at Cippenham and Langley. Then in the 1960s, membership began to decline, falling to 200 in 1968. The church's historian attributed this partially to the church losing its evangelical zeal, but also a failure to introduce a new and freer style of worship that particularly appealed to the young and those looking for a more vital spiritual experience in church life.[73] He concluded: 'broadly, those churches that entered whole-heartedly in what was recognised as a fresh and powerful move of the Holy Spirit prospered. Those who did not ... saw their congregations slowly slip away. Sadly, Slough Baptist Church appears to have been one of the latter'.[74]

A complex picture emerges. Societal change meant people were further away from church and had to make more effort to travel in; perhaps the reasons for them to do so therefore needed to be stronger. At the same time, within the congregations themselves there was a loss of vitality, perhaps compounded by looser relationships. Over time, this resulted in some church congregations changing markedly. Some years after this study ends, St Andrew's Methodist, successor to the Central Hall and still the largest Methodist church in the town, was described as

[71] 'Leaders Meetings', 25/5/1955. Cottage meetings were, of course, common in earlier Methodism.
[72] quoted in Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 115–16.
[73] Ibid., chap. 25.
[74] Ibid., 131–32.

'a gathered Church rather than a neighbourhood Church, with many members travelling quite some difference to attend services and meetings'.[75] Members seemed to be drawn together by social considerations 'teachers, nurses and accountants proliferate'.[76]

There were significant challenges for church leaderships, then. In the mid-1950s, one departing Methodist minister, who had previously worked in the north and Wales, declared: 'of all the places I have worked ... I believe Slough is one of the worst for lack of spiritual life. I have found the further south I go people are less enthusiastic about spiritual living'.[77] This seems an unlikely explanation, particularly since many Slough residents were migrants from the north and Wales: perhaps more plausibly, he felt 'Slough was difficult because it was such a new town'. Difficult, maybe: but there was one example in the town that showed that it was not impossible.

The Gospel Tabernacle

The Gospel Tabernacle was a church established in the middle of WWII by a 27 year old ex-miner from Wales, who heard 'a call' to Slough – 'a town I had heard about only a few times, and in which I had not the slightest interest ... [and where] I did not know one single person' - while ministering in London.[78] By the time of his death in 1974, the church had grown to over 600 members, meeting in a 450 seat building that had been extended several times over the years; over 1,000 children per week attended the 28 children's and youth clubs across the town; several thousand were subscribed on to correspondence courses on evangelism, in a ministry that extended well beyond Slough.[79] His funeral was attended by over 1000, and a memorial service at London's Westminster Chapel by 1600.[80]

[75] Shepherdson, 'Is It Only 25 Years', 53.
[76] ibid
[77] 'The Church in Slough [24-08-1956]'.
[78] Richards, *'Build My Church'*, 10.
[79] 'Old Fashioned Religion'; 'Around Slough Churches', *SE*, 8 November 1974.
[80] 'Pastor Richards: "A Man Of Vision And Inspiration"', *SE*, 20 September 1974; 'Joyous Farewell To Pastor Billy', *SO*, 8 November 1974.

The Gospel Tabernacle appealed to those who 'wanted something more' than was being offered by the mainstream denominations – whatever their age. One 88 year old, an ex-Baptist and Congregationalist, who had at various times been a deacon, Sunday School teacher and lay preacher, moved to the Tabernacle in 1950 at the age of 84 because the mainstream churches 'lacked real life and gusto'.[81] At the other end of the age spectrum, a 20 year old girl had been taken to the church by a friend when 14, and was now involved in several children's and youth activities and the choir.[82] In later years, the appeal of the church was in its relevance and community: in 1954, the church proudly proclaimed '12 reasons why you should attend the Gospel Tabernacle', regularly advertising the claims thereafter:

1 You will find real friendship
2 You will find that the Services will appeal to both old and young
3 You will be uplifted and strengthened to do your week's task
4 You will meet hundreds of happy people whose lives and homes have been transformed
5 You will find healing for body as well as soul
6 You will find a Church that gives priority to your children
7 You will find a Minister and Members whose chief concern is to help you
8 You will find the burdens and cares of life can be lifted
9 You will find Services arranged for all age groups
10 You will find a Gospel that works
11 You will find the Services are "alive" and enjoyable
12 You will find out the secret that brings over 650 adults, young people and children to the Services, Club and Schools of the Gospel Tabernacle each week[83]

This perhaps reads like a 'to do' list for many a church. The church certainly created the strong sense of community and commitment that other non-conformist churches were struggling to maintain – the 20-year-old reported being in church on four weekday evenings and both Saturday and Sunday, alongside her full-time job as a typist at a local engineering firm.[84]

The Tabernacle was not only relevant and friendly, but well versed in contemporary means of communication. The Pastor broadcast regularly on Radio Caroline, and the BBC's Morning Service

[81] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 1 January 1954.
[82] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 30 April 1954.
[83] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 5 November 1954; 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 21 February 1958.
[84] 'Church in Slough [30-04-1954]'.

came from the church in May 1965.[85] The two local newspapers were generally empathetic and gave helpful publicity.[86] At various times, the *Observer* printed a monthly 'sermonette', from which it is possible to 'hear' the Pastor from a distance of 50 years, preaching an unflinchingly evangelical message, defending traditional Christian positions on theology, behaviour and morals.[87] In addition, during the 1960s the Pastor duelled regularly through the *Observer's* letters pages with the liberal Vicar of Colnbrook on issues such as miracles, divorce and remarriage, evangelism, contraception and the virgin birth.[88] In what now looks like a throw-forward to a later age, the Pastor introduced modern music into services, and was comfortable with a high media profile that made him a local 'celebrity'.[89] As the *Observer* was to put it later, 'that old-fashioned religion in a new-fashioned way'.[90]

But the claim was that this was not just a matter of slick marketing and a friendly congregation, but that the Tabernacle was a place where supernatural things happened. An *Observer* reporter attended a healing service in 1952 and published five profiles of Slough residents who had variously been healed of deafness, blindness, diabetes, a stiff neck, and severe back pain.[91] The Pastor said: 'we do believe that God can heal [people] today as he did in the past'. More widely, testimonies of personal spiritual encounter given by ordinary congregation members were a regular feature of services. After one service with testimonies by a butler, manager, salesman and plumber, the Pastor explained: 'the idea is to show people Christ can satisfy people whatever their occupation'.[92]

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[85] 'Preaching Through The Pops', *SE*, 28 May 1965.
[86] Ibid.
[87] 'One Minute Sermon', *SO*, 23 March 1956; 'Monthly Message', *SO*, 14 January 1972.
[88] 'Around And About: Controversial Priest', *SO*, 3 February 1956; 'Vicar Challenges Ban On Divorcees', *SO*, 8 November 1957; 'Colnbrook: Vicar Criticises Crusade', *SO*, 6 May 1966; 'Letters Extra: The Pill For Teenagers', *SO*, 24 January 1969; 'Letters: Vicar Offers Pastor A Debate On Virgin Birth', *SO*, 5 September 1969.
[89] 'Sixteen Good Reasons For Services To Go With A Swing', *SO*, 11 December 1959; 'The Church That Began With One Man And A Leaky Hut', *SO*, 26 June 1964.
[90] 'Old Fashioned Religion'.
[91] 'The "Observer" Investigates "The Place Of Miracles"', *SO*, 13 June 1952.
[92] 'Faith - and Four Men and a Girl', *SO*, 11 September 1953; 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 1 April 1960.

The Pastor's methods were not to everyone's taste. In 1963, he conceded: 'some people may find our methods unorthodox but I think they are justified because we get the message over'.[93] Somewhat earlier, when the priest at St Laurence's had compared clergymen's efforts to attract congregations to those of 'theatre-managers', one of his targets was clear: 'with an anxious eye on the empty seats, may God forgive us [if] we have often found ourselves ordering not public worship but public entertainment'.[94]

If the churches were losing traction and/or becoming marginalised, then one might ask, firstly, whether they recognised this and what actions they took; and secondly, with the benefit of an historian's hindsight, what actions they might have taken.

Outreach and Visitation

As discussed, in the interwar years the days of people coming to church as a default, perhaps largely social, obligation were ending – however much church leaders might rail against this. After WWII, perhaps only in the Roman Catholic community could the churches depend on 'their people' coming to them – which they did in their thousands. But in the Protestant churches, a ministry model primarily based on serving a 'gathered' community had to change. For the twenty-five years after WWII, various strategies can be seen – house to house visiting; focusing on children and youth; attempting to make church services more appealing to families; and adapting the church's message to make it more 'contemporary' (which might mean adapting – some would say conforming – to changing social or political norms). The church's ministry to the young is considered in Chapter 6, and its wider message in relation to society in Chapter 7. This section will briefly examine the outreach challenges for marginalised churches.

In the smaller parishes around the fringes of Slough, the old expectation that the 'parson' would be well known and visible within the parish might still hold true – in Hedgerley, for

[93] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 1 February 1963.
[94] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 7 May 1954.

example, the vicar could say 'I visit all the houses in my parish once each year and many houses three times a year' as late as 1964. But this was for a parish population still under 1,000, despite the building of a new estate. Similarly in Dorney: in the same year, the vicar reported – perhaps with tongue in cheek – 'although [visiting] does not appear to bring parishioners to church, it is certainly productive of many apologies for non-attendance'.[95] There might have been issues of time management: again in 1964, the priest in charge of St Michael's, Beaconsfield, explained that his visiting was limited because ' one of the problems here is that folk are so interested and interesting that visits tend to take a long time ... even non-church-goers are most friendly and civil'.[96]Class and age may have come into this – the 60 year old Oxford-educated priest also attributed the lack of youth work in his district to there being 'very few young people who are not away at school'.[97] But in general, visitation was highly desirable in making the church visible: 'I have found [visiting] of inestimable value in enabling me not only to get to know the people individually but in putting out new plans and ideas to them'.[98]

However, the situation was very different in the huge urban parishes in Slough. The priest in charge of St Michael's Whitby Road, at the southern end of Farnham Royal parish, spoke for his colleagues when he said of personal visiting: 'with 2,000 houses and a moving population you can only scratch the surface and in fact all your time is taken up in seeing people who have got to be seen for baptism, sickness etc'.[99] His conclusion – 'only a limited amount can be done - the lay people have got to help with this'.[100] The task was complicated by the work patterns of the working-class population: in 1958, the vicar of St Paul's reported 'mothers going to work in Factories make visiting & Sunday attendances very difficult - also awful night shifts for men'.[101] The vicar of Wexham agreed: 'difficulties here are (a) many wives as well as husbands go out to

[95] 'Dorney 1964'.
[96] 'Beaconsfield St Michael 1964'.
[97] Ibid.
[98] 'Colnbrook 1964'.
[99] 'Farnham Royal St Michael 1964'.
[100] Ibid.
[101] 'Slough St Paul 1958'.

work in the nearby factories (afternoon visiting) (b) people are very television & car minded (evening visiting)'.[102] Here, as at St Michael's, it was more productive to focus on those contacts produced by 'occasional conformity'; 'I have found door to door visiting very unsuccessful, & in a parish of this size & character, I spend time following up contacts through baptisms, sickness, funerals etc & visiting parents of my large Sunday School'.[103] This was in itself a large task – for example, in 1945 there were 159 baptisms, 118 marriages and 38 funerals in the area served by St Michael's, and a total of 1500 enquiries for the Farnham Royal parish as a whole. [104]

If meeting people in their homes was made more difficult by work patterns, perhaps the church should be meeting people during the working week, close to, or in, their workplaces. The Industrial Christian Fellowship was active in the interwar years, and in 1952 the Church of England appointed its first full-time industrial missioner, based at the Social Centre.[105] St Michael's – the closest church to the Trading Estate – began running 'industrial services' in the mid-1950s, including blessing industrial 'produce' at Rogationtide, involving a procession through the Estate itself.[106] By the 1960s, the church celebrated an annual 'Industrial Sunday' in conjunction with local Methodists.[107] During Lent in 1968, Slough and District Christian Council ran a series of 30 minute lunch-time services aimed at office and shop workers based in the town centre.[108] These initiatives aimed at bridging a divide between a church's Sunday ministry and what people experienced in their working lives. They 'had not been properly prepared for life in industry by their schools, clubs or churches', maintained a Church of England youth worker at a 'Christianity in Industry' conference. In particular, Sunday Schools were at fault – the 'system has completely

[102] 'Wexham 1964'.
[103] Ibid.
[104] 'Reprimand For Church Authorities', *SO*, 5 October 1945.
[105] 'Our Opinion: Religion At Factory Bench', *SO*, 4 January 1952; 'Link Between Church And Industry', *SO*, 11 January 1952.
[106] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 4 May 1956.
[107] 'Industrial Sunday', *SO*, 17 May 1968.
[108] 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 23 February 1968.

broken down in industrial areas'.[109] Later, Anglican clergy were routinely trained to understand 'People At Work' – but what lasting effects all these initiatives had is not clear.[110]

Where churches did engage in wider house-to-house visitation, it could only, as the vicar of St Michael's had pointed out, be accomplished by enlisting the 'lay people'. St Michael's itself found such visits generally welcomed in a limited exercise in 1955.[111] Elsewhere, most churches engaged in such activities from time to time. In 1946, Cippenham Free Church distributed 2,000 letters, and followed this up with house-to-house visitation – although no details of the impact survive.[112] Another large scale visitation was carried out by 19 young people from Stoke Poges, who visited 1,000 homes in north central Slough in 1956.[113] They reported being 'met with overwhelming friendliness, and discovered many people of all ages who are interested in church activities', including recording details of the old and lonely. What is not clear is how this was followed up – in 1958, the vicar reported that church services were 'well attended', but Table 7 shows that Easter communicants, probably reflecting peak attendance, were just over 5 per cent of the parish population in both 1958 and 1964.[114] Similarly in St Paul's parish – where a group of 18 church members spent every other Wednesday evening visiting home by home, 'finding people friendly and very appreciative'.[115]

The largest visitation project was the Gospel Tabernacle's: the door of every home in Slough knocked on over a 7-year period by a group of 30 church members, mostly young people.[116] The normally ebullient Pastor conceded that its impact in 'getting people to church' might have been limited - 'not everyone is interested, but everyone knows we are here'. Perhaps so; but when

[109] 'Women At Work Make Boys Blush', *SO*, 23 July 1954.
[110] 'Around Slough Churches', *SE*, 8 January 1971.
[111] 'Homes Welcome Church Callers', *SO*, 2 December 1955.
[112] Chudley, *Windsor Road*, 109.
[113] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 21 September 1956.
[114] 'Stoke Poges 1958'; 'Stoke Poges 1964'.
[115] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 6 June 1958.
[116] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 1 June 1956.

considered alongside the human resource demands of children's and youth work – of which more in the next chapter – few churches could afford to commit to such a long-term effort.

Perhaps it was more a question of commitment. It was not only the mainstream denominations that were committed to visitation. The Jehovah's Witnesses set up a base in Slough in 1938, with a programme of door-to-door visitation, leaflet distribution, and loudspeaker vans; and in 1959, the presiding minister estimated that, between them, the church's members were spending 700 hours per month preaching, and handling 70 Bible discussions weekly.[117] This activity particularly focused on the outlying estates.[118] Also active in door to door work were the Seventh Day Adventists, collecting for missionary work.[119] And in practice, all the churches came together for Christian Aid Week, when every house in Slough was visited for the collection: in 1966, this involved 24 churches and 840 collectors.[120] Perhaps the issue was what the churches could agree on as a priority.

However, the visitation task was further complicated by the mobile population – 'Slough is a place of passage, people come and go and there seem few who have their roots here', as the rector of Upton put it.[121] In 1974, the Bishop of Oxford specifically asked his clergy how significant a problem this was. Clergy in the large urban parishes saw this as a major problem – particularly for people in lodgings and flats.[122] And in the centre of town, church communities were dislocated by the redevelopment of the town centre and by another demographic challenge – Commonwealth immigration.

[117] 'Progress of Slough's Jehovah's Witnesses', *SO*, 26 August 1938.
[118] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 2 October 1959; 'Church in Slough', *SO*, 13 November 1959.
[119] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 10 April 1959.
[120] '21 Churches Combine Against Blot On Humanity', *SO*, 24 April 1959; 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 6 August 1965; 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 13 May 1966.
[121] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 9 March 1956.
[122] 'Langley 1974'..

Immigration

Slough's rapid growth was built on economic migration: and surveys such as for the 1951 Town Plan consistently showed a town that was generally welcoming of migrants. While interwar migration was overwhelmingly from within the United Kingdom, the war years brought in, for example, a community of Polish refugees. But a significant change began in the mid-1950s, when the first West Indian migrants arrived. Thereafter, 'immigrants' was the common local term for non-white migrants from the Commonwealth, and the rate at which they arrived was rapid – with profound implications for all local communities and institutions, including the churches.

The influx began in the mid-1950s: in early 1955, around 200 West Indians were working in Slough.[123] By 1963, there were an estimated 1,800 West Indians, 2,100 Indians, and 600 Pakistanis; and in 1967, there were around 1,500 West Indians, 4,000 Indians and 3,000 Pakistanis – meaning that 'about one in 10 people in Slough is coloured'.[124] As with interwar immigration, arrivals did not settle evenly across the town, but tended to congregate near those of similar backgrounds and heritage. A 1968 photograph of around 400 pupils at Thomas Gray school, in St Paul's parish, shows around 30 per cent 'immigrant' children.[125] In the same year, 45 per cent of the 300 pupils at Montem Junior, in next door Upton parish, were from 'immigrant' families.[126] The churches could hardly miss the change: in 1971, St Paul's estimated that 3000 of a parish population of around 11000 were 'immigrants', and in 1974 the Rector of Upton estimated that one-third of incomers to the parish were 'from overseas'.[127] While the parishes on the periphery of Slough were facing the challenges of very rapid population growth that, for example, St Paul's had faced in the interwar years, the central parishes now experienced the challenge of a fairly

[123] 'West Indians Will Be Welcome'.
[124] Israel, *Colour and Community*, 9; 'Tenth Of Slough Is Coloured'.
[125] 'One For The School Album', *SO*, 19 July 1968.
[126] 'Our School'.
[127] 'St Paul's Send Missionaries To Slough's Immigrants', *SO*, 8 October 1971; 'Slough St Mary 1974'.

static parish population numerically, but with a rapidly increasing proportion of arrivals with very different cultural and, often, religious backgrounds.

In 1966, the Slough Council of Social Service published a report on racial integration, based on a sample of 165 'coloured immigrants' interviewed in 1963.[128] This wide-ranging survey included religious affiliation and immigrants' experience of local churches. This highlighted, unsurprisingly, the very different natural religious affiliations of the newcomers, reproduced in Table 9. West Indians, given their largely Christian heritage, would find it easier to turn to the churches; Indians and Pakistanis would welcome helpful approaches, but the cultural barriers were significantly higher.

	Total	Indian	Pakistani	West Indian
Anglican	38	0	1	37
Free Churches	25	0	0	25
Roman Catholic	5	0	0	5
Hindu	36	36	0	0
Sikh	41	41	0	0
Islamic	20	0	20	0
Total	165	77	21	67

Table 9: Religion Claimed By Coloured Immigrants, 1963[129]

Purely numerically, increasing immigration from the Indian subcontinent caused the nominally 'Christian' proportion of the parish population to shrink. This sheds new light on Figure 22 and

[128] Israel, *Colour and Community*.
[129] Ibid., 15.

Table 7: such demographic change was significant enough to explain at least some of the 28 per cent drop in Easter communicants between 1958 and 1964 at St Paul's, and 20 per cent at Upton. But the impact was more profound than just communicants and electoral rolls. St Paul's earlier growth had utilised the financial support and manpower of a committed and growing congregation ('a host of willing workers', as the Bishop of Buckingham put it in 1957), now that congregation 'gradually dwindled' as many long-standing church families moved away and were replaced by immigrant families.[130] The next chapter will note that the decline was partly reversed by a focus on the young, probably from the non-immigrant part of the parish population. But later, the church felt it was key to reach out to the new immigrants: 'it is often said that for the sake of racial peace and harmony we should not mention Christianity to immigrants ... but they need the gospel just as much', said the vicar.[131] The outreach began with a house to house visitation, and later the church appointed a staff worker specifically to focus on the Pakistani community.[132]

In the early years, many of the largely Christian West Indians found homes in local churches. For example, by 1962, half the 100 strong congregation at St Michael's Whitby Road were West Indian.[133] At Ledgers Road Methodist in 1959, 20 of the congregation were West Indian – at a time when the church membership was 74.[134] But even where the new arrivals were Christians, they did not always fit into existing church communities. The Ledgers Road minister told the Slough Caribbean Club that they came from 'a land very much more religious than our own', but in this they 'could set an example to English people'.[135] That example could include a much livelier sort of worship – a journalist attending one service reported 'a fever pitch sermon and prayers, and rousing negro spirituals sung to the accompaniment of a guitar and three tambourines'.[136]

[130] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 1 March 1957; 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 25 April 1969.
[131] 'St Paul's Send Missionaries'.
[132] 'Missionary To Work In Slough', *SO*, 21 January 1972.
[133] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 7 December 1962.
[134] 'Church in Slough', *SO*, 24 July 1959; Shepherdson, 'Ledgers Road', 16.
[135] 'West Indians Are An Example To Us Says Minister', *SO*, 29 December 1961.
[136] 'Co-Op Bans West Indian Church', *SO*, 28 April 1961.

While some did find homes in existing congregations, for others the style of worship was too staid and they went on to form their own churches.

In one move somewhat symbolic of the church in the late twentieth century, in 1971 'The Church of God Of Prophecy', a group of 50 adults and children, bought the old Anglican mission hall of St Martin's, recently closed after 80 years.[137] Even in 1956, the congregation at St Martin's was elderly, numbering 15 on average but occasionally as few as one, ministered to by an 84 year old priest.[138] By 1971 it appears the elderly congregation had quite simply 'died out'. The new owners, by contrast, included all ages from 'tiny tots to old ladies' – and the worship was predictably lively: clapping, stamping, and 'music climbing up the scales'.[139]

This style was not to everyone's taste within the churches, but also aroused complaints outside. One local resident said: 'I wondered what had hit me when the West Indians started ... stamping, shouting, clapping and singing ... there is a limit to human endurance'. However, the West Indian leader felt that 'noise was not the main reason for the objections'. Apparently, a youth club which met in the same hall three times a week, including 'jiving and playing records' did not cause similar offence.[140] The minister at the Gospel Tabernacle pointed out that people did not generally complain about noise from football matches, dances and so on. The minister of Methodist Central Hall hinted that racial prejudice might be at play - wanting the West Indians to join existing congregations, rather than setting up something new: 'it would be better for race relations'.[141] Perhaps if churches had been more willing to adapt their worship styles, his wish might have been more widely fulfilled.

However, the question of race should not be overplayed. While it had initially been an issue in wider town society, Slough had always been known as a welcoming place for migrants, given how

[137] 'West Indians To Take Montem Church?', *SO*, 10 September 1971; 'They Praise the Lord And Make A Joyful Noise', *SO*, 15 October 1971.
[138] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 17 August 1956.
[139] 'They Praise the Lord'.
[140] 'Co-Op Bans'.
[141] Ibid.

many residents had once been migrants themselves; and the 1963 survey found 'no evidence of overt forms of religious conflict or dispute leading to social rejection of the coloured immigrants'.[142] Churches were in the forefront of trying to break down any 'colour bar'.[143] The survey was 'encouraged to note that several local clergymen have taken an active interest in race relations' and concluded that 'there can be little doubt that churches are among the few practical catalytic potentials in the community for the ultimate reconciliation of cultural differences'.[144]

And it was by no means just 'coloured' communities who set up churches for those of their own background and culture. Two Welsh churches were established in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the membership of the Presbyterian church, established in 1941, was almost exclusively Scottish.[145] But the prime example of a church ministering to a defined sub-set of the community was Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism

If the Gospel Tabernacle provides a comparison between the differing fortunes of the Free Churches, the Roman Catholic churches provide another comparison, perhaps particularly with the Anglican churches, operating within the same working-class communities. While focusing on one sector of the community, the Catholic holistic vision of the 'family' of the church was not so different from the vision of the Anglican parish outlined by the Anglican Bishop of Buckingham in 1933:

> 'a communal idea of religion, as a home, a family and a society ... the church with her visible society, ministry, episcopate, sacred books, sacraments, schools etc ... Her task was to enrol, enlist ... to that community of life'.[146]

[142] 'There's Beneath The Surface Colour Bar', *SO*, 4 May 1956; Israel, *Colour and Community*, 13.
[143] 'A Calypso To The Man Who Fights The Colour Bar', *SO*, 1 April 1955; 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 1 March 1963; 'Indian Farewell For Father Hinkes', *SE*, 2 December 1966.
[144] Israel, *Colour and Community*, 14.
[145] 'First Presbyterian Service'; 'Scots Now Have Their Own Church'.
[146] 'Growth of Slough'.

There had been a small Roman Catholic community in Slough since the nineteenth century: and as already seen, the town's first priest had been a well-respected local figure.[147] His successor was similarly well-regarded; and the town appears to have been largely free of sectarian rancour. But the Roman Catholic community was small – in 1885, around 100 in a parish covering not only Slough but also the surrounding villages – until the influx of the interwar years.[148] There are no records of the numbers of Catholics arriving at this stage; but as early as 1924, the school attached to St Ethelbert's had to be enlarged, and in 1932, the growth was such that the first assistant priest was appointed.[149] In 1934, the Bishop of Northampton confirmed 180 candidates, and in 1937 a 2,000-strong procession celebrating the feat of Corpus Christi marched through the town's streets.[150] The major draw was, of course, jobs on the Trading Estate; so families settled on the new estates in the Farnham and Burnham areas. By 1939, it was estimated that 1300 Catholics lived within St Ethelbert's parish.[151] But the greatest expansion in the Catholic community occurred during and after World War II – in 1963, it was estimated that there were 5000 Catholics in Slough, and the proportion of children baptised as Catholics was estimated at one in six, up from one in eighteen in the 1930s.[152]

The influx placed huge strain on existing resources. In 1956, St Ethelbert's reported overcrowding at two of its five Sunday morning masses – with 600 people cramming into the 350 seat church for the 10 am service.[153] Two months later, the church was reportedly 'packed almost to suffocation' each night of a week-long mission.[154] And this was at a time, as seen above, when some Anglican congregations were pitifully small, and Methodists were seeing Slough as something of a spiritual desert. And the regular commitment continued: in 1963, it was estimated

[147] 'Sudden Death of Father Clemente'.
[148] Carey, 'Our Lady Immaculate'.
[149] Ibid.
[150] 'Great Week for Slough Catholics'; '2000 in Corpus Christi March'.
[151] 'Big Gathering Of Catholics'.
[152] 'Every Sixth Baby'.
[153] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 6 January 1956.
[154] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 16 March 1956.

that 3000 attended mass at St Ethelbert's each Sunday – 'we have to pack the people in with a shoe horn. Many have to stand' – with similar pressures elsewhere.[155] Similarly, Catholic schools were overcrowded almost immediately they opened.[156] The Catholic approach to education is examined further in the next chapter.

The influx prompted the creation of new parishes – between 1945 and 1980, the original St Ethelbert's parish was divided into seven – new churches, priests' accommodation, and, given the importance attached to specifically Catholic education, schools.[157] The initial phase, from 1940 to 1960, involved four new schools and was estimated to require £119,000 to be raised from local Catholics, alongside their normal weekly offerings.[158] Subsequently, new churches in Langley and Burnham, cost £17,000 and £25,000; but costs – and perhaps ambition - escalated and by the 1960s, new churches at Farnham Royal and Wexham cost £70,000 and £78,000 respectively.[159] While debts on the initial phases were cleared relatively quickly, reduced government grants for Catholic schools increased debts significantly from the 1950s.[160] By 1971, the parish debt in Langley stood at £95,000, with weekly contributions only covering interest payments.[161] Financial pressures caused some retrenchment; in Cippenham, plans to build a new Catholic church were shelved and the shared church of St Andrew's was built instead.[162] Nevertheless, the commitment of predominantly working-class local Catholics to capital projects in the post-war period compares favourably to the mainstream Protestant denominations.

The increased Catholic presence resulted in increased recognition in various ways. The first civic service at St Ethelbert's was held in 1951 – only 10 years after the first civic service at a non-

[155] 'Every Sixth Baby'; 'Overcrowded Catholics Want Two New Churches', *SO*, 18 September 1964.
[156] 'Not Enough School Places For Catholic Children', *SO*, 31 October 1952; 'Farnham Royal: Long Waiting List At St Anthony's School', *SO*, 17 June 1960; 'So Many Children Problem For RC School', *SO*, 1 December 1961; 'St Joseph's Face Problem Of Overcrowding', *SO*, 19 July 1968.
[157] 'New Catholic Parish Gets First Priest', *SO*, 23 May 1980.
[158] '300 Local Catholics At Protest Meeting', *SO*, 16 December 1949.
[159] 'Bishop Lays Stone Of £17000 Church', *SO*, 5 October 1956; 'Milestone For Burnham Catholics', *SO*, 14 February 1958; 'A Dream Come True', *SO*, 28 February 1964; 'Catholics' £78000 Church', *SE*, 7 March 1969.
[160] 'Bishop Talks Of Crisis Over Catholic Schools', *SO*, 24 October 1958.
[161] 'Langley: Catholics Warned About Plight Of Church Finances', *SE*, 5 March 1971.
[162] 'Cippenham: Joint Church For Anglicans And Catholics', *SO*, 20 October 1967.

conformist church, and nine years after the first such service at an Anglican church other than St Mary's. [163] A practising Catholic was elected the town's mayor in 1961, 'rarely missing attending Mass at 7 am each day' during his year of office.[164] By 1965, speaking at the opening of a new church hall in the town centre, the priest at St Ethelbert's referred to Catholics being a 'fighting minority' in the past, but now ready and willing to play a full part at the heart of town life.[165]

The increased recognition was not just in civic matters, but ecclesiastical. In 1961, Anglican, Congregational and Methodist ministers were amongst 250 Protestants attending a High Mass at St Ethelbert's, as part of the Week of Christian Unity.[166] The priest at St Ethelbert's was closely associated with the rector of St Mary's, the minister at Central Hall, and the Presbyterian minister in promoting Christian unity thereafter. From 1966, Catholics joined in united services at other churches; in July of that year, the St Ethelbert's priest preached at St Mary's for the first time.[167] The rapprochement clearly pre-dated the Vatican II changes, introduced from the beginning of 1965.[168]

Here, then, was a community defined by its religion, with the church and church life at its heart. Sarah Williams found this in her study of early twentieth century Southwark: 'religion formed part of the symbolic system of meaning by which this community was constituted', and defined its ethical base: 'popular definitions of what it meant to be truly religious, to sin, and to be moral'.[169] However, the religion that Williams analysed was a popular religion that, while containing elements of orthodox Christianity, and conformity with its periodic rites and rituals, saw no need for regular churchgoing. The Roman Catholic community in Slough, however, was characterised by very high levels of mass attendance – if this was a 'popular religion', it appears

[163] 'Corporation And Catholics Make Borough History', *SO*, 13 April 1951; 'Civic Leaders At Congregational Church', *SO*, 31 January 1941; 'First Civic Service at St Paul's', *SO*, 9 October 1942.
[164] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 25 May 1962.
[165] 'Mayor Opens Modern £4000 Hall For St Ethelbert's Church', *SE*, 9 April 1965.
[166] 'History In The Making', *SO*, 27 January 1961.
[167] 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 8 July 1966.
[168] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 22 January 1965.
[169] Williams, *Religious Belief*, 13.

to have been more closely aligned with orthodox Christianity than Williams found: within the period of this study at least.

There was significant financial commitment involved; but this created a community life of its own – with a constant round of dances, fetes and other social events to raise funds.[170] Young people were catered for by various guilds, sports clubs, and uniformed organisations such as Scouts and St John's Ambulance.[171] The church took a noticeably softer line on moral issues – Sunday games and cinemas, whist drives, football pools - than some of the Protestant churches: perhaps not openly challenging working-class mores until the contraception debates of the late 1960s.[172] The 'fighting minority' was prepared to battle for its religious identity - including, for example, fights with the Local Education Authority over travel costs and fees at Catholic schools.[173] And comparing Table 7 and Table 8 with the claimed 3,000 weekly communicants in 1963, the Catholic 'minority' may actually have represented approaching half of all church attendance in Slough on an average Sunday. Descriptions of 'institutional marginalisation' – or 'believing without belonging' – need to be consequently nuanced.

There are signs that the Catholic expansion was slowing, or coming to an end, towards the end of our study period, however. Holy Redeemer church in Wexham, seating 600, was opened in 1969; however, only 18 years later it was demolished and a smaller 250 seat church built, 'to cut costs'.[174] Whether this was because of reduced adherence, or a lower number of Catholics due to demographic changes, is not clear.

[170] for example, 'RC Sale of Work Raises £115', *SO*, 5 November 1943; 'Bishop Opens Garden Fete - Under Umbrella', *SO*, 21 July 1950; 'Target For Convent Fete Of £2000', *SO*, 13 July 1962.
[171] 'St Ethelberts SJAB Division', *SO*, 3 September 1943; 'Catholic Scouts On Parade', *SO*, 22 April 1966.
[172] 'Sunday Games [26-09-30]'; 'Priest in Favour of Sunday Cinemas', *SO*, 1 May 1936; 'New RC Guild Room Opened', *SO*, 14 January 1944; 'Priests Welcome Pope's Ruling On The Pill', *SO*, 2 August 1968; 'Catholic View On Married Love Misrepresented, Says Father Burditt', *SO*, 20 September 1968.
[173] 'School Fares - Catholics Win The Day', *SO*, 14 May 1948; 'Catholics Win Fight To Get County To Pay School Fees', *SO*, 22 December 1960.
[174] 'Catholics' £78000 Church'; 'Date Set For Start Of Church Building', *SE*, 4 September 1987.

Other Religious Groups

The focus of this study is on organised religion within the recognisably orthodox Christian denominations. But a significant feature of post-war Slough was not just a fragmentation in the support for orthodox Christian groups - the Tabernacle and Presbyterian churches, and the Salvation Army and Brethren – but other much less orthodox alternatives. Here, the few sources available rely on the declarations of the groups themselves, and so merit some caution. But it seems clear that groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses grew substantially from the 1960s onwards. This fragmentation is again consistent with Brierley's figures, where it is only minority groupings that show both absolute and relative growth after WWII.[175]

Whether support for other groups – orthodox or unorthodox – was a reaction against the perceived shortcomings of the major denominations, or a response to the entrepreneurial activity of the new groups, it does indicate an openness to 'belong' to a corporate worshipping body, rather than an individualistic 'believing without belonging'. The late appearance of some of these groups within the timeframe of this study means that whether such growth from small beginnings could be sustained in the longer term is an open question.

Internal Dysfunction?

The preceding discussion has highlighted incidences of apathy and lack of welcome. There are hints that the church's message may have lacked perceived relevance to people's everyday lives. But visible internal division could be particularly damaging to recruitment for churches 'at the margin'. Such divisions in the churches were apparently not unusual. Addressing the Anglican clergy and churchwardens in 1974, the Bishop of Oxford urged that 'the 'them/us' syndrome must be exorcised so that skirmishes between rival interests stop'.[176] This was a longstanding problem - for example, in the interwar years the insularity in Hitcham parish simultaneously

[175] Brierley, 'Religion', 654–55.
[176] 'More Young People Needed For Ministry Says Bishop', *SO*, 30 August 1974.

hampered its outreach and made it unwelcoming and unappealing to incomers. In the post-war years there is some evidence of not just dysfunction, but of internal infighting. Churches were clearly not keen to publicise this - which makes it the more notable when clergy 'went public'. In 1956, the outgoing priest-in-charge of St Andrew's Cippenham condemned a group who were 'fractious and contentious because [they] cannot have [their] own way '.[177] This 'surely suggests a lack of Christian charity and restraint' he declared. A section of the congregation of Wraysbury petitioned the Bishop of Oxford to oust the vicar – the dispute becoming public in 1957.[178] The Vicar of Burnham was in regular public conflict with his congregation over issues such as changes to service patterns and the future of the church youth club.[179] And in 1964 the Vicar of Colnbrook publicly identified his own congregation as the largest barrier to making the church more attractive to new people.[180] The incumbents survived this opposition – the vicars of Wraysbury, Burnham and Colnbrook served until 1974, 1977 and 1978 respectively – but whether the reputation of the church did is another question. These were disputes sufficiently public to make their way into the local press: one that did not, but would clearly have been nonetheless visible locally, occurred in the hamlet of Dropmore, just west of Farnham Royal and north of Burnham. In his 1958 visitation return, the vicar gave full voice to his frustration at internal resistance and conservatism:

> The great difficulty is the extreme exclusiveness of certain vocal members of the PCC: some of the PCC think that if anyone resides just outside the actual parish boundaries, they have no right to attend Dropmore Church!! ... Major XXX & his wife cause a great deal of trouble by having shadow meetings & trying to arrange things before PCC or other meetings are held. Their particular characteristic is their utter meanness & 'dog-in-the-mangerish' attitude to other people's giving – trying to stop other people from giving so that their lack of giving is not shown up. Major XXX's sarcastic attitude to people in general prevents the average person from voicing his or her opinion anywhere & tends to make the PCC a two man show, Vicar versus XXX. Unless nothing is to be done in the Parish at all – teaching, raising money & anything else, it has got to

[177] 'Cippenham: Vicar Hits At "Rule The Roost" Group', *SO*, 30 November 1956.
[178] 'Vicar Talks of "Plot" Against Him', *SO*, 28 June 1957; 'Wraysbury 1958'.
[179] 'Burnham Vicar's Clash With Church-Warden', *SO*, 25 April 1958; 'Burnham: Vicar Accused Of Lacking Faith', *SO*, 27 January 1967.
[180] Daniel, *Enemy*.

be Vicar versus XXX. Major XXX was born & brought up in this district, but has not lived many years in this Parish. He is a JP, Deputy Lieutenant for Bucks, ex-High Sheriff & an old Etonian.[181]

Things had not improved 6 years later – the next year for which a visitation return has survived.[182] How widespread such attitudes and behaviour were, is of course hard to establish, although the Bishop of Oxford's 1974 admonitions suggest they were not uncommon. Examples such as the above present only one side of the story, but that is perhaps immaterial: regardless of the circumstances, the very incidence of such infighting would have undermined the attractiveness of the Christian community and potentially fuelled any 'Christian hypocrites' rhetoric.

Conclusions

Returning to the historiographical themes highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, Slough affirms some theories but also provides evidence that points in quite different directions. In terms of visible adherence, the Anglican churches experienced a slow decline relative to population. The loss of traction in the interwar years as the Church's parish system was unable to scale to meet the dramatic influx of newcomers proved irreversible, as Archbishop Lang had predicted – at least in the near term. While 'occasional conformity' saw the church continue to be utilised to anchor major life events, in terms of more regular adherence absolute numbers stabilised throughout the 1950s and 1960s, but at less than half the country-wide average.

The three mainstream nonconformist denominations also declined, but at different rates. The Congregationalists and Methodists suffered from an inability to recruit – either from within, in transferring their children into adult membership, or from without, in recruiting incomers to the town – to replace those moving away or simply lost through death. The Baptists were more successful in this, particularly in the church plants at Cippenham and Langley; but suffered in the late 1960s from a failure to embrace new worship styles and methods. There was, however,

[181] 'Dropmore 1958'.
[182] 'Dropmore 1964'.

growth within orthodox Free churches – in two very different contexts. Firstly, the Gospel Tabernacle demonstrated that strong leadership, a contemporary message, and an activist gospel directly relevant to everyday life, could demand – and generate – a high level of commitment. It also, consciously or unconsciously, provided a level of 'competition' to the mainstream denominations for the already committed that were looking for something more from their Christian experience. Secondly, the Presbyterians were successful in building and maintaining a strong congregation focused on the Scottish community, with a service style little different to the Congregationalists. The alternatives provided by these two latterly established churches may have resulted in some 'recycling of the faithful' at the expense of the longer standing mainstream nonconformists.

The Presbyterians found a place at the heart of the Scottish diaspora in Slough. Even more significantly, the strong support for the Roman Catholics demonstrated that the pre-war centrality of a church in community life once enjoyed by the Church of England and mainstream Free churches could still be true in post-war Britain. The Roman Catholics provided strong cultural and social utility within the Irish community.

The nonconformist churches fared better; and there was probably growth relative to population in the thirty years after the War. However, this growth was accompanied by fragmentation – the 'religious plurality' identified by other researchers.

What are notably absent, however, is any evidence of a downshift in church adherence in the 1960s, or of a downshift triggered by changes in social attitudes specific to the post-war period, rather than a continuation of a gradual move away from traditional, 'Christian' mores that dates back to WWI, if not before. And at least as relevant were the changes wrought by immigration; the pressures of industrial life on the work and home lives of ordinary people; the loosening of ties within church fellowships as churches became more 'gathered' rather than local communities; and the ability of church leaders to motivate their memberships to reach out, as

people were less likely to come to church regularly as a matter of course. While wider conclusions are drawn later, this study confirms Ian Jones' assessment that more analysis is needed to form balanced assessments of post-war religious decline.[183] It also suggests, however, that Jones' generational analysis does not appropriately account for either the Roman Catholic or Gospel Tabernacle's relative strength.

The next chapter will consider how a church's fortunes fluctuated according to its attitude to the young and families.

[183] Jones, *Local Church*, 175.

Chapter 6 The Church And The Young

In February 1982, the Welsh Congregational Church held its last service in the Marystrong Hall before it was demolished.[1] Vandals had damaged the building, built in 1929, beyond the point where the elderly congregation could afford the repairs. How had it come to pass that the once flourishing church – membership over 100, 12 deacons, and a Sunday School with an attendance of up to 190 – had dwindled to a regular congregation of around 20?[2] 'We have very few young members', said a 79-year-old church elder: 'I think we are a lot to blame for that because we never taught them Welsh. So when the children come to the services they can't understand the sermons'.[3]

Various thoughts may be prompted by the elder's comments – why hold services in a language understood by only a diminishing few? Why did the young not see learning Welsh as important? Was 'learning Welsh' about inculcating religious faith in the young, or Welsh culture? In practice, it was often difficult to separate the church's activities and those of the local Welsh Society.[4] But more widely, the Welsh Congregational Church's experience speaks for many churches across Slough – those that focused on the needs of children and young people generally fared better; and more specifically, those that were successful in transferring the young into their committed memberships flourished long after the decline or demise of those that did not.

This is hardly revolutionary – all churchmen knew the four-thousand-year-old principle: 'train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'.[5] The writer did not specify who should do the 'training'. In twentieth century Slough, the religious training of children was shared in varying degrees by parents; churches – in particular, their Sunday Schools; day schools;

[1] 'Vandals Close Welsh Chapel', *SE*, 12 February 1982.
[2] 'Record Broken At Marystrong Church'.
[3] 'Welshwoman's Sad Farewell', *SO*, 12 February 1982.
[4] for example 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 13 June 1958.
[5] Proverbs 22:6.

and other Christian organisations. For a headmaster, it was primarily the parents' responsibility: 'I don't think parents realise how important it is that they should help and encourage their children in religion'; in fact, 'a sound religious background' was key to a wider education.[6] For a senior Anglican clergyman, church day schools were 'the most important' of the 'agencies ... engaged in the instruction of the young'.[7] For a Baptist, 'the Sunday School movement [is] one of the greatest assets of the nation'.[8] For a Congregational minister, 'the religious training of children was perhaps the most important question today. They were the citizens of tomorrow, and they must be good citizens'.[9] While there was much agreement as to the desired outcome, there was a variety of approaches – and varying levels of financial and human commitment behind them.

Transferring the young into committed members was not just 'a numbers game'. All churches depended on volunteers to staff their various activities, or to finance paid workers to carry them out. Churches needed to replenish their workforce as the elderly became too infirm, or died. And in the meantime, churches that looked 'elderly' might be less attractive to young people and young families migrating into the area, so compounding the problem. People could be active in church work for a long time, so these effects could take many decades to work themselves out – as at Marystrong – but with a certain inevitability about the result.

This chapter will consider some evidence as to the relative fortunes of churches that did or did not focus on the needs of the young, and the costs of so doing; and then consider in more detail the varying strategies adopted – for example, whether they focused on 'churched' or 'unchurched' families, the balance between preparing children to be good citizens and to be faithful disciples, and the ways in which methods, and perhaps message, adapted to changes in society.

[6] 'Don't Forget Religion', *SO*, 18 December 1953.
[7] 'Church Conference 5-1922'.
[8] 'The New Baptist Sunday School Buildings', *SO*, 19 May 1933.
[9] 'New Upton Lea Congregational Hall', *SO*, 10 May 1940.

Sunday Schools

The primary church work amongst the young was, of course, the Sunday School – particularly in the Free Churches. In 2007, Doreen Rosman surveyed the fortunes of Sunday Schools against a backdrop of the changing social climate of the twentieth century.[10] Her analysis affirmed the familiar picture of a peak in the late nineteenth century, but a significant role in many communities well into the twentieth century. From a peak of 75 per cent, Sunday School attendance experienced a slow decline to a figure of 47 per cent by 1947; the decline accelerated from the mid-1950s, until by the late 1980s less than 10 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 were attending Sunday School.[11] While acknowledging attempts by churches to update their methods, Rosman attributed the decline mainly to changing parental attitudes, particularly by non-churchgoing parents. Sending one's children to Sunday School was a component of the 'occasional conformity' of popular religion identified by Sarah Williams - doing 'the right thing' by one's children.[12] In the first half of the century, 'the right thing' involved giving one's children a religious education in Sunday School, with no expectation that this might result into an ongoing church commitment; latterly, as attitudes changed, there was less parental compulsion - or possibly the secular day schools took on the role of providing the basic religious education. In either event, Sunday School attendances suffered accordingly.[13] This, of course, is a 'demand-side' explanation: while acknowledging the changes in the social climate, the focus of this study is on whether the churches themselves contributed to the decline.

Chapter 3 included an extended discussion of the role of Sunday Schools in Slough before WWI. This period was, according to Rosman, the 'high watermark' for both absolute and proportional Sunday School attendance.[14] However, Chapter 3 showed that, even with a steadily growing population, and around 70 per cent of children enrolled in Sundays Schools, fortunes varied widely.

[10] Rosman, 'Sunday Schools'.
[11] Ibid., 150,156; See also Gill, *Empty Church*, 225.
[12] Williams, *Religious Belief*, chap. 4.
[13] Rosman, 'Sunday Schools', 152,154,157-158.
[14] Gill, *Empty Church*, 225.

Numerical growth was almost entirely accounted for by the newly established St Paul's and Baptist churches, and proportional expansion at St Mary's and St Peter's.[15] Apart from Ledgers Road, the Methodist schools were static, and the Congregational schools declined.

Chapter 3 highlighted the challenges of supporting the Sunday Schools work, particularly if it was growing. New facilities were needed, at significant cost to the local congregation. Many teachers were needed and had to be regularly replenished. In the short term, churches that were successful in mobilising the necessary financial and human resources were generally more successful in their overall numerical growth. However, 'the cause and effect' were slightly more complex than simply accommodating additional children. The willingness of congregations to make the necessary commitments could be a sign of wider missional enthusiasm, and the more outward-looking a church was, the more likely it was to grow. Incomers with no denominational affiliation might find such churches more welcoming and attractive, particularly those with young families. The activities around the Sunday Schools provided a social life not just for the children, but also the parents. Serving as a teacher or helper knit people into the social fabric of the church, as did the constant round of bazaars and other fund-raising activities. Churches with active Sundays Schools as a central part of their mission had high social utility.

This chapter considers whether such short term 'success' was also reflected in a church's longer-term fortunes. The analysis begins by considering whether different outcomes could have been affected by denominational factors.

[15] Consistent with Rodman's estimates; Gill calculates from the total number of under 15's; in either case, very young children would have been too young to be in Sunday School, and 13 or 14 year olds may have already joined the workforce.

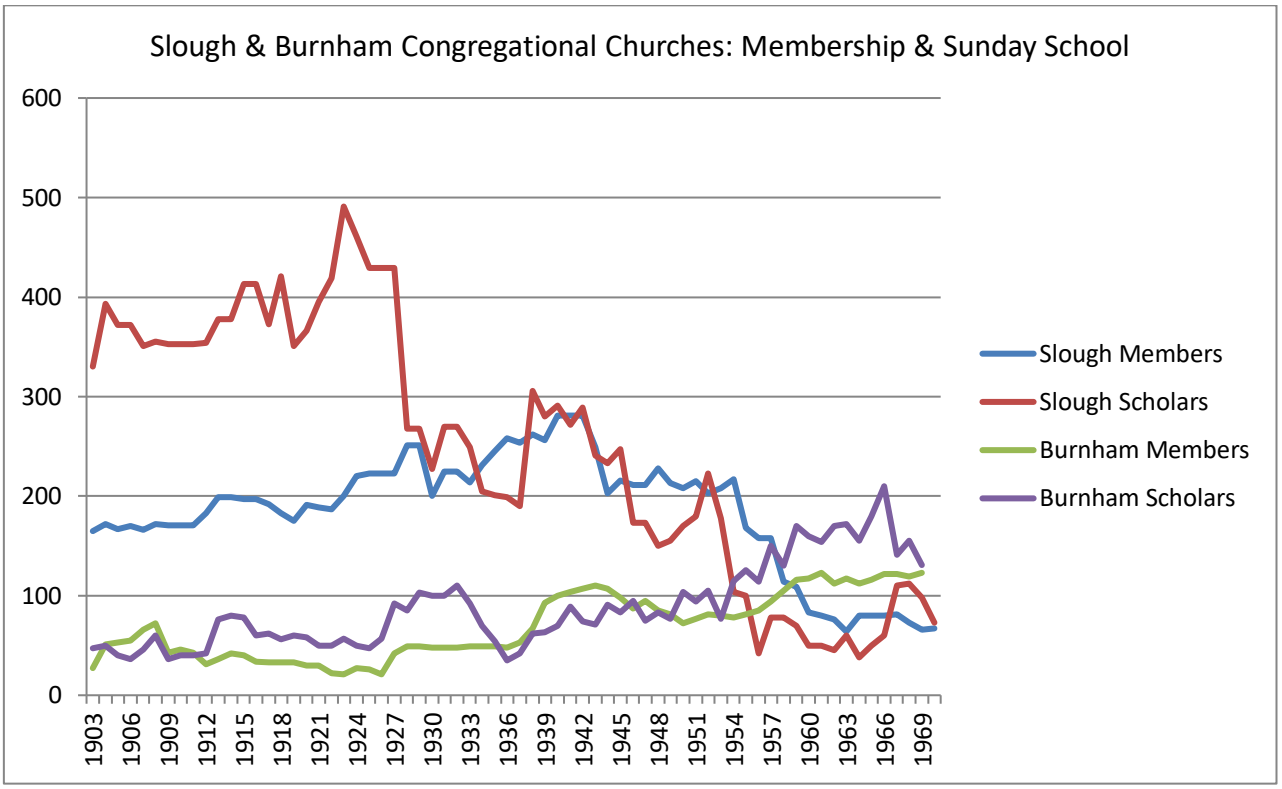


Figure 31: Slough and Burnham Congregational Churches 1900-1970[16]

Annual membership and Sunday School statistics by congregation were reported annually by all Baptist, Congregational and Methodist churches; those for the first two denominations are readily available, and the individual returns show how fortunes could vary widely over time. Figure 31 shows the membership and Sunday School rolls for Slough and Burnham Congregational Churches from 1900 to 1970.[17] In Slough, Sunday School rolls peaked at 491 in 1923, declining to 73 in 1970. Membership peaked at 248 in 1948 – that is, 25 years after the Sunday School peak – and declined to 67 in 1970. Meanwhile, at Burnham, Sunday School rolls grew from 58 in 1923 to 210 in 1969, and membership grew roughly in line with this, from 30 in 1923 to 122 in 1969. From being by far the smaller church, Burnham grew to around twice Slough's size over a 50-year period.

Annual reports reflect the day to day ups and downs of any organisation, and the personalities of the leadership – some inclined to be positive whatever the circumstances, others less so. However,

[16] CY 1900-1970.
[17] Slough figures include the halls at Chalvey and Langley, primarily used for Sunday Schools.

over time, patterns emerge. Slough Congregational's Sunday School facilities were historically poor: insanitary, cramped, and freezing in winter.[18] The demand was there – children were being turned away for lack of space – but the issue was funding: as discussed, perhaps a symptom of a wider lack of commitment from the membership. Eventually, a small hall was completed in 1923, with an extension in 1928 that finally gave the Sunday School sufficient 'clean, wholesome and healthy' facilities, at a cost of £2,000.[19] This was not without an 'extraordinary series of setbacks', which clearly included tensions between the Sunday School and some members of the church membership.[20] And in the meantime, rolls had dropped precipitously, to half their peak.

Meanwhile, at Burnham the positive effects of good leadership, and focusing on the needs of the young families moving into the rapidly expanding village, are apparent. Within a year of an energetic, inspirational new minister arriving in 1928, membership had doubled from 21 to 42, and £1,000 had been raised to replace a dilapidated hall with a new hall focused on Sunday school work. The Sunday School also doubled, to over 100; growing steadily thereafter – with a few ups and downs.

Slough Congregational members could claim that the growth in population was away from the immediate area around the church. Slough Baptist Church, around 200 yards from the Congregational Church, faced similar challenges.

[18] 'Slough Congregational Church Centenary Brochure', 2; 'Chalvey Congregational Sunday School [27-06-1914]'.
[19] 'Congregational Sunday Schools', *SO*, 30 March 1928.
[20] Ibid.; 'Congregational Sunday School', *SO*, 15 June 1928.

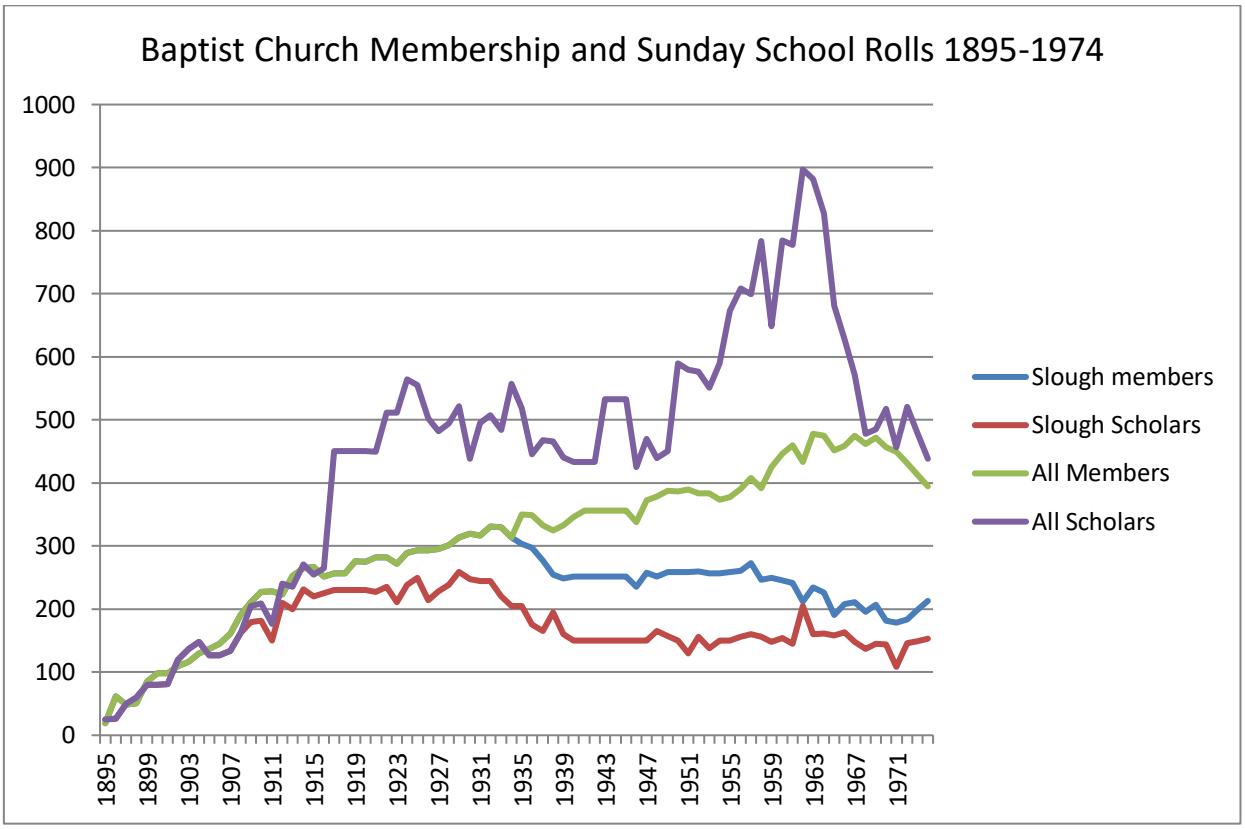


Figure 32: Slough, Cippenham, Langley and Britwell Baptist Churches 1895-1974[21]

Figure 32 shows the equivalent data for the Baptist Church to the Congregational data in Figure 31. The rapid growth in membership of Slough Baptist compared with Slough Congregational in the period up to 1914 has already been seen; the Sunday Schools grew similarly rapidly, with around 230 on the roll in 1914 compared with around 380 at the Congregational Church. Thereafter, the Slough membership peaked at 330 in 1933, and the Sunday School roll at 260 in 1929. There were subsequent declines, but at a slower rate than the Congregationalists. The more energetic Baptist church failed to substantially grow its central Sunday School, therefore. This was partly due to 'competition' from increased capacity in the centre of Slough – the Sunday School at the huge new Methodist Central Hall had a 'regular attendance' of 273 within 6 months of opening, over 100 more than in the William Street and Herschel Street Sunday Schools that it replaced.[22] But the main reason was that the new housing estates in Manor Park, Farnham Royal and Upton Lea were up to 2 miles

[21] BH 1895-1974.
[22] 'Central Hall Sunday School', *SO*, 19 May 1933 Later, the new Presbyterian Sunday School was further 'competition'.

away: perhaps within reach for church families prepared to walk together, but not for families with less committed parents. For a while, the Baptists ran a free bus service between Manor Park and the afternoon Sunday School.[23] The initiative was short-lived, perhaps because this was 'competing' with Sunday Schools at Marystrong and Hampshire Avenue Methodist: but also because the real answer was to place Sunday Schools within the centres of population.

Figure 32 shows that although the central church's membership and Sunday School peaked in the early 1930s, overall Baptist participation in the town grew strongly, through the church 'plants' in Langley, Cippenham and Britwell. Over the 50 years after 1914, when Slough 'adopted' the Langley Mission, the three plants added 250 members and 660 Sunday scholars to the totals. In each case, the initiative began with a Sunday School, leading later to the establishment of a church, initially under the overall leadership of the central Baptist Church, then leading to a fully independent church.[24]

Again, investment in facilities was required. New school halls cost £5,500 at the central church, opening in 1933; £1,250 at Cippenham (1940); and £8,000 at Langley (1958).[25] But this was not the only commitment expected of the congregation. As already noted, Sunday Schools were labour intensive, and required significant levels of organisation, week in, week out. One preacher could address a congregation of 25, 100, 200 or more. But Sunday Schools required an army of teachers and helpers. The high levels already noted in the pre-war period if anything increased: at Slough Baptist in 1929, 248 Sunday scholars required 32 teachers; and at Methodist Central Hall in 1939, an estimated 50 members were involved in some way in the Sunday School, then numbering around 200 scholars.[26] An independent church like Burnham Congregational, therefore, was limited in its capacity to grow its Sunday School work simply through lack of people. The Baptists could address

[23] 'Buses to Sunday School', *SO*, 23 July 1937.
[24] for example, 'Religion's Amazing Headway in Cippenham', *SO*, 25 February 1938.
[25] 'Sunday School Buildings'; 'Cippenham Baptists' £1250 Hall'; 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 12 September 1958.
[26] 'Baptist Sunday School', *SO*, 3 May 1929; 'Pageant At Central Hall', *SO*, 16 June 1939.

this by asking members to help with their local Sunday School 'plant' – worshipping in Windsor Road in the morning, say, and helping at the Cippenham Sunday School in the afternoon.

But Sunday School work was relentless - reports regularly flagged the need to bring on new teachers to cope with growth and new groups, to replace those who were moving away, or those who were simply tired. As the Congregational Sunday School Superintendent noted: 'there was a constant falling off of teachers ... and they must either grow new ones or else they must be obtained from the Church'.[27] In the smaller churches, there could be a limited pool of those willing to make the necessary commitment. Back at the Welsh Congregational church, where our chapter started, the hitherto healthy Sunday School closed in 1950 through lack of teachers. Despite repeated urgings from the leadership, it took four years to find enough manpower to restart; by which time, children and families had moved elsewhere – only one little girl turned up when the school reopened in 1954.[28]

As will be seen, the same principles applied to all churches and all aspects of their work among the young. Such work meant short term investment – time, money – for a long-term gain: bringing children up as Christians, and, in the much longer term, inducting them into the church membership where they could make their own contribution of time and money for the benefit of the next generation. And in a town with such significant migration, the investment might be for incomers' children, not one's own family and friends. Everyone would agree on the benefits; but the voluntary mobilisation of time and money would show the real level of commitment.

Such a response could come from a sense of duty or simple generosity. Or it could be as a response to a missional call – that is, to the church's responsibility to reach out to others. At the Baptist Church, members were urged to 'place the demands of the child first' and to make the 'highways' more attractive than the 'lower ways', in an era where everyone was 'out to capture the children'

[27] 'Congregational Sunday School Anniversary [1895]'.
[28] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 18 June 1954.

and there were many other distractions, for example the cinema.[29] At the Congregational Church, a minister highlighted the need for the Sunday School to be 'owned' by the church, or 'things would very likely go wrong'.[30] But 40 years later, members were being chided that, for a majority of them, 'a perfunctory attendance at worship is the beginning and end of their stewardship'.[31]

It is perhaps this lack of wider congregational 'ownership' that accounts for the failure of the Congregational 'plants' in Langley and Upton Lea to prosper in the longer term. It appears that an energetic, visionary leader was key to establishing a work, and recruiting and motivating a team of fellow workers; but for the work to endure after that leader had moved on, the work had to be 'owned' more widely, with successor leadership taking over. At Upton Lea, a retired Congregational minister with a renowned children's ministry, who moved to the area in 1937, was the driving force.[32] A Congregational Sunday School in Upton Lea began meeting in a home in 1938, then in an estate agent's office, and finally in a £420 hall, seating 100, which opened in 1940.[33] By 1942, there were 150 on the Sunday School roll, with 18 teachers involved; and by 1945, the work had expanded to include Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides, with three Sunday activities – a morning Junior Church, afternoon Sunday School, and evening adult service.[34] However, this represented the church's peak. The retired minister died in 1947: possibly coincidentally, church attendances declined rapidly despite continued population expansion in the area, and the church was abandoned by 1960.[35] In Langley, church records provide no clues as to why the longstanding Congregational Mission declined after WWI, eventually being closed in the mid-1930s.[36] However, this decline happened while the nearby Gospel Hall Mission, with its much loved and energetic missioner, was 'flourishing' with around 200 children and 20 teachers in its Sunday School.[37]

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[29] 'Sunday School Buildings'.
[30] 'Congregational Sunday School Anniversary [1895]'.
[31] 'Congregational Church 102nd Anniversary', *SO*, 22 October 1937.
[32] 'Ministers Deceased: Dorling, Frederick William Robertson'.
[33] 'New Upton Lea Congregational Hall'.
[34] 'Upton Lea Harvest Festival', *SO*, 9 October 1942; 'News From Slough Churches', *SO*, 30 March 1945.
[35] CY 1960.
[36] CY.
[37] 'Sunday School Outing [09/08/1913]'; BH.

Sunday Schools did not generally feature as highly in Anglican priorities as Church day schools, as seen below. But comparisons can still be made between Anglican parishes – particularly in those with no Church schools. Most notable was St Paul's, where the 'Stoke Gardens Mission' was formed in the 1880's around a Sunday School. When the new parish was established in 1905, the Sunday School had grown to 500 children, with 60 or more helpers.[38] The focus continued: as the Bishop of Buckingham wrote in 1942 'its careful attention to the spiritual welfare of the young has been a factor of primary importance. As a matter of fact, the Sunday Schools have been one of the largest in the whole Diocese of Oxford'.[39] Perhaps the high point was in 1930, when the annual Sunday School outing to Burnham Beeches attracted over 1,000 children, parents and helpers.[40] The occasion commanded widespread local support: lorries to transport everyone were loaned by local businesses, prizes for sports were similarly donated, and much of the food too. The total cost drawn from church funds was only £18. The *Slough Observer* noted the efficient organisation, mobilisation of massive resources and goodwill generated by this 'Parish Outing', commenting 'it is an eloquent annual testimony to the important position the Church occupies in the life of the parish, and the intimate relationship existing between the officers of the church and the Sunday School and the families belonging to them'.[41]

There is no conclusive way of linking this commitment to the young to St Paul's longer term fortunes: but 30 years later, St Paul's reported its best ever annual income, with a healthy financial surplus; and 45 years later, it was the only parish in the deanery fully meeting its financial obligations – locally, to the diocese, and to wider missions work.[42] What is clear, though, is the near term cost. The human commitment has been noted: and £4500 was collected over a two year period for a new parish hall, opened in 1933 primarily for children's work.[43] But Upton Lea was a mile away from the

[38] 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing [1906]'.
[39] Dowsett, *St Paul's*, 5.
[40] 'St Paul's Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 18 July 1930.
[41] 'St Paul's Treat'.
[42] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 13 April 1962; 'Church Members Told To Dig Deeper In Their Pockets', *SE*, 8 November 1974.
[43] 'The Gilliat Hall Opened', *SO*, 10 November 1933.

main church and hall, and with an estimated 2,000 children on the estate, there was plenty of scope for both the Anglican and Congregationalist Sunday Schools to co-exist.[44] A site was donated in 1938: £600 was then raised in 12 months to build a hall for a new Sunday School – 'a highly commendable achievement on the part of St Paul's parish which, as everyone knows, is not one of the richest'.[45]

There were different outcomes among the Free Churches; likewise, different outcomes appear when comparing St Paul's with neighbouring Anglican parishes. To the east of St Paul's, Langley's struggles in the 1920s and 1930s were attributed to under-resourcing and under-financing – both from central sources; and poor communications. This was in the same area as the failing Congregational mission – but also, the flourishing Gospel Hall Mission, as noted above. Same location, different churches, different outcomes.

Meanwhile, to the west of St Paul's, the Manor Park estate was in Stoke Poges parish. Here, the Anglicans were more proactive than in Langley; the St John's 'plant' in the Manor Park hall opened in 1935 at a cost of £1,000.[46] Within 18 months the Church Army captain leading the work reported a Sunday School of 265, 'flourishing' Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides, and 52 Easter communicants.[47] A senior PCC member commented on the focus on the young, and the Church Army's role in leading this: 'it was through the children that the parents could best be approached'. This flagged two interesting strategic possibilities: not training the child via their parents and other responsible adults (as the writer of Proverbs had implied), but bringing unchurched parents within the orbit of the church; and attracting Christian parents new to the area (of which, of course, there were literally thousands) who had no firm denominational allegiance – in both cases, through the quality of facilities offered for their children. As a recruitment strategy (conscious or not) this can be traced back to well before WWI. In 1895 a Congregational minister observed: 'every Sunday School

[44] 'Sunday School For Upton Lea'.
[45] 'Christ Church Hall Opened', *SO*, 14 April 1939; 'The Church in Upton Lea'.
[46] 'The New Church at Manor Park', *SO*, 22 February 1935.
[47] 'Success of New Church', *SO*, 17 April 1936.

was a link to hundreds of homes. The children became passports to the home, and the first link that bound the church to the neighbourhood about it was the children in the Sunday School.'[48]

While in Langley, only the Gospel Hall Sunday School was flourishing, in Manor Park parents had several choices for their children. In 1933, Marystrong's Sunday School had 208 children on its roll, and required a new hall as an extension to the main church.[49] And under the direction of the Central Hall, the Methodists began meeting in a local school, with a Sunday School in the afternoon and evening service for adults.[50] A 'school-church' followed, opening in 1937; 'a building designed for immediate use as a Sunday School and for church services ... [with] the erection of a real church in the future, the first church then being devoted solely to Sunday School purposes. This ... was the usual ... procedure in new districts'.[51] The strategy proved fruitful: and Hampshire Avenue grew into a strong independent church over the next twenty years or so. Like the Baptists in Cippenham and Langley, a strong church at the centre had the necessary resources to establish and grow 'plants' to reach critical mass.

Langley was to the east, Stoke Poges to the west; one mile to the south of St Paul's was St Mary's, situated very close to both the Baptist and Congregational churches, and so subject to the same demographic and geographic constraints. Detailed data have not survived, so comparisons are difficult: but in 1954, the rector complained that Sunday School attendance was 'lamentably small – rather a disgrace', at an average of 80 each Sunday, with less than 100 in the kindergarten.[52] Attendances had fallen 20 per cent in the last 3 years, with some children lost to 'Nonconformist Sunday Schools' and some not attending at all. The decline was attributed to a familiar cause– the location of the church, with the added factor of busy roads for children to cross. And a shortage of adults with the necessary time to devote to the work. His assistant priest went on to comment 'the

[48] 'Congregational Sunday School Anniversary [1895]'.
[49] 'Marystrong Sunday School Anniversary', *SO*, 19 May 1933.
[50] 'The New Church in Hampshire Avenue'.
[51] 'New Methodist Church for Slough'.
[52] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 8 January 1954.

old-fashioned Sunday School is, for good or ill, becoming something of a rarity' – focused as it was on church children.

Church Schools

In the early twentieth century Anglican mind, the Sunday School, although important, was not the highest of missional or programme priorities. The primary route into the Christian faith involved induction from birth through infant baptism and continued by bringing up a child within the community of faith. Religious education was key to this induction; and the primary means by which this delivered was in the day schools: 'after the Church, the schools should be next in importance', urged the Rural Dean in 1922.[53] The triennial visitation return questionnaires showed the same priorities – a whole section on day schools, with an assumption that they would be Church schools; and typically half a question on Sunday Schools.

In 1921, a representative of the National Society urged local churchgoers that it was their 'bounden duty' to preserve the Church schools endowed by their forefathers; without them, 'all continued security for the teaching of Christian faith to the children of the parish disappears'.[54] While acknowledging it was 'often the case [that] fairly good religious teaching [was] given in Council Schools', he maintained that in some, no religious instruction at all was given; and in any case, it was only in Church schools that the catechism was taught. This fell on willing ears; similarly, the oft-repeated injunction that all true education must be based on a sound religious foundation.[55] But events would show this was an expensive and arguably misplaced strategy.

At first sight, the position was reasonably healthy. Oxford diocese claimed that 528 out of 730 elementary schools across the three counties were church schools in 1929, with 49300 children out of a total of 90600 on their rolls.[56] In Buckinghamshire in 1920, there were 152 church schools and 82

[53] 'Church Conference 5-1922'.
[54] 'The Church Schools', *SO*, 3 September 1921.
[55] for example, 'Church Conference at Slough', *SO*, 1 May 1920.
[56] 'The Church Schools', *SO*, 15 November 1929.

Council schools.[57] Within the Burnham rural deanery, 12 of the 18 parishes had a church school in 1914, and 10 out of 18 in 1939. In terms of population, 43 per cent of the deanery's population lived in a parish with a church school in 1914, falling only slightly to 40 per cent in 1939.

On closer examination, the position was much weaker – described by the diocese's Assistant Bishop as 'critical' in 1929.[58] There were several challenges – population growth; increases in the school leaving age; urbanisation; and the financial provisions of the 1902 Education Act. To this might be added a fourth – in parents' minds, to what extent Church Schools offered something more than the free schooling provided through Council schools.

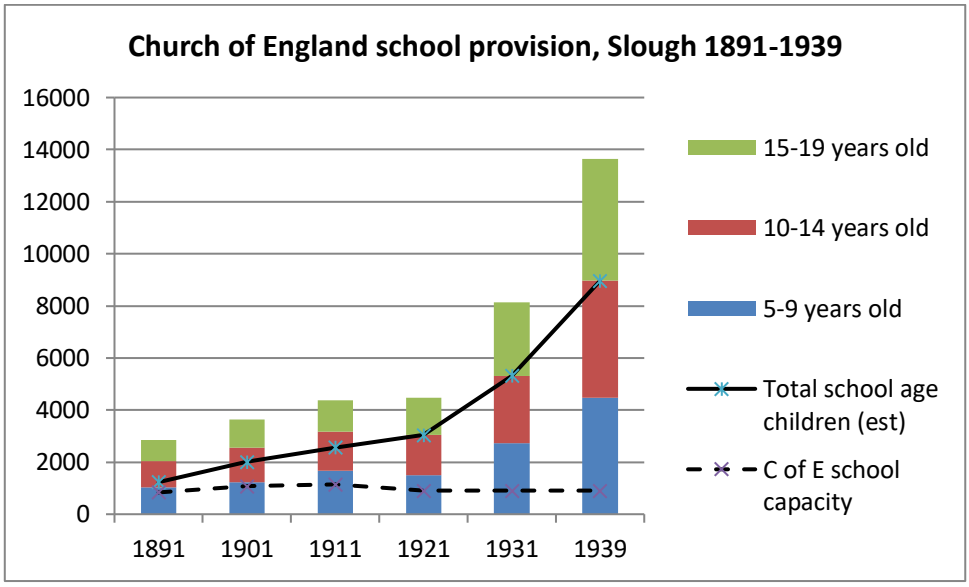


Figure 33: Church of England school provision, Slough 1891-1939[59]

Figure 33 shows the impact of rising population and increasing school leaving age on the influence of Anglican Church Schools in Slough up to the onset of WWII. The school leaving age was progressively raised from 10 years old in 1880 to 15 years old in 1947. In 1891, approximately 68 per cent of school age children could be accommodated in Church Schools – slightly higher than the national average; but by 1939, for purely demographic reasons, this had reduced to 10 per cent.

[57] 'Church Conference 1920'.
[58] 'The Church Schools [1929]'.
[59] http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10032751/cube/AGESEX_85UP, accessed 4 August 2013; Kellys.

Capacity had remained roughly constant while the number of children of compulsory full-time school age had risen from around 1,200 to 9,000.

Simply maintaining existing church school capacity involved substantial costs. The 1902 settlement made Local Education Authorities responsible for the basic running costs of church schools, including an allowance for basic 'wear and tear'.[60] But churches were responsible for any alterations and enhancements to church schools to meet rising standards – for example, to enable the serving of school meals. By 1929, an estimated £400,000 was needed to restore church schools in Buckinghamshire to the statutory level: a sum that was 'perfectly impossible ... for churchpeople ... to find'.[61] And this was before extending capacity to meet the rapidly increasing demand.

In Datchet, just to the south of Slough, 'saving our school' cost £6500, raised locally after much effort by the church.[62] In practice, the school was too large and well-attended to have been allowed to close - with a capacity of 320 and rolls of 280 in 1931.[63] The alternative was to transfer ownership to the local authority, and with it the responsibility for upgrading the school fabric up to statutory requirements. But that involved loss of church control over the religious education syllabus. Over time, it appears that fewer parents cared: in Colnbrook, after another intensive 'save our school' campaign, the vicar grumpily remarked of local parents 'it is questionable whether if the Schools were surrendered they would be much upset'.[64]

Datchet was a large village whose population, while growing, was geographically constrained. Elsewhere, church schools found themselves well away from the new estates and suffered as populations shifted – perhaps attracted to jobs in Slough. At Hitcham and Hedgerley, just outside Slough's expansion, rolls fell to unviable levels and the Church schools were closed in the 1920s.

[60] Lois Louden, 'Distinctive and Inclusive: The National Society and Church of England Schools 1811–2011' (National Society, 2012), chap. 5.
[61] 'Church Conference 1920'.
[62] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 12 November 1926.
[63] 'Datchet 1931'.
[64] 'Colnbrook 1924'.

Similarly, within Slough, the Church school at Farnham Royal was two miles north of the major new housing developments – and offered only 195 places for over 2,000 school age children.[65]

Apart from the reduction in the proportion of Church-governed school places, rising statutory standards meant that the newer state schools were also better equipped.[66] In Datchet, the Church School was not at a disadvantage as there was no alternative; but in central Slough, parents could choose between Church and Council schools. Even church parents were torn – in a 1922 parish magazine, the Rector complained that parents 'failed to realise the far more vital importance of sending their children to Church Schools than of securing for them more luxurious surroundings elsewhere', resulting in low rolls at the Infants school.[67] Perhaps it was more that the Church could not make the case; later, the Roman Catholics would show this was possible.

Meanwhile, ongoing educational reform further weakened the position. In the 1920s and 1930s, the various Hadow reports proposed the abandonment of all-age schools, with pupils transferring from elementary to secondary schools at the age of 11. In the villages, this typically meant that children would move to a secondary school in a nearby town; those who opposed the reforms saw this as 'decapitation' of village schools, further reducing their viability.[68] As seen above, there were proportionately fewer church schools in the expanding towns, further reducing the Church's influence. In Slough, there was no Church-governed secondary school in the town until 1940.[69]

Visiting the Rural Deanery conference in 1934, Buckinghamshire's Education Secretary emphasised the considerable co-operation centrally with the churches, but noted the predictability of local opposition – including the dislike of change, particularly when involving religion and schools.[70] Some such arguments seemed less a concern about a reduction in Church influence than opposition to any improvements in extending education more widely –commenting on the Education Secretary's visit,

[65] 'Farnham Royal 1936'.
[66] 'Chalvey Schools'.
[67] 'Slough Church Schools', *SO*, 8 July 1922.
[68] 'County Education Secretary On The Hadow Scheme', *SO*, 30 November 1934.
[69] 'Slough's New Church of England Senior School', *SO*, 31 May 1940.
[70] 'County Education Secretary'.

the churchgoing *Slough Observer* editor condemned 'the extravagant, needless faddisms of the Hadow Report ... a mass of pseudo-psychological twaddle', maintaining that 'the sound, simple education of the past, such as the Church of England has invariably provided in its schools, is all that is needed by the average child'.[71] But the Education Secretary also noted that 'in the long run, education, like all public services, follows public opinion' and normally 'a long way behind'.[72]

If opposition were not to be seen as simply resistance to change, the case for preserving Church Schools had to be made. This was a three part argument that had not changed since the battles over the 1902 Act – firstly, that it was the best way to guarantee children being given a sound religious education; secondly, that this was the essential foundation for a wider education; and thirdly, that religious education needed to involve induction into the Church – including its denominational practices and teaching.[73]Winning the argument centrally was one test of whether the case had been made; raising sufficient money locally to upgrade existing church schools, and to build new ones, was another test of public opinion. During the 1920s and 1930s the Church struggled to win the argument on the first two points.

In part, this was because it was hard to maintain that Council schools did not deliver religious education. The county's policy was 'that definite instruction in the principles and practice of the Christian faith shall be systematically given in every school'.[74] This included beginning the day with a hymn, the Lord's Prayer and other prayers, an optional Scripture reading, followed by 20-30 minutes of religious instruction.[75] One senior churchman conceded that 'the religious teaching in some of the secondary schools was extraordinarily good'.[76] Despite church concerns that it might be seen as an optional extra, 'less important than arithmetic or geography', a local Council elementary school

[71] 'The Church and Hadow', *SO*, 30 November 1934.
[72] 'County Education Secretary'.
[73] D. R. Pugh, 'The Church and Education: Anglican Attitudes 1902', *JEH* 23, no. 3 (July 1972): 219–32 is a detailed review of the 1902 debate.
[74] 'Religious Instruction in Elementary Schools', *SO*, 31 May 1929.
[75] 'Religious Instruction in Schools', *SO*, 24 April 1931.
[76] 'Oxford Diocesan Conference: Educational Problems in Schools and Parishes', *SO*, 1 May 1931.

headmaster took the opportunity of the annual prize-giving to emphasise the value placed on religious education.[77] 'The children seem to realise very fully the significance of this part of our work', he maintained. But this was not to induct children into any church – it was 'to give [them] a thorough training in citizenship'. Parents might have asked in what ways this differed from what was being offered in Church Schools.

Senior members of the Church of England had realised much earlier the unsustainability of the status quo. As the Great War ended, Archbishop Davidson was in favour of a co-operative approach on religious education in all schools, 'while there were still school buildings to bargain with'.[78] In 1921, the Bishop of Oxford supported an approach whereby the Dual System would be abandoned and in return for strong co-operation from all the denominations in religious education, 'all schools would be provided by the public authority'.[79] However, in 1923 the National Society AGM called on the Church authorities to abandon the policy of negotiating about "the surrender of Church Schools'.[80] This about-turn was reflected locally: in 1925 the Assistant Bishop proposed to the Oxford Diocesan Conference that Church Schools be retained, but highlighting the costs thereby incurred to refurbish schools on the 'black lists'.[81] But by 1929, he was reporting a 'critical situation' whereby insufficient money was forthcoming to fix existing problems, with no solution for the expanding populations.[82] This ultimately led to more co-operation centrally on the syllabus to be used in Council Schools within the Oxford Diocese, following on from other dioceses which had taken a more proactive approach.[83]

But this was non-denominational religious education delivered by teachers: the clergy's role in Council schools was limited to being a 'manager', or governor, with no day-to-day involvement. In

[77] 'The Church Day Schools', *SO*, 4 September 1931; 'Religious Instruction in Schools', *SO*, 24 December 1937.
[78] Louden, 'Distinctive', 59.
[79] Burge, *Primary Visitation*, 44–45.
[80] Louden, 'Distinctive', 59.
[81] 'Diocesan Conference: Resolution to Retain Church Schools', *SO*, 13 November 1925.
[82] 'The Church Schools [1929]'.
[83] 'Religion In Slough Schools', *SO*, 18 September 1931; Louden, 'Distinctive', 60–62.

Church schools, clergy were regularly involved in teaching – according to the visitation returns, often daily. Within the space of thirty years, then, the clergy had moved from being a daily part of the education of the majority of Slough's children to being so for a very small minority. Not only so, but they also thereby lost the link thereby created back to the parents. So Church schools lost significant traction – and with it, certainly in Anglican churchmen's minds, one of the main ways in which the church engaged with its parishioners.

By the early 1930s, then, the Church of England had implicitly accepted that day school education as an induction into the Church was confined to the children of churchgoers. In 1931, the Bishop of Buckingham was at pains to emphasise the good relations with the local education authorities and Council schools, but maintained it was the 'paramount duty' of churchgoing parents to educate their children as Anglicans, and therefore support the retention of Church schools.[84] The building of the new Church of England Senior School, following the rebalancing of the financial obligations in the 1936 Education Act, should be seen in this light. The school cost over £20,000, 75 per cent contributed by the local education authority, and could accommodate 400 children.[85] But the intention was limited to giving children in the Church of England elementary schools a continuation of their education in a Church of England secondary school after the age of 11.[86]

So the Church of England's influence on children's education in Slough weakened very significantly during the interwar years – at least proportionately. The absolute number of Church of England school places remained roughly constant, as Figure 33 shows. But even this proved unsustainable under the remorseless financial pressures. In 1946, the church needed to raise £24,000 to perform necessary repairs to the three Church schools in central Slough: sums that proved impossible to find, despite the normal appeals.[87] The schools were handed over to the LEA, and in 1950 one was closed

[84] 'The Bishop of Buckingham on the Church Schools', *SO*, 23 January 1931.
[85] 'New Church of England Senior School'.
[86] 'Possible Church Senior School', *SO*, 12 February 1937.
[87] 'Church Must Raise £24000 Or Lose Schools', *SO*, 7 June 1946.

as beyond economic repair, reducing the Church school capacity in central Slough by a third.[88] And as the 1944 Education Act strengthened the teaching of religious education in state schools (or, in the case of Buckinghamshire schools, made the county's policy a statutory obligation) 'parents seem increasingly to have assumed that children would get the teaching they needed there'.[89]

The local support for Church of England schools perhaps signifies the diminishing influence of the Church in everyday life, therefore – and the more so when compared with the Roman Catholic experience. The influx of migrants from the late 1920s had included many Catholics – some directly from Ireland, but many from London and the North-West. By 1939, it was estimated that 1300 Catholic children lived within St Ethelbert's parish – at this point, including all of Slough and the immediately surrounding villages.[90] The major draw was, of course, jobs on the Trading Estate; so families settled on the new estates in the Farnham and Burnham areas. Later, the influx of Londoners on to the LCC estates at Langley and Britwell included yet more Catholic families. In 1963, it was estimated that there were 5,000 Catholics in Slough, and that one in every six babies was Roman Catholic.[91]

For the Catholic Church, building schools went hand in hand with building churches in serving the new populations.[92] In the Farnham area (and, later, on the east side of the Britwell estate), St Anthony's infant and junior school, accommodating 300, opened in 1940, and the new church in 1964.[93] St Ethelbert's junior school, next to the church in the centre of Slough, was extended to 240 places in 1940.[94] In Langley, Holy Family church opened in 1957, Holy Family primary school in 1962.[95] At Upton Lea, St Ethelbert's primary school opened in 1967 and Holy Redeemer church in

[88] 'Chalvey Church School To Be Condemned'.
[89] Rosman, 'Sunday Schools', 157.
[90] 'Catholic School Foundation Stone Laid', *SO*, 5 May 1939.
[91] 'Every Sixth Baby'.
[92] 'Three New Catholic Schools', *SO*, 10 March 1939.
[93] 'New Catholic Church and School', *SO*, 30 April 1937; 'Fine New Catholic School Opened'; 'A Dream Come True'.
[94] 'Two More Roman Catholic Schools For Slough', *SO*, 17 June 1938.
[95] 'Blessing of New Langley Church', *SO*, 8 March 1957; 'New School Means Upsurge of Catholic Life in Langley', *SO*, 11 May 1962.

1969.[96] For the over 11's, St Joseph's Secondary Modern, accommodating 510 boys and girls, opened in 1958, and in 1945 the long-established St Bernard's and St Joseph's convent schools merged to become a girls' grammar school under the 1944 Education Act.[97] While some of the schools attracted up to 75 per cent local authority funding, significant sums had to be raised from local Catholics to fund these projects.

Why were Catholics more successful in engaging community support to fund their schools, as well as their churches? Alana Harris has argued that 'a distinctive Catholic culture' centred on a 'household of faith' persisted throughout the second half of the twentieth century.[98] Her study is centred on the family as 'a site for religious formation', including themes of socialisation and generational transmission, set within the context of the wider family of the Church; the home is 'the domestic church'.[99] This was not simply a social equivalence, but a theological one: the earthly family mirroring the Holy Family. Schools played an important role, as 'a prime site for religious socialisation, sustained by the Catholic community at considerable personal sacrifice'.[100]

This was borne out by Langley's parish priest, addressing parents at the opening of Holy Family primary school: 'the opening of a new Catholic school … must mean a glorious upsurge of renewed Catholic life throughout the parish'.[101] But this was indeed at considerable cost: 9 years later, the parish debt, incurred by funding the church, church hall, school and the priest's house, stood at £95,000 - the payment of which was 'the duty of our own parish', according to the priest.[102]

[96] 'St Ethelbert's RC Primary School', *SE*, 6 January 1967; 'At Last Upton Lea Roman Catholics Have Their Own Church', *SO*, 7 March 1969.
[97] 'One Girls' School For Local Catholics', *SO*, 27 July 1945; 'New School For Roman Catholics', *SO*, 29 October 1954.
[98] Alana Harris, *Faith in the Family: A Lived Religious History of English Catholicism, 1945-82* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 268.
[99] Ibid., 11–12.
[100] Ibid., 36; see also Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *Catholic Education: The Unobtrusive Partner: Sociological Studies of the Catholic School System in England and Wales* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1978); Mary Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995).
[101] 'New School Means Upsurge'.
[102] 'Langley Catholics Warned'.

A 1954 letter gave the personal view of a Catholic parent, midway through the Catholic expansion. At that stage the costs, borne mainly by working-class parents, were £38,000 for St Ethelbert's and St Anthony's primary schools, and a projected £37,000 for St Joseph's Secondary Modern; the letter argued that these were in effect subsidising the entire state system, as children would have otherwise have had to be provided with places in fully state-funded schools. Parents were 'paying dearly' for what should be their right, to have their children educated according to their religious beliefs.[103] These arguments echoed those made in a public meeting in 1943 – taking a familiar form; it was primarily a parental right and responsibility to have their children educated according to their beliefs, that religion was at the heart of all true education, that RE teachers must be believers, and that parents should not pay a financial penalty for exercising what should be their right.[104]

These were exactly the points local Anglicans had been expounding in the interwar years, with diminishing success. And the holistic vision of the 'family' of the church was not so different from the vision of the Anglican parish outlined by the Anglican Bishop of Buckingham in 1933: 'a communal idea of religion, as a home, a family and a society ... the church with her visible society, ministry, episcopate, sacred books, sacraments, schools etc ... Her task was to enrol, enlist ... to that community of life'.[105]

The transition to adulthood

In the influential *Churches and Churchgoers*, church attendance was linked statistically to 'endogenous' factors – that is, the handing down of Christian faith from one generation to the next.[106]. In her study of Britain after 1945, Grace Davie places the breakdown in this continuity after WWII; 'pre-war generations in Britain, to a greater extent than is often realized, grew up under the influence of the churches, or, at least, under the influence of a wide network of para-church

[103] 'Letters to the Editor: Catholic Schools', *SO*, 5 November 1954; £40000 raised for schools by St Ethelbert's 1944-1958: see 'Bishop Talks Of Crisis Over Catholic Schools'.
[104] 'Roman Catholics And State Education', *SO*, 23 April 1943.
[105] 'Growth of Slough'.
[106] Currie et al, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 6,118ff.

organizations' and 'it is the generation born immediately after the war that has, very largely, broken the formal link with the churches'.[107] In a more recent study, Ian Jones agreed: 'by the 1960s, relations between the young and old had become a hotly-debated social question', going on to quote Davie's identification of 'a generational shift in the religious life of the nation'.[108] Jones' analysis of late twentieth century congregations identifies three broad generational groupings: an 'older generation' born before the late 1920s; a 'post-war generation' born from the mid-1930s to the early 1950s; and a 'post-1960s' generation.[109] Jones identified the post-war generation as 'a kind of hinge generation between their elders and those younger' who 'allowed their children greater autonomy in spiritual exploration than they themselves had been permitted'.[110] As a group, they had experienced being brought up within an atmosphere of 'Christian' discipline; while some might have rejected this in their adolescence, many had come back to faith in later years, taking up positions of authority in their congregations. But as parents themselves, they had not brought up their own children within the same 'Christian' discipline; and the generational transference had been thereby broken.

Such an analysis, based on studying local congregations and the oral testimony of individuals within them, can potentially suffer from 'survivor bias': that is, although the generational effects identified may be true, the timing may apply only to those who remain in the congregation. Further back in time, the same effect could have applied to those long since lost to the church.

Slough was no exception to the importance of generational transfer. In 1954, the *Slough Observer* published a weekly series of 29 profiles of Slough church members, ranging in age from 18 to 88.[111] All but one of those profiled had come into the church through generational transfer. And it was also true in Slough that 'a generation gap' was identifiable in the 1960s. A 1962 conference identified 'the gap between teenagers and adults' as the 'biggest problem of youth work', with it being 'everyone's

[107] Davie, *Religion in Britain*, 1994, 122.
[108] Jones, *Local Church*, 1.
[109] Ibid., 177–79.
[110] Ibid.
[111] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 6 November 1953 to; 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 28 May 1954.

responsibility' to bridge it.[112] But while the terminology might be of the 1960s, the problem was hardly new.[113]

In 1927, at the Congregational church 'the problem for the last quarter of a century had been how to retain the older [Sunday] scholars, from 14 to 18'. In fact, the problem was not just for 'teenagers', but also those younger: 'the problem now was how to retain the other scholars as well'.[114] This was seen as a question of generational transfer: 'there was not the same parental control in the home that used to exist'. When challenged about one boy being absent from Sunday School, 'the father said he could not do anything with him'.[115] The speaker maintained that 'when I was 14 or 15' [that is, a 'teenager'] his father would have dealt with this very differently.

Going back 'a quarter of a century', to the high point of Sunday School attendance in the late nineteenth century, finds the churches still struggling with the transition of children, particularly boys, into committed adult membership. As one Congregational minister put it:

> that something is needed to maintain the interest of young people who leave the Sunday School, and foster their attachment to the Church, is fully recognized. What that something is, it is not easy to say. The one thing needful has probably not been found as yet.[116]

There are no data for the drop-out rate at the Congregational Church, but in 1911 Ledgers Road Methodist church estimated that 80 per cent of Sunday scholars failed to transfer to adult membership.[117] The Baptist church fared slightly better: between 1925 and 1929, an average of 7 scholars a year became members – consistent with Figure 32, and perhaps 30 per cent of those 'graduating' from the Sunday School – but this was a deferral, rather than a solving, of the issue. By

[112] 'The Church In Slough', *SO*, 23 November 1962.
[113] The term first seen in Slough in 1952, 'Spotlight on Slough's Teenagers'.
[114] 'Congregational School', *SO*, 13 May 1927.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Bainton, *The Congregational Handbook: Being a Guide to the Administration of a Congregational Church*, 114.
[117] 'Ledgers Rd Sunday School Anniversary [1911]'.

the time of the church's 50th anniversary in 1943, 'it will be the chief aim of the church to increase the number of young people participating in its activities'.[118]

And not just at the nonconformist churches; in 1922, an Anglican conference claimed that while 80 per cent of children had some contact with religious bodies (of any denomination), 'from 14 onwards the leakage is so appalling that only five per cent carry on – ninety-five per cent of all adolescents are left to the streets'.[119] This was again put down to greater independence on the part of the young, and less parental control being exercised: 'the young are claiming very great freedom … fewer children attend Sunday School as there is very little parental compulsion'.[120] The Bishop of Oxford had attributed the problem at least partially to the effects of the War, during which 'the normal restraints were removed on boys and girls, and now these young people required a sense of self-discipline and self-respect'.[121] A few years later, the deanery conference considered 'how is the Church to retain its hold on youth'.[122] The main speaker felt that young people 'who attend church today do not attend because they have got to, but because they want to draw nearer to God'. And presumably those who did not attend were exercising their choice in the opposite direction. This may seem to be a 'demand-side' analysis, but that was not the speaker's emphasis – to general acclaim, he maintained the church needed to give young people more responsibility, trusting them and making the church more attractive to them: 'we have not got to attack the youth but to satisfy them'. Failing this, they did not lack alternatives – tennis, dancing and greyhound racing were mentioned. In response, the Rural Dean observed that the elderly 'felt more and more the inability to take part in the exercises of the young'.[123] Forty years later, this might have been called 'a generation gap'.

[118] 'Baptist Church Enters 50th Year', *SO*, 24 September 1943.
[119] 'Church Conference 5-1922'.
[120] 'RD Burnham 1924'; 'RD Conference 1924'.
[121] 'Bishop of Oxford 1921'.
[122] 'Rural Deanery of Burnham', *SO*, 18 May 1928.
[123] Ibid.

It should be noted that although 'generational transfer' was the overwhelming means by which churches sustained and even grew their membership, it was possible for the process to work in the opposite direction. As seen above, churches saw Sunday Schools as a way of reaching unchurched parents. The one exception in the 1954 profiles was an ex-London mother with no previous church affiliation who had nevertheless 'decided to bring up any children she had as Christians'.[124] The children began attending the Sunday School at St Paul's, and through this the mother had been brought into contact with the church and had become a committed member. Her older children had begun to take on leadership in church youth organisations and there were signs the process of generational transfer might be restarted.

The problem of transferring children from an early engagement – whether through a Church day school, or the Sunday School – into a committed long-term allegiance to the church seems to go back at least as far as the late nineteenth century, therefore. Some churches fared better than others, but the evidence from Slough suggests that the problem was at least as acute in the interwar years, if not earlier, as it was post-1945. This would place the roots of the problem somewhat earlier than Jones' 'post-war generation'. Perhaps a narrative of a gradually widening gap between the churches and the young is more appropriate than one based on generational 'tranches'.

Certainly, by 1954 the gap was wide enough: one 20 year old could speak of a church that was 'unnecessarily forbidding, tending to put people off', and lacking authenticity and relevance: 'too far from heaven in theory and too far from earth in practice'.[125] This young man, at least, had made the transition, however; through involvement in the Boys Brigade, Life Boys, and the Young People's Fellowship. The question then becomes why this was so.

One late nineteenth century theory for the failure of young men to 'graduate' from Sunday School was because it was too sedentary, or too 'feminine'. This led to the formation of uniformed

[124] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 9 April 1954.
[125] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 5 March 1954.

organisations nationally.[126] The Boys' Brigade (BB), a uniformed organisation typically linked with Free Churches, was founded in 1883, and its Anglican equivalent, the Church Lads' Brigade (CLB), in 1891. These promoted the concept of 'muscular Christianity', expressed in the BB's purpose as 'the advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness'.[127]

In Slough, a CLB company was formed in 1899, to address 'the difficulty of keeping in touch with the lads of the parish ... felt by almost all church workers'.[128] The aim was 'to foster in the lads what is now felt to be so sadly lacking ... [the qualities of] good honest, sterling, straightforward men ... and above all ... the spirit of God-fearing churchmen'. The CLB promoted Sunday church attendance, but also an extensive programme on weekday evenings. One typical week included an afternoon parade before church on Sunday, drill practice on Monday, band practice on Tuesday, and gymnastic class on Friday.[129] By 1901 the Slough CLB had fifty-one boys – around 10 per cent of boys in the town aged between fifteen and nineteen.[130] However, its Anglican focus, and the cost of subscriptions and uniforms may have deterred all but the relatively well-off, and the brigade did not survive the disruption of WWI.[131] A Boys Life Brigade (BLB) – an initiative similar to BB – was established in 1907 by a Baptist Church member, and had forty-two recruits by 1911.[132] The BLB also operated largely independently of the churches, however, and seems to have disappeared after the Great War.

It was not until 1925 that three BB companies – at the Baptist, Congregational and Wesleyan churches were formed, followed a few years later by the junior version, the Life Boys.[133] These groups quickly gained traction and public approval. In 1932, the *Slough Observer* urged that 'the

[126] Springhall, 'Building Character'.
[127] https://boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/ accessed 21/12/2018
[128] 'Church Lads' Brigade [18/03/1899]'.
[129] 'Church Lads' Brigade', *SO*, 25 April 1903.
[130] 'Church Lads' Brigade: Slough Company', *SO*, 24 June 1899; 'Church Lads' Brigade: Oxford Diocesan Regiment at High Wycombe', *SO*, 1 June 1901.
[131] Springhall, 'Building Character', 53.
[132] 'Thankoffering Day [1907]'; 'Boys' Life Brigade [27/05/1911]'.
[133] 'Slough First Boy's Brigade', *SO*, 23 October 1925.

training given and the type of lad produced ... is deserving of every possible encouragement'.[134] The annual inspections and displays were major social events: for example, the large hall at the Central Hall was regularly filled for the 1St Slough Company's displays.[135] By 1939, there were five BB Companies in the town, each with 35 to 50 boys and up to 10 NCO's. By 1945 there were nine, with around 300 boys enrolled.[136] The programme was the familiar mix of the spiritual and the physical: alongside the weekly Bible Class, there was 'drill, gym, PT, swimming, football, sports, dramatics, ambulance and national service'.[137] In 1932, one officer proudly proclaimed:

> the success of the BB is due to two things ... boys appreciate discipline, and boys do want to follow Christ ... on these twin rocks the BB was built, and on them ... is destined to achieve still greater things ... in the years to be.[138]

These groups undoubtedly fostered strong, lifelong relationships. But there is some evidence of the 'internal secularisation' that Dominic Erdozain identified in his study of the YMCA, with the 'spiritual' component either downplayed or presented in behavioural terms.[139] Speaking to Slough Rotary in 1945, the son of the BB's founder spoke of creating 'team spirit and loyalty' and training 'trustworthy boys, good leaders, and good citizens', with no mention of any spiritual component.

The history of the 1st Slough Boys Brigade Company, initially affiliated to the Wesleyan church, and then the Methodist Central Hall, provides more evidence. Addressing the annual inspection in 1939, a local captain said 'we are placing a great deal of emphasis on physical fitness and physical training these days', telling the boys 'it will be your job later to straighten the world out ... and it will require all your moral courage and physical strength', with no mention of any spiritual armoury.[140] A memoir of the early years of the Company, beginning around 1928 and finishing around 1955, emphasises strong friendships built on membership of the BB bands and a love of rugby: 'the history of the

[134] 'The Boys' Brigade', *SO*, 22 April 1932.
[135] 'Slough Boys Brigade Display', *SO*, 14 April 1939.
[136] 'Pioneer of Youth Movements', *SO*, 19 January 1945.
[137] 'Boys Brigade', *SO*, 6 October 1939.
[138] 'Boys Brigade News', *SO*, 16 December 1932.
[139] Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*.
[140] 'Slough Boys Brigade Display [1939]'.

Slough bands is linked closely with that of Slough Rugby Football Club'.[141] The 90 pages are filled with 'pen portraits' of members (both as cadets, and then as officers after the War), group pictures of bands and rugby teams, and reports of keenly fought rugby and football matches. But the affiliation to the Methodist Church is not mentioned.

How successful these organisations were for transferring older children into the main body of the church is therefore debatable. Again, the 1st Slough Company provides indications. In 1951, the Methodist Central Hall leaders removed 14 names from the annual membership return, mostly from the BB class, as they did not worship at the Central Hall.[142] In 1961 and 1964, the leaders discussed the problem of young men being lost to the church when too old for the BB.[143] A further sign that the church lacked a core group of young men was the problem of recruiting BB leaders from the mid-1960s onwards.[144] In 1972, the annual report noted that most of the 25 members were the sons of church members, with the main attractions being the 'range of activities and interests which are not available elsewhere. Above all, the Company provides friendship and somewhere to belong'.[145] The BB's role was now as a 'peer group' for boys from church families as an alternative to those possible through school or secular youth or sports clubs – worthwhile, perhaps essential, but somewhat different from the original objective.

Message – Citizens or Disciples?

The uniformed organisations were clearly popular with many teenage boys. They were sources of longstanding friendships, and no doubt were key to character formation. But as recruiting grounds for church membership, they appear to have been less successful. There was an increasing number of secular sports and youth clubs providing alternatives for those who found the church connection off-putting, But perhaps an 'internal secularisation' of the message being proclaimed made

[141] Norman Keitch, 'A Golden Era: The Story Of The 1st Slough Company' (CVR Communications, 1997), 2, SLLS.
[142] 'Leaders Meetings'; 7/3/1951 meeting.
[143] Ibid.12/9/1961 and 2/3/1964.
[144] Ibid. 7/3/1966, 6/9/1968, 12/2/1969.
[145] 'St Andrew's Methodist Church Annual Report 1972', 1972, DMS69, BRO.

membership seem no different to any other sports or social club. The example of the Boy Scouts provides further pointers.

Scouting of course shared many of the objectives of the BB and CLB in promoting 'manliness' and character in the adolescent male, although propagating specifically Christian virtues was not in the forefront of its objectives.[146] Slough's churches were prominent in establishing Scouts in the town, with the first troop being set up by St Paul's in 1908, with twenty-four recruits.[147] By 1914, there were four Slough troops, three of which were affiliated to the Anglican churches.[148]

There may have been little difference between 'Christian' morality and values and those of the Scouts initially, but a growing divergence became apparent in the early 1930s, when St Paul's banned the Scouts from using its church hall and shortly after set up a Boys Brigade company.[149] Twenty years later, this divergence became contentious, when the Cubs were also banned from using the hall because they were 'not religious enough' and 'encouraged the desecration of the Lord's Day'.[150] The vicar then attempted to recruit Cubs into the church's Life Boys group – an initiative hastily abandoned in the face of outrage from local youth leaders.[151] A Scout leader rejected the accusation that the movement was not religious by pointing to the first Scout promise being 'to do his duty to God'; and 'evidence of Scouting's close links with religion' was supposedly provided by the gift of a Bible for 'keenness and fine scout spirit' at the 'offending' troop.[152]

Other Anglican churches clearly did not feel likewise; by the 1950s, the Free Churches and St Paul's all had associated BB branches, while the remaining Anglican churches supported the Scouts. And as

[146] Springhall, 'Building Character', 53.
[147] 'St Paul's Branch'.
[148] 'St George's Day At Slough'.
[149] 'First Slough Scouts', *SO*, 21 October 1932; 'St Pauls Boys' Brigade Display', *SO*, 27 April 1934.
[150] 'Vicar Falls Foul Of The Lot', *SO*, 11 September 1953; 'Scouts "Desecrate The Lord's Day"', *SO*, 2 October 1953; Under a new vicar, the Brownies were subsequently banned, for similar reasons: 'The Banished Brownies', *SO*, 19 June 1959.
[151] 'Letters to the Editor: Vicar's "Poaching" Deplorable', *SO*, 18 September 1953.
[152] 'Vicar Falls Foul Of The Lot'; 'Remembrance of a Scout and a Christian', *SO*, 25 September 1953.

the St Paul's controversy arose, Cubs and Scouts troops were formed at St Ethelbert's, with the Catholic priest describing the Scout movement as 'a thoroughly Christian organisation'.[153]

The Scouts provide an example, then, of a theological divide – was 'Christianity' a matter of personal discipleship, of (as the BB maintained) 'following Christ' – or was it about being a citizen of a Christian country? Some churches saw a distinction: others did not. There was a similar divide in the teaching of religious education in schools. If children and young people saw 'Christianity' as including induction into the Christian family, and into a 'vital' relationship with God, perhaps they were more likely to prioritise an ongoing commitment to the church family through church membership. But if 'Christianity' was rather a matter of behaviour and 'citizenship', then the question might simply not arise. It could be quite normal to 'believe but not belong'.

The alternative to the uniformed organisations were overtly religious clubs, such as Christian Endeavour (CE) and the Band of Hope temperance club, where the church leadership was more directly involved in the agenda than in the Scouts or BB. In the first half of the century, these groups were well frequented, without entirely solving the question of older children's commitment. For younger children, there was good take-up – of the 180 enrolled in the Baptist Sunday School in 1909, 80 were enrolled in the junior section of CE (for those aged 7 to 14), and 120 in the Band of Hope.[154] However, as they transferred to the Senior Sections, older children went one of two ways – either becoming church members, and actively involved in Sunday School teaching or the choir, or ceasing to attend . This was 'deeply regretted, but ... [they were hopefully] not lost to the army of God's workers'. In the interwar years, the pattern continued: the junior CE at both Slough Baptist and Ledgers Road were reported to be 'flourishing', but reports focus on BB, Guides and Girls Life Brigade for the older children.[155] After the War, the junior sections continued, although perhaps with reduced numbers; a 1958 Easter pageant at the Baptist church included 25 children from Slough and

[153] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 23 October 1953.
[154] 'Thankoffering Day [1907]'; 'Slough Baptist Church [20/03/1909]'.
[155] 'Slough Baptist Sunday School', *SO*, 18 May 1928; 'The Church Challenged As Never Before', *SO*, 29 March 1940.

35 from the wider Thames Valley.[156] There seem to have been declining numbers for the older age groups, however; in 1940, only 40 people attended a CE for the Thames Valley, and in 1958 Ledgers Road closed its senior CE because attendance had dwindled to 12: 'it just did not seem to attract the young people we really want to attract' said the treasurer.[157] The alternative to be tried for children of 15 years upwards was a Youth Fellowship – a similar approach to that adopted at the Central Hall to attract those graduating from the BB.[158]

This was no panacea, however: leadership and direction were needed. For example, at Burnham such a club was formed to foster 'social activity among the youth of the church'.[159] But in practice, the club was purely social, and although 'they are nice young people ... they are nothing to do with the church ... all they do is listen to music and play skiffle', and the vicar decided to close it. This created an outcry, with parishioners blaming the lack of church engagement on the vicar: services were dull, and young people 'lacked instruction in what going to church means'. And such clubs were often set up for defensive reasons, rather than to reach out to disengaged youth. As early as 1910, when a Primitive Methodist Young People's Club was established at Ledgers Road, it was 'for recreation without being contaminated with the influence of the world' and was limited to regular church attendees.[160] But with leadership and direction, a contemporary approach could succeed not only in retaining the church's young, but also in reaching out to the unchurched – as discussed below.

The discussion thus far has mainly focused on the problems of attracting and retaining boys and young men. Perhaps there was less concern as to whether young women would transfer into the main body of the church, in which there was an extensive range of activities for older women. Uniformed organisations were widespread for girls as well as for boys, but the potential distinctions noted in the theological focus are not as apparent - so at the Baptist church, Guides and Brownies

[156] 'Easter Pageant At Baptist Hall', *SO*, 3 April 1958.
[157] 'Christian Endeavour Easter Rally', *SO*, 29 March 1940; 'The Church in Slough'.
[158] 'Leaders Meetings' 6/3/1957.
[159] 'Burnham Vicar's Clash With Church-Warden'.
[160] 'Ledgers Rd Minutes'8 March 1910.

served the girls, with BB and Life Boys for the boys.[161] The same theme of lifelong friendships is clear - a party at Ledgers Road Methodist brought together girls who had met each other through the Girls Life Brigade 21 years previously.[162] But the sources do not allow further exploration, as with the young men's groups.

The Message Or The Medium?

As already noted, a review such as Doreen Rosman's identified that the 'primary cause' for children stopping attending Sunday Schools and other activities 'was the changing social ethos'.[163] But churches themselves were concerned throughout the century that they were in some way contributing to the decline. There are many signs of local unease as to the methods of teaching, and the qualifications of teachers. For example, in 1922, the Anglican Diocesan Sunday School visitor reported that 'the whole standard of teaching is lower in spite of all our efforts'. Teachers needed to update their teaching methods to prepare children better for the 'dilemmas' they would face in adult life. There was also concern about finding the right quality of teachers.[164] Following this, in 1924 clergy were asked in their visitation return, 'Have there been any improvements of method in your Sunday Schools in the last few years?'. The vicar of St Paul's – with one of the largest and liveliest Sunday Schools – replied: 'I fear not – teachers too conservative – Diocesan advisors have been invited to visit School & some advice acted upon. Am obliged to let well alone.'[165] Some years later, the Diocesan Missioner urged local churches to involve young people more in running their own organisations; while this was received positively, some observed that older people 'felt more and more their inability to take part in the exercises of the young'.[166] And concerns were being expressed at some Nonconformist churches even earlier. At the Ledgers Road Sunday School anniversary in 1908, the speaker noted:

[161] for example, 'The Baptist Sunday School', *SO*, 29 April 1927.
[162] 'Reunion Party For Girls Life Brigade Company', *SO*, 6 December 1957.
[163] Rosman, 'Sunday Schools', 158.
[164] 'Church Conference 5-1922'.
[165] 'St Paul 1924'.
[166] 'RD Burnham 1928'.

> Children were being taught by the best methods in the day schools, and if Sunday School teachers did not adopt some of those methods they could not expect to be successful. Every year was bringing new ideas in the way of teaching ... he did not want them to be discouraged and say they were not fit to be teachers, but to make themselves fit, and become as good as and even better than the day school teachers.[167]

But probably the clearest examples of the medium being as important in some cases as the message come from the post-war period.

In early 1962, the Vicar of Colnbrook and the Pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle looked out over very different congregations. On three separate Sundays, the congregation at the 11 o'clock service at Colnbrook had been precisely one. At the Gospel Tabernacle, the church was bursting at the seams, filled with 400 people for both Sunday services. The two clergymen could not have been more different in other ways; the Vicar was a morally and theologically liberal, left-wing, High Churchman, who was later to cross swords with the Pastor on issues such as teenage sexuality and the Virgin Birth. The Pastor was morally and theologically conservative, who believed the churches were struggling because their leaders 'have not preached Heaven and Hell-Fire, sin and holiness, judgement and reward'.[168] But on one thing they agreed – the need for the church to be relevant and appealing to the young and their parents.

A year later, the Vicar looked out at a congregation of over a hundred. A new 'Family Communion' service had proved very popular with young families, incorporating updated words, more contemporary music, a more convenient time, a crèche, and coffee after the service. But this had been achieved only after the Vicar had concluded, after being in post for 16 years, that in face of constantly declining ('pitiably small') attendances, and various initiatives such as Pram services, he had to provide a lead; and that this needed to be done despite the opposition of virtually his entire regular congregation.[169] As he put it 'some twenty-six years of parish life had convinced me there are two main types of churchgoer: those who like the services as they are and always have been, and

[167] 'Primitive Methodist Sunday School [1908 Anniversary]'.
[168] 'Aim No Stones at Ald. Manning, but Blame Churches', *SO*, 19 February 1954.
[169] 'Taking The Yawn Out Of Churchgoing', *SO*, 19 June 1964; Daniel, *Enemy*.

come to church regularly; and those who feel the services are out of date and out of touch with modern life, and come to church very occasionally [if at all]'.[170] Unfortunately for the future health of the church, the latter group included virtually all the young families in the village. As the Vicar said 'I want to get back to the old idea of the whole family coming together to church.'[171] And to make the experience a lively and engaging one: 'far too many children grow up bored stiff with all that goes on in and around church …it is far better to send them home having thoroughly enjoyed themselves and wanting to come again.'[172]

Colnbrook was by no means the only church to introduce family-oriented services. In 1956, the deanery conference considered 'Operation Firm Faith', a national Anglican campaign particularly focused on the religious education of the young.[173] The diocesan visitor maintained that the Sunday Schools had generally failed to translate regular attendance into adult adherence – partly because many Sunday Schools operated so independently that 'people think they are something entirely separate' from the main church. Churches should therefore encourage children to worship with adults. Subsequently, many local Anglican churches introduced family friendly services – for example, St George's Britwell began doing so in 1958. [174] And not just the Anglicans: also in 1958, Ledgers Road Methodist began a series of monthly family services, with a crèche provided for very young children.[175]

However, Colnbrook is noteworthy for the openness of the clergyman as to his challenges, his own shortcomings, and the opposition to change. He warned any incumbent who tried a similar initiative 'that he will run into bitter opposition from those older members of the congregation who dislike change of any kind; and the more successful his efforts, the more bitter the opposition may

[170] Daniel, *Enemy*, 5.
[171] Ibid., 25.
[172] Ibid., 50.
[173] 'The Church in Slough', *SO*, 16 November 1956; Jones, *Local Church*, 86–87.
[174] 'Transforming A Hut Into A Church', *SO*, 11 April 1958.
[175] 'The Church in Slough [6-06-1958]'.

become'.[176] He also openly lists the outcomes – an initial surge of interest (congregations of over 200, nearly 10 per cent of the parish population), falling back to a regular attendance of around 100, with 175 on Easter Day 1963 – one year on from the nadir. This included a pool of around 24 teenagers who attended reasonably regularly. The electoral roll had increased from 53 to 222, and 63 people attended the annual parochial meeting compared with 12 the previous year.[177]

If Colnbrook had to make significant changes, the Gospel Tabernacle's focus from the start was on complete families, and on a contemporary and appealing approach. In 1962, this had resulted in 17 Sunday Schools and youth clubs being established around the town, with 850 children a week attending – at a time when Sunday schools in other churches were declining. And many of these schools were on the new estates where the traditional churches had struggled to gain traction with unchurched incomers. In 1969, the Pastor said 'we believe in a lively and picturesque presentation of the gospel which will appeal to young people'.[178] This 'lively' approach included the use of conjurors, puppet shows and child-friendly songs, in addition to the long-standing highlights of any Sunday School, the family outings and the annual trip to the seaside.[179] Far from the boredom highlighted at Colnbrook, there was 'no room for gloom at this Sunday School'.[180] The Pastor led from the front ('gospel salesman packs in the kiddies'), but also mustered a large team of teachers and helpers: 'the church relies for its momentum on the fervour of its members'.[181] In 1962, there were around 60 teachers in the 17 Sunday Schools; and the helpers included young people themselves; the worship services were supported by a 22 piece 'swing band', and the puppeteers were two 16 year olds.[182]

[176] Daniel, *Enemy*, 65.
[177] Ibid., 39,56.
[178] 'Church In Slough', *SO*, 11 July 1969.
[179] 'Puppets Lead Children In Gospel Songs', *SO*, 28 January 1955; 'Britwell: Sunshine Corner Attracts 70 Pupils', *SO*, 26 July 1963; 'The Pied Piper Sunday School Of Britwell', *SO*, 10 February 1967; 'Gospel Express Takes Slough's Biggest Sunday School Outing', *SO*, 23 June 1972.
[180] 'No Room For Gloom At This Sunday School', *SO*, 25 September 1953.
[181] Ibid.; 'Success Story Of A Church', *SO*, 22 November 1963.
[182] 'Success Story Of A Church'; 'Puppets Lead Children In Gospel Songs'.

As noted above, the theological positions of the Vicar and the Pastor could hardly have been more different. How appealing, or otherwise, people found the content of the message is explored elsewhere; but the focus here is on leadership, focus and presentation.

The final illustration of the principles explored in this chapter is St Paul's, highlighted previously as an example of the long-term vitality of a church with a primary focus on the young. But in the late 1950s, St Paul's was challenged by significant new demographic changes in the parish. Whereas the earlier challenges had been how to respond to a dramatic influx of UK newcomers on to new estates, now the challenge was a static parish population increasingly transformed by arrivals from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent, with very different cultural and, often, religious backgrounds. The congregation 'gradually dwindled' as many long-standing church families moved away and were not replaced.[183] How the church dealt with the wider issue of immigration is dealt with elsewhere; but noted here is that the decline was reversed by a focus on the young – a mixture of spiritual meetings, combined with a wide range of social activities such as skating, barbecues, sports and drama, with the leadership being provided by a young curate. This focus included not only the church's young people – but also the unchurched: through, for example, an evangelistic coffee bar in central Slough with contemporary music.[184] By 1969, half the congregation of 300 were young people.[185]

In conclusion, churches that did not focus on engaging with children and young people did not flourish in the longer term. One consequence was simply a question of replacement - a church that did not replace members lost through death with younger members graduating through the Sunday School would suffer a decline in membership, amongst other things. In the near term, young couples and young families would simply worship elsewhere, if at all. But a focus on the young was expensive in human resources and capital expenditure on buildings and other facilities; and there was a time

[183] 'Church In Slough [25/4/1969]'.
[184] 'Religious Beat Music On Top Of Fire Escape', *SE*, 13 January 1967; 'Antonia, Atheist At 16, Chats Over Christian Coffee', *SO*, 12 May 1967.
[185] 'Church In Slough [25/4/1969]'.

lag between cause and effect – which gave ammunition to those inclined to oppose the change and investment.

Changing social attitudes meant that churches could no longer rely on parents 'doing the right thing' in sending their children to church – any more than they could rely on adults attending for the same reason. The onus was therefore increasingly on the necessity to attract people. 'Competition' for children's attendance came from an increased focus on families participating in leisure time together, or from the availability of other clubs and societies – such as Guides and Scouts. Where parents saw the religious education of their children as a priority, rather than as a matter of social conformity, churches faced increasing 'competition' from state schools – both before and after the 1944 Education Act. But none of these forces were irresistible: where churches proactively sought to attract children and young families, rather than waiting passively for them to enter, then people responded enthusiastically and attendances could be high. This was a continuing theme: in the early part of the century, most notably at the Baptist church and St Paul's, and later in the century at the Gospel Tabernacle. But the need to adapt was continual too.

Attracting the young was as much about the medium as the message – presentation needed to be lively and engaging. Creating a 'peer group' of friends who participated in social as well as spiritual activities was essential, the more so as the century progressed and alternative peer groups – through school, or other clubs and societies – vied for young people's attention. But all young people's work required teams of committed adults, and the 'message' might have been key in mobilising these resources. In the early part of the century, emphasising 'duty' and 'responsibility' might have been enough, but as the century progressed, the churches most successful in mobilising human and financial resources were those whose message was one of spiritual imperative, most notably the evangelical and Catholic churches.

This chapter began by suggesting that a focus on inducting the young into the church was hardly new, quoting some ancient wisdom that would have been familiar to churchmen. The consequences

of the breakdown in generational transmission were hardly new either; as another piece of ancient wisdom said:

> And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD ... And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them ...[186]

[186] Judges 2:10-12.

Chapter 7 The Church's Message – A Story in Need of an Update?

Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,
For I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled.

Tell me the story softly, with earnest tones and grave;
Remember I'm the sinner whom Jesus came to save.
Tell me the story always, if you would really be,
In any time of trouble, a comforter to me.

Katherine Hankey, 1866

The previous chapters have analysed various attempts by the churches to address the problem of religious indifference. Examples have been given of churches that flourished in the challenging conditions found in Slough – the formula generally being an empathetic and engaging leader, a welcoming and supportive congregation, a focus on the young, and church ministry that combined an authentic 'believing and belonging' experience. But despite the churches' best efforts, indifference – or perhaps indifference to the mainstream Protestant churches - continued to be widespread.

Nationally, Roger Lloyd wrote of the Church of England in 1965, both 'traditional methods', and various experiments and innovations, 'were proving themselves impotent to reach the minds of those who ... might be supposed to be the most 'valuable' of all to God'. [1] Perhaps, then, the message was at fault? As Lloyd observed 'before there can be a mission there must be an evangelistic message, and ... large sections of the modern world had given notice that if this

[1] Lloyd, *Church of England*, 595.

message was what they supposed it to be they would not be able to heed it'.[2] Perhaps 'the old old story' extolled by the famous hymn above had outlived its usefulness and should be updated?

Locally, two vocal clergymen encountered in Chapter 5 took positions at opposite ends of the spectrum. For the vicar of Colnbrook, responding to the return of the American evangelist Billy Graham to the UK in 1966, 'such old fashioned' messages … were virtually meaningless to most people' and the church needed 'a radical transformation … it was no good just shouting the old messages louder and louder'.[3]

For the Pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle, the reverse was true – the 'old fashioned messages' were as valid as ever, it was simply that they had not been delivered effectively. In 1954, he wrote:

> The church is to be blamed for this shocking state of affairs. For more than a generation the church has been self-centred. She has been "neither cold nor hot" and her "couldn't care less" attitude toward the masses outside the fold has produced a situation that is almost irremediable. The leaders of the church have lacked passion and vision, they have pandered to the "elite", they have had respect of persons ... The gospel they have preached has lacked conviction and has only served to tickle the ears of the listeners. They have not preached Heaven and Hell-Fire, sin and holiness, judgement and reward – the result, there has been a falling away from the church, many have lost faith, the world is unconvinced ... The church must repent ... throw off the false dignity, needless ceremony and cold ritualism and humble herself to the level of boy and girl, youth and maiden and man in the street and in all sincerity offer the help that alone can be given [by] the living God.[4]

This is an historical study, and so the theological merits of 'modern' and 'traditional' interpretations of Christian doctrine and dogma are beyond its scope. However, a study such as this can perhaps shed light on various factors – what clergymen themselves thought about the message and how it was being proclaimed; the popular public – as opposed to private – response; and how and when the churches responded. Continuing themes have been that churches that combined strong leadership with empathetic, active and supportive congregations flourished while those that did not declined; that churches that focused on the young and families did better

[2] Ibid.
[3] 'Colnbrook: Vicar Criticises Crusade'.
[4] 'Blame Churches'.

than those that did not; and that churches at the heart of a community could flourish. But can it be identified whether the growth or otherwise of a church was related to whether it presented a 'modern' or 'traditional' message?

Chapter 2 postulated that the failure to deal with the long-recognised shortcomings of the Anglican parish system had significant long-term consequences. Chapter 6 showed that the failure to deal effectively with the unsustainable position regarding religious education in schools, again long recognised, also had long term consequences. Similarly, the Pastor's 1954 analysis, blunt and untactful though it might seem, was not a new diagnosis – the issues had been widely recognised and accepted at least forty years earlier.

The experience of the 1916 National Mission caused much soul-searching within the Church of England. Inadequate teaching, uninspiring worship, and lack of empathy and understanding were widespread. As the Mission closed, the Archbishops wrote an open letter to clergy and lay members of the Church:

> Have we not learned … how many thousands of professing Christians and Churchmen there are who have a wholly inadequate understanding of [the Christian Faith's] depth and range, and how urgent, therefore is the need of reviving and perfecting the ministry of teaching? Have we not realized that if the Church's public worship is to attract and uplift the people of the land there must be more freedom of adaptation to meet the needs and desires of their actual lives … Have we not been made to realize more keenly than ever abuses and abnormalities in the outward structure of the Church's life which … offend the conscience of those whom we most desire to draw into our fellowship? Has not the very message of the Mission brought home to us how much more clear, courageous and sustained must be the corporate witness and warfare of the Church … ?[5]

Five Committees were established and asked to report back in months, if possible, on the Teaching Office of the Church, Public Worship, Evangelistic Work, Church Reform and the Problems of Industrial Life. The Committee on the Evangelistic Work of the Church reported in early 1918. Its Chairman, the Bishop of Southwark reported:

[5] 'After The Mission', *Times*, 23 November 1916.

> the Committee's general conclusions could be summed up under two simple heads - the great lack of conviction as to the need and the means of membership of the Church of England or any religious body at all; and the lack of conviction of our spiritual capacity as human beings and of the specific means offered to us in the Church of Christ.[6]

The Committee saw a 'golden age of evangelistic opportunity' but saw only 'evangelistic impotence' within the Church. In recognition, the Church was urged to 'set itself to awaken the evangelistic consciousness in individual members and in the body corporate'. And the situation was so urgent that everything else must be secondary – 'a temporary abandonment of all organizations that cannot be directed to the single end of evangelization … this neglected duty'.[7]

As discussed at length in Chapter 4, the key issues were authenticity and relevance. The Church was 'on trial':

> Though men are not indifferent to the Christian Church they are watching it with critical and often unfriendly eyes. They ask to see within the Church more sacrifice, more fellowship, more heroism, more brotherhood, more zeal for the uplifting of human life and for the regeneration of the whole social order than they can discover beyond its border. This is the standard by which they are judging the Church … at the heart of the whole problem of evangelization lies the necessity of a more intense spiritual life in the Church.[8]

A columnist in The Times commented 'we have rarely read such an outspoken statement'. In his view, the 'old old story' was still valid, but its messengers fell short:

> The Gospel is not attracting men and women today. It is not that they are set against Christianity, but that they are convinced that its representatives, in both their corporate and individual capacities, are unqualified to be its exponents ... The official representatives of the church seem to live in another world than that of the average man's experience. Men do not ask for a new Gospel. They would be content with the old, if only they could find it expressed in terms level to their experience and their needs … It is the first duty of the Church to proclaim this new, yet old, Gospel of the Divine Kingdom.[9]

On the contrary, however, sermons and public worship were remote, incomprehensible and not relevant to everyday life and its challenges:

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[6] 'The Future Church', *Times*, 6 March 1918.
[7] 'The Church on Trial', *Times*, 10 April 1918.
[8] Ibid.
[9] 'Preaching The Gospel', *Times*, 20 April 1918.

> Nothing is farther from the thought [of the great mass of English people] than to reject Christianity. Too often, however, it is presented in a jargon they do not understand. The forms of worship to which they are invited offer them rites and ceremonies which are meaningless to them. The sermons they hear … use arguments which bring no conviction. Consequently many are puzzled by a presentation of a religion from which they know they can derive no benefit.[10]

It was, therefore, the church's responsibility that people appeared indifferent, or turned elsewhere:

> Organized Christianity … does not attract the great mass of people who, failing to gain from it what they need, have either abandoned all spiritual effort or have turned for the inspiration of great ideals and the challenge of strenuous service to the trades unions and friendly societies, the labour and women's movements. Or religious cults such as Theosophy or Christian Science.[11]

A few months later, another of the five committees – that on Teaching Office of the Church – produced what *The Times* again reported under the headline 'Church on Trial'. This 'candid report' again outlined failures of the Church and its clergy – 'the Church often fails to give its message effectively, and many of the clergy are deficient in spiritual earnestness, in intellectual capacity, and outlook'.[12] But the apathy of churchgoers was also responsible:

> There is a deplorable contrast between the enthusiasm of Christian Scientists and certain Socialist bodies in trying to convert others to the opinions they hold and the half-heartedness or complete indifference of the majority of the laity of the Church in bearing intelligent witness to their faith.[13]

Previous chapters have shown that, in the Anglican church at least, the national debate and diagnosis was fully visible at the local level. The Burnham Deanery Conference considered the Archbishop's Committee reports in 1919, the year after publication. The local debate mirrored the national. The main conference speaker began by challenging his colleagues as to the lack of authentic Christian fellowship in the churches:

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] 'The Church on Trial', *Times*, 13 September 1918.
[13] Ibid.

> Church people were not a very attractive society in the eyes of outsiders. They were not bound together by any ties as close as those which bound other societies in the world. Gatherings of Church people were not the brotherly gatherings that they ought to be.[14]

In contrast, members of the Labour Party were sure of their aim and were united in purpose to achieve it – 'a loyalty they would very much like to see in the Church'. The Church existed to 'preach the Gospel – the good news' but the preaching was ineffective:

> They had to preach something that was good news, and they did not really understand the people with whom they were dealing. They did not put the message to them in the way it should be put … They had so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men should put their trust in Him as their Saviour and serve him as their King.[15]

His address was welcomed with applause and a proposal to support it was passed unanimously.[16] An enthusiastic response, but Chapter 4 highlighted the practical struggles the Anglican church on the ground faced subsequently. And Chapter 4 also noted similar concerns being expressed by clergymen of all denominations.

The Introduction to this thesis began with the powerlessness clergy in interwar Slough felt in dealing with the apathy they saw around them. And the 'call to arms' made nationally, and endorsed so enthusiastically locally, did not seem to survive long as the absolute priority. After 1919 the evangelistic enterprise of the church, and its message, were only formally discussed on four occasions at around forty deanery conferences during the interwar years. In fact, it would be nearly ten years before the Deanery would return to the question.

As there were a limited number of standing items, the deanery conference agendas seem a reasonable guide to local clergy priorities. In the 1920s the most regular topics were finance in general, clergy pay and pensions, and the lack of ordinands – as discussed in Chapter 2. The two best attended conferences were on Prayer Book revision. During the 1930s, an increasing concern would be the challenges of church extension into the new housing estates. A 1933 meeting was

[14] 'Church Conference at Slough', *SO*, 14 June 1919.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

typical – agenda items covered the national and international situation, and locally, finance, clergy incomes, the division of the diocese, and the need for new churches. The fact that electoral rolls were not increasing was highlighted but seen as an administrative issue only.[17]

The first conference to revisit the issue of evangelism, in 1928, has already been referred to in Chapter 4. Speaking to the question of "How can people be brought back to the Church", the main speaker, a missionary in Docklands, emphasised the need for services to be accessible and the preaching comprehensible and relevant, even to the uneducated. He maintained that the problem was not of need, or desire - 'practically everybody wanted to worship', but they were put off church 'because most of the clergy had had a college education and used language which had no meaning to them'. All churches were packed at harvest thanksgiving service because the people understood them. The working classes would come to church if they were encouraged to do so. The key, therefore, was in missionary enterprise – that is, inviting people to come – and then 'giving them something they understood' when they got to church.[18]

The 1934 conference was also referred to in Chapter 4, considering the question of regular church attendance.[19] The *Slough Observer* commented 'of all the knotty problems of this exceedingly problematic era of human history, there is probably none which is harder to unravel than that of the 'empty churches''.[20] This reflected the mood of crisis at the conference: 'the biggest question was whether the church was going on', and if so in what form. However, the main speakers – the vicar of Datchet, and a St Paul's churchwarden – dismissed any consideration that people might have a choice, and that churches needed to be attractive and relevant. The blame lay with the people: 'churchgoing was obligatory' regardless of what they found when they went to church or whether they agreed with it, and regardless of any external distractions.[21]

[17] 'Rural Dean of Burnham on These Troublous Times', *SO*, 28 April 1933.
[18] 'Power of the Sermon'.
[19] 'RD Conference 1934'.
[20] 'Notes by the Way: The Problem of Churchgoing', *SO*, 4 May 1934.
[21] 'RD Conference 1934'.

The reality was that the church's message was being challenged by 'modern thought' – variously, the challenges posed by scientific advances, 'higher criticism' of the Bible, and new questions arising from social and cultural change, and the pressures of modern life. But in 1918, *The Times* commented:

> Everywhere one meets men in holy orders who apparently have little interest in the questions which occupy men's thoughts, and show no power to recommend the faith they represent to the hearts and minds of men, except along lines which may have been effective in times past, but which have long since lost their force.[22]

The 1934 deanery conference indicates that this may have been widely true locally. Intriguingly, the question of 'modern thought' was not considered as a separate agenda item at any of the local conferences, although hinted at by the main speakers at three.

At the 1919 conference the speaker briefly noted that 'modern thought' was a challenge to authoritative preaching, but maintaining that if approached properly, it should 'help them understand' – without further explanation.[23] The fullest debate was in 1929, when the conference considered 'The Danger of a Secular Civilization' with the main speaker being from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.[24] For him, 'secularism was a new foe to Christianity … defined as an outlook on life from which God had been dropped out', and 'the cause of it was the steady growth of science'. But 'religion was not to be proved by a proposition in Euclid', and no advice was given on how to approach the specific questions that science posed for faith. The only solution the speaker saw was again commitment to authentic Christian witness – 'a new consecration of life … we have got to give our lives in sacrifice in a way we have never done before'.[25]

Of course, the term 'secularism' goes back at least to Horace Mann's commentary on the 1851 Religious Census, in which he had identified the working classes as 'unconscious secularists' who

[22] 'Training of the Clergy', *Times*, 21 September 1918.
[23] 'RD Conference 1919'.
[24] 'The Ruri-Decanal Conference', *SO*, 10 May 1929.
[25] Ibid.

needed 'the restraints and consolations of religion'. [26] But a change in tone is clear. Mann urged his readers to take the gospel invitation to people through 'aggressive Christian agency'.[27] There were no doubts as to what this meant, but eighty years later, the 'gospel invitation' and its messengers were under scrutiny, and their authenticity needed to be demonstrated.

In 1930, the conference discussion on the main topic 'The Study of the Bible' was led by the vicar of St Paul's.[28] His presentation outlined a conventional evangelical approach to the Bible, condemning attempts to discredit it 'by the higher critic and the infidel'. As noted elsewhere, the vicar was the only evangelical in the deanery, and often found himself at odds with his Anglican colleagues. Hinting at the influence of 'modern thought', the Rural Dean said that 'he would have more liberal views on the subject of criticism and science'. However, 'he found himself more in agreement than he expected' on 'the 'general position'.[29]

Much of the evidence, such as it is, for how much such questions affected the actual message being proclaimed in the churches comes from the Anglican records, simply through their comprehensiveness. Chapter 5 reported a senior Baptist leader's description of much Baptist preaching as 'intellectual rather than inspiring', coupled with 'a deplorable lack of joyousness in worship'.[30] But the Baptist church clearly recognised the need to address the questions of modern life – in the winter of 1935-6, a sermon series addressed 'The Problems of Life and Belief', with the opening address on 'Science and Religion'.[31] The address asserted 'there was no antagonism between the conclusions of science and religious faith', as they were dealing with different questions.

But the challenges of 'modern thought' were not the only 'questions which occupy men's thoughts' – perhaps, in working-class Slough, not even the predominant questions. In 1919,

[26] Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship, pp. clxviii-clxii.
[27] Ibid.
[28] 'Church Conference at Slough', *SO*, 28 November 1930.
[29] Ibid.
[30] 'Ald Bowyer'.
[31] 'The Problems of Life and Belief', *SO*, 11 October 1935.

debating the Archbishop's Committee reports, a speaker noted that preachers were pulled in different directions – some wished them to be more dogmatic and 'authoritative', while others saw this as 'alien to the Christian spirit' and akin to the teaching 'of the Scribes and Pharisees'.[32] Chapter 4 explored this division in approach in debates on Sunday leisure and recreation, and temperance. The Gospel, the 'good news', could all too easily be presented – or, perhaps, heard - as a question of conformance to a moral code. This was clearly popular with some, but Erdozain pointed out the risks:

> The danger of pinning Christian hopes on tangible ethical demands was twofold: either the demands would be rejected as unreasonable and cultic, or worse, they would be fulfilled without supernatural assistance.[33]

On this last point, Erdozain argued that the churches' failure – and specifically, the evangelical failure – to preach a supernatural soteriology contributed to the very nature of the popular perception of Christianity. He pointed to Mass Observation's 1947 survey, which found that for many people, religion – at this stage, synonymous with Christianity - was:

> religion with God relegated to the background, the stress of everyday actions, general principles of behaviour, belief in standards of behaviour acquired through personal experience of the need for standards; a philosophy rather than a theology, a coherent way of life rather than a faith.[34]

Chapter 4 showed that the opposition to changes in secular leisure culture was not confined solely to the evangelical churches, but the loudest voices were apparently within the Free Churches and St Paul's. These churches were also the supporters of the local Bible Society – proclaiming, as seen above, the authoritative and normative nature of the Bible. To the extent that this could characterised as the religion 'of the Scribes and Pharisees', this was a secularising of the church's message. In interwar Slough, there is more direct evidence of this than of over-accommodating to the challenges of modern thought – although this may be a question simply of the more public nature of the debate.

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[32] 'RD Conference 1919'.
[33] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin', 86–87.
[34] Mass Observation, *Puzzled People*, 147.

The 'popular religion' referred to in the 1947 Mass Observation is outside the focus of this thesis, while it is the emphasis of, for example, Sarah Williams' contemporaneous study of Southwark.[35] There is no reason to suppose that such popular religion did not exist in Slough. Indeed, much clergy discussion centred around the belief that there was spiritual need but puzzlement as to why this was coupled with indifference and apathy towards the churches. That in the interwar years, and likewise after WWII, some churches grew, often rapidly, provides evidence of some spiritual or social need which people were prepared to satisfy through association with an organised body.

As Jeremy Morris commented in his review of Williams' book:

> Church historians are going to find her conclusions extremely uncomfortable. If she is correct in her description of the richness of the interior religious world of the urban working class … then the problem of non-attendance is actually thrown into even sharper relief. Just why, one might ask, did it prove so problematic for churches to find so few points of contact with working class belief? Why did their product not appeal on its own terms? Why did they not see through their failure to recognize genuine belief when they encountered it?[36]

Why indeed. For Erdozain, this was a theological issue; for Green, it was an over-emphasis on social utility that crowded out the spiritual functions and focus – the failure of 'the associational ideal'.[37] But for contemporaries, it was authenticity and relevance that were the major concerns. The apathy and lack of spirituality, the nominalism, the class bias, in some cases the hypocrisy and small-mindedness, made the churches unappealing places. With hindsight, their leaders were out of touch – and sympathy - with the people they were seeking to reach. At the beginning of Chapter 4, we noted Adrian Hastings' characterisation of the Edwardian church: 'there did already exist an immense boredom, a conformity with convention reflecting only the most attenuated belief'.[38] If churchgoers seemed unexcited and unmotivated, why should the working classes of

[35] Williams, *Religious Belief*.
[36] Jeremy Morris, 'Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c 1880-1939', *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 682–84.
[37] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin'; Green, *Age of Decline*.
[38] Hastings, *English Christianity*, xvi.

Slough attend churches which presented 'a religion from which they know they can derive no benefit'?[39]

Despite the undoubted challenges, it can be argued from the evidence from the Anglican establishment and from local experience that many years of failure to preach the Gospel effectively, and to connect it to the day-to-day life of the 'man in the street' contributed to the institutional marginalisation of the churches by the close of WWII. Perhaps his diagnosis was presented in undiplomatic language, but there is some support for the Pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle's assertion that 'the church is to be blamed for this shocking state of affairs'.[40]

The bare statistics also superficially support the Pastor's case. Despite preaching the 'old fashioned' messages' decried by his sparring partner from Colnbrook, the Gospel Tabernacle grew numerically, had a thriving children's work, and was able to finance both a series of building projects and an expansion of its full-time staff.[41] In fact, perhaps not 'despite' but 'because of' for at least a proportion of the Slough population. It has also been noted that despite a possible 'secularising' of their message, the two most evangelical churches in Slough – St Paul's, and Slough Baptist – saw the greatest proportional growth in the period up to WWII. But in the period after WWII, the Presbyterian church and the Roman Catholic churches also experienced growth based on very different foundations.

Church growth and modern thought

For the Gospel Tabernacle, there is a considerable amount of source material that shows the contents of the Pastor's message, as covered in Chapter 5. For churches adopting a more 'modern' or 'liberal' theological stance, there is less direct evidence. Can it be established

[39] 'Preaching the Gospel'.
[40] 'Blame Churches'.
[41] 'Colnbrook: Vicar Criticises Crusade'.

whether there is any correlation between church attendance and whether a church embraced 'modern thought'?

The Introduction quoted Steve Bruce as attributing the decline in church adherence from the 1960s onwards partially to theological roots:

> ... the churches [enthusiastically] collude[d] in their own demise ... jettison[ing] much Christian belief and ritual in the hope that imitating secular culture would make them more attractive ... vicars vied with each other to argue that socialism, communism (indeed any secular 'ism') was really more Christian than Christianity. ... the churches succumbed to a lay version of the rationalising spirit that had pervaded academic theological circles since the start of the century. God became some vague higher power or just our own consciences; the Bible became a commonplace book of ethical and moral guidelines for living; miracles became natural phenomena misunderstood by ignorant peasants; Christ became an exemplary prophet and teacher; and heaven, hell and salvation became psychological states.[42]

Superficially, if the Pastor was at one end of the spectrum regarding the 'old old story', the Vicar of Colnbrook was clearly at the other, characterising the opinions outlined by Bruce. As noted in Chapter 5, he took liberal positions on higher criticism of the Bible and social attitudes to divorce, remarriage and contraception, and supported left wing political causes such as nuclear disarmament. However, there is no evidence that such positions proved sufficiently popular with parishioners to attract them to church - Chapter 6 reported that after 15 years in his post, his congregations had dwindled to one in some services. But he saw that he was able to turn around attendances within 2 years by making services accessible and family-friendly. This does not prove Bruce's point – but fails to disprove it. The Vicar's views perhaps did not attract people to church in the 1950s; but they failed to deter them after his service changes in the early 1960s.

The Vicar was far from alone in his support for disarmament and other 'left wing' causes. For example, a 1959 letter to the local newspaper was signed by nine local clergymen, including three Anglicans, three Baptists, two Methodists and one Congregationalist.[43] The letter maintained 'that nuclear arms are wholly evil … the very negation of all we understand by the Christian faith'.

[42] Bruce, 'Secularisation in the UK and the USA', 207.
[43] 'Letters To The Editor: Clergy Call For a Pledge', *SO*, 12 June 1959.

Some clergymen went further – the first chairman of the local branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was the Methodist Central Hall minister. He saw the gospel message as inextricably entwined with such issues; for example, supporting the Aldermarston March in 1960, he wrote:

> if you think, as I do, that to protest against preparations for racial extermination is the very stuff of the Gospel, then you will be very welcome in our [CND] ranks. This is not politics; it is the Gospel; it is evangelism.[44]

It is not clear how much support the minister had within his own congregation for these views. The Leaders' meeting minutes are silent on the issue, although there are hints of lack of support for causes such as World Refugee Day – some saw them as the minister's 'hobby-horse'.[45] But what is clear from the statistics presented in Chapters 2 and 5 is that there was no increase in support at the Methodist Central Hall during this period.

Elsewhere, clergy support for political causes could divide opinion. The Methodist's successor as the local CND Chairman was the 'left wing' priest in charge of St Peter's Chalvey.[46] Known as Slough's 'most controversial priest', he was 'convinced that it was impossible for the Christian church to dissociate itself from politics', including preaching on the subject.[47] Some churchgoers disapproved strongly of his political activities, thinking him 'a crank, Communist, a priest who should get on with more church work and mind his own business' and that 'he had 'no right' to dabble in the issues he dabbled in'.[48] But for others, his support for anti-apartheid, 'urgent disarmament, racial integration, easing world hunger, and progressive theological ideas' stood 'for all that was right'.[49] Upton's population contained an increasing proportion of Commonwealth immigrants from the 1960s so the priest's work in interracial relations was

[44] 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 31.
[45] 'Leaders Meetings'; 'Pastoral Newsletters', no. 30.
[46] 'Slough's Left Wing Priest Is Leaving', *SO*, 23 September 1966; 'Rev Sidney Hinkes Leaving Slough', *SE*, 23 September 1966.
[47] 'Around And About: Slough's Canon Collins', *SO*, 26 June 1964.
[48] 'Letter: No Negative Mumbling', *SO*, 30 September 1966.
[49] Ibid.

particularly commended. On his departure, one Indian community leader spoke of 'his unimpeachable integrity … inspired scholarship … and passionate dedication to humanistic causes'.[50] Even his opponents were appreciative: one said 'I do not agree with his political views but I do agree that he is a very hard working priest … I am among many who are sorry to see him leave'.[51]

Despite the generally high regard in which he was held, the statistics in Chapters 2 and 5 demonstrate no increase in church adherence in Upton parish within this period. Chapter 5 showed that in next door St Paul's, with its very different theological approach, any direct equation between the message and adherence was complicated by the influx of immigrants from a non-Christian heritage into central Slough. But the priest was a high profile figure, and the local press was silent about any increase in attendance – a 1964 profile asked, rather, whether people had left the church because of his beliefs.[52] By comparison, the press regularly reported the increased attendance at the Gospel Tabernacle.

This begs the question of just what being a 'Christian' meant, and what level of commitment that required – a topic discussed in the last chapter. For those attracted by the Gospel Tabernacle's message – and, perhaps, the message of the sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists – the message was clear. This was 'the old old story', a message of 'salvation', and personal commitment to the local congregation was part of the equation. But it is less clear what the call was from churches with a message grounded in more 'modern', liberal theology. If being a Christian was not a question of 'salvation', of becoming part of 'a chosen people', then why was adherence to a church any more than a choice from a range of social or political organisations? This was a question of whether one saw Christianity as a matter of holding of certain political beliefs, or more generally as citizenship of a 'Christian country' or a matter of

[50] 'Letter: A Good Lead', *SO*, 7 October 1966.
[51] 'Letter: No Hate', *SO*, 7 October 1966.
[52] 'Slough's Canon Collins'.

behaviour, 'living a good life'. As Erdozain put it, 'the danger of pinning Christian hopes on tangible ethical demands was … they [could] be fulfilled without supernatural assistance' – so while one might approve of churches that held such views, that would not necessarily prompt one to attend them.[53]

An example was from the circumstances in 1954 that prompted the outburst from the Gospel Tabernacle's Pastor. The town was exercised over whether an openly atheistic man was a fit person to be mayor. Several professed Christians maintained strongly that he was not. The Rector of Farnham Royal found himself on the opposite side:

> Of course I believe that there is no better person than a practising Christian to be our First citizen, but I should be a fool – and what is more important a very bad Christian – if I did not recognise the sincerity, integrity, and often genuine desire to serve the community of many good people who cannot intellectually accept the Christian religion … People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I hope that those throwing stones at a possible atheist mayor are themselves regular and active members of a Christian community … I know many atheists who really understand why they are atheists. I wonder if our vociferous Christians are as well versed in their religion as atheists are in their irreligion?[54]

Better a mayor who was a good atheist than a bad Christian. Here was Christianity as a belief system as valid as any other, to be judged against a culturally determined behavioural standard and by the integrity of those who professed to believe it. And here was a Christian as a good person, a good citizen, rather than as a 'saved' disciple.

The implication that some professing Christians were hypocrites is relatively rare in Slough's local press in the post-war period, certainly compared with the interwar years. Perhaps the comment from the 1924 Rural Deanery Conference that 'there is really more real religion than thirty years ago, and the religious are more really religious' was accurate in that the number of 'nominalists', or downright hypocrites, was reducing as Christian adherence became less of a social

[53] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin', 86–87.
[54] 'Blame Churches'.

convention.[55] But in post-war Britain, not being seen as hypocritical was no longer sufficient to bring people into the churches.

Holding to the 'traditional' gospel message was at least distinctive. But if Christianity was simply a matter of good behaviour, how could Christians be distinctive? Again in 1954, this prompted some clergy to suggest that Christians should be encouraged to wear a badge to show their faith. A *Slough Observer* editorial rubbished the idea:

> Apparently it's so difficult to recognise a Christian today that he ought to wear a badge. Or is it? Badges are all right for unions or fan clubs or social organisations. But if a man is a practising Christian there is no difficulty in recognising the fact. Giving him a badge would indicate that one can no more distinguish a Christian from an atheist than an electrician from a toolmaker. Christianity is not a label, it is a way of life, which no-one can mistake.[56]

The suggestion appears to have died a death, but the challenge to authenticity and distinctiveness remained. And Farnham Royal's Rector was perhaps highlighting a feature of post war Britain noted by Grace Davie – that 'Christian' expectations and standards could often be defended most vociferously 'by those who do not attend church with any regularity'. This is the rise of what Davie calls vicarious religion: 'church leaders and churchgoers believe on behalf of others and incur criticism if they do not do this properly … even when those codes have been abandoned by large sections of the populations that they serve'.[57]

In retrospect, perhaps it can be seen how the message of the church needed to adapt. Before WWI, the message was to a relatively captive audience, and was primarily to inspire and encourage the faithful. The extent to which it did is open to question, as the 1918 Anglican reports highlighted. In the interwar years, the message was to an increasing sceptical audience, and needed to show itself as authentic and relevant to the questions of modern life. After WWII,

[55] 'RD Conference 1924'.
[56] 'No Need For A Label', *SO*, 12 February 1954.
[57] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, Second edition. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 6.

it was to an audience that was either disinterested or saw the church as a social and ethical organisation that could be approved of without necessarily needing to be actively supported.

Another feature of post war religious belief characterised by Davie is 'an observable change in the actively religious constituencies of Britain, which operate increasingly on a model of choice, rather than a model of obligation or duty'[58]. She continued:

> What was once simply imposed on substantial sections of the population (with all the negative connotations of this word), or inherited (which has a rather more positive spin), becomes instead a matter of personal choice. Religiously active individuals now go to a church or to another religious organization because they choose to, sometimes for a short period or sometimes for longer, sometimes regularly and sometimes occasionally, but they feel little obligation either to attend that church in the first place or to continue if they no longer want to.[59]

She also drew attention to the 'manifest' decline in 'hard' measures of religiosity – defined as church attendance and adherence to formal credal statements – compared with persistence in 'soft' measures, such as 'belief in God' and participation in the rituals of occasional conformity – what she had earlier termed 'believing without belonging'.[60]

This thesis has argued throughout for a gradual increase in people's sense of choice, dating from WWI, corresponding with an increase in the range of leisure alternatives and organisations that offered them. The decline in obligation and duty caused people, consciously or otherwise, to evaluate what the churches offered – and often to find it wanting. Before WWII, the predominant narrative was around authenticity. After WWII, the narrative was perhaps more about relevance and uniqueness. The evidence from Slough suggests that a 'traditional' message had the power to attract throughout, providing it was evidenced by authentic congregational life. It gave people a positive choice.

Again, this corresponds to Davie's observation that increasingly in post-war Britain: 'the actively religious are disproportionately drawn to … charismatic evangelical churches [that] epitomize firm

[58] Ibid., 3–4.
[59] Ibid., 7.
[60] Ibid., 5.

commitments, strong fellowship and conservative teaching, balanced by the warmth of a charismatic experience'.[61]

Davie goes on to contrast this with 'the rather more liberal forms of Protestantism, noticeably fashionable in the 1960s [that] have not fulfilled their promise … by and large the purely cerebral has less appeal … than many people thought would be the case'.[62] While the evidence from post WWII Slough is not as overt as for the 'traditional' gospel, the indications are that a message based on 'modern' thought failed to attract people to church.

The aim of this study is to show that 'the internal deficiencies' of the church, the 'supply side' of the secularisation debate, extended to the core message that the churches proclaimed. The clergy themselves thought this was so – although not necessarily agreeing amongst themselves as to how the message should be adapted, either in form or presentation. The statistics point to adherence being maintained better in churches that held 'to the old old story' than in those that did not. This is not to draw conclusions as to the theological merits of different versions of the church's message or how it was presented, which are beyond the scope of this study. Perhaps it can be said, though, that in 'marketing' terms, the 'traditional' message observably motivated and inspired its audience to activity and support more than the alternative approaches did.

[61] Ibid., 7–8.
[62] Ibid.

Conclusions

This thesis has focused on a neglected area of the historiography of twentieth century secularisation in the UK. In 2003, Jeremy Morris concluded that historians had focused primarily on the external forces of modernization and postmodernity, but largely ignored approaches that 'assume no significant change in religious need, but instead locate the causes of church decline in the various strategies adopted (or refused) by churches themselves' – what he called the 'supply side' of the argument.[1]

Simon Green and Dominic Erdozain were two exceptions to Morris's generalisation. Green's local study of industrial Yorkshire traced the decline of the churches after WWI to 'the product as much of an internal deficiency within modern religious organizations as of the external pressures which had been brought to bear on them during the past fifty years and more'.[2] If this highlighted strategic and organisational deficiencies, Erdozain's focus was faulty theology. The roots of church decline lay in the reduction of the traditional evangelical message of salvation by faith to certain behaviours – total abstinence, 'muscular Christianity', and forms of 'holiness' – and church ministry focused towards socialising and welfare. He concluded 'such ethicised Christianity, part crusade and part soirée, was a shadow of its former self' and ultimately led to 'something more damaging than bitter resentment, something no religion can survive, which is gentle disdain'.[3] For Green and Erdozain, the churches' strategic, operational and theological errors or deficiencies had created their own internal mechanism of secularisation.[4]

Morris, Green and Erdozain accepted the reality of church decline and explored its causes. In a later study, Morris speculated on the possibility of identifying approaches that resisted and perhaps even reversed decline or secularisation: commenting that 'a refreshingly different

[1] Morris, 'Strange Death', 964–65.
[2] Green, *Age of Decline*, 387.
[3] Erdozain, 'Secularisation of Sin', 85–86.
[4] Ibid., 59.

reading of British religious history might come into view' through a focus on 'the adaptive strategies of churches in the modern period, as they sought to 'modernize' their ministries, liturgies, missionary, and educational methods and bureaucracies to cope with the challenges of rapid social change'.[5]

A local study is particularly appropriate for analysing these matters. In this period, people's experience of institutional religion was overwhelmingly local – of a church, a minister, a congregation; of an encounter in which these were either helpful or not, perhaps in the context of a crisis, or a 'rite of passage' such as birth, marriage or death. The local study's bounded population promotes objectivity and allows comparison between different groups.

However, the local studies that have underpinned the historiographical debate have typically focused on London boroughs and northern industrial towns, over periods from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The picture is generally one of established churches and religious institutions experiencing decline. Two exceptions – both limited in their focus and thus contribution to the wider debate - are Rex Walford's study of church planting on the new housing estates of North London, which ends with WWII; and Ian Jones' study of intergenerational religious transfer in Birmingham, which ends in 2000.[6]

Slough, the subject of this study, was and is representative of twentieth century industrial development and social change. It grew and changed rapidly as macro-economic forces directed industrial development towards the south-east. Rapid industrialisation created significant employment and consequent economic migration. Migrants came initially from depressed areas of the UK and those moving out of London; and from the 1950s, increasingly from the Commonwealth. Migrants saw Slough as a 'land of opportunity', and economic development created a relatively prosperous town. But 'too many people arriving too rapidly' created

[5] Morris, 'Secularization and Religious Experience', 197,219.
[6] Walford, *New London*; Jones, *Local Church*.

infrastructural challenges – shortages of housing, community and leisure facilities – with attendant social problems. Mid-twentieth century Slough was a town that lacked community cohesion and civic identity: it was said to 'lack a soul'.[7]

The challenges posed by rapid growth and change also applied to the churches. Slough was by no means exceptional. In 1935, Archbishop Lang warned:

> This problem of making spiritual provision for the populations of the new districts which were being formed in many parts of the country was the greatest that had been presented to the Church in our generation. It might almost be said to be one of the greatest ever presented to the Church of England in the course of its long history ... some dioceses ... were almost breaking down under the magnitude of the problem.[8]

Slough exemplified the 'new districts', predominantly located in outer, and just outside, London. The dioceses most affected were London and Chelmsford, in which Dagenham, another rapidly growing industrial town, was situated. Oxford diocese was also severely affected, and Slough was one of several communities springing up or expanding in the southern part of Buckinghamshire.

But the same challenges created opportunities for churches to play significant roles in the lives of Slough's residents. Churches were a major focal point for people to meet and form friendships, particularly in a town with so many newcomers. Clubs and associations associated with the churches were a major part of the social scene, particularly – although not exclusively – for children and young people. The social problems associated with rapid growth presented opportunities to provide leadership and deliver practical solutions alongside the local authorities or businesses. In a country broadly adhering to a Christian consensus, certainly at the beginning of the period being studied, church leaders were natural community leaders. If there was a sense of anonymity and lack of cohesion in a town that was growing perhaps too rapidly, churches were a natural place for community formation.

[7] Minoprio, 'Advisory Plan', 7–8.
[8] 'Problems Of The New Areas'.

It was not just rapid urbanisation and associated demographic change that challenged the churches, however, but significant changes in the social climate. As threatening was a rise in the sense of choice, at the expense of obligation and duty, which began to take hold particularly in the years after WWI, coupled with an increase in social and leisure alternatives. The churches increasingly found themselves competing with secular organisations for people's time, attention and commitment.

In examining overall adherence to religious institutions – which, until the last few years of the study, overwhelming meant Christian churches - three key periods have been identified. Before WWI, adherence was relatively stable. Churches were arguably the most significant social institutions in the community and church leaders among its most significant leaders. Between the wars, overall adherence declined substantially relative to population, as churches were challenged by secular alternatives for people's discretionary time. Their moral authority also came under challenge. After WWII, adherence was again relatively stable, but at a significantly lower level as the losses of the interwar years were not recovered. The churches moved from being central to the community to being one of many social institutions, with a corresponding loss of community leadership and influence.

However, within this overall picture, some movements and churches grew, often substantially, while others declined – highlighting the agency of church leaderships and congregations. The story of the churches in twentieth century Slough was not, therefore, a uniform story of 'institutional attenuation and marginalisation', or of 'decline'.[9] While the external pressures – population growth, new housing estates, a shift towards a largely working-class population, immigration and multiculturalism – were common to all, individual fortunes varied markedly.

There is strong evidence that 'internal deficiencies', including: vision and leadership; organisation and finance, and congregational behaviour and spirituality, played a significant role

[9] Morris, 'Strange Death'.

in negatively affecting those fortunes. Conversely, churches with energetic leadership and highly motivated and committed congregations grew, often substantially and quickly – perhaps at the expense of other churches, but also in new, unchurched settings. The ability to finance new buildings and ministers to reach out to the new housing estates, and to mobilise large numbers of lay volunteers to staff a church's activities – particularly its Sunday Schools – was a major factor.

Churches that had significant social or cultural utility – at the heart of a community, whether that be a housing estate, a village, or an ethnic group – prospered where others with no such role declined. Mainstream Protestantism generally declined, Roman Catholicism grew; an emphasis on authentic Christian spirituality was supported, but purely social, or nominal, adherence to Christianity was increasingly seen as a choice not a social or cultural imperative. The search for authenticity led to a fragmentation in the religious landscape after WWII, not so much 'believing without belonging' as a search for groups that authentically offered both.

The most significant story-within-a-story was of Anglican decline. Before WWI, Anglican adherence was around 18 per cent of Slough's adults, two-thirds of total adherence. By the early 1970s, this had fallen to 3 per cent, or one-fifth of the total. The structural weaknesses within the parish system and the allocation and suitability of clergy were major contributors to this decline. The Church was simply unable to provide churches and clergy for the new centres of population – as Archbishop Lang had warned. But even with diminished resources, the parish 'offer' to all remained intact – to baptise, marry and bury; to visit the sick and help in times of crisis. Supporting this 'occasional conformity' became a burden to a Church that increasingly resembled an underfunded and overstretched social service. There were signs too of the persistence of class stereotypes which made some churches unwelcoming. Correspondingly, over-reliance on the financial and personal support of the wealthy undermined the Church's finances when former supporters moved away from an industrialising town they longer found congenial.

The weaknesses have been shown at a local level, but they also reflected leadership impotence from the very top. A series of reports, and accompanying episcopal pronouncements, showed the Church's senior leaders were aware of its structural weaknesses. But despite some insightful analysis, Archbishops and Bishops were unable to inspire the necessary changes and financial support required. Roger Lloyd commented 'it is ... the vicars and rectors in their parish churches – and not their bishops, who are the real arbiters ... if they say No, there is nothing more to be said until they change their minds'.[10] The comment could have been extended to the men and women in the pew – one report railed against 'the half-heartedness or complete indifference of the majority of the laity of the Church' to the urgings of its most senior leadership.[11]

However, the semi-autonomous nature of a parish could be a strength. In Slough, the experience at St Mary's, before WWI, and St Paul's, at least until WWII, showed that energetic and charismatic clergy could motivate people to give both significant practical and financial support in very different theological settings. While lack of such support was often seen as a barrier, this thesis argues that it could be a symptom of commitment to the church's mission. The quality of local leadership was central to a church's fortunes.

The Church of England's weaknesses and strategic errors extended beyond the purely clerical and liturgical. In Anglican minds, religious education (RE) in day schools was key to inducting children into the Church's faith, perhaps even more so than Sunday Schools. As education provision shifted inexorably towards secular schools, the Church – both nationally and locally - fought an arguably counter-productive battle to preserve Church schools. Counter-productive, as many schools were ultimately closed anyway due to being poorly located relative to changing population needs or in such poor repair. And more counter-productive as RE shifted from being delivered with the active participation of the local churches, to being a classroom subject taught and learned like any other. In Slough, this resulted in a fall over a thirty-year period from 70 per

[10] Lloyd, *Church of England*, 147.
[11] 'Church on Trial', 13 September 1918.

cent to 10 per cent of schoolchildren receiving RE under the umbrella of the Church – undeniably one aspect of 'institutional marginalisation'. At national level, there was a clear missed opportunity after WWI to reach a settlement, in cooperation with the Free churches, that would have preserved some church involvement in RE for the majority. The long-term cost of this failure is impossible to calculate.

The decline of Anglicanism was part of a wider decline in historic mainstream adherence. All three major nonconformist denominations declined overall, but with significant differences in the fortunes of individual churches. Those fortunes were in inverse proportion to their apparent strength at the beginning of the period. There was no Baptist church initially, but the Baptists were the most active subsequently, showing the benefits of strong and charismatic leadership that inspired practical and financial commitment from its membership. Before WWI, growth was faster than overall population growth. In the interwar years, the Baptists energetically planted or supported churches on the new housing estates. But in the late 1950s and 1960s, the church failed to respond to new social attitudes, particularly among the young, and changes in church worship styles, which stalled growth and saw those who 'wanted something more' defecting to more 'lively' congregations. Again, internal issues – leadership and congregational support – were key to the church's fortunes.

The Methodists presented a mixed picture – little growth before Methodist Union, several years of strong growth at the Central Hall under a young, energetic minister, followed by a long period of stasis, in which the membership gradually grew more elderly and successive leaders struggled to motivate more than a committed core to give practical and financial support. The trend was bucked at Hampshire Avenue, planted in the mid-1930s with a young minister focusing on young families, which grew strongly until the mid-1950s before itself entering a period of slow decline.

At the outset, the Congregationalists appeared best positioned of the three main Free churches, with the largest membership, largest Sunday Schools, largest church building, and mission halls in

Chalvey and Langley. But the congregation was unwilling to support much needed updates to the Chalvey Sunday School, the Langley mission hall closed as the Baptist mission was thriving, and the Upton Lea daughter church closed while nearby Christchurch, established around the same time, continued to flourish. There were signs of internal discord, class tensions, and spiritual malaise. Only at Burnham, where the church focused on young families moving into the new estates, was there growth. By the end of the period Burnham was twice the size of the historically much larger Slough church.

The source material did not allow a direct theological linkage with the different fortunes of the three denominations. But the Introduction noted David Bebbington's 'broadening continuum of Evangelical opinion', from conservative Baptists to liberal Congregationalists, with Church of England evangelicals and Methodists between.[12] As one of Bebbington's 'quadrilateral' of evangelical characteristics is Activism, there might be a correlation between evangelical fervour and the long-term fortunes of Slough's Free churches. The dramatic growth of the Gospel Tabernacle after WWII, when other Free church ministers were describing Slough as 'a spiritual desert', perhaps further illustrates the impetus that could be given by charismatic and energetic leadership based on a strong evangelical message.

Where the three Free churches did agree was in resolute support for 'traditional' Christian values and behaviour. This led to unstinting resistance to any attempt to erode the traditional Sunday. Early in the study, this stance corresponded with public opinion; but shifting attitudes meant that during the 1930s the council allowed Sunday games in public parks and cinemas to be opened on Sunday evenings, despite church opposition. The churches' stance was hard to justify theologically and seemed more an argument about social norms - an example of Erdozain's secularising forces. The churches' moral authority was weakened by divisions amongst their senior leaders. When the Rector of Slough pleaded for moderation and criticized those who

[12] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 228.

confused 'the Jewish Sabbath with the Christian Sunday', the implication was not lost.[13] One local councillor concluded 'the Rector had practically disposed of the Nonconformists'.[14]

If senior churchmen could not agree, then people had a choice as to whose leadership to take. The churches increasingly no longer spoke for the whole community, but sections of it – a process of marginalisation perhaps accentuated by a secularising of their message. But the Gospel Tabernacle demonstrated that a commitment to traditional mores was no barrier to church growth. The key was to focus on the relevance of Christianity to everyday life and concerns, and to build a community of mutually supportive, like-minded people. While the focus on 'miraculous' divine intervention appealed only to a minority, the Tabernacle's '12 reasons why you should attend the Gospel Tabernacle' could have been a manifesto for any church. But if Christianity was to be relevant to a rapidly changing world, some aspects needed to change while core values remained constant – as the local newspaper put it, 'old-fashioned religion in a new-fashioned way'.[15]

The dangers of 'updating' the core message, rather than the presentation and delivery of it, were illustrated by churches that adapted too readily to contemporary social attitudes while discarding old certainties. This was another form of secularisation: if the gospel could be equated to support for nuclear disarmament, as one Methodist minister appeared to suggest, then why not simply join CND? No direct evidence of decline in such churches has survived, but neither has any evidence of growth – which represented relative decline in a growing town.

Two other growth stories showed the enduring value of social and cultural utility within minority communities. The Presbyterian church grew almost as rapidly as the Gospel Tabernacle, drawing its membership from the Scottish diaspora. But the main example was the Catholic church, closely identified with the immigrant Irish community. One large parish subdivided into

[13] 'Rector's Opinion'.
[14] 'The Slough Churches and Sunday Games', *SO*, 19 September 1930.
[15] 'Old Fashioned Religion'.

seven over a fifty-year period either side of WWII. By the 1960s perhaps half those worshipping regularly in a Christian church were Catholics. The working-class adherents supported the building of churches, priest's houses, and Catholic schools where the young could be inducted into the faith as part of their wider education. There was a contrast between the Catholic appeal to its community and the Anglicans appeal for support for the historic parish system. The first attracted widespread commitment; the second increasingly did not. The constant round of fund-raising – bazaars, fetes, dances and so – created a social life of its own, rather as it had done in the Protestant churches before WWI. Notably, growth in the Catholic church occurred despite old-fashioned liturgy and conservative moral attitudes. The changes arising from Vatican II took effect only towards the end of the study period, and there is little evidence of the consequences. Earlier in the century, the Catholics were more sympathetic to changes in social attitudes over, for example, the proper use of Sunday; and it was perhaps only in the late 1960s, in debates over birth control, that there are hints of any widespread discontent within its community over the church's moral stance.

Chapter 2 introduced the idea of four kinds of 'religious utility' – civic, cultural, social, and spiritual. The civic utility of religion is the role of the churches in the delivery of services such as education and welfare. Over the period of this study, the civic utility of religion declined enormously, in Slough as in the UK – what Morris called the 'institutional marginalisation' of the churches, as social services became the preserve of local government.[16] However, the building of several Catholic schools from the mid-1930s showed this decline was by no means inevitable. Public policy tended to follow, rather than lead, public opinion.

The cultural utility of religion is the sense of Britain as a Christian country – the decline of which has been the subject of studies by Callum Brown and Simon Green.[17] In Slough, there were signs

[16] Morris, 'Strange Death'. See also Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2006).
[17] Brown, *Death*, 2009; Green, *Passing*.

that the Christian, specifically Protestant, consensus began to fracture in the interwar period and came under increasing pressure after WWII with the impact of Commonwealth immigration. The social utility of religion, or of religious institutions, is in facilitating community at various levels: friendships, mutual support, the transfer of skills and knowledge (for example, in motherhood and child-rearing), clubs and societies, and contributing to wider community cohesion. The social utility of the churches was high before WWI, where they were the town's major social institutions. In the interwar years, social utility remained high, but increasingly became part of an expanding range of social and leisure alternatives – most notably the Slough Social Centre, from 1937. At the end of the period, while still significant, the churches as a group were just one social organisation among many. The trajectory of change in the cultural and social utility of Slough's churches is more consistent with Green's timescale and analysis of decline than Brown's.

The spiritual utility of churches was of course their primary role – congregation, worship, and teaching - but the most problematic category given the difficulties in measurement. Despite the difficulties, the critical significance of this part of the churches' role means it cannot be ignored. The evidence suggests that churches that were places of encounter, authenticity, and relevance, prospered. A winning formula was high spiritual and social utility - both believing and belonging.

There is clear evidence that a lively and welcoming congregation was key to attracting and retaining non-members. Conversely, places which exhibited spiritual 'deadness' and congregational cliques struggled. The spiritual vitality of a church was a combination of both leadership and congregation: clergy placed the responsibility with their congregations; congregations were quick to attribute growth to the effects of good leadership. Positive examples were the Baptist church and St Paul's early in the century, and the Gospel Tabernacle after WWII. Other examples were on the new estates, where establishing churches was undoubtedly challenging, but Burnham Congregational, Cippenham Free, Hampshire Avenue Methodist and Langley Free all became self-sufficient during the period. An unfortunate converse example was

the long-established Slough Congregational church, where severe relational dysfunction led to both relative and absolute decline.

These examples also highlight the challenge of maintaining vitality through successive generations and under different leadership. Challenging though church planting was, many of the growth examples were of newly established churches, perhaps less encumbered by organisational, financial or relational legacy issues. And towards the end of the period, there were signs that the attraction of a new, entrepreneurial church to 'belong' to could lead people to fringe movements – the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, or Mormons.

The 'spiritual utility' of churches and denominations was a primary factor in their relative fortunes, therefore. This probably qualifies Green's comment that the 'collapse' of the 'associational ideal' in the 1920s led to 'the local religious classes los[ing] heart'.[18] Rather, this was a period which tested what the term 'Christian' meant in practice. Perhaps some not so much 'lost heart' as saw no need to make the financial and personal commitments being requested. And it was one thing to make sacrifices for one's family and neighbours, another to support outreach to incomers they neither knew nor cared about. Others were prepared to make such sacrifices. Perhaps the period is therefore better characterised by a 'sifting out' – a clarifying of who 'the committed Christian minority' were, those for whom authentic Christianity was not primarily about civic and cultural utility, but about closely linked spiritual and social.

Addressing another aspect of the historiographical debate, there is little evidence of a downshift in church adherence in the 1960s, or of a downshift triggered by changes in social attitudes specific to the post-war period. Rather, there was a gradual move away from traditional, 'Christian' mores that dates to WWI, if not before. And at least as relevant in Slough were the changes wrought by immigration; the pressures of industrial life on the work and home lives of ordinary people; the loosening of ties within church fellowships as churches became more

[18] Green, *Age of Decline*, 380.

'gathered' rather than local communities; and the ability of church leaders to motivate and mobilise their memberships to reach out, as people were less likely to come to church regularly as a matter of course. This confirms Ian Jones' assessment that more analysis of religious decline after WWII is needed.[19] It also suggests however, that Jones' generational analysis does not appropriately account for either the Roman Catholic or Gospel Tabernacle's relative strength.

Where a focus on generational transfer is borne out is in the overriding need to focus on the young – particularly in view of the lack of any material evidence of success in evangelising unchurched adults. Churches that did not focus effectively on engaging with children and young people did not flourish in either the short or longer term. In the short term, attracting young couples and young families was key to congregational vitality and growth; and not just for the children – children's activities provided high social utility for their parents too. The historiography has tended to emphasise the longer-term consequence that churches which did not replace members lost through death with younger members graduating through the Sunday School would suffer a decline in membership. This was undoubtedly true early in the period, but as mobility increased, churches might be religiously socialising children who subsequently moved away from the area into the membership of other churches. But a focus on the young was expensive in human resources and capital expenditure on buildings; and there was a time lag between cause and effect – which gave ammunition to those inclined to oppose the change and investment.

Changing social attitudes meant that churches could no longer rely on parents 'doing the right thing' in sending their children to church – any more than they could rely on adults attending for the same reason. The onus was therefore increasingly on the necessity to attract people. 'Competition' for children's attendance came from an increased focus on families participating in leisure time together, or from the availability of other clubs and societies – such as Guides and Scouts. Where parents saw the religious education of their children as a priority, rather than as a matter of social

[19] Jones, *Local Church*, 175.

conformity, churches faced increasing 'competition' from state schools – both before and after the 1944 Education Act. But none of these forces was irresistible. Where churches proactively sought to attract children and young families, rather than waiting passively for them to enter, people responded and attendances could be high. This was a continuing theme: in the early part of the century, most notably at the Baptist church and St Paul's, and later in the century at the Gospel Tabernacle. But the need to adapt was continual too.

Attracting the young was as much about the medium as the message – presentation needed to be lively and engaging. Creating a 'peer group' of friends who participated in social as well as spiritual activities was essential, the more so as the century progressed and alternative peer groups – through school, or other clubs and societies – vied for young people's attention. But all young people's work required teams of committed adults, and the 'message' was key to mobilising these resources. In the early part of the century, emphasising 'duty' and 'responsibility' might have been enough, but as the century progressed, the churches most successful in mobilising human and financial resources were those whose message was one of spiritual imperative, most notably the evangelical and Catholic churches.

The final part of the study further explored whether 'the internal deficiencies' of the church extended to its core message. The clergy themselves thought this was so – although not necessarily agreeing amongst themselves as to how the message should be adapted, either in content or presentation. The statistics point to adherence being maintained better in churches that held 'to the old old story' than in those that did not. This is not to draw conclusions as to the theological merits of different versions of a church's message, which are beyond the scope of this study. Perhaps it can be said, though, that in 'marketing' terms, the 'traditional' message observably motivated and inspired its audience to activity and support more than alternative approaches did.

This thesis has been written from a historical perspective. Its summary conclusion is that the agency of the churches, including their leaders and congregations, played a part in the outcomes known as secularisation. However, a history such as this could also be written from a theological perspective - ultimately, Christianity was and is the religion of its founder. And its Founder predicted the fate of His followers should they lose their authenticity, relevance and distinctiveness:

> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.[20]

He also made it clear that the agency of His followers was paramount in resisting such a fate:

> You are the light of the world … let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.[21]

The story of Slough's churches perhaps illustrates these sayings. The challenge in any age is to interpret and apply Christianity to the circumstances of the day. The test of how successfully this challenge was met became starker during the period being studied. Huge challenges were posed by economic and social change. Churches that struggled to meet those challenges, and lost their authenticity, relevance and distinctiveness – or became 'secularised' - declined and in some cases closed. But Slough had churches that reacted positively, authentically and relevantly. Despite the challenging environment, they attracted support, and some grew significantly. Secularisation was not inevitable: the churches were key agents in their own fortunes.

[20] Matthew 5:13
[21] Matthew 5:14-16

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Burnham Lent Rise Wesleyan Methodist Church	D/MS 16
Cippenham Methodist Church	D/MS 33
Hampshire Avenue Methodist Church, Slough	D/MS 67
Ledgers Road Primitive Methodist Church, Slough	D/MS 68
Methodist Central Hall, Slough	D/MS 69
St Andrew's Methodist Church, Slough	D/MS 69
William Street Primitive Methodist Church Slough	D/MS 70
Herschel Street Wesleyan Methodist Church, Slough	D/MS 113

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Stoke Poges	PR198
Upton cum Chalvey	PR214
Wexham	PR228

Nonconformist Records

Burnham Congregational Church	NC6
Langley Free Church	NB28

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Year	OHC shelf mark
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1906	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.370
1909	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.373
1913 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.376
1914	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.376
1917 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.379
1918	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.379
1921 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.403
1922	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.381-2
1924 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.406
1924	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.384
1927 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.408
1928	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.387
1930 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.411
1931	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.390
1933 (Rural Dean)	MS.Oxf.dioc.papers.c.414
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