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WELFARISM, SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

ON T.H. GREEN AND OTHERS

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ABSTRACT

Scholars often link the emergence of welfarism and socialism to a loss of religious faith. Yet an examination of the beliefs of secularists who had lost their faith suggests that the loss of faith did not result in an emotional need that social reformism sometimes met. Nonetheless, an examination of welfarists and ethical socialists such as T.H. Green suggests that there was an intellectual or rational link between faith and social reformism. Here many Victorians and Edwardians responded to the dilemmas then besetting faith by adopting immanentist theologies, and this immanentism often sustained a moral idealism that inspired various social reformers.

Introduction

Scholars often link the emergence of the ethics of welfarism and socialism (c. 1870 to 1914) to the process of secularisation.² They imply that these doctrines of social reform fulfilled a need earlier met by religious faith. Some people argue, particularly concerning the ethic of welfarism, that evangelicals orientated their lives around practical works and social service provided an alternative outlet for the feelings of duty that arose under this religious imperative. For example, Victorians such as Beatrice Webb spoke of the "transference of the emotion of self-sacrificing service from God to man."³ More recently, Professor Richter has argued that T.H. Green turned liberalism into a surrogate faith by using philosophical Idealism to give conscience a social meaning.⁴ Other people argue, particularly concerning ethical socialism, that nonconformists orientated their lives around the ideal of the Kingdom of God and the socialist commonwealth provided an alternative outlet for aspirations that arose under this religious imperative. For example, Victorians such as Samuel Hobson said that the Independent Labour Party "set out to capture the soul of Nonconformity" with "a blend of religion and sentiment."⁵ More recently, Professor Pierson has argued that John Trevor preached a religion of socialism that filled the vacancy left by the demise of nonconformity.⁶

These scholars all portray modern social reformism as an emotional or psychological response to the loss of faith. In contrast, we will find that the ethic of welfarism and ethical socialism were not surrogate faiths offering an emotional outlet for distressed Christians. Many people coped perfectly well with a loss of faith without turning to social reformism, and most secularists who did turn to social reformism adopted a political outlook

that owed little to Christianity. What, then, was the connection between the rise of modern social reformism and the decline of religious faith? We will find that both the ethic of welfarism and ethical socialism arose as part of a general intellectual or rational response to the dilemmas facing Christians and theists alike. More particularly, we will find that many Victorians and Edwardians responded to the dilemmas then besetting faith by adopting immanentist theologies, that this immanentism often sustained a moral idealism, and that this idealism inspired modern social reformism. In short, welfarism and ethical socialism did not so much provide a new home for an old religious spirit as emerge out of a new set of religious dogmas.

Secularism

We will begin by examining the case for a psychological link between social reformism and secularisation. If welfarism and socialism arose to fulfil an emotional need amongst people who had lost their faith, surely many secularists would have shown some sympathy for social reformism. After all, most Victorian and Edwardian secularists were apostates who had been raised as Christians but later had lost their faith. Actually, however, British secularism owed more to the radical individualism of Thomas Paine than to the social utopianism of Robert Owen.⁷ Although some secularists became social reformists, the majority, including leaders such as Charles Bradlaugh and G.W. Foote, remained hostile to any hint of state interference.⁸ Most secularists were iconoclasts who disliked any set of ideals that seemed to go against individualism, and the example of these secularists should make us wary of the argument that a loss of faith encouraged people to turn to social reformism. We must ask why people who rejected Christianity should not have followed the example of Bradlaugh and defended liberal individualism? There does not seem to be a universal or historically specific need for faith that compelled

either agnostics in general, or erstwhile evangelicals in particular, to turn to substitute religions.

A weak version of the psychological link between social reformism and the loss of faith would be that secularisation did not lead people to welfarism and socialism so much as encourage those who did turn to social reformism to regard such beliefs as a religion. This, however, still will not do. Consider those Victorian secularists who did become socialists such as Edward Aveling and George Bernard Shaw.⁹ Like most Radicals, these secularists believed that social ills resulted from ignorance and vested interests. Their ideal was the free society which Radicals had long hoped for, but their economic arguments showed that such a society had to eliminate capitalists as well as landlords. Thus their socialism was a science that would liberate the worker from the shackles of the monopolist: Aveling was a Marxist believing that Marx had laid bare the economic laws governing capitalist societies, and Shaw was a Fabian believing that the law of rent showed socialism alone offered a just society. They looked upon socialism as an economic science and regarded talk of a higher religion and nobler morality as cant. As Aveling said, "he that has wholly abandoned the older creeds is always very careful to use no phrase that in any sense, however remote, implies them."¹⁰ Secularists who turned to welfarism or socialism generally did not regard their social reformism as a new religion.

Several welfarists and socialists undoubtedly did regard their social reformism as a new faith. The question is: how should we account for the emergence of the religious idealism which inspired them? We have discovered that the continuation of religious needs and emotions can not explain the emergence of such idealism: at the very least, the counter-examples of contemporary secularists require us to explain why some erstwhile evangelicals or nonconformists turned to surrogate religions whilst others did not. Next

we will see how welfarism and ethical socialism drew on an idealism which derived from doctrines that flourished because they seemed to resolve the Victorian and Edwardian crisis of faith.

Immanentism

Christianity was on the defensive in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.¹¹

Darwinism, historical criticism, and moral doubts led people to question the truth of the Bible at a time when Biblical literalism constituted an important article in the creed of many Protestants. Numerous Victorians and Edwardians stopped believing in the Bible, but they did not thereby become agnostics or atheists; rather, the vast majority turned to liberal Christianity or to theism.¹² At one end of the social scale, we find lower middle-class nonconformists attending the numerous theistic and ethical societies which eschewed all dogma. Here we find people such as John Trevor and William Jupp.

Trevor was raised as a Calvinist, and he left school aged fifteen to train as an architect, before then going on to found the Labour Church movement in an attempt both to provide the working-classes with suitable places of worship and to infuse a religious spirit into the socialist movement.¹³ Jupp also was raised as a Calvinist, but he left school aged thirteen to work as an errand boy, before then joining a discussion group that later met with Thomas Davidson, a peripatetic philosopher, under whose influence they formed the Fellowship of the New Life.¹⁴ At the other end of the social scale, we find upper-middle class Anglicans, from all wings of the Church, wrestling with the theological problems of the day. Here we find people such as T.H. Green and Charles Gore. Green's father and maternal grandfather were Anglican priests.

He himself studied at Rugby School and Oxford before becoming a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford where he joined his mentor Benjamin Jowett, a prominent Broad Church theologian.¹⁵ Gore was the son of the brother of the

Earl of Arran and the daughter of the Earl of Bessborough. He studied at Harrow School and Oxford before becoming the first Principal of Pusey House, Oxford, named after a leading High Church theologian.¹⁶ All of the people mentioned responded to the death of the Bible with religious liberalism; all of them later turned to welfarism or ethical socialism.

Darwinism led the assault on Biblical Christianity with the theory of organic evolution by natural selection making a literal reading of Genesis untenable. Whilst science in general suggested that nature was too uniform for miracles to occur, evolution in particular suggested that humans had risen from apes, not fallen from Eden. Although science did not disprove the existence of God, it certainly contradicted the Bible, and many people, like Leslie Stephen, thought that if they could not accept every word of the Bible, they could not be true Christians.¹⁷ Such considerations led some Victorians and Edwardians to secularism and many more to liberal Christianity or theism.

Jupp, for example, recalled that evolution implied "immeasurable periods of human development" thereby making "the whole scheme of evangelical theology read like a fiction of the brain."¹⁸ No wonder, then, that as a newly ordained priest, Gore concentrated on the need to reconcile faith with science, a topic he chose to take as the subject of his first lectures at Oxford.

Historical criticism too challenged Biblical literalism. Scholars such as Charles Hennell and David Strauss applied historical methods to the Bible.

They concluded that the Bible did not consist of the historical depositions of eye-witnesses: the Bible was a mythical work. Victorians such as George Eliot came to regard the Bible as implausible upon reading the work of these scholars.¹⁹ Jupp too was distressed to find contradictions in the Bible.

Within the Church, Gore tried to resolve the difficulties raised by historical criticism when he led the Lux Mundi theologians in accepting the demise of the

Old Testament whilst clinging tenaciously to the New Testament, a radical compromise that came to seem conservative only after the emergence of theological modernism.²⁰ The problem was that the omniscience of God implied that, as Christ, He should have known that the Old Testament was mythological, whereas the Gospels clearly show that Christ believed the Old Testament to be true. It seemed that either God was not omniscient or the Gospels were not true. Gore responded with his doctrine of kenosis according to which God had emptied Himself of His divine attributes such as omniscience in order to take human form, so that as Christ He possessed only contemporary human knowledge.

The other main problem facing contemporary Christianity was the growing conviction that some evangelical doctrines were immoral. Liberal clerics such as F.D. Maurice denounced the doctrine of the atonement and the concept of eternal damnation: they wondered how a just God could allow an innocent Jesus to suffer in place of those who had sinned and how a loving God could condemn people to perpetual Hell with no possibility of repentance. As a child, for example, Trevor asked himself: "how could the saved have any joy in heaven, knowing that the lost were suffering eternal torment."²¹ Later he turned away from Christianity when he decided that a moral God could not have rejected the Jews in the way described by St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, and so, since God must be moral, the Bible could not be true.

Neither scientific nor historical nor moral difficulties proved that Christianity was a lie: clergymen like Gore sought doctrinal solutions to these doubts, and clergymen like Maurice abandoned the offending doctrines. Nonetheless, the problems besetting contemporary Christianity produced a definite shift in the mental world of the late Victorians and the Edwardians.

A new set of religious beliefs arose as people thought through the implications of the new knowledge for faith. Thus the common doctrinal structure of the varieties of religious liberalism that flourished in the late

Victorian and Edwardian era owed much to the problems then confronting faith.

To embrace science and history, religious seekers needed to replace the idea of a God who intervened miraculously in the natural world with an evolutionary account of the divine. To appease contemporary morality, they needed to reject the idea of eternal damnation for an account showing that humanity could vanquish evil. These requirements explain the recurrence of certain beliefs amongst religious seekers: certain beliefs thrived because they seemed to solve the problems that were undermining the Bible.

Many Victorians and Edwardians believed that they could reconcile religious faith with Darwinism and historical criticism by replacing a transcendent God who acted spontaneously and miraculously with an immanent God who operated slowly and through earthly processes. Immanentism was, therefore, a powerful strand of turn of the century theology espoused by Anglicans such as J.R. Illingworth, non-conformists such as R. Campbell, and people founding new religions such as Edward Maitland.²² If God dwelt within the world, not beyond and independently of His creation, we would expect Him to work through natural processes, not miraculous interventions. God revealed Himself through the evolutionary development of this world, not through the divine revelations of the Bible. Thus Darwin simply described one aspect of divine truth, namely, that God worked His will through gradual changes brought about by natural means, and similarly, the historical critics simply showed that the Bible was a product of a particular stage in this unfolding of the divine.

Victorian and Edwardian immanentism could seem to free religion from all dogma: if God resided within the world revealing Himself through the development of the world, then any new knowledge represented the discovery of a new fact about God, and any discarded belief represented a necessary stage in an evolutionary movement towards complete knowledge of God. In fact,

however, immanentism sustained certain characteristic religious doctrines, namely, the existence of an inner reality, the unity of all things, and the purposive nature of evolution. The core of the immanentism that flourished following the death of the Bible consisted of belief in purposive evolution culminating in a self-conscious awareness of the divine unity of all things. As Jupp recognised, for many of his generation, religion came to signify "an impassioned sense of the Unity and Order of the world and of our own personal relation thereto; an emotional apprehension of the Universal Life in which all individual lives are included and by which they are sustained; the communion of the human spirit with the Unseen and Eternal; faith in God as the Principle of Unity."²³

Because God dwelt within everything, all things contained an inner reality that was at one with God. Jupp, for example, defined God as the "inner reality of the whole - the one spirit that includes and pervades all the parts."²⁴ This belief in an inner reality encouraged some immanentists to elevate feeling and instinct over reason and intellect. Life and emotion came from within and so carried a kind of divine sanction: tradition and reason were part of an outer life that could obstruct us in our efforts to reach the divine within. Trevor, for instance, described the true religious life as a practice to be forged in a workshop not a lesson to be learnt at school, saying that "that which you have learned from life to live by, that is your religion."²⁵

Further, because the divine exists in all things, everything forms a single whole. The inner reality of each thing is at one with the inner reality of all other things. As Jupp explained, "there is something in me, that is at one with the law by which the flower unfolds from the seed, and at one with the grace of its form or colour."²⁶ This belief in the universe as a single, spiritual whole encouraged the immanentists to call for a higher

individualism proclaiming both that individuals must follow their own instincts in their progress towards God and yet that individuals are intrinsically a part of a wider community.

Finally, because God revealed Himself through the development of the universe, evolution was a progressive process leading to the self-revelation of the divine. Trevor, for example, believed that the future promised "continuous progress towards the great Source of all things."²⁷ Gore even argued that we can deduce the existence of God from the fact that evolution exhibits a purposive tendency explainable only in terms of a purposeful mind that controls the whole process: "it seems impossible to account for the progressive evolution of living forms unless some sort of direction, some sort of organic tendency to become this or that, is assumed in nature."²⁸ Clearly this teleological view of evolution runs contrary to the Darwinian idea of mutations coming up against the natural environment. Most immanentists ignored the gap between their views and Darwin's, but a few confronted Darwin, arguing that the fact of evolution did not presuppose his particular mechanism of change, and championing instead the Lamarckian alternative.

Green's theology corresponds to Victorian and Edwardian immanentism. He rejected the dogmas of historical theology for an Idealist metaphysics in an attempt to reconcile faith with science and thereby provide religion with rational foundations. Further, although his Hegelianism meant that he approached this problem through logical constructions, his conclusions still parallel those of Jupp, Trevor and Gore.²⁹ Green described the Idealist concept of the concrete universal as a metaphysical presupposition of all knowledge. The scientific view of the world as a world containing objects and events made sense only if we postulated a divine principle immanent in mind and nature and uniting the two. Scientists could not explain the concrete universal because to do so they would have to presuppose that which they hoped

to explain. Thus science and religion were discrete domains of knowledge brought together by an immanent spiritual principle. Green's Hegelianism centred on this defence of an immanent God:

That there is one spiritual self-conscious being, of which all that is real is the activity or expression; that we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world; that this participation is the source of morality and religion; this we may take to be the vital truth which Hegel had to teach.³⁰

Green argued that because the eternal consciousness exists in all things, everything contains an inner reality: "God is identical with the self of every man."³¹ Moreover, because everything partakes of the divine, everything is fundamentally at one: because reality exists only as knowledge, and because knowledge presupposes consciousness, therefore just as individual subjects unify the diversity of the world, so God must unify the diversity of individual subjects. Finally, Green argued the true self of each individual joined with God in a teleological process leading to the realisation of this self.

Immanentism helped to resolve the moral qualms of Victorian and Edwardian doubters. Immanentism suggested an answer to that quintessentially modern question: what would sustain public morality if people no longer believed in a Day of Judgement? Morality would thrive even if Christian dogma failed because we contain the divine within us so our instincts impel us to act morally. Immanentism also suggested that humanity could triumph over evil because the process of evolution involved the progressive realisation of the divine will: as individuals become increasingly aware of the divine within

themselves, so they become increasingly moral, until good conquers evil.

The moral arguments of our immanentists suggest that humanity develops an ever clearer understanding of the divine. Often immanentists divided the path to enlightenment into discrete stages. Jupp's account reads like an intellectual biography of his generation: in the beginning, humanity emphasised the sense of sin, a necessary stage since a conviction of having done wrong shows the stirring of moral awareness; next, humanity adopted the ideal of a loving God as exemplified by Christ; finally, the gospel of today highlights the divine unity of all bidding us, "be ye reconciled to God, to Nature, to your own hearts and to one another, since all are striving, however feebly, towards the same great goal of goodness and of love."³² Clearly contemporary people have a special relationship to history. Because we understand the nature of God, we can transcend the unconscious process of evolution and consciously cooperate in the fulfilment of God's will. Now that we understand the unity of all, we can grasp the purposive nature of evolution, so we can act deliberately to advance the ideal. Thus contemporary people can attain true freedom through self-conscious union with God. Such freedom will be the perfect freedom that comes from living in harmony with the divine thereby cooperating with the spiritual law that governs the universe. Further, once people attain freedom, they will recognise themselves to be outgrowths of a universal self, so they will be suffused with love and sympathy. Finally, the dominance of love in society will produce a spiritual fellowship without need of authority. In this way, Victorian and Edwardian immanentism sustained both an ethic of human brotherhood and an ideal of spiritual fellowship. As Jupp explained, his generation adopted the ideal of "an organic social communion" because "as we learn that God is not alien to any of us . . . it begins to appear highly absurd that we should be alien or indifferent to one another."³³

Green's philosophy resembled Victorian and Edwardian immanentism. His Hegelian view of history as the gradual development of reason suggested that humanity becomes increasingly enlightened as reason unfolds. We occupy a special place in the historical process because God "uses the animal organism of man . . . to form a being formally self-conscious, and thus capable of knowledge, able to conceive a world of which each element is determined by relation to the whole."³⁴ The model Reformer sacrifices pleasure to advance the divine purpose by internalising social norms and acting for the common good: Reformers live a life of religious citizenship informed by an ethic of brotherhood. Further, in doing so, Reformers attain perfect freedom by acting in accord with the higher self that is at one with the divine. Finally, the good society was one consisting of citizens pursuing their moral development through the community.

We now have identified a set of beliefs that provided a safe haven for those Victorians and Edwardians who were troubled by the death of the Bible. These beliefs satisfied most doubters who therefore did not go on to become secularists. True, it is misleading to describe Green, Jupp, and Trevor as Christians, but they all believed in divine immanentism. Gore, of course, remained in the Church of England becoming successively the Bishop of Worcester, Birmingham, and Oxford. He simply modified immanentism to emphasise the special importance of Christ. The evolution of nature slowly reveals God, but this process requires Christ, as God incarnate, to demonstrate the moral character of God; thus, although Christ is God, "this supernatural Person is no unnatural phenomenon, but is in very truth the consummation of nature's order, or the rectification of it, so far as sin, which is unnatural, has thrown it into disorder."³⁵ In addition, because Gore emphasised the incarnation, not the atonement, he could suggest that eventually we would triumph over evil. The redemptive power of Christ

expressed by His Church would enable us to build God's Kingdom on earth.³⁶

Welfarism and Ethical Socialism

Victorian and Edwardian immanentism underlies a definite, historical relationship between religion and social reformism. First, the moral doctrines associated with immanentism sometimes led people to welfarism or ethical socialism. Second, the resulting social reformism differed from classical liberalism, from earlier forms of socialism, and indeed from the whole nineteenth-century radical tradition.

Our immanentists rejected classical liberalism because classical liberalism could not accommodate the moral ideals that arose following the death of the Bible. A belief in an immanent God led many Victorians and Edwardians to look for the Kingdom of God on earth not in heaven. They advocated a new theology that required individuals to join themselves with the larger community so as to cooperate with God in the evolution of this world towards a spiritual fellowship. The new theology preached the unity of all and so an ethic of human brotherhood: all people were fundamentally equal since all people contained the divine within them. Consequently, our immanentists could not remain indifferent to the fate of their fellows; they looked for the material and especially the moral uplift of the less fortunate; they said, with Trevor, "somehow the life of the people must be raised."³⁷ Thus, as Jupp recalled, his contemporaries learnt to see society, "not as a mere complex of conflicting individuals, but as an organic whole, or at least as a fellowship of inter-related, mutually dependent human beings, wherein the claims of the personality of each should be recognised and, under a justly established social order, made one with the needs of the common life."³⁸ There was a move away from individualism, and because people generally identified classical liberalism with individualism, this implied a move away

from classical liberalism.

Although our immanentists rejected classical liberalism, they remained reluctant to call themselves socialists. The difficulty lay in the widespread identification of socialism with a narrow materialism. Trevor, for instance, identified "the grand heresy of socialism" as "the teaching that a man can be made better merely by being more comfortable."³⁹ Our immanentists wanted a new spiritual life more than economic reform. Jupp and his circle, for instance, sympathised with economic socialism as a cure for economic ills, but considered socialists to be "too exclusively concerned with a change in the external conditions of life, laying little or no stress on the necessity of an inward change . . . without which economic reforms could avail but little."⁴⁰

Similarly, Gore complained that Christ "preached no system of political economy," but rather sought "a profound ethical change based on changed thoughts about God and about man."⁴¹ Such criticisms of socialism extended from the nature of the ideal to the means of realising the ideal. Our immanentists showed less interest in questions of political strategy or legislative programmes than in personal righteousness as a living example of the new life. Trevor, for example, said that "I knew well that within myself I must first find the regenerating life which was needed to regenerate society."⁴²

Immanentists generally opposed classical liberalism and Marxism in the name of an ethical ideal of spirituality and fellowship. Those who became socialists, including Jupp and Trevor, did not so much convert to socialism as redescribe their immanentist theology and ethic of fellowship as socialism. In becoming socialists, they gave socialism a new slant, and had they not done so, they would not have become socialists. They typically saw the labour movement as a reformist movement based on an ethic of brotherhood, not class.

Thus they nearly always advocated a change in the system of private property

merely as a secondary aspect of their existing ideal. Trevor, for example, said that he turned to socialism only once he recognised the connection of "social reform" to "the religious life."⁴³ Those immanentists who remained somewhat hostile to socialism, including Green and Gore, shared the spiritual ideal of people such as Jupp and Trevor, but they associated this ideal with a reformulated liberalism, not with socialism. In sticking with liberalism, they gave liberalism a new slant, and had they not done so, they would not have remained liberals. They often saw the labour movement as a class movement based on sectional interests, not the general will. Further, they nearly always advocated some continuation of private property as a secondary aspect of their ideal of the moral citizen. Gore, for example, argued that the moral growth of individuals required some private property, and whilst he thought that private ownership of the means of consumption might suffice, Green also defended private ownership of the means of production on similar grounds.⁴⁴

The social reformism of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain owed much, therefore, to the religious and moral beliefs that flourished following the death of the Bible. Our immanentists equated welfarism or ethical socialism with their moral ideal of a spiritual fellowship: their religious beliefs had inspired them to look for a higher awareness that would lead to communion with God, and now they equated social reformism with just such an awareness of the love and energy of God. Once people became aware of the divine unity of all, they would recognise that a spiritual relationship bound them to their fellows, they would see themselves, and hence their good, as part of a greater whole, and hence social good. Consequently, a social ethic would replace the current obsession with the individual, so welfarism or socialism would triumph. Yet, our immanentists insisted, this social ethic would not endanger individual freedom. On the contrary, because our goal is consciousness of the

divine within, perfect freedom consists in cooperating with the divine purpose: thus, by establishing a spiritual fellowship, we would realise our inner selves and gain perfect freedom through a right relationship to society.

Jupp, for example, described his ideal as a "unity of social action, wherein the individual may find his fitting place, and do the work that is becoming to himself and rightly related to the whole."⁴⁵ Victorian and Edwardian immanentists saw their ethic as a higher individualism. Trevor, for example, believed that "the new living individualism . . . sees that Individualism must take on a far higher form than that of the Manchester School, and, from a competitive materialist Individualism, must grow into a spiritual co-operative one."⁴⁶

Many moralists believe in positive freedom. What distinguishes Victorian and Edwardian immanentists is their stress on the religious underpinnings of the ideal. They wanted a spiritual fellowship or religious citizenship, not just an ethic of social duty. Gore, for example, said his ethic differed from that of previous Radicals in its "vivid sense of the will of a righteous God."⁴⁷ Indeed, it was this belief in a divine order underlying reality that enabled our immanentists to reconcile their social ethic with individual freedom. They argued that the immanence of God implied an underlying kinship of existence thereby guaranteeing that if each individual attained perfect freedom, the result would be a harmonious society: as Jupp explained, "all the discords belong to a vast and infinite harmony, into which they are finally resolved."⁴⁸

Green too advocated a social ethic which incorporated a positive concept of freedom. He distinguished a lower or feeling self that sought pleasure from a higher or divine self that sought self-realisation: the lower self aims at an illusory good since pleasure is inherently transient, whereas the higher self aims at the true good through reason or "consciousness of a possibility

of perfection to be realised in and by the subject of the consciousness."⁴⁹

The good life is a free life spent seeking the perfect ideal that is found in God. Green gives two arguments for why the attempt to realise the divine requires that we act for the common good. First, a principle of reciprocity means that what is good for one must be good for all: reason declares that individuals are morally equivalent, so reason shows that the final good must be the self-realisation of all. Thus individuals who follow the dictates of reason will promote the good of all. As Green explains, "the true good is good for all men" because they share "the same nature and capacity."⁵⁰

Second, individuals can realise their moral nature only within society: a moral character depends on sacrificing pleasure and cultivating a concern for others. Thus individuals realise themselves through devotion to the common good. As Green explains, "human society" is "the organism in which the capacities of the human soul are unfolded."⁵¹ According to Green, then, the good consists of self-realisation through service to society. He reconciled this social ethic with individual freedom by adopting a positive definition of freedom as self-realisation: freedom consisted of developing a virtuous character through the sacrifice of pleasure for of a life of social service. Green argued, therefore, not only that to live for God, we must live "for the brethren," but also that in doing so, we "live freely," that is, "in obedience to a spirit which is our self."⁵²

A spiritual fellowship was almost the only content that our immanentists gave to their welfarism or socialism. They understood the ideal to be the realisation of the divine purpose, and beyond this, they did not worry about the details of the ideal: because the ideal entailed union with the divine, it would be fine, and if the details of the ideal remained opaque, this was because we did not fully understand the divine purpose. Indeed, we could give a blueprint for the ideal only if we had a supernatural revelation of the

divine, whereas in fact we come to know the divine, and so the ideal, only through the evolutionary process: as Trevor explained, "a creed is impossible for us" since we must rely on "our own natural development towards God."⁵³ Our immanentists simply placed their trust in God.

Green proposed few policies other than temperance and educational reform. He wrote about social morality in the abstract, but he shied away from proposals for state interference on the grounds that external reforms could only provide suitable conditions for individuals to transform themselves: likewise, although some of his disciples proposed state action, others, notably Bosanquet, argued that Reformers should work principally through the voluntary sector.⁵⁴ Green wanted to awaken the divine spirit of reason, morality and fellowship, not to pin this spirit down in particular institutions. Moreover, Green argued that we could be sure of progress towards the ideal due to the working of the spiritual principle in history: God or reason ensures that our "wants and desires" become "an impulse of improvement ('Besserungstrieb'), which forms, enlarges and re-casts societies" towards "an unrealised ideal of a best," that is, "God."⁵⁵ Green believed in Hegel's cunning of reason. Green too trusted to God.

Although vague, the welfarism or socialism of our immanentists incorporated those doctrines by which they reconciled faith with contemporary science and morality. True, our immanentists did not believe that welfarism or socialism was a science as described by Marxists; rather, they showed little interest in economics, and when they did, they typically described economics as a moral discipline, not a science. Nonetheless, their political thought incorporated their purposive theory of evolution. They believed that their welfarism or socialism was both scientific and historically inevitable because the ideal was the end-state of a teleological process. According to Jupp, for example, "the inner harmony which prevails throughout the

universe . . . is overcoming the ephemeral animosities . . . of human will" so that "the principle of unity . . . is being, as it were, focused on the human race - gathering itself there into a conscious purposive realisation."⁵⁶ Similarly, Trevor spoke of "God in the Labour Movement - working through it, as once he had worked through Christianity, for the further salvation of the world."⁵⁷ Further, because welfarism or socialism was the divine will, a reformed society would contain no sin; rather morality would thrive because people would do as the divine bade them.

Green too regarded progress as an inevitable fact of an evolving divine order. We could deduce progress logically from an immanent God working through history, so moral progress was an a priori truth of which we could be certain irrespective of either science or history. The development of reason leads inexorably to an ethical ideal of "universal human fellowship."⁵⁸ Like other immanentists, Green deduced progress from his postulated reconciliation of faith and science. Unlike other immanentists, however, Green emphasised that although we could be sure of progress, we would never reach the final ideal: the struggle to realise the ideal was a never ending struggle.

The ethical quality of the welfarism or socialism of our immanentists ensured that they avoided the pitfalls that they discerned in other varieties of social reformism. They neither defined the ideal in economic terms nor got bogged down in policy issues. Instead, as Jupp recalled, "while their gospel of freedom and human brotherhood required them to strive for a more just distribution of the results of human labour . . . it also seemed to demand of them a personal righteousness that should refuse to have part in, or profit by, the competitive system."⁵⁹ The ideal was not a set of abstract principles, but rather a living power within the life of the believer. Thus, Trevor pleaded, "we have not only to think Socialism, to believe Socialism - we must be Socialists"; and Gore argued that "Christ requires us not to do

such and such things, but to be such and such people."⁶⁰ This quest for personal righteousness defined the political strategy of our welfarists and ethical socialists. They hoped to establish the ideal through the transformation of individual lives: to become a Reformer or a socialist was to undergo a moral conversion that lead to a new life, and as more and more people lived this new life, so society would approach the ideal. Some immanentists even suggested that making socialists or Reformers was a sufficient condition for building an ideal society. They did so for two reasons. First, because they equated their ideal with a moral consciousness not an economic system, they argued that once people believed in the ideal, welfarism or socialism necessarily would exist because welfarism or socialism consisted of just such a conscious acceptance of the ideal. Second, because they believed that the ideal would be the inevitable outcome of the unfolding of the divine, they did not worry about how the ideal would come about: if they kept their house in order, God would see to the rest. Such arguments enabled our immanentists to neglect questions of political strategy. Ethical socialists, for instance, typically regarded the socialist movement, not as a political movement seeking power to construct a new society, but rather as a religious movement based on a spiritual ideal; they condemned most political debate as petty and narrow squabbling.

Green too emphasised the ethical quality of both ends and means. He wanted a society of Reformers, not a society organised in a particular way; indeed, he even insisted that "the perfection of human character . . . is for man the only object of absolute or intrinsic value."⁶¹ Green wanted individuals to re-enact the life of Christ within themselves: the Reformer constantly crucified his selfish desires so as to be born again as a social being who aimed at self-realisation through social service. It was Green's overwhelming concern with the moral regeneration of individuals that inspired

his fear of schemes for economic reform; he stuck by self-help through temperance and thrift because he thought state aid would prove detrimental to the character of recipients. Finally, Green argued that if people followed the example of Christ, the ideal would come. Certainly the ideal could not come except as a result of personal righteousness since only the struggle of individuals could realise the divine.

Conclusion

Some scholars have noted the resemblance of Green's policy prescriptions to those of Bright or Gladstone. They suggest that Green set out to defend conventional liberal beliefs by rephrasing them in Idealist terms. A few draw the conclusion that Green does not represent the moment in time when welfarists broke with the heritage of classical liberalism.⁶² Yet the conclusion does not follow from the premise. True, Green's actual proposals were far from revolutionary, but we have seen that immanentists generally distrusted economic socialism and shied away from policy prescriptions in favour of a moralistic rhetoric. What mattered, in other words, was precisely Green's rephrasing of liberalism. His Idealist phrasing promoted welfarism by resolving the difficulties then besetting contemporary Christianity in a way that introduced an immanentist theology that in turn promoted an idealist ethic of brotherhood and so a concern with social welfare.⁶³ Here, whatever Green's own policy preferences, his immanentism and idealist ethic paralleled and inspired those other strands of thought that collectively sustained the idealism that mattered for the growth of welfarism.

True, the growth of the welfare state owed much to a change from a traditional concern with the poor as individuals to a novel concern with poverty as a social ill having many causes, a change inspired largely by the detailed social investigations of people such as Charles Booth.⁶⁴ True also,

Green's concern lay with the individual poor, so his preferred solutions were temperance and education not unemployment relief and pensions. Yet the welfarist belief that society should help the poor depended as much on a new moral idealism as on an understanding of the causes of poverty. Besides, the new conception of the causes of poverty arose partly because people concerned themselves with the poor out of a sense of moral idealism: Booth, for example, began his survey of the East End of London because he wanted to show that the moral idealists had misunderstood, exaggerated and sensationalised the issue of poverty. Immanentism, therefore, whether as the Idealism of Green or as an evolutionary motif, acted both directly as the moral inspiration for the growth of the welfare state and indirectly as the practical inspiration for the growth of the welfare state.⁶⁵

What was the role of religious beliefs in this break with classical liberalism? Well, there was no simple psychological relationship whereby people who rejected Christianity became welfarists or socialists; on the contrary, many secularists espoused a Radical individualism in opposition to welfarism and socialism alike. There was, however, a more complex relationship between the decline of Biblical literalism and the rise of welfarism and socialism - a relationship which applies to Christians such as Gore and theists such as Trevor, not to secularists such as Aveling and Shaw.

People rejected the Bible because they could not reconcile Biblical literalism with either their moral convictions or the theory of evolution and the discoveries of historical criticism. Thus numerous Victorians and Edwardians sought worldviews compatible with these beliefs to replace their earlier Biblical literalism. It was this dilemma that gave rise to the characteristic doctrines of the era, namely, an immanentist metaphysics and an ethic of human brotherhood. These doctrines, in turn, helped to sustain a broad spectrum of political beliefs amongst which were both welfarism and

ethical socialism. In this way, then, the demise of the Bible did encourage some people to become welfarists or socialists, but it did so, not because they needed a faith, but rather because the reasons that drove them away from the Bible also led them to beliefs that sometimes ended in welfarism or socialism.

Perhaps the lingering atmosphere of nonconformism or evangelicalism explains the personal passion of some Victorian and Edwardian social reformers, but the nonconformist or evangelical conscience did not have a direct effect on reformist thinking. For a start, the vital link between religious faith and social reformism lies less in the emotions than in logic: religion inspired welfarism and ethical socialism as a particular set of metaphysical doctrines, not as a universal or historically specific need. Further, the religious faith that inspired social reformism was a growing immanentism, not a declining evangelicalism: the metaphysical doctrine underlying welfarism and ethical socialism was a belief in a God who united all things and worked through all things to realise the ideal. Thus welfarism incorporated the theology of immanentism, not the spirit of evangelicalism, and ethical socialism emerged from the growth of immanentism, not the secularisation of nonconformity.

NOTES

1. I thank the University of Newcastle upon Tyne for awarding me a Sir James Knott Fellowship with which to pursue my research.

2. In what follows, I will use the terms welfarism and socialism to refer principally to certain moral doctrines rather than those policies and institutions that we now regard as characteristic of welfare and socialist states.

3. B. Webb, My Apprenticeship (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938), p. 153.

4. M. Richter, The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and His Age (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964). On Green as the ideologue of welfarism see G. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (London: Harrap, 1951); and A. Ulam, Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1951). Recent works stress that Green did not propose much state interference, but that the logical and actual outcome of his theory was welfarism: see P. Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1978); A. Vincent & R. Plant, Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); and P. Weiler, The New Liberalism (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982). All of these recent works reassert the primacy of an emotional link between such welfarism and a loss of faith.

5. S. Hobson, Pilgrim to the Left (London: E. Arnold, 1938), p. 40.

6. S. Pierson, "John Trevor and the Labour Church Movement in England, 1891-1900", Church History 29 (1960), 463-478. More generally see S. Pierson, Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism (Ithica: Cornell University, 1973); and S. Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896", History Workshop 4 (1977), 5-56.

7. On the secularist movement see S. Budd, Varieties of Unbelief (London: Heinemann, 1977); E. Royle, Victorian Infidels (Manchester: Manchester University, 1974); and E. Royle, Radicals, Secularists and Republicans (Manchester: Manchester University, 1980).
8. Both Bradlaugh and Foote debated against socialism: see C. Bradlaugh & H. Hyndman, Will Socialism Benefit the English People? (London: Truethought, 1884); and G. Foote & A. Besant, Is Socialism Sound? (London: Freethought, 1887).
9. See, on Aveling, C. Tsuzuki, The Life of Eleanor Marx 1855-1898 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); and, on Shaw, M. Bevir, "The Marxism of George Bernard Shaw, 1883-1889", History of Political Thought 13 (1992), 299-318.
10. E. Aveling, "An Atheist on Tennyson's 'Despair'", Modern Thought 4 (1882), 7.
11. On the Church and theology see O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, 2 Vols. (London: A. & C. Black, 1971); and B. Reardon, From Coleridge to Gore (London: Longmans, 1971).
12. On the different responses to the crisis of faith see L. Butler, Victorian Doubt: Literary and Cultural Discourses (London: Harvester, 1990).
13. For his autobiography see Trevor, My Quest for God (London: Labour Prophet, 1897).
14. For his autobiography see W. Jupp, Wayfarings (London: Headley Bros., 1918).
15. For a biography see R. Nettleship, "Memoir", in T.H. Green, The Works of

Thomas Hill Green, 3 Vols., ed. R. Nettleship (London: Longmans, 1885-1888),
Vol. 3: Miscellaneous and Memoir, pp. XI-CLXI.

16. For a biography see G. Prestige, The Life of Charles Gore (London:
Heinemann, 1935).

17. See N. Annan, Leslie Stephen (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1951).

18. Jupp, Wayfarings, p. 40.

19. On George Eliot see B. Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (Harmondsworth:
Penguin, 1964), pp. 214-260.

20. C. Gore, ed., Lux Mundi (London: J. Murray, 1890).

21. J. Trevor, Labour Prophet Tracts (London: Labour Prophet, 1896), Tract 1:
Theology and the Slums, p. 1.

22. See respectively J. Illingworth, Divine Immanence (London: Macmillan,
1898); R. Campbell, The New Theology (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907); and E.
Maitland, The New Gospel of Interpretation (London: Lamley, 1892).

23. W. Jupp, The Religion of Nature and of Human Experience (London: P. Green,
1906), p. 3.

24. Ibid., p. 174.

25. Trevor, My Quest, p. 211.

26. Seed-time, January 1890.

27. Trevor, My Quest, p. 152.

28. C. Gore, The Reconstruction of Belief, 3 Vols. (London: J. Murray, 1921-

1924), Vol. 1: Belief in God, p. 60.

29. Because we are comparing Green to a broader idealism, we will ignore his more specific relationship to a narrower Hegelian Idealism.

30. Green, "Review of J. Caird: Introduction to The Philosophy of Religion", in Works, vol. 3, p. 146.

31. Green, "Fragment of an Address on Romans x.8, 'The Word is Nigh Thee'", Works, vol. 3, p. 227.

32. W. Jupp, The Forgiveness of Sins and the Laws of Reconciliation (London: P. Green, 1903), p. 50.

33. Jupp, Religion, p. 177.

34. Green, "Lectures on Logic", in Works, Vol. 2: Philosophical Works, sec. 21 (p. 182).

35. C. Gore The Incarnation of the Son of God (London: J. Murray, 1891), p. 229.

36. On Christ and the Church see respectively Gore, Reconstruction, Vol. 2: Belief in Christ; and Gore, Reconstruction, Vol. 3: The Holy Spirit and the Church.

37. Trevor, My Quest, p. 194.

38. Jupp, Wayfarings, p. 69.

39. Trevor, My Quest, p. 208.

40. Jupp, Wayfarings, p. 71.

41. C. Gore, Strikes and Lock-Outs: The Way Out (London: P. King, 1926), p. 12.

42. Trevor, My Quest, p. 174.

43. Ibid., p. 196.
44. For Gore and like-minded people on property see C. Gore, ed., Property: Its Duties and Rights (London: Macmillan, 1913). For Green's views see Green, "Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation", Works, vol. 2, secs. 211-232 (pp. 517-535).
45. Jupp, Religion, p. 136.
46. Trevor, My Quest, p. 173.
47. C. Gore, Buying up the Opportunity (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1895), p. 14.
48. Jupp, Religion, p. 162.
49. Green, "On the Different Senses of 'Freedom' as Applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man", Works, vol. 2, sec. 21 (p. 326).
50. T.H. Green, Prolegomena to Ethics, ed. A. Bradley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1884), sec. 244 (p. 262).
51. Ibid., sec. 273 (p. 295).
52. Green, Works, vol. 3, p. 221.
53. Labour Church Record, January 1899.
54. On the different political views of Green's followers see S. Collini, "Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State: Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England 1880-1914", Past and Present 72 (1976), 86-111.
55. Green, "Address on 2 Corinthians v.7, 'Faith'", Works, vol. 3, pp. 269-270.
56. Jupp, Religion, p. 177.
57. Trevor, My Quest, p. 241.
58. Green, Ethics, sec. 209 (p. 222).

59. Jupp, Wayfarings, pp. 83-84.

60. Trevor, Tracts, Tract 2: From Ethics to Religion, p. 21; C. Gore, The Sermon on the Mount: A Practical Exposition (London: J. Murray, 1896), p. 19.

61. Green, Ethics, sec. 247 (pp. 266-267).

62. See, for instance, J. Morrow, "Liberalism and British Idealist Political Philosophy", History of Political Thought 5 (1984), 91-108. Certainly we should be cautious about proclaiming a total break between the two. This, however, is because ideologies do not possess an essentialist core, but rather have numerous strands many of which usually will persist through a time of great change.

63. For a recent statement of the importance of idealism, as opposed to Idealism, for welfarism see J. Harris, "Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy", Past and Present 135 (1992), 116-141.

64. On changing attitudes to the object of social policy see J. Harris, Unemployment and Politics 1886-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

65. On the importance of the evolutionary motif in welfarist thinking see M. Freedman, The New Liberalism (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978). The undoubted significance of evolutionism, however, should not obscure the place of Idealism: Hobhouse, for instance, owed a debt to Idealism at the same time as he adopted evolutionism: see S. Collini, Liberalism and Sociology (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979). The fact is that both evolutionism and Idealism could accommodate the immanentist and moral doctrines that we have identified, so the two often went together in the thinking of both new liberals and ethical socialists: see, in particular, D. Ritchie, "Darwin and Hegel", Darwin and

Hegel with Other Philosophical Studies (London: Sonnenschein, 1893), pp. 38-76.