Missionaries, the Monarchy, and the Emergence of Anglican Pluralism in the 1960s and 1970s

Daniel S. Loss

Abstract In the late twentieth century, a new justification for the Church of England's establishment emerged: the church played an important social and political role in safeguarding the interests of other religious communities, including non-Christian ones. The development of this new vision of communal pluralism was shaped by two groups often seen as marginal in postwar British society: the royal family and missionaries. Elizabeth II and liberal evangelicals associated with the Church Missionary Society contributed to a new conception of religious pluralism centered on the integrity of the major world religions as responses to the divine. There were, therefore, impulses towards inclusion as well as exclusion in post-imperial British society. In its focus on religious communities, however, this communal pluralism risked overstating the homogeneity of religious groups and failing to protect individuals whose religious beliefs and practices differed from those of the mainstream of their religious communities.

In 1966, two acts of worship in historic London churches sparked heated protest from the Anglican faithful. The settings of these two services, Westminster Abbey and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, with their royal connections, could hardly be more closely linked to the Church of England's status as the Established Church of the nation. The religious services that took place in these two iconic buildings were described by critics as nothing less than a betrayal of Christianity. What upset observers was the presence of non-Christians as active participants. Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims (among others) contributed to the Commonwealth Day service held at St. Martin-in-the-Fields in June, with the queen in attendance. Six months later, Westminster Abbey marked the nine hundredth anniversary of its first coronation with readings from a similarly diverse group of participants. Critics, both clerical and lay, lambasted the services and argued that they represented "the adulteration and erosion of the Christian faith." A correspondent to the *Church Times* went even further, declaring, "The holding of such a service in a Christian church was the negation of Christianity."[1] The archbishop of Canterbury was

[1] "Protesters 'Picket' Service," *Church Times*, 16 December 1966, 8; Charles Henry, "Multi-Faith Service," *Church Times*, 1 July 1966, 6.

543

more measured in his criticism and too politic to broadcast his views widely, but he expressed the belief in a letter that "Christians … are so pledged to their belief in the uniqueness and finality of Christ that they cannot on the whole be happy with a multi-religious service in a Christian church."[2] This emphasis on the fundamental incompatibility of Christianity with other faiths, though not universal among Anglicans, dominated church thought in the mid-1960s.

Within half a century, the Church of England had embraced a far more positive position towards the non-Christian religious communities of Britain. This new pluralism was on display at a Lambeth Palace reception in 2012 where representatives of Britain's Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities came together to celebrate the queen's Diamond Jubilee. Speaking on behalf of the gathered religious leaders, the archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, thanked the queen for her contributions to the religious life of the nation, signaling appreciation for her demonstration that "both in your own person and as the Supreme Governor" of the Church of England, "being religious is not eccentric or abnormal." The queen, Williams suggested, was an exemplar of the church's commitment to "convene and support the diversity of faith communities in our society." The queen echoed this sentiment, praising the Church of England for the role it played in securing a place for faith in British society. She maintained that the "concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under-appreciated. Its role is *not* to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country."[3]

Between the 1960s and the early twenty-first century, then, Anglican attitudes towards other faiths shifted dramatically from a focus on accentuating the distinctiveness of Christianity to an inclusive position that emphasized the worthiness of other religious traditions and the values shared by different religious communities. Soon after the Lambeth Palace reception, Williams defended the continuing presence of Anglican bishops in the House of Lords on the grounds that the Lords Spiritual are "not there to represent the Church of England's interests: they are there as bishops of the realm, who have taken on the role of attempting to speak for the needs of a wide variety of faith communities."[4] This view of the Church of England as an advocate for non-Christian religious communities was not simply a matter of Anglican self-congratulation. In his 1990 Reith Lectures, Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi, warned that the disestablishment of the Church of England would be a "significant retreat from the notion that we may share any values and beliefs at all."[5]

When and how did this state of affairs, which the sociologist Norman Bonney has described as "state Anglican multi-faithism," come about? In Bonney's account, this

---

[2] Michael Ramsey to Derick Heathcoat-Amory, 7 March 1967, Ramsey 118, fol. 168, Lambeth Palace Library.

[3] "HM the Queen Attends Multi-Faith Reception at Lambeth Palace," 15 February 2012, https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/hm-queen-attends-multifaith-reception-lambeth-palace.

[4] "Bishops' Dozen in Reformed Lords," *Church Times*, 30 March 2012, https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2012/30-march/news/bishops%E2%80%99-dozen-in-reformed-lords.

[5] Jonathan Sacks, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (London, 1991), 68.

arrangement is the product of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and the result of collaboration among the queen, Tony Blair, and David Cameron.[6] But as David Feldman has shown, impulses towards pluralism are a recurrent feature of British history, with the state regularly accommodating national, racial, and religious diversity in ways that have bolstered existing structures of governance.[7] This emphasis on tolerance of diversity as a deeply held value found expression in the queen's suggestion at Lambeth Palace that the very purpose of the Anglican establishment was to secure the protection of religious minorities.[8]

And yet skeptical attitudes towards non-Christian faiths continued to dominate Anglican thought through the mid-1960s. The matter went well beyond conservatives penning angry letters to the *Church Times*. Multifaith services consistently sparked protests from Christians who emphasized the incompatibility of the Christian message with the other major faiths of the world. In 1966, the lower house of the Convocation of Canterbury passed a resolution expressing concern about multifaith services taking place in churches. The following year, the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele deprecated "the current tendency to equate all religions as ways which eventually lead to God."[9]

An emphasis on the inadequacies of other faiths also found expression in the upper reaches of the Anglican hierarchy. Cosmo Gordon Lang and William Temple, archbishops of Canterbury from 1928 to 1942 and 1942 to 1944, respectively, were both wary of anything that might suggest an equivalence between religions.[10] Peter Webster has argued that Michael Ramsey's tenure as archbishop of Canterbury (1961–74) was a key stage in this shift towards greater appreciation for other faiths, contending that Ramsey "did what he could to support the civil rights of religious minorities, and to aid constructive religious dialogue," thereby demonstrating that "the Church of England needed to act, in an embryonic but significant way, as a defender of faith."[11] In fact, Ramsey's record was mixed. Although he was a determined advocate of immigrants generally (serving as chair of the National Council for Commonwealth Immigrants for several years in the late 1960s), he was reluctant to intervene on behalf of non-Christian religious causes and uneasy about multifaith

[6] Norman Bonney, *Monarchy, Religion, and the State: Civil Religion in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the Commonwealth* (Manchester, 2013), 128–43.

[7] David Feldman, "Why the English Like Turbans: A History of Multiculturalism in One Country," in *Structures and Transformations in British History*, ed. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2010), 288–93. For an account of British willingness to countenance cultural difference that stresses its assimilationist origins, see Jordanna Bailkin, "Much Married Men: Polygamy, Culture, and the State," in *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, 2012), 132–63.

[8] This understanding of the church's establishment differed considerably from that enshrined in the 1662 Act of Uniformity, which first described the church as "by law established" and mandated the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* in public worship. "Act of Uniformity," 14 Car. 2., c. 2 § (1662), sec. VI; Alan Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography* (Princeton, 2013), 85.

[9] "Summary of the News," *Church Times*, 17 June 1966, 3; "Protest against the Multi-Faith Service," *Church Times*, 9 December 1966, 1; "Keele Statement," *Church Times*, 14 April 1967, 20.

[10] Cosmo Gordon Lang to Campbell, 6 May 1936, Lang 147, fol. 424, Lambeth Palace Library; William Temple to Walter Samuel, 26 November 1942, W. Temple 62, fols. 3–4, Lambeth Palace Library.

[11] Peter Webster, "Race, Religion and National Identity in Sixties Britain: Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and His Encounter with Other Faiths," in *Christianity and Religious Plurality*, ed. Charlotte Methuen, Andrew Spicer, and John Wolffe, Studies in Church History 51 (Woodbridge, 2015), 398.

religious services.[12] Even in cases where Church of England leaders sought to act in ways that endorsed the worth of other religious traditions (such as the sale of redundant church buildings to non-Christians), they were constrained by more conservative Anglicans, both lay and clerical, who aimed to preserve the exclusionist emphasis of traditional Christian teaching. There were, to be sure, people in the church who advocated a more welcoming attitude towards other faiths, consistent with the tradition of pluralism identified by Feldman and Matthew Grimley.[13] This openness was justified both on theological grounds (most frequently a belief that the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the world) and as a means of improving community relations in an increasingly diverse society.[14] But this more pluralistic perspective remained a minority position in the Church of England well into the 1970s.

It was not until Robert Runcie's tenure as archbishop of Canterbury in the 1980s that the Church of England embraced a conception of itself as a "defender of faith." Where Ramsey had spurned the idea of a Council of Faiths, Runcie praised the creation of such an organization in the famously multiethnic city of Leicester and promoted the creation of the national Inter Faith Network. In a 1990 speech to that organization, Runcie described learning that, thanks to a few tentative moves by his predecessors, "the place of the Archbishop within the establishment caused minority faith communities to hope that I might use my influence and access to help provide the channels in which their own voice might be heard … That," Runcie submitted, "I have tried to do." Especially notable were Runcie's advocacy on behalf of Britain's Muslim community in the wake of the Rushdie affair and his campaigning for the acknowledgement of non-Christian faiths in the 1988 Education Reform Act.[15] Runcie took the corporate nature of his role as archbishop of Canterbury seriously, consulting widely within the church before taking action and making public statements. His embrace of this new role for the Church of England was therefore both a result and a reflection of a broader shift in Anglican thinking on other religions.[16]

Focusing on interfaith relations in the 1960s and 1970s, this article offers an explanation of how and why the Church of England came to embrace this pluralist vision of British society and to accept this new justification for its establishment. It was not the "trendy" bishops and priests associated with "South Bank religion" that pushed the church in this progressive direction.[17] Instead, it was two historical actors that

[12] Hugh Whitworth to Janet Henderson, 13 July 1973, Ramsey 262, fol. 213, Lambeth Palace Library. Tellingly, Owen Chadwick's biography of Ramsey relegates his relations with non-Christian religions to a brief appendix. See Owen Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford, 1990), 406–8.

[13] Matthew Grimley, "The Religion of Englishness: Puritanism, Providentialism, and 'National Character,' 1918–1945," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 884–906.

[14] See, for example, David Brown, "Multi-Faith Services," *Church Times*, 26 May 1967, 12; Peter Absolon and Marcus Braybrooke, "Use of Churches by Non-Christians," *Church Times*, 7 July 1972, 12.

[15] Robert Runcie, "Speech for the Hindu Temple," 25 October 1986, Runcie/SPEECH/318, Lambeth Palace Library; Runcie, "Archbishop's Address," 29 November 1990, Runcie/SPEECH/294, fols. 3-6, Lambeth Palace Library.

[16] Runcie's Anglo-Catholic incarnational faith may have also contributed to his openness to seeing the workings of God in other faiths. Stephen Platten, "Introduction: Runcie: Gownsman and Swordsman," in *Runcie: On Reflection*, ed. Stephen Platten (Norwich, 2002), 11–14, at 16; Christopher Hill, "Friendship before Theology: Runcie and the Churches," in Platten, *Runcie: On Reflection*, 96.

[17] For an account of South Bank religion that stresses its anti-clerical and anti-institutional character, see Mark D. Chapman, "Theology in the Public Arena: The Case of South Bank Religion," in *Redefining*

(when not marginalized in accounts of postwar society) are typically seen as conservative in outlook: the monarchy and missionaries.[18] Prince Charles was roundly criticized for his 1994 suggestion that, upon his accession to the throne, he be known as "Defender of Faith" rather than "Defender of the Faith." But his mother had, decades earlier, begun laying the groundwork for this shift. Elizabeth II is well known for the strength of her Christian faith, a faith that she mentions frequently in her annual Christmas broadcasts and that the former dean of Windsor described as "the whole basis of her existence."[19] Her commitment to Christianity has not, however, precluded an embrace of religious diversity. Throughout her long reign, as Philip Murphy has recognized, Elizabeth II has taken a keen interest in the Commonwealth, carving out a global role that extends beyond her limited constitutional responsibilities in the United Kingdom.[20] That experience with the Commonwealth, according to Rowan Williams, has made her comfortable with the idea of Britain as a multicultural society.[21] The queen's interest in propagating an image of the Commonwealth as a religiously diverse family obliged the Church of England to make formal (if often tokenistic) acknowledgment of other faiths and led the churches of Britain to consider questions of multifaith worship, the use of church buildings by non-Christians, and the appropriate response to a society being remade by immigration.

The key protagonists in the debates over interfaith relations that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s were those who already had extensive experience interacting with people of other faiths: missionaries. Conservative missionaries were wary of church actions that might suggest the equality of different religious traditions, whether multifaith services or allowing the use of church buildings for worship by non-Christian groups. In contrast to this exclusivism stood the liberal evangelicalism of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).[22] Without abandoning their commitment to the ultimate truth of Christianity, CMS leaders proved open to interfaith dialogue and willing to recognize the value inherent in other faith traditions. These inclusivists, however, tended to balk at the thoroughgoing pluralism of theologians such as John Hick and groups such as the World Congress of Faiths, which they

Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives, ed. Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley, Alana Harris, William Whyte, and Sara Williams (London, 2006), 92–105.

[18] For exceptions to the lack of attention paid by historians to the monarchy, see Tobias Harper, "Voluntary Service and State Honours in Twentieth-Century Britain," *Historical Journal* 58, no. 2 (June 2015): 641–61, at 659–61; Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven, 2010), chaps. 1–2; Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, 1995).

[19] Mark Greene and Catherine Butcher, *The Servant Queen and the King She Serves* (Worthing, 2016); Douglas Keay, *The Queen: A Revealing Look at the Private Life of Elizabeth II* (New York, 1992), 124.

[20] Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government, and the Postwar Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2013); Ruth Craggs and Harshan Kumarasingham, "Losing an Empire and Building a Role: The Queen, Geopolitics and the Construction of the Commonwealth Headship at the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 1979," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (January 2015): 80–98.

[21] Robert Hardman, *Her Majesty: Queen Elizabeth II and Her Court* (New York, 2012), 320.

[22] On the split between liberals and conservatives within the Church Missionary Society and the creation of the conservative Bible Churchman's Missionary Society in 1922, see Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910–1942*, vol. 1 (London, 1971), 461–73.

deemed as a move towards religious syncretism that threatened individual religious traditions. Instead, these liberal missionaries developed a theology of religions that emphasized the distinctiveness and integrity of the major religions of the world as genuine and communal responses to the divine. The prominent position of these thinkers within the Church of England helped lay the foundation for the church's acceptance of its new role as a "defender of faith" in the 1980s and beyond.

The significance of this development is twofold. First, it helps explain the survival of the Church of England as the Established Church even in the face of much-discussed evidence of secularization.[23] By taking on a new social and political role as an advocate for religious communities, Anglican leaders reinforced the church's position as the state church. Second, this new conception of religious pluralism sheds light on the successes and limitations of multiculturalism in British history. Much of the scholarship on the treatment of immigrants in twentieth-century Britain has, with good reason, emphasized exclusion and marginalization.[24] But when religion is considered alongside race as a mark of difference, it is possible to discern ways in which British society could be surprisingly open to diversity.

That religious inclusivism, however, had its limits. The pluralism embraced by the Church of England was a communal pluralism, grounded in the notion of the integrity of other religious traditions. The emphasis on the organic nature of religious communities meant that the protections and privileges granted to religious groups did not always extend to individuals whose beliefs and practices diverged from communal orthodoxy. I conclude by examining the legacy of this Anglican inclusivism for interfaith relations in the 1980s and beyond and by highlighting the inadequacies of communal pluralism for Christians and non-Christians alike. In tacitly assuming that religious communities were homogenous and hierarchical, communal pluralism placed undue confidence in the ability of religious leaders to represent the interests of their co-religionists.[25]

I

The British monarchy has long recognized the value of acknowledging the religious traditions and practices of its non-Christian subjects across the empire. In late 1940, two months after large-scale German bombing of Britain began, George VI held a reception at Buckingham Palace to mark the announcement of the government's decision to provide a site for a mosque and Islamic cultural center in London. The

---

[23] For accounts of the timing and causes of religious decline in Britain, see Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000*, 2nd ed. (London, 2009); Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007); S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c. 1920–1960* (Cambridge, 2011); Clive D. Field, *Britain's Last Religious Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2015).

[24] For recent scholarship in this vein, see Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and the Politics of Race* (London, 2015); Brett Bebber, "'We Were Just Unwanted': Bussing, Migrant Dispersal, and South Asians in London," *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2015): 635–61.

[25] On the tendency of group-based theories of pluralism to infringe on the rights of individuals, see Julia Stapleton, introduction to *Group Rights: Perspectives since 1900*, ed. Julia Stapleton (Bristol, 1995), xxvi–xxix.

Times wrote appreciatively of this decision, foregrounding the fact that "in the struggle in which Great Britain and the British Empire are engaged the Moslem communities of the Empire have clearly shown where their loyalties lie."[26] Earlier efforts to secure state support for a mosque had met with no success; it was the argument that Muslims' loyalty across the empire was critical to the war effort that persuaded the government to act.[27] This apparently sudden respect for the religious traditions of the empire echoed events of six decades earlier. Following the Indian rebellion of 1857, the British government deemed popular fears about forced conversions to Christianity a key factor underlying the revolt. The next year, when Parliament brought the rule of the British East India Company in India to an end, Queen Victoria proclaimed that "we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure." That proclamation represented a repudiation of evangelicals' call for the imperial state to embrace a missionary role.[28]

The monarchy's persistent (if politically expedient) acknowledgment of non-Christian religions provoked considerable anxieties among many Christian missionaries. The government's 1940 decision to support a mosque in London prompted one conservative missionary to ask, "Moslems in this country have religious liberty but why should we, a Christian people, build a mosque for them?"[29] In response, Lambeth Palace deferred to realpolitik, pointing out that "it is considered desirable at the present time to recognise the fact that many millions of His Majesty's subjects are Moslems."[30] But four years later, the archbishop of Canterbury balked when he heard reports that the king would be opening the mosque, writing to the king's private secretary to warn that doing so would give the "suggestion that we regard all religion as standing on a level."[31] In spite of these warnings, the king visited the Islamic Cultural Centre in Regent's Park a few months later, where he examined plans for the mosque to be built on the site provided by the government.[32] This case—in which the king ignored the warning of the archbishop of Canterbury—was a sign of how the views of the monarchy and the Established Church did not always align when it came to their dealings with other faiths. In affirming the value of non-Christian religions, the royal family pushed the Church of England and its leaders in directions that it otherwise might not have gone.

Philip Williamson has shown how national days of prayer in the first half of the twentieth century exemplified a new relationship between the monarchy and the

[26] "Mosque for Moslems in London," *Times* (London), 14 November 1940, 5; "A Moslem Centre," *Times* (London), 14 November 1940, 5.

[27] Humayun Ansari, ed., *The Making of the East London Mosque: Minutes of the London Mosque Fund and East London Mosque Trust Ltd., 1910–1951* (Cambridge, 2011), 11, 16–17, 24–25.

[28] Ian Copland, "Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company, c. 1813–1858," *Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (December 2006): 1025–54, at 1044–45; Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698–1858* (Woodbridge, UK, 2012), 237–42.

[29] William Watson to Cosmo Gordon Lang, 2 December, 1940, Lang 184, fol. 121, Lambeth Palace Library.

[30] Letter to William Watson, 2 December 1940, Lang 184, fol. 122, Lambeth Palace Library; letter to T. Ashton, 11 January 1941, Lang 184, fol. 125, Lambeth Palace Library.

[31] William Temple to Alan Lascelles, 24 August 1944, W. Temple 30, fol. 269, Lambeth Palace Library.

[32] "Islamic Cultural Centre," *Times* (London), 22 November 1944, 7.

churches in which the monarchy was "impartial between the different faiths" and thereby became "still more attractive as a general symbol." That impartiality had, by the early 1940s, already extended beyond the Christian churches. In addition to his endorsement of a mosque in London, George VI also added the chief rabbi to the list of religious leaders to be contacted regarding national days of prayer.[33] The coming decades would see a further expansion in the monarchy's endorsement of the value of non-Christians' religious commitment.

The end of empire strengthened the royal family's interest in affirming the worthiness of the diverse faiths of the Commonwealth. Alister Chapman has suggested that "much of the language used for the Commonwealth after 1945 emphasized its diversity in ways that made it awkward to hold on to the idea of Christian Britain." Chapman points to the winding up of Commonwealth Youth Sunday in 1964 as evidence of diminishing popular interest in the Commonwealth,[34] and yet, thanks to the efforts of the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Council (headed by the Conservative former chancellor of the exchequer, Viscount Amory), 1965 saw not one but two religious celebrations of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Day service took place in Westminster Abbey as usual. More novel was a multifaith service at St. Mary-le-Bow that opened the Commonwealth Arts Festival. Both services had royal attendees, with the duke and duchess of Gloucester present in Westminster Abbey and the duke of Edinburgh at St. Mary-le-Bow.[35] As the empire increasingly became a thing of the past, the royal family proved eager to preserve the trappings of a global community and to justify its special role in the Commonwealth.

Amory took the multifaith service at the Commonwealth Arts Festival to be a resounding success and approached Ramsey to propose a "multi-religious service" modeled on the St. Mary-le-Bow service but on a larger scale. "This service," Amory reported, "clearly made a deep impression on all of the limited number of people who had the opportunity of attending it, from Prince Philip downwards." Given the apparent interest of the royal family in events of this nature, the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Council felt that "something on these lines could effectively be held in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen."[36] Amory also approached the dean of Westminster Abbey about holding the service there, reporting the queen's interest in attending such a service. The dean demurred on the grounds that the abbey's governing body "did not feel that they would be ready to have a Service for perhaps ten years." Faced with this dismissal, the queen's private secretary expressed "great disappointment" and "indicated that the queen would accept an Anglican service of the previous pattern with reluctance and hoped that a multi-religious Service could

---

[33] Philip Williamson, "National Days of Prayer: The Churches, the State, and Public Worship in Britain, 1899–1957," *English Historical Review* 128, no. 531 (April 2013): 324–66, at 343, 356–57.

[34] Alister Chapman, "The International Context of Secularization in England: The End of Empire, Immigration, and the Decline of Christian National Identity, 1945–1970," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 1 (January 2015): 163–89, at 172–73, 188.

[35] Derick Heathcoat-Amory to Michael Ramsey, "Commonwealth Sunday," 17 March 1965, Ramsey 74, fols. 335–38, Lambeth Palace Library; "No Cabinet Member at Service," *Times* (London), 25 May 1965; Tom Dalton, "All Faiths Services," *Times* (London), 10 June 1966, 13. On the Commonwealth Arts Festival, see Radhika Natarajan, "Performing Multiculturalism: The Commonwealth Arts Festival of 1965," *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 3 (July 2014): 705–33.

[36] Derick Heathcoat-Amory to Michael Ramsey, n.d., Ramsey 103, fols. 248–49, Lambeth Palace Library.

be arranged." Not to be deterred, Amory organized a service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the parish church of Buckingham Palace.[37] The bishop of London expressed reservations about the multifaith observance but did not object to its taking place as long as the service was prepared with care. In the end, the service took place as an "Affirmation of Faith," followed by sacred readings by Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant representatives.[38]

In December 1966, the general secretary of the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations met with Amory and representatives of other churches to discuss the possibility of similar services in the future. The churches' representatives pointed out that "there were some Christians who objected to the 'indifferentism' of religious services," but they agreed that "there was no harm in an occasional service of this sort if it served a useful purpose and was something of a state occasion." Amory pronounced himself pleased with the conclusions reached and planned to pass them along to the queen.[39] Based on this meeting and "some genial conversation at The Club" between Amory and Ramsey, Amory began planning a similar service for 1967.[40] The initiative provoked considerable disquiet on the part of Ramsey, who objected to such services becoming a regular occurrence, and on that of the bishop of London, who doubted their theological integrity. Ramsey wrote to Amory explaining his inability to approve the proposed service, citing both legal problems (the fact that the service would require the permission of the bishop of London) and theological reservations.[41]

This confusion threw the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Council into a panic, as the queen had already been informed of the decision to hold a service in 1967 and had approved of members of the royal family being invited. When it became evident that service might not take place, she was disappointed, as were the duke and duchess of Kent, who "had been thrilled at the idea of representing her at a multi-religious service in a religious building."[42] Ramsey suggested that holding a multifaith service in a church posed special theological problems that could be avoided that if it were instead held in a secular building. By the time the confusion was sorted out, it was too late to secure a secular location, and the year passed without a multifaith Commonwealth Day service.[43]

Committed to her role as head of the Commonwealth, the queen was dissatisfied with the Church of England's attitude towards multifaith services marking

[37] Robert Beloe to Robert Stopford, 29 March 1966, Ramsey 103, fols. 254–56, Lambeth Palace Library; Eric Abbott to Michael Ramsey, 11 October 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 192–94, Lambeth Palace Library.

[38] Robert Stopford to Robert Beloe, 31 March 1966, Ramsey 103, fol. 257, Lambeth Palace Library; "Many Faiths to Meet in St. Martin's," *Times* (London), 7 June 1966, 11.

[39] J. R. Satterthwaite, "Note for the Archbishop of Canterbury," 7 December 1966, Ramsey 103, fols. 279–81, Lambeth Palace Library.

[40] J. R. Satterthwaite, "Commonwealth Day Multi-Religious Acts of Worship," 22 December 1966, Ramsey 103, fol. 286, Lambeth Palace Library; Robert Beloe, "Multi-Religious Service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields," 3 March 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 162–63, Lambeth Palace Library.

[41] Ramsey to Heathcoat-Amory, 7 March 1967.

[42] Robert Beloe, "Commonwealth Day Multi-Religious Service," 16 March 1967, Ramsey 118, fol. 174, Lambeth Palace Library.

[43] Robert Beloe, "Multi-Religious Services," 4 April 1967, Ramsey 118, fol. 181, Lambeth Palace Library.

Commonwealth Day. Following the failure to arrange a service in 1967, her private secretary outlined her attitude "from the point of view of her headship of the Commonwealth which was a collection of nations and countries holding many faiths. She valued the opportunity of attending an occasion at which these faiths were expressed."[44] Perhaps attuned to the negative impact that the tighter immigration restriction proposed in the 1965 White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* could have on relations with the Commonwealth, Buckingham Palace continued to push for multifaith Commonwealth Day services.[45] Due to this pressure, these services resumed in 1968, although the bishop of London continued to withhold his permission for the services to take place in a church in his diocese.[46] As a result, the Commonwealth Day services between 1968 and 1971 took place in the Guildhall. This secular setting apparently displeased the queen, who attended the service in 1968 but made it clear that she would not do so again until it was held in a church. Beginning in 1972, multifaith Commonwealth Day services were held on an annual basis in Westminster Abbey. As a royal peculiar, the abbey was outside the jurisdiction of any diocesan bishop, with its dean reporting directly to the monarch and therefore more susceptible to royal pressure. Services at the abbey, then, eased the problem of securing the permission of a skeptical church hierarchy.[47] A year after rejecting proposals for the multifaith services at the abbey, the dean pronounced himself cautiously amenable to services of this sort, envisioning the abbey as a "place where responsible and cautious experiments may be made" and "a House of Prayer for all nations," but he also emphasized that the "occasion is a Commonwealth one rather than an Abbey Service."[48]

The queen's persistent interest in attending multifaith services, alongside similar services that took place in Westminster Abbey and Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, in 1966 and 1967, prodded the churches towards embarking on a detailed examination of the circumstances in which such services could be acceptable.[49] Even in purely "symbolic" acts such as attending church services, the queen helped establish the

[44] Quoted in Robert Beloe, 15 November 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 207–9, Lambeth Palace Library. David Paton, a representative of the Church Assembly's Missionary and Ecumenical Council, objected to this "Commonwealth idea" that "Decent Burmese" were Buddhists just as "Decent English" were Christians. See Michael Ramsey, "Some Thoughts on United Worship with Other Religions," 11 October 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 189–91, Lambeth Palace Library.

[45] On the White Paper and the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, see Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, 1997), 174–80.

[46] Robert Stopford to Austen Williams, "Inter-Faith Service," 13 November 1967, Ramsey 118, fol. 206, Lambeth Palace Library; Austen Williams to Robert Stopford, 13 November 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 211–12, Lambeth Palace Library; Robert Stopford to Austen Williams, 24 November 1967, Ramsey 118, fol. 216, Lambeth Palace Library; Robert Beloe, "Multi-Faith Act," 20 February 1968, CFR G 5, fol. 16, Lambeth Palace Library.

[47] Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 118; Donald Simpson, "Thirty Years of the Commonwealth Day Observance," *Round* Table 86, no. 341 (January 1997): 27–36, at 28.

[48] Eric Abbott to Michael Ramsey, 11 October 1967; Abbott to Ramsey, 7 March 1972, Ramsey 223, fol. 134, Lambeth Palace Library.

[49] Hugh Montefiore, vicar of Great St. Mary's, organized the service there as part of a meeting of the World Congress of Faiths in Cambridge. Montefiore had converted to Christianity from Judaism as a teenager. The service sparked a small protest led by the conservative vicar of Roydon, Christopher Wansey. Robert Beloe, "All Faiths Service at Great St. Mary's Cambridge," 22 September 1967, Ramsey 118, fols. 187–88, Lambeth Palace Library; "Mr. Wansey Leads His 'Act of Witness,'" *Church Times*, 29 September 1967, 17.

agenda for the churches. This is not to say that the queen insisted on multifaith Commonwealth Day services because she already had, in the mid-1960s, an embryonic version of the pluralism she outlined at Lambeth Palace in 2012. But in endorsing the formal recognition of religious diversity as a valued part of the Commonwealth and of British society, she did help lay the foundation for this later concept of pluralism.

By the mid-1970s, the queen's interest in recognizing the value of other religious traditions was so well known that, when church leaders first became aware of the World of Islam Festival planned for 1976, they recognized that the queen would be invited and would likely attend. In response to news of the plans of the festival, the British Council of Churches (Britain's main ecumenical organization) and the Conference of British Missionary Societies set up a joint advisory group on Islam in Britain. Its terms of reference were broad, but it was clear from the outset that the festival would be the focus of its work. In the wake of the 1973–74 oil crisis, the importance of maintaining good relations with the Muslim world became increasingly apparent. Early memoranda on the festival by Anglican missionaries suggested, "No doubt there is a good deal of the surplus money of the oil States behind it," and noted, "Oil, as a weapon, has transformed the political scene."[50] At its first meeting, the joint British Council of Churches/Conference of British Missionary Societies group recognized a "need for vigilance and wise counsel" in a number of questions, including a potential "request for Royal patronage and/or official attendance of Church representatives."[51] By early 1975 (still a year before the opening of the festival), Lambeth Palace was attentive to the possibility of the royal family's involvement with it and anxious that the "idea of the Church (& the Church's Supreme Governor) giving support to Another Faith which denied Our Lord" could provoke controversy.[52]

The respectability granted to the festival by the queen's involvement all but forced the new archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, to participate in two events he might otherwise have avoided. First, he accepted an invitation to the royal opening of the festival because to refuse would attract "criticism on the ground that the church had encouraged the queen to go, saying that it was just 'cultural', but had stayed away itself, fearing that it was after all 'religious.'"[53] Second, he hosted a reception at Lambeth Palace for Abdel-Halim Mahmoud, the grand imam of the al-Azhar mosque and university in Cairo. Organizers had sought Mahmoud's endorsement of the festival to "extricate themselves from increasingly embarrassing connection with Islamic interests of a more aggressive and politically motivated character." Mahmoud's participation was, however, contingent on "assurances … that he will be treated here as befits his office and station." Lambeth Palace initially sought to

[50] John V. Taylor to T. Carlisle Patterson, "World of Islam Festival 1976," 20 September 1974, 1, BCC/DEA/2/3/6/1, Church of England Record Centre; Max Warren, "World of Islam Festival, 1976," 1 September 1974, 1, BCC/DEA/2/3/6/1, Church of England Record Centre.

[51] BCC/CBMS Advisory Group on Islam in Britain, "Minutes of the First Meeting," 3 December 1974, BCC/DEA/2/3/6/2, Church of England Record Centre.

[52] Hugh Whitworth to Douglas Cleverley Ford, "Festival of Islam," 14 November 1975, Coggan 14, fol. 307, Lambeth Palace Library.

[53] Hugh Whitworth, "World of Islam Festival," 11 February 1976, Coggan 36, fol. 280, Lambeth Palace Library.

arrange a meeting between Coggan and Mahmoud in "some academic situation," rather than as "one religious leader meeting another religious leader," which was bound to upset conservative evangelicals. In the end, diplomatic protocol demanded that Mahmoud be invited to Lambeth Palace, where he met leaders from the British Council of Churches and the Conference of British Missionary Societies. Against the will of Lambeth Palace, then, the event took on a far more "representative" character than they had hoped for.[54]

The significance of the queen's enthusiasm for affirming the value of non-Christian religious traditions was twofold. First, in making such gatherings respectable, she made it difficult for the archbishop of Canterbury to reject similar opportunities. If high-level meetings with representatives of other faiths were acceptable to the Supreme Governor of the Church, who was a mere archbishop to disagree? Second, the queen's interest in events like this one brought the underlying theological issues to the fore and put them on the agenda of the churches. The Commonwealth multifaith services were not the only experiments in interfaith worship taking place in the 1960s, but the queen's presence at such services made the question of how the churches should relate to non-Christian traditions all the more pressing.[55]

II

Ceremonial occasions such as Commonwealth Day and high-level meetings between archbishops and imams were far from the only interfaith encounters that took place in this period.[56] In a host of more mundane ways, Christians interacted with Britain's growing communities of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Multifaith services took place across Britain, especially in cities with large immigrant communities. In Leicester, for example, an Anglican vicar arranged a multifaith service to mark the centenary of the birth of Mohandas Gandhi.[57] Beginning in the late 1960s, there was a growing belief that religious education syllabi should be revised to reflect the changing religious landscape of Britain and thereby improve community relations. Local education authorities in London, Birmingham, and the West Riding of Yorkshire were pioneers in this regard.[58] And as shifting populations and dwindling congregations made

[54] B. D. Nicholls to Douglas Cleverley Ford, "The World of Islam Festival 1976 and the Archbishop," 10 July 1975, Coggan 14, fols. 288–89, Lambeth Palace Library; Douglas Cleverley Ford, "Memorandum to the Archbishop," 28 July 1975, Coggan 14, fols. 290–91, Lambeth Palace Library; Harry Morton to Hugh Whitworth, "Visit of the Shaykh Al-Azhar," 26 January 1976, Coggan 36, fol. 276, Lambeth Palace Library.

[55] For an extensive analysis of the Church of England's response to these questions, see Theresa H. N. Kuin Lawton, "'Defender of Faith': Is There an Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism? The Church of England and Other Faiths, 1966–1996" (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 2011).

[56] For a case study of interfaith relations in a mid-sized city, see Alister Chapman, "Civil Religions in Derby, 1930–2000," *Historical Journal* 59, no. 3 (September 2016): 817–43.

[57] "Around the Dioceses," *Church Times*, 1 August 1969, 16; For other examples of multifaith services at the local level, see "Around the Dioceses," *Church Times*, 24 July 1970, 12; "Criticised Service Not 'Inter-Faith,'" *Church Times*, 23 June 1978, 2; M. Hamilton, "Inter-Faith Worship Is Not a Novelty in Newcastle," *Church Times*, 20 October 1989, 10.

[58] Stephen G. Parker and Rob J. K. Freathy, "Ethnic Diversity, Christian Hegemony, and the Emergence of Multi-Faith Religious Education in the 1970s," *History of Education* 41, no. 3 (May 2012): 381–404;

redundant church buildings more numerous, some dioceses considered selling the buildings to local communities of non-Christians.

On all these matters and the controversies that emerged from them, missionaries and former missionaries took keen interest. This should not be especially surprising—overseas missionaries were, after all, the people with the most experience of non-Christian faiths. But historians' conception of missionaries is so closely tied to the British Empire and cultural imperialism that their role in the post-imperial period has been underexplored.[59] However, even if the formal end of empire had marked the end of missionary activity overseas (and it did not), individuals who had done missionary work in the decades before independence did not simply disappear from the scene. One, John V. Taylor, became the first priest to be directly appointed to one of the three senior bishoprics in England since the sixteenth century. As Taylor noted, the issues that seemed novel in the wake of post-imperial immigration, had, in fact, "been lived with by those engaged in overseas mission for at least two hundred years."[60]

Though most of the participants in discussions over the churches' relations with other faiths had experience as missionaries, they were far from unified in their theological views or their positions on the practical questions that arose in Britain's increasingly diverse religious landscape. Such divergences were a longstanding feature of missionary thought, with some missionaries envisioning religious conversion as part of a broader project of cultural transformation and others, as Elizabeth Prevost has shown, demonstrating a surprising degree of openness towards indigenous cultural and religious practices.[61] Christian attitudes towards non-Christian religious traditions have often been grouped into three broad schools of thought: exclusivists, who emphasized the errors and limitations of other religious traditions; inclusivists, who saw the workings of God in other religions but maintained the primacy and definitiveness of Christianity; and pluralists, who claimed that other religions were equally as valid as Christianity.[62] The exclusivist position had long dominated Christian thinking and received a strong endorsement from William Temple in 1942, who wrote that Christianity is a "profoundly intolerant religion, not of course

---

"Religious Education in a Multi-Religious Society," July 1969, BCC/ED/7/1/58, Church of England Record Centre.

[59] Just a handful of the two dozen volumes in William B. Eerdmans' series Studies in the History of Christian Missions are devoted to the postimperial period. For a sample of the rich body of scholarship exploring the relationship between missionary activity and the British empire, see Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester, 2004); Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940* (Stanford, 2002); Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005). For a suggestive account of how missionary activity stimulated public interest in Africa, see John Stuart, "Overseas Mission, Voluntary Service, and Aid to Africa: Max Warren, the Church Missionary Society, and Kenya, 1945–63," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 3 (September 2008): 527–43.

[60] R. K. Orchard to Ruth Tetlow, "Seminar on 'Christian Mission in a Multi-Faith Britain,'" 4 October 1972, BCC/DEA/2/3/6/1, Church of England Record Centre.

[61] Jeffrey Cox, "Missionary Literature: The Defamation of the Other,'" in *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York, 2008); Elizabeth E. Prevost, chap. 3, "Christianizing Womanhood in Madagascar, 1901–1923," and chap. 4, "Christianizing Womanhood in Uganda, 1910–1930," in *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford, 2010).

[62] This tripartite division was popularized in Alan Race, chaps. 2–4 in *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London, 1983).

in the sense that it justifies persecution … but in the sense of drawing a very sharp line between those who attempt to follow its way and those who only regard this as one among a number of good ways."[63] The most radical challenge to this mode of thought came from pluralists, the most notable of them the philosopher of religion John Hick, who called for a "Copernican revolution" in Christian understandings of religion that recognized that the major world religions were all valid approaches to the divine.[64]

Out-and-out pluralists like Hick were rare within the Church of England and had little direct influence on the church's attitudes on questions like multifaith worship and the use of churches for non-Christian worship. Far more significant were the competing attitudes of exclusivists, most notably Sir Norman Anderson, and inclusivists like Max Warren and John V. Taylor. Anderson was a prominent scholar of Islamic law who served as chair of the House of Laity in the Church's General Synod and as president of the conservative Bible Churchman's Missionary Society. Though later scholars have argued that Anderson adopted "an inclusivist position that placed Christianity among world religions and yet remained fundamentally in agreement with evangelical convictions," his responses to the concrete issues of interfaith relations that faced the Church of England demonstrated little appreciation for the potential value of other faiths.[65] Addressing the possible sale of redundant churches to Muslims, Anderson emphasized Muslims' denial of the divinity of Christ and warned that the sale would promote the idea that Islam and Christianity were equally good ways of approaching God.[66]

The liberal evangelicalism of the CMS stood in contrast to this exclusivism. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, the CMS's two most prominent figures were Warren, who served as its general secretary from 1942 to 1963, and Taylor, who succeeded Warren in the position. Together, they outlined and helped define "an open approach" towards other religions that nonetheless remained "centered on Christ."[67] Inspired by Kenneth Cragg's *The Call of the Minaret*, an account of the pull of Islam for both Muslims and Christians, Warren edited a series published by SCM Press on the Christian presence in non-Christian settings, with volumes on Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, traditional African religions, and religion in Japan. In his oft-quoted introduction to the series, Warren wrote, "God has not left Himself without witness in any nation at any time. When we approach the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him … Our first task in approaching another people,

[63] Temple to Samuel, 26 November 1942.

[64] John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London, 1973), 99–147. Hick contributed to the development of Birmingham's multifaith religious education syllabus in the mid-1970s.

[65] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL, 2003), 261. For Anderson's emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ, see J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (London, 1970), 24, 26, 102.

[66] Baden Hickman, "Moslem Offer Splits Church," *Guardian*, 10 July 1972; *The Community Orientation of the Church: The Final Report of the British Council of Churches' Working Party on the Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Areas* (London, 1974), 58–59.

[67] Graham Kings, "Mission and the Meeting of Faiths: The Theologies of Max Warren and John V. Taylor," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, 2000), 287.

another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy."[68] As a result of his appreciation for the holiness of other faiths, Warren supported the sale of redundant churches to members of non-Christian faiths, asking, "Are we seriously in a position to say that for a Muslim in his mosque, or the Hindu in his temple, that he is any less aware of the *numen*, is any less confronted with a *mysterium tremendum* which challenges him to worship?" Warren went on to argue that "to pull down a redundant church and refuse its use to fellow-citizens of another Faith … wholly fails to do justice to the genuineness of any kind of worship other than Christian."[69] His thinking was enshrined in the British Council of Churches' endorsement of the idea that redundant churches could in principle be sold to non-Christians for religious worship.[70]

But while this principle had in the abstract been accepted by the British Council of Churches, the proposed sale of individual church buildings was a different matter. Plans to sell St. Mary's, Savile Town, in Dewsbury and St. Leonard's, Bedford, to the local Muslim and Sikh communities, respectively, provoked local outrage and heated debate in the Church of England's General Synod.[71] Central to local opposition was the conviction that the sale of a church building to a non-Christian group would constitute a betrayal of the missionary cause, prompting overseas missionaries to ponder, "Is our work abroad in vain, when we hear of this apostasy in our own country?"[72] In the end, the sales of St. Mary's and St. Leonard's were scuttled by local protests, in spite of the support for the transactions from senior church figures such as Michael Ramsey and Robert Runcie.[73]

Contemporary observers attributed these divergent attitudes to a growing divide between the laity and the clerical and episcopal leadership of the church.[74] During the debate on the fate of St. Mary's, one observer noted that the procedures surrounding church redundancy had "made it all too easy for a 'we-they' attitude to develop, in which 'we' (the local people) came to feel that 'they' (the diocesan authorities and the Church Commissioners) were riding rough-shod over local susceptibilities and

[68] Max Warren, "General Introduction," *Sandals at the Mosque: Christian Presence amid Islam* (London, 1959), 9–10.

[69] Max Warren, "Are There Any Circumstances in Which It Would Be Proper for a Church Consecrated for Christian Worship to Be Used for Worship That Was Not Christian?," March 1972, 10–11, BCC/DCA/CCRU/7/4/7, Church of England Record Centre.

[70] B. D. Nicholls, "Working Party on the Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multiracial Areas," 2 November 1972, BCC/DCA/CCRU/7/4/7, Church of England Record Centre.

[71] For an overview of these debates, see John Maiden, "'What Could Be More Christian Than to Allow the Sikhs to Use It?': Church Redundancy and Minority Religion in Bedford, 1977–8," in *Christianity and Religious Plurality*, ed. Charlotte Methuen, Andrew Spicer, and John Wolffe, Studies in Church History 51 (Woodbridge, 2015), 399–411.

[72] Patrick J. Lamport, "Church into Mosque?," *Church Times*, 18 February 1972, 16.

[73] "Primate on 'No Mosque' Decision," *Church Times*, 27 October 1972, 1; "Proposal to Sell Church to Sikhs," *Church Times*, 23 March 1978, 1, 20.

[74] On the growing liberalization of senior clergy, see Eliza Filby, *God and Mrs. Thatcher: The Battle for Britain's Soul* (London, 2015). For an account of the General Synod that emphasizes how its structure offered opportunities for conservative evangelicals, especially among the laity, see Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People* (London, 2016), 53–54.

interest."[75] That sentiment was echoed in the report by the local vicar: "As far as the people of Savile Town are concerned, they believe that no one cares about their case —that someone 'up there' has decided a course of action."[76] That divide between laity and leadership was confirmed in General Synod, where the House of Laity consistently rejected the principle of selling redundant churches to non-Christian faiths even as the Houses of Clergy and Bishops repeatedly endorsed it—in 1983, almost 90 percent of bishops voted in favor of a resolution that would have established that principle.[77]

Growing episcopal backing for communal pluralism found its clearest support in the thought of the liberal inclusivist Taylor, Warren's successor at CMS and bishop of Winchester from 1975 to 1985. It was under Taylor's leadership that the diocese of Winchester sold St. Luke's, Southampton, to the local Sikh community.[78] Like Warren, Taylor outlined an appreciation for the authenticity of non-Christian religions as responses to the working of God in the world. In the inaugural Lambeth Interfaith Lecture in 1977, he suggested that "we should think of every religion as a people's particular tradition of response to the reality which the Holy Spirit has set before their eyes."[79] His choice of words was significant. In conceptualizing religion as "a people's" response, rather than an individual's, Taylor laid out a vision of religion as deeply embedded in communal life. His acknowledgment of the divine origins of religion did not mean, however, that members of different religious faiths should "limit our search to the areas of common ground." What truly united different faith communities, Taylor argued, was the existence of certain beliefs and commitments in each faith tradition that could not be gainsaid or leveled down to some lowest common denominator.[80]

Warren and Taylor's openness to non-Christian beliefs did not, therefore, equate to a belief that all sincerely held supernatural beliefs were equally valid. Instead, they privileged and granted the status of "religion" to those beliefs and practices that had over time been codified into the properties of communities. This emphasis on the communal aspects of religion was echoed by another former CMS missionary, David Brown, who was bishop of Guildford from 1973 to 1982. In a pamphlet written in response to the World of Islam Festival, Brown emphasized the importance of thinking about Muslims as a community of believers and practitioners rather than as a group of individuals. In his opening chapter, tellingly called "The Muslim Community," Brown insisted that "behind each individual Muslim stands a Muslim community."[81]

This vision of religions as communities with a clear sense of internal integrity—a vision with roots in CMS—shaped Christian responses to the growing religious

---

[75] "Report on a Debate in Wakefield Diocesan Synod," 13 May 1972, BCC/DCA/CCRU/7/4/7, Church of England Record Centre.

[76] "'End the Torture' of Dewsbury Church," *Church Times*, 19 May 1972, 3.

[77] "Stalemate on Redundant Churches," *Church Times*, 6 July 1973, 5; "Motion to Make Redundant Churches Available to Those of Other Faiths Fails," *Church Times*, 11 February 1983, 5.

[78] "Redundant Church to Be Sold to Sikhs," *Church Times*, 4 March 1983, 1, 20.

[79] John Taylor, "The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue," 2 November 1977, 3, Coggan 54, fols. 152–60, Lambeth Palace Library.

[80] Taylor, 6–7, 9.

[81] David Brown, *A New Threshold: Guides for the Churches in Their Relations with Muslim Communities* (London, 1976), 1, 7.

pluralism of British society. In the late 1960s, for example, when experiments in multifaith worship provoked such unease, leading figures in Anglican missionary circles (including Taylor) prepared a statement that both cautiously endorsed the legitimacy of multifaith services (provided they reflected sufficient "theological sophistication") and warned that the "inspiration of such gatherings is the Hindu principle of syncretism which embraces all religions as different roads to the one God."[82] It was this carefully delineated support for multifaith activity—simultaneously accepting the worth of other religious traditions and insisting on their distinctiveness—that would be foundational to the communal pluralism that the Church of England came to embrace.

Taylor's influence was also felt in his role in pushing Lambeth Palace towards formalizing its commitment to interfaith dialogue. In 1974, with the World of Islam festival looming, he approached Donald Coggan (who would soon succeed Ramsey as archbishop of Canterbury) with a proposal to establish a "number of handpicked specialists to work corporately as 'The Archbishop's Consultants … on inter-faith relations', and to work individually, each in his proper sphere, as a person who is actively practising 'dialogue.'" Taylor proposed that the initial membership include Peter Schneider (an Anglican convert from Judaism who had extensive experience in the field of Jewish-Christian dialogue) and Kenneth Cragg, already well known for his work on Muslim-Christian relations, *The Call of the Minaret*. Both Schneider and Cragg had contributed to Warren's Christian Presence series for SCM Press. Tellingly, Taylor described their roles specifically in terms of being responsible for Judaism (in Schneider's case) and Islam (in Cragg's). In the future, Taylor suggested, they should be joined by experts on Hinduism and Buddhism.[83] Just as he would do in his Lambeth Interfaith Lecture three years later, Taylor outlined a version of interfaith relations in which it was taken for granted that the other parties to this interfaith dialogue would be representatives of the well-established religions of the world: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. CMS missionaries came to dominate the group; Cragg and Schneider were joined as consultants by Warren, George Appleton (who had worked in Burma), David Brown (Sudan), and David Young (Sri Lanka).[84] Just how far from Christian exclusivism this group of missionaries had come can be discerned in Brown's remarks about the composition of the group. In his estimation, although Warren, Cragg, and Appleton had "considerable expertise in Hinduism and Buddhism … I suspect that their heart's love is for Islam rather than others. It will be essential to include … people whose first love is for Hinduism and Buddhism."[85]

At the group's first meeting, a lengthy discussion took place over its name. Attuned to Brown's suggestion that the Church of England would have to engage in interfaith relations at the "ambassadorial level," the group decided to call itself the Consultants

---

[82] "A Statement Prepared by the General Secretaries of the Larger Anglican Missionary Societies and the Secretary of the Missionary and Ecumenical Council of the Assembly," April 1967, BCC/DEA/7/2/17/2, Church of England Record Centre.

[83] John V. Taylor to Donald Coggan, 24 July 1974, Coggan 14, fols. 1–3, Lambeth Palace Library.

[84] Archbishops' Consultants on Interfaith Relations, "Minutes," 15 March 1976, Coggan 36, fols. 33–34, Lambeth Palace Library.

[85] David Brown to Douglas Cleverley Ford, 28 February 1975, Coggan 14, fol. 46, Lambeth Palace Library.

to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Interfaith Relations, based on the clear recognition of "Canterbury" by "leaders of Other Faiths."[86] Schneider, elected as secretary as well as the designated expert on Judaism, took the representational character of the group seriously and sought to use his position to establish high-level contacts with representatives of other faith communities.[87] By contrast, most of the other consultants viewed their role in more modest terms, as serving as a think tank to advise the archbishops as issues emerged but not seeking out opportunities to represent the Church of England.[88] This divergence of views, coupled with Schneider's poor administrative skills, put the consultants on unsure footing. Uncertainty about their future was further exacerbated in 1978 with the creation of the British Council of Churches' Committee on Relations with People of Other Faiths, a body that seemed set to take over many of the functions of the archbishops' consultants.[89]

In spite of (or perhaps because of) this history of limited success, Schneider lobbied Runcie hard for the survival of the consultant group into Runcie's archepiscopate. Schneider wrote to Runcie that "the very fact that the Archbishops have taken the time and thought to select such a group as Interfaith Consultants is seen as a token of the Archbishops' (and that of the Church as a whole) seriousness in the field of Interfaith Relations." Young reiterated this idea, suggesting, "To disband the Consultants or to curtail their work would be seen as a withdrawal of interest by the Church of England."[90] In other words, the mere fact that the consultants had become so well known among other faith communities ensured their continuing survival. Though the immediate impact of the archbishops' consultant group was limited, its establishment was a key step in the institutionalization of the church's growing commitment to communal pluralism.

Runcie put the archbishops' consultants to work even before his translation to Canterbury. With his encouragement, the consultants agreed that it would be desirable to have representatives of "Other Faith Communities."[91] The "interfaith friends" who ended up attending were Hugo Gryn (a prominent Liberal Jewish rabbi), M. A. Azki Badawi (the director of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Regent's Park), H. Saddhatissa (head of the London Buddhist Vihara), Harminder Singh (a Sikh representative of the World Congress of Faiths and a member of the

---

[86] "Interfaith Relations," March 1975, Coggan 14, fols. 66–68, Lambeth Palace Library; David Brown, "Relationships with Those of Other Faiths," August 1974, Coggan 14, fols. 14–16, Lambeth Palace Library.

[87] Peter Schneider, "Brief Notes on a Meeting of Asian Community Organisation Leaders with the Archbishop at Lambeth," 27 September 1976, Coggan 36, fols. 71–72, Lambeth Palace Library.

[88] Max Warren to Douglas Cleverley Ford, July 1977, Coggan 59, fols. 153–54, Lambeth Palace Library.

[89] Douglas Cleverley Ford, "A Summary of Conversations," February 1978, Coggan 73, fols. 40–42, Lambeth Palace Library; John Wolffe, "How Many Ways to God? Christians and Religious Pluralism," in *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain since 1945*, ed. Gerald Parsons, vol. 2 (London, 1994), 39.

[90] Peter Schneider to Robert Runcie, 22 September 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 87–89, Lambeth Palace Library; David Young to Robert Runcie, "Consultants to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Interfaith Relations," 2 October 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 90–92, Lambeth Palace Library.

[91] Robert Runcie to Peter Schneider, 23 January 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fol. 23, Lambeth Palace Library; Consultants to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Interfaith Relations, "Minutes," 10 March 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 26–30, Lambeth Palace Library.

Commission for Racial Equality), and Bhavyanandaji (head of the Rahma Krishner Vendanta Centre).[92] Sensitive to the charges of syncretism that had long plagued anything that resembled multifaith worship, organizers took great care to ensure that "nothing … be done which would embarrass Interfaith people or imply that they acknowledged in Christianity something which they did not acknowledge."[93]

In just a decade and a half, Lambeth Palace's attitude towards representative gatherings of the major world religions had shifted dramatically. Where Michael Ramsey had grudgingly accepted multifaith Commonwealth Day services only under royal pressure, Robert Runcie sought to include at his enthronement representatives of non-Christian religious communities. By promoting a theology of religions that valued the major religions of the world as authentic communal responses to the divine, inclusivist missionaries had played a key role in pushing the Church of England towards this new pluralism.

III

Runcie's interest in interfaith relations reached beyond securing the presence of representatives of other faiths at his enthronement. Early in his time as archbishop of Canterbury, he made clear that improving interfaith relations would be a priority in his archepiscopate and that in this respect he hoped to move beyond being "some kind of figurehead … merely having his photograph taken from time to time with the Chief Rabbi!"[94] Runcie's vision of a religiously pluralistic society was grounded solidly in a conception of religions as communal phenomena, characterized by clear boundaries and leadership. Runcie argued that the "categories of analysis set by secular sociology, especially the notion of the 'privatization of religion,'" failed to grasp the true nature of religion as a social phenomenon: "Religion is never simply a private activity. The root meaning of the word itself lies in the concept of binding together." In this vein, Runcie endorsed the vision of a religiously informed public sphere outlined by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, suggesting, "It is *as communities* we have much to offer our world in the moral enterprise. … So, as we work together, let us do so as communities of faith."[95]

Runcie's successor at Lambeth Palace embraced a similar vision of communal pluralism. Early in his time at Lambeth Palace, George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury from 1991 to 2002, met with non-Christian religious leaders to learn "of the matters which are of most concern to your faith communities." Carey admitted to his guests that the major Christian denominations were embarking on a "Decade of Evangelism" but assured them that this project was "not an assault by the churches on the other faith communities in this country." Instead, he expressed hope that "we shall be allies in standing up for the integrity of each other's faith traditions." Carey reiterated this sentiment at an address marking the tenth anniversary of the Inter Faith

---

[92] Peter Schneider to Richard Chartres, 18 March 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 36–38, Lambeth Palace Library.

[93] 13 March 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fol. 32, Lambeth Palace Library.

[94] Kenneth Cracknell to David Young, 7 August 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 84–85, Lambeth Palace Library.

[95] Runcie, "Archbishop's Address," 6–7.

Network, warning against versions of interfaith dialogue that focused on finding "some form of religious Lowest Common Denominator" as likely to "result in a profound loss of integrity for those involved." Like Runcie, and later Rowan Williams, Carey embraced the conception of the Church of England as a mediator between religious communities and the state.[96]

But for all the apparent goodwill that developed among the leaders of Britain's religious communities, the limitations and exclusions of this new Elizabethan settlement would become increasingly apparent as time passed. Communal pluralism came under strain both for its pluralistic nature and for its emphasis on religion as a communal phenomenon. As Prince Charles and Rowan Williams discovered, any suggestions that the constitutional position of the Church of England vis-à-vis other religions be modified were bound to spark discontent. Charles's 1994 expression of a preference for his future role as monarch to be "Defender of Faith, not the Faith" was derided as both naïve and a threat to the Christian character of the nation. Similarly, Rowan Williams's 2008 suggestion that the recognition of sharia law within the British legal system was unavoidable met a storm of protest.[97]

The communalist perspective of Church of England leaders was also shown to be inadequate to the complexities of Britain's shifting religious landscape. In its emphasis on the integrity of religious communities and traditions, communal pluralism was predicated on the assumption that Britain's non-Christian religious communities were homogeneous and hierarchical, with leaders that senior Anglicans could engage with in a "representative" fashion. This assumption proved dubious in two ways. First, Britain's growing non-Christian religious communities were, in fact, riven by factionalism. As early as 1969, for instance, the archbishops of Canterbury and York were forced to consult the Community Relations Commission to determine which group of Sikhs deserved their acknowledgment.[98] A similar problem emerged with Runcie's enthronement in 1980. The initial plan to invite formal representatives of Britain's non-Christian faith communities foundered on the "fragmented state" of Britain's Muslim community, with no single figure likely to satisfy the different sections of the community.[99]

Second, communal leaders proved unable to represent the beliefs and practices of all of their apparent followers. When, for example, the religious leaders of Bradford issued a joint statement condemning the death threats made against Salman Rushdie in the wake of the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, a local Anglican community-relations officer admitted that not all Muslims could or would agree to the sentiments

[96] George Carey, speech, 10 June 1991, Carey/SPEECH/563, Lambeth Palace Library; George Carey, speech, 30 November 1997, Carey/SPEECH/565, Lambeth Palace Library; George Carey, "The Challenge of Pluralism to Religion and the Role of Leadership within Religions," 4 February 1994, 5, Carey/SPEECH/1005, Lambeth Palace Library.

[97] Rowan Williams, "Civil and Religious Law in England: A Religious Perspective," 7 February 2008, http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective; Brown and Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was*, 174–77.

[98] Hugh Whitworth to David Blunt, 10 October 1969, Ramsey 169, fol. 242, Lambeth Palace Library. On factions among British Sikhs, see Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* (London, 2006), 30–31, 74–76, 81–86.

[99] Richard Chartres to Robert Runcie, "Note to the Archbishop from RJCC," 14 March 1980, Runcie/MAIN/1980/102, fols. 33–34, Lambeth Palace Library.

expressed in the statement.[100] This disjuncture between the positions of religious individuals and the leaders of their putative communities also extended to Christianity and Judaism. Two court cases from the early twenty-first century—*Eweida v. British Airways* and *R(E) v. Governing Body of JFS*—are emblematic. In both cases, religious individuals sought protection under the law on the basis of their personal beliefs and practices, only to have their claims rejected as insufficiently grounded in communal norms. In contrast to the individualist conception of religion enshrined in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, British jurisprudence has tended to privilege religious beliefs and practices as articulated by communal leaders.[101]

Far from being a matter solely of interest to philosophers of religion, then, the question of whether religion is best understood as an individual or as a collective phenomenon had concrete repercussions, both for the legal standing offered to religious organizations and individuals and for individuals' relationships with their co-religionists. If anything, the potential disjuncture between individualist and communal conceptions of religion has only become more salient in recent decades. As sociologists such as Robert Bellah, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead have shown, it is increasingly common for people to identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" and to prefer their relationships with the divine and the supernatural to be individual rather than institutional.[102] Even as the Church of England has shored up its institutional position through the framework of communal pluralism, it has in the process grown more distant from popular understandings of spirituality.

---

[100] "Inter-Faith Attack on Death Threat," *Church Times*, 10 March 1989, 1, 24.

[101] Lawrence Early, Eweida and Others v. The United Kingdom (European Court of Human Rights, 15 January 2013); Nicholas Phillips, R (E) v. Governing Body of JFS, No. 15 (United Kingdom Supreme Court, 16 December 2009).

[102] Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985); Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Tradition: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford, 2005).