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‘True democratic sympathy’: Charles Stubbs, Christian socialism and English labour, 1863-1912

‘A man of no common order’

> It is all very well for you to speak of the Labour leaders and the Trade agitators, and the Socialists, and the anarchists, as the ‘dangerous classes.’ No! it is *you* who are the dangerous classes – if your superfluities and luxuries tempt the passions of the destitute; if your opulence, instead of being a grand means, a solemn trust, a grave responsibility, is merely a source of sensual indulgence and vain worthlessness; if but a mere fraction of your accumulated goods is given to the perishing; if your extravagances are a challenge to the covetous, your ostentation a temptation and an evil to the envious, if your hand as an employer lies heavy on those whom you employ – then, I say, it is you, and not the Socialists, who are ‘the subverters of society and the torch-bearers of revolution’.
> Charles Stubbs, ‘The sins of usury’, *Christ and economics: in the light of the Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1894), 167

Defending private property, on the grounds that it was contingent upon the fulfilment of public responsibilities, was common in the nineteenth-century. However Charles Stubbs, rector of Holy Trinity, Wavertree, was unusually robust in this sermon to a congregation mainly of ‘prominent Liverpool citizens and businessmen’ in 1892. The series of sermons from which the quotation is taken was said to have ‘created a sensation’.[1]

Unless otherwise stated, the author of all works cited is Charles William Stubbs.

[1] C[ornwall] R[ecord] O[ffice], Stubbs Papers, 9030/3, press cutting, 29 June 1901.

Stubbs' refusal to enter an apologia for property, beyond the responsibility conferred on owners to use it to diminish inequality, anticipated the influential collection *Property: its Duties and Rights* (1913), particularly the distinction between property for 'use' and property for 'power', notably made by the liberal theorist and sociologist L. T. Hobhouse.[2] For Stubbs Jesus Christ was the 'Divine comrade' or 'Divine Communist'.[3] Neither description was a throw-away remark and neither impeded his promotion. Gladstone appointed him Dean of Ely Cathedral in 1894, and another Liberal Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, appointed him Bishop of Truro in 1906. Stubbs held that post until he died in 1912. This article analyses the thought of an energetic radical, whom contemporaries regarded as an important Christian socialist; and it particularly considers Stubbs' significance for the labour movement.

A grocer's son, Charles Stubbs was born in Liverpool in 1845. Like his near-contemporary Charles Booth, he was educated at the city's Royal Institution School. On graduating from Cambridge he was ordained and from 1863 served as curate at St Mary's church in Sheffield's Bramall Lane. His arrival in this exclusively working-class parish coincided with deepening controversy around the 'Sheffield outrages' (sabotage of tools and workshops by trade unionists in the edge tool trades, directed at non-union members). The experience convinced him that trade unions should be respected and encouraged, not tolerated or suppressed. He was sympathetic even to those activists who used sabotage. In 1890 he recollected

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[2] L. T. Hobhouse, 'The historical evolution of property, in fact and in idea', in *Property, Its duties and Rights: Historically, Philosophically and Religiously Regarded. Essays by Various Writers, with an Introduction by the Bishop of Oxford* (London, 1913), 3-31.

[3] 'The imperial Christ & His democratic creed', reprinted in *Eastern Weekly Leader* 27 October 1894, 12; *Village Politics: Addresses and Sermons on the Labour Question* (London, 1878), 116.

teaching an evening class and remarking that such actions against a fellow worker were 'unmanly'. A workman burst out: 'Unmonly! What dost a' mean? We wants to make 'im a man.' This caused Stubbs to reflect on,

> the old-fashioned Manchester school of competition and its devil-take-the-hindmost theory of industrial organisation … From the point of view of Christian ethics, and its economic maxim, 'Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's wealth', is there not a great deal also to be said for that spirit of loyalty to his class and subordination of individual to social duty, which certainly is implied in such a speech as that of my young Sheffield knife-grinder?[4]

If Stubbs had reached that view in 1863 rather than in retrospect, then his generosity of spirit towards the Sheffield trades was highly distinctive. Churchmen of all denominations at the time were deeply uncomfortable about restrictive practices, while the outrages themselves provoked universal condemnation.[5] Trades unionism, Stubbs later elaborated, might 'be irritating to those who inherit moods of feudal haughtiness … [but] the postponement of the interest of an individual to the interest of the class to which he belongs is a nobler, a more Christian thing than the desire to drive a large trade, or to scheme for personal enrichment'.[6]

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[4] Paper to the 1890 Church Congress at Hull, 'The church and labour movements', in *Christ and Economics: in the Light of the Sermon on the Mount* (London, 1894), 249.

[5] Kenneth D. Brown, 'Nonconformity and trade unionism: the Sheffield outrages of 1866', in Eugenio Biagini and Alastair J. Reid (eds), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), 86-105 (p. 98).

[6] 'A social creed' in H. W. Freeman (ed.), *Charles W. Stubbs, Bishop of Truro, 1906-1912: Some Sermons, Speeches and Pastoral Letters* (London, 1915), 181.

In 1871 Stubbs moved to the rural parish of Granborough, Buckinghamshire. It was no grand living: his immediate neighbours were a widowed lacemaker and the parish rat catcher. Stubbs estimated 70% of the parish were paupers.[7] It was here that he met Joseph Arch, leader of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, of which Stubbs became an eloquent supporter. In 1884 he was transferred to Stokenham, a mixed farming and fishing parish in south Devon. The living was a Crown appointment and the government apparently calculated Stubbs would bolster Liberalism in the county among the newly enfranchised rural working class. It was from here that he moved to Wavertree in 1888.

When Stubbs was appointed to Wavertree the *Liverpool Mercury* commented that 'he is a man of no common order'.[8] One reason for this is evident in evident in titles of some of his twenty-four books: *Village Politics, Addresses and Sermons on the Labour Question; The Land and the Labourers* (which went through five editions, 1885-1904); *Christ and Economics; Christ and Democracy*; and *A Creed for Christian Socialists* (part of a series edited by the American socialist Edward Bellamy). He was an indefatigable public speaker, preached regularly beyond his own pulpit and also lectured widely both in Britain (for example to the Ancoats Brotherhood, Glasgow's Ruskin Society, Northampton Secular Society and numerous working men's clubs and friendly societies) and abroad (including at the 1899 Hague Peace Congress and Harvard University).

Agrarian and Rural Reform

[7] *The Mythe of Life: Four Sermons with an Introduction on the Social Mission of the Church* (London, 1880), 14.

[8] *Liverpool Mercury* 16 January 1888.

> Dedicated to the farm labourers of England in sincere sympathy with their struggle towards citizenship through self-reliance and association'.
> Charles Stubbs, *Village Politics: Addresses and Sermons on the Labour Question* (1878), dedication

Neither Stubbs' theology nor his politics have commanded much attention from posterity.[9] Though included among 'the leading figures in the Christian Socialist movement' by an early historian, he was (as we shall see) theologically unsympathetic to what is generally seen as the mainstream of Christian socialism.[10] Politically he has been noted primarily as a land reformer. He was one of the earliest members of the British political establishment to defend any aspect of the Chartist Land Plan from its legion of critics. In the mid-1840s, tens of thousands of Chartists, frustrated by failure to secure parliamentary reform, focussed their hopes and savings on a scheme to relocate urban workers on four-acre smallholdings. Only 220 families were ever located and the scheme rapidly slid into humiliating decline, bankruptcy and the critical scrutiny of a parliamentary enquiry.

However in an appendix, based partly on personal knowledge and on sympathetic reportage in the *Labourers' Union Chronicle* (the newspaper of Arch's union), Stubbs claimed that the once-

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[9] Peter d'Alroy Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914* (Princeton, 1968), 133-36; Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (Philadelphia, 1996), 80; Malcolm Chase, ' "Wholesome object lessons": The Chartist Land Plan in Retrospect', *English Historical Review* 118 (February 2003), 59-85 (pp. 68, 73); Mark Freeman, *Social Investigation and Rural England, 1870-1914* (Ipswich, 2003), 68-70, 91, 112; François Poirier, 'Volcano at rest: Liverpool, 1890-1910', in S. Finding *et al* (eds), *Keeping the Lid on: Urban Eruptions and Social Control since the 19th Century* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), 60-61.

[10] Stephen Mayor, *The Churches and the Labour Movement* (London, 1967), 188.

godless Chartist estate near Minster Lovell (Oxfordshire) had been transformed. As recently as the 1870s, the colony 'had a bad name, and was reported, probably incorrectly, as not safe for passing through at night'. All this had changed, mainly because allottees were now skilled agricultural workers cultivating land that was divided into larger units than the original four-acre parcels (which were an unsuitable size for smallholding due to the stiff clay of local soil).[11]

The 1879-82 Royal Commission on Agriculture having taken a keenly critical interest in these Chartist colonies, their viability was widely debated. Stubbs' interest in the Land Plan and his conviction that, far from failing dismally, it demonstrated the advantages of smallholder cultivation, have to be seen in this context.[12] His remarks appeared during the flurry of agrarian debate preceding the 1885 general election. *Inter alia* they show why his appointment to a parish within a new and marginal county constituency would have been seen as advantageous to the Liberals. The land question formed a substantial part of the radical liberal platform.[13] Joseph Chamberlain's *Radical Programme*, published four months before the election, committed progressive liberals to land reform and the restoration of a peasant proprietorship.[14] Jesse Collings, responsible for the rural element of the programme, went so far as to argue that 'there should be three or four thousand Great Dodfords in

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[11] 'The Feargus O'Connor Allotments', appendix 2 of *The Land and the Labourers: a Record of Facts and Experiments in Cottage Farming and Co- operative Agriculture* (London, 1884); new edn 1891, 200-206 (quoting 203). Four further editions of this work appeared by 1891. See also *Glebe Allotments and Co-operative Small Farming* (London, 1880), 20.

[12] See also Chase, 'Wholesome object lessons', 69-76.

[13] Patricia Lynch, *The Liberal Party in Rural England, 1885-1910* (Oxford, 2003).

[14] *The Radical Programme: With a Preface by the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain* (London, 1885), 54. See also J. Chamberlain, *A Political Memoir, 1880-92*, ed. C. H. D. Howard (London, 1953), 108-10.

England' – Great Dodford being the most-successful of the Chartist estates.[15]

When Stubbs dared to lecture on allotments and labour issues in Granborough's parish schoolroom, the farmer to whom he let his glebe promptly resigned his tenancy in protest – no mere empty gesture but one meant to injure Stubbs financially.[16] Stubbs' immediate response was to divide the glebe (historically set aside in each parish to support the incumbent) into half-acre allotments for cultivation by farm workers. The gradual divorce of labourers from the soil had led to their pauperization and was 'the parent of some of the most lamentable and mischievous of existing social evils'.[17] Letting his glebe was one way each parson could have an immediate impact on the labouring poor of his parish, Stubbs argued. His initiative was admired: for example Tom Mann's weekly, *Trade Unionist*, defended him from the charge that he unduly profited from it, pointing out that at the inception of the revolt of the field Stubbs had put the farmers out and the labourers in for no more rent. (Thanking Mann and offering support to the *Trade Unionist*, Stubbs ventured the view that he could have let the glebe for significantly more.)[18]

In addition to allotments and smallholdings, Stubbs also advocated the establishment of cottage building societies.[19] Stubbs, however, went much further. The establishment of cottage building societies sounds a rather milk-and-water political objective, but the call was made in the context of a deeper perception of the abject

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[15] *Ipswich Journal* 7 March 1885.

[16] 'The labour question in 1872', *Village Politics*, 55.

[17] *Land and the labourers*, 1-67 (quoting pp. vii and 61); 'The labour question in 1872', *Village Politics*, 55-6.

[18] *Trade Unionist* 11 and 18 July 1891.

[19] *Manchester Guardian* 29 September 1880, quoting speech at Leicester Church Congress.

failure of rural social leadership. 'It was the common burden of all squires', Stubbs told the 1897 Church Congress, 'that good cottages cannot be made to pay':

> [I]f a landlord found it commercially profitable to provide, as part of the necessary working plant of his estate, healthy stables and cowsheds for the proper housing of his farmers' cattle, but commercially unprofitable to provide healthy cottages for the labourers who were necessary to the work of the farm, then they had reached a social state in which the worth and value of a beast was more considered than the worth and value of a man, and it was idle to talk any more of either citizenship or practical religion, for the time had evidently come for revolution.[20]

Stubbs became more outspoken after his appointment to Ely in 1894. It is interesting to compare the passage just quoted with another on workers' housing (ostensibly similar even down to the hidden quotation from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, 'good cottages cannot be made to pay'), in his 1884 book *The Land and the Labourers*.[21] That work was devoid of any mention of revolution; and it posits the implausible notion that landowners might levy higher cottage rents on labourers but reduce farm rents to enable farmers to pay higher wages to the labourers.

'Back to the land' had a wide appeal in radical liberal and Christian socialist circles. Few things were more in need of reform, declared Stubbs from the early 1870s, than English land law. Contrived to perpetuate the power of the landed class rather than the general welfare, land law was the evil to which could be traced

[20] 'Practical religion in village citizenship', paper to the Church Congress, Nottingham, *Manchester Guardian* 2 October 1897.

[21] *Land and the Labourers*, 24-7.

'most of the other evils which are characteristic of our present system of agricultural economy'.[22] In keeping with an agrarian tradition that stretched from Thomas Spence, through the vast majority of Chartists, to the contemporary Land Restoration League, Stubbs rejected land nationalization and instead espoused producer cooperatives, profit sharing and tax reforms that would facilitate a gradual redistribution of the land.

Such policies, while only 'left of centre' on the contemporary political spectrum, placed Stubbs on the extreme wing of the Church of England. For example the *Church Quarterly Review*, a stringent critic of Stubbs' theology, promoted land colonies and rural reconstruction; but the vision of 'back to the land' it articulated centred on the relocation of industry to rural areas, and state-sponsored 'compulsory labour colonies … for the detention of habitual vagrants'. [23] Unlike Stubbs, the *Review* was no friend of agricultural trade unionism either. It informed its readers that Joseph Arch's autobiography was 'full of sheer ignorance', and not worth the money it cost: 'we should not care to keep a copy of it … it presents to our view a hearty hatred of the Church of England'.[24]

The Anglican clergy's antipathy to rural trade unionism has been well-documented.[25] The Victorian church's 'other' Stubbs (William, Bishop of Oxford, 1889-1901) rationalized this antipathy on the grounds that 'to regulate wages is not the proper business of

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[22] 'The Landlord', in *Village Politics*, 160, 167.

[23] For example 'Back to the Land', *Church Quarterly Review* vol. 62, no. 124 (July 1906), 249-70.

[24] *Church Quarterly Review* vol. 46, no. 92 (July 1898), 289, 303.

[25] F. G. Heath, *The English Peasantry* (London, 1874), 235-45; Pamela Horn, *Joseph Arch* (Kineton, 1971), 69, 71-2; Pamela Horn, 'Agricultural trade unionism in Oxfordshire', in J. P. D. Dunbabin (ed.), *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1974), 97, 248; Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (London, 1991), 102-3, 187-8..

the Church of Christ.[26] Only two in any hundred would not take 'what an agricultural labourer characterised to me the other day as "the big folks" side of the question', Charles Stubbs told the 1877 Church Congress, in a speech (and its resultant controversy) that the *English Labourers' Chronicle* covered at length. 'There is much in Trades Unionism', he added, 'that ought to gain the sympathies of a minister of Christ.[27] His sympathies were not limited to rural unionism alone: 'It is something to have obtained so emphatic a commendation of trade unionism as that of Dean Stubbs', one paper commented after an especially forceful speech he made at the 1885 Church Congress.[28] The annual congresses were the closest Victorian Anglicanism came to a general synod. As the only official forum where clergy of all ranks gathered with the laity to discuss issues of the day, they did much to shape the changing character of the Church of England.[29] They were also very much Stubbs' natural habitat.

To Stubbs was due much of the credit for partially reversing Anglican hostility to the labour movement. Introducing Arch's autobiography the Countess of Warwick, cited 'no less an authority than Dean Stubbs' in support of the jaundiced view of the Anglican clergy that suffused Arch's text.[30] That she went on to claim that rural clergy had changed by the time the book appeared (1898) was in substantial part due to Stubbs. His views had evolved rapidly under the influence of farm workers in his Buckinghamshire parish. As recently as 1872 Stubbs had confessed to doubts about trade

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[26] Speech at the annual Church Congress, Bath, 1873, quoted by Heath, *English Peasantry*, 240.

[27] 'The clergy and the agricultural labourers', *English Labourers' Chronicle* 23 June 1877, 8; cf. 'The labour question in 1877', *Village Politics*, 179.

[28] *Speaker* 12 October 1885.

[29] Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 359-64.

[30] Joseph Arch, *The Story of His Life, told by Himself* (London, 1898), xvii, xviii.

unions, preferring agricultural cooperation as the way forward.[31] However in 1874, in a sermon preached during the eastern counties lock-out, Stubbs threw his authority behind collective bargaining, also attacking the employers' refusal to enter arbitration.[32]

The National Agricultural Labourers' Union was, he argued, 'the most important labour movement of modern times'. It fought for the dignity and economic interests of one of the most repressed occupational groups in English society, workers whose condition lay 'at the root of most of the social evils, of town and country alike'. Systemic pauperism and demeaning charity could be eliminated if the Union prospered.[33] While a modern historian has dubbed the Bishop of Manchester the 'clerical champion of the agricultural labourers', the latter's support was largely limited to a single newspaper letter suggesting the farmers of England were mad to oppose their workers.[34] Stubbs' support, on the other hand, was in the first instance practical and then sustained over the remaining decades of his career.

'Maurice up to date'

> Stubbs' teaching may be described as Maurice up to date … adapted to altered circumstances, and informed by the best economic teaching and experience, of the present day.

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[31] 'The labour question in 1872', esp. pp.31-62.

[32] 'A strike for wages', *Village Politics*, 69-81.

[33] Christian Social Union Paper, 'The Church in the villages', reprinted in *Christ and Economics*, p. 278; 'A strike for Wages', *Villages Politics*, 80.

[34] Nigel Scotland, *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field. A Study of the Methodist Contribution to Agricultural Trade Unionism in East Anglia 1872–96* (Gloucester, 1981), 16; *The Times* 2 April 1874.

> Hastings Rashdall, *Economic Review*, vol. 4, no. 2 (April 1894)

As the distinguished idealist philosopher and theologian Hastings Rashdall recognized, Stubbs' thinking cannot be understood except in relation to the pioneering Christian socialist (and founding Principal of the Working Men's College) Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72). Since the second half of the twentieth century, Maurice has been recognized as a profoundly important force in the English theological tradition. However his reputation had suffered somewhat in the decades after his death.[35] For Stubbs, though, Maurice was among the 'latter-day saints of the Church of England' and one of his earliest acts after he was installed at Truro was to commission a stained-glass window of Maurice for the cathedral.[36]

> He taught me what, up to then, I had not learnt from any of my teachers, that the meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation was, in the first place, this: That God has a plan for the world; that order and progress in human civilisation are real.[37]

In 1894 the appointment of 'the Radical Dean … caused some comment', and the *Sunday Magazine* sought out Stubbs for an

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[35] Bernard M. G. Reardon, 'Maurice, (John) Frederick Denison (1805–1872)',*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/18384, accessed 23 July 2016]; J. F. C. Harrison, *A History of the Working Men's College, 1854-1954* (London, 1954), pp. 16-86.

[36] Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 23.

[37] *The Christ of English Poetry, being the Hulsean Lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge, MCMIV-MCMV* (London, 1906), 172; 'The church and socialism', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 23 and 197.

interview. There he ascribed his interest in social issues to his very first meeting with Maurice, 'an epoch in my life', he also recollected.[38] Maurice had asked rhetorically 'whether there shall be a living Politics, grounded on an acknowledgment of a permanent Order, adapting itself to the changing wants of man, or only endless altercations between one political dogma and another'.[39] Stubbs' whole career could be characterized as the pursuit of Maurice's concept of living politics. True theology, the younger man argued, enlarged 'the sphere of the Church, to draw closer her ties with the best secular life of the world, and to widen our conception of Christianity from a mere narrow scheme of personal salvation into a religion of world-wide redemption'.[40] However, it is a measure of his political distinctiveness that Stubbs dedicated an 1880 volume of sermons on the social mission of the Church to the memories of Maurice and Giuseppe Mazzini and contemplated editing a selection of the latter's work as early as 1870. The Italian revolutionary enjoyed considerable popularity among British nonconformists, particularly Unitarians, but Stubbs' enthusiastic endorsement (he also edited a selection of his works) was unusual for a prominent Anglican. However, both shared a profound belief, in Mazzini's words, 'in collective social faith, which creates victory'. 'No Democratic movement – no social transformation', declared Stubbs, would endure if not 'based on Religion; which was not the result of a strong and active common faith'.[41] As we shall see, Mazzini's anti-

[38] *Sunday Magazine*, October 1894, 664; Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 27.

[39] F. D. Maurice, *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation? In a Series of Letters to a Friend* (Cambridge, 1860), 293.

[40] 'The Triumph of the Innocents', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs,* 106.

[41] *The Mythe of Life*; *"God and the People" ... Being selections from the writings of Joseph Mazzini* (London, 1891), p. vii; G. Mazzini (1835), quoted by E. Biagini, 'Mazzini and anticlericalism: the English exile', in C. Bayly and E. Biagini (eds), *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism, 1830-1920* (Oxford, 2008), 148.

papal stance also resonated with Stubbs' suspicion of Tractarian Anglicanism, while both men emphasized that individualism could be ethical only within and alongside the fulfilment of social obligation.

Nor was Stubbs' path from ordination to a bishopric due to Maurice's inspiration alone. He was an early member of the Guild of St Matthew, a small but energetic Anglican society founded by Stuart Headlam in 1877 'to justify God to the people' and promote the study of social issues from a Christian perspective. Under the influence of its secretary Frederick Verinder (also secretary of the English Land Restoration League) the Guild closely aligned itself with support for the land taxation policies of Henry George.[42] Stubbs was not a blinkered supporter of Headlam, whose rigid emphasis upon the sacraments as the path to salvation he did not share. Stubbs was also one of twenty-nine clergy who in 1891 signed a declaration critical of Headlam for seeking to impose on the Guild a manifesto committing it to the transfer of Church of England schools to the publicly funded School Boards. This would constitute, Stubbs believed, an unhelpful retreat by the Church from the politics of the everyday. From the mid-1890s he largely shifted his allegiance to the Christian Social Union. Founded in 1889 by Henry Scott Holland, it had quickly established a numerical ascendancy over the Guild as well as a more overt educational mission. The Union sought to raise awareness of social problems and means to their resolution, rather than pursuing a defined programme as the Guild did through close adherence to the tenets of Henry George.[43] Scepticism about George seems to have been

[42] Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival,* 99-169; Trevor Peacock, 'The Guild of St Matthew', and John Saville, 'Frederick Verinder', in J. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds), *Dictionary of Labour Biography: Volume VIII* (Basingstoke, 1987), 97-103 and 261-5.

[43] Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, 113-17, 180-81.

one issue that caused Stubbs to distance himself from Headlam. He had read *Progress and Poverty* soon after it was published (1880), quoting approvingly (albeit without any direct attribution) George's dictum that 'the association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our time'.[44] At first sight, Stubb's subsequent implicit disavowal of George is surprising. Yet as John Saville sagely observed in an early issue of this journal's precursor, 'the place of Henry George in the history of radicalism and socialism in Britain is usually exaggerated … too often he has been regarded as the most important single cause of the new trend in ideas'.[45] Recent scholarship on the land question no longer foregrounds George; and it has been argued that his enduring influence within Christian socialism was limited to Headlam and his closest followers.[46] As we have seen, Stubbs was advocating land reform soon after he left his Sheffield curacy for rural Buckinghamshire; he seems to have found little in George that was intrinsically novel, while reacting against the American's central proposition that the 'single tax' would resolve all injustice. Inequality of wealth was broader than just in land, offensive though that was. However, rather than resort to state coercion as Georgeite doctrine demanded Stubbs, the anti-authoritarian Mazzinian, appealed to Christian sympathy and self-sacrifice.[47]

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[44] *Christianity and Democracy. Socialism and Social Reform: Two Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1881), 33.

[45] J. Saville, 'Henry George and the British labour movement: a select bibliography with commentary', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 5 (Autumn 1962), 18.

[46] M. Cragoe and P. Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (Basingstoke: 2010); Peter d'A. Jones, 'Henry George and British socialism', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 47:4 (October 1988), 480.

[47] A contrary interpretation, based on a narrow range of Stubbs' work, is offered by Alex Wagner in a piece published by the present-day Georgite Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 'Rescued from obscurity: the impact of Henry George's

In a high-profile 1909 address on 'The Church and Socialism', Stubbs praised the Christian Social Union (but conspicuously not the Guild of St Matthew) as the force that had done most to spread the ideals of Christian socialism.[48] Nevertheless, it has been argued that his appointment to Ely was 'a landmark for the Guild of St Matthew'.[49] Indeed, he was the only Guild member ever to receive preferment. 'An uncompromising Broad Church Christian socialist' he was somewhat exposed in an institution that mustered few radicals among its senior clergy.[50] Acclaiming his appointment, the nonconformist journal, *Independent*, argued Stubbs was closer to Congregationalism than to Anglicanism.[51] In 1878 the possibility of his promotion even to rural dean had been greeted with incredulity by his fellow Christian socialist, Thomas Hughes.[52] Stubbs was offered his bishopric by a Presbyterian Prime Minister intent upon ending a 'prolonged dose of High Churchmen'. The Archbishop of Canterbury seems not to have favoured the move. Stubbs, indeed, was not the first choice. Truro was first offered to the then Bishop of Wakefield, a peer's grandson of whom *The Times* obituary would observe waspishly 'the outside world heard little'.[53] It was not a description that could ever be applied to Stubbs.

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ideas on Christian Socialist movement in England', (URL http://schalkenbach.org/scholars-forum/RSF-Alex-Wagner.html (accessed 2 October 2016), 19-20.

[48] 'The church and socialism', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs,* 198-9.

[49] Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival,* 135.

[50] Edward Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge, 1987), 104.

[51] *Independent*, 1 March 1894, quoted in Mayor, *Churches and the Labour Movement*, 209.

[52] Reviewing *Village Politics* in *The Academy* 19 October 1878.

[53] Bannerman, 13 July 1907, quoted by John Wilson, *The Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London, 1973), 576; Bernard Palmer, *High and Mitred: Prime Ministers as Bishop-makers, 1837-1977* (London, 1992), 151-3; G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (Oxford, 1935), p. 1239; *The Times* 8 January 1940.

'The awful difficulty of being a Bishop & a Liberal',[54] identified by several other bishops in the Edwardian years, was shared by Stubbs. For him the difficulty was compounded by ill-health which dogged the last three years of his life, ironically mitigated by his never attaining the seniority among the bishops needed for a seat in the House of Lords. Potentially difficult also, as far as relations with nonconformists were concerned, was his opposition to the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in England and Wales, a position founded on a belief – cherished more in hope than expectation – in 'the comprehensiveness and catholicity … of our national Church'.[55] It is unlikely that he would have been consecrated a bishop had he not adhered to this view but, as we shall shortly see, a few years earlier he had conceded that disestablishment might be acceptable 'if it were the nation's view'.

However his elevation to a bishopric did not moderate his other opinions. 'Successful Reforms are always in essence Puritan Reforms', he preached in 1908, 'for they are the reforms, not of men whose cry is, "Ours the rights, yours the fault!" but of men who confess "Ours is the fault," and raise the cry of "Duty!"'.[56] During the Lancashire miners' strike of 1887, Stubbs had joined Baptist and Unitarian ministers in Liverpool in calling for a living wage. Thereafter he argued for deep state intervention to establish,

> the "living wage" … [to] allow the worker not only to maintain his own working powers in the highest state of

[54] Graham Neville, *Radical Churchman: Edward Lee Hicks and the New Liberalism* (Oxford, 1998), 202.

[55] *Christus Imperator: A Series of Lecture-Sermons on the Universal Empire of Christianity* (London, 1894), viii. See also his 'In the event of disestablishment, some questions' and 'Disestablishment and disendowment', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs,* 220-31 and 232-37.

[56] 'The church in relation to democracy and business methods' [1908], in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs,* 219.

> efficiency, but also to enable himself and family to live a decent, a joyous, and a reasonable life … the living wage must be the bed-rock of price, the first charge on the product of work.[57]

In March 1912, in the heat of the political crisis caused by the miners' strike, almost Stubbs' last public act was to write to *The Times*, forcefully reiterating this concept of 'a living wage'. It was a more incisive intervention in the dispute than the official 'day of humble prayer and intercession' initiated by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, where the latter declined to enter a definition of living wage beyond 'proper remuneration', balanced by agreement that coalowners were 'entitled … to adequate safeguards for securing a minimum profit' and freedom from 'being perpetually harrassed' by industrial action.[58] It would be a full eighteen years before the idea was taken up more-widely in the Church of England – in very similar language to Stubbs' – in the Archbishops' Committee of Inquiry, *Christianity and Social Problems* in 1918.[59]

In the terminology of the times Charles Stubbs was 'Broad Church' rather than 'Tractarian' or 'ritualist'. He was not therefore situated in the Anglo-Catholic tradition of Christian socialism, epitomized in the twentieth century by Conrad Noel and the Thaxted movement.[60] General histories tend to overlook the vibrancy of Christian socialism within both the Broad Church and

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[57] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 11 May 1914; 'The Social Creed of a Christian Democrat', in Andrew Reid (ed.), *Vox Clamantium: The Gospel of the People* (London: 1894), 355-65 (360).

[58] *The Times* 6 March 1912; *Hull Daily Mail* 18 March 1912 (Cosmo Lang's address at Sheffield Parish Church).

[59] *Christianity and Industrial Problems: the Report of the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry* (London, 1926), 116.

[60] Arthur Binns, 'Beyond the 'Red Vicar': Community and Christian Socialism in Thaxted, Essex, 1910–84', *History Workshop Journal* 75 (Spring 2013), 101-24.

nonconformist traditions, understanding them essentially as exercises in religious individualism, in contrast to Christian socialism. The latter, furthermore, has also typically been portrayed as sentimental, abstruse and as having had limited political traction beyond helping 'to make socialism more respectable'.[61]

Stubbs' Christian socialism

> While individualism is of the very essence of Christianity, individualism to be truly ethical must put itself wholly into social relationship.
> Charles Stubbs, 'The church and socialism', in H. W. Freeman (ed.), *Charles W. Stubbs, Bishop of Truro* (London, 1915)

Convinced that Christian socialism had deviated from the fundamental principles of Maurice, Stubbs rejected the sacramentalism of the Tractarians.[62] 'True religion is that which really helps on human progress', he told a gathering of Cornish friendly societies.[63] He was impatient with Ritualists who were, he argued, of limited significance: little more than two percent of Anglican clergy were 'High Churchmen', he estimated.[64] In

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[61] For example G. C. Binyon, *The Christian Socialist Movement in England* (London, 1931); Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival,* 431-59 (quotations from p. 457); Norman, *Church and Society in England*, 167-86. For an important corrective see D. M. Thompson, 'The Christian Socialist revival in Britain: a reappraisal', in Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew (eds), *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh* (London, 1993), 273-95.

[62] A. V. Woodworth, *Christian Socialism in England* (London, 1903), 111.

[63] E. H. Sedding, *Charles William Stubbs, D.D. Fourth Bishop of Truro* (Plymouth, 1914), 25.

[64] 'Dean Stubbs of England over here', *New York Times* 15 October 1885. See also his criticisms of Tractarianism in *The Christ of English Poetry*, 172, 202.

theological terms, Stubbs preached the *immanence* of Christ, dynamically present in the material world, not remote and transcendent and to be apprehended by the believer solely through individual acts of piety and the sacraments: social redemption and social atonement through and in Christ was also true. This in turn underpinned his confidence that the world was gradually moving towards perfection in its social order, animated by '[f]aith in the Divine Fatherhood of God, and the filial relationship of man to God as the true basis of social order'.[65] Its sacramentalism was also a factor that caused Stubbs to distance himself from the Guild of St Matthew. As he wrote in Scott Holland's journal *Commonwealth*: 'Faith in democracy is but another name for faith in human progress, a conviction little, if at all short of religion itself'.[66]

Simon Green has located this theological emphasis in Christian socialism as emerging in the post-1918 years. Before then even those whom Green terms 'Christian socialist zealots', such as Charles Gore (Bishop of Birmingham from 1905), held back from explicitly affiliating to the Labour Party. To Charles Stubbs arguably belongs, therefore, the credit for forging a position of public support for the labour movement that would subsequently see William Temple (a future archbishop of both York and Canterbury) join the Labour Party in 1918, followed by Gore (by then Bishop of Oxford) the following year, as well as R. H. Tawney's 1921 call to Anglicans to join in the battle against *The Acquisitive Society*.[67]

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[65] *The Christ of English Poetry,* 185, 198.

[66] *Commonwealth* 3 (March 1896), 10.

[67] S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c. 1920-1960* (Cambridge, 2011), 48-9. R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London, 1921), 227-42. Green points out that Temple had declared his loyalty to Labour in 1908 and resigned from the Party in 1921 on his appointment as bishop of Manchester.

Before 1918 Stubbs' position was more typically found within the Free Churches rather than Anglicanism, and not always then: for example the Baptist Charles Spurgeon, arguably the greatest nonconformist preacher of the later nineteenth century, took little interest in collective action, convinced that 'social problems would be resolved only through the instrumentality of personal salvation'.[68] However, within Methodism the idea of the social gospel, 'as sacred and as indispensable as the individual Gospel', gathered momentum from the 1880s. Samuel Keeble, founding editor of the *Methodist Weekly* and the prime mover of the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service, was particularly eloquent:

> An impartial study of the Scriptures reveals the fact that in both Testaments the social Gospel is, if anything, the most prominent, and that to ignore the material and social life of men, and the moral condition of classes, communities and states, is the most utter unfaithfulness to the precepts and teachings of the Word of God.[69]

Keeble, who had been taught by William Lovett, the author of the People's Charter himself, would go on in the 1920s to express admiration for even the most resolute of 'physical-force' Chartists, Joseph Rayner Stephens.[70] Stubbs was more circumspect about the politics of direct action: 'a revolution by force, it is true, can

[68] Brown, 'Nonconformity and trade unionism', 93.

[69] S. E. Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams* (London, 1896), 62-3, cited by Thompson, 'Christian Socialist revival', 294-5.

[70] John Munsey Turner, 'Keeble, Samuel Edward (1853–1946)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/47029, accessed 23 June 2014]; Michael S. Edwards, *Purge This Realm: A Life of Joseph Rayner Stephens* (London, 1994), 168.

sometimes re-make a Government. But it is only a revolution in moral character that can re-make a people'.[71]

Stubbs did not live to witness the post-war years. However the direction he might have travelled is evident in the company that he kept in publishers' catalogues. His *Social Creed for Christians* was published alongside an abridgement of Marx's *Capital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, Proudhon's *What is Property?*, and works by Edward Carpenter, Hyndman, Kropotkin, Tom Mann and William Morris.[72] Recast in 1894 as 'The Social Creed of a Christian Democrat', it appeared in the same collection as the original version of Mann's *Socialist View of Religion and the Churches*.[73] And in Sonnenschein's 'Social Science Series', Stubbs' *The Land and the Labourers* featured alongside work by Belfort Bax, Carpenter, Engels, Thorold Rogers and Sydney Webb.[74]

Stubbs' socialism was transitional: Christian socialism for a Liberal age. He might also be characterized as developing a transitional political theology, at the intersection of Victorian faith and modern secularization. 'In regard to Politics the Church of the Incarnation can appeal to the Democracy as the Religion of the Fishermen who gathered round the Carpenter's Son'.[75] Christ 'the Divine comrade' led Stubbs to seek out interesting company among past social thinkers: the fourteenth-century poet William Langland and his *Vision of Piers Ploughman*, an exemplar (Stubbs thought) of

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[71] 'The church and socialism', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 197.

[72] P. A. Kropotkin, *An Appeal to the Young* (London, '5th Edn', 1890?), Publisher's advertizement inside front and back covers.

[73] Reid (ed.), *Vox Clamantium*; Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann, 1856-1941: The Challenges of Labour* (Oxford, 1991), 94-5.

[74] 'Social Science Series', unpaginated catalogue at rear of Woodworth, *Christian Socialism in England*.

[75] *Christus Imperator*, 13-14.

'social emancipation by revolt'; [76] the radical Shakespeare beloved of the Chartists; and the veteran Owenite socialist E. T. Craig. During the 1830s Craig had led a socialist community at Ralahine, County Clare, and was later involved in the Owenite colony at Manea Fen in Cambridgeshire. Ralahine, argued Stubbs, was among the most 'suggestive and successful' of all nineteenth-century experiments in agricultural cooperation.[77]

'God knows the social errors, the sin of the Church in the immediate past … has been great', Stubbs preached in a sermon before the Mayor and Corporation of Gateshead in 1895.[78] His theology was not superficial in its politicization: the involvement of the Church in politics was both a moral and theological imperative. He excoriated what he termed the 'social agnosticism' of Arthur Balfour, leader of the Conservative parliamentary opposition at the time.[79] In a sermon abbreviated in his notes as 'is Political Economy the modern Anti-Christ?' Stubbs argued for religion to take an expansive role and for the State to control 'private selfishness' and 'competitive anarchy'. The modern economy created wealth but was 'fatal' to man, freedom, security and moral development. John Ruskin and William Morris should displace John Stuart Mill and Richard Cobden; Robert Blatchford and General Booth (founder of the

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[76] 'William Langland. Social emancipation by revolt', in Charles Stubbs (ed.), *God's Englishmen: Lectures on the Prophets and Kings of England* (London, 1887), 82-107.

[77] *Land and the Labourers*, pp. 75-118 (quoting p. 76); John Saville, 'Edward Thomas Craig', in Bellamy and Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography: Volume I* (London, 1972), 89-93. On Ralahine see R. G. Garnett, *Co-operation and the Owenite Socialist Communities in Britain, 1825-45* (Manchester, 1972), 119, 127-8.

[78] CRO, Stubbs Papers, 9030/1, manuscript of 'Democratic Administration', fol. 14v.

[79] *Christ and Economics*, 94.

Salvation Army) should displace the narrow calculations of the Charity Organisation Society.[80]

Prior to the Third Reform Act (1884), Stubbs' directed much energy to extending the suffrage to rural workmen. The case he made was typically combative: it rested not on patronising arguments that farm labourers deserved the vote, or that it would increase their self-respect, but rather on a conviction that the agricultural trades union movement was 'one of the most splendid instances of self-education that the country has ever seen', distinguished by 'sobriety of judgment and law-abiding spirit'.[81] Following the 1884 act, Stubbs detected a corrosive complacency in the Liberal Party and in January 1897 was a key signatory to an open letter from fifteen junior and middle-ranking clergy to the Chief Whip. They sought to shape policy following Rosebery's resignation as the Party's leader, predicting it would die if it remained out of touch with labour and describing its lukewarm attitude to franchise reform and working-class MPs as 'suicidal and unjust'. They were prepared to countenance even disestablishment 'when it is the nation's will', though they plausibly argued that fulfilling this 'remnant of the old Radical policy' would never deliver the reform of those injustices that pressed hardest on workers.[82]

The letter is a good example of Stubbs' engagement with the politics of the everyday, underlining that he saw the coming revolution less in terms of a ground-up political revolt than in a transformation of the nature and purposes of the Christian State. 'The comprehensiveness and catholicity … of our national Church', carried with it the obligation to transform the State so that it in turn would transform the lives of its citizens.[83] Stubbs was therefore

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[80] *Christ and Economics*, 11, 64-71.

[81] *Village Politics*, 190-1.

[82] *The Times* 9 January 1897.

[83] *Christus Imperator*, viii.

indefatigable in support for ameliorative measures such as legislation to eliminate food adulteration and pollution, the provision of open spaces, playing fields, gymnasiums, baths and Sunday opening of public libraries, museums and galleries, as well as self-help initiatives such as allotments, penny savings banks and sick clubs. He anticipated the establishment of parish councils (1894) by setting up 'village parliaments' with a wider remit than Church business in the parishes he served; and he argued rural clergy should fulfil in their parishes the functions that university settlements did in cities, with village schools functioning as museums and art galleries outside school hours.[84]

Stubbs proposed ecclesiastical reforms that extended far beyond the parochial. He called for each diocese to establish 'a representative council of social service, whose first duty it should be to collect adequate data as to the social and economic condition of the rural population'.[85] He was instrumental in securing the agreement of the House of Bishops in the Canterbury Convocation to establishing a 'social service committee' in each diocese, as well as educating the clergy 'in the systematic study of social relations'; and he clearly influenced the 1908 Lambeth Conference report on '*The Moral Witness of the Church'* in relation to democracy, and social and economic questions, obviously so when that report is contrasted to the work of the previous Conference (1897), confined as it was to 'industrial problems'.[86]

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[84] *Christ and Economics,* 289; *Land and the labourers*, 62-3; *The Mythe of Life*, 34-7; *The Church in the Villages: Principles and the Ideal* (1887), quoted in Freeman, *Social Investigation*, p. 69. See also *Village Politics*, 174.

[85] *Manchester Guardian* 2 October 1897.

[86] 'The moral witness of the church' [Truro diocesan conference address, 1907] and 'The church in relation to democracy and business methods', in Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 207-8, 210-11; R. T. Davidson (comp.), *The Five Lambeth Conferences* (London, 1920), 265-71, 409-15.

At the heart of Stubbs' thinking lay the belief that 'it is not the equalization of Capital that is needed, but its moralization'.[87] Moralization was also the keystone to his position on the reward of labour, seen already in his intervention in the 1912 miners strike. Stubbs was 'lucky' (Thomas Hughes half-jokingly observed) not to be German, for the publication of *Village Politics* might have brought him 'serious trouble with Prince Bismarck's police'.[88] In purely political terms his understanding of Christian socialism was decidedly more muscular than that of F. D. Maurice. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels dismissed the concept of Christian socialism as 'but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat'.[89] But for a majority within the established Church it was decidedly heterodox. Commenting upon the Christian Social Union's Lenten sermons for 1894 (to which Stubbs contributed) the *Church Quarterly Review* deplored their 'meddling' in politics which threatened to distract the faithful away 'from sound doctrine' by setting 'class against class' with the clear message 'that all the vices, all the injustice, all the shortcomings were on the side of the wealthy and professional'. It singled Stubbs out for 'forced use of Scripture texts' and 'unnecessary flippancy in speaking of our Lord as "a social emancipator"',

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[87] 'The Social Creed of a Christian Democrat', in Reid (ed.), *Vox Clamantium*, 362. Slightly earlier, in *Christ and Economics*, 118, Stubbs specified 'property' rather than capital.

[88] Reviewing *Village Politics* in *The Academy* 19 October 1878.

[89] K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, edited with an introduction by Gareth Stedman Jones (London, 2002), 247. The editor points out (p. 270) that the original reference was not to the contemporary Christian socialist movement but rather to a broader 'holy' [*heilige*] socialism.

and condemned his concept of a democratic creed as 'an objectionable parody'.[90]

There is a broader significance for the historiography of British radical politics in Stubbs' conceptualization of Christian socialism. 'The decay of Chartism' and Maurice's winding up in 1855 of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations created, it has been argued, a discontinuity in the third quarter of the nineteenth century no less profound than that which disrupted the politics of labour.[91] Over the past quarter of a century, however, the concept of that broader discontinuity has been powerfully questioned. It is pertinent to note in this connection that Gillespie's pioneering history of the labour movement, 1850-1867, (hailed by Biagini and Reid, the key proponents of the 'continuity thesis', as an important and neglected anticipation of their argument) relied heavily on Stubbs's own history of Christian socialism.[92] Though his title mentioned only Kingsley, Stubbs was candid that this was to secure wider attention for the book: Maurice's influence on Christian socialism, he emphasized, was formative and enduring; Kingsley's importance was as the 'popularizer' of Maurice.[93]

In emphasising Maurice's lasting influence, Stubbs was himself stressing the continuity of the movement he founded. Yet the 'continuity thesis' ignores Christian socialism completely, as does Biagini's detailed exegesis of popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone. This thesis stresses the intellectual convergence of nonconformity, Liberalism and trade unionism as central to forging

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[90] Review of *Lombard Street in Lent*, in *Church Quarterly Review* vol. 39, no. 77 (October 1894), 231-4.

[91] Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, 41.

[92] Biagini and Reid (eds), *Currents of Radicalism*, 2, 5; Frances Elma Gillespie, *Labor and Politics in England, 1850-1867* (Durham, N.C., 1927), 32-3, 36.

[93] *Charles Kingsley and the Christian Social Movement* (London, 1899), pp. vi-viii, 11.

popular liberalism; and it positions the Church of England as the entirely negative object of radical hostility and anticlericalism.[94] Working-class support for the Church, in this interpretation, was principally evident in the disruption of disestablishment meetings and the negative correlation of nonconformity and prohibitionism. Furthermore the 'crucial and emblematic position' of anti-clericalism in popular liberal ideology largely explains a situation where, 'by the early 1880s, as the county franchise approached, it seemed that the prospective new electors would do for the Church of England what the urban householders had done for the Church of Ireland in 1869'.[95]

At the risk of stating the obvious, the new rural electorate did no such thing. Of course the politics of education and tithe were absolutely bound-up with the privileges of the Church; but within specifically *English* politics of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, disestablishment was a dog that did not bark. This is not to suggest that Charles Stubbs explains this failure. There were 'not a few' Anglicans, he conceded, who opined that enfranchising rural labourers would 'overturn the Church and the parson', but he thought them misguided: participating in mass meetings in 1876 for the county franchise, Stubbs was struck by the absence of disestablishment rhetoric.[96]

'The Divine Comrade'

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[94] *Currents of Radicalism*, 10, 136, 199, 200: Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), 192-253.

[95] Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 244, 251, 253.

[96] *Village Politics*, 187-92.

> Realise the new law of self-sacrifice enunciated by the Divine Communist of Nazareth … liberty is sacred, and so is association.
> Charles Stubbs, *Village Politics: Addresses and Sermons on the Labour Question* (London, 1878), 116.

Stubbs possibly adopted the idea of the Divine Communist from Heinrich Heine; he appears to have been the first English author to use it.[97] For Stubbs both the theological and imaginative conception of Christ varied from age to age. To modern sensibilities this might appear unremarkable; but for the *Church Quarterly Review* it was evidence he did not believe that 'the personality of Christ rests in His Divine Nature, and is therefore incapable of representation'. For Stubbs, however, Jesus' humanity was part of his very essence: Christ *was* capable of representation. Stubbs responded with high emotion to William Holman Hunt's depiction of Christ in his painting *The Triumph of the Innocents*, a work Ruskin had described as 'the greatest religious picture of our time'. Hunt's 'devout carefulness and pious accuracy' exemplified, claimed Stubbs, 'the reality of that spiritual kingdom of God that underlies all our daily life'.[98]

Jesus was the 'Divine comrade … ever ready … to illuminate … difficult modern problems'.[99] He was also human. 'He came in as a poor man in the outward rank of an artisan. He was a true child of the people'. Religious ministers preached a message essentially concerned 'with another world than this', but they were also

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[97] Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography* (Princeton, 2014), 249.

[98] 'The Triumph of the Innocents' [1891], in *Pro Patria: Sermons on Special Occasions in England and America* (London, 1901), 110-16 (quoting pp. 113-14). And see Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in industrial Britain* (Stanford, Ca, 2012), 134.

[99] *The Christ of English Poetry*, 67; 'The Imperial Christ & His Democratic Creed', *Eastern Weekly Leader* [Norwich] 27 October 1894, 12.

'ordained to carry the message of the righteous government of a present God … to this present world'.[100] A 'too metaphysical Christology' and excessive emphasis on the sacraments alienated working people and Stubbs warmly endorsed the dockers' leader Ben Tillett for rousing a crowd to give three cheers for the socialist 'man from Nazareth'.[101]

Much of this perspective derived from Stubbs' mentor Maurice, but he developed it in a yet-more contentious direction by combining it with 'higher criticism' – the contemporary term for the application of detailed textual and linguistic analysis to the Bible – that Maurice himself had found deeply unsettling. As recently as 1866 the judicial committee of the Privy Council had been required to rule on issues arising from the alleged blasphemy of John Colenso, a colonial bishop who had applied such techniques to the Old Testament. It ruled in Colenso's favour and – gradually and often grudgingly – critical approaches to the Old Testament came to be accepted.[102] On offering Stubbs the Ely deanery Gladstone, for example, described him privately as 'rather strong I am told in the Wellhausen sense but within allowable lines'.[103] (Gladstone was here referring to a German whose Old Testament scholarship was gathering momentum in England.[104])

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[100] *Village Politics*, 9.

[101] *The Christ of English Poetry*, 97; *Pall Mall Gazette* 25 September 1890; *Christ and Economics*, 63.

[102] Peter Hinchliff, 'Colenso, John William (1814–1883)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/5875, accessed 11 July 2016].

[103] Letter to his son-in-law (the Dean of Lincoln), 23 January 1894, quoted in H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries: Volume 13, 1892-96* (Oxford, 1996), 365.

[104] John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in Nineteenth Century England and Germany* (London, 1984), 273-89.

However, within Anglicanism the application of higher criticism to the New Testament was a different matter. In 1905 Stubbs caused a predictable furore when he acted as a leading organizer of a manifesto calling on the Church to embrace higher criticism of the New Testament.[105] Variously deemed as 'calamitous', 'extreme', 'subversive of faith' and obliging its signatories to resign from the Church, the manifesto was neutralized primarily because the Archbishop of Canterbury decided to ignore it. Most nonconformists, meanwhile, were incredulous at the hostility Stubbs and his co-signatories evoked; and a few months later the Wesleyan Methodists' annual conference conspicuously welcomed higher biblical criticism.[106]

Stubbs for his part approvingly quoted Ernest Renan's 1863 *Vie de Jésus* ('poison' according to one of his adversaries), along with the Lutheran theologian Adolf von Harnack, and the combative English biblical critic Edwin Abbott.[107] The latter was another progressive religious thinker with connections to Chartism: his brother-in-law, John Humffreys Parry, had contested Norwich as a Chartist candidate at the 1847 general election and was a close friend of William Lovett.[108] Stubbs also followed Chartist thinking in

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[105] *The Times* 20 April, *Scotsman* 22 April 1905.

[106] *Daily Mail* 21 April 1905; *The Times* 2, 10, 29 May and 1 September 1905.

[107] *The Christ of English Poetry*, 97-100; *The Times* 29 May 1905; Gerald Parsons, 'Biblical criticism in Victorian Britain: from controversy to acceptance', in Gerald Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain, Volume II: Controversies* (Manchester, 1988), 245.

[108] James M. Borg, 'Abbott, Edwin (1808–1882)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/14, accessed 5 July 2016]; Malcolm Chase, '"Labour's candidates": Chartist challenges at the parliamentary polls, 1839-60', *Labour History Review* 74:1 (April 2009), 82.

emphasising the resonance of Shakespeare's moral vision with that of radical Christianity.[109]

Stubbs' *Village Politics* included a sermon on 'Poverty and Religion'. This he concluded with an unattributed quotation from a recent (1872) novel *The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist* by Elizabeth Lynn (estranged wife of the Chartist and republican William Linton):

> The modern Christ would be a politician … He would not content himself with denouncing sin as merely spiritual evil; He would go into its economic causes, and destroy the flower by cutting at the roots – poverty and ignorance.[110]

Stubbs' choice is interesting, as is his decision not to reference his source. This sensational but now forgotten best-seller was a dangerous text for any clergyman to use. Its central figure Davidson, a carpenter, is Jesus Christ returned to Victorian London as a communist. In the novel's closing pages Davidson is kicked to death by Anglican zealots, egged-on by a parson.[111] It is difficult to conceive of a bleaker vision of the second coming.

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[109] 'A thanksgiving for Shakespeare' [Birthday sermon preached at Stratford 23 April 1899], in *Pro Patria*, 59-74; *The Christ of English Poetry*, pp. 123-65; cf Sedding, *Stubbs*, 98-108.

[110] *Village Politics*, 105.

[111] E. Lynn Linton, *The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist*, 6th edn (London, 1874), 81-2, 272-4. See also Nancy Fix Anderson, 'Linton, Elizabeth Lynn (1822–1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/16742, accessed 17 June 2014]. Laurence Gronland, *The Cooperative Commonwealth: an exposition of modern socialism* (London, 1886), 247, mistakenly attributed Linton's words to Stubbs himself.

One implication of the novel is that the earthly kingdom of God was un-realizable in modern urban society. Stubbs may have felt so too. Wavertree was essentially a suburban parish during his incumbency. His sense of purpose wilted somewhat in the face of a fully urbanized society: Chicago, for example, he described as 'a clanking wilderness of endless streets, monotonous, unpicturesque, untidy, dirty, foul'.[112] The challenge of urbanism, however, was more than aesthetic:

> When one reflects as to what the average of mankind is today, what our species, self-regarding by its very essence, is at best; what our actual society, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, is at this latest hour of its development … when we bring ourselves to confess honestly that religious belief, the last reserve force against the pressure of self-interest, has, in relation to business life, with so many of us practically broken down, one may be pardoned if one finds it difficult to be over-sanguine for the future of society.[113]

In contrast to his practical proposals for rural reform, his prescriptions for urban reform were short on specific remedies and rather longer on an idealized vision of how human character would, given time, be reformed through recognition of the immanence of 'the divine comrade' Christ. While his Wavertree sermons recognized the need to coordinate charity and extend organized labour (to female sweated trades, for example), Stubbs preached at greatest length about cathedrals as places for 'great civic acts of worship' and internal reforms such as appointing canons responsible

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[112] CRO, Stubbs Papers, 9030/4, Stubbs to his wife, October 1899.

[113] *Christ and Economics*, 240-1.

for 'Christian Economics and Trade Ethics'.[114] His ideal of ministry remained centred on tradition, so much so that he opposed those who wanted to create a separate parish to serve that part of Wavertree that comprized 'migratory overflow' from Liverpool. Prejudice and 'standoffishness' among his parishioners should be replaced, he argued, by Christian charity expressed through the weekly offertory: this would enable the Church to build better schools and systematically support the needs of the parish's poorer inhabitants. A 'true parish' nurtured mutual responsibility and it required diversity of social class.

It was therefore his rural rather than urban pastorate that marked him out. Stubbs made the very best of a country living, in the sense not only of improving the situation of his parishioners and his personal relationships with them, but also of developing his own career on the basis of these creative engagements. He was the very antithesis to Richard Jeffries' portrait of the parson as no more than a 'cipher … outside the real modern life of the parish', or Augustus Jessopp's yet more cheerless depiction of the country clergyman as 'a man transported' who, from the moment he accepts a rural benefice, 'is a shelved man'.[115] Stubbs struck a raw nerve in the establishment for his single-minded insistence upon the need for each rural church to re-focus its mission to embrace the social and material needs of all its parishioners. If Anglicanism was failing the towns and cities, then some at least of the blame could be laid at the door of rampant urbanization and its attendant social problems for which the Church had never been equipped to deal; but the Church claimed a unique and timeless place in England's countryside, predicated upon fulfilling a social leadership role that

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[114] *For Christ and City! Liverpool Sermons and Addresses* (London, 1890), 1-18, 170-208; *Christ and Economics*, 23-60, 254-7, 274-6.

[115] Richard Jeffries, *Hodge and His Masters*, (London, 1890), 208-9; Augustus Jessopp, *The Trials of a Country Parson* (London, 1890), 85-6.

vindicated the privileges it enjoyed there. If, as Stubbs argued, 'the social mission of Christ's church' was not being applied in England's villages, then this pointed to a systemic failure in Anglicanism, one that threatened the survival of national character as well as the privileges of Establishment; and at the door of the Church must lay the ultimate blame for the economic and social condition of England's villages.[116]

This was a social gospel more closely in accordance with the prevailing Methodist convictions of rural labourers. Stubbs was a key Anglican figure in seeking reconciliation between this constituency and the established church. His appointment to Truro was an important signifier of establishment conciliation, for Cornwall was a county whose Methodist traditions were particularly strong and where the case for the reinstating the see in 1877 had partly been based on its distinctive religious make-up. However, the growth of Ritualism within Anglicanism had eroded the regard Cornish nonconformists had for the Church, while Stubbs' three predecessors themselves had scant regard for Methodism. Stubbs, by contrast, cherished the memory of John Wesley, declined to alter the room in which the latter had once slept in the Truro parsonage that was converted to the bishop's residence, and commissioned a bust of Methodism's founder which he placed in his private chapel.[117]

Conclusion

[116] *Lombard Street in Lent: A Course of Sermons on Social Subjects organized by the London branch of the Christian Social Union* (London, 1894); Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth*, 80; *Christ and Economics*, 267-8.

[117] P. S. Morrish, ''History, Celticism and propaganda in the formation of the diocese of Truro', *Southern History* 5 (1972), 257, 260; Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge, 1995), 33; D. M. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1972), 8-9; Sedding, *Stubbs*, 20, 36.

> It is somewhat difficult to sum up so complex an individuality. He is a man of no common order.
> *Liverpool Mercury*, 16 January 1888.

On his appointment to Truro the *Scotsman* described Charles Stubbs as 'a strong personality about whom a great deal of controversy has raged'.[118] A reputation for theological unorthodoxy clung to him even as a bishop. He remained unorthodox in behaviour too: as a matter of principle when using the railway he always travelled third-class. At Granborough he had taught farm labourers to box. At Truro Stubbs, a heavy smoker even in public, caused a minor sensation when he offered a cigarette to a railwayman while waiting for a train.[119]

Stubbs' vision for the Church avowedly embraced democracy as a central article of faith. However his empathy with labour was most evident in his support for trades unionism; and the occupational groups he knew best (in Sheffield, rural England and Cornwall) were peripheral to the emerging Labour Party. 'I remain a Liberal', he explained shortly before his death. Yet he was no-less emphatic that if socialism was impossible then so was Christianity.[120] His 1909 survey 'The Church and Socialism' conspicuously offered no criticism at all of the ILP, SDF or even the Socialist Party of Great Britain (forerunner of the Communist Party).[121] His socialism rested on his deeply felt repudiation of

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[118] *Scotsman* 10 August 1906.

[119] Sedding, *Stubbs*, 21, 30; *Liverpool Mercury* 16 January 1888.

[120] Sedding, *Stubbs*, 109, 115.

[121] In Freeman (ed.), *Stubbs*, 194-5. He did criticize those whom he characterized as 'the extreme left, the Anarchic Communists, represented by the Socialist-Labour Party and the Industrial Workers of the World – two sinister groups of uncompromising revolutionaries of Scottish-American origin'.

individualism in society no less than religion. In politics *per se* he would be most accurately described as evolutionary. He espoused land tax reform and gradualist redistribution rather than land nationalization, agricultural cooperation and smallholdings rather than collectivization, and a State regulated 'living wage' rather than nationalization of the means of production. The accumulation of gradualist measures accompanied by a realization of Christ's purpose would realize 'the great social reconstruction' to which, he believed the world was moving. 'It is the essence of Christianity to believe in a social millennium. Progress is at the heart of Christ's doctrine'.[122] Stubbs' response to the pessimism that he frankly expressed in reflecting on contemporary society (noted above), was to declare: 'if we be Christians we must not lose heart. The mountains of difficulty are there. We cannot deny it. They do block the way to the promised land. But we walk by faith, not sight'.[123]

Some of these 'mountains of difficulty' were internal to the Church. The polarization of urban parishes into comfortable suburban and more-challenging inner-areas, as encountered by Stubbs in Wavertree, was one issue. Another was the financial state of the Anglican Church, its gravest crisis since the seventeenth century.[124] Clerical incomes were in steep decline over the period of Stubbs' ministry while the number of clergy fell by over five per cent between 1901 and 1911.[125] Tithe revenue especially was falling – the seldom-appreciated obverse to the increasingly contentious

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[122] *Christ and Economics*, 97, 166-7.

[123] *Christ and Economics*, 241.

[124] G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964), 471.

[125] Avner Offer, *Property and Politics, 1870-1914: Landownership, Law, Ideology and Urban Development in England* (Cambridge, 1981), 92-3; cf F. Musgrove, 'Middle-class education and employment in the nineteenth century', *Economic History Review* 12/1 (1959), 99-111.

issue of tithe collection.[126] Stubbs insistence on social mission required each clergyman to seek to influence all aspects of their parishioners' lives, secular as well as spiritual. His practical solution to the decline of clerical incomes and recruitment was to propose grouping contiguous parishes under a single incumbent; but the Church was painfully slow to adopt the idea.[127] Even this, of course, would be merely a partial response to the broader challenge of reversing the Church's diminishing social leadership.

Stubbs projected a different idea of what a churchman should be. He was not unique in this, but he did so consistently and with increasing visibility at a time when Anglicanism faced escalating difficulty adjusting to the rise of organized labour. 'The voice of the Dean of Ely throbbed with that true democratic sympathy which has marked his career all along', commented the *Manchester Guardian* of his 1895 Church Congress speech on trade unionism.[128] Creative theological engagement with labour was Stubbs' career-long preoccupation, and not a turn taken late in his ministry. In this he contrasts with Durham's bishop Brooke Westcott, whose conciliatory intervention in the Durham miners' strike of 1892 was widely admired (and exaggerated in significance).[129]

Stubbs worked on a broader canvas, chronologically and geographically. Nonetheless, controversy had raged widest around his rural mission: it was easier to dismiss as misjudged idealism the vision of Christ and capitalist economics that he expounded at Wavertree, not least because it lacked in specifics. By contrast his

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[126] Tithes were linked to a moving average of grain prices under the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. This price index slumped from 113 in 1875 to 67 in 1901, with only a slight recovery in the pre-war years. See Offer, *Property and Politics*, 92-3.

[127] *Christ and Economics*, 271-7.

[128] *Manchester Guardian* 9 October 1895.

[129] G. F. A. Best, *Bishop Westcott and the Miners* (Cambridge, 1967), 5-22.

patent sincerity and single-minded support for rural labour, at a time when the farm worker had few friends in the religious establishment, found expression in practical support for land and franchise reform, trade unionism, and the promotion of the Church as a resource for the entire community, outwith the religious realm. When Gladstone offered him the Ely deanery, he summarized Stubbs as best 'known perhaps for his early & meritorious association with the movements for allotments'. The Prime Minister had indeed read his *Land and the Labourers*; he had also read (unusually for Gladstone, twice) Stubbs' sermons on the social mission of the Church, *The Mythe of Life* (1880), his *Christianity and Democracy: Socialism and Social Reform* (1881) and *Christianity and Freethought* (1883).[130] However, it was Stubbs the practical rural social reformer who stuck in Gladstone's mind.

When he died in 1912 Stubbs was cremated. It was an unorthodox choice for a senior Anglican at the time and an apprehensive Archbishop of Canterbury sought assurances that cremation was indeed what Stubbs had wished.[131] His modest memorial in Truro Cathedral is inscribed simply 'Think of Living', Stubbs' preferred translation of Goethe's maxim *Gedenke zu leben*.[132] It was an apt summary of a career preaching an egalitarian philosophy of labour and the necessity of engaging in the politics of the everyday, rather than religion as a form of social control or future consolation for privations in the present. Stubbs'

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[130] H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries: Volume* X, *January 1881-June 1883* (Oxford, 1990), 6 and 185-6, and *Volume XI, July 1883-December 1886* (Oxford, 1990), 18, 425, 496.

[131] CRO, Stubbs Papers, 9030/7 – correspondence between H. W. Freeman and Randall Davidson, 6 and 10 May 1912.

[132] Often rendered in English as 'Remember to live'. It was also the title of a poem he wrote shortly before he died, *Cornish Bells and Other Carols and Verses* (Truro, 1910), 103 ('Oh think of living! / Death is not death / But only deeper living').

career alerts us to the complexity of Anglican social politics and provides a window onto (and partial explanation for) the gradual re-positioning of the Church of England into an acceptance – and eventual advocacy – of democracy.