USE OF THESES

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THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER:
ASPECTS OF ANGLICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT IN
ENGLAND, 1918-1945

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This thesis is all my own work.

M. K. Browne

Margaret Kaye Browne
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract (vi)
Abbreviations (viii)
Introduction 1

I THE SHAPE OF THE MOVEMENT
1. The Bishops and Cinderella 14
2. The Frisky Horse 42
3. The Cuckoo in the Sanctuary 71
4. The Ecumenical Movement 87

II THE RECOVERY OF PROPHECY: THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST STAGE
1. The Prophet's Mantle 106
2. The Anatomy of Christian Socialism 118
3. The Hope of the Kingdom 134

III CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY: A THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF SOCIETY
1. From Ethics to Sociology 143
2. The Kingdom of God and the Natural Order 159
3. The Collapse of Idealism 167
4. The Idea of a Christian Social Order 178

IV THE PERSPECTIVE OF CRISIS
1. A Change of Theological Climate 186
2. The Generation Gap 193
3. New Directions 208

V THE MORALIZATION OF INDUSTRY AND PROPERTY
1. The Ethical Outlook of the 1920s 220
2. The Christian Critique of Modern Industry 224
3. The Christian View of Wealth and Property 242
4. An Indifferent Performance 255

VI THE LESSONS OF TWO CRISES
1. 1926: Best Foot Forward 281
2. 1926-31: The Decline of Episcopal Radicalism 329

VII FROM MORALS TO ECONOMICS
2. The Empirical Approach 404
3. Christians in a Post-Christian Society 417

VIII THE RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY
1. The Impact of Oxford 432
2. The Church on the Map 465

Conclusion 498
Appendix. Select Biographical Notes 510
Bibliography 523
ABSTRACT

The theological grounds for Christian concern with the social order were the major preoccupation of Anglican social thinkers in the years between the wars. For most of the period, social theology was world-affirming: it presented society as part of God's creative purpose and man as a social being who should not be treated in isolation from his earthly environment. It was argued that the idea of a Christian social order, once central to the Church's social teaching, had disappeared with the collapse of medieval Christendom. The recovery of that idea, and the formulation of its key principles in terms relevant to modern society, became the self-appointed task of the Christian social movement in the inter-war period.

In the late 1930s, Anglican social theology underwent important changes as a result of the influence of neo-orthodox Protestantism. The emphases of crisis theology - God's otherness and man's sinfulness - called into question the assumptions that the pattern of God's creation was still discernible in the modern world and that man could work towards the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Anglican social theology became increasingly existentialist. Its central theme was the duty of the Christian to obey God's will in the context of everyday life; and the attempt to draw the outlines of a Christian social order was regarded with increasing suspicion.

While earlier social theology had treated the social order as part of the sphere of the Church, crisis theology
set the Church and the world in tension. The full Christian message, it was argued, was not strictly applicable to a world governed by secular assumptions; while the conduct of social and political life belonged properly to the State. The Church's legitimate role in social affairs was therefore limited. In a modern, pluralist society, Christian values could only be implemented when Christians fulfilled the normal duties of citizenship in the light of faith - attempting to translate the Christian law of love into terms of justice, its nearest equivalent in a sinful world. This required a sound knowledge of social and economic realities and a clear understanding of alternative courses of action. Christians who worked, with non-Christians, towards the achievement of justice and truth would help to guide society in a more Christian direction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEGM</td>
<td>Anglican Evangelical Group Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Church Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Chronicle of [Canterbury] Convocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCFCL</td>
<td>Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFC</td>
<td>Christian Frontier Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNL</td>
<td>Christian Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copec</td>
<td>Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Church Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSC</td>
<td>Christian Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSL</td>
<td>Church Socialist League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Christian Social Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federation of British Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>Industrial Christian Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>Independent Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKG</td>
<td>League of the Kingdom of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
<td>Navvy Mission Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCM</td>
<td>Student Christian Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUC</td>
<td>Trades Union Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers' Educational Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>YJC</td>
<td>York Journal of Convocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men's Christian Association</td>
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