

British Religion and the World Wars

British Religion and the World Wars:

*A Subject Bibliography
of Modern Literature*

By

Clive Field

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INTRODUCTION

In Great Britain, as in many other combatant nations, the recent centenary of the First World War and the upcoming eightieth anniversary of the Second World War have provided a strong impetus to academic research into all aspects of those conflicts, and this has been as true of their social, economic, and political dimensions as of their military course. The role of religion (broadly interpreted) during these wars, which has often been ignored in many of the more general British histories, presumably on the grounds that it had become increasingly irrelevant in a secularizing culture, has captured, to a surprising degree, the interest of scholars and writers from a variety of disciplines. This momentum shows little sign of slowing. As yet, however, there has been no systematic bibliographical audit of publications relating to the religious landscape of Britain in the First and Second World Wars. This slim volume is intended as a *vade mecum* for current and future historians, offering a *selective* listing, along subject lines, which will enable them quickly to ascertain much of what has been written to date (mostly to the end of 2018) and, by inference, to identify areas which have been under-researched and which lend themselves to further investigation.

Scope

To contain the book within reasonable bounds, it has been necessary to impose certain limitations on the selection of references. Chronologically, the scope is confined to “modern” literature, loosely defined as appearing within the past half-century or so (from the 1960s to the present), albeit, in the case of the Second World War, some significant publications from the immediate post-war era have been included. Omitted, therefore, are items (often now obsolete, except for reminiscence or historiographical value) on the First World War appearing during the inter-war years, after which the religious output tailed off, until revitalized by, among others, Stuart Mews in his landmark MA and PhD theses (respectively written in 1967 and 1973). Geographically, the focus is on the British Isles, encompassing, for the First World War, England, Wales, Scotland, and an undivided Ireland and, for the Second World War, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (but not the Republic of Ireland). Subject coverage is wide but has been

especially restricted for two topics, pacifism and conscientious objection and post-war remembrance and memorialization, where religious components, explicitly or implicitly, run through an extensive corpus. In terms of format, the emphasis has been upon printed books (specific page ranges being cited, where appropriate), book chapters, journal articles, and research theses. The bibliography thus excludes manuscripts, audio-visual materials, newspaper articles, and internet sites and blogs. Also omitted are dramatic or fictional works, or those designed for a juvenile audience. To be eligible for inclusion, items had to relate, in whole or substantial part, to the actual years of conflict (1914–18 or 1939–45). Although a majority of them are of a secondary nature, many editions of primary resources are also noted.

Other Bibliographies

Readers desirous of extending their bibliographical enquiries can turn to various more general reference works. For the First World War, the principal bibliographies are: Cyril Bentham Falls, *War Books: An Annotated Bibliography of Books about the Great War* (new edition, with additional entries by Robert John Wyatt, London: Greenhill Books, 1989); Alfred George Sidney Enser, *A Subject Bibliography of the First World War: Books in English, 1914–1987* ([second edition], Aldershot: Gower, 1990); and Jason Kovacs and Brian Osborne, *A Bibliography: The Great War (1914–1918)* (Halifax, NS: World Heritage Tourism Research Network, 2014). All three titles are international in coverage, as is the dynamic online bibliography maintained by the International Society for First World War Studies and available on its website. For Britain alone, there is Barry Wintour, *Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918: A Subject Bibliography of Some Selected Aspects* (Englefield Green: Greenengle Publishing, 2014). This can be supplemented, for individuals who served with the British forces, by Tom Donovan, *In Memoriam: A Bibliography of the Personal Memorial Volumes of the Great War, 1914–1918* (Brighton: Tom Donovan Editions, 2015). More global is Edward Lengel, *World War I Memories: An Annotated Bibliography of Personal Accounts Published in English since 1919* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

For the Second World War, there are fewer general bibliographies and none which is particularly up-to-date. The standard volumes are by Alfred George Sidney Enser, *A Subject Bibliography of the Second World War: Books in English, 1939–1974* (London: André Deutsch, 1977) and *A Subject Bibliography of the Second World War and Aftermath: Books in English, 1975–1987* (Aldershot: Gower, 1990). In connection with the American

Committee on the History of the Second World War, Arthur Layton Funk also produced a series of bibliographies of books published between 1966 and 1984. Confined to Britain alone is Antoine Capet, "Guide bibliographique", in *La société anglaise en guerre, septembre 1939–août 1945: actes du colloque organisé à l'université de Rouen, les 13 et 14 décembre 1996*, edited by Jean-Paul Pichardie (Rouen: Centre d'études en littérature et civilisation de langue anglaise, Université de Rouen, 1997, 183–238). For a bibliography of religion on mainland Europe during the war, especially in the occupied territories, see Jan Bank with Lieve Gevers, *Churches and Religion in the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 575–91). On the Holocaust, see Jack R. Fischel and Susan M. Ortmann, *The Holocaust and its Religious Impact: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

Arrangement

So far as possible, subject headings have been standardized between the two sections, for the benefit of readers wishing to follow a theme across both conflicts. A handful of works appear in both sections, mostly with page references specific to each war. Where, in each section, an item is of relevance to more than one heading, it is listed under the primary heading, with a cross-reference added under one or more secondary headings. If the context of any entry seems unclear, a brief explanation has been added at the end, within square brackets. Composite indexes of personal names for authors and subjects are appended, the references therein being to item numbers and not to pages. The alphabetical filing principle throughout is letter-by-letter, rather than word-by-word. Surnames beginning with Mc should be read as Mac. In the main bibliography, multiple works by the same author are listed in ascending date order.

Emerging Themes

It would naturally be impossible to distil the findings of over 1,200 publications into a summative assessment of the impact of the two World Wars on British religion. However, some emerging themes from the literature can be noted.

The traditional interpretation of the First World War was that the Churches had mostly nailed their colours too enthusiastically to the wartime mast and suffered long-term reputational and numerical damage as a consequence. However, recent revisionist scholarship has suggested that the negative effects of the First World War on organized religion chiefly arose,

less from substantial loss of faith, than from the disruption by the war of the Churches' routine work and Sunday observance on the home front. Declines in church membership and attendance were continuations of pre-war trends. Nationalist rhetoric has been shown to be less pervasive than once thought, with an ecclesiastical peace testimony found to extend beyond Quakerism. Roman Catholic attitudes to the war were complicated by papal neutrality and, in Ireland, by Irish republicanism, culminating in the Easter Rising (1916). A more positive view of the wartime performance of the Church of England has been expressed, notably in relation to its chaplains to the armed forces. There is an extensive literature on wartime military chaplaincy more generally, which, albeit on a proxy basis, has often illuminated the religious state of the fighting men. A very large number of the armed services comprised non-Christians, especially Muslim and Sikh imperial troops and British Jews. Wartime anti-Semitism was exacerbated by Germanophobia and Jewish support for the Russian Revolution (1917), while the campaign to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine gained political momentum with the Balfour Declaration (1917). Among the population at large, wartime conditions were accompanied by increased belief in the supernatural and Spiritualism.

Notwithstanding extensive inter-war secularization, religion was a strong undercurrent to Britain's war effort during the Second World War, symbolized in the religious sense of the country's wartime leader, Winston Churchill. Government was not slow to exploit religion's value for propagandist, patriotic, and civilian morale purposes, to the extent of portraying the conflict as a defence of Christian civilization against the ranked forces of totalitarian evil. This position, only partially dented by the Anglo-Soviet Treaty (1942), allying Britain with an atheistical and religiously repressive regime, was largely shared by the Churches and reflected in the new brand of "BBC religion", which voiced a generic, accessible, communal, and practical Christianity. But it did not mean that the Churches were uncritical of the conduct of the war, for example over obliteration bombing of Germany, nor that they did not strive for peace. They also made an important contribution to the development of post-war internationalism, social order (especially through Archbishop William Temple), and educational provision (via the religious clauses of the Education Act 1944). The Moot was an important group of intellectuals thinking about the rebirth of Christendom. On the ground, as in the First World War, the work of the Churches was disrupted by wartime conditions, and they suffered losses in members and attenders. Judaism, in its various facets, dominated the wartime religious agenda and accounts for one-third of the references here. A resurgence of anti-Semitism in Britain was an

undoubted paradox during an anti-Nazi war, and there was a degree of ambivalence in the treatment of Jewish refugees and responses to the Holocaust – on the part of government, Christians, and Anglo-Jewry alike. Government was also preoccupied with the difficulties of administering the British mandate in Palestine, foreshadowing modern Middle East problems.

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A link to a much shorter draft of the section on the First World War was made available to the membership of the Religious Archives Group in February 2017, and several valuable comments were made in response. A draft of the section on the Second World War was circulated to delegates attending the symposium on “British Christianity and the Second World War” at Durham University in September 2017, and numerous suggestions were received. The author is grateful to all those who helped in these ways. But he is especially indebted to Professor Keith Robbins for readily agreeing to review the enlarged, rearranged, and consolidated bibliography and for preventing sundry omissions. Any remaining oversights or errors are the author’s responsibility.

Omissions and New Publications

The author would be pleased to receive notification of any significant omissions and of new publications which might be considered for inclusion in a supplemental bibliography, at some future stage. They should be sent to c.d.field@bham.ac.uk

FIRST WORLD WAR

Overviews

Comparative

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Ireland

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