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## Fundamentalism and Anti-Catholicism in Inter-War English Evangelicalism

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**DRAFT APRIL 2012**

**Fundamentalism and Anti-Catholicism within Interwar English Evangelicalism**

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The historiographical consensus has been that Protestant national identity diminished considerably by the early twentieth century. Hugh McLeod has shown how race came to rival religion in explaining national success, the Great War softened attitudes towards Roman Catholics, and partition in Ireland removed a contributing factor to religious intolerance.<sup>1</sup> In another masterly analysis Matthew Grimley has suggested that while Protestantism continued to influence national culture and identity, it ‘was not, by and large, defined by anti-Catholicism’.<sup>2</sup> Such studies demonstrate persuasively the general trajectory of twentieth century English Protestantism; yet there is some tendency to overlook those who resisted this direction of travel, and particularly the enduring influence of anti-Catholicism within the evangelical constituency.

Anti-ritualism became an ‘all-consuming passion’ for many evangelicals during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> However, although the focus of the historical literature has been Victorian anti-ritualism, anti-Catholicism remained a core

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<sup>1</sup> H. McLeod, ‘Protestantism and British National Identity, 1815-1945’, in P. Van der Veer and H. Lehmann (eds), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, (Princeton, NJ; 1999), 44-70.

<sup>2</sup> M. Grimley, ‘The Religion of Englishness: Puritanism, Providentialism, and “National Character”, 1918–1925’, *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (2007), 891.

<sup>3</sup> James C. Whisenant, *A Fragile Unity: Anti-Ritualism and the Division of Anglican Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Milton Keynes, 2003), p. 1. See also J. Wolffe, ‘Anti-Catholicism and Evangelical Identity in Britain and the United States, 1830-1860’, in D. W. Bebbington, M. A. Noll and G. A. Rawlyk (eds), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York, 1994), 184.

characteristic of evangelicalism during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> The zenith of Tractarianism came after the Great War, as symbolised by the Anglo-Catholic Congresses. For many evangelicals, and also other Protestants, there was particular anxiety over ‘catholicising trends’ such as the ecumenical conversations at Malines from 1921, the controversial Prayer Book revision proposals of 1927-28, and the Oxford Movement centenary in 1933. The intensity of hostility was underlined in 1934, when a request by the Archbishops’ Committee on Evangelism for a ‘Truce of God’ between the parties was flatly rejected. The *Churchman* declared: ‘Evangelical Churchmen have no desire that England should submit to the Pope’.<sup>5</sup> Nonconformists were also vigilant regarding Rome, watchful of inchoate sacramentalism in the form of the Society of Free Catholics and the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship.<sup>6</sup> The religious controversy of the period stimulated powerful synergies of church and chapel anti-Catholicism. Nonconformity was now less sharply opposed to establishment, showing greater willingness to defend the Protestantism of the national Church. During the liturgical controversy of 1927-28 representative bodies of nearly all Nonconformist denominations declared their opposition to revision.<sup>7</sup> Effective action followed, as evangelicals united to twice mobilise the House of Commons to reject the revised liturgy. Despite the wider decline of anti-Catholicism, the Protestant watchdog still had a surprisingly loud bark.

This chapter explores the relationship between evangelicalism, fundamentalism and anti-Catholicism during the interwar period. Clear terms of

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<sup>4</sup> J. Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-28* (Woodbridge, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Notes and Comments’, *Churchman* (January, 1935), 3.

<sup>6</sup> See E. Kaye, ‘Heirs of Richard Baxter? The Society of Free Catholics, 1914–1928’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 256-272; Martin Wellings, ‘Discipline in dispute: the origins and early history of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship’ in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds), *Discipline and Diversity*, Studies in Church History, 43 (Woodbridge: 2007), pp. 388-398.

<sup>7</sup> See Maiden, *National Religion*, ch. 4.

reference on which to base this discussion are required, as the likeness between evangelicalism and fundamentalism has been hotly contested. In religious and political discourses the term ‘fundamentalist’ is now so heavily loaded with meaning that its usage can be controversial and problematic. James Barr and Harriet Harris have equated conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism on the grounds that both are based on biblical foundationalism.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach is avoided for the purposes of this chapter as it appears one-dimensional, focusing on a single characteristic.<sup>9</sup> The chapter also takes seriously William Shepard’s wise dictum that ‘one should not *lightly* exclude from a category such as fundamentalism those who accept the label for themselves nor *lightly* apply it to those who do not.’<sup>10</sup> Rather, in broad agreement with George Marsden’s description of fundamentalists as a ‘militant wing of conservatives’,<sup>11</sup> what follows chiefly identifies as fundamentalist those who have professed to be such, or which have demonstrated a range of clear traits.

In the case of interwar English evangelicalism, however, there are complex ambiguities to be grappled with. The backdrop is the reconfiguration of British evangelicalism in the early twentieth century, with the polarisation of liberal and conservative evangelicals and the acrimonious organisational divisions which accompanied this. For conservatives, there was particular anxiety over higher criticism, liberal theology, Darwinism and Romanism.<sup>12</sup> Some displayed arguably fundamentalistic characteristics, such as conservative views about verbal inspiration,

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<sup>8</sup> James Barr, “‘Fundamentalism’ and Evangelical Scholarship”, *Anvil*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1991), 144; Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford, 1998), 313.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, 313.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1991), 3.

<sup>12</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), ch. 6.

premillennial eschatology or a siege mentality within their denominations.<sup>13</sup> However, while Ian Rennie suggests close parallels between American fundamentalism and conservative evangelicalism, there can be no straightforward comparison.<sup>14</sup> Conservative evangelicals rarely displayed the bellicosity of their American counterparts and their leaders were at pains to distinguish themselves from militancy. Moreover, various organised groups *did* emerge clearly as fundamentalist, often self-identifying as such, and exhibiting greater levels of militancy and doctrinal exclusivity, an attachment to biblical inerrancy and forthright eschatological interpretations. Organised fundamentalism was a feature of British evangelicalism, even if it made few inroads into the movement.<sup>15</sup>

This distinction, but also the blurring, between conservatives and fundamentalists was clearly evident in their expression of anti-Catholicism. This paper will suggest that there were subtle, yet significant, differences in the tone, emphases and actions of conservative and fundamentalist evangelical anti-Catholicism.<sup>16</sup> However, opposition towards Rome also stimulated fundamentalistic characteristics amongst conservative and moderate evangelicals. Furthermore, anti-Catholicism was also a factor in the ambiguous relational dynamics of evangelicalism. Paradoxically, it contributed towards the lack of separatism within British

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Wellings has argued that within Anglicanism, 'Evangelicalism as a movement was basically conservative in this period in a way that the other church parties were not'. See *Evangelicals Embattled: Responses to Evangelicals in the Church of England to Ritualism, Darwinism and Theological Liberalism, 1890-1930* (Milton Keynes, 2003), 319.

<sup>14</sup> Rennie, 'Fundamentalism and the varieties of North American Evangelicalism'.

<sup>15</sup> On British fundamentalism, see I. M. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: a Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism, 1918-1939* (Carlisle, 1999), pp. 142-156; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 217-26; Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the Truth', 417-51; D. W. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in Interwar Britain', in K. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c.1750-c.1950*, Studies in Church History: Subsidia, 7 (Oxford, 1990), 297-326.

<sup>16</sup> On anti-Catholicism and fundamentalism see Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the Truth', 439-40. Note that this chapter does not include liberal evangelicalism in its discussion. Note that liberal evangelicals often had milder attitudes towards ritual, although some were deeply opposed to it – see Maiden, *National Religion*, chs. 2-3.

evangelicalism, providing a significant impulse for denominational loyalty. What follows is divided into three parts. Firstly, the contours of interwar conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism are further explored. Secondly, the chapter assesses the expression of anti-Catholicism amongst fundamentalist groups. Finally, it explores the influence of anti-Catholicism on the ambiguous relationship between evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

### **English Fundamentalism in the 1920s**

Post-World War I conservative evangelicalism has often been portrayed as an uncompromising and intransigent movement.<sup>17</sup> The division in 1910 of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union from the Student Christian Mission was an event epitomising the polarization of the period. Within the wider conservative constituency most claimed a ‘high’ view of the inspiration of scripture;<sup>18</sup> while a pre-millennial eschatology was widely influential.<sup>19</sup> For Anglican Evangelicalism, the assessment of Adrian Hastings is particularly damning: the movement lacked ‘largeness of heart’.<sup>20</sup> The formation of the Bible Churchman’s Missionary Society (BCMS) out of the Church Missionary Society in 1922 highlighted a desire amongst conservatives for specificity on the nature of biblical authority. During the 1920s the evangelical party was also often characterised by defensiveness within a Church which appeared increasingly under the sway of modernists and sacramentalists. Controversy was also felt within Nonconformity, where the Baptists had led the way for division when C. H. Spurgeon left the Baptist Union during the Down Grade

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<sup>17</sup> See for example, Randle Manwaring, *From Controversy to Co-existence: Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1914–1980* (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>18</sup> Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled*, 165-68. Pre-millennialism is the idea that Christ’s millennial reign will be inaugurated at his second coming.

<sup>19</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 192-3.

<sup>20</sup> A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London, 1991), 200.

Controversy of 1887-88. In the following century there was unrest over the appointment of T. R. Glover as vice-president of the Baptist Union in 1923; and some Methodist evangelicals were wary of a softening of Wesleyan theology to pave the way for Methodist reunion.<sup>21</sup>

However, the label 'fundamentalist' can only tenuously be applied to conservative evangelicalism during this period. There was a strong measure of theological and ecclesiastical moderation within the movement. Organisations and conferences such as the Keswick convention and, within Anglicanism, the Islington Clerical Conference and the Conference of Evangelical Churchmen brought together delegates from across the evangelical spectrum. Tellingly, the theme of the Conference of Evangelical Churchmen in 1922 and 1925 was maintaining unity in evangelical diversity.<sup>22</sup> Conservative evangelicals were unpredictable and fluid in their affiliations. Prominent Anglican conservatives, such as Henry Wace, F. J. Chavasse and younger members of the party, such as G. T. Manley, remained in the CMS after 1922, while Sydney Carter, principal of the Bible Churchman's Missionary College, was for a period a member of the liberal Anglican Evangelical Group Movement.<sup>23</sup> Despite the wider polarisation within the movement, the religious taxonomist will find it challenging to locate organisational lines of division within evangelicalism during this period.

Various leading British conservatives such as Anglican clergyman J. Russell Howden; Graham Scroggie, minister of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh; D. M. Macintyre, Principal of the Glasgow Bible Institute, and George Campbell Morgan, minister of Westminster Chapel, were not known for their bellicosity. They were wary

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<sup>21</sup> See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 220; 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1927), 103.

<sup>22</sup> Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled*, 321.

<sup>23</sup> Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled*, 292.

of fundamentalism, refusing to regard certain views as badges of orthodoxy and refraining from encouraging the oppositional mentality that dominated American evangelicalism.<sup>24</sup> Scroggie, a venerated Keswick 'name', could be generous in orthodoxy, arguing at one convention that in order to protect evangelical unity the Apostles' Creed should be accepted as their basis of faith.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, various prominent conservative evangelical theologians, such as W. H. Griffith Thomas, T. C. Hammond and G. T. Manley, fell short of asserting the inerrancy of Scripture.<sup>26</sup> Campbell Morgan, writing in the *British Weekly*, admitted that, while he would probably be 'placed' as a fundamentalist, he was opposed to those who 'separate themselves not only from those who accept the evolutionary theory but from those who deny the literal inerrancy of Scripture.'<sup>27</sup> Interwar conservative evangelicalism cannot easily be subsumed within the label 'fundamentalism'.

However, various organisations *have* persuasively been identified as fundamentalist. The most significant of these were the Bible League, formed in 1892; the Wesley Bible Union, established to protest against the appointment in 1913 of George Jackson to a chair at Didsbury College, Manchester;<sup>28</sup> and the Baptist Bible Union, formed by James Mountain in response to the setting up of the Free Church Federation in 1919, and reconstructed as the Bible Baptist Union in 1923 (later becoming the non-denominational Believer's Bible Union).<sup>29</sup> It appears that the

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<sup>24</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 222; D. M. Thompson, 'George Campbell Morgan', *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, 440-2.

<sup>25</sup> I. M. Randall, 'William Graham Scroggie', Timothy Larsen (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Leicester, 2003), 593-5.

<sup>26</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 189; P. H. Friesen, 'Thomas, W. H. Griffith', Larsen (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, 665-7; D. F. Wright, 'Soundings in the Doctrine of Scripture in British Evangelicalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 31, 87-106.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in 'Notes', *The Fundamentalist* (August 1928), 180. From the *British Weekly*.

<sup>28</sup> The WBU became the British Bible Union in 1932. See above, chapter 5.

<sup>29</sup> On these groups see, see Martin Wellings, 'The Wesley Bible Union', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. 54 (2002), 158-63; Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the Truth', 421-2;

memberships of these organisations remained low and funds were lacking. By its end in 1928 the Believer's Bible Union was particularly small, closing with a mere 130 subscribers to its magazine.<sup>30</sup> The Brethren, Strict Baptists and Fellowship of Evangelical Churchmen were separatist groups, and there were fundamentalist strands within the Advent Testimony Movement and the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society. Alongside these bodies were single-issue Protestant organisations such as the Protestant Truth Society and the Church Association, whose preoccupation was opposing Catholicism but which had significant fundamentalist dimensions. Such organisations formed a larger unofficial network which saw the exchange of speakers and provided mutual support.

These groups were often willing to accept the label 'fundamentalist' (the Wesley Bible Union changed the name of its journal to *The Fundamentalist* in 1927) and some identified with a wider transatlantic movement. The organ of the Bible Baptist Union, the *Bible Call*, watched developments in North America keenly, reporting in 1925 on the 'valiant onslaught of the American Fundamentalists' and praying for an "epidemic of fanaticism" in their own nation.<sup>31</sup> 'We rejoice to learn of the backbone of our American brethren', it told readers, 'and we heartily wish that more Evangelicals on this side of the water would rally to the standard'.<sup>32</sup> Such groups were often unfazed by accusations ignorance and extremism, determined to uphold their banner of biblical Christianity.

English fundamentalism was particularly marked by the militancy of its response to religious and secular developments, an ideological commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and a confident espousal of pre-millennialism. A

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Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism'.

<sup>30</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 224.

<sup>31</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (June 1925), 84.

<sup>32</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (Feb 1925), 18.

fundamentalist cartoon from 1927 shows a soldier, spear in hand, guarding a pulpit, with a caption inspired by a Sankey gospel song reading ‘Hold the fort, I am coming’.<sup>33</sup> The sketch illustrates the militant and defensive stance of English fundamentalists, who perceived themselves as countering threats to both their churches and nation. ‘The most prominent contingents in the host of Anti-Christ’, warned the president of the Wesleyan Bible Union, were ‘Romanism; Mammonism....“The Devil’s mission of amusements”; the delusion of Evolution and the kindred speculation of Anti-Christian science; the Guess-Criticism of the Bible; and the manifold speculations of vain philosophy’. ‘All these forces’, he continued, ‘are co-conspirators for the overthrow of Christianity’.<sup>34</sup> The Antichrists of a rationalistic, Romanising and jazz-dancing age were invariably named and demonised under the blanket label ‘modernism’. The rhetoric of the movement was often nostalgic, as demonstrated in one poem:

Oh! how we long for the good old days  
With the old-fashioned people, and their old-fashioned ways  
With the old-fashioned Bible, loved from cover through to cover  
Where eternal life was found, and no fault they could discover<sup>35</sup>

English fundamentalists often presented themselves as traditionalists, standing against a tide of modernism and rationalism. The irony, of course, is that their most fiercely protected and deeply cherished ideas, pre-millennialism and inerrancy, had debatable pedigree in the Christian tradition.

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<sup>33</sup> A. H. Carter, *These Little Ones’, or Modernism the Ruthless Destroyer of Child Faith* (Hounslow, 1927), 10.

<sup>34</sup> ‘United Protestantism’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1923), 103.

<sup>35</sup> ‘The Good Old Days’, *Bible Call* (January – March, 1927), 15.

While many conservative-minded evangelicals felt embattled by the changing intellectual, cultural and social context, it was fundamentalist groups who fought their cause most vigorously. ‘Controversy for faith,’ declared one leader, ‘is not only good, but is one of the best and most essential services which God expects from His children to-day.’<sup>36</sup> The use of militaristic metaphors in their literature is striking. The term ‘soldier saints’ was widely used as a description of true believers.<sup>37</sup> The language of military manoeuvres was scattered through fundamentalist discourse. In his presidential address to the Bible Witness Union in 1927, A. H. Carter called for a ‘united front against the ever advancing forces of Modernism’.<sup>38</sup> The *Bible Call* wrote ‘We ask the pardon of our readers for coming back to the old battle-line. We would much prefer to write something of a constructive and expository nature; but as long as Modernists continue to bring out their erroneous theories, we must combat them with the keen edge of truth.’<sup>39</sup> The fundamentalist armoury was set against theological generalities affecting the denominations. ‘When will the Churches wake up to realise that they are responsible to God for allowing Satan’s infidels to capture their pulpits for their hell-born campaign against God and His Holy Word?’, asked James Mountain.<sup>40</sup> Such fierceness was a hallmark of fundamentalism, often in marked comparison with conservative evangelicalism.

Both inerrancy and pre-millennialism were key ideological factors driving English fundamentalists, who did not hesitate to claim both were signs of orthodoxy. A. H. Carter, for example, employing Benjamin Warfield’s approach, asserted that the puzzles and apparent discrepancies within scripture were largely the result of

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (March, 1925), 356.

<sup>37</sup> See ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (September, 1924), 206; ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (January, 1925), 305.

<sup>38</sup> Carter, *Modernism*, 6.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (June 1925), 82.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (January – March, 1927), 2.

copyist's errors.<sup>41</sup> Many subscribed to the idea of the Holy Spirit's verbal inspiration of the original text.<sup>42</sup> The clear view of the Wesley Bible Union was that on matters of history, prophecy and morality the scriptures were literally inerrant, and its journal rebuked conservative evangelicals for suggesting otherwise.<sup>43</sup> The dominant eschatology of the movement allowed an interpretation of present threats that fostered a sense of common purpose and embattled unity. The forces of modernism were understood to be diabolically controlled, part of a final apostasy:

In plain language, Liberalism, Modernism, Sceptical Criticism and all other apostate movements are simply phases of one gigantic revolt of the carnal mind against God and His Christ. They are all the precursors of the anti-Christ, leading up to the last struggle of the hosts of darkness, in their impotent fight against our soon-coming and victorious Saviour, who shall destroy anti-Christ with the Spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming.<sup>44</sup>

Such eschatological interpretation contributed to an essential Manichean-like dualism within English fundamentalism.

However, while sections of English fundamentalism had a tendency towards exclusivity *within* their denominations, separatist courtroom battles were not characteristic of the movement as they were, for example, amongst Canadian Baptists

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<sup>41</sup> A. H. Carter, *God's Word Supreme* (London, 1914), 112-13.

<sup>42</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (May 1925), 68. Not all subscribed to the view of mechanical inspiration – it was rejected, for example, by Harold C. Morton of the Wesley Bible Union. See Bebbington, *Martyrs for the Truth*, 429.

<sup>43</sup> 'Notes', *The Fundamentalist* (April 1928), 181.

<sup>44</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (May 1925), 51.

during this period.<sup>45</sup> In the case of the Wesley Bible Union, there was a commitment to the Wesleyan Connexion, with the aim being to protect and maintain doctrinal standards 'by constitutional methods'.<sup>46</sup> When an Irish Evangelical Church was formed out of the Irish Presbyterian Church in 1928, *The Fundamentalist* offered its support, but also declared:

On the other hand there are those in the Churches who say "We shall not retire: we are the people who have the best right inside: and we stay in TO FIGHT!" We do not doubt that our Irish brethren were rightly guided, but in many cases in Britain we are confident the better course is for the present to stay in – but to stay in for one reason only, viz. to fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup>

T. Dinsdale Young, vice-president of the Wesley Bible Union, said in his autobiography: 'I cannot but assert that the average Christian can best serve God and his age by association with a denomination.'<sup>48</sup> It was widely argued that fundamentalists had a responsibility to shepherd those who might otherwise be led astray.<sup>49</sup> Although English fundamentalists praised the separatist activities of their North American counterparts, they chose fight over flight in response to denominational heresies. Overall, however, while anti-separatism often complicates the identification of fundamentalists in the English context, as this section has argued, there was a line, however blurred, between them and more conservative evangelicals.

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<sup>45</sup> See George A. Rawlyk, *Champions for the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and the Maritime Baptists* (Montreal, 1990), 59-60.

<sup>46</sup> See Wellings, 'Wesley Bible Union', 163.

<sup>47</sup> 'Notes', *The Fundamentalist* (September 1928), 203.

<sup>48</sup> T. Dinsdale Young, *Stars in Retrospect* (London, 1920), 129.

<sup>49</sup> 'Notes', *The Fundamentalist* (September, 1928), 201.

### **Anti-Catholicism and fundamentalism**

In 1937 Basil F. C. Atkinson, the Cambridge librarian and a council member of the Protestant Truth Society, asserted that Christianity was faced with ‘two powerful resolute foes, which hate each other, but are united in their opposition to the gospel’. These were ‘rationalism or atheism’ and the ‘attempt to revive the medieval or Romish religion’.<sup>50</sup> Alongside modernism, Catholicism was widely perceived as the chief threat of the ‘anti-Christian conspiracy’ threatening the nation.<sup>51</sup> Both Anglicans and Nonconformists were preoccupied with the controversies over the ecumenical negotiations at Malines and Prayer Book revision. The *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* made clear its interest in the Anglican situation, ‘For the Established Church is our Church, the Church established by our own native land: and with immense fervour we pray for the victory of Truth and Righteousness.’<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Free Church fundamentalists kept a close watch on the growing influence of catholic ‘heresies’ within Nonconformity, with the Revd Dr W. E. Orchard, a Congregationalist, and the Revd W. G. Peck, a United Methodist, seen as notorious ritualisers.<sup>53</sup> Well-established networks functioned between fundamentalist organisations and Protestant societies. The anti-Catholic appetite of English fundamentalism was nourished by the Protestant Truth Society. For the *Bible Call*, John Kensit Jnr, the leader of the PTS, was ‘Our devoted brother’,<sup>54</sup> while the Wesley Bible Union, also a member of the United Protestant Council,<sup>55</sup> advertised

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<sup>50</sup> Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Four Centuries of Freedom – And Now?* (London, 1937), 14-16.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (April 1925), 52.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (August, 1924), 185.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (November, 1925), 550.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Editorial Notes’, *Bible Call* (June 1925), 95.

<sup>55</sup> ‘United Protestantism’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1923), 103.

publications by the society in its journal and invited Kensit to speak at the WBU's conference at High Leigh.<sup>56</sup> Daniel Hone, a member of the Union's organising committee from 1916, had co-founded the Protestant Defence Brigade alongside Kensit Jnr's father in the 1890s.<sup>57</sup> What follows assesses the anti-Catholicism which found expression in fundamentalist circles during the interwar period.

### ***Belligerence and militancy***

The perception of the threat of Rome contributed to the militant nature of English fundamentalism and its wider sense of a national crisis. 'I am compelled to admit', wrote one Methodist, 'that our land is practically possessed by Romanism.'<sup>58</sup> In the words of one commentator: 'In a day where Religion is by general consent ebbing away and when multitudes of strange faiths are springing up on every side, Romanism and Rationalism come sweeping again over Britain.'<sup>59</sup> The polemic of the fundamentalist anti-Catholicism was particularly pugnacious. The *Bible Call*, for example, argued that the English had 'no use of the gospel of the apostolic succession of Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, and the *Church Times*.'<sup>60</sup> The language of the Protestant Truth Society was particularly unambiguous: 'The serried ranks of Romanism, whether Italian or Anglo, must be driven back in the name of the Lord of Hosts'.<sup>61</sup> Generally speaking, the level of bellicosity exceeded that of conservative evangelicalism.

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<sup>56</sup> 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (August, 1925), 472; 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (January, 1927), 5; 'The Summer Bible Conference at High Leigh' *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1923), 101.

<sup>57</sup> Wellings, 'Wesley Bible Union', 116.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from W. W. Coleman, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (August, 1923), 190.

<sup>59</sup> 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1927), 101.

<sup>60</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (May 1925), 52.

<sup>61</sup> *Protestant Truth Society Annual Report*, 1935-6, 9.

The catholic threat was often linked with other fundamentalist anxieties. Romanism and modernist rationalism were seen as mutually supportive, weakening the foundations of biblical Christianity. According to the *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union*:

the Modernists play the game of Rome as certainly as do the Romanisers. For to destroy the belief of the people in the trustworthiness of the Bible is to leave them an easy prey to the claims of the Papacy to be the supreme judge on earth and director of the consciences of men, the sole last supreme judge of what is right and wrong.<sup>62</sup>

The influence of liberal Catholicism was further evidence that these threats were co-conspirators. Charles Gore, the liberal Catholic Bishop of Oxford, was frequently targeted, it being difficult to tell where his 'popery ends, and his modernism begins'.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Anglo-Catholicism could be cast as a modernist religious movement, combining, according to Basil Atkinson, 'the rationalist view of the Bible with the Romish view of the church'.<sup>64</sup> However, fundamentalists were flexible in their critique of Anglo-Catholics, as Romanism was also presented as backward-looking, unscientific and irrational.<sup>65</sup> Atkinson also made a point of emphasising the *medieval* nature of Catholic religion, while others warned of the 'Revival of Medieval Fetishism'<sup>66</sup> and the dangers of slipping back to the 'dark ages of Roman error'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (December, 1925), 573.

<sup>63</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (July – September, 1927), 34.

<sup>64</sup> Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Four Centuries of Freedom – And Now?* (London, 1937), 16.

<sup>65</sup> Wellings, *Evangelicalism Embattled*, 48.

<sup>66</sup> 'Straight Talks', *Bible Call* (April – June, 1927), 19.

<sup>67</sup> Atkinson, *Four Centuries of Freedom*, 15. 'Notes', *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (May, 1927), 101.

There was no straightforward relationship between English fundamentalism and anti-modernity.

Fundamentalists often opposed Catholicism so viciously because they associated it with worldly tendencies. In 1931 the Church Association compared the situation for evangelicals to that of the Israelites as they fled from Pharaoh. ‘The Church of God is faced with grave difficulties, not the least of which is the sea of indifference, flanked by the danger of a barren Modernism, while the hosts of worldliness and of a sensuous “Anglo-Catholic” religion seem advancing to overwhelm her.’<sup>68</sup> ‘Aesthetic religion’ and ‘popish mimicry’ had degenerated Christianity from the spiritual to the sensual. By the interwar period it was rare for conservative evangelicals to ridicule Anglo-Catholicism on the grounds of effeminacy,<sup>69</sup> but fundamentalists maintained the old caricatures:

It is sensuous, weakly, sentimental, sloppy and effeminate. It leaves alone the faculties of the personality which are the springs of character, such as the conscience, will, and thinking powers. It appeals to sentimentalists of both sexes. That is the reason why emotional women and girls favour ritualist churches, and why strong, hard-headed thinking men like a virile and thought-provoking preacher of the Puritan brand...<sup>70</sup>

Catholicism was also associated with ‘worldly’ activities such as dancing, drinking, gambling and Sabbath-breaking.<sup>71</sup> Fundamentalist opposition to ‘Rome’ was marked by its level of confrontation and its conflation of sacerdotalism with threats such as modernism and worldliness.

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<sup>68</sup> Church Association, *Annual Report, 1931*, 20-1.

<sup>69</sup> Maiden, *National Religion*, 96.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (June 1925), 84.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (April – June, 1927), 19; ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (July – September, 1927), 35; ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (October – December, 1927), 50.

### ***Pre-millennial convictions***

There was, in the second place, a strong interrelationship between anti-Catholicism and pre-millennial ideology. Fundamentalists, of course, drew on a strong Protestant eschatological tradition of placing Roman Catholicism in the narrative of the Book of Revelation;<sup>72</sup> however, by the interwar period they were the subset of evangelicalism to make the most unambiguous links between Roman Catholicism and biblical prophecy. ‘The revival of Romish power and idolatry’, it was argued, ‘is one of the leading features of Satan’s programme for the last times.’<sup>73</sup> The Protestant Truth Society produced a steady stream of ‘prophetic books’ from the ‘Protestant Historical Standpoint’.<sup>74</sup> Booklets by John Kensit, Baron Porcelli and Albert Close, encouraged such apocalyptic readings of the times and the identification of Rome as the Antichrist and Babylon of biblical prophecy.<sup>75</sup> Contemporary developments were interpreted through the lenses of biblical prophecy, and a particular focus of anxiety was the idea of an axis between Fascism and the Vatican. The Lateran Treaty of 1929, which established the Vatican city-state, was understood as a particularly significant moment. Some interpreted this in the light of Revelation 8, and the ‘union of the civil power with the great apostate Babylon to dominate the world’,<sup>76</sup> while it was also predicted that the Pope would soon obtain a seat on the Council of the League of

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<sup>72</sup> For example, the *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union*, when arguing that supporting Anglican reunion with Rome was ‘aiding and abetting reunion with the Antichrist’, referred to John Wesley’s identification of Rome with the Beast in his *Notes on the New Testament*. See ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (January, 1924), 21.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (May 1925), 52. See also ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (April, 1923), 83-4.

<sup>74</sup> Protestant Truth Society, *Annual Report, 1933-34*, 45.

<sup>75</sup> J. A. Kensit, *The Anti-Christ Identified* (London:, 1937), 20; A. Close, *Rome’s Fight*, 109.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Notes’, *The Fundamentalist* (April 1929), 74.

Nations.<sup>77</sup> Some claimed that the rising Fascist powers of Europe were the ten horns of the Beast in Revelation. ‘Do we not see here a portrait of the Fascist-Clerical Front, or the Holy Roman Empire which is so fast being built up?’ suggested one Protestant Truth Society publication.<sup>78</sup> Pre-millennial convictions were, of course, to be found amongst other evangelicals, but fundamentalists demonstrated greater willingness to categorically identify Rome with characters and events in biblical prophecy. This reflected a greater sense of certainty they were observers to the outplaying of a dramatic eschatology between spiritual light and darkness.

### ***Naming and dramatising the popish enemy***

Thirdly, in contrast to the wider increase in religious tolerance, fundamentalists did not shrink from identifying Catholic threat and conspiracy. Notions of secrecy and conspiracy are a running theme in English anti-Catholicism; however, by the interwar period fundamentalist organisations were the main promulgators of theories of Catholic intrigue. It was widely held that Romanist operatives worked within the Protestant denominations. The Anglo-Catholics aimed to win the national Church for the Vatican, while the ‘nefarious work of unprincipled minions of the Romanist’ was a threat to Nonconformist churches.<sup>79</sup> The hand of Rome - ‘subterranean Papal influence’<sup>80</sup> - was perceived in all areas of British society. The *Bible Call*, for example, warned that, while the latitudinarianism of the age might ridicule the idea of religious persecution returning, the ‘revival of the Inquisition, rack and torture chamber of Rome’ could not be ruled out.<sup>81</sup> It was widely held that the Foreign Office

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<sup>77</sup> Baron Porcelli, ‘Italy and the Papacy’, *Churchman’s Magazine* (February, 1929), 57.

<sup>78</sup> Protestant Truth Society, *The Vatican and Spain* (London, n.d.), 16.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (January, 1926), 3.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (August, 1923), 176.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (January, 1926), 2-3. See also ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (June, 1927), 139.

was under the grip of a Jesuit-controlled fifth column,<sup>82</sup> and that the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press empires were similarly possessed, with three quarters of all editors, sub-editors and reporters Anglo- or Roman Catholic.<sup>83</sup> Rome's dark and manipulative influences seemed to be everywhere.

Theories of Romish political conspiracy were disseminated and given wider currency by the literature of the Protestant Truth Society. Roman Catholic bishops and Jesuits, it was claimed, worked against the national interest during the Great War, doing all they could to 'bring about the downfall of Britain'.<sup>84</sup> Following the secession of the Irish Free State the PTS persisted in identifying Catholic intrigue, asserting that 'Rome victorious in Ireland is the great hope of the Vatican wirepullers'.<sup>85</sup> The rise of Fascism was also presented in conspiratorial terms, with the Pope in alliance with Mussolini and Franco.<sup>86</sup> In an open letter to the Prime Minister after Britain declared war on Germany, John Kensit proposed a purge of Roman Catholics in the Foreign Office, the retaking of Irish ports and the withdrawal of the British envoy to the Vatican.<sup>87</sup> Fundamentalists understood international developments in the anachronistic interpretative framework of Protestant – Catholic conflict.

Alongside this hostility towards the 'other', fundamentalists celebrated their national distinctiveness. British liberty, prosperity and morality were contrasted with Irish slavery, poverty and corruption. John Kensit argued at a Wesley Bible Union meeting that a Protestant only had to look across the Irish Sea to recognise the ravages

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<sup>82</sup> 'Notes', *The Fundamentalist* (May 1928), 107; Protestant Truth Society, *The Vatican Foreign Office and the League* (London, n.d.).

<sup>83</sup> See Close, *Rome's Fight*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Close, *Rome's Fight*, 10.

<sup>85</sup> *Protestant Truth Society and Kensit's Wickliffe Preachers, Annual Report, 1921-2*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Protestant Truth Society, *The Vatican and Spain* (London, n.d.).

<sup>87</sup> J. A. Kensit, *Britain, the Pope and the War: Mr Kensit's Open Letter to the Prime Minister* (1941).

of Romanism.<sup>88</sup> While evangelicals more generally asserted the Protestant religious and constitutional heritage of the nation, fundamentalists were more likely to stress the ethnic dimensions of this particularity. Following a visit to the United States, Arthur H. Carter, organising secretary of the Bible League, argued that the decline of Protestant civilisation was partly attributed to race. There were two kinds of American, he emphasised, those of ‘puritan stock’ and the immigrants.<sup>89</sup> The ethnonationalistic strain was also pronounced in British Israelite ideology – the idea that the British descended from the ten tribes of Israel – found amongst prominent fundamentalists. James Mountain, the leading militant Baptist, identified with the movement, asserting that prophecies concerning Israel were being ‘fulfilled in the Anglo-Saxon race and the world-wide British Empire’.<sup>90</sup> Amongst Wesleyan leaders, T. Dinsdale Young was a British Israelite,<sup>91</sup> and other leaders, such as Harold C. Morton, declared some sympathy for the movement, condemning the ‘baseless attacks’ against it.<sup>92</sup> British Israelitism, while far-fetched for some, harmonised with the sense of Christian patriotism that undergirded fundamentalist anti-Catholicism.

### ***Political activism***

Fourthly, anti-Catholicism found expression in political activism. This, of course, has often been a characteristic of fundamentalism in other contexts, most notoriously the United States during the twentieth century. In Britain, Protestantism and parliamentary politics often intertwined, anti-Catholicism was an important electoral

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<sup>88</sup> ‘The First Conference of the W. B. U.’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (July, 1923), 150. ‘Notes’, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (August, 1923), 176. See also, Avary H. Forbes, *Anglo-Catholic Conspiracy* (London, n. d.), 21-2; J. A. Kensit, *What I saw in Rome*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1924), 56.

<sup>89</sup> Arthur H. Carter, *Modernism: the Peril of Great Britain and America* (London, 1924), 10.

<sup>90</sup> ‘The Crowning Bible Vindication’, *Bible Call* (October – December, 1926), 103.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from C. H. Coates, *Bible Call* (April – June, 1927), 29-30.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Postscript’, *Bible Call* (July – September, 1927), 41.

factor as late as the 1900 general election.<sup>93</sup> The Prayer Book controversy of 1927-28 saw evangelicals of all hues seek to influence the liturgy of the national Church by political means.<sup>94</sup> However, fundamentalist organisations were amongst the most militant campaigners for parliamentary Protestantism. The Wesley Bible Union urged its members to inform MPs that voting for Prayer Book revision would mean losing Methodist votes in the forthcoming general election.<sup>95</sup> In the general elections of 1929 and 1935 the Protestant Truth Society and Church Association sought to influence national politics by encouraging the public to vote along religious lines. Key questions about the constitution, the inspection of convents and the use of public funds for Roman Catholic schools were issued to candidates.<sup>96</sup> In 1929 the Protestant Truth Society used the slogan ‘Whatever your party: VOTE PROTESTANT’,<sup>97</sup> publishing a list of MPs who came down ‘against the interests of the Reformation’ in the debate on Prayer Book revision the previous year.<sup>98</sup> Conservative Central Office addressed Protestant issues in its ‘Questions of Policy’ before the 1929 general election, which included a guarantee that it would not tamper with the Protestant succession.<sup>99</sup> Determination to place Protestantism on the electoral agenda was an important feature of interwar fundamentalism.

### ***Media and propaganda***

Ecclesiastical and political campaigns against Romanism saw single-issue fundamentalist groups exploit a variety of profile-raising mediums and methods. The

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<sup>93</sup> P. Nicholls, *The Khaki and the Confessional: A Study of a Religious Issue at the 1900 General Election in England* (Melbourne, 2000), 312–13.

<sup>94</sup> See Maiden, *National Religion*, chs. 3-6.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Notes’, *The Fundamentalist* (December, 1927), 275.

<sup>96</sup> ‘This General Election’, *Churchman’s Magazine* (December, 1935), 333-5; ‘Protestantism and the General Election’, *Churchman’s Magazine* (March, 1929), 108; Church Association *Annual Report, 1935*, 11; Protestant Truth Society, *Annual Report, 1935-6*, p. 9

<sup>97</sup> ‘Protestantism and the General Election’, *Churchman’s Magazine* (May, 1929), 149.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Protestantism and the General Election’, *Churchman’s Magazine* (March, 1929), 108.

<sup>99</sup> London, National Archives, HO45/15704, 506961/36.

Protestant Truth Society placed strong emphasis on propaganda. Its founder, John Kensit Snr, had by one assessment a 'gift for self-advertisement',<sup>100</sup> and the organisation maintained a prolific publishing press. The propaganda machine of the PTS and Church Association had a significant influence on parliament during the Prayer Book controversy of 1927-28, when the Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, reported that MPs were 'snowed under' by publicity.<sup>101</sup> This aptitude for the dark arts of campaigning was also on display during the 1929 general election, when the Protestant Truth Society published a special, widely-distributed newspaper, the *British Citizen*.<sup>102</sup> Both the PTS and CA used motor caravans, state-of-the-art automated presses and lantern slides to communicate their message.<sup>103</sup> If British fundamentalists were in part struggling against modernity, they did not hesitate to adopt its techniques and technologies.

Overall, with its combination of belligerent militancy, eschatological conviction, conspiratorial anxiety, political assertiveness and propaganda savvy-ness, anti-Catholicism found a distinctive expression within fundamentalist circles during the interwar period.

### **Evangelicalism, fundamentalism and anti-Catholicism**

This characterisation of fundamentalist anti-Catholicism supports the notion of a distinction between conservative and fundamentalist evangelicalism in the interwar British context. In contrast to fundamentalist organisations, there were some aspects of moderating restraint in conservative evangelical anti-Catholicism. The National

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<sup>100</sup> Martin Wellings, 'The First Protestant Martyr of the Twentieth Century: the Life and Significance of John Kensit, 1853-1902' in Evans (ed), *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, 354.

<sup>101</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, Davidson Papers, vol. 450: Davidson to E. Woods, 18 February 1927.

<sup>102</sup> 'Protestantism and the General Election', *Churchman's Magazine* (May, 1929), 149.

<sup>103</sup> *Protestant Truth Society, Annual Report 1929-30*, 13-22; *Church Association Annual Report, 1929*, 9-11.

Church League, for example, tended towards more moderate and ‘respectable’ methods, directing its resources towards Protestant education and formal protests against Anglo-Catholic advances. In contrast, the Protestant Truth Society and the Church Association were directly combative, and historically relations with the National Church League were sometimes strained as a result.<sup>104</sup> During the 1930s the PTS were still assisting parishioners in fighting legal battles against Anglo-Catholic incumbents, and the CA by 1930 was forming local ‘vigilance committees’ to oppose Anglo-Catholic clergy.<sup>105</sup> Conservative evangelical polemic was comparatively milder than that of fundamentalist groups, framing their substantial objections to Anglo-Catholicism in theological or constitutional terms, making fewer dramatic allegations over political intrigue and less-readily employing explicit apocalyptic interpretations.<sup>106</sup> Conservative evangelicals were sometimes self-conscious in their anti-Catholicism. At the height of the Prayer Book controversy, for example, the *Methodist Leader* was careful to strike a balance in its anti-Catholicism, saying ‘Few of us would wish to raise again the ferocious anti-popery cries of other days, but it is certainly high time that we awoke to the peril to Protestantism in our land.’<sup>107</sup> In contrast, fundamentalists were often frustrated by the tolerance of other evangelicals. A. H. Forbes of the Protestant Truth Society was disgusted that some evangelicals saw Cardinal Newman as a Catholic of honesty and integrity.<sup>108</sup> Overall, while opposition to Rome was a larger evangelical concern, there were differences of emphasis and method within the movement.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled*, 78.

<sup>105</sup> See for example, *Protestant Truth Society and Kensit’s Wickliffe Preachers, Annual Report, 1926-1927*, 4; *Church Association Annual Report, 1930*, 13-14.

<sup>106</sup> Maiden, *National Religion*, ch. 3.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Table Talk’, *Methodist Leader*, 1 December 1927, 771.

<sup>108</sup> Forbes, *Anglo-Catholic Conspiracy*, 8.

<sup>109</sup> This, of course, is a general observation: at an individual level there were cases which do not fit the broader analysis. An example is the prominent Methodist leader T. Dinsdale Young

However, despite this general distinction, the threat of ‘catholicization’, more than any other religious issue, was able to provoke *fundamentalistic* responses amongst conservative and moderate evangelicals. The ‘threat’ of Rome was often met with a militant response from such evangelicals. One assessment of Anglican evangelicalism in the early twentieth century described it as having a ‘neurosis’ over ritualism.<sup>110</sup> The mobilisation of evangelicals against Prayer Book revision proposals in the 1920s and the intransigent response of Anglicans to the Oxford Movement centenary reveal the extent of anti-Catholic feeling within the movement. The language of warfare was often used during the Prayer Book crisis. ‘We are called on very largely to fight the battle of the Reformation again’, asserted C. Sydney Carter.<sup>111</sup> In 1926 Thomas Nightingale, the General Secretary of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, assured Anglicans that the Free Churches would ‘roll up our forces and stand with you shoulder to shoulder, different regiments but one army’.<sup>112</sup> The National Church League minced no words in a 1933 tract declaring that to ask Evangelicals to celebrate the anniversary of Tractarianism was ‘like asking Roman Catholic to light fireworks for the Fifth of November’.<sup>113</sup> There was little room for compromise where Protestantism was at stake.

The ‘crisis’ of catholicization also saw displays of unity between conservatives and fundamentalists. During the Prayer Book controversy, for example, evangelicals formed the Committee for the Maintenance of Truth and Faith, a body

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who, although widely regarded as having solid fundamentalist credentials, was opposed to criticizing Catholicism on political grounds, arguing instead for a positive preaching of the Gospel. See Young, *Stars of Retrospect*, 157.

<sup>110</sup> J. W. Walmsley, ‘The History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England between 1906 and 1928’, PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 1980, 227.

<sup>111</sup> C. Sydney Carter, *The English Reformation: Why it Was Needed, What it Was and What it Did and the Present Day Attempt to Undo It* (London, 1927), 24.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Notes of the Week’, *Record* (25 November 1926), 813.

<sup>113</sup> Academicus, *Attitude of Evangelicals to the Celebration of the Centenary of the Oxford Movement* (London, 1933), 14.

which brought together conservative groups, such as the National Church League, with the Protestant Truth Society and Church Association.<sup>114</sup> Anti-revision meetings united conservative leaders such as J. Russell Howden and H. W. Hinde with fundamentalists such as J. A. Kensit Jnr.<sup>115</sup> Following the parliamentary defeats of the revised book the Protestant Truth Society *Churchman's Magazine* praised Hinde's leadership, arguing that providence had brought him to chair the Islington conference and that 'our friend is an evangelical of the true type'.<sup>116</sup> Anti-Romanism blurred the boundaries between evangelicals of different distinctions. It also encouraged a victim mentality amongst some Anglican conservative evangelicals. At the height of the Prayer Book controversy H. W. Hinde wrote to Archbishop Randall Davidson that it appeared 'evangelicals are no longer wanted in the Church of England'.<sup>117</sup> The Anglican hierarchy may have deliberately excluded evangelicals from positions of influence following the controversy; however, defensiveness was certainly a feature of Anglican evangelicalism. A bold editorial in the *Record* in 1927 asserted that the evangelical party must show a 'larger loyalty' to biblical truth, rather than the 'executive chiefs' of Anglicanism.<sup>118</sup> When the party re-evaluated its position in the 1950s, some drew connections between anti-ritualism and their isolation within the Church. Gordon D. Savage, the first secretary of the Church Society, recommended a more conciliatory approach to Anglo-Catholics in the face of Canon Law revision proposals, arguing that 'For too long Evangelicals came under the influence of separatist brethren' and that the party was 'clearly paying for our virtual withdrawal

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<sup>114</sup> Maiden, *National Religion*, 64.

<sup>115</sup> Maiden, *National Religion*, 64.

<sup>116</sup> 'Our Portrait Gallery', *Churchman's Magazine*, vol. 82 (1928), 1.

<sup>117</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, Davidson Papers, vol. 453: H. W. Hinde to Randall Davidson, 10 October 1927.

<sup>118</sup> 'Editorial', *Record* (19 May 1927), 382.

from the Councils of the Church'.<sup>119</sup> Interwar anti-Catholicism drew evangelicals together, but built up walls between them and other Christians.

However, crucially, if anti-Catholicism cultivated a fundamentalistic exclusivism *within* their denominations, it actually worked against the kind of separatism *from* denominations which was a feature of North American evangelicalism. In 1926, two senior Anglican evangelicals, E. A. Knox and F. J. Chavasse, wrote to Archbishop Davidson with the warning that the legalisation of reservation of the sacrament in the liturgy might result in schisms, and then disestablishment.<sup>120</sup> However, despite this prophecy, when the bishops authorised use of the revised Prayer Book without parliamentary approval in 1928 there was no serious secession of evangelicals from the Church of England. Anti-Catholicism tended to have the opposite influence on evangelicals, binding them to their denominations.

It was inconceivable to many evangelicals that they would leave their churches, allowing them to be overrun by catholic influences.<sup>121</sup> This outlook was perhaps most tellingly present amongst those on the fundamentalist wing of the movement. Michael J. F. McCarthy, the former Irish nationalist who converted to Protestantism and then moved to London, where he authored anti-Catholic pamphlets, said the following about Anglicans and secession:

Needless to say, the Evangelicals never asked for revision of the Prayer

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<sup>119</sup> Gordon D. Savage 'Canon Law Revision: Evangelical Policy and Action', *Churchman* (Dec 1955), 198.

<sup>120</sup> E. A. Knox and F. J. Chavasse to Randall Davidson, 20 October 1926, DP, Vol. 449, LPL, 242–3.

<sup>121</sup> Maiden, *National Religion*, ch. 3.

Book, and have no intention of seceding from the Church founded by Evangelicals at the Reformation, to which they are intensely devoted and whose perversion to Roman and International uses they oppose to the death. Evangelicals may leave a particular church where the Prayer Book is disobeyed or perverted and go to a church where it is loyally followed; or attend a Nonconformist church; or, where no loyal church is available, they may start a church for themselves, as happened in the well-known case of Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon, which I have attended for twenty years and which is now a parish church. But they have no intention of deserting the Church and the King, its Head, and so handing over Church property to Anglo-Catholics in “complete dogmatic agreement” with the Papacy which would be the ultimate gainer by the betrayal.<sup>122</sup>

Too much was at stake for church, nation and empire to be left in the hands of Anglo-Catholicism.

Nonconformist fundamentalists also encouraged their Anglican brethren to remain and fight. Sacerdotalism was the ‘historic and inexorable enemy of the Church of England’ and it was hoped that ‘the evangelical clergy will hold their ground and refuse to be driven out’.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the threat of ‘catholicization’ within their own denominations dampened separatist impulses. For example, while *The Fundamentalist* admitted that the rise of ‘Unitarianism on the one hand and Romanism on the other’ might one day require the creation of a pure ‘Free Protestant Church’, in the meantime true Christians ‘ought not to separate from a fellowship which presumably embodies a providential ordering of life, without first doing

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<sup>122</sup> Michael J. F. McCarthy, *Church and Empire Breaking* (London, n.d.), 12.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (April - June, 1928), 18.

everything that lies within our power to save those in association with us.’<sup>124</sup> The general strength of anti-Romanism within the Free Churches was a comfort for militant Nonconformists. The Wesley Bible Union was usually critical of the *Methodist Times*, but it was cheered by its declaration in 1927 that the influence of Anglo-Catholicism was making Anglican – Nonconformist reunion less likely.<sup>125</sup> It is probable that those evangelicals who supported Methodist reunion in 1932 were led to do so partly because of the implicit anti-Roman component in the scheme. According to Sir Robert Perks, the first lay vice-president of the reunited church, Methodist reunion could help ‘save England from Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism’.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Baptist fundamentalist hearts were warmed by their denomination’s solid opposition to Catholic influence. Fundamentalist Baptists praised their Union’s condemnation of Anglican Prayer Book proposals: ‘We are . . . delighted by the fact that the Baptists, with an almost unanimous consent, have redeemed British Nonconformity from the danger of repudiating the Reformation, and have afforded a signal proof that at least in that section of the Church the old Puritan spirit of healthy and holy hatred of sacerdotalism is by no means dead’.<sup>127</sup> Anti-Catholicism was a spur for denominational loyalty amongst evangelicals, mitigating differences between them and other Christians.

## **Conclusion**

A close examination of the anti-Catholicism which influenced English evangelicalism adds weight to the argument for some distinction between conservative and fundamentalist evangelicalism during this period. Fundamentalists displayed the

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<sup>124</sup> ‘The True Believer and the Apostosing Church’, *The Fundamentalist* (March 1929), 52.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Notes’, *The Fundamentalist* (December, 1927), 276-8

<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Hastings, *English Christianity*, 214. Perks was a vice-president of the Protestant Truth Society in the 1930s - see Protestant Truth Society, *Annual Report, 1933-34*, p. 17.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Straight Talks’, *Bible Call* (July – September, 1927), 33.

greatest bellicosity in their response to the influence of Rome and the ‘compromising’ of their denominations and such threats were depicted as part of a wider eschatological drama. Conspiracy theories concerning the Romish ‘other’ and ideas of national uniqueness had widest currency in fundamentalist circles. Electoral politics were used to fight Catholic influence and fundamentalists were adept in exploiting propaganda opportunities. However, if English fundamentalists kept alive the most confrontational anti-Catholicism of the nineteenth century, fundamentalistic tendencies were evident in the expression of anti-Catholicism found amongst conservative and moderate evangelicals. The levels of wider evangelical anxiety and militancy in response to perceived ‘catholicizing’ influences and the siege mentality which this could foster is striking.<sup>128</sup> There are perhaps comparisons to be made between the anti-Catholic crusading of English evangelicals and the anti-evolution protests of their counterparts in the United States.<sup>129</sup> Arguably, amongst Anglican evangelicals at least, the appetite for contesting ‘defining’ issues and the rhetoric of crisis has remained as the chief focus of concern shifted from ritual to morality from the 1960s onwards.<sup>130</sup> However, conversely, anti-Catholicism also acted as a break on both fundamentalism and fundamentalistic tendencies in the English context, strengthening evangelical attachment to their denominations. A crucial factor to weaken the separatist impulse was the existence of a national Church and its implications for national religious, political and cultural identity. An irony of anti-Catholicism is that it both gave expression to and limited fundamentalism in English evangelicalism.

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<sup>128</sup> This is not to characterise the entire non-liberal evangelical constituency in this way. The danger of such broad assessments is they can obscure the variation within the group.

<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, Ian Rennie makes the interesting point that both the Prayer Book campaign and William Jennings Bryan’s anti-evolution campaign in Tennessee were Pyrrhic victories. See ‘Fundamentalism’, 342.

<sup>130</sup> On this shift, see J. Maiden and P. Webster, ‘Parliament, the Church of England and the Last Gasp of Political Protestantism’, *Parliamentary History* (forthcoming).