

# A Balliol quartet and the welfare state: Temple, Beveridge, Tawney and Toynbee

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## Abstract

This article sets *Christianity and Social Order* into the context of William Temple's contemporaries at Balliol College, with a focus on Beveridge and Tawney, and Arnold Toynbee in a previous generation. It explores who first developed the concept of the 'welfare state'.

## Keywords

Arnold Toynbee, Balliol, *Christianity and Social Order*, First World War, R. H. Tawney, Scott Holland, welfare state, William Beveridge

William Temple and William Beveridge laid the intellectual foundations of the 'welfare state' with their famous 1942 publications, neither of which mentioned that expression. Temple had coined the term, rendering it as 'Welfare-State', in the 1920s. Beveridge disliked its connotations, preferring national or social insurance. In celebrating the eightieth anniversary of Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* and the Beveridge Report, it is timely to reflect on their influences.

It helps to see Temple and Beveridge alongside R. H. Tawney, the foremost Christian Socialist thinker. All three were students at Balliol College, Oxford, at the turn of the twentieth century. This trio also links to a Balliol student from the

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1870s, who became a lecturer and fellow there. Arnold Toynbee invented the phrase 'Industrial Revolution'. Tawney, Beveridge and Temple all lived and worked in Toynbee Hall in London, in the years after their time at Balliol. The Hall was named after Arnold Toynbee because he epitomized its spirit of privileged students living alongside and seeking to support, while learning from, the poorest in society.

This ethos was part of the reform movement in universities in the Victorian era, especially in Balliol, where Benjamin Jowett became a student in 1836, a fellow in 1840 and master in 1870, serving until his death in 1893. By the time Toynbee came up, Jowett's Balliol had the outstanding Idealist philosopher T. H. Green as a fellow. Jowett and Green cultivated a liberal Christian ethos.

Peter Hinchliff notes that:

William Temple died in 1944, almost exactly a hundred years after Jowett and Stanley had set out on their campaign to make the university of Oxford conform, even in the study of theology, to the principle that education was an enquiry after truth not the transmission of correct answers.<sup>1</sup>

Hinchliff also quotes the philosopher Anthony Quinton, in an essay on Absolute Idealism:<sup>2</sup>

New ideas are normally produced by unimportant people; the holders of important posts disseminate the ideas they acquired in their comparatively unimportant youth.<sup>3</sup>

Arnold Toynbee came from Pembroke to Balliol in 1875. Plagued by ill health, he sat for the Pass School as a student of History and started teaching at Balliol in 1878. He was a pioneer of the discipline of Economic History, stimulated adult education, gave a famous lecture to the co-operative movement in 1882 in Oxford Town Hall, and died in 1883 at the age of 30. José Harris explains:

At Oxford in the early 1880s the historian Arnold Toynbee lectured to large audiences on the evils wrought by the 'Industrial Revolution' (a concept newly invented by Toynbee at this time) and on the falsity of the mechanistic equation between public and private interests proclaimed by Adam Smith. Toynbee's teaching led many of his hearers very easily into the orbit of the idealist system of political philosophy taught by the Balliol philosopher T. H. Green.<sup>4</sup>

In that 1882 lecture, 'The education of co-operators', Toynbee called for:

Education of the citizen. By this I mean the education of each member of the community as regards the relation in which he stands to other individual citizens, and to the community as a whole... Only through associations like yours can effective citizenship-education be given to the great masses of the working people.<sup>5</sup>

On the first anniversary of his death, in the spring of 1884, Jowett invited the Wadham-educated leader of the settlement movement in the East End of London, Reverend Samuel Barnett, to preach in Balliol chapel. Henrietta Barnett, his wife, explains:

As I sat on that Sunday afternoon in the chapel, one of the few women among the crowd of strong-brained, clean-living men, the thought flashed to me: 'Let us call the Settlement Toynbee Hall.'<sup>6</sup>

Hinchliff states: 'As with so many of those whose ideas were shaped at Balliol in the 1870s, it is difficult to be certain whether Toynbee was chiefly influenced by Green, or by Jowett himself, or simply by the general atmosphere of the college.'<sup>7</sup> A quarter of a century later, Edward Caird, the master when the other three were undergraduates, paid tribute to the influence of Jowett and Green on his own thinking. Beveridge explained that Caird directly urged Balliol students to 'discover why, with so much wealth in Britain, there continues to be so much poverty, and how poverty can be cured'.<sup>8</sup> The later trio certainly followed Toynbee in living up to this injunction and living out that 'general atmosphere'.

R. H. Tawney, born in Calcutta, came to Balliol from Rugby school in 1899, studying History, and then lived and worked in Toynbee Hall. He followed Toynbee's commitment to the co-operative movement and was one of the pioneers of the similar Workers' Educational Association (WEA). He fought in the First World War, which affected him deeply. He wrote famously about equality. He taught workers around the country before settling into a long career at the LSE. Tawney was on a committee chaired by A. L. Smith, then master of Balliol, on adult education for the Ministry of Reconstruction after the war, largely drafting its 1919 report. Tawney gave the inaugural Henry Scott Holland lectures at King's College London exactly 100 years ago. Canon Scott Holland was another Balliol-educated giant of Christian social reform. In 1926, he published those 1922 lectures as *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.<sup>9</sup> Tawney was a committed Christian and the intellectual powerhouse of the left in British politics. He read Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* in draft.

Pimlott, writing a history of Toynbee Hall in 1935, reports:

An interesting experiment in 1905 was an attempt to organize a course of study which would arise directly out of the lives of the students. In the winter term two residents, Tawney and Beveridge, lectured concurrently on the 'Social Aspects of Industry' and 'Labour and the Law', and in the spring term Graham Wallas gave a course on the 'Government of an English City', accompanied by a tutorial class conducted by the lecturers of the previous term.<sup>10</sup>

William Beveridge, born in Rangpur (then in India, now in Bangladesh), was at Charterhouse, then went up to Balliol in the same year as Tawney, 1899. He achieved first-class honours in Greats, also studying Mathematics and Law with

distinction. He won an Oxford fellowship before proceeding to Toynbee Hall. Through their work there together, Tawney met Beveridge's sister, Jeannette, and married her.

Beveridge worked in the civil service throughout the First World War, not being medically fit to enlist. He was knighted for his contributions as a government economist, becoming director of the LSE in 1919 and master of University College, Oxford, in 1937. Like Tawney and Temple, Beveridge found reports an influential way of reforming society. In the Second World War, Beveridge's report on *Social Insurance and Allied Services* captured the public's imagination by identifying and linking the five giant evils which the welfare state was intended to slay: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease.<sup>11</sup> A summary was translated and air-dropped behind enemy lines, explaining the kind of future for which the Allies, whose model Temple called the Welfare-State, were fighting, boosting morale at home and, to judge by the reactions of senior Nazis, undermining the morale of the Power-State. Two copies were found in Hitler's bunker.

William Temple knew Tawney when they were both pupils at Rugby. He met Beveridge at Balliol, coming up in 1900, a year after Tawney and Beveridge. Temple was president of the Oxford Union, followed his first in Greats with an Oxford fellowship, and went on to Toynbee Hall. He was ordained a priest in 1909 and officiated at Tawney's wedding to Jeannette Beveridge.

Temple became the first president of the WEA in 1908, serving until 1924. He was invited to become headmaster of Repton in 1910. He married Frances Anson in 1916, becoming Bishop of Manchester in 1921, Archbishop of York in 1929 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942. He died in 1944. He was prolific in preaching, speaking, writing, convening and chairing groups, and drafting reports.

Historians and theologians have struggled to decide if Temple coined the phrase 'welfare state'. There are three books to consider and it is significant that each was the second in a series. Temple naturally varied what he said or wrote depending on the context of the invitation.

The historian Peter Hennessy is wrong in *Never Again* to say that William Temple first used 'welfare state' in 1941 in *Citizen and Churchman* and so was not the first to coin the term because Zimmern had used it in 1934 and Schuster in 1937.<sup>12</sup> In *Christ in All Things*, Stephen Spencer points out that Temple first deployed the term in his Scott Holland lectures in 1928, published that same year as *Christianity and the State*, dedicated 'To my friend, R. H. Tawney'.<sup>13</sup> This is when Temple contrasted a Welfare-State with a Power-State. Why this odd format, with capital letters and a hyphen? In the wake of Russia's war on, and invasion of, Ukraine, it is worth examining this contrast between the two kinds of states, which in turn makes it important to note the dates and to understand the context of the different publications. In his 1928 lectures, Temple explained that the First World War:

was a struggle between the idea of the State as essentially Power – Power over its own community and against other communities – and of the State as the organ of

community, maintaining its solidarity by law designed to safeguard the interests of the community. The Power-State might have yielded to sheer pressure of circumstances in course of time; but it is contrary to the psychology of the Power-State to suffer conversion; it was likely to fight before it let a Welfare-State take its place.<sup>14</sup>

Welfare's religious underpinning was made clear by Temple in a letter to *The Times* in 1934: 'The gravest evil and bitterest injury... is the spiritual grievance of being allowed no opportunity of contributing to the general life and welfare of the community.'<sup>15</sup> A welfare state, on this prophetic approach, is one where every citizen has the chance to *contribute to* the welfare – in the sense of the well-being or the common good – of society as well as to be supported by the community when necessary.

Temple explains in the 1941 book *Citizen and Churchman* that it was the second in another series. He created this one himself and invited the then master of Balliol (later Lord) Lindsay to speak first. *The Two Moralities* was the inaugural Archbishop of York's Lenten Talk in 1940.<sup>16</sup> In *Citizen and Churchman*, Temple's sequel again mentions the idea of a Welfare-State, arguing that if certain Christian presuppositions (as you might expect in a Lenten Talk) are accepted, 'in place of the conception of the Power-State we are led to that of the Welfare-State'.<sup>17</sup>

The third of these books, *Christianity and Social Order*, was published early the following year, 1942, when he became the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was commissioned when he was still Archbishop of York – which is how he is described on the front cover. He explains in the preface that it was intended by the publishers, Penguin, as a companion volume to *Christianity and World Order*, by George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, published in 1940. This explains both the title's reference to *social* order (rather than 'the State' or 'the Welfare-State' or 'Society') and why Temple did not concentrate here on his prescient Welfare-State versus Power-State analysis of international (dis)order. Bell's book having addressed the *world* order, Temple – now as archbishop – took time instead to justify the Church's right at home to contribute to progressive thinking, even so early in the war, about the reconstruction and reform of social order on the assumption of an Allied victory.

The first four footnotes in *Christianity and Social Order* all refer to Tawney, the fifth to Beveridge for his 1909 book *Unemployment*, and it is only in the sixth that he goes beyond Balliol to a text of St John's (the Gospel, not the neighbouring college). Later footnotes draw on Tawney.

In sum, the welfare state is an expression of faith in society. The fact that Temple initially portrayed it as the 'Welfare-State' was not an aberration but showed the values which were worth fighting for, against Power-States, as now in Ukraine's defence against the war being waged by the Power-State of Russia.

Finally, the genius of this quartet illustrates what I call a Paradoxbridge principle: the deeper the influence a college proves to have in your later life, the less likely you were to have noticed it when it was first happening. This is why the

distinctive ethos of Jowett's Balliol, or of any intermediate institution, matters and can make a difference after 80, 100 or 200 years.

## Notes

1. Peter Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 230.
2. Anthony Quinton, *Thoughts and Thinkers* (London: Duckworth, 1982), p. 186.
3. Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion*, p. 231.
4. José Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain, 1870–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 228.
5. Arnold Toynbee, 'The education of co-operators' (1882). Reprinted in Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century in England: popular addresses, notes and other fragments* (London: Rivington, 1887) and quoted in H. S. Jones, 'Civil society and citizenship 1880–1914' in Lawrence Goldman, *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain since 1870: essays in honour of José Harris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 41.
6. S. A. Barnett and Henrietta Barnett, *Towards Social Reform* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1909), p. 249.
7. Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion*, p. 218.
8. William Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 9.
9. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 1926).
10. J. A. R. Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall: fifty years of social progress* (London: Dent, 1935), p. 147.
11. William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, Cmd 6404 (London: HMSO, 1942).
12. Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain, 1945–51* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992).
13. Stephen Spencer, *Christ in All Things: William Temple and his writings* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2015), p. 83.
14. William Temple, *Christianity and the State* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 169.
15. Quoted by F. A. Iremonger, *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: his life and letters* (London and New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 440.
16. A. D. Lindsay, *The Two Moralities: our duty to God and to society* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1940).
17. William Temple, *Citizen and Churchman* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1941), p. 35.

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