George Anthony Denison (1805-1896):

A Georgian High Churchman

in Victorian times.

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I declare that this thesis is my account of my research, and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

Archdeacon George Anthony Denison was one of the most egregious High Church clergy of the nineteenth-century Church of England. During a life spanning much of that century, his working life included a period as a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford (1828-38) linked with the Curacy of Cuddesdon (1832-1838); and then, for fifty-eight years, the incumbency of two country parishes: Broad Windsor in Dorset (1838-1845), and the village of East Brent in Somerset (1845-1896). He was Archdeacon of Taunton from 1851 to 1896. Beyond his parish, Denison was a leading figure in the revival of Convocation, as he was a significant figure involved in many of the controversies that assailed the nineteenth-century Church of England.

Joyce Coombs’ *George Anthony Denison: The Firebrand 1805-1896* (1984) is the only biography of Denison. Other historians have noticed Denison as an adjunct to other figures and events. There has been a tendency to explain Denison with recourse to a range of loose and ill-defined categories, premised on the notion that he is to be identified with the Oxford Movement and later Ritualists. Coombs also made similar assumptions which this thesis question. Moreover her object was to provide an account of Denison’s life rather than an analysis of his doctrine and social and political theology, the purpose of this thesis.

The work of the revisionist historian, Peter Nockles, has redefined the historiographical and theological place of the Oxford Movement within the wider context of the history of the nineteenth-century Church of England. One of the fruits of Nockles’ *The Oxford Movement in context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857* has been to identify more clearly a continuing strand of orthodox High Churchmanship. His analysis of the High Church tradition and of the Oxford Movement has demonstrated significant points of divergence. Notwithstanding the recasting of the historiographical landscape, there has been no new assessment of George Anthony Denison. He has remained a prisoner of an older historiography
both in the field of the history of nineteenth-century education and that of ecclesiastical history.

This study sits within Nockles’ revisionist historiographical framework. Its object is to demonstrate that Denison was an example of one holding an orthodox worldview that endured beyond the divide of 1828-32; that he held a vision of the world ordered and governed by divine providence; that his notoriety as a controversialist is to be explained as a defence of this view with its concomitant doctrines. Denison has left a large body of polemical writings, providing the sources to examine this premise. Arguably Denison has been too easily dismissed as a mere controversialist, yet his polemical writings usually sold in the many thousands (often 5,000 -7,000 copies) suggesting that his views were considered to be of some account by his contemporaries.
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This study came about as a consequence of a series of coincidences. I found myself during the course of my ministry in places with connections to historical persons. For a period I had charge as curate of William Copeland’s church at Farnham, Essex. Later I held a benefice on the River Stour overlooking William Jones’ parish at Nayland. I was also situated only a few miles from Hadleigh, where I went most days to the town pool to exercise. I was thus drawn to learn something of the late eighteenth-century, and early nineteenth-century movements in the Church. My reason for undertaking this study was prompted when I came across Denison’s name in connection with his stand on the ‘Education Question’. In view of what I had learnt of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Church history, I found myself questioning the way he was cast by historians of nineteenth-century education. This prompted me to attempt an examination of Denison in the context of his times.

Denison was very much a part-time occupation when a working parish priest. I used to spend my day off from my parish in the Rare Books Room in the Cambridge University Library. The research was an enjoyable occupation for quite some years, but that was as far things went, for on my return to my rectory late at night my notes were cast onto my study shelves to remain untouched until the next excursion to Cambridge. The consequence was that I gathered a considerable body of notes. On moving to Perth, Western Australia I asked Archbishop Carnley whether he knew of anyone who might supervise me as a PhD candidate. Not having great expectations, I was surprised when the Archbishop replied, yes, there was indeed such a person well acquainted with the area in which I was interested. It was thus my great good fortune to secure Professor Rowan Strong as my supervisor. My debt to Professor Strong is considerable, and I would acknowledge his guidance, as I sought to work my way through notes gathered over the years,
and find a path to write my way into a thesis. This was at times a struggle, and I am grateful to him for his patience, as I am obliged to him for his questioning and help with maintaining focus.

I am indebted to librarians and archivists who have helped me over a number of years. A regular visitor staying at Pusey House, I experienced the late Fr Harry Smythe’s kind hospitality. I owe much also to Fr Michael Knight (sometime Priest Librarian and Custodian of the Library) whose kindness allowed me to work late into the nights after the library and archives were officially closed. I am grateful for the assistance over many years of the staff of the Rare Books Room at the Cambridge University Library, and especially that of Susan Hill who helped with photocopies after I had moved to Perth. At Lambeth Palace Library the staff have been unfailingly kind and helpful. At the Reid Library in the University of Western Australia, I would wish to thank Graeme Rymill for his kindness looking out material that somehow was always in store.

There are others. My good friend, Dr Donald Leinster-MacKay, has been great source of encouragement and always prepared to read drafts. Another good friend and colleague, Fr Peter Manuel, has read drafts and discussed issues with me. Nicola Ridsdill-Smith kindly undertook the arduous task of proof-reading, and I am most grateful to her for the time and care she gave to this task. I should thank Alison Thorpe and Prue Newham who on many occasions repaired self-inflicted damage brought about by poor posture at the computer. Again with regard to computers my youngest son, Alexander, and my wife Professor Rachel Cardell-Oliver have been stalwart assisting with issues ‘computing’ and ‘formatting’ – matters of some frustration to an older generation.

Lastly, I acknowledge my wife’s patience during the long period of gestation of this ‘project’ – a term which she would define as things begun but not completed.
## Abbreviations

**Alum Cant**  
*Alumni Cantabrigienses*, compiled by J A Venn

**Alum Ox**  
*Alumni Oxonienses*, compiled by Foster

**C&SR**  
*Church and State Review*

**C of C**  
*Chronicle of the Convocation* [Canterbury Province]

**Defence**  
*Defence of the Archdeacon of Taunton*

**LACT**  
*Library of Anglo Catholic Theology*

**L&D JHN**  
*Letters and diaries of John Henry Newman*

**LED**  
*Fifty years at East Brent: The letters of George Anthony Denison*  
1845-1896

**Life**  
G A Denison, *Notes of my Life* 1805-1878

**nd**  
no date

**ODNB**  
*Oxford dictionary of national biography*

**PD**  
*Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates*

**PP**  
*Parliamentary Papers*

**Proceedings**  
*Proceedings against the Archdeacon of Taunton*

**SPCK**  
*Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*

**Supplement**  
Religion the basis of society and government

The main root of evil lies in the want of sound, sober, and practical religious feeling operating steadily throughout the community, and influencing the conduct of all the various departments of social life. The want of this is discernable in attempts to carry out the work of popular education without taking Religion for its basis; in the systematic and avowed separation of civil and political from Christian obligations; in the disposition to consider all truths, on whatever sacred authority they may rest as matters of mere human opinion; and in a persuasion that the whole concern of human government, of legislation, and of social order, may be conducted as if there was no Moral Ruler of the Universe controlling the destinies of men or of nations; no other responsibilities that those which subsist between man and man, unamenable to any higher tribunal.

Bishop Van Mildert, Charge 1831, p15f.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study

This thesis is a study of George Anthony Denison (1805-1896), one of the most egregious nineteenth-century Church of England clergy. Denison has found a place in the history of the nineteenth-century Church of England, and in the history of nineteenth-century popular education, albeit as a figure largely treated as an adjunct to others. It is argued in this study that notwithstanding the work of revisionist historians Denison remains imprisoned within the assumptions and references of an older historiography. The study takes as its starting point, a view of Denison formed by David Newsome working in the working 1960s. Newsome concluded of Denison that his churchmanship is best understood as an ‘indigenous and fiercely conservative Anglicanism’ - a Churchmanship that encompassed a fierce loyalty to the Church of England combined with an innate conservatism.¹ Newsome has observed that the more he delved into the nineteenth-century history of the Church the more inadequate appeared the traditional labels used to categorize the various parties and factions within the Church of England. This is an observation that research undertaken for this study confirms is true of the labels used to categorize Denison.

From amongst the contributors to revisionist history of the nineteenth-century Church of England, Peter Nockles has offered a modifying and nuanced view of Denison’s churchmanship, suggesting this is not easily categorized. Nockles includes Denison in the company of William Maskell and William Scott of Hoxton, the three of whom, he writes, ‘cannot easily be categorised as unreservedly “old High

Church” or “Tractarian”, and whose mature churchmanship contained elements of both. They might be best described as advanced old High Churchmen’.² Nockles accounts Denison ‘a rather political High Churchman’ in the 1830s while at Oriel, though without supporting evidence.³ Moreover, Nockles rehearses Tom Mozley’s assertion that Denison can somehow be explained as having been influenced by Newman, albeit silently and undetected.⁴ Nockles’ treatment of Denison is brief, although a little more extensive with regard to sacramental doctrine. There remains, therefore, the need for a reappraisal of the influences that operated on Denison, as there is for a thorough, and detailed examination of Denison’s doctrine and social and political theology to explain and substantiate what is meant in Denison’s case by an ‘advanced old High Churchmanship’. This is the purpose of this study.

A prisoner of an old historiography

Although Denison’s name appears with some frequency in histories of the nineteenth-century Church of England, he has only once been the subject of a biography – that by Joyce Coombs published in 1984. Coombs argues that it is impossible to exclude Denison from the pages of the Church of England of the nineteenth century. Recognizing that Denison had been treated as an adjunct to other figures and events, Coombs considered Denison deserved a biography because ‘he towered above his clerical contemporaries without resembling any of them’.⁵ With the object of building a picture and record of Denison’s life, and allowing Denison to speak for himself, Coombs made particular use of his correspondence, some published by Louisa Denison in Fifty years at East Brent, and the remainder in an manuscript collection which Denison’s nephew Henry had retained during his life and now archived at Pusey House. Coombs has noted the

³ Ibid, p312f.
⁴ Ibid, p313, n27.
⁵ Joyce Coombs, George Anthony Denison: The firebrand. 1984, p xxi.
difficulty of building a picture of Denison’s domestic and personal life, as little correspondence between members of the family was to be found.⁶ Coombs, however, formed an estimate of Denison’s personality, seeing him as essentially conservative and old-fashioned, noting his pain following the publication of Essays and Reviews which questioned what Coombs describes as Denison’s ‘biblical fundamentalism’.⁷ She has observed that towards the end of a long life, Denison was in some respects left stranded by a changed world. Nevertheless she has recognized that there was also another world, which changed relatively rather less – the world of the rural parish – where Denison was at home. As a countryman and pastor this was a world he could understand. Coombs also credits Denison with the elements of a social reformer in his younger years, especially in the sphere of education.⁸ With an interest in Denison’s personality and relationship, she has seen in him a mixture of egotism and humility, ‘capable of admitting his own faults when he saw them’ and regretting them.⁹ He was a member of a family that was engaged in public affairs, and Coombs has suggested Denison enjoyed the light of the public world.¹⁰ In his relations with Bishop Bagot, Coombs focuses on the unfortunate consequences of Denison’s egotism and single-mindedness.

His ruptured relationship with Bishop Bagot was tragic and indefensible. It is partly explained by Denison’s own impetuosity and, it must be added, personal arrogance. For too long he had manipulated Bishop Bagot, albeit with Bagot’s full co-operation and esteem. A little patience, a little charm and reflection would have brought about a happier issue. Denison had to prove that he was right.¹¹

Coomb’s biography fulfils her declared object – that of providing a record of Denison’s life. However, with a focus on a factual narrative, Coombs does not venture far from this endeavour to provide an analysis and explanation of Denison’s doctrine, social and political theology, or indeed explore what Coombs terms his

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⁶ Ibid, p xxii.
⁷ Ibid, p221.
⁸ Ibid, p220.
⁹ Ibid, p222.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid.
‘biblical fundamentalism’ – a factor which she recognized as significant for Denison, and arguably highly significant as the basis of his epistemology and world-view. Structured chronologically, there are evident difficulties treating and discussing these threads across the several facets of Church life and controversies in which Denison engaged at different times. Thus recounting in some detail his battles with the Committee of Council on Education, there is little to explain the rationale for Denison’s stance other than a summary statement to the effect that on joining the National Society he had a forum to ‘defend his philosophy of Christian education’ with no explanation as to what that might be.\(^{12}\) Likewise Coombs accounts for Denison’s foray into journalism with his *Church and State Review* as an example of his egotism, but offers little by way of context, such as that offered by Allen Warren, who has connected Denison’s periodical with the rise of Disraeli and the contemporary dynamics of Conservative politics.\(^{13}\) In a similar vein, she accounts Denison a ‘conservative theologian,’ but again does not explain this further, other than to attribute this to his classical education.\(^{14}\)

Coombs’ biography, written before revisionist trends in the history of the nineteenth-century High Churchmanship of the past twenty or so years, assumes that Denison can be placed within the traditional historiographical framework of the Oxford Movement. Coombs uses terminology to describe Denison’s doctrinal, social and political theology loosely and with few explanations. For example she concluded Denison had by 1851 established himself as ‘a Puseyite of the deepest dye,’ but does not explain what is meant by this, though in the wider context of her biography it is evident that ‘Puseyism’ may be understood as being congruent with the Oxford Movement.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) *Ibid*, p221.

\(^{15}\) *Ibid*, pp80 and 165.
Of others who have written at length on Denison, Bernard Palmer, acknowledging a debt to Coombs, includes a chapter on Denison, ‘Church Militant: George Anthony Denison (1805-1896),’ in his *Reverend rebels* (1993) – five cameo portraits of priests who fell foul of the law.¹⁶ Four of these, Alexander Mackonochie, Arthur Tooth, Robert Dolling, and Joseph Lyne (Fr Ignatius), were ritualists prosecuted under the Public Worship Act. Palmer includes Denison as precursor of the ritualists, prosecuted for his sermons on the doctrine of the real presence. His treatment of the subject sheds little new light on Denison.

Barry Marshall’s much earlier study of nineteenth-century Anglican education, however, is exceptional as having sought to look behind Denison’s overt militancy on the issue of Church education to offer an explanation of the principles and theology that underpinned Denison’s views - he considered the rationale for Denison’s position.¹⁷ Marshall’s study was completed in 1956. Marshall correctly identified Denison as one for whom a comprehensive theology of Church and State was fundamental to his view of the Church Establishment and its role. However, Marshall’s perception of Denison as a Tractarian educationalist arose out of an older comprehension of the Oxford Movement.¹⁸ In Marshall’s view, one of the consequences of Denison’s failures to see his eucharistic theology supported in the courts was that there was no lasting Tractarian educational ideal. He saw Denison as an isolated figure in the Church of England by the 1850s, particularly after the departure of Manning, as though Denison’s position in the Church was identical with the leadership of the Oxford Movement. Marshall made no connection with other strands in the Church of England’s historical role in education such as the charity schools,¹⁹ as he made no substantive link with the history of the National

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¹⁸ Denison, in Marshall’s view, ‘actualised the Eucharistic concepts of Tractarians in his widely publicized defence of Church schools.’ *Ibid*, p623

Society, and the ‘Church Principles’ of the men associated with the founding of the National Society, whose ‘Principles’ in this connection were, it is argued in the present study, the ‘Principles’ maintained by Denison.\textsuperscript{20} Fifty years on, it is difficult to accept Marshall’s identification of Denison’s career as merely congruent with the Oxford Movement.

Other historians have noticed Denison’s public forays into controversial issues, as they have noticed his pugnacious style and militancy. Owen Chadwick has observed that Denison, ‘square and tough’, had an innate fondness for a fight, and enjoyed the machinations involved in legal and political battles.\textsuperscript{21} Desmond Bowen in his study of the Church of England has taken a similar view and described Denison as ‘tendentious’ and ‘intransigent’. Bowen has acknowledged Denison’s effectiveness as an activist and politician albeit with a sting in the tail, rehearsing Mozley’s estimate of Denison that he ‘would have made a first-class medieval chancellor’.\textsuperscript{22}

Likewise Margaret Crowther has characterized Denison’s views as ‘vehement’ noting his militancy and his ‘widespread and controversial fame’.\textsuperscript{23} Marjorie Cruickshank has linked Denison with Manning, describing the two men as being of the ‘Medieval party’ of the Church of England, a pejorative phrase borrowed surely from one of Denison’s opponents, James Kay-Shuttleworth.\textsuperscript{24} Peter Marsh has considered Denison to have been ‘blinkeried’, and categorized him as an ‘uncompromising denominationalist’, arguing with an apparent disregard for, or understanding of, the origin and purpose of the National Society, that ‘under the influence of Archdeacon Denison, the National Society had adopted a policy of

\textsuperscript{20} Herbert Marsh (1757–1839), Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Cambridge, 1807; Bishop of Llandaff, 1816; Bishop of Peterborough, 1819. Marsh was one of those instrumental in the founding of the National Society in 1811. His views are adumbrated in his published sermon, \textit{The national religion the foundation of national education} ... 1811.

\textsuperscript{21} Owen Chadwick, \textit{The Victorian Church} Part I, pp491 & 493.

\textsuperscript{22} Desmond Bowen, \textit{The idea of the Victorian Church: A study of the Church of England 1833-1889}. 1968, p61. Bowen also described William Goode as ‘one of the intransigents of the Low-Church Party, acting as the Evangelical counterpart to Archdeacon Denison, who represented the extremists among High Churchmen’. \textit{Ibid}, pp147, 233 and 208.


\textsuperscript{24} M Cruickshank, \textit{Church and State in English education}. 1963, p 5. Cf James Kay-Shuttleworth on the use of ‘medieval’ in his \textit{Four periods of public education}. 1862, p23.
narrow denominationalism’.\textsuperscript{25} George Kitson Clark, while describing the archdeacon as being ‘in many ways a truculent nuisance, if at times an amusing one’, unlike Marsh, sets this truculence within the context of the objects of the National Society, whose charter declared its purpose to be ‘the education of the children of the poor, without exception in the Doctrine and Discipline of the Established Church’.\textsuperscript{26} James Bentley has concluded that Denison’s approach to his ecclesiastical politics was to be explained by ‘his controversial, not to say cantankerous, nature’.\textsuperscript{27}

Treated as an historical figure largely incidental to other figures and events, Denison’s position has been frequently identified in shorthand by terms offered with little and sometimes no explanation. Denison, the controversialist, is represented by descriptors such as ‘High Churchman’; ‘extreme High Churchman’; ‘Tractarian’; ‘ritualist’; ‘Tory’; ‘High Tory Churchman’. Thus, for example, Henry Burgess, the historian of the National Society, has assumed that Denison can be classed as a Tractarian, writing that ‘the Tractarian position was stated most frequently and most forcibly by Denison’.\textsuperscript{28} Leaving aside for a moment the question whether Denison might accurately be classed as a Tractarian, what was the Tractarian position on education? This assertion is repeated by George Herring, who states Denison was an advocate ‘of Tractarian educational theories in the National Society’.\textsuperscript{29} This surely is an anachronism conflating Tractarianism that emerged in the 1830s with the Church Principles of orthodox High Churchmen who founded the National Society in 1811. Although describing the beginnings of the

\textsuperscript{25} Peter Marsh, \textit{The Victorian Church in decline}. 1969, pp46 and 73.  
\textsuperscript{26} George Kitson Clark, \textit{Churchmen and the condition of England 1832-1885}. 1973, p 128. For G Kitson Clark’s estimate of the contribution of the clergy to the provision of nineteenth-century elementary education, see Chap 4.  
\textsuperscript{27} James Bentley, \textit{Ritual and politics in Victorian Britain. The attempt to legislate for belief}. 1978, p16. Bentley cites a passage in a letter from Denison to his niece, Louisa Denison, treating with Farrar’s book \textit{Eternal Hope: Five sermons preached in Westminster Abbey, November – December 1877. 1878}. Denison, antipathetic to Farrar’s amelioration of the doctrine of eternal punishment, wrote his niece that ‘I have always set my face as a flint against the mind of the time. I believe it oversets the faith of the many, and makes love grow cold while it proposes to increase it. It has another aspect, that of the craving longing after what is thought to be new and is therefore exciting but is really as old as the hills, in its substance, and not more eternal’. \textit{Fifty years at East Brent}, p202.  
\textsuperscript{28} Henry Burgess, \textit{Enterprise in Education}. 1958, p148f.  
National Society, Burgess has made no analysis of the doctrinal motivation of orthodox High Churchmen whose principles were the ground of the objectives for which the National Society was established. Burgess makes no connection between these principles and the arguments advanced by Denison.  

Soloway, touching on Denison’s battles in the National Society, denoting him ‘the Puseyite Vicar of East Brent’, fails also in this respect.

Marjorie Crowther has classed Denison as a ritualist, and attributed to him a leading role amongst ritualist clergy: ‘the most outspoken of ritualists and their leader in the Lower House of Convocation’. Although Denison certainly spoke in Convocation in behalf of ritualist clergy, Crowther’s assertion is shorn of qualifications and reservations that Denison held with respect to ritualism and the clergy who promoted ritualism – qualifications which undermine such a bald assertion. George Herring asserts (without substantiation, analysing Denison’s sermons on the real presence, or without tracing the path Denison trod to arrive at his articulation of the real presence) that Denison’s forthright defence of ‘Tractarian Eucharistic theology’ places him ‘firmly within the camp of the Oxford Movement’. Bentley assumes Denison to have been a ‘Tractarian’, and that Denison’s adoption of ritualism was arrived at on a path from Tractarianism to ritualism: ‘The feeling that the Tractarian movement was gaining the upper hand was further reinforced by the confident assertiveness of some of the clergy ... for instance the Rev’d G A Denison, vicar of East Brent, Archdeacon of Taunton and a gradual convert from

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30 As G F A Best has observed, a central issue in the debate on the Education Question was the difference between those who understood that religious education rested on the idea of doctrine as defining Christianity, and those who looked to the undenominational idea of general Christianity – that eschewing doctrine. Best has also noted that although the concept of generalized Christianity might be found in earlier Latitudinarians circles, it was a new phenomenon in the mid-nineteenth century in that it was more widely spread. ‘The religious difficulties of National Education in England, 1800-70’, in Cambridge Historical Journal, Vol 12 (2) 1956, p162f, and p 168.


Tractarianism to ritualism.\textsuperscript{34} Bentley writes of Denison as ‘the ritualist vicar of East Brent’, and elsewhere describes him as ‘typical of High Churchmen’ but was ritualism typical of High Churchmen? What was a typical High Churchman? \textsuperscript{35}

With regard to the use of ‘Tractarian’, Frances Knight has warned of the possible confusion that can arise from the ‘loose and pejorative manner’ in which the term has often been used inaccurately to describe those who held in some degree to High Church persuasions.\textsuperscript{36} Further she has cautioned against the sharp categorization of churchmanship that ‘Tractarian historiography has propagated … by focusing on the hostilities of opposing church parties, and portraying a Church riven by Tractarian and Evangelical controversy’. The picture on the ground, Knight suggests, was never as clear-cut, and cannot be easily and precisely defined. Terms such as ‘Tractarian’, and ‘Puseyite’ were used loosely.\textsuperscript{37} This looseness of usage both by contemporaries and by historians, raises the question whether such terms can be considered satisfactory unless qualified and substantiated.

**Revisionist historiography**

Examination of Denison’s writing undertaken as the core of the research for this study challenges the assumption that he can be classed as a Tractarian. However, notwithstanding revisionist re-assessments of the history of the late Hanoverian

\textsuperscript{34} James Bentley, *Ritual and politics in Victorian Britain. The attempt to legislate for belief*. 1978, p12.
\textsuperscript{35} *Ibid*, p137.
\textsuperscript{37} *Ibid*. J C D Clark has remarked that the Victorian conception of High Church was one largely drawn from the Oxford Movement: applied to the world before 1832, few enough men could be found to fit it. Victorian and Edwardian historians inferred a persuasive, vacuous Latitudinarianism: with a few exceptions (JH Overton, J Wickham Legg) their chosen categories prevented them from appreciating the profoundly conservative, theological orthodox and devotionally variable nature of the pre-Tractarian High Churchmanship which was widely and deeply entrenched as the Georgian norm. *Revolution and rebellion State and society in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*. 1986 edition, p109.
Church and in particular Peter Nockles’ significant re-assessment of the historiography of the Oxford Movement and revisionist evaluation of the continuing strength of orthodox High Churchmanship in parallel with the Oxford Movement, Denison remains a prisoner of an older historiography. Denison’s tenure as a fellow Oriel College (1828-38) contemporary with those who were central to *The Tracts for the Time* has lent credence to notion that Denison was influenced by them. But if, as analysis of his writings suggest, Denison was an old-fashioned High Churchman, some other explanation is needed to account for his formation in early adulthood and the influences that bore upon him. As Denison is silent in this period of his life, evidence for his early formation is obscure. But given Denison’s High Church doctrinal beliefs and social and political theology evident in his later writings, there is justification for looking for High Church influences he may have met with in early adulthood. There is Denison’s own admission made later in life that he was not interested in theology at Oxford.\(^{38}\) There are suggestions that his background set him apart from the Oriel fellows and leaders of the Oxford Movement. Scion of a wealthy family with aristocratic connections, Denison had come from aristocratic Christ Church College and was a ‘hearty’ hunting man. He owned he did not enjoy the company of members of the Oriel common room, preferring the friendship of Christ Church men such as Augustus Saunders,\(^{39}\) a mathematical tutor at Christ Church who was curate at Cuddesdon.\(^{40}\) Denison was happy to succeed Saunders as the High Church Bishop Bagot’s curate at Cuddesdon, and enjoyed the company of Bagot’s aristocratic family. There was also Denison’s other significant connection both at Oxford and later in his first incumbency in the Salisbury Diocese - namely his clerical brother, Edward, a fellow of Merton, and an Oxford incumbent, who became Bishop of Salisbury in 1836. Serving from 1838 for seven years both as an incumbent in his brother’s diocese as well as his chaplain, there was ample opportunity for the older clerical brother’s influence to rub off on George Denison.

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\(^{38}\) See chapter 2.

\(^{39}\) Augustus Page Saunders (1801-1878) matriculated at Christ Church in 1819 four years before Denison. Saunders was a student of Christ Church 1823-33, and was Denison’s predecessor as curate of Cuddesdon. He was appointed a domestic chaplain to Bishop Bagot in 1832. He became Headmaster of Charterhouse in 1832, and later Dean of Peterborough. *ONDB*.

\(^{40}\) Denison recorded he frequently came to Saunders’ rooms from Oriel of an evening. *Mr Gladstone*. 1886, p35.
and influence his formation as a parish priest. Bishop Denison was in some degree empathetic towards Tractarians, but he was also critical. His High Churchmanship, evident in his charges and sermons, came out of an older strand of orthodox High Churchmanship encountered at university. The late Georgian University of Oxford the Denison brothers knew in the early nineteenth century was very much a conservative Anglican institution. *The History of the University of Oxford* sheds light on this, particularly V V H Green’s article on religion in the colleges in the eighteenth century, and M G Brocks introduction and article on early nineteenth century Oxford. The Denison brothers came from the same stable, their High Churchmanship arguably explained as having its roots in the strand of High Churchmanship that had informed late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Oxford. This strand of conservative ideology was a reactive movement responding to progressive ideologies, to Socinianism, and to assaults on the Establishment. The doctrine, social and political theology manifested in late eighteenth-century orthodox High Churchmanship and which underpinned the activities of the High Churchmen, such as those of the Hackney Phalanx, was not merely reactive: it was also was proactive. Nigel Aston, writing of George Horne and his allies, suggests these Churchmen contending for the traditional faith mounted what was in effect a ‘counter-Enlightenment’ within the Church of England - ‘false doctrine was not to be let in by the back door by compromises in vital areas of Christian belief’. This ‘counter-Enlightenment’ supplied the basis for a conservative ideology that

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43 There were also changes at Cambridge. On this see John Gascoigne’s exploration of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment at Cambridge illustrating the changing intellectual climate in the closing decades of the eighteenth century as a distinct shift away from Latitudinarian theology. *Cambridge in the age of Enlightenment: Science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution*. 1988. Gascoigne points to a tendency to increasing orthodoxy after the Feathers Tavern Petition of 1772, which marked the high water of Latitudinarianism. pp194ff, and 248ff. Also see A M C Waterman, who suggests there was a change of heart and mind in the last quarter of the century; this shift in position was particularly evident, for example, with John Hey (1734-1815), Richard Watson (1737-1816), and William Paley (1743-1805). ‘A Cambridge Via Media in late Georgian Anglicanism’, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991), p424f.
prevailed in the long years of the Continental War, and informed the politics and religion of national leaders.45

Likewise Boyd Hilton has remarked of the resurgent High Church movement of the late eighteenth century, that it was an expression of contemporary ideology in its own right, and offered something positive to Churchmen reforming and renewing the Church.46 But also underpinning High Church ideology was a return to an emphasis on revealed religion that shaped the ground of orthodox High Churchmen political and social ideology – a facet that continued with Denison and is to be found in his writings.

Priested at Christmas 1832, Denison entered upon his ministry at a momentous time, it being the eve of the new parliament that assembled early in 1833. Scholars such as J C D Clark have seen this period as the end of the old constitution – an Anglican and aristocratic hegemony under a strong monarchy - observing that the measures of 1828-32 were a point of discontinuity manifested in the consequences of reform – namely: ‘Whig or radical reform aimed against the characteristic institutions of the former social order’.47 Nevertheless, if 1828-32 altered the ground upon which the old order stood, and if the alterations of 1828-32 contained the seeds for further changes, there was no radical overturning of the social and political order. The aristocracy and gentry retained their property; the aristocracy predominated in the cabinet as it did on the episcopal bench: the Church Establishment remained; and within a few years the state assisted with structural reforms of the Church. Both Conservatives and Whigs took steps to assist the

45 Ibid.
Church to undertake major reform with the creation of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1836 and thus bolstered the Establishment.  

At the time of Denison’s ordination in 1832 there was a tide of public opinion calling for reform of the Church and its temporalities. Within the Church, however, the impulse for reform predated 1832 by several decades. Churchmen had understood reform of the Church needed to be achieved in the parishes. Efforts had been made to enhance the Church’s parochial work. There were models of institutional aids to pastoral work (for example schools and provident societies) widely introduced by nineteenth-century clergy that were of eighteenth-century origin. These societies afforded important resources complementing regional and local clerically-led initiatives that started in the eighteenth century and gathered pace in the 1790s. These initiatives have been noted by Arthur Burns in The diocesan revival in the Church of England. Burns has suggested that these efforts succeeded in part because clergy were drawn to co-operate because the narrative for the need for reform at the local and diocesan level was sustained by historical legitimation. This is what one might expect in as far as there was an historical pattern and tradition of pastoralia, and the pastoral duties of the clergy were also defined by the ordinal and by canon law. Thus Bishop Ryder in 1816 told his clergy: ‘I can have no new motives to offer, no new incentives to urge, no new views of responsibility

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48 The 1836 Act (6 & 7 Will IV.c.77) amended in 1840 (3 & 4Vcit.c.113) and by subsequent legislation. See G F A Best, Temporal pillars: Queen Anne’s Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England. 1964.

49 See chapter 3.

50 The charity school movement was the forerunner of the National Society (1811). M G Jones, The charity school movement in the XVIII century. 1938. The structure of the SPCK’s organization across dioceses was a model for the National Society. On provident societies, see for example Francis Masères (1731-1824), a barrister and an eighteenth-century advocate of provident societies, annuities, etc – Proposal for establishing life-annuities in parishes for the benefit of the industrious poor. 1772; and The principles of the doctrine of life annuities ... with a variety ... of tables. 1783. Likewise the reports of The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor offer examples of practical kinds of eighteenth-century pastoral work, which were taken up extensively by nineteenth-century clergy. On the work of the nineteenth-clergy see Anthony Russell, The clerical profession. 1980.

to bring before your eyes. I can only, in the emphatic language of St Peter, “stir up your sincere minds by way of remembrance”.52

Arthur Burns has observed two important elements that supported the diocesan revival from the 1820s. The first was the continuation of the perception stemming from the years of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars that ‘the established religion’ served as a ‘buttress’ to the ordering of society and politics.53 The second was that ‘the theology, and especially the ecclesiology of pre-Tractarian High Churchmanship was of crucial significance’. Particularly, Burns contends, the ecclesiology of pre-Tractarian High Churchmanship was important providing ‘a coherent theological and ecclesiological tradition’ that afforded an ideological framework.54 Arguably elements of the ‘counter-Enlightenment’ identified by Aston still prevailed in late Georgian Oxford of Denison’s day. There are demonstrable links across several generations of High Churchmen from late eighteenth-century Oxford to the Oxford of Denison’s day. A number of biographies and dissertations shed light on these figures. F C Mather’s biography of Horsley shows a bishop who, as a leading Churchman, resisted subversion of the Church’s formularies and practices.55 Elizabeth Varley’s biography of Van Mildert shows him to have been one of the principal High Church statesmen of his generation, an apologist and defender both of Christian revelation, and the authority inherent in tradition and the Church’s apostolic ministry.56 The roles of William Howley and Herbert Marsh have

52 Henry Ryder A charge to the clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester in the year 1816 ..., 2nd ed, 1816, p8. Henry Ryder (1777-1836), Bishop of Gloucester 1815-24. Although regarded as an Evangelical in his latter years, Ryder had been formed by his study of the Caroline divines. It was not reform, but the proper exercise of ministerial duty along the old paths defined by the prayer book and tradition that Ryder urged his clergy to greater efforts. Shute Barrington (1734-1826) successively Bishop of Llandaff (1769), Salisbury (1782) and Durham (1891-26), was likewise an advocate of eighteenth-century societies such as The Society for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, and the introduction of Sunday Schools A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Sarum at the primary visitation, in the year 1783. 1783, p103ff.


54 Ibid, pp14, and 15f.

55 F C Mather, High Church prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline tradition in the later Georgian Church. 1992, p56.

56 Elizabeth Varley, The last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the early nineteenth century, 1992. William Van Mildert (1765-1836), Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford 1813, Bishop of Llandaff 1819, Bishop of Durham 1826 till his death in
been subject of unpublished theses.\textsuperscript{57} At Oxford Van Mildert was Regius Professor of Divinity, succeeding William Howley in that office in 1813, to be followed very briefly by Frodsham Hodson in 1820, then Charles Lloyd 1822-29,\textsuperscript{58} and then Edward Burton 1829-36. The Denison brothers knew Lloyd and Burton, Edward Denison being recorded as enrolled in Lloyd’s special classes.

In London, there were links with the Hackney Phalanx, Archbishop Manners-Sutton (Denison’s sister married the archbishop’s eldest son, Charles),\textsuperscript{59} and William Howley, Manners-Sutton’s lieutenant as Bishop of London, and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. It was High Churchmen who revitalised older bodies such as the SPCK, and the founded new national voluntary bodies such as the National Society (1811), and the Incorporated Church Building Society (1818), and worked as well for legislation such as the Additional Churches Act (1818). High Church patronage made the careers of a number of significant figures, among them George Cambridge,\textsuperscript{60} Charles Blomfield, Herbert Oakeley, William Lyall, and John Lonsdale.\textsuperscript{61} At Cambridge, most particularly Trinity College, there was, for example, connection with the Wordsworths – both senior and junior\textsuperscript{62} – the latter being one with whom Denison was to become allied in a number of battles on the ‘Education Question’.

\textsuperscript{59} Charles Manners-Sutton (1755-1845), was an alumni of Trinity College Cambridge. He was Speaker of the Commons. \textit{ODNB}.
\textsuperscript{60} Archdeacon George Owen Cambridge (1756-41), was one of Manners-Sutton’s chaplains. Archdeacon of Middlesex 1808-40, Cambridge was linked with Joshua Watson, and other members of the Hackney Phalanx promoting projects such as church building, the promotion of the National Society, and founding of King’s College London.
\textsuperscript{62} Christopher Wordsworth snr (1774-1846) and his son, Christopher Wordsworth jnr (1807-1885) both stood in the old High Church Tradition. Wordsworth jnr was associated with Archdeacon Denison fighting against Kay-Shuttleworth in defence of Church schools.
Of importance for this study of Denison is Peter Nockles’ revisionist history, *The Oxford Movement in context*, reappraising the tradition of Anglican High Churchmanship as existing in a coherent form in parallel with the Tractarians. Nockles identifies both the characteristics of orthodox High Churchmanship and the principles with which he considers Tractarians identified. Importantly he provides an analysis of points where Tractarians departed from core tenets of older orthodox High Churchmen - amongst these: ecclesiology; attitudes towards the Church Establishment; appeal to antiquity and differences on the subject of the rule of faith; attitude to the Reformers; and supplementing *The Book of Common Prayer* with Roman Catholic books of devotion in the pursuit of an aesthetical life.

Nockles characterises old High Churchmen as those holding in some form: the doctrine of apostolic succession; an ecclesiology which considered the Church of England as a branch of the universal Catholic Church; belief in the supremacy of the scripture; belief that the Bible needed to be interpreted in the light of authoritative standards such as the prayer book, the catechism and the creeds, while also valuing the writings of the early Fathers as witnesses to scriptural truth when a Catholic consent of them could be established; the doctrine of sacramental grace, both in the eucharist and in baptism; and a high view of religious establishments, regarding the state as a divinely ordained, rather than merely a secular entity, and as having a duty to protect and promote the interests of the Church.

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65 On these subjects see Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in context*, chapter 2, Antiquity and the rule of faith; chapter 3, Ecclesiology: the apostolic paradigm; chapter 4, Spirituality, liturgy and worship; chapter 5, The economy of salvation: sacraments and Justification.
In terms of these key characteristics Denison was arguably very much an old High Churchman. Denison believed, except for a short period in his life, that the Church was to be considered as incorporated within the constitution. Denison deprecated the idea that the Church establishment was a mere human construct and subservient to the State, and did not identify with Froude’s radical idea that the Establishment was an incubus.\textsuperscript{67} His ecclesiology was grounded on the traditional High Church ‘branch’ theory. He considered the Church of England to be the Catholic Church in England and a providential gift of God.\textsuperscript{68} He considered the essentials of the Catholic Church were contained within the prayer book – the authority of the scriptures, the creeds, the liturgy, apostolic succession, order and discipline.\textsuperscript{69} Moreover, Denison, critical of the Continental Reformers, believed that it was Providence that had effected the English Reformation, avoiding the errors of the Continent, and considered the English Reformers had removed accretions to restore the Church of England so that it was in accord with the Primitive Church.\textsuperscript{70}

In contrast Nockles notices that the ecclesiology of those, such as Pusey and Keble, who differed from the older High Church ‘branch’ theory - their ‘allegiance focused on the universal rather their own particular church’. They gave their ecclesiology ‘an ecumenical gloss’.\textsuperscript{71} Nockles also notes those who wrote reasserting the traditional High Church view of Branch theory.\textsuperscript{72} All of these men were associates of Denison. Nockles also observes it was old High Churchmen ‘who espoused a pan-Anglicanism associated with the rise of colonial churches’.\textsuperscript{73} Again Denison can be included in this category, shown in the context of proposals for the revision of \textit{The Book of Common Prayer} when he drew attention to the exclusion of the colonial dioceses. He manifested pan-Anglicanism again in his concept for a ‘Church House’ to be built.

\textsuperscript{68} On Denison’s concept of Church and State see chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{69} See chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{70} See also chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, p180.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. Amongst the defenders of the theory were: G E Biber, \textit{The Standard of Catholicity} (1840); Christopher Wordsworth Junior, \textit{Theophilus Anglicanus} (1843); R W Jelf, \textit{Via media} (1844); William Barter, \textit{English Church not in schism} (1845).
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p182.
at Westminster to serve the corporate interests of the Church, standing at the centre of the country’s capital, and at the centre of the empire.  

Denison was firm in his adherence to the notion of the scripture as an authoritative Divine revelation. He maintained also a conservative adherence to the Caroline tradition of biblical interpretation, always insistent that ‘the Church of the Apostles and the first fathers of the Church’ was the teacher of the ‘Faith’. Denison showed no indication that he was tempted to follow in the footsteps of Newman and turn to antiquity as ‘an absolute standard and court of appeal’. Denison saw in Newman a rationalist mindset. A notion such as the doctrine of development was alien to Denison’s conservative mold. For Denison there was only one Faith – that ‘once delivered to the Saints’: recourse to speculation and rationalism he viewed as a manifestation of original sin.

With regard to the doctrine of the sacraments, Denison’s doctrine rested on a high view of the efficacy of grace. The path to his doctrine of the real presence had its origin in his adherence to the prayer book doctrine of regeneration in the sacrament of baptism. In this matter he is better linked to Bishop Phillpotts’ line of argument in defence of the efficacy of grace in infant baptism as being entirely independent of anything in the receiver. Denison’s argument for the doctrine of the real presence was essentially a correlative of Phillpotts’ line of argument. The arguments Denison adduced in his sermons on the real presence were derived from sources with which he was well acquainted - the scriptures, the prayer book and homilies. He notably eschewed Anglican divines, and made no appeal to the Church Fathers - indeed there is no evidence in his writings to show he had studied them.

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74 G A Denison, *Speech of the Archdeacon of Taunton at the first meeting of the executive committee in the matter of a memorial to the late Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Jerusalem Chamber, January 15, 1883*, p6.
77 See chapter 5.
78 G A Denison, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords?* 1851, p16. See chapter six on Denison’s doctrine of the sacraments.
Denison’s promulgation of the real presence drew a parallel with the prayer book doctrine of regeneration at baptism in order to argue that grace was a gift of God and not dependent on the merits of the receiver. Denison belief that the presence followed the act of consecration was not original. Only two generations before, as F C Mather has pointed out, Bishop Horsley had held that as a consequence of the consecration there was a change in the elements and a subsequent presence of Christ, although the bishop did not define the nature of the presence.79 However Denison’s argument for the doctrine of the real presence was peculiarly his own – it did not rest on a Tractarian appeal to antiquity.80

Denison for much of his life was conservative in his liturgical practice, although observant of the discipline and attentive to the rubrics of the prayer book. He allowed his parish to become more advanced in the 1870s, influenced in all likelihood by his nephew, Henry Denison, but also as a more colourful way of expressing his sacramental doctrine. Denison’s adoption of more advanced ceremony was, however, limited. Denison, the Christ Church ‘hearty’ was not interested in the minutiae of ritualism. He cannot be counted, therefore, as one who was drawn to the aestheticism that Nockles considers as another characteristic of Tractarianism. While Denison was committed to the notion of the importance of religion in every aspect of life, he was happy to see this as expressed in the normal round of every day life and in gatherings of community for cricket matches and harvest homes. Denison was not drawn to supplement the prayer book with Roman Catholic books of devotion. He defended the importance of confession as this was allowed for in the prayer book, but was not drawn to sacramental confession.

79  F C Mather, High Church prophet, p204.
80  The matter somewhat altered in the conduct of Denison’s defence in the course of his trial. Charles Grueber, who provided the theological input to Denison’s defence team, appealed to the Anglican Divines and the Church Fathers. See for example C S Grueber, Article XXIX considered in reference to the three sermons of the Archdeacon of Taunton. [1854]). Likewise Chambers’ researches on Thorndike were brought into play in Denison’s defence (David Chambers, The doctrine of the holy eucharist as expounded by Herbert Thorndike DD .... Forming a digest of a series of authorities as to the points in question in Archdeacon Denison’s case, down to the year 1720. 1855.) Likewise, Pusey’s The doctrine of the real presence as set forth in the works of the divines and others in the English Church, 1855, and the subsequent The real presence of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ the doctrine of the English Church, with a vindication of the reception of the wicked and of the adoration of our Lord Jesus truly present. 1857.
Ultimately, however, Denison is defined by his strong, conservative adherence to his native Church, as David Newsome recognised many years ago. His adherence to the Church Establishment within the constitution marks him as belonging to the old High Church tradition, and differentiates him from Tractarians in their attitude to Church Establishment following the reform measures of 1828-32. As Simon Skinner has argued there was a critical difference:

The critical difference between the ‘Ys’ and ‘Zs’ classified by Froude’s shorthand should not, however, be minimized. In general, what was distinctive about Tractarian vis-à-vis Hanoverian High-Church attitudes to establishment remains more significant than what was common; the ‘change’, in other words, is more striking than the ‘continuity’.  

Skinner has pointed to discontinuity evident in the perception of men such as Keble as to the implications of the reformed parliament for the position of the Church. There remains the question how many Churchmen, lacking Keble’s keen appreciation of constitutional and ecclesial issues, questioned the assumptions upon which they continued to work within the Church Establishment? Arguably older scholarly conclusions seem to be valid: that is to say with regard to the anomalous position of the Church after the Reform Bills, the old conceptions were neither completely abandoned, nor any new principle or theory averred.  

Denison’s writings that appear from 1847 onwards show that the adjustments of 1828-32 did not suggest to him that he should abandon his belief in a Church Establishment. Rather he showed that he was a stout defender of a providentially ordained nexus between Church and State. This was a defence that is explained by

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his understanding of the meta-narrative of the scriptures as an authoritative revelation of the operation of God’s Providence in history.  

Denison’s name also appears in the historiography of nineteenth-century popular education. There are significant examples of categorization of Denison in connection with the ‘Education Question’ that are redolent of Whiggism – a perspective that regards Denison as an obstacle to the march of progress. Descriptors used of his stance on Church schools are pejorative – for example Marjorie Cruickshank’s ‘Medieval party’, Peter Marsh’s ‘blinkered’ and ‘uncompromising denominationalist’, Soloway’s ‘Puseyite Vicar of East Brent’, and Burgess’ ‘reaction of extremist clergymen led by G A Denison’. The labels used of Denison reference a religious set of mind, and by that token an obstructionist. This begs the question as to the assumptions made when such labels are used. Is there a suggestion of teleology – that Denison’s religious principles hindered the progress of popular education in the march to a system of universal elementary education serving a modern liberal state, and Denison was thus a reactionary standing against the inevitable separation and disentangling of the Church as an agent within local and broader society?  

A question as to how popular education was conceived in the mid-nineteenth century arises, as well as questions as to how the objectives of those who promoted popular education, including the clergy who formed the largest group promoting schools, might be discerned. Denison’s campaigns on behalf of Church schools were neither conceived nor conducted in a vacuum. For several years he attracted

83 See chapter 4.  
85 Peter Marsh, The Victorian Church in decline. 1969, pp46 & 73.  
88 G R Elton has commented on the ‘assumption of social purpose (that the historian must offer to society a demonstration of its power to advance itself) and then they eliminate any use of history which does not contribute to this purpose. For this reason they do fall into the deterministic error of choosing from the variety of history the line of events and detail which leads to their own present position, their pre-conceived end’. Cited in John Tosh, Historians on history, p28.
considerable support, as is suggested by the considerable correspondence in the Pusey House archives, meetings of the National Society and articles carried in Church periodicals. The ground or principles upon which Denison stood (which presumably reflect those of his supporters) arguably form part of the historical narrative. As G F A Best has contended, those involved in the debate over popular education ‘faced problems and had intentions rather different from our own’. The exclusion of religion, Best has argued, would have been foreign to men and women for much of the nineteenth century, because religion was intrinsic to their perspective. Indeed, as scholars such as David Roberts and Simon Gunn have demonstrated, nineteenth-century voluntarism was intimately linked with religion.

Problems of interpretation arise when history, as G R Elton has argued, is focused on ‘progressive and deterministic elements’ and become an account of progress in which the historian distinguishes ‘what is better and what is worst’. In a similar vein, Frank Turner has contended much intellectual history written about the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century has marginalized religion with a consequent distortion of historical interpretation and understanding: ‘so much intellectual history has been written as a story of the movement from illiberal to liberal ideas or from reaction to progress’. More recently J C D Clark has commented critically on the secularizing paradigm he sees in historical analysis that he considers owes much to sociologists who see ‘modernization’ as synonymous with ‘secularization’, and furthermore understand secularization as a process with parallels to natural science, as ‘naturally occurring’. The meta-narrative that has

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arisen out of the theory of secularization, Clark argues, has eclipsed research on the
history of religion and its complexities – secularization representing ‘a process by
which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious
institutions and symbols’.  

The intrinsic importance of religion to Denison’s understanding of the world can be
demonstrated by an examination of his doctrine and social and political theology
contained in his writings. However, this is not the only avenue. Arguably account
should be taken of the practical ministry that Denison undertook. As the clergy of
the Established Church were embedded in the fabric of their society, one should be
wary of attempts to disentangle the religious from the practical and from the
community. With respect to the rural world of the nineteenth-century parish in the
part of the country in which Denison exercised his ministry, evidence adduced in
this study shows there was no evident separation of the Church from the
community in which it was set. Rural clergy served as significant agents of
amelioration, improvement and quasi-local government within their parishes until
the very end of the century when, under the terms of the 1894 Local Government
Act, parish councils were introduced. And even then, many rural clergy took a
significant role in the new parish councils – often assuming the role of chairman.

Again, there were features in common that were not necessarily shaped along party
lines – a paternalistic approach by clergy to their communities, and common views
as to pastoral practice and institutional improvements. Thus, if the High Church
Denison was king in his rural parish, so equally was Denison’s neighbour, the
Evangelical Joseph Ditcher. Some of Denison’s opposition to interference by Kay-

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95 J C D Clark, ‘Secularization and modernization: the failure of a ‘Grand narrative’, in The Historical
96 The writer has observed this to have been the case in several parishes in which he served as
curate and incumbent.
Shuttleworth in the battle over Church schools can be explained in part by Denison’s strong individualism. But such opposition was not confined to Denison, for while a gradual increase in statist intervention, and a parallel growth of bureaucracy was a feature of the revolution in nineteenth-century government, there was also, as Oliver MacDonagh has noted, widespread resistance to bureaucracy and interference.98 MacDonagh has considered many of the new breed of nineteenth-century civil servants, such as Edwin Chadwick and Charles Trevelyan, to have been ‘crusading, war-lording and empire-building’, and were thus often ‘statesmen in disguise’ engaging in politics.99 The same might be said of James Kay-Shuttleworth against whose centralizing regulatory policies Denison battled. Kay-Shuttleworth was forced to resign in 1849, and it was his centralizing policies that Lauren Goodlad has argued were his undoing.100 The path to centralization was not smooth, and was hardly fully effected in the course of Denison’s life-time. Furthermore, not only was the State’s approach to popular education itself essentially ad hoc for many years, but there were other factors such as the amended Poor Law, and lack of legislation with respect to the employment of children in agriculture that conflicted with progress in rural education. Again, a coherent system of universal elementary education took much of the span of Denison’s life to evolve.

**Purpose of the Study**

So Denison remains a prisoner of an older historiography. Examination of his extensive corpus of writings and other material suggests that the assumptions that

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98 Oliver MacDonagh has observed that opposition to the enlarged role of the State ‘is further demonstrated by the fact that in several instances in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, there was an immediate reaction against collectivist and centralizing measures which had been passed and which had been passed and a very considerable loss of ground; also by the fact, that taking a broad view of the period as a whole, we find that the initial waves of centralizing and administrative bustle in 1830-1850 are followed by two decades of relative indifference and inaction’. *Early Victorian government, 1830-70*, 1977, p9.


100 Lauren M E Goodland, ‘“Making the working man like me”: Charity, pastorship, and middle class identity in nineteenth-century Britain; Thomas Chalmers and Dr James Phillips Kay’, in *Victorian Studies*, 43 (2000-01), p611.
underlie the categories with which he has been identified ought to be challenged and revised. The underlying proposition is that Denison was an ‘indigenous and fiercely conservative Anglican’ - to use Newsome’s phrase; that he represented a continuing strand of High Church doctrine and ideology that extended well beyond the divide of 1828-32; and that it is possible to investigate this strand because Denison has left a considerable body of polemical pamphlets, published sermons, charges, and correspondence. A further proposition is that analysis of Denison’s writings taken together with consideration of the conditions that shaped his work and some account of the wider circumstances political and social that impinged on his career, afford an explanation of Denison’s motivation as a parish priest, as well as explain Denison the controversialist.

Sources

Unusual in a country parson, Denison has left a considerable written record that allows a window to his thoughts, particularly his doctrine, and his social and political theology. Denison is silent for the first forty-two years of his life. Thereafter he appears as an indefatigable writer. His publications, occupying eleven columns of the old British Museum lithographic catalogue, include charges, sermons, speeches in Convocation and Church Congresses, and his own periodical, *Church and State Review*. Further records of speeches are to be found in *Proceedings of the Convocation of Canterbury*, in the records of the annual meetings of the National Society and in the reports of the successive of Church Congresses. Much of Denison’s early correspondence, and record of outward letters, was lost when accidentally committed to the fire. A considerable body of correspondence remains, the principal sources being his niece’s published compilation, *Fifty years at East Brent*, and a manuscript collection in the archives at Pusey House. Other sources of letters and reports are to be found in national newspapers and the (Church) *Guardian*. Denison also wrote two autobiographical retrospectives, *Notes on my life*,

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1805-1878 (1879), and his *Supplement to ‘Notes on my life’* (1893), in which he commented on events and issues.

However, as Coombs noted in her biography, Denison left little in the way of personal records. Just as his autobiographical focus was on the ecclesiastical and political issues in which he became involved, his correspondence has the same focus, there being little of an intimate or personal nature. He was not a diarist, and thus has left scant record of his everyday activities and work. Although Denison described in his *Notes on my life* some of the more significant projects he undertook in his parishes, there are only occasional comments that shed light on conditions in his parishes and the lives of the agricultural labourers and their families. However, a number of royal commissions established to investigate conditions obtaining in families and children of agricultural labourers, offer extensive evidence of conditions in rural communities and the role of clergy. Although Denison made no contribution to these Commissions, evidence given by his friends, and clerical neighbours, supply a fair insight to rural conditions that obtained in his part of the West Country in the period of his career. Denison accepted the economic necessities that shaped the lives of his labouring families as a fact of life, and worked within these constraints. Clergy, such as Denison, dealt with the social and economic conditions as they found them – typically harsh for agricultural labouring families\(^{101}\) – often taking such measures as they could to make ameliorative improvements.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{101}\) Emma Griffin has brought to light remarkable nineteenth-century accounts of those who abandoned the agricultural world for industrial cities, and recounting the typical harshness of agricultural labour. *Liberty’s dawn: A people’s history of the industrial revolution*. 2013.

\(^{102}\) Soloway has adopted a somewhat sceptical view, suggesting the Church sought to justify its privileges in terms of its usefulness to the State. *Ibid*, p349. This may have been true, but utility was not, as is argued in this study, to be understood merely a Benthamite sense – the Church’s usefulness had a strong religious dimension: that is it fulfilled its duty to the State and society by teaching the Christian faith. Implicit is such a notion of utility was a Christian theology of society. On this second point Soloway’s own review of the episcopal bench suggests his generalizations requires qualification. *Ibid*, p349. Bishops such as George Law (Chester), Richard Bagot (Oxford and Bath & Wells), Edward Denison (Salisbury) and Henry Phillipotts (Exeter) would not have subscribed to the notion of rational effectiveness as mark of the Church.
The Chapters

The chapters in this thesis are thematic, though each chapter is structured chronologically as far as possible. **Chapter two** provides a biographical sketch of Denison’s family background and education. Attention is given to the tenets of Anglican orthodoxy that still characterized Oxford teaching in early decades of the nineteenth century. Subsequent chapters show these tenets resonate in Denison’s polemical writings, revealing the formative influence of this orthodoxy.

**Chapter three** addresses the background to Denison’s career for over half a century as a rural incumbent, examining ways in which his life in a rural community served as a further influence shaping his outlook and understanding. Although nineteenth-century England saw many changes in the course of the century, rural England, which Denison inhabited, changed very little. The study draws on evidence from royal commissions to demonstrate this, and illustrate the context and conditions that West Country clergy met with in their work. As subsequent chapters show, Denison’s outlook on the world and his conservative ideology did not alter in the course of his life – a mindset that might be explained both by his own innate conservatism, but also by his career as country incumbent and archdeacon, and a rural community that changed little.

The two following chapters consider doctrine and ideology that shaped Denison’s understanding and perspective of the world, and show these to have been fundamentally the tenets of an old-fashioned orthodox High Churchman. **Chapter four** looks at Denison’s engagement in a series of theological controversies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Analysis of his polemical writings provides an insight to Denison’s orthodox understanding of the status of the Bible as an authoritative, divine revelation of God’s dealing with man and the continuing operation of Providence. This is of significance, revealing him as a man whose
perception of the world was shaped by this understanding of the scriptures. **Chapter five** follows on to consider the significance of Denison’s orthodox understanding of the scriptures as this undergirded his doctrine of Church and State within the English constitution, and his orthodox view that the relation of individual with individual, as well as the ordering of society and its government, were a part of the working of that providence.

**Chapter six** address reasons for Denison’s engagement with controversy over doctrine of the sacraments, examining developments in doctrine of the eucharistic sacrament, and his particular presentation of the doctrine of the real presence that led to his prosecution. Although his doctrine of the real presence was more advanced than many older High Churchmen were prepared to concede, Denison’s position on the eucharist is shown to have arisen out of the Gorham controversy and his desire to defend what he considered to be prayer book doctrine. Denison’s path in development of the doctrine of the real presence, although indebted to men such as Pusey and R I Wilberforce, but also those such as Henry Phillpotts, is shown to be peculiarly his own.

**Chapter seven** recounts Denison’s relation with ritualism and the reasons why he came to empathize with ritualist clergy. Again, this is shown to be a path peculiarly his own (ie not a progression from Tractarianism as Bentley has argued), but arising out of doctrinal convictions as well as his own experience at the hands of prosecutors. Thus he opposed persecution of ritualists by those who denied the Catholic identity of the Church of England. Denison’s partial adoption of ritualism is ascertained, as is his rejection of the individualism of full-blown ritualists as unacceptable to his old-fashioned conservatism. It is argued that assertions that he can be identified as a ritualist require substantial qualification.

In **Chapter eight** examination is made of the position Denison adopted on the ‘Education Question’ – that is the question that arose with respect to the
relationship between voluntaryism and the State, and the allied issue of the respective roles of the Church and the State in the provision of education for the poorer classes in the nineteenth century. This chapter is left to last as explanation of Denison’s stance on Church education draws on material developed in previous chapters. Denison’s battle for Church schools was a manifestation of one of the central traits of nineteenth-century voluntaryism – Christian charity. His world was religious; in Denison’s case, a world explained by his old-fashioned Anglican orthodoxy shaping his view of a providentially ordered society, and his particular station in life which enabled him to serve his community. In an absence of local government agencies, Denison manifested a strong streak of nineteenth-century individualism as a leader within his local society and agent of amelioration for his villagers. His high view of his role as a priest and his high view of the sacraments was significant suggest an emotional commitment to his ministry among his people. Men such as Denison did not entertain centrist intervention lightly, especially if centrist intervention ignored the realities on the ground, or subverted the religious premise upon which their work was conducted.
'The Childhood shows the man,  
As morning shows the day.'


‘We were brought up lovingly, tenderly, gently, wisely; never coddled, always cared for; in true subjection, but free from fear.’

G A Denison, *Notes of my Life*. 1878, p1

‘The child is the father of the man.’

William Wordsworth, *My heart leaps up*. 
CHAPTER TWO

Family antecedents, education
and early influences

The Denison family

George Denison was born on 11 December 1805, in the reign of George III, just seven weeks and two days after the Battle of Trafalgar. He lived to a ripe old age, dying in his ninety-first year on 21 March 1896. During the span of Denison’s long life, England was transformed. The population of nearly nine million at the beginning of the nineteenth century rose to twenty-nine million by 1891.¹ Britain’s landscape was changed by the revolution in manufacturing which saw the growth of great industrial cities, together with the emergence of an industrial proletariat.² Denison’s career, however, was as a country incumbent for sixty-four years. The whole of his public life, that is from 1847 when he first appeared in print on the education question and other public debates, till almost the end of his days, was conducted from his country vicarage in rural Somerset. This was made possible by his significant family connections in London and Westminster, and by improvements in communications - the railway, the postal system, mechanical printing, and the journals and newspapers which flourished correspondingly.³

¹ The population, estimated at 8,893 million in 1801, had reached 17,928 million by 1851, 29,003 by 1891. See B R Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British historical statistics, 1962, p6.
² Urban populations soared in manufacturing cities, for example: Manchester grew from 75,000 in 1801 to 303,000 by 1851; Liverpool from 82,000 to 376,000 in the same period; as did Birmingham from 71,000 to 233,000. Bristol, which Denison would have known, increased its population from 61,000 in 1801 to 137,000 in 1851, reaching 207,000 by 1881. Ibid, p24. Population increases were not confined to urban areas. Somerset increased its population rising from 274,000 in 1801 to 444,000 by 1851, rising to a peak of 463,000 in 1871. Ibid, p20.
³ On the technological and social reasons for the rise of periodical production see John S North, ‘The rationale – Why read Victorian periodicals?’ in J Don Vann and Rosemary T Van Arsdel (eds),
George Denison was born into a wealthy, upwardly mobile family, that acquired considerable landholdings, and with that, social and political connections. His father, John Denison (c.1758-1820), had his seat at Ossington Hall in Nottinghamshire, and Denison was a child of his father’s second marriage.\(^4\) George’s upbringing as the child of a very wealthy country gentleman was made possible by his great uncle William Denison,\(^5\) who had invested in land on a large scale, so that by the 1770s he had purchased many thousands of acres throughout Yorkshire, Durham, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire.\(^6\) At his death in 1782, William Denison’s surviving younger brother, Robert, inherited some seven estates, and it was Robert who saw the beginning of the gentrification of the Denison family, settling at Ossington Hall, which he furnished in the latest taste and at considerable expense from London cabinet-makers. As a testimony to his new-found status as a wealthy landed gentleman he sat for the fashionable portrait painter, George Romney, for a full-length portrait – full length being a statement of status.\(^7\) Robert died in 1785, and the principal part of this Denison fortune, estimated by contemporary Leeds newspapers to be worth as much as seven hundred thousand pounds, passed to his only sister’s sons.\(^8\) Of these, John Wilkinson, the father of

\(^4\) John Denison married first Maria Horlock producing two daughters, Charlotte and Matilda; and second Charlotte Eastwick, this marriage issuing in eleven further children: three girls and eight boys.

\(^5\) See Richard, Wilson, ‘Ossington and the Denisons’, in History Today, March (1968), p164. His father had inherited his estate from his mother’s brothers, who had died without issue. These brothers, William Denison (1713/14-1782), Robert Denison (1719/20-1785), and Matthew Denison (1725-1758) were cloth-merchants - partners in an extremely successful and prosperous business. They followed in the steps of their father, Robert Denison, who had made his fortune as a cloth-buyer, exporting to the Netherlands, Italy and Portugal.

\(^6\) See Richard, Wilson, ‘Ossington and the Denisons’, in History Today, March (1968), p164. His father had inherited his estate from his mother’s brothers, who had died without issue. These brothers, William Denison (1713/14-1782), Robert Denison (1719/20-1785), and Matthew Denison (1725-1758) were cloth-merchants - partners in an extremely successful and prosperous business. They followed in the steps of their father, Robert Denison, who had made his fortune as a cloth-buyer, exporting to the Netherlands, Italy and Portugal.

\(^7\) R Wilson, ODNB, and ‘Ossington Denisons’, p167. Romney (1734-1802) was a fashionable London portrait painter of the latter part of the eighteenth century, contemporary with Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88).

\(^8\) The sister was Anne Wilkinson. Her husband, John Wilkinson appears to have been successfully established in allied businesses, being variously described as a dyer, packer, and London factor. Wilson states John’s involvement in the Leeds firm is unclear, but considers he would have benefited from association with his prosperous Leeds brothers-in-law. He sat for a full-length portrait by Gainsborough.
George Anthony Denison, was the eldest and inherited the bulk of his uncle’s estate. Robert Denison’s will stipulated that the three Wilkinson boys were to continue the family business at Leeds. In deference to his two uncles, John Wilkinson changed his name to Denison by deed poll in April 1785, but he was more inclined to pursue the life of a country gentleman than that of a merchant in Leeds. With his seat at Ossington Hall, and a considerable income to support him, John Denison altered his family’s centre of gravity away from their northern manufacturing origins southwards to London, taking a house at Portman Square in the fashionable west end.

John Denison’s considerable wealth and extensive land-holdings made him a man of some significance and led him to seek a seat in Parliament. Samuel Estwick (1736-95), a West-Indian planter, John’s father-in-law by his second marriage and George Anthony Denison’s maternal grandfather, was also an MP, sitting for Westbury from 1779 till his death. George Denison’s father was a nominal Whig, but manifested a conservative independence. Something of this was shown when, in March 1802, John undertook to stand as a Whig candidate for the Borough of Colchester but stated: ‘In giving my support to the present administration ... I shall not lose sight of those independent principles which have hitherto actuated my public conduct.’ It seems he did ‘not like the party’, his relationship with it being loose and intermittent. As a neighbour of Lord Portland, he was brought into connection with the Whigs as a form of duty as a landowner. Politics at this time were, however, 

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10 John Denison first entered the Commons in 1796, nominally in the Whig interests as member for Wootton Bassett, as a ‘guest’ of Viscount Bolingbroke. As a ‘guest’, Denison would have paid a consideration to be nominated for the seat. R G Thorne, *The history of Parliament. The House of Commons 1790-1820*. Vol 3, 1976, p538. His period in the Commons coincided with the panic and ‘political confusion of parties’ that followed on the French Revolution and the ensuing continental war. See Richard Pares, *King George III and the politicians*. 1953, p195. This confusion saw the landed proprietors and middle classes range themselves behind Pitt the Younger and the King.

11 *The Times*, 21 June 1802.

fluid – the Whigs, for example, formed the nucleus of Pitt’s Tory administration, and Lord Portland, a leading Whig, was a member of the cabinet.13

George Denison and his siblings

With these advantages, several of George Denison’s siblings achieved a degree of prominence, while many of them contracted advantageous marriages in terms of wealth, as well as political and aristocratic connections. Though Denison himself became a country parson, he had the advantages of connections with aristocratic county and metropolitan society, and, at Westminster, links with the political world. These afforded him a position and links far more extensive than might be suggested by the occupant of a mere country vicarage.

Three of George’s brothers came to prominence. Their political and social views are suggestive of the family’s outlook which informed the youthful George’s own views in the period when he held a fellowship at Oriel. His eldest brother, John Evelyn Denison, entered upon a parliamentary career as a Whig immediately after coming down from Oxford in 1823.14 He was elected Speaker of the Commons in 1857, retaining office for fifteen years till his resignation in 1872, when he was created Viscount Ossington.15 Evelyn married Charlotte Cavendish-Scott-Bentinck, the third daughter of the fourth Duke of Portland, linking Evelyn with a prominent Whig family. However, Evelyn’s politics, like his father’s, were essentially confined to the conservative interests of a landowner with a disposition to moderate reform.16 His

13 Richard Pares, King George III and the politicians. 1953, p194.
14 J Evelyn Denison (1800-1873), Viscount Ossington (1872). Evelyn Denison represented a series of constituencies:- 1823 Newcastle-under-Lyme; 1826-30 Hastings; 1831-2 Nottinghamshire (the County was divided by the 1832 parliamentary reform measure); 1832-37 South Nottinghamshire; 1841-1857 Borough of Malton; 1857-1872 North Nottinghamshire. ODNB.
15 See The Times obituary 8 March 1873. Selections from J E Denison’s journal during his years as Speaker were published posthumously in 1899 as Notes from my journal when Speaker of the House of Commons.
16 His politics were described by his obituarist in The Times as ‘those of a modest liberal’. The Times, 8 March 1873, 5 col f.
maiden speech, on the issue of reform, demonstrated his conservatism and hesitancy. Evelyn Denison was no democrat: his support for electoral reform was grounded on the qualification of property, tempered by a balance between landed and other interests. He was a pragmatist in the matter of Roman Catholic Emancipation. He said he rejoiced ‘to find the religious differences were no longer to be considered as the ground for political disqualification’. In the matter of reform of the Irish Church, Evelyn Denison adopted a position of compromise. In August 1836 he espoused the Whig policy of conciliation with the majority of Roman Catholic Irish people while attempting to preserve the Irish Church. He supported the Whig proposal for the suspension of ten bishoprics and those livings in which duty had not been performed in the previous ten years.

Edward Denison (1801-1854), the second eldest brother, was consecrated as Bishop of Salisbury in 1836 at the age of thirty-five, having been nominated to the see by the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. Edward’s rise in the Church of England had been rapid. He obtained a fellowship at Merton College, taking holy orders the following year, and was then appointed Vicar of the Oxford parish of St Peter in the East in 1834. Edward was thus a fraternal presence in Oxford during a significant part of George’s tenure of his fellowship at Oriel College (1828-1838).

18 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 6, 17 August 1832, col 192.
19 PD, 2nd Series, Vol 19, 12 May 1828, cols 631-633
20 ‘There are two great objects to be obtained: first to maintain the Establishment, which from its anomalous character, requires a mode of reasoning unsuited to any other case and particularly its own; secondly to give some satisfaction and contentment to the Irish people.’ PD, 2nd Series Vol 20, 30 March 1829, cols 1552-3.
21 ‘The real question involved is no less a one than this: in the settlement of Irish affairs, should the great body of the Irish people be considered, or not taken into account?’ PD, 3rd Series, Vol 38, 2 August 1836, col 817.
22 Ibid, His position on the charge that such a measure would see the dis-endowment of Church property was that tithes were, sui generis, monies levied in a specific locality for the work of the Church in that locality: tithes were not in that sense transferable property.
23 Melbourne disliked political bishops, declining to consider either Thomas Arnold or R D Hampden. Edward’s nomination thus owed much to his apolitical character and the absence of controversial publications by him. See Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Pt I, p122.
Edward Denison’s political and social views were similar to those of his older brother Evelyn. Manifesting a mild liberalism in his Oxford days, Edward was also prepared to allow concessions to Roman Catholics in 1829. Bishop Denison manifested a High Churchmanship formed in Oxford within the circle of Charles Lloyd, then Regius Professor and later Bishop of Oxford. Edward’s elevated view of the Church and its ministry manifested itself in his relief that Richard Whately, whom he knew well at Oriel as a leading Noetic, was passed over as a successor to the orthodox High Church Archbishop William Howley. As a bishop, Edward Denison can be classed with Samuel Wilberforce as a conservative High Churchman who brought reforming zeal and improvements to the administration of his diocese. He travelled widely in his diocese, extending the number of centres where he confirmed. Edward’s correspondence with Samuel Wilberforce suggests there was empathy between the two men – it was to Edward that Wilberforce turned for advice on examining ordination candidates after the latter was appointed to the see of Oxford. With respect to the Oxford Movement, Bishop Denison had

25 Charles Lloyd (1784-1829) was Librarian and Censor at Christ Church, Preacher of Lincoln’s Inn (1819-22), and then Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford (1822-1829). Lloyd was consecrated Bishop of Oxford in 1827, but continued in office as Regius Professor till his death in 1829. ODNB.
27 Soloway has written of Bishop Denison reforming energy: ‘Elevated to the See of Salisbury in 1837 at the age of thirty-six, Denison was a diligent, reforming bishop who spent long hours visiting the poor, even during cholera epidemics. During his seventeen years at Salisbury he preached regularly on Sundays when in the cathedral town, and donated more than £17,000 to charity, saving nothing from his episcopal income.’ Prelates and people, p190.
28 Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Pt 2, p342; Arthur Burns, The diocesan revival in the Church of England, p132.
29 See A R Ashwell, The Right Rev Samuel Wilberforce, Vol 2, 1880-82, p58f. Also see R K Pugh (ed), The letter books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68, letters 396 and 490. It was Edward Denison to whom Wilberforce wrote on his appointment as Bishop of Oxford in 1845, asking him ‘to send a sketch plan of your ordination examinations. I find my first ordination just at hand and shall be most thankful for the most minute and practical sketch of that which your Lordship has aimed at and found practicable that you could give me’. Samuel Wilberforce to Edward Denison 17 November, 1845 in ibid, No 71, p47. Soloway notes Wilberforce’s concession that Denison was one of the few prelates as capable as he. Prelates and people, p190. Citing Wilberforce to Gladstone, 26 December 1851, Ps, Bodleian Library Dep D 204, ff 281-6.
reservations. He shared Wilberforce’s concerns about Pusey’s teaching and the latter’s adoption of Roman material for private confession, and he was condemnatory of Tract XC.⁴⁰ One of the reasons he advanced for opposing proposals for re-allocation of cathedral revenues was his suspicion of Tractarianism at Oxford. Cathedral foundations afforded the possibility that they might serve as centres of theology independent of Tractarian influence. Despite these reservations about Tractarians, Owen Chadwick considers that Bishop Denison was ‘always judged with sympathy’ by the Tractarian element of Church.³¹ The bishop found some common ground with the Tractarians, sharing their concern at the liberal Renn Dickson Hampden’s appointment to the episcopal bench,³² and Edward was one of thirteen bishops who signalled their objection to Lord John Russell’s appointment of Hampden. Denison, though a Whig appointment, stood on this issue with the Tory and High Church bishops, against the Whig bishops who included his old Provost of Oriel College, Edward Copleston, Bishop of Llandaff.³³

In his relations with Archbishop Sumner Edward displayed a Denison family characteristic of doughty independence. He objected strongly to Sumner’s failure to react more firmly in the matter of the establishment of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850.³⁴ He clashed again with the archbishop three years later in the matter of the right of Convocation to sit and conduct business. Denison, together with other High Church bishops – Henry Phillpotts of Exeter, Ashurst Gilbert of

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³⁰ Edward Denison to Samuel Wilberforce 26 April 1851, in A R Ashwell, Life of Bishop Wilberforce, Vol 2, p98. On the Tract, see W M Jacob, ODNB.


³² Renn Dickson Hampden (1793-1868), Professor of Moral Philosophy, Oxford, 1834; Regius Professor of Divinity, Oxford, 1836; Bishop of Hereford 1847.

³³ Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Pt 1, p239, n1. Edward Copleston (1776-1849); Fellow of Oriel (1795), Tutor 1799; Vicar of St Mary’s (1800); Provost of Oriel (1814-1828); Dean of Chester (1826); Dean of St Paul’s, and Bishop of Llandaff 1828. Richard Brent notes of Copleston that in theology ‘he attacked the external threats to Anglican orthodoxy, in particular the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. However, his methods were liberal: he utilized new means for conservative ends’. ODNB. Copleston was elected a member of Nobody’s Friends in 1828. Club of Nobody’s Friends: biographical list, p98.

³⁴ ‘I cannot say how vexed I am with the Archbishop ... I am very glad that I wrote, very plainly expressing my dissatisfaction. Though I wrote two letters, adding some further criticisms in my second, his Grace has not made any reply or taken any notice of my letters.’ Edward Denison to Samuel Wilberforce [November 1850], in A R Ashwell, Life of Bishop Wilberforce, Vol 2, p58.
Chichester, and Samuel Wilberforce of Oxford – formally protested against the archbishop’s prorogation of Convocation without the assent of his fellow bishops.  

The need for independent ecclesiastical government and the reform of the Church to meet the needs of contemporary society were long-held views of Bishop Denison. Ten years before, speaking in the Lords, he had decried the Church’s lack of legislative independence and capacity to govern herself:

> The position of the Church was most objectionable as a body without any power of self-legislation, or authority, by internal arrangements to settle matters in which might be required adaptation, alteration, or abrogation. The inconveniences from this state of things, were most weighty and painful, pressing every day on the consideration of those who were exposed to them by their position. 

A third brother, General Sir William Denison (1804-71), was a year older than George. As children he and George were close playmates, were at school together, and later tutored together at home at Ossington. Trained as an engineer, William Denison enjoyed a successful career in the army in a variety of capacities. His life took a different turn when he accepted several appointments as a colonial governor, serving in a succession of imperial posts. William’s overseas service had an impact on George’s domestic life. One of William’s sons, Henry Phipps Denison, was sent back to England from Australia at the age of thirteen to live at the East Brent vicarage. George Denison having no children, Henry became not only in effect

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35 Convocation sat for one day on 16 February 1853. See Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Pt I, p320. See also Sir John Pakington’s reference to this incident, PD, 3rd Series, Vol 124, 3 & 4 March 1853, cols 977-8.
36 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 70, 4 July 1843, col 568f.
37 *ODNB*.
38 He was appointed Governor of Van Diemen’s Land in 1846, then transferred to New South Wales in 1855, with the nominal title of Governor-General of Australia; from there he went to Madras in 1860, serving as Acting Governor-General of India in 1863 until his retirement and return to England in 1866. Of George Denison’s four younger brothers, two - Henry and Alfred - followed William Denison to Australia. Henry died in 1858 as a consequence of a riding accident. Alfred served his brother William in New South Wales, where he sat very briefly in the Legislative Council. Alfred returned to England to become private secretary to his eldest brother as Speaker of the Commons. Stephen Denison became Deputy Judge Advocate. Two other brothers, Frank and Charles, joined the navy and the army respectively. For an account of William Denison’s career in Australia see John Bennett, *Reluctant democrat: Sir William Denison in Australia 1847-1861*. 2011.
an adopted son, but remained part of his uncle’s household in adulthood, serving as assistant curate from 1870 till George Denison’s death in 1896.

George’s siblings’ marriages brought useful connections. William’s marriage to the daughter of Admiral Sir Phipps Hornby brought a link to the Stanley family and Earls of Derby. It was the 14th Earl of Derby, when Tory leader and Prime Minister, to whom George looked for support in his campaign for Church schools. His half-sister, Lucia Maria Charlotte, married Charles Manners-Sutton (1780-1845) in 1811. Her husband was the eldest son of Charles Manners-Sutton, Archbishop of Canterbury. Manners-Sutton entered the Commons in 1806, and later became Speaker (1817-35). Manners-Sutton’s younger son, Denison’s nephew, entered Parliament in 1839. These links with the Manners-Suttons were extended later with George Denison’s association with Christopher Wordsworth Junior, whose father, Christopher Wordsworth Senior, was chaplain to Archbishop Manners-Sutton, and linked with the High Church Hackney Phalanx in London.

39 Sir Phipps Hornby (1785-1867). William’s brothers-in-law included James John Hornby, Provost of Eton, as well as one of the eminent Victorian admirals, Sir Geoffrey Thomas Phipps Hornby (1825-95) - See Andrew Lambert, Admirals. 2008, chapter 7. William’s mother-in-law, Sophia Maria Burgoyne, was the daughter of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne; her brother was Field Marshal Sir John Burgoyne. ODNB.

40 Edward Smith-Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby, was twice Prime Minister – 19 December 1852 - 17 December 1842, and 20 February 1858 – 11 June 1859. Stanley was a friend of Evelyn Denison, a friendship that dated from their Oxford days, and subsequent travels together. ODNB.

41 Lucy Maria Charlotte Denison married Charles Manners-Sutton (1780-1845), 1st Viscount Canterbury (1835) in 1811. He was the eldest son of Archbishop Manners-Sutton (1755-1828). The Archbishop’s father had assumed the additional name Sutton on inheriting the estates of his maternal grandfather, the Second Baron Lexington. Charles Manners-Sutton was first returned to the Commons in 1806 for Scarborough through family electoral interests (that is the interests of the Duke of Rutland – Charles’ father, the Archbishop, was a grandson of the 3rd Duke). He was associated with the ‘Alfred Club’ which included amongst its members Palmerston, Robinson, Peel. Charles Manners-Sutton was created Viscount Canterbury in 1835 on his retirement as speaker. ODNB.

42 Denison’s nephew, John Manners-Sutton (1814-1877) 3rd Viscount Canterbury, represented the Borough of Cambridge as a Conservative between 1839 and 1847; he was Peel’s Undersecretary for the Home Office 1841-46.

43 Christopher Wordsworth Snr (1774-1846) Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, (1820-1841), was private tutor (1798-1802) to Charles Manners-Sutton. Wordsworth’s acquaintance with the family led to preferment through the good offices of the Archbishop. Wordsworth became domestic chaplain to the Archbishop in 1805. Associated with Joshua Watson and others in the formation of the National Society, Christopher Wordsworth Snr was a strong advocate of education in the principles of the Church of England. See, for example, some of his publications: The leaven to leaven the lump; or, duties individual and national; with a special application to the parochial system in
Another significant important connection was George’s younger sister Charlotte’s marriage to Robert Phillimore, providing him with another brother-in-law with parliamentary and legal connections. A Peelite MP in the mid-1850s, Robert Phillimore had a distinguished legal career. He served the Church as chancellor of several dioceses, becoming in due course Dean of Arches – the presiding judge of the appellate court of the Archdiocese of Canterbury. Phillimore was to be an important figure in George’s life representing him in the matter of the prosecution over the real presence, and for many years was a source of legal advice in connection with Church affairs, an office which Robert Phillimore’s son, Walter, assumed after his father’s death.

**Upbringing as a country gentleman and schooling**

Denison’s account of his upbringing suggests a strong and vigorous boy, who was not afraid of hard knocks. At Ossington Hall Denison came to enjoy the country
pursuits of fishing and shooting, and delighted in hunting. These hearty pursuits were allowed to take precedence over everything else, including lessons, so important were they considered to be. William and George’s activities suggest boys of high spirit, attempting to manufacture gunpowder, and engaging in acts of vandalism, such as carving their names on a neighbouring clergyman’s mahogany dining room table. Perhaps it was a consequence of this behaviour that William was removed from a school in Esher, where he had been with his older brothers, and was sent in 1811 with George to a school in Sunbury, just outside London. George, aged six at his first school, found himself in an establishment run by the master and his wife on the basis of a strict corporate morality. This was the beginning of an education designed to instil toughness and resilience.

When William was sent on to Eton from Sunbury, George was moved to the grammar school attached to Southwell Minster, not many miles south of Ossington, as one of the twelve fee-paying pupils accepted by the master, the Rev William Foottit. Denison considered he was well taught at Southwell, and remembered Foottit as ‘a good and kindly man, and a good scholar’. Denison appreciated the ‘beautiful old Minster’ and its choral services. The minster-yard, or graveyard, was their playground, and George, no shrinking violet or physical coward, engaged in the equestrian battles, a hatter’s son his favourite mount. He also took part in attacks on boys from another school passing through the minster-yard: ‘Lying in wait behind the gravestones, we sallied out upon them, and punched their heads; occasionally bringing them in gentle contact with a gravestone’. He was sorry to leave the school when he was sent to Eton in 1817, aged eleven and a half; a move

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45 Denison recalled his experiencing excitement at the anticipation of a hunting day: ‘I never could sleep the night before’. The kennels of the Rufford were close at hand. Ossington was so situated that it was possible to join five other meets within a fifteen-mile radius. G A Denison, Life, p45.
46 ‘It was a law that, any day, as soon as the hounds were heard in our woods, we put down our books and were off, out of the door or the window, whichever was the quickest way, to the stables, where all was ready beforehand. One of the gardeners was our special ally, quite as fond of hounds as we were. Directly we saw his face at the window, away we went.’ Ibid, p45.
47 Dr D P Leinster-Mackay (author of The rise of the English prep school, 1984) has suggested to me that perhaps this was the fashionable school run by Dr Curtis as a preparatory school for Eton.
48 G A Denison, Life, p4.
49 G A Denison, Life p7.
which may have been hastened by the destruction of the schoolroom at Southwell by fire that year.\textsuperscript{50}

While Denison recalled the attraction for him of the atmosphere and the music at Southwell Minster, he made no such observation of Eton. Such recollections of Eton as Denison retained were confined to the poor teaching and the violent discipline.\textsuperscript{51} The Headmaster, Dr Keate, had a reputation for flogging, and many of his victims attributed the derivation of his surname to the Greek Χεω ατη (I shed woe).\textsuperscript{52} Denison recorded that he ‘suffered at Keate’s hands on three occasions’.\textsuperscript{53} Keate appears to have had a profound distrust of boys’ honour, a distrust that may, on occasion, have been well-founded, as Denison’s encounter with his headmaster, having been caught bathing at a forbidden hour, suggests. Denison was flogged, but seems to have shown resilience:

I ought to say, and with shame I say it, for fibbing to Keate when he caught us, just as we turned into his lane on our return. We ran and hid, but were ferreted out. Approaching Keate, with my hat off, and my wet towel hanging out of it, I stated to him that it was a mistake to suppose I had been bathing. He looked at me and said nothing; but next morning, as I richly deserved, I suffered heavily.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50} G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p7 and p9.

\textsuperscript{51} Denison’s recollection was that he learnt very little: ‘Before school you went to your tutors to be “construed”, that is, to have done for you what you ought to have done for yourself, as well as you could, according to your knowledge and your powers. But you were not asked to exercise your powers at all ... You went into school: most days you came out just as you went in, not having been “called up”, that is, to produce anything out of your “construing”. How could it be otherwise in a class of some forty boys?’ Denison, \textit{Life}, p32. See also \textit{C&SR}, Vol V (May) 1865, p133.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Life}, p364.

\textsuperscript{53} G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p10.

\textsuperscript{54} G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p10. Eton maintained a peculiar system of bounds, which restricted access to many places to which boys had a legitimate reason to be present. Custom dictated boys were supposed to hide if they saw a master. If they were caught, they were punished for not ‘shirking’. See Thomas Balston, \textit{Dr Balston at Eton}, 1952, p64f.
At Christmas 1819 Denison left Eton to be tutored at home by the Rev Charles Drury for the next four years. Drury agreed to tutor the Denison boys on the understanding that Charles Manners-Sutton would act as patron to secure a suitable living when Drury’s term at Ossington was concluded. Denison vividly recalled this period as though ‘it were yesterday, the foundation of my four year’s training’. Drury’s place in the Ossington household and his relationship with George Denison and his brothers became all the more important with John Denison’s death in 1820. Evelyn Denison, barely twenty years of age, assumed his father’s place, and, with his mother, had the responsibility for his younger siblings. A wing of Ossington Hall was given over as their school and the three younger Denison boys lived separately from the remainder of the house and were subject to Drury, whose word was law. Denison described the regime as a ‘real good despotism’. Discipline was strict and the boys knew there was no point in making a fuss about it as ‘nobody would have paid the smallest attention’.

Charles Drury imposed an exacting routine. Every morning, at precisely eight o’clock, George had to report at Drury’s bedside with some work he had learnt. There was work every day before and after breakfast until one o’clock; time off for play in the afternoon; from four o’clock to six more work; and again from eight till ten. In Drury, Denison faced a tutor whose scholarship exacted precision and due care. Denison learnt not to be careless, being flogged early on by Drury for grammatical blunders. Drury’s methods laid the foundations for Denison’s success in the honour schools at Oxford, and contributed to Denison’s fastidious attention to detail, that characterised his style as a polemicist.

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55 A Denison, Life, p44. The Rev’d Charles Drury (?1789-1869), Oriel College, Oxford, BA 1810; Michel Fellow, The Queen’s College (1811-24); MA 1813; Rector of Pontesbury 1824; Prebendary of Hereford 1842. Foster, Alumni Oxonienses.
56 Drury to J E Denison 16 November 1818. Denison Papers, Os C5, Nottingham University.
57 G A Denison, Life, p44.
58 Ibid, p45.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid, p44.
In the autumn of 1823, at the age of seventeen, Denison matriculated at Christ Church, going into residence in January 1824. The university was still largely clerical. M C Curthoys, in his account of Oxford before the reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, draws attention to the university’s small size and the youthfulness of the larger part of the body of college fellows. While fellowships could be held for life, most fellows only held their positions on average for ten years. He cites Richard Cobden’s observation that the university was ‘a great nest of small clubs, where everyone knows everybody, and all are anxious to have a stranger of any note amongst them. The best of fare, plenty of old port and sherry, and huge fires, seem the chief characteristics of the colleges’.  

Oxford University at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as M G Brock has observed, ‘was still an Anglican institution in an Anglican state, one of its foremost duties being to uphold Christian doctrines as they were taught by the Church of England’. Subscription to the Church’s formularies by undergraduates and fellows served to maintain the Anglican character of Oxford. This character had been reinforced by the panic engendered by the French Revolution which induced the university to focus more strongly on its traditional obligations, defined by John Willis, the Vice-Chancellor (1792-96), who said in 1792 that ‘the sole purpose of our academical institutions’ is the ‘maintenance of Order, the Advancement of learning and the furtherance of Religion and Morality’. In Denison’s day the University of Oxford was a religious corporation, one of whose principal functions was the education of the clergy of the Church of England. Yet the basis of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts was not divinity but the classics. The essential purpose of this
education, as Edward Copleston believed it to be, was to ‘exercise the mind of the student’. The scholastic discipline that George learned under Charles Drury’s tutorship would have been furthered during his undergraduate training. This tradition of scholarship inculcated what David Newsome has described as being a product of the Oxford Greats – ‘an exactitude’ of mind and ‘an undoubted pedantry’.

Denison observed later in life that he was not trained as a theologian. The Christian faith was an integral part of the university curriculum, divinity being included as a compulsory element within the requirements for the BA degree, with a pass in the subject being necessary to graduate. However, opportunities for an undergraduate to acquire any extensive knowledge of divinity were limited. The syllabus merely demanded knowledge of the New Testament in Greek, the Thirty-nine Articles, and Butler’s Analogy. Classic works of Anglican Caroline divines provided the basis for the limited catechetical teaching of divinity at Christ Church using Bishop John Pearson’s *Exposition of the Creed*, first published in 1659.

Beyond the catechetical instruction received at Christ Church as part of the undergraduate degree, Denison would have been required, as a candidate for ordination, to hear lectures given by the Regius Professor of Divinity. These lectures owed their format to Dr Edward Bentham (Regius Professor 1763-76), and were

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W E Gladstone acknowledged the extension of knowledge to be a good thing ‘but the first condition of all is to have it exact’. Gladstone recognised that at Eton they knew ‘very little indeed, but we knew it very accurately’. W E Gladstone to his son, W H Gladstone 21 January 1857 in D C Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, Vol 2, p160f.
66 Paul Quarrie gives a flavour of this catechetical teaching at Christ Church: ‘The Christ Church Collections Books’ in L S Sutherland and L G Mitchell, *The History of the University of Oxford*, Vol 5, 502f. Pearson was republished at regular intervals throughout the eighteenth century; Pearson’s *Exposition* was still used in the nineteenth century with further editions printed in 1826, and 1834. Another edition with an analysis by W H Mill (1792-1853) appeared in 1837. Produced in several further editions, it was still in print in 1890. The role of the Oxford University Press in the publication of standard works in the corpus of Anglican theological literature as a counter to revolution in the 1790s is described by R Greaves, ‘Religion in the University 1715-1800,’ in L S Sutherland and L G Mitchell, *History of the University of Oxford*, Vol 5, p423.
followed in their essentials by his successors, continuing into Denison’s day.\textsuperscript{67} These lectures were intended as an \textit{epitome} of Anglican doctrine, ecclesiology and polity.\textsuperscript{68} Bentham’s definition of divinity, as taught at Oxford, rested on a view of a divine providential ordering of the world:

Theology is the knowledge and declaration of truths relating to God; truths pertaining either to his nature, or to his dealings with the world. - particularly with mankind; - his wise and beneficent purposes in creating us; his power and goodness manifested in preserving us; his mercy in redeeming us; his laws, and sanctions of rewards and punishments, whereby he hath inforced them in former times; and now continues to inforce them upon us as moral agents.\textsuperscript{69}

Bentham’s theology adumbrated the operation of a divine providence at work in the world – a world-view that Denison’s polemical writings suggest he also held and maintained all his life.

During Denison’s undergraduate years, Charles Lloyd was Regius Professor from 1822 until his death in 1829. Lloyd had succeeded the High Churchman, William Van Mildert,\textsuperscript{70} who had close connections with William Howley, his own predecessor in the chair and with the Hackney Phalanx, which in its turn had close ties with Howley when he was Bishop of London and later Archbishop of Canterbury. Lloyd was on

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\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid}, pp iii-iv
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid}, p i.
\textsuperscript{70} William Van Mildert (1765-1836) was linked with the Hackney Phalanx when Rector of St Mary-le-Bow and Preacher of Lincoln’s Inn. He was a member of Nobody’s Club being nominated by William Stevens himself in December of 1803: \textit{Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list}, p30. He was consecrated Bishop of Llandaff in 1819, and translated to Durham in 1826. \textit{ODNB}.
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Lloyd’s gift for teaching and influence was recognised by his students. Not only did he attend to his statutory duties as professor in a regular and energetic fashion, but he also supplemented his university lectures with private classes attended by invited graduates. The names of the men who attended these classes reads as a roll call of the next generation of High Churchmen, and included J H Newman, E B Pusey, R H Froude, Robert Wilberforce, R W Jelf, W R Churton, Edward Churton, Frederic Oakeley, Thomas Mozley, F E Paget, George Moberley, and Edward Denison. H P Liddon considered that Lloyd ‘made his chair more of a power in Oxford than it had been under any of his predecessors, not excepting Van Mildert’. An obituarist writing in 1829 considered Lloyd ‘revived theological studies in the University, and was regarded as ‘if not the founder of a new school, at least as the infuser of a new and more energetic spirit’. 

A modern biographer of Lloyd, William Baker, considers Lloyd’s interest in liturgical studies and in the historical background of the Book of Common Prayer implanted

71 Lloyd was elected a member of Nobody’s Friends in February of 1820, being put up by Van Mildert and Joshua Watson. Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list, p72.
72 Lloyd’s lecture topics are to be found in E S Foulkes, A history of the Church of S Mary the Virgin, Oxford, etc. 1892, pp401-4. See also H P Liddon, Life of Pusey, Vol 1, p62f, and Thomas Mozley, Reminiscences. 1882, Vol 1, p177f.
73 Edward Churton recorded his impression of Lloyd’s personality. Lloyd’s external bearing was ‘blunt and bluff’, but Churton suggests this was only an outward manifestation. Underneath Lloyd showed a ‘frank-hearted and discerning friendliness which shone through the sallies of a playful humour too buoyant to be controlled’. Memoir of Joshua Watson, 1771-1855. 1861, Vol 1, p271.
74 Ibid, p103, n47. The sources for these names are a letter from R H Froude to Robert Froude, 2 February 1826, Oratory MS, and several letters to Froude’s father describing Lloyd’s lectures in 1826.
the idea that the book reflected medieval and primitive devotion, and thus indirectly led to a reconsideration of historical antecedents, and sympathy with the pre-Reformation Church. Denison was not ordained until 1832, three years after Lloyd’s death in 1829, when the Regius Professor’s public lectures were given by Lloyd’s protégé and preferred successor, Edward Burton. However, Denison’s high view of the Book of Common Prayer and its liturgy was an important facet of his churchmanship, and probably owed much to Lloyd’s interests and teaching at Oxford in this period – an influence that continued in the person of his successor. A disciple of Lloyd, Burton largely maintained his predecessor’s conservative High Church divinity. In his Church politics he was probably more conservative than Lloyd, opposing the admission of Dissenters to the university and writing against Lord Henley’s Plan of Church Reform.

As an undergraduate at Oxford, Denison found society at Christ Church congenial, making a considerable number of friends both in ‘The House’ and with undergraduates in other colleges. Social success as an Oxford undergraduate of this period required an acquaintance with an unwritten social code and exchange of hospitality. Denison became a member of Loder’s, properly known as the ‘Christ Church Society’. This was an exclusive society, confined to twelve members, and


Lloyd’s Formularies of faith, published in 1825, dealt with the creeds and the sacraments, not only of baptism and of the altar, but of penance, orders, extreme unction, and matrimony.

78 Edward Burton, DD (1794-1836), saw to the posthumous publication of some of Lloyd's work. ODNB.

79 Edward Burton, Sequel to remarks upon Church reform, with observations upon the plan proposed by Lord Henley. 1832. Lord Robert Henley (1789-1841) was an evangelical Tory and lawyer. Some of his ideas were put into practice by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. ODNB.

80 G A Denison, Life, p46.

81 These social niceties were a feature of Oxford, and Denison’s social facility made life easy for him at Christ Church. By contrast, Mark Pattison on going up to Oriel from the confined social life of an isolated country rectory, had no such easy entry to undergraduate social life: ‘I had been turned out upon the world without the most elementary knowledge of the rules of etiquette ... I didn’t know I ought to leave a card after hospitality; I doubt whether I had any visiting cards to begin with ... I did not know that a note of invitation required an answer’. Mark Pattison, Memoirs. 1885, pp59-60.

See also See M C Curthoys and C J Day, “The Oxford of Mr Verdant Green,” in The history of the University of Oxford, Vol 6, pt 1, pp270-71. Curthoys and Day observe that entry upon undergraduate life was a much greater leap before the institutional education in public schools became more common. p270.
included many of the ‘hearties’ at Christ Church. Loder’s was characterized by its aristocratic pursuits wherein the society’s members ‘sacrificed at their ancestral altars of fox-hunting, Church, and king’. Undergraduate society at Christ Church enabled Denison to continue the country pursuits he had enjoyed at Ossington, and to mix with undergraduates who, like himself, were the sons of wealthy landed gentry and aristocracy – amongst the matriculated members of the House would have been those who regarded Oxford as a finishing school and had no intention of proceeding to a degree. Amongst his other social occupations as an undergraduate, Denison recorded that he joined the debating society, which he recalled being established in his time in private rooms.

Oriel fellowship

Denison obtained a first class honours in *Literis Humanioribus* in the Michaelmas of 1826. Looking to remain in the university, he stood un成功fully for a demyship at Magdalen in the summer of 1826. In the same year he entered for the Ireland Scholarship Denison recorded that Charles Lloyd remarked to him ‘Why, George, we all thought the two first days you were going to get it; but you dropped your Greek’. He tried again unsuccessfully the following year. In 1828 Denison secured a probationary fellowship at Oriel after submitting to competitive examination. Under Provost John Eveleigh, Oriel had begun the practice of selecting its fellows after examination, a practice continued under Edward Copleston (Provost 1814-28). Oriel’s selection procedure was facilitated by the fact that some twelve of its eighteen fellowships were not tied geographically or to specific foundations such as

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84 Magdalen had two classes of fellowship. The allowance for demies was worth half that for full fellowships – hence the name.


86 John Eveleigh (1748-1814) was Provost 1781-1814. *ODNB*. 49
local grammar schools. These examinations for fellowships made Oriel one of Oxford’s most talented colleges, winning honours in the schools, and allowed the college to boast of a common room that for some years comprised men of significance in university and national life.

R W Church, who was both an undergraduate at Oriel graduating in 1836 and elected a fellow in 1838, noted that Oriel fellowships were not advertised. Aspiring candidates had to apply to the provost, and if given leave to stand, the candidate was required to write a letter in Latin to each of the fellows stating his reasons for applying. ‘This was not a mere formal application ... it was meant to test a man’s power of putting his own personal case and wishes in Latin’. Church recalled that the translation of English into Latin prose and the writing of an English essay were salient tests in the Oriel fellowship examinations. If similar tests were imposed when Denison sat for an Oriel fellowship just a few years before, these were two areas in which Denison would have been most competent. He won the Chancellor’s Latin Essay Prize in the same year as he obtained his fellowship, and won the English Essay Prize the following year in 1829. On Denison’s own admission, his knowledge of science was minimal, despite his cramming before the examination.

Acquiring his fellowship at twenty-three, George Denison held it for ten years. In Oxford he had the company of his brother Edward, a Fellow of Merton and an Oxford incumbent. Edward was to be a familial connection in Oxford until his appointment to the see of Salisbury eight years later.

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88 H P Liddon described the strenuous nature of the examination of candidates for Oriel fellowships that Pusey had undergone just five years before Denison. Life of Pusey, Vol 1, pp55-57.
89 Richard William Church (1815-1890) Fellow of Oriel 1838-41; Rector of Whatley, Somerset, 1852-1871; Dean of St Paul’s 1871.
91 See also K C Turpin for a description of Oriel’s fellowship examinations, Ibid, p184f. ‘The Oriel common room was rather proud of its seemingly easy and commonplace and unpretending tests of a man’s skill in languages and habits and power of thinking for himself. They did not care if he had read much, so that he came up to their standard of good Latin, good Greek, good English and good sense.’ ‘The ascendancy of Oriel,’ in The History of University of Oxford, Vol 6, Pt I, p68.
Denison’s own account of his life at Oriel is remarkable for its brevity. His treatment of these ten years occupies less than half a page in his autobiography published in 1879. Thomas Mozley observed that in later life Denison appeared to have ‘forgotten Oriel College’. It is true that in his autobiographical retrospect Denison evinced little affection for Oriel. He seems to have found the social atmosphere of the Oriel common room stifling, damning it as ‘dull a place socially as I can remember anywhere’. The fellows he described as ‘stiff, and starched, and afraid of one another; there was no freedom of intercourse’. Denison’s boyhood tutor, Charles Drury, himself an Oriel man some eighteen years before Denison became a fellow, shared Denison’s sense of the dullness of the Oriel common room. The atmosphere at Oriel would have contrasted with the ebullience and heartiness of social life Denison had known at Christ Church. If Denison found the society of the Oriel common room less than congenial, he showed early marks of his strong character by making matters more to his liking. Denison had the fellows decorate the common room ‘in good taste’, and appears to have subverted Oriel’s decorum by introducing a degree of youthful boisterousness. Mozley recalled of Denison that ‘In his laudable desire to civilise us [he] introduced aristocratic amusements’. One of these amusements was cock-fighting – ‘the players sat on the ground, trussed like fowls, facing one another. They had to make a fight with their toes, each trying to trip up and overthrow his antagonist’. Denison’s wild and noisy contribution to the Oriel common room seems to suggest a young man still in the flush of youth. The reason why Denison found the society of the Oriel common room less than congenial may have been that he stood apart socially from the other fellows at

93 G A Denison, Life, p50.
94 Denison recalled the sentence pronounced upon the Oriel fellows by Drury on dining in hall with Denison. ‘After a while I saw him [Drury] making faces at me: which I understood, and moved to go. When we got outside, the wrath of the man exploded. Soon afterwards I sent him a yearly present of brawn. He wrote, - “My dear George, - When I had unpacked the brawn and set it on end, it looked much pleasanter, and tasted a great deal better, and was every way more agreeable than the fellows of Oriel”.’ Cited in John W Burgon, Lives of twelve good men. New edition, 1891, p211.
95 Mozley, Reminiscences, Vol 2, p94.
96 Mozley also recounted the story of the rhubarb tart sent to the table hot, notwithstanding Denison’s injunction that it should have been served cold. Denison sent for the cook, Mr King, and harangued him for fully ten minutes before the Oriel Hall, which had fallen silent. ‘Was there ever such a barbarianism heard of as serving rhubarb tart hot? Where could Mr King have lived to know no better than that?’ Ibid, p94.
Oriel, coming from a wealthier and socially more sophisticated background. This is confirmed by Mozley, who recalling Denison’s ‘handsome figure, his pleasant smile, his musical voice and his ever ready wit’, also observed the social difference: ‘Coming from Christ Church, and from a family which had acquired a good county position in Notts, he had advantages over most of us’.97

Denison’s career at Oriel was shaped by changes that took place in the body of fellows around the time of his election. These changes had a considerable impact upon the social dynamics of the college. Oriel had seen a new generation of fellows elected in the 1820s. Of these, the most significant were John Henry Newman (1822-1845), Edward Bouverie Pusey (1823-29), Robert Wilberforce (1826-33), and Richard Hurrell Froude (1826-36).98 At the time of Denison’s election, two great Oriel luminaries, Edward Copleston (the Provost), and Richard Whately,99 were about to move away from Oxford. The choice of candidate for a new provost lay between John Keble and Edward Hawkins. Hawkins prevailed, being elected provost in place of Copleston in February of 1828.100 Hawkins was perceived as the better man of business and a firmer disciplinarian.101 Within a year of Denison’s election as a fellow, differences arose between the new provost and the stronger personalities within the ranks of the new generation of fellows who wanted to undertake a more active pastoral oversight of their undergraduates, thereby increasing their religious influence over them.102 Hawkins feared such religious influences might have been perceived by the parents of undergraduates as ‘excessive or unsuitable’.103 The rifts at Oriel, arising from the tensions between the three tutors and the provost, were soon enlarged by the Bill for Roman Catholic Emancipation. The Oriel common room divided, with Thomas Davies, Henry Jenkyns, John Awdrey and Edward Pusey

97 Ibid, vol 2, p93.
98 The dates in parenthesis represent the respective years as fellows of Oriel.
99 Richard Whately (1787-1863). Graduated from Oriel in 1808; private tutor in Oxford; Principal of St Albans Hall (1825); 1829 Drummond Professor of Political Economy (1829); Archbishop of Dublin (1831).
100 Edward Copleston became Bishop of Llandaff in 1827, resigning as provost in January 1828.
siding with the provost in support of Peel on the one hand, and, on the other, Dornford, Keble, Newman, Wilberforce and Froude supporting the anti-emancipist MP for the university, Sir Robert Inglis.  

At the start of his fellowship Denison enjoyed good social relations with Newman. They evidently walked and rode together from time to time, and Denison is listed as one of the members of Newman’s intercollegiate dining club, which met regularly till it ceased in early 1833. It is not known what George Denison’s views were on Catholic emancipation, or on any of the other related issues such as the admission of Dissenters to the university, or the Great Reform Bill. His only reference to this period was a general, if Delphic comment, made much later in life in his autobiography, that there were ‘movements in men’s political positions in and around 1832’. We cannot know whether in this period George Denison shared the politics of his brothers, Evelyn and Edward, though this seems likely as Thomas Mozley opined that during his Oriel years Denison shared his family’s Whig politics – politics which, as has been noted were, in the case of his older brothers, actually not of a party kind – Whig but also conservative, while, in the matter of granting concessions to Roman Catholics, mildly liberal. Denison, however, did not become embroiled in the political controversy that occupied the Oriel common room, for after his probationary year he was away from Oxford taking a continental

104 Ibid, p188.

105 Though Denison held Newman in affection, he took a strong position against those who had left the Church of England for Rome, and there was no communication between the two men after Newman’s secession till Newman wrote to Denison in 1858 to ask for help in connection with the proposed Roman Catholic University in Ireland. Denison rejected Newman’s appeal for assistance, and another fourteen years passed before there was rapprochement, when Denison wrote: ‘Your letter has quite destroyed all pain I have caused myself by a wrong reading of your letter of 1858.’ LED, p135f. Denison, in his latter years, seems to have resumed relations with Newman. Writing to Sir Walter Phillimore, Denison stated that whenever he passed through Birmingham, he always had gone to see and talk with Newman. Denison saw in Newman a ‘rationalistic and sceptical mind…. A really deep and abstract thinker and deeply tinged with the vice of system building’. C&SR, Vol 5, p56.


107 G A Denison, Life, p68.

tour with his old family tutor, Charles Drury, from the autumn of 1831 to the early summer of 1832. In the summer of 1832, Newman himself went abroad for twelve months with Froude, in the interests of the latter’s health, returning to Oxford in the summer of 1833.

Denison returned to Oriel after his continental tour to encounter the altered circumstances within the common room caused by the rift between Newman and Hawkins. Hawkins’ decision to withhold new students from the three tutors meant he was obliged to find new tutors, and had temporary recourse to Hampden, sometime fellow of the College, bringing him in as a non-resident tutor to fill the breach. In January of 1831 George Denison was also appointed a tutor, and elected sub-dean in October of that year. However, though Hawkins had the appointment of the tutors in his hands, the college officers were elected by the body of the fellowship, and these elections reflected the divided loyalties amongst the fellows. The provost had to live with the successive elections of Newman as dean in the years 1833-34, and 1834-35. Freed from other burdens and responsibilities, Newman’s return to Oxford in the autumn of 1833 was marked by a flurry of activity that led to the publication on the 9th September of the first Tract, Thoughts on the ministerial commission, written by Newman himself. This tract was followed in close order, before the end of the year, by a further twenty, of which Newman contributed nine. In a letter to Froude, Newman recorded the names of the men who met to take counsel together in the autumn of 1833: Denison’s name was not amongst them.

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109 G A Denison, Life, p50ff. Newman noted in his diary, ‘— our Denison has left me for the continent to sojourn there a year’. JHN to James Endell Tyler 29 July 1829, L & D of JHN, Vol 2, p154.
110 Clement Greswell and W J Copleston, nephew of the former provost, were appointed as the other two tutors in 1832. K C Turpin, ibid, p191.
111 Turpin, ibid, p191.
Denison made no direct reference to the tensions amongst the Oriel fellowship. Coombs has suggested that in accepting pupils from the provost, Denison adopted a different position from the three former tutors.\footnote{Joyce Coombs, *George Anthony Denison: The firebrand*. p13.} There is, however, no evidence that Denison adopted any particular position in this battle. The most that can said is that although socially on good terms with Newman, he was not part of the latter’s inner circle, and perhaps indifferent to the issues espoused by Newman over the tutorships. Whatever the case, it may have been of some significance for Denison’s retrospective view of Oriel in 1879 that in accepting a tutorship, he was fated to be associated with the demise of Oriel’s reputation in the honour schools. This does not seem to have been a consequence of Denison’s failure as a scholar. Despite having tried twice unsuccessfully for the Ireland Scholarship in 1826 and 1827, a nod was made to Denison’s scholarship when he was later appointed an examiner for the Ireland Scholarship in the place of his brother Edward. Denison also examined at Eton for the Newcastle Scholarship in 1837 and 1838.\footnote{Life, p70. See also an account in Francis Thackeray, *Memoir of Edward Craven Hawtrey DD*. 1896, p104.}

Commenting many years later on Oriel’s problems with its tutors, Mark Pattison commented that Hawkins had disposed of three energetic up and coming men, and ‘supplied their places with three inefficients – W J Copleston, G A Denison, and Dornford’. Pattison remembered Denison as a scholar ‘according to the measure of those days’, that is he ‘knew his Greek plays, and could let fall a clever thing.’\footnote{M Pattison, *Memoirs*, 1885, p66.} Unfortunately for Denison, his effectiveness as a teacher was limited by the problems inherent in the tutorial system Hawkins continued to maintain at Oriel. Brock has noted that Oxford tutors were expected to take on too wide a range of work, a view reflected in Pattison’s account, ‘one man teaching everybody everything’.\footnote{M G Brock, ‘The Oxford of Peel and Gladstone, 1800-1833,’ in *History of the University of Oxford*, Vol 6, p34ff. M Pattison, *Ibid*, p224.} Pattison recollected his experience of such problems in one of Denison’s large classes at Oriel: ‘When we went into Denison, some one or two members of the class did their piece well; to my flat amazement most of them...
stumbled over the easiest lines’. Pattison had prepared for the class with published notes, and supplied the answer to a question put by Denison. ‘Denison gave me a look as much as to say, “Who the devil are you?” He had evidently not been accustomed in his class to meet with such profound learning’.  

Denison and his fellow tutors failed to secure a single first-class honours degree for the college. Newman, like a prophet scorned, had an axe to grind, but his description of the tutorial system suggests this may well have been less than satisfactory. The failure of the system at Oriel was reflected in the number of men resuming the older practice of acquiring private tutors. In December of 1835, this brought Denison’s resignation as a tutor in protest. Newman appeared to have been sympathetic on this account, for this he believed was a consequence entailed by Hawkin’s system:

Now do not repeat of this gossip which comes - Denison is going to give up the Tuition at Christmas - and one chief reason he gives for it, is that he cannot keep men from taking private Tutors, and is disgusted. He has not got one man a first-class. Now who can deny he is a clever and popular man? - yet see the result. It so happens this was the very ground, the sole ground, on which before my actual correspondence and controversy with the Provost began, before I rested the necessity of our [Tutorial] system. I have the paper by me in which I said it. It is to me quite marvellous that my prediction should be so fulfilled, except that it could not help being. The poor Provost unless he persuades D. to change his mind, is reduced to an alternative of Mosley and Eden - each of whom he hates (in Rowena’s way) like poison.

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117 M Pattison, Memoirs. 1885, p64f.
118 ‘I have in writing my prediction given in to the Provost four years since, that, if our system of Tuition were stopped, the Classes would fail and I referred him to the fact that when Tyler, Keble, and Whately ceased to take private pupils, the series of honours stopped in 1823. . . . – Rogers took his honours two years since, he was the last of my pupils – and the last of our (classical, i.e in-college) honours – Nothing is done now. Men like young [James] Mozley who might have been anything, are doing nothing.’
Newman took the view that if Denison, with his accomplishments and popularity, was unable to work within Hawkins’ system to good effect then Newman’s criticism of the tutorial system was confirmed. ‘He [Denison] has been five years Tutor!’ Newman thought it remarkable, in view of the consequences of the faults he had identified in Hawkins’ system, that he ‘should have been proved correct in so short a time’.\footnote{JHN to R H Froude, 17 November 1835, \textit{L & D JHN}, Vol 5, p.163.} Newman appears to have been sympathetic towards Denison in this matter, and there seems to be no suggestion that there were any personal difficulties between the two men that had arisen because Denison had accepted a tutorship. Denison did not allude in his autobiography to the problems he encountered as a tutor. Presiding, as one of Oriel’s three tutors, over a marked decline in Oriel’s academic standing in the honours school, there was probably little reason for Denison later to revisit his problems at Oriel.

**Curacy at Cuddesdon**

However, Denison’s life in this period was neither limited to his fellowship nor were his obligations confined to his duties as tutor. In 1832 he had taken orders, being ordained deacon at Trinitytide, and priested by Bishop Bagot at Christmas that same year. Within a short time, Denison was appointed by Bagot to the curacy of the village of Cuddesdon outside Oxford on the resignation of Denison’s Christ Church friend, Augustus Page Saunders, on the latter’s appointment as Headmaster of Charterhouse.\footnote{Augustus Page Saunders (?1801-1878) was an undergraduate and Student of Christ Church. He was appointed Headmaster of Charterhouse in 1832. He was later Vicar of Ravensborough, and Dean of Peterborough from 1853 till his death in 1878. Foster, \textit{Alumni Oxonienses}.} Denison’s association with Cuddesdon seems to have begun several years earlier with visits to Cuddesdon to see Saunders.\footnote{Such an occasion was recorded by William Gladstone, who rode out to Cuddesdon on 25 June, 1829, and enjoyed ‘a splendid dinner there’. The company, Gladstone recalled, had included ‘Saunders, Dennison [sic] of Oriel, my brother, Antice, Tancred, Selkirk, Hill, etc’. W E Gladstone, \textit{Diaries}, Vol 5.} Cuddesdon, rather than Oriel, became the focus of Denison’s social life.
In order to meet his responsibilities both at Cuddesdon and at college, Denison divided his day during term between the two, riding out to Cuddesdon most days. Out of term he resided at Cuddesdon. As curate, Denison had the use of two cottages and some land. Here he established a home with domestic staff and a gardener. By contrast with his brief mention of Oriel, his account of Cuddesdon is more expansive, suggesting his time there held a special place for him. Denison seems to have enjoyed his pastoral role, demonstrating a propensity for decisive action, implemented in a manner which, Denison conceded in later years, was ‘despotic’. He introduced heating to the parish church, albeit nearly burning down the building on a Christmas morning. His delight with engagement in village life saw him organize social occasions with cricket matches, together with a banqueting tent and village feast supplied from his own kitchens. Beside his pastoral work and the home he had established, Denison also enjoyed the congenial aristocratic society of Bishop Bagot, the bishop’s wife, Lady Harriet, and their family with whom he became close friends.

Denison’s years as a fellow of Oriel and curate of Cuddesdon came to an end when, in 1838, family patronage enabled him to leave Oxford and take a living. His brother, Edward, consecrated Bishop of Salisbury just the previous year in April 1837, offered George the vicarage of Broad Windsor, Dorset, within his own diocese. This preferment enabled Denison in September of 1838 to marry Georgiana Henley, whom he had met in the familial atmosphere of the Bagots’ home at Cuddesdon, perhaps a further reason for his warm memories of Cuddesdon. Denison’s marriage brought an alliance with a family not dissimilar from his own. His wife’s grandfather was a prominent London merchant. His father-in-law, Joseph Henley, had received an education at Oxford as well some experience.

123 G A Denison, Life, p67.
124 Ibid, pp 70-77.
125 Ibid, p75.
126 Ibid, pp 75.
127 Ibid, p75.
128 For Denison’s account of his time at Cuddesdon see Life, pp70-77.
129 Life, p77.
128 Ibid.
in his father’s business. He had inherited the estate of Waterperry near Oxford purchased by his father. In his new father-in-law Denison thus acquired further connections with City of London and, when Henley was elected to the Commons in 1841, further links with Westminster. Denison’s mother-in-law was the daughter of another MP, John Fane. Joseph Henley was a High Churchman, and Denison found him empathic as regards ecclesiastical matters. Henley kept Denison abreast of the political mood in the Commons with respect to matters affecting the Church.

Denison was rising thirty-three years of age when he left Oxford: a mature age when it might be expected that his personality and outlook were fully formed by his upbringing, education, and social milieu. These early years suggest a man of strong, robust personality; a countryman brought up with the privileges of landed wealth and connection. He also, on both sides of his marriage, had merchant antecedents, with both families selecting the traditional path to prestige by acquiring estates and parliamentary seats. His ties with Oriel in the formative period of the Tractarian Movement seem not to have drawn him into the fold of those activists. There is a reference to Denison’s support for Newman in 1836, contained in a letter of Denison’s friend, Frederic Rogers, who wrote to Newman from Hursley reporting Keble’s account ‘that George Denison goes about the country, puffing you and your view of things’. But it seems that Denison, although proximate to the persons and events that sparked the Tracts and the Oxford Movement, was a passive bystander. Denison, on his own admission, was not a theologian, and did not apply himself to the study of divinity during his years in residence at Oxford. His retrospective

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131 The Henleys had been London merchants, and had, as in the case of the Denison family, evolved as country gentlemen. Henley’s father had leased, then purchased the Oxfordshire estate of Waterberry. Joseph Henley was to become a useful ally to Denison, keeping him abreast of opinion in Parliament. One of the Conservative MPs for Oxfordshire for thirty-six years (1841-78), Henley was President of the Board of Trade in 1852 during Derby’s short-lived administration, becoming a Privy Councillor. In March of 1858, Henley joined the cabinet again as President of Board of Trade, but resigned over policy of parliamentary reform. He declined Lord Derby’s offer of the Home Office in 1866. ODNB.
132 Frederic Rogers to Newman 29 August 1836, JHN L&D, Vol 5, p346. Frederic Rogers was the last of Newman’s pupils at Oriel, and the last of the classical honours of this period. See Newman to Hurrell Froude 14 June 1834, JHN L&D, Vol 4, p273.
description of his relations with the Tractarians up until 1838 sums up the situation. He wrote that he was ‘very good friends with the writers of the Tracts’, yet at the same time he owned he was ‘not intimate with them’.\(^\text{133}\) Giving an account of his Oriel days to Dean Burgon, Denison admitted: ‘I came from Christ Church; from a life as distinct in sundry ways from the life of [the] Oriel common room as could well be. The grave interests which were stirring to their depths, or at least beginning to stir, the Oriel life and conversation, were not present to me.’\(^\text{134}\) In his *Reminiscences* published in 1882, Thomas Mozley, an Oriel man and early in life a disciple of Newman, suggested Denison was subtly and gradually influenced by Newman.\(^\text{135}\) But Mozley’s vague attribution of Newman’s influence is not satisfactory, for Denison did not involve himself in the Oxford Movement while a fellow of Oriel, he disapproved of Newman’s secession and was highly critical of his legacy leading men to abandon the Church of England.

Nearly thirty years later, Denison wrote acknowledging the power of the Movement that had its origins in the common room at Oriel: ‘The old High Churchman was not equal to the crisis, and Evangelicalism had nothing substantial to oppose the invading power. A counter-movement was planned and commenced in the common-room at Oriel College, during the Long Vacation of 1833.’\(^\text{136}\) However, there was a great deal in this ‘counter-movement’ that rehearsed traditional orthodox High Church perspectives with which Denison would concur and are evident in his polemical writings. The appeal to a man such as Denison was the call to clergy to be more than creatures of the state, to fulfil their sacred ministerial obligations. Thus, Denison in his later years saw the movement at Oxford as having ‘leavened’ the ‘entire mass of English Churchmen’.\(^\text{137}\)

\(^{135}\) Mozley contended Denison ‘must be set down among the number of those upon whom Newman was making a continual and silent impression, undetected or suppressed at the time, but destined to show itself all the stronger afterwards’. Thomas Mozley, *Reminiscences*, Vol 1, p98.
\(^{136}\) C&SR, Vol 5, p 55.
\(^{137}\) C&SR, Vol 5, p54.
But Denison’s retrospective comments were also critical of Newman’s leadership of the movement. He considered Newman to have been ‘the recognized head and leader of the Oxford Movement, if not in its infancy, at all events in its prime and maturity, he held ... at Oxford an intellectual empire which Aristotle or Socrates might have envied.’\textsuperscript{138} Denison decried the radical direction developed in the later stages of the movement at Oxford. ‘A man of ordinary common sense connects himself with the human race through his own parents ... Instead of cultivating through their own mother of the Church of England, they judged their spiritual parent by the sentiments of Greek or Latin fathers culled at their own pleasure, and applied to their own position and obligations by the merest \textit{private judgment} in the world.’\textsuperscript{139} Denison published an account of the wasted life of one clergyman after his conversion to Rome.\textsuperscript{140} He abhorred the consequences that befell such men who followed Newman:

He [Newman] had friends and followers and disciples in crowds, hanging on his lips in wonder and absolute awe; he was looked up to as an oracle by hundreds of cultivated intellects ...; he has been regarded as the arbiter of rival faiths, the man upon whose \textit{ipse dixit} it rested whether many a hopeful English youth should realize the dreams of his mother and the ambition of his father by taking the family living, or throw up his prospects and ‘going over to Rome’ not in the fashionable, but in a theological sense.\textsuperscript{141}

The mature Denison evolved as a conservative in his theology, as he did in his political and social views. He later defined a conservative as one ‘who is for Church and State (that is the maintenance of) the order of national life and the system of government which are founded by Divine authority, and have existed in England without interruption for many centuries’.\textsuperscript{142} Denison’s conservative make-up led him to see Newman as flawed: as having ‘a rationalistic and skeptical mind,’ which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{138} \textit{C&SR}, Vol 5, p54.
\item \textsuperscript{139} \textit{C&SR} Vol 1, p216.
\item \textsuperscript{140} \textit{C&SR}, Vol 5, p102f. See Newsome’s account of the difficulties converts faced in \textit{The Wilberforces and Henry Manning: The parting of friends}, p39ff.
\item \textsuperscript{141} \textit{C&SR}, Vol 5, p55.
\item \textsuperscript{142} \textit{C&SR}, Vol 6, p5.
\end{itemize}
led him to be ‘deeply tinged with the vice of system-building’.\textsuperscript{143} This trait, combined with Newman’s Evangelical origins, proved fatal to his growing up as ‘a dutiful son of the English Church’.\textsuperscript{144} What Denison meant by this was a proclivity to view the Church ‘as a speculation more than a fact’. The Church of those who turned to Rome was ‘the Church of their books, or of their imagination, not the Church of their fathers’. In Denison’s eyes those who went to Rome did so as a consequence of the committing the cardinal sin of rationalism – looking at the Church ‘through their private judgement’.\textsuperscript{145}

Denison’s analysis of Newman was indicative of the very considerable differences between their characters and mental constitution. Denison was an old-fashioned scholar, content to accept the intellectual \textit{milieu} in which he was educated and formed. He was an exemplar of a conservative strand of High Churchmen who, notwithstanding his lack of engagement with the Tractarians during his years at Oxford, brought energy and zeal to his ministry in the Church of England.

\textbf{Conservative High Churchmen: A continuing dynamic}

This study seeks to demonstrate that Denison’s career as a rural incumbent, and as a national Anglican polemicist, was shaped by his adherence to the High Church ideology in which he was formed. This was the very dynamic which led Oxford to institute the new examination system in which Denison gained his first-class honours. The object was to ensure Oxford graduates went down from the university imbued with the orthodox teachings of the Church of England. Denison was an example of the kind of graduate John Willis, the Vice-Chancellor (1792–96), had

\textsuperscript{143} C\&SR, Vol 5, p56.  
\textsuperscript{144} C\&SR, Vol 5, p56.  
\textsuperscript{145} C\&SR, Vol 1, p216.  
\textsuperscript{145} Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was a radical journalist who participated in the American Revolution and was involved in the French Revolution., published \textit{The rights of man} (Pt 1, 1791; Pt 2, 1792), \textit{The age of reason} (Pt 1, 1794; Pt 2, 1795), \textit{Common sense} (1776).
declared was the intended product of Oxford University. Such men would go out into society imbued with an orthodox Anglican doctrine: men who would as a consequence of their Oxford education play their part in the ‘maintenance of Order, the Advancement of learning and the furtherance of Religion and morality’.146

There was, as F C Mather has observed, a ‘serious and consistent tradition of High Church ideology’ in the late eighteenth century.147 This tradition had become rather more prominent, as Peter Nockles has written, with the re-emergence of Tory throne and altar theology in the latter years of George III’s reign.148 Indeed Boyd Hilton argues more forcefully that the neo-conservative ideology of the late eighteenth century was not so much a reflection of the ancien regime, but arose as a contemporary ideology in its own right countering progressive ideologies associated with the American and French revolutions.149 This was a political theology which continued to be expounded into the nineteenth century. For example, in the election of 1841, Peel campaigned in the West Riding with the theme ‘The altar, the Throne, and the Cottage’.150 It was fear of the consequences of revolution, such as that seen in France, together with a sense of apprehension as to the corrosive effects of the Enlightenment on Christianity, that incited High Churchmen such as George Horne,151 Samuel Horsley,152 and William Jones of Nayland153 to take up their pens and counter these forces.154 Not least, High Church

147 F C Mather, High Church prophet. Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the later Georgian Church, p305.
150 See Douglas Hurd, Robert Peel. 2007, p223.
151 George Horne (1730-92) President of Magdalen College, Oxford 1768, Dean of Canterbury 1781, and Bishop of Norwich 1790.
152 Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) Archdeacon of St Albans 1781, and successively Bishop of St David’s 1788, Rochester 1793, St Asaph 1802.
153 William Jones, of Nayland, (1726-1800) Incumbent of Nayland, Suffolk, was a close friend of George Horne. Jones was an apologist for orthodox Trinitarianism, the Caroline divines and Anglican tradition. William Stevens published Jones’ collected works in 1801. See ODNB. William Stevens (1732-1807) was a cousin of George Horne and schooled together with him.
Anglican ideology was apparent in the creation of the National Society in 1811, founded by High Churchmen precisely because they wished to propagate and teach the doctrinal principles of the National Church. The fate of the Gallican Church as a consequence of revolution in France not surprisingly led Anglican High Churchmen to fear not just the destruction of the Church Establishment, but Christianity itself, together with the destruction of the structures of society which, they believed, rested on Christian religion.

The notion held by some involved with the Oxford Movement that the High Church was moribund does not match the tenor of the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century High Church writers. The activism and the polemical writings of High Churchmen, such as Horne, Horsley, and Jones, far from being complacent, indicate they believed they lived in a period of crisis in which they were called to defend Christianity, together with the English constitution and social order; in short, that they called to engage in ideological warfare. Something of the crisis that they identified is illustrated by Bishop Horne’s colourful imagery describing the dangers he believed confronted the Church and Christianity itself:

A mine is laid under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may, and probably will, inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion; in consequence of which, that edifice, the erection of which has been the work of ages may be overturned in a moment, and so effectually, as that the same foundation can never be built on again. Without any visible marks of decay, and before its bigoted friends suspect any danger, it may vanish, we are told, like a castle in a romance.

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154 See F C Mather, High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the later Georgian Church 1992, p305.
155 See Peter Nockles on the Tractarian’s view of the eighteenth-century Church, and of later historiography of the Oxford Movement which perpetuated the idea that the Church in the previous century was almost moribund. The Oxford Movement in context, p4ff.
156 George Horne, The duty of contending for the faith, in Works, (1831 ed.) p 421. Horne appended a footnote to the effect that a friend, some four years before the publication of Priestley’s Importance and extent of free inquiry in 1785, had commented in a sermon that gunpowder had been lain ‘grain by grain under the old building ... a mine, waiting, perhaps, only till some unforeseen occurrence should kindle it, to destroy, at one tremendous explosion, the Constitution in Church and State’. As did Horne, Samuel Horsley thought the Church was confronted by powerful and dangerous
The High Church reaction to the perceived dangers posed by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was characterised by a considerable robustness. Typical were the steps taken by William Jones (of Nayland) and the layman William Stevens in 1792, who together undertook a counter-attack engaging with their opponents’ own weapon – literary propaganda. Their influence was considerable, spreading extensively through High Church friends and connections of both Jones and Stevens, and continued through their heirs and legatees amongst ‘Nobody’s Friends’ and the Hackney Phalanx. ‘Nobody’s Friends’ was a dining society founded by William Stevens’ friends in his honour, the members being both lay and clerical. A members’ list of the Club of ‘Nobody’s Friends’ from its foundation in 1800 up till 1885 affords an invaluable record of a continuing tradition of High Churchmanship through the nineteenth century. The Hackney Phalanx was an informal association of High Churchmen linked by ties of friendship and family bonds centred around Joshua Watson (1771-1855) and the rectory of his elder brother, John Watson, at Hackney. The Phalanx was linked by ties through William Stevens, George Horne, Charles Daubeney and others to a tradition of High Churchmanship. The informal group was influential, being involved in stimulating the work of the SPCK, as well as founding new societies, such as the National Society, the Church Building Society and the Additional Curates Society.

opponents: they were in Horsley’s estimation ‘shrewd, active, busy, bustling and indefatigable.’ The duty of contending for the faith. 1787 ed, p11.

157 William Stevens (1732-1807) was an apologist for both High Church political doctrine and sacramental theology. See Peter Nockles article ODNB. See also Edward Churton’s account of Stevens in Memoir of Joshua Watson, Vol I, p22-44. Also Robert M Andrews recent study William Stevens (1732-1807): Lay activism in late eighteenth-century Anglican High Churchmanship. Murdoch University PhD Thesis, 2012.

158 The club of Nobody’s Friends. Biographical list of the members since its foundation 21 June 1800 to 30 September 1885. Printed for private circulation 1920. Neither of the clerical Denison brothers are listed as members.

159 There were significant names associated with the Watsons, inter alios:- Thomas Sikes (Mary Watson’s brother), Sir John Richardson, Henry Handley Norris, Christopher Wordsworth Senior, William Van Mildert, Benjamin Harrison, and William Lyall.

160 Charles Daubeney (1745-1827) Archdeacon of Sarum. Daubeney’s Guide to the Church in several discourses 1798, and still in publication in 1830, was a conservative High Church contribution to the theory of the Church and her ministry.
William Jones’ contribution to the High Church polemics was notable for his recognition of the intellectual force of the Enlightenment and the problems it posed for orthodox Christianity. He attacked natural religion – the ‘pretended Religion of Nature’ – because he saw its potential to undermine the orthodox Christian claim that all knowledge which man had of divine things was derived from revelation and not from reason or nature. In his *Letter to the Church of England* (1798), Jones wrote: ‘We have allowed so much to human philosophy, that it is too commonly known against our preachers, and factiously objected to them, that they neglect the Gospel, and take what they call natural religion into the pulpit.’ The proposal for a Society for the Reformation of Principles was in essence a manifesto that urged the teaching of revelation in scripture and fundamental doctrine. Jones sought to counteract the influence of natural religion by setting out a scheme to educate the rising generation of clergy in the orthodox doctrines or principles of the Church: to ‘furnish their minds with good principles, and with such sober and strong reasons as may (with Divine blessing) enable them not only to maintain their ground for themselves, but to recover to the truth those who have departed from it’. To this end, Jones compiled a compendium of classic Anglican theologians published as *The Scholar armed* in 1795.

Reaction to rationalist literature continued as a theme in the writings of High-Churchmen into the early decades of the nineteenth century. For example, Bishop Shute Barrington’s charge of 1811 suggests the kinds of concerns that exercised Horne and Jones continued to have potency: ‘Scepticism and infidelity, those engines of anarchy which have torn up the foundations of society in other countries, should even in this country, and of late years, to all appearances have

161 ‘But as the world is always changing, time hath lately brought up many new and strange things; Revolution hath succeeded Revolution; every one worse than the former: but what is worst of all, there hath been a Revolution in men’s minds as well as in their fortunes’. William Jones (of Nayland), *A letter to the Church of England*. 1798, p234.
162 *Ibid*, p246. Note Jones’ comment on the influence of Locke: ‘He [Locke] was the oracle to those who conducted the American Rebellion; which led to the French Revolution; which will lead (if God permit) to the total overthrow of Religion and Government in this Kingdom, perhaps in the whole Christian World; and all this from Mr Locke’.
163 Shute Barrington (1734-1826) successively Bishop of Llandaff 1769, Salisbury 1782, and Durham 1791. *ODNB*.
increased, rather than diminished’. Similarly, the report of the board of the SPCK for 1812 noted the necessity for further counter propaganda: ‘the growing necessity and duty of publishing through the medium of the Society’s publications, the most effectual antidote and remedy practicable to the overflowings of ungodliness diffused over the public mind, through the press from a variety of corrupt forces, and to an extent hardly ever known before, even in this Kingdom’.165

In the same vein, William Van Mildert,166 disturbed by dangers posed to orthodox political and social theology, attacked the German enlightenment as an anti-Christian conspiracy in his Boyle lectures, given between 1802 and 1805. Closer to home, he attacked Paine, Godwin and Geddes.167 Van Mildert argued that Paine’s The Age of Reason, and William Godwin’s Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its influence on modern morals and happiness, were subversive of ‘every friend of truth and social order’. He considered these writers had ‘tainted’ the morals of the community at large, and introduced principles ‘compounded of hatred to God and hostility to all institutions political or religious’ which afforded the means of social control.168 That Van Mildert held such views in 1821, only seven years before Denison went up to Oxford, suggests that the issues that troubled William Jones and William Stevens were still alive and well three decades on. Van Mildert was a link between Oxford and London. He had connections with a significant and influential group of London High Churchmen, being a close friend of Joshua Watson and an intimate of the Hackney Phalanx, and at Oxford, where he was Regius Professor of Divinity, and succeeded by Charles Lloyd, who was a friend.

164 Shute Barrington, A charge delivered to the clergy the Diocese of Durham ... 1797, in Sermons, Charges and Tracts, 1811, p206.
165 SPCK, A report of proceedings for the year 1812, p48f.
166 William Van Mildert (1765-1836) a member of the Hackney Phalanx, Preacher Lincoln’s Inn 1812-19, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford 1813, Bishop of Llandaff 1819, Bishop of Durham 1826. ODNB.
167 William Godwin (1756-1836) was another journalist with radical tendencies, being an early advocate of Utilitarianism. His famous publication, An enquiry concerning political justice (1793), was a radical attack on contemporary political structures.
168 Alexander Geddes (1737-1802) was a liberal Roman Catholic priest who wrote in support of the French Revolution.
Orthodox epistemology: Revelation and reason

The High Church attack on natural religion touched on a significant aspect of Anglican orthodox thinking – the defence of revelation. This is a matter of some importance for understanding Denison’s High Church orthodoxy. Jones believed, as did other High Churchmen such as van Mildert, that it was revelation, not reason, or nature, that gave mankind knowledge of the divine. At the heart of their polemical writing was a defence of the epistemology of revealed knowledge and an assertion of the subordinate status of reason in connection with such knowledge. Preaching before Lincoln’s Inn in the period 1812 -1819, Van Mildert told his congregation that Christian knowledge of the divine was an appeal ‘from man’s finite and imperfect conceptions to those attributes of the Godhead which are perfect and infinite’.\(^{169}\) It was faith that ‘propounds this solution; and reason accepts it in deference to that authority which is supreme’.\(^{170}\) Van Mildert attributed secondary status to natural reason, which he allowed a role in a ‘humble endeavour’ in the exploration of those areas which were apparent to the human mind. Revelatory and rational knowledge were seen as different orders of knowledge, the former being \textit{a priori}.\(^{171}\) Nevertheless, having thus accepted revelation with reverence and submission, reason is not precluded from ‘an humble endeavour to explore such indications of divine wisdom in these proceedings as are not altogether hidden from our view’.\(^{172}\)

\(^{169}\) ‘The Christian theist position is primarily a matter of faith: reason is entitled to explore, in a secondary and humbler capacity, such indications of divine wisdom as is not hidden from our view.’ William Van Mildert, ‘God’s moral government of the world’, in \textit{Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819}. 2nd ed; 1822. Vol 2, p267.


\(^{171}\) Arguing the primacy of revelation, Van Mildert was not willing to give reason the status of universal authority grounded on the assumption that there is a certain infallible criterion of truth implanted in the mind, and antecedent to any revelation of the divine will. (p 160) He did concede the right of sitting in judgment on a divine revelation, but only under restrictions and limitations ‘to prevent the purpose of infidelity’. \textit{Sermon XVII}, ‘The proper limits of human understanding in judging of revealed religion’, in William Van Mildert, \textit{A historical view of the rise and progress of infidelity, with a refutation of its principles and reasonings}. (Boyle Lectures delivered 1802 – 1805). 4th ed, 1831, p157. [1\textsuperscript{st} edition published 1806].

\(^{172}\) William Van Mildert, \textit{Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819}. 2nd ed; 1822. Vol 2, p267.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued for a similar notion of the status of reason in its relation to revelation, maintaining the rational nature of man was consonant with the nature of his creation in the image of God. He defined ‘reason’ as man's capacity to understand God: ‘all certain knowledge is in the power of God, and a presence from above’. For Coleridge, therefore, given the extraordinary status of the Bible, the knowledge revealed there was antecedent to other forms of knowledge. ‘Reason’ had a subordinate status as understanding, as it follows the principle of biblical inspiration. As Coleridge explained: ‘the supreme reason whose knowledge is creative and antecedent to the things known, is distinguished from the understanding, or creaturely mind of the individual, the acts of which are posterior to the things it records or arranges’.

Orthodox political and social theology

The primacy of revelation for knowledge of God was, therefore, a central tenet of these High Churchmen. A further tenet was that revelation showed God acted in history, with the concomitant belief that there was providential social order and government. Bishop Horsley denied that it was possible to build society on secure foundations with an appeal to natural rights. He denied also that the human race had ever lived other than ‘in society and under government’. This was the design of God’s providence. Van Mildert also subscribed to the doctrine that providence ordered the world, and divine commands constituted the principle upon which society should be ordered and governed. ‘The moral government of the world by an all-wise and all powerful disposer of events,’ he told his congregation at Lincoln’s

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173 Samuel Coleridge (1772-1834) poet and philosopher.
175 ‘... all certain knowledge is in the power of God, and a presence from above. So only have the ways of man been reformed, and every doctrine that contains a saving truth, and all acts pleasing to God (in other words, all actions consonant with human nature, in its original intention) are through WISDOM: that is the rational spirit of man.’ Ibid, p20.
177 Samuel Horsley, Sermons. 1839 edition, p520f.
Inn, ‘is one of the uncontrovertible truths, of which no sincere believer in revealed religion can be supposed to doubt.’

The concept of the operation of providence also had implications for the orthodox doctrine of Man, which will again be seen in this study to have been central to Denison’s ideology. High Churchmen well understood that Enlightenment rationalism subverted their concept of society, and their related doctrine of man. Fundamental to this doctrine was the scriptural account of original sin. Christian teaching regarded the human race as fallen and flawed. High Churchmen, therefore, strongly dissented from the Enlightenment view that man, in the state of nature, was essentially good and inherently capable of perfection. For Jones, the biblical doctrine of the fall pointed to the brutish and evil impulses of man, an understanding of man’s nature, which Jones maintained against the humanism of contemporary philosophers. This gave rise to the necessity of government in order that society might be ordered peaceably and harmoniously. Thus for Jones, the inclinations of men, and their natural rights, were *ipso facto* in a state of restraint.

High Church doctrine concerning society and its governance extended further than mere restraint and order. It will be shown in this study that Denison’s view of the nature and the ordering of society and his own status – that is his obligations and

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178 William Van Mildert, *Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819*. 2nd ed; 1822. Vol 2, p263. Note also Coleridge’s argument that the bible ‘contained rules and assistance for all conditions of men under all circumstances; and therefore for communities no less than for individuals’. *Ibid*, p5. This argument should be compared with Archbishop William Thomson’s view in his pastoral letter criticising *Essays and Reviews*. See chapter 5.


181 In so far as Jones acknowledged natural rights, these were only the rights of man in a state outside society where he was necessarily an unsociable, independent savage. On Jones’ view, the natural rights of man were restrained within society by government, and such rights as man possessed were defined as civil rights, not natural rights.
duties within it – was based on his belief that these were a providential gift of God. The orthodox High Church concept of divine governance was epitomized by William Stevens: ‘Is it to be imagined that the Creator who foresaw this necessity, would not institute government from the beginning, but leave himself without witness of his goodness?’ Stevens believed society was appointed by God with enforcements of rewards and punishments – a doctrine expounded by William Paley, and, as Paley was taught well into the nineteenth century, this was a doctrine which continued to be transmitted and have currency.

The key to the maintenance of society was seen to rest not in self-interest and acquisition of power, but upon the responsibilities of mutual obligation. Mutual obligation complemented a political theology which accepted as axiomatic that society was unalterable by the will of Man. The condition of men, their wealth and social status, were providential factors. Notions of individual rights were alien to the concept of mutual obligation as the basis of society. What followed was the principle that individuals had responsibilities and duties of mutual obligation, arising out of their position in society. Given this principle, it was important that men and women were taught and made to understand the religious principles upon which their duties and obligations were based. Remove this religious principle, and men and women would not know the ground by which they should judge their duties and action. As Thomas Rennell remarked: ‘When a principle of dependency upon God is removed, there is no longer room for the operation of beneficial laws, equal justice, or social subordination. It is impossible to erect a genuine rational liberty on the ruin of conscience’.

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183 William Paley (1743-1804) was a writer on theological and moral subjects. Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, 1766-76, Archdeacon of Carlisle 1782.
184 Thomas Rennell (1786-1824) Fellow of King’s, Cambridge; Master of the Temple 1797-1827; Dean of Winchester 1805-40. Rennell was friends with the great conservative lawyers Eldon and Erskine. He was also a friend of HH Norris and linked by friendship with the Hackney Phalanx. Rennell became a member of Nobody’s Friends in 1813, proposed by Lord Kenyon and G W Marriott. *Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list*, p50.
185 Thomas Rennell, ‘Ignorance productive of atheism, faction, and superstition’, *A sermon preached before the University of Cambridge, on Commencement Sunday, July 1, 1798*. p21.
High Church social doctrine was by Denison’s day in tension and competition with Malthusian\(^{186}\) doctrine and political economy, which interpreted social organization in terms of economic laws. In this respect Malthus and the political economists continued in the tradition of eighteenth-century espousal of natural law. The tension was apparent to Malthus, who, as a clergyman of the Church of England, felt obliged to tone down his theory in the second edition of his work on population so as to be less objectionable to orthodox theology.\(^{187}\) The amended Poor Law of 1834 enshrined the atomistic principle of competition and self-interest, and stood in contrast with orthodox Christian notions of mutual obligation and duty. Against this atomism, religion afforded, as Rennell expressed it, ‘the cement’ of mutual dependence.\(^{188}\) Such thinking was not confined to High Churchmen. The Evangelical Thomas Gisborne (the elder)\(^{189}\) argued that the maintenance of society depended upon individuals accepting the obligations and duties of their station, and ‘to deduce from them ‘moral truths’ derived from revelation rules of conduct by which inhabitants of this country in particular, each in his respective station, may be aided in acquiring knowledge and encouraged in the performance of their several duties, are the object of unequivocal utility’.\(^{190}\)

The same argument extended to the purpose of the Church Establishment, which, as Van Mildert stated, was the ‘public good’ that the Establishment served in promoting cohesion across society. The Church provided ‘pure morals, social confidence, individual integrity, the best sympathies of our nature, the conjugal,

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\(^{186}\) Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) a clergyman, was a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, 1793; Professor of Political Economy at the East India Company College 1805. Malthus was known principally for his *Essay on the principle of population*, 1798.


\(^{188}\) Thomas Rennell, *Principles of French republicanism essentially founded on violence and blood-guiltiness. A sermon preached on, the 26th October, 1793, in the Cathedral Church of Winchester. Occasioned by the murder of her most Christian Majesty. 1798*, p21.

\(^{189}\) Thomas Gisborne (the elder) (1758-1846) a clergyman who was a principal figure in the Clapham Sect.

\(^{190}\) Thomas Gisborne (the elder), *An enquiry into the duties of man in the higher and middle classes of society in Great Britain*. 1795, preface p[B.]
parental, and filial affections, the love of peace, the love of order. Robert Nares argued the loss of religion would leave the state reliant upon the negative operation of punitive law. The absence of the Church, and the doctrines it taught, would deprive the State ‘of this its firmest hold upon the hearts and minds of men’. Nares contended that the National Church was providential and had, by virtue of providence, a political function. It was ‘by divine appointment,’ and had the capacity to regulate ‘the inner man, while the law can only notice his actions’.

The notion of ‘usefulness’ – that is the political and social function of the Church Establishment – came to be seen in the period of reform in the earlier part of the nineteenth century as a way in which the National Church could be defended as a useful part of the constitution. In Denison’s generation it was recognised that clergy had to be scrupulously attentive to their duty and obligations in their parishes, playing their part in engendering social order. Yet this was not merely an issue of law and order pure and simple. The providential nature of society and its government implied an intimate relation between religion and the well-being and good order of society. The duties and obligations of the clergy had a broad social complexion. So it was that William Lyall, writing in 1833, defined good government as that ‘in which the peaceful fruits of religion and social order spring in abundance’. Lyall was for many years an active and reforming parish

191 William Van Mildert, ‘Sermon preached in St Nicholas Church, Newcastle, September 3, 1839’, in Sermons on various occasions and charges, etc. 1838, p274.
192 Robert Nares (1753-1829) Assistant Preacher at Lincoln’s Inn 1788; Vicar of Dalbury 1796, Rector of Sharnford, a Canon of Lichfield and Prebendary of St Paul’s 1798, Archdeacon of Stafford 1801; Vicar St Mary’s, Reading, 1805; Vicar All Hallows, London Wall 1829.
193 Robert Nares, True wisdom the cause of stability. A sermon preached in the Church of St Mary, Islington, Sunday December 10th, 1820, for the benefit of the charity schools of that parish. 1821, p9.
195 Robert Nares, Principles of government adapted to general instruction and use. 1793. [abridgement of 1792 ed] p 23. Addressing the problem of ignorance [of the Gospel], Nares suggested that the art of printing books was to be an instrument in the hands of providence for diffusing knowledge. True wisdom the cause of stability. 1821, p6.
196 William Rowe Lyall (1788-1857) Assistant Preacher at Lincoln’s Inn 1817; Rector Weeley, Essex, 1823, and Archdeacon of Colchester 1824; Archdeacon of Maidstone and Prebendary of Canterbury 1841; Dean of Canterbury 1845. Both William Howley and Charles Blomfield were his patrons. Lyall became a member of Nobody’s Friends in 1818. Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list, p64.
197 William Rowe Lyall, Sentiments of the clergy on the question of Church reform. 1833, p9.
clergyman in Essex and later in Hampshire, as well as being a country archdeacon for over twenty years. He set an example as an energetic and reforming archdeacon, as Dewey notes, by taking on the difficult parish of Hadleigh with a population of three thousand. A lack of leadership in the parish had seen the parish church decay and the Established Church become a poor second best by comparison with active Nonconformist communities.\textsuperscript{198} His notion of clerical duty was a reflection of a continuing High Church Anglican ideological belief in a providentially ordered and governed world:

If we can only make our people content with the government under which they are destined to live, and dispose them to pay a ready and cheerful submission to all the laws which it is their duty to observe; - these are the great ends of all government; and by co-operating in these ends we shall at once fulfil our duties, both as members of society, and as members of religion.\textsuperscript{199}

To understand Denison, the militant Victorian Churchman, it is necessary to consider his life against the background of this continuing tradition of Anglican High Church ideology – the milieu in which the Denison clerical brothers were formed at Oxford - a continuing ideological strand that existed in the university before the Oxford Movement; which continued, eschewing the radicalism of some of the Tractarians, to be a potent force in the revival of the nineteenth-century Church of England. For High Churchmen such as Lyall and Denison the pattern of society, in which the ideal of High Church political theology could most nearly be realised, was the rural parish.

Denison’s career was primarily that of a country parson engaged in a grass-root renewal of the Church of England and English society through a dedicated and energetic parochial ministry. Denison’s actions within his parish were shaped by his political theology. His ministry was based on a world he saw through the lens of this old-fashioned High Church ideology. Seeing the issues of his day from such a

\textsuperscript{198} Clive Dewey, \textit{The passing of Barchester} 1991, p17. Lyall had been preceded as incumbent by the asthmatic Hugh Rose.

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Ibid}, p9.
perspective, he firmly believed that there were ideological battles that Churchmen were called to fight. He believed Churchmen had inherited the mantle of earlier generations who had done battle in their own day fighting for orthodoxy – a perspective that had informed Oxford of the late eighteenth, and the early nineteenth-century Oxford of Denison’s day. Throughout his life Denison felt the call to resist attacks upon Christian orthodoxy was an ongoing and a never-ending struggle: ‘The conflict between the Church and the World,’ Denison contended, ‘is a perpetual conflict, admitting of no armistice’.200

200 Life, Preface, [piii].
The human condition

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural and good works.


The office of priest

And now we exhort you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you have in remembrance, into how a Dignity, and to how weighty an Office and Charge ye are called: that is to say, to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they might be saved through Christ for ever.

‘The Ordering of priests,’ The Book of Common Prayer.

Christian society and governance

We beseech thee also to save all Christian Kings, Princes, and Governors; and especially thy servant George our King; that under him we may be godly and quietly governed: And grant unto her whole Council, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and indifferently minister justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue.

CHAPTER THREE

Denison as a rural incumbent

From Oxford don to country parish priest

In April 1838 George Denison exchanged the life of an Oxford don for the very different circumstances of a country parish.\(^1\) As by far the greater proportion of livings were rural parishes, this was a typical path for a young don, who might hold his fellowship for a few years before a college living or other preferment became available.\(^2\) Going into a rural living, Denison returned to the roots of his boyhood and earlier family life, which had raised him a country gentleman. Again, this was not exceptional. At this period a third of the clergy came from aristocratic, gentry or clerical families with their roots in the country.\(^3\) Denison was to remain a country incumbent for the next fifty-seven years until his death in 1896, with the additional responsibilities of an archdeaconry from 1851.

This chapter examines Denison’s career as a country parish priest for over half a century in the two West Country livings he held in succession - at Broad Windsor in

\(^1\) See Anthony Russell, *The clerical profession*. 1980, p158. Russell comments upon the contrast between university life and rural ministry: ‘Country life in the early nineteenth century was ubiquitously boorish and uncultured, and could often be wild, savage, and brutal. It must have appeared even more so to men who left the seclusion of Oxford to take up a family or college living and found themselves in the midst of a community at best indifferent, but frequently openly hostile to its clergyman.’


\(^3\) See Alan Haig, *The Victorian clergy*. 1984, pp35-40. Virgin has observed that traditionally the majority of the clergy appear in the late Georgian Church to have had rural origins. *The Church in an age of negligence*, p109ff.
Dorset, and later East Brent in Somerset. His parochial work is considered with reference to social and political pressures that had led an earlier generation of Churchmen to reassess the work of the Church towards the end of the continental war – considerations in this period which saw amongst High Churchmen an infusion of fresh energy in the work of the SPCK, and new initiatives with the creation of the National Society in 1811, and the Church Building Society in 1818. These initiatives proved useful when, following the political adjustments of 1828-32, further reform and renewal within the Church became imperative. National institutions such as the National Society and the Church Building Society were well placed to assist clergy at the grassroots in the parishes. Among these organizations, the National Society was particularly significant for clergy of Denison’s generation, as Church schools became increasingly to be seen as an institution essential to effective parochial ministry.

Beyond the political pressures upon Churchmen to show that the Church was useful in the Age of Reform, Denison’s ministry and his role in his community were shaped by the particular circumstances of the nineteenth-century rural world in which he lived in Dorset and Somerset. Clergy such as Denison and his colleagues dealt with matters as they found them locally – conditions varying from parish to parish. Evidence, to be found in Royal Commissions from the 1840s through to the 1860s, affords an insight to the social and economic conditions obtaining in West Country parishes, and the measures taken by clergy meet the problems they encountered. Though Denison did not give evidence at these commissions, his neighbouring colleagues – some of them his friends, and others corresponding acquaintances – did so. This evidence demonstrates how little the state and central government impinged upon rural communities, as it also demonstrates the significant opportunities open to capable clergy to take steps to make improvements in their local communities. This localism was an important facet of the world in which

4 The foundation of the Society reflected an effort to improve the Church’s pastoral reach, and coincided with the 1818 Church Building Act, 58 Geo III c 45.

5 For example: 1843 (402) VII, Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture, and 1867-68 [4068] XVII, Commission on the employment of children, young persons, and women in agriculture (1867).
Denison worked: the harsh realities and problems which presented themselves being the canvas or background of his ministry.

However, both the examination of the social and political pressures arising out of the Reform period as influences impinging upon Denison’s clerical career, and the nature of the rural communities in which Denison lived and worked, need to be considered alongside the background and influences reviewed in the previous chapter – namely his formation in the milieu of High Church orthodoxy and ideology. Denison saw his role and his work through the lens of providentialism, which shaped his view of society and the ordering of its ranks and economy, as it did his notion both of man’s duty of obedience to God, and of man’s mutual obligation to each other. This providentialism underpinned Denison’s belief in the function of the Church within the constitution to maintain the good order of society. In this chapter Denison’s providentialism and High Church doctrine are examined in connection with his parochial ministry.

Political incentive for improvement of parochial ministry in the period of reform

Denison was deaconed and priested in 1832 by the Bishop of Oxford, Richard Bagot. He was admitted to the Church’s ministry in the very year in which the Great Reform Bill was passed. The 1832 Reform Act\(^6\) had been preceded by hostility towards the Church Establishment, manifested as agitation for reform, as well as instances of calls for dis-establishment. Radical opinion in the new Parliament, which first sat in early 1833, was antipathetic to the Church Establishment. Riding on the wave of reform, questions were raised regarding the status of endowed and charitable property, including the Church’s temporalities. J S Mill declared that ‘the

\(^6\) 2 & 3 Will IV.c.45 An act to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales (7 June 1832).
most pressing duties which this Parliamentary Reform had devolved upon our public men, is that of deciding what may, and supposing this determined, what should be done with the property of the Church, and various Public Corporations.  

Whatever the true objectives of those calling for the reform of the Church Establishment, the political pressures running counter to the Church could not be ignored. As J B Wetherell recognized, Churchmen could not remain inert or merely oppose calls for reform. 'The tide of public opinion is running so strongly in favor [sic] of a reform in the temporalities of the Church, that it would be unwise in the dignitaries of the Establishment, as it would be futile now to oppose the current.'  

Bishops’ and archdeacons’ charges delivered at this time suggest that the need for reform was widely recognized by Churchmen. This awareness induced the publication of Lord Henley’s Plan of Church reform (1832), and within Oxford circles a reply, Sequel to remarks upon Church reform (1832), from one whom Denison knew, namely Edward Burton, Regius Professor of Divinity. Burton had already addressed the issue the previous year with his Thoughts upon the demand for Church reform (1831). In 1833, Thomas Arnold, another Oriel man and Headmaster of Rugby, gave vent to his liberal notions in his Principles of Church reform, recommending the inclusion of Nonconformists within the embrace of a wider Church Establishment.

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8 J B Wetherell, Church Reform. A letter to Viscount Althorp. 1833, p3.
9 See also Henley’s Plan for a new arrangement and increase in the number of the dioceses of England and Wales, 1834
10 Denison possessed copies of Burton’s Thoughts upon the demand for Church reform (1831) and Sequel to remarks upon Church reform, etc (1832). Items 8 and 11 in Denison’s pamphlet collection held at Pusey House.
Obligations and duties of the clerical ministry

If public opinion was to be incited to adopt a negative view of the Church Establishment as being utterly inefficient and of no apparent use, Churchmen set about proving the opposite, and to demonstrate that the Church was positively useful. This, in turn, meant that the parochial clergy had to be seen to be fulfilling their obligations, and, of a political necessity, making a demonstrable commitment to the exercise of the pastoral duties. It is necessary to note that Churchmen understood the notion of the ‘usefulness’ of the Church not in Utilitarian terms, but in terms of the Church doing its job and imparting the Christian faith to the populace. The notion of the Church’s ‘usefulness’ is to be explained in this context by William Paley’s *dictum* that ‘the authority ... of a Church Establishment is founded upon its utility’: the ‘utility,’ or function of the Church, being defined as ‘the preservation and communication of religious knowledge’.\(^\text{12}\) The question of the ‘usefulness’ of the Church Establishment was thus religious. It was also ideologically charged: for implicit was a political theology that placed Christianity at the centre of the constitution, positing an intrinsic relation between Church and State.\(^\text{13}\) That Churchmen considered it possible to mount a defence of the Church Establishment on the basis of her ‘utility’ – that is by showing that the Church was actually performing her duty – demonstrated there remained a substantive belief in a Christian social and political theology of the kind explored in the latter part of the previous chapter.

When Denison was ordained in 1832, the spirit of the times demanded much greater exertion and commitment by the clergy. Bishop J B Sumner, an Evangelical, remarked that the profession of a clergyman had been sometimes considered ‘a


\(^{13}\) See for example Archdeacon Justly Hill’s view on Church State relations. The Archdeacon opposed the severing of the relation between Church and State. *A charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Bucks ... 1833*, p17.
smooth and easy course of life’. The changing times, he asserted, called for something more: the passive qualities of ‘decency and respectability of conduct’ were no longer sufficient. What was required of the clergy was a sense of professionalism marked by education, character, and talent for leadership: ‘He must have such education, and be possessed of such strength of character as may raise him above the level of those over whom he is to rule. He must have such natural and acquired powers, as shall enable him to take the lead among his fellow creatures: to guide the flock, not follow it’. In the same vein, Archdeacon Bather in his charge of 1833 called upon his clergy to be ‘studious to enquire what conduct is peculiarly called from those whom God has placed as watchmen upon her walls’. He told his clergy that they must demonstrate at their ‘several posts, the exemplary, and useful men which we have the several advantages to be’.

The subject of ministry was addressed by Newman in 1833 in an early tract, Thoughts on the ministerial commission. His thoughts on the ministry had been anticipated by the High Church Hugh James Rose at Cambridge some several years earlier in his The commission and consequent duties of the clergy (1828), as they had been on a number of occasions by Richard Mant in 1822 and 1825, and recurred to again by Mant in The clergyman’s obligations considered, 1830 and The Church and her ministrations, 1838.

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14 J B Sumner, A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Chester at the triennial visitation in July and September 1832, p2.
16 Edward Bather (1779-1847) educated at Shrewsbury and Oriel (BA 1804), was Vicar of Meole Brace, Shropshire; Archdeacon of Salop 1828. He published three volumes of sermons (Sermons chiefly practical, 1827-40); Hints of ministerial duties was published posthumously in 1876, but the title is indicative of earlier concerns. ODNB.
17 Edward Bather, Thoughts on Church Establishments and Church reform. A charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Salop, 1833, p35.
18 Richard Mant (1776-1848) was domestic chaplain to Archbishop Manners Sutton and later Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore. He did much to promote the work of the SPCK. See his earlier publications Rule of ministerial duty inforced and illustrated, 1822, and Further particulars in the ministerial character and obligations examined and inforced, 1825.
Indeed, there was a widespread inclination to reconsider the Church’s ministerial duties and obligations extending beyond the two universities. This was manifested, for example, by the movement to form associations in defence of the Church in the early 1830s. A number of such associations were established – amongst other places, in Bath, Bristol, Ripon, Cheltenham, and Winchester. It was a movement supported by H J Rose, who established The British Magazine in 1832 to engender Church Principles. This dynamic was recognized by William Palmer (of Worcester) who described it as a surge of energy ‘as if feelings long pent up had acquired energy from restraint and compression’. The movement was not merely defensive, but recognized Churchmen needed to meet the exigencies of the day.

One of the principal instruments that lay to hand, which would enable the Church to show that the Establishment was useful, was its parochial system. The proper exercise of ministerial duty in the parishes offered the opportunity to tackle the ignorance of the poorer classes. The shadow of revolution since the terror in France in the 1790s and, closer to the period when Denison was ordained, unrest in that country between 1827 and the July Revolution of 1830 and the flight of the Bourbon monarchy, was a reminder of the dangers of social instability: a fear rekindled in 1838 by Chartist agitation. Fear of the masses and of social unrest was current when Denison became Vicar of Broad Windsor in 1838, with the beginning of large-scale gatherings of Chartists up and down the country. Near Denison in the

19 The objectives of these associations are described by William Palmer, Narrative of events connected with the publication of the Tracts for the Times, 1843, p19f.
1. To maintain pure and inviolate the doctrines, the services, and the discipline of the Church; that is, to withstand change, which involves suppression of doctrine, a departure from primitive practice in religious offices, or innovation upon the Apostolic prerogatives, order, and commission of bishops, priests and deacons.
2. To afford Churchman an opportunity of exchanging their sentiments, and co-operating together on a large scale.
21 William Palmer (of Worcester Coll -1803-85) Vicar of Whitchurch 1846. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, moved to Oxford in 1832. Palmer was a liturgist and historian (Origines liturgicae 1832, and Treatise on the Church of Christ 1838). He was associated early on with the Oxford Movement, but fell out with Newman and Froude (Narrative of events connected with the publication of Tracts for the Times 1853). Palmer and Denison were associated in defending the Catholic element in the Church of England while renouncing Romanizing.
22 Narrative of events, p27.
West Country some 30,000 Chartists gathered on Trowle Common in Wiltshire.\textsuperscript{23} Fear arising from social instability continued for the best part of the ensuing decade. A depression in the trade-cycle and a series of poor harvest in the early 1840s fuelled Anti-Corn law demonstrations to bring about the repeal of this protectionist legislation. Chartist agitation culminated in a great meeting on Kennington Common in 1848 during the period of revolutionary upheavals in Europe which caused the authorities to take precautionary measures in London.\textsuperscript{24} In his 1844 charge, Samuel Wilberforce, at that time Archdeacon of Surrey, described the fearful condition and ignorance of the mass of the lower orders:

\begin{quote}
A lower condition of morals, in the fullest sense, could not I think be found ... Moral feelings and sentiments do not exist among them; they have no morals ... Their education is an education of filthy habits and immoral conduct, and gaming and drinking. Their horrid words, their ferocious gestures, their hideous laughter, their brutal, mindless faces, appal and amaze the stranger. Their appearance, manners, habits, and moral condition, so far as the word ‘moral’ can be applied to them, in accordance with their half-civilized natures.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

Wilberforce’s material was drawn from the findings of the assistant poor law commissioners inquiring into the condition of the women and children of the families of agricultural labourers. Conditions were found to be appalling all over the country – poor food, bad housing, ignorance of even of basic domestic skills, neglect of children, irregular schooling and consequent illiteracy. Denison’s brother, Stephen, an assistant poor law commissioner, was responsible for a damming report in 1844 on the gang system of farm labourers reflecting the worst of these issues, as the system was perceived as inimical to family life and social cohesion.\textsuperscript{26} Only four years later, uprisings occurred in Europe, spreading through France, Germany, and Italy. Just across the channel, King Louis Philippe was deposed, and a few months later there was considerable bloodshed in the course of the ‘June days Uprisings’ in Paris. Amongst those killed was the Archbishop of Paris. These disturbances, led

\textsuperscript{23} See Malcolm Chase, Chartism a new history. 2007, p32.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p300ff.
\textsuperscript{25} Samuel Wilberforce, Charge delivered to the Archdeaconry of Surrey, cited in English Journal of Education, Vol 2, 1844, p266.
\textsuperscript{26} 1843 [510] XII, Report on the employment of women and children in agriculture.
Christopher Wordsworth junior, who associated himself with Denison in 1847 and 1848 defending National Society schools, to plead the importance of the Church’s role as an educator as a bulwark against revolution. The disturbances in France suggested to Wordsworth that secular education at the hands of a centrist authority had signally failed.\(^\text{27}\) In the English context he argued that merely putting the scriptures in the hands of the young to inculcate virtues was insufficient. At the root of Wordsworth’s position in 1848 was a doctrinal argument that man was fundamentally flawed. Education had to address original sin, and as a corollary it was necessary to recognize that man could do nothing of his own will. ‘The natural man – that is, he who relies on his own reason, cannot receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned’ [Wordsworth’s italics].\(^\text{28}\) In short, the revolutions of 1848 supplied a continuing case for supporting a conservative, orthodox view of society considered in chapter two of this study.\(^\text{29}\)

**Poor Law amendment and religion**

One of the important responses to problems perceived to lie with the labouring classes was the amended poor law (1834).\(^\text{30}\) This was a significant factor shaping the nineteenth-century rural world. The new poor law was intended to reduce dependence on the poor rates, and force the poor as far as possible to look to their own devices. The 1834 Act owed much to economic theories advanced by Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. The underlying tenet of this legislation rested on a doctrine of enlightened self-interest, which, it was conceived, would

\(^{27}\) ‘The eye may dazzled by specious results of mental proficiency; flattering Reports may be drawn up and circulated of the progress of Schools: a great and complex machinery may be organized and centralized, for the conduct of Public Instruction, as a neighbouring country has taught us by a terrible example, and yet no real permanent good may be effected; the national character may not be improved – it may not be more dignified – more humane – more Christian. On the contrary, it may have become more restless – more proud – more revolutionary - more unchristian – more anti-Christian. And so National Instruction may lead to national Ruin.’ *National warnings on national education*. 1848, p17.

\(^{28}\) *Ibid*, p15.

\(^{29}\) See chapter 2.

\(^{30}\) 4 & 5 Will IV, c. 76 *An act for the amendment and better administration of the laws relating to the poor in England and Wales*. (14 August 1834).
encourage self-help, and self-improvement. The poor were to be forced to take responsibility for their own condition, and taught to become more orderly and self-reliant - the object being to tame and regulate the fearful masses. If the harsh penalties of the workhouse were to be the remedy for indigence, the other more positive object was to educate the lower orders to better habits and discipline. However, this notion of the education of the lower orders was seen through a religious lens – reflected, for example, in the attitude of Charles Blomfield, Bishop of London, and John Bird Sumner, Bishop of Chester, at the helm of the Commission on the poor law. These Churchmen sought a remedy for the condition of the labouring poor in their moral and religious education of the labouring poor. The commissioners in their report advised that they looked to the ‘influence of moral and religious education’ to improve the disposition and condition of the labouring poor, and not so much to economic arrangements and regulations.

The rigour and harshness of the poor law was not the only way in which nineteenth-century society addressed the lower orders. There was also social conscience. This was famously signalled by Thomas Carlyle, who in 1839 posed what he termed ‘The Condition-of-England question,’ the year following Denison’s commencement of his parochial ministry at Broad Windsor. Social conscience found expression in voluntarist Christian charity. In a useful article on this subject, David Roberts has

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31 Towards the closing years of the eighteenth century, the Rev’d Joseph Townsend’s observations identified the problems that led to amendment of the Poor Laws some years later. He wrote of his experience: ‘But what is perplexing is, that poverty and wretchedness have increased in exact proportion to the efforts which have been made for the comfortable assistance of the poor.’ He pre-empted Malthus, and later Darwinist notions, noting that the weakest of both sexes are ‘the first to pay the debt of nature; the most active and vigorous preserved their lives’. *Dissertation on the Poor Laws*. 1786, p7.

32 1834 (44) Vol XXVII Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners on the administration and practical operation of the poor laws in England and Wales, p205. J W Cowell, an assistant commissioner, argued that education was the ‘best antidote against pauperism’ and in places where there was education, he found the effects ‘striking’. 1834 (44) Vol XXVIII Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners, Appendix (A) Part I, p636, and 644f.

The connection between religion and social stability was expounded by the evangelical J B Sumner just two years before. Advocating the positive social benefits of religion, Sumner contended ‘nothing else can supply the true sources of individual comfort, of political stability, or national prosperity’. *A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Chester at the triennial visitation in July and September 1832 by the Rt Rev John Bird Sumner, Lord Bishop of Chester*, p31.

consulted a number of contemporary Tory periodicals to consider the mindset that prompted this voluntaryism. Amongst the leading notions was a premium placed upon the role of landowners – especially those with power and capacity to advance the ‘welfare of the people’; the other leading notion was that of subordinationism. Nineteenth-century voluntaryism was characterized by opposition to ‘over anxious interference’ and to centralism. It is to be observed, however, that voluntaryist Christian charity was not confined to the squires and parsons – Christian voluntaryism also engaged the Victorian industrial middle class in the populous cities. Church and Chapel were equally concerned with the dark and brutish ignorance – signs for them of religious and moral destitution – of the industrial proletariat, upon whom they looked to impose order and discipline.

Both the Poor Law and Christian voluntaryism thus characterized society’s approach in its dealings with the poor. There were some clergy who believed that the enactment of the 1834 poor law led to improvements in the desirable traits of industry and self-reliance, which was the central and crucial aim of the legislation. But there were other clergy who found that the Poor Law failed the test of Christian charity. If there was a positive aim to encourage responsibility incorporated in the new Poor Law, there was also the danger, as the Rev John Davison commented, that charity would be erased from the statute book. Yet, charity was an imperative of the Christian Gospel: ‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was

37 Simon Gunn has argued for the significance of religion (church and chapel) both as the medium through which the culture of the middle classes and their wealth was discerned, as it was the medium through which social relations with the lower classes were shaped. ‘The ministry, the middle class and the “civilizing mission” in Manchester, 1850-80,’ in Social history, Vol 21 (Jan 1986), p23.
39 John Davison (1777-1834) Fellow of Oriel 1810-17; Vicar Sutterton 1817, Rector of Washington 1818, and of Upton-upon-Severn 1826. Davison was associated with Copleston taking a liberal view of the poor laws.
40 John Davison, Considerations on the poor laws, 1817, p95.
thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,
I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in
prison and you came to visit me."\(^{41}\)

The Hon and Rev Samuel Best\(^{42}\) was an example of such a clergyman who looked to
the principles of Christian charity. He saw his ministry to the poor as one of his main
responsibilities. He considered the new poor law to be harsh, and as undermining
the welfare and happiness of the poorer classes.\(^{43}\) It was not a system Best could
regard as ‘tempered by mercy and benevolence’.\(^{44}\) But the issue went further to
the question of the place the poor had in society.\(^{45}\) The point being that the poor
had, on the traditional Anglican view of the ordering of society, an undoubted place
within society.\(^{46}\) The Church taught that all men – rich and poor – were accountable
before God.\(^{47}\) The Anglican account of the virtue of labour afforded respect for the
honest labouring man who earned his ‘daily bread’.\(^{48}\)

\(^{41}\) Matthew 25: 35-36.
\(^{42}\) The Hon & Rev Samuel Best (1803-1873) Eton and King’s - clergyman; fellow of King’s, Cambridge,
1825-6; Rector of Blandford Forum, Dorset 1831-73 & Rural Dean of Andover.
\(^{43}\) Samuel Best, *Parochial ministrations*. 1839, p24. Best believed the focus of the new Poor law was
too narrow, ‘... as if its first and sole objective was the reduction of the rates, the amelioration of
the condition of the labourer having no part whatever in the functions of the guardian, or board of which
he is part’. *Ibid*, p34.
\(^{44}\) *Ibid*. Cf also William Davis, who believed that the poor ought to have a stake in society, on the
basis that this would give them a share in society and thus an interest in its preservation and its
welfare. *Hints to philanthropists; or, a collective view of practical means for improving the conditions
of the poor and labouring classes of society*. 1821, p2.
\(^{45}\) Davison noted that the Political Economists took a hard line dismissing as being of no real value
the value of cottages, live-stock, and cottage gardens. *Ibid*, p105. Many clergy, however, looked to
such things so as to provide the poor with a stake in society and the means to improve their
circumstances.
\(^{46}\) See William Davis, *Hints to philanthropists, etc*, p2. The argument that the poor had no stake
within society was advanced by Arthur Young (1741 -1820), a writer on agriculture and economics.
Young opposed what he saw as the corrosive effects of the Poor Laws, and arguing the labouring
classes had nothing in the way of property, *Annals of Agriculture*, XXXVI 1801, p503. The benefits and
problems of allocating cottages, allotments, etc., was an ongoing debate with the country clergy and
landowners.
\(^{47}\) ‘Yea, it is high wisdom by the wise man therefore to know whose gift it is; for many other skills it
is wisdom to know and believe that all goodness and graces be of God, as author. Which thing well
considered must needs make us think that we shall make account for that which God gives us to
\(^{48}\) William Davis, *Hints to Philanthropists, etc*; ‘Also ‘A sermon against idleness’, in *Homilies*, 1852
dition, p483, and 488f. The Church’s traditional teaching can be seen expounded in *An homily
against idleness*, and Nowell’s *Catechism*, where it is noted that by the words ‘daily bread’ in the
Lord’s Prayer, ‘we are put in mind that we must get our living by our daily bread’. p101.
It was this traditional ideological ground that undergirded Denison’s parochial work. It was a ministry founded on a particular view of providence that shaped the paternalistic view of his station and relation to his villagers:

The respect due to higher station should never be interfered with by familiarity of manner not consistent with the relative position of the two parties. As much kindness always as can be, but no levelling as no condescension. The poor themselves are the truest and best teachers in this particular. They love and respect in a manner very admirable, being perfectly natural and according to the innate tendencies of their position, the Christian Gentleman.\(^49\)

It is not clear that Denison understood the new economic science of political economy. He considered capital to be an accumulation, or inheritance, given by God in ‘the natural order of Providence’.\(^50\) However, in that natural order, the relation of capital to labour was as ‘of a mother and child’ – his metaphor suggestive of a dependency and relationship of obligation.\(^51\) It is doubtful that he would have endorsed the doctrine of enlightened self-interest. If there is no record of direct comment on the poor law from George Denison’s hand, there are indications of views held by his family. His brothers, Evelyn and Edward, evidently shared the kind of views expressed by Best.\(^52\) They saw a connection between their family’s landowning status and their responsibilities for the labouring poor. W M Jacob has noted that Bishop Denison disliked the new poor law, disapproving of clergy who acted as guardians.\(^53\) He rejected ‘as self-righteous the individuality of political economy’ seeing ‘the poor as victims of the faults of their betters, including the church’.\(^54\) The Denison brothers were in the forefront of a movement to improve

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\(^49\) G A Denison, *Supplement*, p59
\(^50\) Ibid, 52f.
\(^51\) Ibid, p52.
\(^52\) See Bishop Denison’s speech in Lords, *PD*, 3rd Series, Vol 64, 7 July 1842, col 1090.
\(^53\) W M Jacob *ODNB*.
\(^54\) W M Jacob, *Ibid*. Soloway notes that Edward Denison disliked the identification of the Church with the interests of the propertied classes. It was a view that Soloway shows was shared by Bishops Phillpotts and Law: that the Poor law was ‘counter to the intentions of the Church’. *Prelates and People*, p191.

Evelyn shared his episcopal brother’s views, drawing attention to the contradictions apparent in the attempt to educate the poor and the failure to improve their living conditions. The former was concerned to see improvements in the living conditions of the poor, and wished to see landowners
the physical and moral welfare of their tenants.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, the strength of the Denison family’s commitment to the welfare of the poor was continued by Bishop Denison’s son, Edward (1840-70). The latter worked in London’s East End relieving problems of social distress.\textsuperscript{56} In later life, reviewing the contribution made by his family, George Denison wrote approvingly of the work undertaken by his nephew, Edward.\textsuperscript{57}

Denison’s understanding of the social order, and his notion of his own duty was entirely shaped by an old-fashioned orthodox view. He wrote of his understanding of God’s providence in the ordering of society, and the labouring poor: ‘The whole course of the Bible declares the poor to be a primary part of His Providence (Deut xv.11, 1 Sam ii, 7).’\textsuperscript{58} Given the hand of providence, Denison did not conceive of the possibility of any significant alteration in the economic and social ordering of rural society, nor in the possibility of ending the poverty of the agricultural labouring

obliged to take greater responsibility. Speaking in debate in 1846 he declared: ‘It was vain to take steps to ameliorate the condition of the people, it was vain to vote money for their education and improvement, to build school-houses and appoint a school-master, if the scholar on his return home each day saw examples stronger than any precept, and law opposed to the instruction he had just received as to order and cleanliness, and morality’. (See Evelyn Denison’s speech, PD, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Series, Vol 87, col 45.)

With the help of his engineer brother, Sir William Denison, Evelyn took steps to improve the living and working conditions of his estate workers and miners. In giving advice to his brother, William went beyond offering mere technical advice to offer wider consideration for the physical and spiritual welfare of the workers. (William Denison to J E Denison 20 November 1844. Correspondence of J Evelyn Denison, (Os 2 C 168), Nottingham University Library. Denison’s nephew, Lord John Manners, supported the idea of the Church of England Self-Supporting Village Society. See Chadwick, \textit{The Victorian Church}, Part I, p348.


\textsuperscript{55} See ODNB.

\textsuperscript{57} G A Denison, \textit{Supplement}, p87.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid}, p57.
families; ‘poverty’ being understood as a relative but permanent economic and social station in society. Such improvements that men like Denison could bring about in their communities were ameliorative adjustments to their overall condition. The raw and harsh demands that agriculture made of its labourers remained a constant in the rural parishes Denison knew in the course of his career as a parish priest.

Whether dealing with the implications of the poor law, or engaging in Christian charity, the mindset that something should be done to educate the lower orders in some degree to assist them to order their lives, together with the notion that clergy could in practical ways implement organizations such as saving banks, clothing clubs and other such instruments which would materially assist their parishioners – these were all grist to a mill that offered the parochial clergy of the Church Establishment strategies to prove themselves useful. Indeed, as the Rev John Sandford\textsuperscript{59} indicated in a manual on pastoralia published in the year Denison moved to East Brent, it was the function of a resident clergyman to make for the effectual ‘temporal and spiritual welfare of all around him’\textsuperscript{60} Sandford’s exposition of the role of a clergyman was holistic – encouraging industry, while ameliorating the conditions of the less fortunate. The whole was conceived in terms of an orthodox concept of society – seeing the mutual relations that must exist in society, while accepting the differences:

The numerous avenues of usefulness, which are open to one so circumstanced, will suggest themselves to every mind ... The whole moral and physical condition of a neighbourhood has been changed by God’s blessing on the unobtrusive, but persevering labours of a single man. Habits of idleness, lawlessness, and intemperance, have been succeeded by industry, sobriety and order ... Schools have sprung up for the young, institutions have been set on foot for the relief of the sick and the aged; schemes for ameliorating the conditions of the humbler classes, and elevating them in the social scale, and at the same time bringing the rich and poor into kindly and

\textsuperscript{59} John Sandford (1801/2-1873) Vicar Chillingham 1827; Rector of Dunchurch 1836; Rector of Grimley with Hallow 1851; Archdeacon of Coventry 1851. ODNB.

\textsuperscript{60} John Sandford, Parochialia; or, Church, school and parish. The Church system and services practically considered. 1845, p205.
brotherly intercourse, have evinced the hand of the moral cultivator, and the working of an active and benevolent mind.  

Clergy as local agents of government

The privileges of the national Church afforded by the State, in Sandford’s view, placed an obligation upon the clergy to exercise themselves in sundry ways for the benefit of their communities.  

Derwent Coleridge went further, contending in a sermon of 1839 that, but for the parochial institutions of the national Church, many a rural village would be sunk in ‘rude, savage and brutal ignorance’ and consequently ‘the pastoral character of the Established Church, considered even from a temporal point of view, it would be difficult to overestimate’. In fact the position of nineteenth-century clergymen allowed opportunities to do a great deal in their parishes. The example of the High Churchman William Lyall (1788-1857), the subject of Clive Dewey’s *Passing of Barchester*, showed what an active parish priest could achieve in successive livings in Essex and Suffolk. Lyall understood the importance for the Church that her clergy should be effective. It was, he declared: ‘the parochial clergy who constituted what is technically called the Established Church. They are the sinews upon which the whole strength of religion depends. As I think we may go even further, and add, that without them, the permanence even of civilization itself, would almost become a problem.’

Lyall’s language may have been over-blown, but reflected the opportunities which existed for active and energetic clergy. On the ground in a rural parish, with the absence of organs of local government and of other ad hoc administrative agents introduced very much later in the century, there was, as will be seen later in this

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61 Ibid, p206.
62 Ibid, p212.
63 Derwent Coleridge (1800-1883) Principal of St Mark’s College (the National Society training college) 1841-64; Rector of Hanwell 1864.
64 Derwent Coleridge, Sermon II ‘The Church of England considered in a national point of view,’ in *The scriptural character of the English Church considered in a series of sermons*. 1839, p29.
65 William Lyall, *Sentiments of the clergy on the question of Church reform briefly stated in a charge ... to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Colchester, in June 1833*. 1833, p14.
chapter, considerable scope for much of the period of Denison’s career as a country parson for him to act on his own initiative to treat with local issues. In the countryside the 1834 Poor law Amendment Act was the most significant legislation for many a decade. Centralising trends and associated bureaucracy induced, as Oliver MacDonagh has observed, powerful opposition.\textsuperscript{66} Regulatory legislation and administrative law only developed gradually over the course of the century, and its initial focus was on manufacturing centres and urban population, rather than rural. Before the Local Government Act of 1894,\textsuperscript{67} there were ample opportunities, as Clive Dewey has shown, for clergy with the education and social advantages of the kind afforded to clergy such as William Lyall and Denison to demonstrate effective parochial leadership. The government of the countryside remained remarkably unaffected by reforming legislation for much of the nineteenth century.

But reformers were highly critical of the old organs of local government and administration – one of the effects of the amended poor law being to circumscribe the limited powers of parish vestries.\textsuperscript{68} The poor law commissioners were severe in their criticism of the competence of parish officers. It was curious, therefore, that in an attempt to exclude clergy from the oversight of Church schools, only thirteen years later, James Kay-Shuttleworth\textsuperscript{69} sought to impose management upon Church schools drawn from the same pool of parochial persons so severely condemned by

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{66} Oliver MacDonagh, \textit{Early Victorian government}, 1830-70. 1977, p9.
  \item\textsuperscript{67} 56 & 57 Vict.c.73.
  \item\textsuperscript{68} There were three forms of vestry – the open vestry, the select vestry, and self-appointed vestry. Open vestries were constituted by any rate-payer who chose to attend; the select vestry were constituted under an 1818 statute, which allowed for a vestry of no less than five, and no more than twenty, to be elected from among substantial householders. The incumbent was included \textit{ex officio}, as were the churchwardens and overseers – these elected officials’ appointments having been first approved by the magistrates. See 59 Geo.c.12, Sect 1. See also 1834 (44) Vol XXVII, \textit{Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners on the administration and practical operation of the poor laws in England and Wales}, p60f.
  \item The Commissioners condemned open vestries as ‘the most irresponsible bodies ever entrusted with the performance of public duties, or the distribution of public money’. \textit{Ibid}, p48. The Commissioners were marginally happier with select vestries, but largely because of ‘the presence of the clergyman and regular minutes kept at their meetings’. \textit{Ibid}, p64. The Commissioners were fundamentally critical of the capacity for professional administration of the persons who comprised the vestries (the farmers in rural areas, and shopkeepers in towns). \textit{Ibid}, pp55, 61 & 64.
  \item James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth (1804-1877) had served as an assistant Poor Law commissioner before being appointed in 1839 as secretary to the Committee of Council on Education – an office he held until 1849.
\end{itemize}
the 1834 poor law commissioners. This was an issue, as will be seen in chapter seven, that aroused Denison’s strong opposition.

Nothwithstanding criticisms of the competence parish officers, local vestries and their officers continued in their traditional responsibilities such as providing a constable, and responsibility for maintaining local roads – a function which was doubtless inefficient.70 Where poor law unions were introduced, vestries were shorn of their responsibility for administering the relief of the poor and distressed. Vestries continued to have responsibility for levying the Church rate, albeit a power already questioned by Nonconformist opponents (see chapter five). In the course of the century legislation made provision for more professional execution of duties, or established ad hoc bodies for specific purposes. Amongst these, for example, were the County Police Act,71 the 1862 Highways Act,72 the 1866 Sanitary Act,73 the 1870 Education Act,74 the Artisan and Labourers’ Dwelling Act 1875, and the Local Government Act of 1894.75 The last restored a measure of parochial government by creating parish councils in parishes with a population of three hundred or more.76 However, for much of Denison’s career, there was considerable scope for a clergyman occupying a high status social position in a rural parish to consider not just the spiritual interests of his parishioners but also to take summary action to address their temporal welfare. As Anthony Russell has shown, the role of

71 2 & 3 Victoria.c.93.
72 25 & 26 Victoria. c. 61 – The Act legislation adopted the principle of the Poor Law Boards and created boards covering a consolidated group of parishes. Section 6.4 allowed parishes to be grouped together for this purpose, and Section 9 allowed the creation of a highway board for each district so created.
73 29 & 30 Vict.c.90, Section 5 allowed the formation of a ‘special drainage district’.
74 The Elementary Education Act 33 & 34 Vict.c.75, Section 10 allowed for the formation of school boards, and Section 14 management of schools by these boards.
75 56 &57 Vict, c.73.
76 56 & 57 Vict.c. 36 The Act gave parish council’s corporate status, thus allowing them to hold property such as offices, village halls, etc, and to acquire land for the purpose of recreation etc. Parishes were given powers via adoptive acts such as the 1833 Lighting and Watching Act, Baths and Washhouse Acts 1842-1882, Burials Acts 1852-1885, 1860 Public Improvements Act, 1892 Public Libraries Act, etc. Parish Councils acquired powers to deal with matters that clergy such as Denison had earlier taken upon themselves – section 8e allowed the parish to utilize wells, springs or streams to provide facilities for water, and section 8f deal ponds, ditches, etc prejudicial to health.
nineteenth-century clergy extended far beyond the sacerdotal office.\textsuperscript{77} As a literate and educated man, the parson served as a recorder – registering baptism, weddings and funerals - as he often served as a teacher, almoner and amateur dispenser of medicine (as Denison did, equipped by his mother with a medicine chest and a book on medicine when he became curate of Cuddesdon),\textsuperscript{78} and in various ways maintained law and order. In addition many clergy promoted social institutions such as savings banks, provident societies, as well as mutual clubs for clothing, coals, and the like.\textsuperscript{79}

It was hardly possible for clergy to confine their dealings to the spiritual welfare of the rural labourers without addressing the material issues that bore upon their physical condition and welfare. Practical issues, such as sanitation, housing, and other nuisances that affected the lives of parishioners, and were often dealt with by parish priests exercising their initiative. This clerical engagement is shown, for example, in evidence given to the Royal Commission on the employment of women and children in agriculture that well into the late 1860s clergy in nineteenth-century rural Dorset and Somersetshire – the counties in which Denison held livings – exercised a significant practical and social role in many country parishes.\textsuperscript{80}

**Practical consideration for improvements in ministry**

Practical schemes and ideas for improvement of parochial institutions and organization, and methods for improved pastoral oversight, were very much

\textsuperscript{78} See Denison’s account of his early effort as an amateur physician in *Life* p71f.
\textsuperscript{79} See J H Blunt’s advice on this – ‘auxiliary parochial institutions’ in his *Directorium pastorale*. This directory was published in 1864, going through a number subsequent editions. But the ideas rehearsed by Blunt had their origins in the eighteenth century.
\textsuperscript{80} There were two Commissions that have proved useful in shedding light on the kinds of conditions met by clergy in their parishes – that of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1843 (1843 [510] XII *Employment of women and children in agriculture*), and a 1867-68 Commission investigating the role of women, children and the young in agriculture (1867-68 [4068] XVII *Employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture*).
dimensions of the renaissance of the parochial ministry. The Archdeacon of Oxford, Charles Clerke, understood the importance of collegiality and networking, suggesting that ideas for improvements could often be best supplied by communicating with neighbouring clergy. In the Oxford Diocese every clergyman was considered a corresponding member of the Oxfordshire Society for Educating the Children of the Poor, the object being to encourage interaction and sharing of ideas. Clergy of Denison’s generation, entering on parochial work after the Great Reform Act, were able to build on institutional models which had begun to be introduced in the previous generation. Evidence for these earlier endeavours is provided by Frederic Iremonger, who, working on behalf of the Hampshire Society for the Education of the Poor, recorded clerical efforts to improve their parishes as early as 1813. Iremonger, engaging in correspondence with societies in other parts of the country, had been encouraged to undertake a tour ‘to see first hand’ the workings of these societies in other dioceses. He was impressed by what he saw being done, and felt ‘gratification’ at ‘this vigorous attempt to give stability to our establishment’. Not least, in the generation before Denison became a parish priest, was the increasing interest taken by the clergy in education.

This interest continued into Denison’s day as the importance of parochial schools came gradually to be recognized because, as G F A Best has noted, the older

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82 Charles Carr Clerke, A charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Oxford ... 1833, p7f.
83 As Clerke pointed out, being a corresponding member of the Oxford Society for the Education of the Poor enabled clergy to receive and give useful information for the further promotion of education with respect to such matters as buildings, teachers, school management, books and educational equipment. Ibid, p24.
84 Frederick Iremonger (1783-1820) was another member of ‘Nobody’s Friends’. He was Vicar of Wherwell, Hampshire, and a Prebendary of Winchester. The Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list of members, p47.
85 Frederic Iremonger, Suggestions to the promoters of Dr Bell’s system population: with an account of the Hampshire Society for the Education of the Poor; the proceedings on the different thousand and district institutions already formed: a general list of schools, and the number of children now receiving instruction, on the new plan, in the principles of the Established Church. 1813, p2. The records of the Hampshire Society for the Education of the Infant Poor corroborate Iremonger’s account, and supply evidence of the organization established in a period well before the State became involved in popular education. See the Society’s Printed papers and memoranda about formation of branches of the National Society in Hants and the Isle of Wight, 1811; Minute Books 1811-1814, 1814-1825, and 1825-1865, together with Annual Reports 1824-34, 1842-8.
methods of education – sermons, homilies and catechising – ‘were increasingly felt to be inadequate without new institutional aids’. Richard Whately, sometime fellow of Oriel, preached in support of education, arguing the inadequacy of the pulpit as a sufficient method of instruction. Beyond the pulpit, other older methods came under scrutiny, as exemplified by Samuel Best’s criticism of reliance on older manuals of pastoralia without addressing method and practical matters. ‘What,’ he asked ‘signifies it putting into the hands of an inexperienced minister Burnett’s Pastoral Care, or other invaluable monitors, if he is not at the same time taught how their directions may be worked out?’

One whom Denison would have known from boyhood, when he preached in his turn in the Eton chapel as a fellow of the College, was John Bird Sumner. Sumner actively disseminated practical ideas for improving pastoral work. In his 1832 charge, he gave his clergy a digest of innovative and systematic pastoral methods being put to use in different parts of the country. Amongst these, Sumner extolled the benefits of a system of district visitors for which he pointed to the example of the Lancaster District Visiting Society. He also pointed to ideas contained in the National Society Annual Report of 1831. The Society’s secretary, the Rev J C Wigram, had undertaken extensive correspondence with clergy in different parts

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86 G F A Best, Temporal Pillars, p154.
87 Richard Whately, The duty of those who disapprove the education of the poor on the grounds of expediency, as well as those who approve it, pointed out in a sermon preached at Halesworth, Oct 7, 1830 ... for the benefit of the Halesworth and Chediston National School. 1830, p26.
88 The Hon and Rev Samuel Best (1802-73), Rector of Abbot’s Anne, Hants.
89 Samuel Best, Parochial ministrations, 1839, p39. The Pastoral Care, a Caroline manual, was compiled by Bishop Burnet (1643-1715) in 1692, and was thus by 1839 a very old introduction to pastoral work.
90 John Bird Sumner (1780-1862) was a Fellow of Eton College 1817-1820 – the period when Denison was a pupil 1817-19. Sumner was Bishop of Chester (1828-48), then Archbishop of Canterbury (1848-1862).
91 J B Sumner, A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Chester at the triennial visitation in July and September 1832. Appendix, pii ff.
92 Ibid. Appendix, p xxii ff.
93 Joseph Cotton Wigram (1798-1867) was Secretary of the National Society (1827-1839). He was successively Rector of the Hampshire livings of East Tisted and St Mary’s Southampton. A lieutenant of Charles Sumner, Cotton was Archdeacon of Winchester (1847). He was consecrated Bishop of Rochester in 1860. Essentially an Evangelical (see Nigel Scotland ODNB), Wigram was nevertheless associated with High Churchmen in the promotion of National Society schools, and elected a member of ‘Nobody’s Friends’ in May of 1831. The Club of Nobody’s Friends: Biographical list of
of the country in order to discover ways in which the clergy were extending the usefulness of their schools. Amongst the ideas for pastoral improvement collated by Wigram were: lending libraries, institutions for clothing, savings banks, public catechising, teaching in Sunday schools, and separate schools for the continuing education of young persons entering on employment.\textsuperscript{94} Wigram’s experience as secretary of the National Society witnessed, as had Frederic Iremonger’s investigations fourteen years earlier, to the exertions being made by the parochial clergy to effect improvements in the pastoral management of their parishes, and the advantages of communicating and sharing practical ideas, as Archdeacon Clerke commended. These efforts contributed to a renewal of the Church at its grass-roots in the parishes. Statistics noted by George Kitson Clark indicate the considerable extent of this revival. Between 1840 and 1876 over seven thousand churches were ‘restored,’ and over seven thousand new churches built with a capital outlay estimated at some £25,500,000.\textsuperscript{95} There was besides capital outlay for Church schools and in addition recurrent costs not met by grants, fees, and other initiatives.\textsuperscript{96}

Pastoralia: Traditional ideals of the prayer book

It is important to recognize, however, that though the call for greater exertion by the clergy in their ministry had a practical and social element, it was also a call for a stricter observance of the model for the Church’s ministry defined by the Prayer Book and canons. There is a rich seam of Anglican literature – commentaries arising out of the Prayer Book directed to pastoralia and devotion. This seam ran through

\textit{members}, p102f. The history of the matters with which Wigram was concerned are treated by Anthony Russell, \textit{The clerical profession}, 1980.

\textsuperscript{94} J C Wigram, \textit{Practical hints on the formaion and management of Sunday schools}. 1833, p75ff.

\textsuperscript{95} George Kitson Clarke, \textit{The making of Victorian England}. 1962, pp152-8, & p169ff.

\textsuperscript{96} The National Society expended £724,599 raised as voluntary subscriptions between 1811 and 1859. There were besides capital raised in individual parishes, as well as considerable sums supplied to support the recurrent costs of Church schools. See 1861 [2794 –I] XXI \textit{State of popular education in England}. Royal Commission, Pt I, Vol I, p18, and p76ff. See also figures adduced by the 1851 census reproduced by Burgess, \textit{Enterprise in education}, Appendix C, pp224-5.
the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and into the nineteenth. Evidence for this continuing tradition of pastoral writing for parish clergy is to be seen the printed British Library catalogue, which shows the writings of eminent Anglican divines on pastoralia were republished again and again in successive generations. While it can not be proved books were read – that certain divines were published again and again, generation after generation, suggests these publications were a significant corpus, and important as characterizing ideals and practice.

Much of this corpus appeared in new editions with greater frequency in the course of the nineteenth century. The Tracts for the Times republished a number of divines.97 This long-lived corpus of Anglican literature ought to be considered as significant, reflecting a tradition within the Church, and equally the Oxford tracts considered against the background of this tradition. The world of publishing demonstrates the relative position of the tracts. W K Lowther Clarke has demonstrated there was a much wider life of Anglican theological literature, pointing to the part played by the SPCK, demonstrable by the evidence of its catalogues.98 Moreover, the Oxford University Press had already begun to bring out cheap editions of classic works of Anglican theology in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This suggests there was a continuing tradition of teaching and devotion in the Church of England, informing the ideals of pastoralia and ministry of men such as George Denison. That the influence of this corpus was alive and well in Denison’s generation is shown by the references made by his brother, Bishop Edward Denison, to the works of Bishop Burnet and Dean Comber. The Bishop urged his clergy to read on the anniversary of their ordination Burnet’s Pastoral care, and Comber’s essay on ordination in A companion to the Temple or Closet. Consequently, parish clergy such as Denison walked old paths in the tradition represented by Anglican pastoralia, albeit, as will be considered below, with new institutional aids.

97 For example Bishop Wilson (Tracts Nos 37, 44, 46, 48, 50,53, 55, 62, & 65. Also Bishop Bull (Tract No 64); Bishop Beveridge (Tract No 25); Bishop Cosin (Tracts Nos 27 & 28).
98 W K Lowther Clarke, Eighteenth century piety. 1944.
The influence of Denison’s brother,
Edward Denison the Bishop of Salisbury

As he was during his period as a fellow of Oriel, George Denison is silent in the period of his first incumbency – we have only his retrospective account of his work at Broad Windsor in his Notes of my life published many years later in 1879. Denison came into his living just six years after the Great Reform Bill, at a time when, as has been observed, there was a sense that the clergy were required to demonstrate effective pastoral oversight in their parishes. Coming into the Diocese of Salisbury, George had in his brother a bishop who looked to his clergy to be energetic in their duty, making improvements in their parochial ministry.99 There is no extant correspondence between the brothers during the period of Denison’s first incumbency, and so no written evidence of their exchanges and the influence of George’s elder brother. But not only did George Denison occupy a living in his brother’s diocese for nearly ten years as vicar of Broad Windsor, but George also served in an office that brought him close to his brother – that of bishop’s chaplain. George continued in that capacity after his remove to East Brent until 1848. Accompanying his brother on visitations, George would thus have been well acquainted with his brother’s mind as he visited and addressed the diocesan clergy. He would have seen in his brother a bishop conscious of the problems facing the Church, and seeking an answer by looking for reform and improvements in the parishes. If not possible to determine directly Edward’s influence on his younger brother, given their years of amicable collaboration together the bishop’s expectations of his clergy suggest the kind of framework and view of ministry that George would have shared. The brothers came from the same stable, and Edward’s

99 Edward Denison succeeded the elderly Thomas Burgess (1766-1837), who had been translated from St David’s to Salisbury at the age sixty-eight. Bishop Denison’s predecessor was precluded by age and ill health, as he was by his personality, to act as a reforming bishop. D T W Price has noted that the Dean of Salisbury, Hugh Pearson (the husband of Bishop Burgess’ niece) considered Bishop Burgess unsuited to the demands of the episcopacy: ‘he had some fine qualities, and some excellent dispositions, but they were rather such as would adorn a private station, such as that of a Greek Professor with a canonry at Ch[rist] Ch[urch], rather than that of a Bishop ….’ H N Pearson, ‘Family and personal memoirs’, unpublished MS, c1856, Salisbury Cathedral Library, cited by D T W Price, ODNB.
views on the Church and the ministry of the parochial clergy were surely an expression of the Churchmanship in which both brothers were grounded. This suggests a better explanation of George Denison’s background as a High Churchman than the long bow drawn by Thomas Mozley (touched on in chapter two) attributing George’s formation to the gradual and long-term influence of Newman – surely unlikely given the separation of the two men, and Denison’s strong disapproval of those who separated themselves from what Denison considered the native English Church. A review in Denison’s Church and State Review of Newman’s Apologia pro vita sua, while defensive of Newman’s honour with regard to Kingsley’s attack, is suggestive of the stark difference between Denison’s conservatism and identity with his native Church, and Newman who by contrast had not grown up ‘as a dutiful son of the Church of England, but as its champion and Goliath – its zealous “propugnator in armis”’. Against Denison’s conservative mindset, and rebuttal of what he saw as rationalism exercised as sin in the pursuit of private judgment, Newman, by contrast, was identified as having ‘naturally a rationalistic and sceptical mind … a really deep and abstract thinker, and deeply tinged with the vice of system-building’. After Denison rebuff of Newman in 1858, a thawing of relationship is suggested by a letter Denison wrote in reply to Newman in 1873.

Bishop Denison held a high view of the priestly office, the Church and the sacraments, as well as manifesting a High Church missionary evangelism. He took

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100 Denison declined Newman’s request for assistance with advocacy for a charter for a Roman Catholic university at Dublin. Denison’s reply to Newman manifests his belief that his native Church of England was the catholic Church of his country, and hints at his estimate that Newman separation was the consequence of the rationalist exercise of private judgment. While Denison believed there was nothing in public policy to stop the granting of such a charter, that policy he believed was wrong. ‘But as I am persuaded that that policy – not only as regards yourselves only, but as regards all –is wholly wrong, and England’s boast, the unfettered exercise of the right of private judgment in matters of Faith (for that right of private judgment, however you may, as I do, denounce and condemn it, would be a warrant for what you ask) is her dishonour and her sin, I could be no party directly or indirectly, to the obtaining of such a Charter.’ Denison to Newman, 6 November 1858, LED, p74.


102 Ibid.

103 Denison to Newman, 23 December 1873, LED, p135. In later years Denison took the trouble, if passing through Birmingham, to visit Newman. See Denison to Walter Phillimore, 16 August 1890 (written after Newman’s death 11 August 1890), LED, p337.
pains to emphasise the sacerdotal nature of his clergy’s calling. Theirs was, as Edward expressed it, a ‘hidden life’ with an ‘inward call.’ They were to appreciate the ‘sanctity of their ministerial calling’ and, by that token, exercise a ‘corresponding diligence in the exercise of their duties’.  

In an ordination sermon, Bishop Denison adopted the suggestion made by the seventeenth-century Bishop Burnet in the latter’s *Pastoral Care*, that clergy should read the ordinal four times a year – particularly the charge and the answers made – and humble themselves for any errors or omissions. Denison also made reference to Dean Comber’s commendation that the clergy should recollect their ordination in their prayers, remembering particularly their calling to the ministry, their faith, and their resolution as to the discharge of their duty.  

As regards general conduct, Denison exhorted such ‘improvement of tone and habit’ as would be ‘proper among the clergy’. He also gave emphasis to the importance of the sacraments, urging his clergy to give ‘the Sacraments their place in the scheme of our holy religion as contrasted with those who would make them little else than bare signs and symbols, instead of channels of regenerating and sanctifying grace’.

Bishop Denison also held a high view of the Church and looked to his clergy, both in their pastoral work and teaching, to reassert ‘the important truth of the nature and constitution of the Church from the vague, and lax notions which used too generally to prevail’. He had a strong sense of the corporate character of the Church, reminding his clergy that what they did in their parishes contributed to the well-being of the whole of the Church. They were not isolated individuals living independently on their benefices, but they ministered as ‘a member of a great body’. Above all, the bishop looked to active evangelistic zeal in his clergy: he

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required that his clergy taught their people, and led them in the path of sanctification. They were not to rest contented that they had been inducted into ‘the mere beginning of Christianity’, but were ‘to endeavour still to go on to perfection, encouraging men to aim continually at a higher standard of holiness, devotion, self-denial, and good works’.  

Edward Denison believed the well-being of the Church establishment depended on the parochial clergy discharging their duties with energy and usefulness. He discouraged pluralists, although he saw practical sense in pluralities in small contiguous parishes. He encouraged the involvement of the clergy and laity in Church agencies such as the SPG, and diocesan associations in aid of the Church Building Society and Additional Curates Society that would further the work of the parishes and the mission of the Church. Bishop Denison took advantage of the new railway system to extend his pastoral oversight, increasing the number of centres he visited throughout his time as bishop, conducting confirmations in the towns and larger villages in different parts of his diocese.

Parishes in the Salisbury Diocese under Bishop Denison became more active. This was reflected in the statistics. In 1839, only one hundred and forty-three parishes had two services on Sundays. By 1851 two hundred and ninety-five parishes had two services and many taught the catechism on Sunday afternoons. There was also an increase in the celebration of the Eucharist. By 1851, eighty-one parishes celebrated at least once a month, compared with thirty-five when Edward Denison came into the diocese. He noted the neglect of Ash Wednesday, and Ascension Day,

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111 Edward Denison, Charge. 1842, p16.
112 Edward Denison, Charge. 1839, p35.
114 Edward Denison, A charge. 1839, pp24-5. The bishop lamented the fact that in practice the contribution from the laity was small, most of the support for these agencies came from the pockets of the clergy. Ibid, p25.
115 A point made by W M Jacob. See ODNB.
looking to restore observance of the Church’s calendar.\textsuperscript{116} There were few parishes without Sunday schools.\textsuperscript{117}

Among the principal policies pursued by Bishop Denison was a strong advocacy of Church education as central to the Church’s missionary work in the parish. The bishop considered ‘the question of education, as one, on which, more than any other’, hinged ‘the development of the Church, and the opportunity of extended usefulness’.\textsuperscript{118} At his first visitation, he remarked on the inadequacy of the provision of education in his diocese, and appealed for this to be improved.\textsuperscript{119} He urged his clergy to do all in their power ‘to promote the education of the younger members of your respective flocks’.\textsuperscript{120} Though there were few parishes with no Sunday school, the bishop looked to the establishment of day schools wherever it was possible. He acknowledged the difficulties of such an undertaking in small parishes, recognizing the great difficulties securing funds.\textsuperscript{121} He encouraged his clergy to take steps to encourage attendance, especially of older children, and was disappointed that clergy in some instances had tried evening schools but given up. Bishop Denison maintained that such schools afforded ‘another means suited for meeting the evils of the state of society’.\textsuperscript{122} The bishop played his part in establishing structures at a diocesan level ‘to carry out the machinery of the National System’ – that is the foundation of parochial Church schools in connection with the National Society, and as early as 1839 the establishment of a training school for teachers at Salisbury in an attempt to improve the quality of teaching in the diocese. He took advantage of the provisions of the 1846-7 Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education to secure a government grant of £2,500.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{116} Edward Denison, \textit{Charge}. 1842, p11.
\textsuperscript{117} Edward Denison, \textit{Charge}. 1851, p8.
\textsuperscript{118} Edward Denison, \textit{Charge}. 1848, p7.
\textsuperscript{119} Edward Denison, \textit{Charge}. 1839, p7.
\textsuperscript{120} Edward Denison, \textit{Ibid}, p22.
\textsuperscript{122} Edward Denison, \textit{Ibid}, p22. In the matter of evening classes and the reasons clergy gave for maintaining such classes see chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{123} Edward Denison, \textit{Charge}, 1848, p9. The reality was that the central government grant was but a small proportion of the real cost, and Bishop Denison was obliged to find the larger proportion of the capital for his new college. The Dean and Chapter provided £7,100, supplemented by subscriptions.
So George Denison’s appointment to his first living in Dorset provided new challenges. The Parish of Broad Windsor was located on the western edge of Dorset in the Diocese of Salisbury. It was a geographically extensive parish, comprising a number of small hamlets with no single centre of the population of some fifteen hundred. His parish church was small and not readily accessible by his dispersed parishioners. His glebe amounted to six acres but was little developed, and his glebe-house was a half-ruined cottage with ‘three habitable rooms’. There was no parish school. Denison’s predecessor, John Dowland, had held the living for ten years but had done little by way of improvements. The same was true of Dowland’s predecessor, George Murray, Bishop of Sodor and Man, who had held the vicarage in commendam.

Denison was quick to implement changes. It helped that Denison’s financial means were more extensive than those of many clergy with poorer livings, as can be seen from the range of incomes illustrated in the abstract of incomes of parochial clergy

from within the diocese. Edward Denison. (Charge. 1851, p10). Bishop Denison established a Diocesan Board of Education, and a system of diocesan inspectors was introduced from 1845. (Charge, 1848, p7). Despite all his efforts, the fact that the larger proportion of the constituent parishes of the diocese were rural, small and poor, meant the majority of parish schools could not meet the conditions laid down by the Committee of Council on Education and thus did not qualify for assistance. The effects of his strenuous efforts to improve the quality of education in his diocese by introducing trained teachers for his diocesan schools were, on this account, quite limited. Illustrating this problem, Bishop Denison recorded that in 1851 there were only ten teachers within the whole of the Salisbury diocese receiving augmentation of their salaries. (Charge, 1851, p13) He could only lament that the Committee of Council’s system of government grants were ‘inoperative in such a diocese as this’. (Charge, 1851, p13).

George Denison’s position on State grants for education is addressed in chapter eight. But it is noted here that after moving away in 1845 from his brother’s diocese to another living in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, George did not follow his episcopal brother’s acceptance of the advantages to be had from accepting state grants for Church schools. George’s vehement campaign against the Committee of Council on Education evinced a testy reaction from Bishop Denison. Edward Denison to George Denison 14 March 1850, and 13 July 1852. Denison Papers, D 12/1 and D 12/2, Pusey House. 124 The parish comprised 14 hamlets over some 6,216 acres. The history of the Antiquities of Dorset, Vol II, p323f.

125 G A Denison, Life, p88.

126 The practice whereby a dignitary such as a bishop in a poor diocese held other preferments to supplement his income.
in England and Wales, 1835.\textsuperscript{127} With an income of some £558 at Broad Windsor, he had, in addition, income from capital of £7500 inherited from his father together with his marriage settlement.\textsuperscript{128} Nevertheless his injection of £5,000 towards capital improvements at Broad Windsor stretched his resources.\textsuperscript{129} His method of financing his parochial project was quite typical. To build his new vicarage, he borrowed £2,000 from the Board of the Queen Anne’s Bounty. The house, stables and improvements to the glebe cost him some £3,000. He incurred a further debt of £1,000 for the building of a chapel of ease, and yet another £1,000 for the building of new school rooms.\textsuperscript{130} Further costs arose with the necessity for life insurance to cover these loans. But, as did other clergy, Denison took on boarding pupils at his vicarage to supplement his income and service these debts.\textsuperscript{131} He took a lease on a house in the neighbouring parish of Netherbury while he built a new vicarage.\textsuperscript{132} His glebe, which he determined to make productive, had no more than a kitchen garden when he arrived. Within two years he had built a road, dug wells, laid out the grounds with trees and shrubs, and erected a new house with stables.\textsuperscript{133} Part of the site of the old vicarage was given over to Denison’s new school rooms, which were established by 1842, four years after his arrival. The cottage which had served as the glebe house was given over to Denison’s curate, Edward Tufnell, a fellow of Wadham.\textsuperscript{134}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{127} See Table of comparative clerical incomes, p447.
\bibitem{128} The value of the vicarage is to be found in the Clergy List, 1841, p30. Denison’s inheritance from his father, see probate copy of John Denison’s will in J E Denison Papers, Os E 3, Nottingham University.
\bibitem{129} Denison, Life, p88.
\bibitem{130} Ibid.
\bibitem{132} Denison recalled his memory of the Brookland family at the Netherbury vicarage. Life, p92.
\bibitem{133} G A Denison, Life, p88.
\bibitem{134} Edward Wyndham Tufnell (1815-96) was later to become Bishop of Brisbane (1859-75). Tufnell was a scholar of Wadham, and a fellow 1839-67; University Proctor 1857, and Select Preacher 1858-9. He was Assistant Curate of Broad Windsor 1837-40. Australian Dictionary of National Biography.
\end{thebibliography}
Denison remained in Broad Windsor for only seven years. In November 1845, he was again indebted to his brother Edward’s patronage for his next living. George Henry Law, Bishop of Bath and Wells, was terminally ill, and, as neighbouring diocesan, temporary oversight of the diocese was passed to Bishop Denison. Edward Denison was thus able to prefer his brother to the Somerset parish of East Brent and a prebendal stall at Well’s Cathedral. George was to remain Vicar of East Brent for over half a century until his death in 1896. His second parish was situated in the Somerset countryside of the Brent valley. Encompassing some three thousand and thirty-seven acres, and with a population in the order of seven hundred, it was about half the size of Broad Windsor. Just over four miles inland from the coast, and seven miles southeast of the post-town of Weston-Super-Mare, East Brent was well situated for easy access to the outside world. The Bristol to Exeter Railway passed nearby at Highbridge, giving Denison access in one direction to Bristol some eighteen miles distant, and, in the other direction, to London one hundred and fifty miles away.

Denison was fortunate to find that his predecessor at East Brent, the Hon the Rev William Towry Law (Vicar 1840-45), whom he had known in Dorset, had already undertaken improvements such as Denison had put in hand at Broad Windsor. The parish church of Saint Mary the Virgin, East Brent, with its mighty landmark - an eighty-foot tower capped by its sixty-foot steeple - was well maintained, and the chancel had been rebuilt. The parsonage was in a good state of repair and its

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135 The population of East Brent was 849 in 1841, falling to 780 by 1851, and remaining more or less consistent till 1881, when there was a further reduction to 709, then 683 in 1891. *Victorian County History*, Vol II, p336.
136 The Bristol Exeter Railway Co created by an Act of 1836. Isambard Brunel was the engineer. The line was opened in 1844, and connected with GWR. The BER was absorbed into GWR in 1874.
137 William Towry Law (1809-1886) was a Prebendary of Wells 1840-51, and Chancellor (1839-51). He seceded to Rome in 1851. *Alum Cant*.
grounds had been planted out by Law. Denison was not called, therefore, to undertake major capital works in his second parish. But above all, to his great pleasure, his predecessor had built a parochial school. Writing many years later in 1893, Denison expressed his delight that Law had insisted that his school trust deed invested the management of the school in the hands of the parish priest, as Denison had done at Broad Windsor.

On his move to East Brent in 1845, Denison found, by contrast with Broad Windsor, a quiet and peaceable parish. Indeed the absence of disorder and criminal activity at East Brent led the first policeman to be stationed in the village to request Denison use his influence to have him moved, as there were no opportunities to make his mark and secure promotion. Other than this anecdote, Denison did not comment on the economic conditions at East Brent. The income of £930 per annum enjoyed by the East Brent vicarage would suggest the parish supported profitable farming, and was more prosperous and economically more stable than Broad Windsor.

As a country incumbent, Denison lived by a disciplined routine in a sequence of worship, together with manual and pastoral work. Louisa Denison recorded that it was her uncle's practice to rise very early and work in the garden and his greenhouse till the church bell rang at 8am. With eighty acres of glebe Denison farmed in a small way, though in the later years the management was passed to Mrs Denison. In September 1883 he wrote:

I pursued duck-farming last year with some success - I cannot say profit. This year I have finally declined this branch also, and have given all my ‘plant’ to Georgy and Henry. I find the attention a weariness now, and chilly at times, and that when I have opened a drawer I forget to shut it, and when I have shut it forget to open it,

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139 Denison, Life, p95.
140 G A Denison, Supplement, p27.
141 Life, p92.
143 G A Denison to Miss Denison 15 September 1883, LED, p278f.
Throughout his career, summer and winter Denison had the morning and evening offices read in his parish church, and in addition the litany was read at noon on Wednesdays and Fridays. In this regard, Denison implemented an aspect of the Church’s revival, initially represented by Thomas Keble, Rector of Bisley, who instigated public daily offices in 1827. The daily reading of the offices in the parish church observed the prescription of the Prayer Book rubrics, and the reciting of the litany conformed to canon XV stipulating that the litany was to be said or sung, as set down in the Book of Common Prayer, on Wednesdays and Fridays. While demonstrating a disciplined adherence to the rubrics and canon law, Denison was old-fashioned in his pattern of worship, celebrating Communion once a month, albeit rather more frequently than clergy who celebrated only once a quarter.

Denison understood work in his parish community as a religious work. Religion was for him ‘the beginning, the middle and the end of all. Christian teaching; the golden thread that runs through it all, linking all its parts together in the right use of the gifts of our life, to the saving of our own, the winning of others’ souls; and to the glory of God’. Throughout his life Denison’s religious understanding of his role as a rural incumbent was shaped by an underlying providentialism. Writing in 1893, only three years before his death, he showed he had retained all his life a concept of the providential ordering of society, with its rank and obligations: ‘It is not only means of life, but it is station in life which are part of the Providence of God’. There was thus a strong sense of subordination and paternalism in Denison’s view

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144 G A Denison to Miss Denison 24 March 1882, LED, p254f.
145 H P Denison, Seventy-two years of Church recollections 1925, p19.
146 O W Jones, Isaac Williams and his school, p14.
147 See chapter 6.
149 Ibid, p58. Cf Samuel Wilberforce’s view that ranks of the clergy should be filled by gentlemen, and that the poor ‘should be ministered to by England’s gentlemen’. A R Ashwell and R G Wilberforce, Life of Samuel Wilberforce, Vol 3, p155f.
of society, but by the same token, it bound him in duty and mutual obligation to society. Thus as his niece, Louisa Denison, describes Denison in his old age, he continued to work for his community, attending a committee in Bridgewater to bring relief to those who had suffered in Somerset floods, as also his positive response to the advent of local government in 1894, just two years before his death, seeing the legislation as an opportunity for his community. Aged eighty-nine, he wrote that he was going through the Local Government Act in order to be able to inform his people upon it, and mentioned that he hoped to be present at the first meeting of the parish council. This action reflected Denison’s strong sense of the importance of corporate action in the life of community.

An agent of local government

Some seven years before Denison arrived in the West Country in 1838, economic distress had led to outbreaks of riots in Dorset. Economic distress, and social unrest had been long-standing in the region and these problems taxed the administration of the poor laws. A number of factors combined to make for a history of economic distress in Dorset. Amongst these had been the swamping of the labour market by some quarter of a million demobilized soldiers and seamen, following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. The labour market was further eroded by agricultural depression involving a series of poor harvests. The introduction of machinery was perceived by agricultural labourers to exacerbate the problems of a labour surplus. A series of riots and protests, which Cobbett described as a ‘rural war,’ were intended to force farmers to raise wages. Riots broke out in Kent, where barns, ricks and other property was burned. The unrest spread through Hampshire and Sussex, and from there to Wiltshire, where rioters were confronted

150 LED, ppxii-xiii.
151 See Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commission. Figures for Dorset are given by Pamela Horn, The rural world 1780-1850. Social change in the English countryside, Table 3, p120.
152 On the economic difficulties after the Continental War, see Pamela Horn chapter 3, The rural world 1780-1850.
by the Yeomanry. Trouble broke out in Dorset in a number of parishes, where there were instances of arson and smashing of machinery.\textsuperscript{154}

On his arrival at Broad Windsor, Denison recognized there were economic and social problems. He observed that unemployment and low wages in Dorset, a problem that dated back to the riots in 1830-31, had acquired an ‘unpleasant notoriety’.\textsuperscript{155} He was to quick to recognize that the two sources of employment in his new parish – agricultural labour and cottage industry – afforded depressed wages. He noted that in Dorset farmers paid wages significantly lower than those he had known in Nottinghamshire, or Oxfordshire, by several shillings per week. The principal cottage industry at Broad Windsor – producing sail-cloth on handlooms – provided employment, but at low wages as it was necessary to compete with the newer and more efficient machine-powered mills.\textsuperscript{156} As a consequence there was continuing social unrest that Denison described as a state of lawlessness with outbreaks of mob violence. Three years after his arrival, in 1841-2, he encountered rioting and rick-burning that caused alarm in the parish, particularly amongst the tenant farmers who feared being singled out and subjected to violence.\textsuperscript{157} Anthony Russell has described the pall of fear that enveloped the countryside when riots flared up across the country in 1830-1, and the steps taken by clergy, whether magistrates or not, to organize patrols and defence of persons and property.\textsuperscript{158} Denison made representations through the magistrates, applying for a policeman to be stationed at Broad Windsor.\textsuperscript{159} The policeman evidently reported to Denison, and carried out his duties in conjunction with him. He claimed, in his autobiography,

\textsuperscript{154} On these riots see E J Hobsbawm and George Rudé, \textit{Captain Swing}, (1969), and G E Mingay, \textit{Rural life in Victorian England}, (1976), and George Rudé, \textit{The crowd in history}.


The ‘unpleasant notoriety’ was probably a reference to the Tolpuddle Martyrs: a group of men who had formed a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers in the Dorset village of Tolpuddle to combine against the reduction of wages. They were sentenced to transportation at the 1834 Dorchester Assizes on an indictment of unlawful assembly, but pardoned in 1836.

\textsuperscript{156} For evidence of examples of various cottages industries, see 1867-68 [4068-I] 2\textsuperscript{nd} \textit{Report of the Commissioners on the employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture}.

\textsuperscript{157} G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p89f.

\textsuperscript{158} Anthony Russell, \textit{The clerical profession}, p153.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Life}, p90.
that his resolution and firm measures countered the mob and brought peace. A number of men were arraigned before the magistrates and one of their number was convicted and transported for arson. Denison had ensured that order had been restored to his parish in keeping with the providential order dispensed by the Creator as enjoined by the exhortation concerning due order taught in the Homilies. Denison never became a magistrate. However, his action at Broad Windsor exemplified the possibilities open to a nineteenth-century country clergyman to take decisive action in the absence of other local authority. Russell has argued, following William Cobbett, that the influence of the clergy as agents of social control lay with their presence in the network of the parochial system: ‘In a society which was by nature local, the influence of the clergy particularly as agents of social control arose more from their dispersal and situation that from any other factor’.

In a more positive vein at East Brent, Denison took steps to enhance community life by organizing recreational activity. This was a characteristic feature of his ministry.

161 Ibid.
162 ‘Forasmuch as God hath created and disposed all things in a comely order, we have been taught ... that we also in all commonwealths to observe and keep a due order, and be obedient to the powers, their ordinances and laws; and that all rulers are appointed of God, for a Godly order to be kept in the world.’ Cf the Genesis account of God’s creation: ‘An exhortation concerning good order, and obedience to rulers and magistrates,’ in Homilies, 1852 edition, p103. The injunction to social order followed on the paradigm of God’s creation of order out of chaos reflected in ‘Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters, in a most excellent and perfect order.’ Ibid, p100.
163 After the French Revolution and during the Napoleonic Wars, the rising status of clergy in the closing years of the eighteenth century led them to accept office as magistrates, the office lending them powers to maintain law and order. By the time Denison became vicar of Broad Windsor, it was beginning to be recognized that there were tensions between the clergyman’s office as a minister, and that of a magistrate.
164 Ibid, p154.
165 Ibid, p153. William Cobbett contended that ‘It is the equal distribution of the clergy their being in every corner of the kingdom, that makes them a powerful and formidable corps.’ The life and letters of William Cobbett, Vol 1, p15, cited by Russell p 153.

There are many examples of such influence being exercised by Denison’s colleagues in Somerset shown by evidence taken in the late 1860s by the Royal Commissioners inquiring into the employment of women and children in agriculture. This evidence demonstrates such influence continued to be exercised by clergy well into the latter part of the century. See below material drawn from 1867-68 [4068] XVII Employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture.
Denison organized village cricket, and ensured such occasions would be as enjoyable as possible by supplying ample refreshments from the parsonage. Many years later at a discussion in the 1869 Church Congress Denison recalled that the innovation of Sunday cricket for his parishioners had been his first action at Cuddesdon. He was supportive of Sunday recreation, although clearly for Denison this meant support given to activities very much under his control. The reason he gave for so doing was because he associated and integrated everything in life with religion.\textsuperscript{166}

Denison’s capacity for organizing large-scale social events in his village was demonstrated by his ‘harvest homes,’ which he began in 1856 some eleven years after he had moved to Somerset.\textsuperscript{167} The event was a considerable occasion, which in later years ran for several days. Large marquees were erected, the vicarage and village decorated. These occasions included a dinner on the Tuesday and Wednesday evenings followed by dancing, football, amusements such as fortune-telling, and a steam merry-go-round.\textsuperscript{168} Denison’s harvest homes were intended to draw in the whole village, as well as a considerable part of the surrounding countryside. It was Denison’s intention that nobody would be excluded. He appears to have genuinely enjoyed the pleasure the community derived from these occasions. At the 1869 Church Congress he expressed his pleasure at hearing from other clergy their positive attitudes towards recreation. He told the congress, ‘We do in the evening, what I am happy to hear so much said for – we dance; and the other day, I stood at one side of the tent, and saw one hundred and fifty couples dance in a country dance’.\textsuperscript{169}

Denison’s ‘harvest homes’ were remarkable affairs, and testimony both to his capacity for organization and his influence within his own parish and neighbouring

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\item \textsuperscript{166} Church Congress, Liverpool 5-8 October, 1869, p149. \\
\item \textsuperscript{167} ibid, p150. \\
\item \textsuperscript{168} G A Denison to Miss Denison 15 September 1883, \textit{LED} p278. \\
\item \textsuperscript{169} Church Congress, 1869, p150.
\end{enumerate}
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communities. Elsewhere, ‘harvest frolics’, as they were generally known, had a bad reputation. Agricultural labourers expected ‘largesse’ of the farmers after the harvest was gathered, resulting in several days of drunkenness and disorder. Some clergy attempted to tackle the problem by substituting ‘sober enjoyment for vicious excess’ at harvest homes by organizing an event for the whole village with a Church service. However, they often faced the resentment of the labourers who did not care for the imposition of restraints.\footnote{Denison’s success at organizing his harvest homes, and maintaining the event year after year, stands out when taken in comparison with the evidence given by James Fraser that many clergy who attempted such events generally gave up after a year or two.\footnote{Fraser, later to become Bishop of Manchester, was himself an energetic reforming clergyman in his own parish and had observed the attempts of clergy trying to manage drunkenness and violent behaviour in the many rural parishes he visited during his service as an assistant commissioner on two Royal Commissions.} Denison success doubtless owed something to the force of his personality – a trait observed by Mozley – and the good relations he had with his parishioners.\footnote{Something of Denison’s youthful enjoyment of the singing at Southwell Minster stayed with him in later life. He enjoyed music and singing, and was supported in this by his family: his nephew, Henry Denison played the organ, and George’s wife assisted on occasions when Henry was absent. There was no surpliced choir at East Brent, but St Mary’s had a Jacobean gallery where the Lincoln organ was placed.}}

\footnote{One Norfolk clergyman wrote to James Fraser on this subject describing the labourer’s notion of pleasure as ‘often coarse and animal; the idea of beer is the predominating one in his mind’. 1867-68 [4068] XVII Employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture. 1st Report, Part I. p44\footnote{Ibid, p45.}}

\footnote{Fraser served as an assistant commissioner on education in 1858, and again in 1867 he served on the Commission reporting on the employment of women and children in agriculture.\footnote{Mozley declared of Denison: ‘Everybody must regret that Denison has not had a larger and more suitable sphere for the full exercise of his great powers and his really beneficent nature. With his scholarship, his knowledge of law, his ready wit, his promptitude of action, his agreeable address, and his taste for improvements, he would have made a first rate medieval chancellor, archbishop, and cardinal.’ Reminiscences chiefly of Oriel College and the oxford Movement, Vol 2, p98.}}

\footnote{Cephas Lincoln (c1788-1864) was a late-Georgian organ builder based in London. Grove’s Dictionary of music and musicians, vol 4, p701.}
parishioners. George Denison’s choir comprised both the children from the school and men and women from the village. Denison’s relations with his parishioners is reflected in his niece’s account of his birthday parties:

Archdeacon Denison’s birthday was always celebrated by the whole choir being invited to dine with him, and owing to its heterogeneous composition, the result was a very lively party. After a substantial meal in the dining room, shared by all the family, the young men and maidens danced in the drawing room, the little boys played at various games in another room, and also in one corner the Archdeacon played whist with the elders of the party.

At East Brent, Denison found the population experienced recurring outbreaks of disease caused by tainted water in times of drought. In 1866, some twenty-one years after his arrival in Somerset, Denison took steps to engineer a solution. He tapped the spring water at Brent Knoll supplying not only his own village, but also the surrounding population, with clean water. Some years later, in 1878, he was able to improve the scheme further with financial assistance received from his brother Alfred. Although George Denison says nothing on the matter, his appraisal and solution to this local supply of water could well have owed something to another brother, General William Denison, whose professional work as an engineer had involved him in matters of public health. William had earlier, in 1844, contributed technical advice and plans to Evelyn Denison for improvements to the water supply and sewage as part of improvements on the Ossington Estate and mining villages.

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175 Denison evidently had taken no notice of J M Neale’s dictum pronouncing condemnation on ‘all galleries’, favouring a choir and an organ in the chancel. ‘Church enlargement and Church re-arrangement’, in Camden Society Report 1850-3, p15. W F Hook, by contrast with Denison’s arrangements at East Brent, rebuilt his church to accommodate choirmen. Life and letters of Dean Hook, 7th ed, p332.

176 LED, pxi.


178 Ibid.

179 William Denison had assisted his eldest brother, Evelyn, with improvements to the Ossington estate, and in particular undertook the design of cottages. William emphasised the need for ventilation, as well as supplying his brother with plans for drains and sewers. See William Denison to J E Denison 13 December 1844. Correspondence of J E Denison, Os 2 C 169, Nottingham University.
Denison was not alone resorting to such measures. Other Somerset colleagues took practical steps to remedy practical problems in their parishes; for example, J B Archer. His parishioners, dependent on a brook running through the village, suffered recurrent outbreaks of fever after drinking polluted water.\textsuperscript{180} Charles Heurtley, one of the assessors at Denison’s trial for heretical eucharistic doctrine, was another clergyman who addressed the problem of adequate clean water in his village at Fenny Compton, establishing a company to provide the utility.\textsuperscript{181} It was not until 1866, with the passing of the Sanitary Act, that the government attempted to address the practical problems of water supply and sewage by creating sanitary districts, the basis of the later rural district councils.\textsuperscript{182} Denison’s concern for practical problems arising in his community continued into his old age. At the age of eighty-six, following serious flooding in Somerset, Denison braved the December weather to attend weekly committee meetings to assist with relief for those who suffered as a consequence of flood damage.\textsuperscript{183}

On the matter of agricultural labourers’ housing Denison is silent on such matters at East Brent, as he is on others. Perhaps the cottages were well maintained, and, therefore, this was not a problem Denison had to address. Nevertheless, the Denison family had enlightened views on the subject of cottages. Denison’s eldest brother Evelyn observed that poor housing militated against the effectiveness of any other measures, such as education, that might be taken to improve the lives of

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William later served as an engineer on the Royal Commission on the health of towns 1844-45: on his return to Britain, William served as chairman 1868-71 of a Royal Commission to consider the pollution of British rivers. See \textit{ODNB}.
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\textsuperscript{180} Rev J B Archer, Vicar of Churchill, 1867-68 [4068-l] 2\textsuperscript{nd} \textit{Report of the Commissioners on the employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture}, Appendix Part II, p488. (Hereafter references to this report are abbreviated as 1867-68). There were other clergy who gave evidence of similar problems. The Rev R Lawrence at Bleadon described his village as barely supplied with water. 1867-68, p488. The Rev Frederick Du Sautoy, Vicar of Mark, gave evidence of improvements made to the ventilation and drainage of cottages and had secured the provision of a good water supply. (1867-68, p488.)
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\textsuperscript{181} The Rev Charles Abel Heurtley (1806-1895) was a Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford; Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity 1853-93. He was Rector of Fenny Compton in Warwickshire 1840-1872. \textit{ODNB}, & \textit{Crockford’s}.
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\textsuperscript{182} The Sanitary Act 1866 (29 & 30 Vict. c.90).
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\textsuperscript{183} G A Denison to Miss Denison 14 December 1891, \textit{LED}, p354.
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the labouring poor.\textsuperscript{184} Housing was evidently a matter of concern for Denison’s clerical colleagues and neighbours. The Rev W H Cartwright, one of Denison’s correspondents and a Somerset colleague, felt obliged to tackle the conditions in which some of his parishioners lived. He found families in his parish living in conditions of squalid poverty, existing like rabbits more or less naked.\textsuperscript{185} Cartwright was an active clerical interventionist like Denison – he resolved these problems pulling down seven infamous cottages, and establishing a clothing club.\textsuperscript{186}

Parish schools

Many clergy, Denison included, placed considerable store by their Church school and its importance for their work in their parishes. On this account, and because Denison was notoriously involved in the ‘Education Question’ in a battle with the Committee of Council on Education – a subject taken up in chapter eight – it is appropriate at this point of this study to consider the perspective of parochial clergy who promoted education in their parishes.\textsuperscript{187}

Denison and many of his colleagues saw the parish school as an instrument of their ministry – this understood in the broadest sense as both religious and social. Thus Denison regarded the Church school as the nursery of the parish, as essential to effective pastoral oversight.\textsuperscript{188} Denison’s view of the importance of his village school for his ministry was widely held. Thus, for example, the Rev John Sandford wrote that a parochial school was a priority and the foundation upon which other

\textsuperscript{184} PD, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Series, Vol 87, col 45.
\textsuperscript{185} Presumably Cartwright invoked legislation on nuisances to justify his action. He cited, as an example of the state of affairs he encountered, a family who lived ‘like rabbits, scarcely dressed, and if any came to the village, scurry away like rabbits to hide their nakedness’. See ‘Extract from Commissioner Boyle’s diary’ recording his visit to Cartwright’s parish. 1867 B68, p487.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, p487.
\textsuperscript{187} Not least because this evidence from the parochial grassroots qualifies the centrist perspective of Kay-Shuttleworth at Downing Street, and the differences that Denison had with Downing Street in the years 1847-53 considered below in chapter eight.
\textsuperscript{188} G A Denison, \textit{The ‘Conscience Clause’: Speech of the Archdeacon of Taunton in the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury, February 6\textsuperscript{th}}, 1866. p13.
work was built. ‘The providing of schools for the infant poor is one of a parochial ministers most important duties, and ought to be amongst the earliest objects of his attention. Without effective schools his labours can never be extensively or permanently successful; and he will lose its seed-time for future harvests.’

Church and Chapel were equally concerned with the dark and brutish ignorance – signs of religious and moral destitution – of the agricultural labouring classes and the new industrial proletariat upon whom they looked to impose order and discipline. Both in the country and in the new cities education was the primary means by which these objects would be served. The parochial school was seen as an instrument of intervention that broke the generational cycle among the labouring classes. Thus the Rev Robert Simpson argued, the parents of the children of the poor, who ought properly to be the instructor of their children, were ‘neither wise nor pious. They lived in ‘the neglect of every sacred obligation and the practice of the grossest vices,’ and were, therefore, likely ‘to propagate the same vices in their offspring – thus misery, guilt, and crime will descend with accumulated virulence, to the latest age’. The same point was made by Rev Robert Evans, who accepted that some clergy might not relish ‘the humbling uncertainty of superintending a school,’ but, Evans asked, ‘if they be builders of the Church of God, ought they not begin with the age in which its foundation of principles in the heart must be laid? And if they be followers of Christ their Master, ought they not follow him in the regard He showed towards children?’

Considerable emphasis was placed by Churchmen on religious and moral education, as opposed to relying merely on imparting secular knowledge. The Rev G A Jacob, sometime headmaster of King Edward VI School, Birmingham, repudiated the idea of simply improving the mind and investing the individual with the authority of

189 The Rev John Sandford, Parochialia; or, Church, school and parish. The Church system and services practically considered. 1845, p67.
191 The Rev Robert Wilson Evans, The bishopric of souls. 1842, p165. Evans was Archdeacon of Westmoreland.
knowledge on the assumption that this would allow him to secure his happiness ‘by the independent resources of his own rational nature’. Jacob believed that the focus of education could not avoid the moral state of man as this was expounded in Articles IX (Of Original, or Birth-sin) and X (Of Free-Will). Along the same lines, another writer argued that the purpose of education was ‘to dissipate the darkness’. There was little difference in the stance of Evangelicals and High Churchmen on this point, as the necessity of religious and moral education rested on a scriptural view of human beings as a fallen race.

These sentiments suggest the broad rationale for Church schools. However, in practice, clergy were obliged to face a number of practical hurdles in their attempt to school the children of the labouring families. These hurdles say both something about the considerable personal efforts made by individual clergy, and the lack of understanding at the centre in Downing Street (the location of the offices of the assistant secretary to the Committee of Council on Education) of the difficulties facing rural schools as evidence from Denison’s Somerset colleagues testify. The first of these lay with the 1834 poor law.

Effects of the Poor Law on rural schools

One of the broad objectives of the Amended Poor Law was to improve the labouring classes by moral and religious education, but this objective was subservient to the primary intention that the poorer classes should support themselves. This had long-term consequences for the schooling of children of agricultural labouring families in nineteenth-century rural England. The legislation

192 G A Jacob, National education on a Christian basis. A letter to the Rt Hon Sir Robert Peel. 1838, p8f.
194 Anon, Thoughts and reflections on national education especially of the poorer classes. 1839, p6.
195 Ibid.
196 Illustrative evidence has been drawn from evidence given by clergy living in a thirty mile radius of East Brent.
caused parents to put their children out to seasonal work at a very young age, even while they were at school – as early as six, or seven. Children were put to seasonal piece-work interrupting their schooling, a practice noted by the 1843 Poor Law Commission. It was possible for a young child to earn nearly sufficient to supply his own sustenance: ‘It would appear that there are but few families where one child or more are not employed in farm-labour. The employment of a child is much more common than that of the wife … The lowest rate of earnings of the child is nearly, if not quite, enough to support it.’

Furthermore, pressure for children to learn the skills necessary for employment in agriculture and to earn a living, led children to leave school between the ages of eight and eleven. In the early 1840s Stephen Denison observed: ‘The present state of the Labouring market, combined with the effect of the New Poor Law, in throwing the labouring classes mainly on their own resources, almost compels the parents to take their children from school as soon as they can earn anything in the fields.’ These economic pressures were still at work quarter of century later. In 1867, H S Tremenheere observed that where agricultural wages were low, and where, out of wages of 12/- per week, flour could cost a family 10/- per week, it was

197 See The Rev Alfred Austin’s description of conditions in Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and Somerset - 1843 (402) VII, Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture. p316. Such work included bird-keeping, care of poultry, watching cattle, sheep or pigs, getting in wood for the house, potato-setting, picking apples, withy-stripping. As a child’s strength grew, other occupations were available such as working in the stable, learning to lead a horse with a plough, helping the carter to learn to drive the team, and employment in the hay-field at harvest. In the case of girls, there were other cottage occupations such as gloving and shirt-wire button making. 1843 (402) VII, Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture. p28-30.

198 A younger brother – Stephen Charles Denison (1811-1871), 6th son of John Denison. BA Balliol College, Oxford (1832); barrister of the Inner Temple, and deputy judge advocate. Alum Ox.

199 Stephen Denison, 1843 (402) VII, Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture. p217. The Rev Stephen Clissold, the Rector of Wrentham in Suffolk, told the 1843 Poor law Commission that ‘education had not advanced in agricultural districts since the passing of the New Poor law.’ 1843 (402) VII, Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture, p218.

200 Hugh Seymour Tremenheere (1804-93) was educated at Winchester and New College. A fellow of New College 1824-1856, he was called to bar. He became a civil servant around 1835, serving as an assistant Poor Law commissioner. He submitted a number of reports on schools for the Committee of Council on Education (1840). As a civil servant at the Home Office, he contributed significant reports on the employment of children and young persons in agriculture (1867), and likewise on the employment of such persons in manufactures (1870). ODNB.
‘of very great importance that every sixpence that could be earned should be obtained’. Were the children’s earnings not available parents would be obliged to apply for aid.\textsuperscript{201} The 1834 Poor Law remained a dominant factor in rural parishes, where there were no moderating factors such as the Factory Acts as obtained in industrial and urban areas.\textsuperscript{202} There was thus no statutory restriction on the employment of children in agriculture until 1867 when the Agricultural Gangs Act restricted the employment of children under the age of eight.\textsuperscript{203} Subsequently, the 1873 Agricultural Children Act, which did not come into force until 1875, raised the age for the employment of children to twelve, but children in this age range could be employed if a certificate was obtained to show they had attended school a certain number of times in the year according to a prescribed scale. There was, however, also provision for the justices to grant exception to the restriction on the employment of children between eight and twelve years age range so as to allow them to work for up to eight weeks.\textsuperscript{204}

So there was a structural economic imperative working against popular education in country parishes. Given this disincentive, the initiative for the foundation of such schools generally lay with the parish clergyman, as did the effort to raise the funds for the ongoing maintenance of the school. In poorer parishes, where it was difficult to secure funding from Downing Street the burden was often assumed by the clergyman. Denison was able to maintain his school with his own resources after


\textsuperscript{202} The 1833 Factory Act (3 & 4 Will IV c103) prohibited the employment of children under the age of nine in the textile industry, this did not apply to other workshops and other manufactures. There was further legislation in 1847, 1850, 1874 and 1878 regulating the work of women and children in factories. However, the first legislative restriction of children’s labour in agriculture appeared as a result of the Commission on the employment of Children, young persons and women in agriculture. The 1867 Act for the regulation of Agricultural Gangs (30 & 31 Vict c130) prohibited the employment of children under ten years of age. The 1873 Act to regulate the employment of children in agriculture (36 & 37 Vict c 67) addressed the problem of children performing occasional agricultural work, their absence from school, and sought to establish the attainment of a defined standard of education. However, the 1833 Factory Act definition of a ‘child’ (ie under nine years of age) still applied.

\textsuperscript{203} 30 & 31 Vict.c.130, Section 4.

\textsuperscript{204} 36 & 37 Vict.c.130, Sections 5 & 6.
declining a government grant after 1847.①⁰⁵ But, by refusing a grant, Denison lost but a small proportion of the income necessary to maintain his school. In practice the government contributed only a quarter of the recurrent income expended on the maintenance of a parochial school, and moreover this contribution was made upon terms which secured its expenditure upon conditions of improvements as defined by the secretary to the Committee of Council on Education, rather than mere recurrent costs. ①⁰⁶ Many small parish schools could not reach the required condition to receive a grant, and thus, in circular process, were unable to raise their standards to qualify. Rural schools, being small, tended to be more expensive to maintain on a *per capita* basis, and often the capitation fees and subscriptions raised less than half the recurrent costs, frequently leaving the gap in funding to be met by the clergy themselves. ①⁰⁷ The Rev Charles Carey, rector of Kingweston, another clergyman serving as a diocesan inspector with knowledge of the circumstances of some thirty-six parishes, found schools in smaller parishes ‘thoroughly inefficient through want of funds to procure proper teachers, the burden of maintenance being thrown almost entirely upon the clergyman’. ①⁰⁸

However, Denison was in better position than most to support his school. As has been seen he enjoyed a larger income than most of his fellow clergy, and his was an economically well-founded parish. Furthermore, he had good relations with his farmers. Denison evidently had considerable respect for Somerset farmers. When they were adversely affected by the importations from the USA in the 1870s, he

①⁰⁵ See chapter 8.
①⁰⁷ James Fraser’s observations of the problems that obtained in the districts he visited, undoubtedly were also true for many Somerset clergy: ‘In rural districts a state of things exists less favourable to education. In the first place, the schools are relatively far more expensive than in the towns, because they are smaller; the school fees are lower, seldom exceeding 1d a week, and thus private subscriptions are important. In the second place the landowners do not contribute to the expenses of the schools so liberally as the wealthy classes in mining districts or large towns, so the that the burden of supporting the school falls principally on the parochial clergy, who are very ill able to support it. [2794 – I.] Vol XXI. – Part I. – 1861 Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of popular education in England. p71.
was supportive of them.\textsuperscript{209} He seems to have found support amongst them for his various projects such as his harvest homes, and may thus have secured support for his school. There were other clergy amongst Denison’s neighbouring Somerset clergy who had similar good relations with farmers. Such was the case with the vicar of Witham Friary, who found most of the support for his school from farmers with a voluntary rate. The vicar characterized his farmers as ‘a sensible set of men, and wish the boys to go to school’.\textsuperscript{210} Likewise, Arthur Salmon had a degree of support from the bigger farmers. ‘The farmers who are better educated themselves and rent large farms are becoming more anxious for the education of their labourers, the smaller and more ignorant farmers still oppose it.’\textsuperscript{211}

Social conditions in a rural parish were dependent on the interest of landed proprietors. The provision of education for the poor was likewise dependent on the interest and support of these proprietors. In parishes where the proprietors were not resident, or where there was no large landowner, support for education was to be looked for amongst the tenant farmers and smallholders. Circumstances differed markedly from parish to parish. Difficulties were encountered when a clergyman was dependent on small farmers. This is demonstrated by the case of J King Eagles. His school had been supported by a lady at her sole expense. King reported that on account of this lady’s death the school was likely to be closed at midsummer as he was not sanguine he could find support elsewhere. ‘I fear it will be impossible to set one up, as farmers as a body are not at all favourable to education.’\textsuperscript{212} The schoolmaster at Wivehoscombe recounted similar problems in his parish, mentioning ‘the bigotry of the farmers’ and difficulties gathering subscriptions: ‘Not a farmer, but one exception, subscribes to the National School.’\textsuperscript{213} Without a sympathetic landlord, and without support from tenant farmers, clergy had to find

\textsuperscript{209} ‘Many cheese farmers came to thank me for my Cheese Battle and they have elected me member of the Agricultural Society.’ G A Denison to Lady Phillimore 31 January 1887. \textit{LED}, 303f.


\textsuperscript{212} The Rev J King Eagles, Vicar of Hillfarance, 1867-68, [4202 – I], \textit{Ibid}, Part II, p464. In the case of the Eagles, his Sunday school provided the only education for many of the children in his parish.

\textsuperscript{213} Edwin Lucas, school master at Wivehiscombe, 1867-68, [4202 – I], \textit{Ibid}, Part II, p460.
ways of supporting schools out of their own means. E F Johnson had no landlords of any substance. He reported that if he approached small-holders ‘they stare if asked for five pounds towards the school’. 214

As archdeacon, Denison would have been aware that many Somerset clergy had much greater difficulties than he in finding support and subscriptions for village schools where they were dependent upon the smaller tenant farmers. 215 Treating this matter in his journal, Church and State Review, he acknowledged that clergy might often rely on assistance from resident landlords. But he recognized that most clergy could not obtain help in support of their schools from the tenant farmers. In those parishes where the landowners were not present, clergy were usually had to look their own resources. 216 He saw the disconnection between the local realities on the ground, and the prescriptions from London. In its laudable attempt to improve standards, the Committee of Council on Education attached strings to capitation grants requiring improvements, and the employment of a certificated teacher. Denison saw two difficulties arising from these conditions. The first was that only those clergy whose schools could meet the conditions would secure a capitation grant. The grant system failed those whose resources were limited and were unable to meet the conditions. They were left to do the best they could. However, Denison contended that there was a second consequence of the system of capitation grants. If the system aided some schools, it made matters worse for those schools which did not qualify, for the salaries of certificated teachers had a tendency to push up the cost of teachers in the surrounding district. The certificated master ‘raises the price of all other village masters around him, rendering them dissatisfied, and indeed difficult to procure’. 217 Moreover, Denison noted the social problem arising in villages with respect to qualified certificated masters, who might be better

215 Such problems went beyond Somerset and were quite general. See Tables 2 and 3 (at the end of the chapter) shewing contribution made by the clergy greatly outstripped other subscribers to schools, as was shown by the Rev James Fraser and the Rev Thomas Hedley in data they collected for the Newcastle Report (1861).
216 C&SR, Vol I, August 1862, p127.
217 Ibid.
educated than the tenant farmers – the consequence, he observed, was that ‘the farmers are jealous of them’.  

Denison also saw a disconnection between the curriculum as it was developed from the late 1840s and realities on the ground. His view on the education of the children in his parish was practical and realistic. It was a view shaped by consideration of the future of children of agricultural labouring families, whose lives were tied to the land and farm labour from an early age. If they were to find future employment, they had to be hardened to agriculture labour, and by twelve years of age begin to learn something of necessary skills such as driving a horse. Thus he was unimpressed by the kind of curriculum developed in London by those quite disconnected from conditions in rural parishes. In the early 1860s, commenting on the curriculum devised in Downing Street\(^{219}\) that the teaching of ‘geography, some history, a little grammar, or more recondite arithmetic,’ would all be forgotten by those ‘who go to the plough at twelve years old’.\(^{220}\) Furthermore, he recognized the local social problems arising from the schooling of the children of labourers - that neither farmers nor tradesmen would countenance and support the education of the children of their employees or labourers beyond their own education, or that of their own children.\(^{221}\) Denison was far from exceptional in taking such a view. The Rev E P Vaughan,\(^{222}\) school inspector in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, considered the standards required by Downing Street were ‘ludicrous’ and quite beyond what was required, given the age that boys left school. Given that popular education was directed at the lower classes and schools where farmers and trades people would not send their children Vaughan, as did Denison, believed the latter class would not tolerate superior education for the poorer classes.\(^{223}\) Both Denison and Vaughan were pragmatic in their estimate of what could be a practical expectation of popular

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218 Ibid.
219 The location of the offices of the Committee of Council on Education.
221 Ibid.
222 The Rev Edward Protheroe Vaughan was Rector of Wraxall, near Bristol. Crockfords.
223 Vaughan’s views cited by J C Wigram, Present aspects of popular education. A charge delivered to the clergy and churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of Winchester at his second visitation in April 1849, p x.
education in rural parishes. Contemporary evidence suggests they had good reason to be so. Agricultural labourers and their families were tied to the seasonal demands of agriculture. Economic necessity, heightened by the imperative of the Poor Law, required children take on work from a young age. This made for irregular attendance at school. It was estimated in the 1851 census that on average children would have received only four years of schooling.224

Clergy in parishes in the area near Denison gave evidence of the continuing use of young children in seasonal employment in 1867.225 The evidence of the Rev John Hancock of Haselbury pointed to the continuing economic necessity for labouring families to acquire the earnings of children aged ten to twelve.226 Children’s seasonal and domestic work took priority over school, with consequent ill effects for their schooling. Little had changed since an earlier inquiry in 1843, which observed the same disruptions to children’s schooling.

The effect of these interruptions in the attendance of children at school is frequently mischievous, as far as their progress is concerned. A child not only loses a certain quantity of instruction, but on return to school after working in the fields, it appears less desirous and even less capable, of profiting by school instruction.227

George Denison’s good friend, the Rev C S Grueber, vicar of Hambridge, gave evidence as to the difficulties securing school attendance with respect to the

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225 The supporting evidence accompanying Boyle’s Report in 1867-68 [4068-I]. For example, The Rev J M King, vicar of Cutcombe, p446. The Rev W P Michell, curate of Carhampton, gave evidence that boys aged nine were employed to drive carts, and even younger, from around the age of six, to drive birds; The Rev Richard Lambert, Vicar of Fitzhead, stated boys around eight were employed scaring birds, helping parents plant potatoes, and in the summer minding pigs, sheep, etc, p460. The Rev F C Kinglake, Curate of Monkton, had boys in his parish employed from eight years of age withy-peeling, p465. The Rev A C Ainslie believed ‘the chief enemy to education’ was employment of children in potato setting, hay and corn harvest, potato picking, etc, p466. The Rev Alfred Bull, Vicar of Woolavington, knew of boys as young as seven keeping sheep, p484. The Rev G G Beadon, Rector of Axbridge, testified to employment of children under eight from his parish in the adjoining parishes of Cheddar and Compton, where there were market gardens producing peas and potatoes, p486.
227 The Rev Alfred Austin’s report in 1843 (402) VII, *Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture*. p37. ‘The importance of this employment to the family is perceptible in the unwillingness of parents to let their children attend schools where work might be interrupted.’ p316.
employment of children and women in his parish. Grueber’s parish was what was known as a gloving parish: girls and women were employed over long hours in making button-holes for gloves. He recounted that girls who were employed never went to school. His parish also relied on the seasonal crops of potatoes and apples, which drew children from school for cropping and harvesting. Demand for children’s labour during fell off during the winter, and attendances often improved. However, the lack of demand for children’s labour in the winter and the increased opportunity for school attendance was often offset by problems with bad weather and consequently impassable roads and lanes. In a parish where the population was scattered this was a serious obstacle to school attendance in the winter. The Rev J Watson Moor identified such disincentives: ‘Poverty, apathy, distance from school, roads under water at times of the year.’

Many clergy took the initiative to establish evening schools in their parishes, as they sought to meet the practical problems arising both from irregular attendance at school as a consequence of children’s employment on seasonal work, and the early age at which children left school. They also tried to offer opportunities for young men and women to compensate for the inadequacies of their earlier day schooling. At Broad Windsor Denison instituted an evening school, where he undertook the education of young men and women employed in manufacture. He had large attendances at his evening classes and on Sunday afternoons. This was not untypical. For those who had received no education as children, as was probably the case at Broad Windsor before Denison established a school, evening classes provided an opportunity for older children and young men and women to acquire useful and practical schooling. Denison recorded that with the institution of his evening classes at Broad Windsor ‘many of the young men and women employed at

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228 1867-68 etc Commission, p481.
229 The Rev E Huxtable, Vicar of Weston Zoyland. Huxtable had a large parish with a population of 894. His National school had a hundred pupils in the winter.
233 Life, p89.
the village workshop came to us to try to learn something, – reading, writing,’ though he added, ‘summing was a far-away accomplishment.’

Denison, although he conducted evening classes at Broad Windsor, at East Brent eschewed evening classes, concentrating upon his day school. Denison is silent with respect to the day-to-day practical running of his schools and the problems of securing attendance. Doubtless his strong personality and organizational skills were directed to secure the efficiency of his school. The effective teaching in his day school seems to have supplied Denison with reason, in later years, to withdraw support for Sunday schools, feeling that they had been overtaken by the better teaching practices in the day schools.

Sunday schools are, in my judgment, speaking generally, an evil perse, and are only to be justified as supplementing the wants of weekly schools, out of which want they sprung. That is the way in which they are to be regarded appears to be evidenced by the fact that as weekly schools and their scholars multiply, the attendance at Sunday schools diminishes, though not as might be expected in the same proportion.

As regards attendance, Denison acknowledged the demands for children’s labour.

But as his parish lay in dairy country and the demands for children’s labour was regular – dairy farms operating seven days a week – Sunday therefore was not so

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234 *Life*, p89. In 1843, in the period that Denison was running his evening classes at Broad Windsor, The Rev Henry Austin, a fellow Dorsetshire clergyman, explained the importance of evening schools and Sunday schools. These were the same reasons advanced a quarter of century later by Denison’s Somerset colleagues. The two most significant reasons advanced by Austin were that such schools provided a means to supply continuing education, and that they served also as a means of keeping young men out of beer houses. The latter perhaps explained itself. The need, however, for what Austin termed ‘continuing education’ arose for two reasons. The first was the early age at which children were taken into employment in Dorset, being put to work sometimes between the ages of seven to eleven, but more generally between nine and eleven. The second lay in the nature of agriculture and the employment of children, enrolled at school, in agriculture on a seasonal basis. Austin was rector of Pimperne, Dorset. He gave evidence to the 1843 Commission. See 1843 [510] Vol XII, Employment of women and children in agriculture. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, p41.

235 G A Denison to Lord Auckland, Bishop of Bath & Wells, 7 January, 1858, *LED*, p73f.

different from weekdays.\footnote{G A Denison to Lord Auckland, 7 January 1858, \textit{LED}, p73f.} The local demand for labour being regular, Denison would have had fewer difficulties with irregular attendance. East Brent did not present the kind of problems of disorderly conduct Denison had encountered in Broad Windsor, as is suggested by Denison’s policeman who found little to do at East Brent.

However, not all clergy seemed to be able to attain in their schools the satisfactory state of affairs that obtained in Denison’s parish. The conditions that Austin described as obtaining in Dorset in the 1840s, very much as those Denison had known in the early years of his parochial ministry, still prevailed over a quarter of a century later in many Somerset parishes. The efficiency of village schools and the attendance of children was still dependant upon the exertions of the parish clergy. The Rev Thomas Hedley, an assistant commissioner serving on the royal commission enquiring into the state of popular education between 1858 and 1860 (the Newcastle Report), attested to the importance of this factor: ‘Whatever efficiency and life there is in our rural schools, I should attribute it almost wholly to the influence and exertions of the parochial clergy’.\footnote{\textit{Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of popular education in England}. p154.} The Newcastle Commission (1861) indicated that clerical initiative and support remained central to the continuance of rural education.

\begin{quote}
He is [the clergyman], in almost all cases, the only person who takes any interest in the school. He is usually one of the chief or the chief – contributor to its support. He is the responsible person when the school is in debt. He is the visitor, and frequently an occasional teacher of the school.\footnote{\textit{Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of popular education in England}. p154.}
\end{quote}

This certainly seems to have been the case in Somerset in the late 1860s in the experience of Rev W P Anderson, a school inspector for the Diocese of Bath and Wells. Acquainted with a range of parochial schools in the course of his duties,
Anderson declared that the efforts and personal influence of the clergyman were a significant factor in rural education. ‘The existence of the school depends very much on the clergyman working in it a great deal, and stirring up the people to send their children to the school. If he does so, they will come.’

The kinds of problems adduced above were ongoing. Evidence given to the 1867-68 commission on employment in agriculture showed very little had changed on the ground in rural parishes. Denison and his Somerset clerical colleagues were still dealing with difficult social and economic problems, and were still trying to compensate for systemic deficiencies in the education of the children of agricultural labourers. R J Boyle reporting on Somerset wrote: ‘In many parishes the day school has been supplemented by a night-school, and so much good is done by an efficient night-school that it becomes advisable that such schools should be on equal footing with day schools as to government allowances and advantages.’ Although Denison did not, it was for this reason that some of his clerical colleagues continued to maintain Sunday schools and evening schools with the object of helping younger parishioners retain and extend what little had been learnt at day schools. Even by the late 1860s, W P Anderson continued to run an evening school under his own supervision for two hours three nights a week from November through to March. He taught writing, arithmetic, and reading, the latter including some Scripture, English and Geography. In some instances, evening schools were run by the village school-teacher, but many others were run by the incumbent himself, or by a member of his family. The Rev J S Coles had an evening school for girls in his parish where many of them were employed by the day in glove making; the school being maintained by his daughter. The Rev R W Church, the Rector of Whatley and later Dean of St Paul’s, had a successful evening school in which his

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241 None of the Somerset clergy gave evidence that they shared the earlier evangelical objections to teaching reading or writing on Sundays.
242 R J Boyle 1867-69 [4202] XIII, Employment of children, young persons, and women in agriculture, 1\textsuperscript{st} Report – Part I, Report by R F Boyle on Somersetshire,
wife and daughter served as the teachers. Denison’s friend and associate, the Rev C S Grueber, regularly saw the upper classes of his day school ‘cleared off’ by the early full-time employment of children, and for that reason ran an evening school with the assistance of his daughter. There were a number of cases where clergy had become exhausted trying to maintain a night school over a period of years, and as in the case of Edward P A Talbot had given up the attempt. The Rector of Binegar reported he had also attempted to supply an evening school, ‘but had given up owing to all the work falling on the rector’.

There were other evident problems with evening schools which required the attention of their pupils after a long day of labour in the wet and cold of winter. The Hon and Rev Walter Portman found his boys ‘wet and tired’. Furthermore he had to begin almost from the beginning almost every year, and could do ‘little more than keep them able to read and write with the average’. The Rev Adam Goldney found it difficult to supply the deficiencies of day schooling, and the difficulties were all the greater given the late hour and the distances travelled. In some cases, evening schools were used by clergy to advance the education of their adult parishioners, but they found, as did the rector of Shepton Mallett, that ‘grown-up men do not like to come with boys, who perhaps know more than themselves’.

There were, however, other much broader reasons why clergy ran evening schools that went beyond teaching the curriculum and mere scholastic attainment. One of the fundamental objects was to improve the rising generation. Such goals applied equally to the day school, or indeed Sunday schools. W H Cartwright’s lack of expectation that anything could be done with the older members of his community

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246 The Rev R W Church, Rector of Whatley, Ibid, p500.
251 The Rev A Goldney, Vicar of East Pennard, Ibid, p250. cf Edwin Lucas, a school-master at Wivehiscombe, who gave observed the inadequacies of night schools to make up the deficiencies of day school. Ibid, p460.
was common-place. He placed a high value on his school and evening classes because it brought children and younger members of the parish under the eye of the incumbent.\textsuperscript{253} W P Anderson gave his reason for maintaining an evening school as not only helping the young lads and apprentices at their work, but engaging young adults in their free time: that is, it ‘kept them out of mischief ... they fought so much’.\textsuperscript{254} However, clergy who tried to compensate for the inadequacies of day schooling by maintaining evening schools were ineligible for government grants to support their work – an indication of the lack of appreciation at Whitehall of the reality on the ground in rural parishes.\textsuperscript{255}

Denison provided leadership in his rural community in his office as vicar, which he believed divine providence had provided for spiritual benefit and physical well-being of his parishioners. This was a paternalistic and religious obligation that Denison exercised in the context of a rural society that was marked by an entire absence of other agencies of government. For much of Denison’s career this remained the case. Evidence adduced in this chapter from royal commissions indicate that country clergy, such as Denison, were important agents in nineteenth-century rural society ameliorating conditions amongst the poor, promoting education, saving and clothing clubs, and other benefits in the absence of any other agency. Evidence garnered from Denison’s neighbouring clerical colleagues show how consistent and unchanged were the conditions of nineteenth-century rural parishes in which they and Denison worked.

It is of considerable significance that the performance of these ministries were exercises in pastoral care – that is to say, they were religious acts as much as they

\textsuperscript{253} The Rev W H Cartwright, Vicar of Butcombe, thought ‘the only chance of getting improvement was to work on the rising generation.’ \textit{Ibid}, p 487. The Vicar of East Hamptree, The Rev C H Nutt, observed that the disadvantage of the strong presence of Dissent in his parish ‘prevents the children coming so much under the eye of the vicar’. \textit{Ibid}, p 503.


\textsuperscript{255} The Rev Henry Pratt, Rector of Shepton Mallet, had a large population in his parish, and was very much in favour of night schools. He would have liked a grant, which was not available, but he believed also the kind of examinations that might had been imposed for day schools by the Revised Code, would frighten his students away. \textit{Ibid}, p 491.
were practical measures. Denison saw the golden thread of religion in all he did and all that his community did – for Denison the country parish was the locus in which membership of Christ’s Body was realized in the day-to-day things of practical life in a rural community: a way of life that was for Denison the substance and glory of the Church of England.\textsuperscript{256} As a parish priest, Denison manifested the zeal which his episcopal brother had called for, as well as the traits of character and leadership Bishop Sumner wished to see in the parochial clergy. Denison stood very much, as Sheridan Gilley has commented, in the tradition of the squarson.\textsuperscript{257} His decisiveness and energy made him well suited to such a role – one which he understood as the fulfilling of his High Church doctrine, and the political and social theology tenets which are examined in the following three chapters.

\textsuperscript{256} G A Denison, \textit{Church rate a national trust}. 1861, pp82-3. His sense of the importance of the parish was shared by another \textit{quondam} Oxford don, The Rev R W Church, who believed the Church of England was to be identified in its parishes. Church was a fellow Somerset priest, serving as incumbent of the parish of Whately for almost twenty years from 1852 till his appointment by W E Gladstone to the deanery of Saint Paul’s in 1871. Church saw in the parish structure ‘the positive and substantial characteristics of the traditional and actually existing English Church’ which he identified as a ‘reality and experience’. R W Church saw the Church of England’s parish system as the ‘reality’ where the Church was to be found, rather than being an abstract ideal ‘on paper’. R W Church, \textit{The Oxford Movement: Twelve years 1833-1845}. 1970 ed, p268. Church’s remark was a counter to W G Ward’s \textit{ideal of a Christian Church considered in comparison with existing practice}, 1844. William George Ward (1812-1882) was a disciple of Newman. He wrote his \textit{ideal} as a response to William Palmer’s \textit{Narrative of events} (1843). Ward had contributed articles in the years 1841-3 to the \textit{British Critic} in which he idealised the Roman Catholic Church as the model of the true Church. Ward’s \textit{Ideal} led to controversy within the University at Oxford, and subsequently the deprivation of his degrees.

Denison: the uniqueness of revelation

‘Let it be our concern and conjunct answer to every ‘invention’ of man’s reasoning power, we may not touch the Word of God – lest we lose the light which guides us on our way to heaven’

G A Denison, *Supplement to “Notes of my life.”* p79

Denison and Bishop Tait: biblical criticism – two different mindsets

‘The Bishop of London’s mind [Tait’s] appears to be of that order which cannot grasp the fact that the use of reason, when brought into contact with Revelation, is to limit and circumscribe its own operation, and to subordinate its conclusion of whatever kind, however exact and necessary these may appear to be, to what God has revealed in His Book.’

‘It is really curious to see what extent the whole idea of religion in the Bishop’s mind is that of the religion of individual man, guided and controlled by individual conscience, mistaken or not, as it may happen, and not that of the member of the Church.’

Denison’s criticism of Bishop Tait’s 1862 charge in *Church and State Review, Vol 2*, p3.
This chapter examines Denison’s committed view of scripture as a revelation of the work of divine providence, which we have seen as undergirding his engagement with his parish and, in this chapter, with a number of national ecclesiastical and theological controversies. Denison’s views on the scriptures and providence are to be found in his occasional polemical writings in which he engaged with ecclesiastical politics and controversies. Denison was not a systematic writer, but it is nevertheless possible to demonstrate coherence in his approach to the issues of his day, as his polemical writing continued to maintain and defend the tenets of the prevailing Anglican orthodoxy of his formative years. It was in the 1860s that Denison engaged in the defence of his understanding of providential revelation and the authority of the scriptures. This was occasioned by the eruption of modern biblical criticism in Britain with the publication of Essays and Reviews in 1860, followed only a few years later in 1863 by Bishop Colenso’s Pentateuch and Book of Joshua critically examined. The Essays and Reviews appeared to Denison to be a radical challenge threatening the foundations of the traditional orthodox concept of the status of the Bible as divine revelation, and provoked a personal crisis for him. The publication of Lux Mundi almost three decades later, in 1889, induced a similar crisis.

*Essays and Reviews*

*Essays and Reviews* was published in February 1860 and rapidly achieved notoriety, demand for copies of the book promoting a succession of reprints. In the British
Isles, where the native approach to the study of the Bible was highly conservative, the book produced shock waves. The volume appeared remarkable to contemporaries on account of its principal thrust – that of seeking the freedom to engage in a critical approach to the Bible – German biblical scholarship providing the background and original ideas. Britain had been largely undisturbed by scientific history and literary criticism as this was applied to scriptures by German Protestant scholars.\(^1\) The ‘aggressive temper,’ as Storr has remarked, of Rowland Williams’ essay, and of the one written by the principal architect of the volume, Henry Bristow Wilson, contributed to the shock with which *Essays and Reviews* were received.\(^2\) The dangers of an aggressive approach and open assault on orthodoxy were feared by the Cambridge New Testament scholar, F J A Hort,\(^3\) who had declined Williams’ request for a contribution. ‘At present very many orthodox but rational men are being unawares acted upon by influences which will assuredly bear fruit in time, if the process is allowed to go on quietly; but I cannot help feeling that a premature crisis would frighten many back into the merest traditionalism’.\(^4\) There was, as the moderate and liberal Bishop Thirlwall observed, ‘a tone of scornful bitterness’ used against those who maintained traditional beliefs.\(^5\) Thirlwall, whose own scholarship and knowledge of German scientific historical criticism afforded him a knowledge of the intellectual background that shaped the purpose of the *Essays*, was critical of the writers who claimed freedom to treat without restriction

\(^1\) See V F Storr, *The development of English theology in the nineteenth century*. 1913, ch xxi on the publication of *Essays and Reviews*, and ch x on biblical criticism in the earlier part of the century and the conservative forces opposed to German scholarship.


\(^3\) Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-92), a Fellow of Trinity College 1852-57, and 1872-92, was associated with J B Lightfoot and most particularly with B F Westcott, working on the Greek text of the New Testament.

\(^4\) Hort to Williams 21 October 1858. Cited by Altholz p13.

\(^5\) Connop Thirlwall, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of St David’s, October 1863*. 2\(^{nd}\) ed, 1864, p13. There had been exchanges between Williams and Thirlwall in 1860 (Rowland Williams, *Earnestly respectful letter to the Lord Bishop of Saint David’s on the difficulty of bringing theological questions to issue*, and Thirlwall’s reply, *Letter to the Rev Rowland Williams, Vice-Principal of St David’s College, Lampeter: an answer to his ‘Earnestly respectful’ letter, etc.*)
doctrine which the Church of England and the universal Church regarded as definitive.  

To men such as Denison the Essays appeared as a radical assault upon the concept that the Bible was unique, quite unlike other written works, and *ipso facto* an assault on the fundamental certainty of the transcendence of God, his creative work, his continuing providence and his relation with man. Those aligned with orthodoxy in the battle against the new biblical criticism espoused by the essayists and reviewers represented, as Josef Altholz has suggested, the prevailing orthodoxy that held sway within much of the Church of England.

Historians have tended to study this controversy from the standpoint of the Essayists ... It might be more useful now for historians to pay some attention to the other side, those who denounced Essays and Reviews from the standpoint of orthodoxy within the Church of England. They may well have been less attractive; they may even have been wrong; but they were certainly more numerous and more representative of the mind of the Church.

**Reaction in Convocation to *Essays and Reviews***

Protests and appeals by the lower clergy, both High and Low Church, led Archbishop Sumner to summon the bishops to Lambeth in February 1861. The bishops were put on the spot. Their response, framed as a reply to an address from the rural deanery of Dorchester, was drawn up by Bishop Wilberforce and issued over the archbishop’s signature. The bishops’ general censure was unanimous, and was

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6 *Ibid*, pp12 & 15. Thirlwall had spent a brief period in Germany early in his career, and knew Bunsen (the subject of Williams’ essay). He had translated Schleiermacher on St Luke (1825), and, with Julius Hare, had translated Niebuhr’s *History of Rome* (1831).


8 For an account of the meeting on 1st February at Lambeth see *Life of the Rt Rev Samuel Wilberforce*, Vol 3, pp2-4.
remarkable for including bishops such as Hampden, Thirlwall and Tait. However, when they met again in March, the bishops were far less clear as to what further action they might take. It was on this account that at the February session of Convocation Dr Jelf, Principal of King’s College London, introduced charges of unsound doctrine against Essays and Reviews, and called for synodical action. The Lower House of Convocation, however, hesitated to proceed along the lines of Jelf’s motion. In an attempt to obtain a measure of agreement, Christopher Wordsworth junior, seconded by Denison, proposed an amending motion whereby the house confined itself to support for the episcopal censure:

That the Clergy of the Lower House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, having regard to the censure which has already been pronounced and published by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Provinces of Canterbury and York on certain opinions contained in a book entitled ‘Essays and Reviews,’ entertain an earnest hope that under Divine Blessing, the faithful zeal of the Christian Church in this land may be enabled to counteract the pernicious influence of the erroneous opinions contained in the said volume.

Denison, however, was ‘wholly dissatisfied’ that this was ‘all that was to be got from the Lower House.’ It was not, in Denison’s view, a synodical condemnation expressing the corporate authority of the Church. When Convocation met in March, Denison submitted a gravamen alleging Essays and Reviews contained doctrines ‘subversive of the Inspiration and Authority of the Holy Scripture, and, in

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9 See Altholz, p51ff. The bishops unanimously agreed ‘in expressing the pain it has given them that any clergyman of our Church should have published such opinions … We cannot understand how these opinions can be held consistently with an honest subscription to the formularies of our Church, with many of the fundamental doctrines of which they appear to us essentially at variance’. The text was drawn up by Samuel Wilberforce and published over Archbishop Sumner’s signature. The text and names of the bishops subscribing to the letter are to be found in Life of the Rt Rev Samuel Wilberforce, Vol 3, pp4-5.
10 Ibid, p5f.
11 See Altholz, p56. Richard William Jelf (1798-1871) had been educated at Eton, Christ Church, Oxford, and was elected a Fellow of Oriel (1820-), and appointed a Canon of Christ Church (1840-1871). He was Principal of King’s College London (1844-1868). ODNB. Jelf was elected a member of ‘Nobody’s Friends’ in 1845. The Club of Nobody’s Friends: biographical list, p144.
12 G A Denison, Life, p290.
13 Ibid.
other respects also, contrary to the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England,’ and called for synodical condemnation. In the Upper House in March of 1861, the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, and Ashurst Gilbert of Chichester, steered a reply to Denison’s *gravamen* opening the way for the Lower House to offer to the Bishops’ House an opinion as to whether *Essays and Reviews* warranted synodical action.

This gave Wilberforce and Denison the opportunity they had sought, and Denison was appointed chairman of the Lower House committee. To expedite matters, he drafted a report for the consideration of the committee – a piece of determined efficiency which, as will be seen, became a matter of controversy in 1864 between Denison and Tait, then Bishop of London. This document became redundant in the course of discussion, some members of the committee thinking it ‘too strong and decided’. The committee developed its own report, influenced, as Altholz has suggested, by Jelf’s book attacking *Essays and Reviews*. Denison, however, published his draft independently in 1861 as *Analysis of ‘Essays and Reviews’*. His *Analysis* dismissed the authors’ claim that their essays were a collation of independent contributions without collaboration. He treated the book as an entity, considering the several essayists to have had ‘a common object and purpose’.

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*Gravamen* was a memorial sent from the Lower House to the Upper House of Convocation seeking redress of a grievance or disorder in the Church.  

16 The Lower House of Convocation was constitutionally dependent upon the Bishops’ House to initiate such proceedings. Only twelve bishops were present - Wilberforce’s motion was carried eight to four. G A Denison, *Life*, p290f. ‘His Grace the President be requested to direct the Lower House to appoint a Committee to examine the said book, and to report therein to that House, in order that the Lower House may communicate to this House its opinion whether there is sufficient grounds for proceeding to a Synodical Judgment upon the book.’ *C of C*, 15 March 1861, p621.  

17 *C of C*, p621.  

18 Denison’s forceful methods often brought him trouble, but he rationalised his approach explaining: ‘All my experience of Committees had shown me that the thing to be done with a view to avoiding desultory and confused proceeding in Committee is, that the Chairman should be ready with a draft report upon the first day of assembling of the Committee. That is to say, that there should be something definite, and connected in its several parts throughout for the Committee to go to work upon, instead of attempting to construct the Report bit by bit from day to day.’ *Life*, p292.  

19 *Specific evidence of unsoundness in the volume entitled Essays and Reviews*, 1861.  

20 G A Denison, *Analysis of ‘Essays and reviews’*. 1861, p2f. Denison’s approach was predicated on the common declaration in the preface of *Essays and Reviews* expressing the hope of the authors.
sought to demonstrate the ‘connection of thought’ that ran through the several essays. Under Denison’s leadership the committee was able to report with alacrity to the Lower House in June of 1861, just three months after receiving direction from the House of Bishops in March. The Report specifically noted in its preliminary statements that the essayists had in many places disparaged the miracles, predictive prophecy and leading doctrines (viz the descent of man from Adam; the fall and original sin; incarnation; salvation through the blood of Christ; etc). Denison, in full expectation the report would make it possible to take a further step towards condemnation of Essays and Reviews, moved ‘That in the opinion of this house there are sufficient grounds for proceeding to a synodical judgment on the book entitled Essays and Reviews, and that the above resolution be communicated to the Upper House, together with a copy of the report of the committee’. Although Denison’s resolution was carried, debate in the Lower House indicated that, as with the Bishops’ House, the inferior clergy, while distressed by the Essays, were also far from certain as to the best way to proceed, and whether synodical censure was an appropriate course.

Convocation’s determination of the issue was suspended when Kerr Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury (successor to Edward Denison), commenced legal proceedings against one of the essayists, Rowland Williams, an incumbent in his diocese.

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that the volume would illustrate the advantages of ‘free handling’ of the scriptures as against the tenets of orthodoxy with ‘repitition of conventional language’ and ‘traditional methods of treatment’. Ibid, p2.
21 Ibid.
22 C of C, 18 June 1861, pp672-87. As with Denison’s Analysis, the Committee treated Essays and Reviews as a book having a common purpose, outlining in their Report ‘its leading principles’. The essayists essentially maintained that man’s ‘advanced knowledge’ which, if ‘governed by conscience,’ was the way to ‘determine the truth of the Bible’. The Committee noted the Essayist’s further qualifying principle: namely that where the Bible was at variance ‘with the conclusions of such educated intellect’ it had no divine authority. The essayists’ principles were at odds with those of orthodoxy. The old principles of interpretation were no longer tenable ‘if the credit and authority of the Holy Scriptures was to be maintained’.
23 C of C, p673.
24 C of C, 18 June 1861, p688.
26 For the twenty-two articles preferred against Rowland Williams see Speech of Robert Phillimore, DCL, QC, in the case of ‘The Office of the Judge Promoted by the Bishop of Salisbury against Williams’ delivered on the 9th, 16th and 11th of February, 1862. 1862, pp177-206.
Similar proceedings were initiated by James Fendall, with the consent of the Bishop of Ely, against Henry Bristow Wilson, Vicar of Great Staughton, Huntingdon, in the Diocese of Ely. The other essayists, not being incumbents, avoided episcopal prosecution.27 The cause of Essays and Reviews was frozen in Convocation until 1864 while the cases against Williams and Bristow ran their course in the courts.28 The case against Williams and Wilson was heard in the Court of Arches in 1862,29 Denison’s brother-in-law, Sir Robert Phillimore QC, appearing as advocate for Bishop Hamilton.30

The hearing in the Arches, however, was not the comprehensive examination of Essays and Reviews for which Denison had looked in Convocation, as the court declined to determine questions of divinity.31 The proceedings against Williams and

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27 The other essayists were: Rev Frederick Temple (1821-1902), Headmaster of Rugby; The Rev Rowland Williams (1817-70), Professor of Hebrew at St David’s College, Lampeter, and Vicar of Broad Chalke; The Rev Baden Powell (1896-1860), Savilian Professor at Oxford; The Rev Henry Bristow Wilson (1803-88), formerly Rawlinson Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, and at the time of publication Vicar of Great Staughton, Huntingdonshire; G W Godwin (1817-78), the only layman – a lawyer and Egyptologist; The Rev Mark Pattison (1813-84) Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford; The Rev Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), Regius Professor Greek at Oxford.

28 The text of Sumner’s communication to the Lower House suspending proceedings is reproduced in Life, p295. For an account of the legal saga, see Ellis, Seven against Christ, chapter 4, and Altholz, Anatomy of a controversy, chapters 10 – 13.

29 The appeal court of the Province of Canterbury. The Dean of Arches (as the presiding judge of this court was known) was Stephen Lushington (1782-1873), a barrister of the Inner Temple, and an MP for a brief period in his early life. He presided over the Diocese of London’s Consistory Court from 1828, and served as Dean of Arches 1858-67. He was also a judge of the High Court of Admiralty 1838-67. Lushington was succeeded as Dean of Arches by Denison’s brother-in-law, Sir Robert Phillimore.

30 Sir Robert Phillimore acted together with J D Coleridge, QC and Dr Swabey. Phillimore’s defence was very much a defence of orthodoxy. He listed in court the effect of the Essays and Reviews on the received understanding of the scriptures: ‘The men and women around us are told that the whole scheme of salvation has to be entirely re-arranged and altered. Divine rewards and punishments, the Fall, original sin, the vicarious penalty, and salvation by faith are all, in the natural senses of the terms, repudiated as immoral delusions. Miracles, inspiration, and prophecy, in their plain and natural sense, are doomed as figments or exploded blunders. The Mosaic history dissolves into a mass of ill-digested legends, the Mosaic ritual into an Oriental system of priestcraft, and the Mosaic origin of the earth and man, sinks amidst the rubbish of rabbinical cosmogonies. And yet all this done in the name of orthodoxy, and for the glory of Christian truth.’

31 Lushington, Dean of Arches, drew attention to the principles enunciated in the judgment in the Gorham Case [The Gorham judgment is considered in greater detail in chapter seven], and the subsequent Privy Council Judgment, which restricted the court’s competence to a narrow purview, eschewing a wider discussion of scripture or theology. ‘I also wish to draw your attention to this, whether it be competent to the Court to confine its attention to the particular parts of the Scriptures which are cited in the argument; and at the same time not to go into the consideration of the rest of the Bible? And whether the inevitable effect of that will not be that the Court will be called upon to
Bristow in the Court of Arches concluded in June of 1862. Stephen Lushington, Dean of Arches, suspended both priests for one year from their livings, and imposed on them the costs. Both men gave immediate notice of appeal.\(^{32}\) Denison was highly dissatisfied with these court proceedings. Believing that Convocation was the body responsible for determining matters of doctrine, he shortly afterwards in the August number of his periodical, the *Church and State Review*, argued the Church’s function as the guardian and interpreter of scripture:

In condemning the book [Essays & Reviews] the Church does not reconstruct, but republishes her profession of Faith; and in this way, while she saves her own position, she warns all her children against the seductions of heresy or heresies contained in that book. This is the procedure in Synod; the primary duty of a Church in every case.\(^{33}\)

Further consideration of *Essays and Reviews* in Convocation, however, was suspended until Williams’ and Wilson’s appeals were heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.\(^{34}\) Denison dismissed the validity and authority of this body as a court of final appeal in causes ecclesiastical, as being incompetent to hear matters of doctrine and a breach of the compact between Church and State.\(^{35}\) ‘If procedures in Synod be neglected, or evaded for any cause, the Church is committed to, and is, as it were, an accomplice in respect of the heretical book, because the one way supplied in the good Providence of God for meeting the evil of the Church in her corporate capacity is not taken by the Church in her corporate capacity.’\(^{36}\)

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33 *C&SR*, Vol 1, 1\(^{st}\) August 1862, p107.
35 *C&SR*, Vol 1, 1\(^{st}\) July 1862, p75.
36 *C&SR*, Vol 1, 1\(^{st}\) August 1862, p107.
While appeals on behalf of Williams and Wilson were in train, Denison was given cause for further angst when in 1862 Bishop Colenso published *The Pentateuch and the book of Joshua*. Colenso questioned the authorship and historical accuracy of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua. Following on *Essays and Reviews*, the book caused considerable controversy. Colenso was doubtless encouraged to publish by the outcome of the case against Williams and Wilson in the Arches. Colenso’s book also caused offence to orthodox minds, and offended Denison with the suggestion that Moses could not possibly have been the author of the whole of the Mosaic narrative, and that the narrative was not historically accurate. Denison therefore moved in Convocation for a committee to examine Colenso’s book and report whether portions of it were heretical. The expectations of Denison and his like-minded colleagues in Convocation for another synodical condemnation as ecclesiastically authoritative were represented by Dr Jebb, who expressed his hope that Convocation would pass judgment on the book as ‘one Providential means, under the blessing of God, of checking heresies’.

The possibility of dealing with *Essays and Reviews* continued to languish in Convocation throughout 1863 and into early 1864, when the appeal of Williams and Wilson was heard by the Judicial Committee. The Privy Council Committee delivered

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37 John William Colenso (1814-1883) was consecrated Bishop of Natal in 1853. Colenso had already attracted controversy the previous year (1861) when he published a *Commentary on the epistle to the Romans* in which he questioned the doctrine of eternal punishment. F D Maurice had notably been deprived of his professorships at King’s College London, nearly ten earlier after the Principal, R W Jelf (Denison’s ally in Convocation) and the College’s board had determined such denial to be heretical.

Colenso was deprived by Archbishop Gray of Capetown in 1863, but the Privy Council ruled in Colenso favour in 1865. Gray then excommunicated Colenso in 1866. Amongst the matters considered by the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 were the issues that had arisen with regard to Bishop Colenso.

38 Cf the classic argument of the Anglican divine, Edward Stillingfleet, on the authority of Moses’ authorship, that he was an authority by education and experience, educated in wisdom in Egypt, and that Moses was ‘an eye-witness of most of his history’, and that for the rest there was ‘certain and uninterrupted tradition of the other part among the Jews, manifested by rational evidence’. Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines sacrae, or, an account of Christian faith as to the truth and divine authority of the scriptures and the matters therein contained*. 1663, p119.

39 Cf of C, 11 February 1863, p1010f. Denison was appointed chairman. See Denison’s account in *Life* p302ff.

its judgment in February of 1864, bringing little comfort to Denison. The judgments made against Williams and Wilson in the Arches were reversed by the Judicial Committee.\textsuperscript{41}

The Privy Council’s approach was to measure the charges against the Church Formularies according to legal rules, as they would in the interpretation of statutes and written instruments – a principle established in the Gorham case.\textsuperscript{42} The case against the two priests fell on appeal to the Judicial Committee on the ground that the Articles of Religion did not support the specific charges.\textsuperscript{43} With regard to the question of inspiration, the case against Williams, that he had maintained the Bible was not the word of God, was dismissed as the passage cited in the indictment did not warrant the charge.\textsuperscript{44} Of greater significance was the Judicial Committee’s treatment of the issues arising from the subject of divine inspiration. The summary of the proposition inherent in the charge against Wilson was essentially a devastating critique of the kind of uncritical approach to the Bible maintained by those such as Denison. The charge had asserted:

That it is a contradiction of the doctrine laid down in the sixth and twentieth Articles of Religion, in the Nicene Creed, and in the ordination Service of Priests, to affirm that any part of the Canonical Books of the Old or New Testament, upon any subject

\textsuperscript{41} Edmund F Moore, \textit{Reports of cases heard and determined by the Judicial Committee and the Lords of Her Majesty’s most honourable Privy Council}. New series, Vol 2, 1863-5, p434.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{43} The charge was that Williams had offended against Article XI (‘Of the Justification of man’) writing that the transfer of merit was a fiction. Williams explained at the appeal that his use of ‘fiction’ was intended to describe the phantasy in the mind of the individual that he believed he had obtained merit by transfer. If the court did not feel Williams’ use of ‘fiction’ was appropriate, they acquitted Williams of the charge of offending against Article XI on the grounds that ‘the Article is wholly silent as to the merits of Jesus Christ being transferred to us’. \textit{Ibid}, p428. The Judicial Committee ruling found that Wilson had neither questioned nor denied a future judgment, only that he had suggested that a judgment of eternal misery may not be the purpose of God. \textit{Ibid}, p431. On the same principle, the charge that Wilson’s view of the final judgment had contradicted the three creeds, the absolution, the catechism, and both the burial and commination services, was overturned on the grounds that Article XLII that treated with judgment in the 1552 prayer book, was withdrawn in 1562 prayer book. \textit{Ibid}, p433.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid}, p427.
whatever, however unconnected with religious or moral duty, as not written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{45}

The Judicial Committee found the assertion that the entire Bible was inspired was not supported by the Articles, liturgy or creeds.\textsuperscript{46} Equally significantly, the committee found that the Church had not used the term ‘inspiration’ as such, and with regard to the broader notion of the Bible being revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the Word of God, the Committee considered the framers of the Articles had been cautious, and had eschewed laying down anything ‘as to the nature, extent or limits of the operation of the Holy Spirit’.\textsuperscript{47}

The Privy Council ruling was a considerable blow for the orthodox position. Altholz has described the legal determination as ‘a victory for the essayists’.\textsuperscript{48} Coupled with Lushington’s judgment, which had already struck out most of the charges, it opened a considerable area of biblical criticism and theological inquiry to free discussion among the clergy, and it rendered a large part of the conventional teaching ‘unenforceable at law’.\textsuperscript{49} However, in the Province of Canterbury this was a direction that the archbishop opposed. Charles Longley wanted his clergy to ‘adhere steadfastly to those Interpretations of the language of our Church which have been commonly accepted as agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and to the doctrines of the Catholic Church’.\textsuperscript{50}

In fact, as the Lord Chancellor noted, the Judicial Committee’s ruling was not unanimous – both archbishops (Longley of Canterbury and Thomson of York) dissented on the matter of the inspiration of the Bible.\textsuperscript{51} The archbishops moved

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p429.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p429.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p430.
\textsuperscript{48} Altholz, \textit{Anatomy of a controversy}, p109
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p109f.
\textsuperscript{50} C T Longley, \textit{A pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of his province, 14 March, 1864}, p13.
\textsuperscript{51} Both Archbishops had sat with the appeal, and differed from the lay lords and Bishop Tait. See Altholz’s \textit{Anatomy of a controversy} on this, p105. Their difference was recorded at the conclusion of
quickly to make a public rejoinder to the judgment by publishing pastoral letters. Longley, who had been Denison’s tutor at Christ Church, maintained a conservative orthodox line. The archbishop made it plain that he considered the authority of the scriptures ought to be recognized in keeping with the tenor of the Church of England’s Articles and liturgy. Longley believed the essayists had subverted the notion of scriptural authority as this was understood in the Articles and liturgy. He questioned Williams’ notion that the Bible was ‘an expression of devout reason, and therefore to be read with reason and freedom’. In Longley’s eyes, Williams rendered the scriptures merely the word of man, and thus devoid of authority for establishing doctrine. He was also disturbed by Wilson’s suggestion that though the Word of God was contained in the scriptures, it was not necessarily co-extensive with it. Longley contended, against Wilson, that the Church maintained the scriptures to be God’s Word without qualification. Likewise in the northern province, Archbishop Thomson attempted to mend the breach in the wall of the orthodox citadel. He believed the people would reject the ‘fine-spun metaphysical view of evil’ advanced by the essayists, which they would detect as unwarranted ‘by the voice of inspiration’ and turn to the ‘plain declarations of the Bible’. This, he declared was the word of God, and formed a contemporary guide both to faith and practical duties.

the Privy Council Judgment. Lord Westbury informed the Court, ‘I am desired by both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York to state that they do not concur in those parts of this judgment which relate to the seventh Article of charge against Dr Williams, and to the eighth Article of charge against Mr Wilson’. Edmund F Moore, Reports of cases heard and determined by the Judicial Committee and the Lords of Her Majesty’s most honourable Privy Council. New series, Vol 2, 1863-5, p434.

52 C T Longley, A pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of his province, 14 March, 1864. p4f.
54 Ibid, p7.
57 Thomson’s biographer in ODNB has noted that his career might have taken a very different course, as he was to have been a contributor to Essays and reviews, but failed to deliver his essay in time. Subsequently Thomson edited a volume of essays, Aids to faith; A series of theological essays by several writers. Being a reply to ‘Essays and Reviews’, 1864, to which he contributed a monograph of his own, ‘The death of Christ’.
58 William Thomson, A pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the Province of York p21. Thomson declared his belief that if tempted to err in faith, there was still ‘the commonsense of the people,
Resumption of consideration of

*Essays and Reviews* in Convocation

With the proceedings in the courts concluded, it was now possible to resume consideration of *Essays and Reviews* in Convocation as Denison desired. But he had to await the promotion of the matter in the Bishops’ House, the Lower House being constitutionally unable to initiate business. As the pastoralis of the two archbishops demonstrated, Denison was far from exceptional being dismayed at the tenor of *Essays and Reviews*, as he was not exceptional desiring that the Church be seen to respond. The extent of this dismay was manifested in a declaration affirming belief in the inspiration of the scriptural canon presented to Longley. The declaration was signed by nine thousand, six hundred and seventy clergymen in England and Wales (just over half the total number of clergy), and some one thousand, two hundred and thirty-one Irish clergy. Longley was thus quite aware of the widespread disquiet within the Church, and of the expectation that the Church should be seen not to acquiesce in the essayists’ views. The courts had dealt with only Williams’ and Wilson’s contributions, and those piecemeal, as Lord Westbury stated at the conclusion of the Judicial Committee’s judgment:

and with the Bible in their hands, and the Prayer Book that acknowledges the Bible, will refuse to be led off by its plain statements’. *Ibid*, p22f.

59 *Ibid*, p21. He asked: ‘What then are we to teach? Where is ‘the very lively Word of God, the special food of man’s soul, that all Christian persons are bound to embrace, believe and follow, if they are to be the same?’ The Church of England answers: the Bible is that Word. The new doctrine seems to leave us without an answer’. *Ibid*, p15.

60 Alan Haig, *The Victorian clergy*, p3, gives the number of clergy in England and Wales in 1861 as 19,336, sourced from the Census Reports. The number of signatures supports Altholz’s view that orthodoxy was widespread and mainstream.

61 The Declaration affirmed ‘belief that the Church of England and of Ireland, in common with the whole Catholic Church, maintains without reserve or qualification, the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the whole of Canonical Scriptures, as not only containing but being the Word of God; and further teaches in the Words of our Blessed Lord, that the “punishment” of the “cursed” equally with the “life” of the “righteous” is everlasting’. *Life of Pusey*, Vol 4, p54. The background to this Declaration is given in *Life of Pusey*, Vol 4, pp53-67. According to Pusey Longley had anticipated receiving the Declaration as providing support for the expression of his own views in his *Pastoral Letter*, but was unable to wait until the wording had been drawn up and the signatures collected. (*Ibid*, p56). Samuel Wilberforce seems to have promoted the idea for the Declaration. A committee, consisting of Pusey, Archdeacon Clerke, Dr Cotton, Archdeacon Denison, W R Fremantle (one of Wilberforce’s rural deans), Dr Leighton, and Dr J C Miller, was formed to implement the idea.
We desire to repeat that the meagre and disjointed extracts which have been allowed to remain in the reformed Articles [that is, after the Articles against Williams and Wilson had been reduced and redrawn at Lushington’s behest], are alone the subject of our judgment. On the design and general tendency of the Book called ‘Essays and Reviews,’ and on the effect of aim of the whole Essay of Dr Williams, or the whole Essay of Mr Wilson, we neither can nor do pronounce any opinion.62

This was the issue – not only had Williams’ and Wilson’s essays been considered piecemeal, but they were the only two of the seven contributors to Essays and Reviews, who had faced censure. Longley felt strongly that the writers had acted ‘in concert,’ notwithstanding a brief preface to Essays and Reviews denying collusion.63 Longley’s own views and pressure from the wider Church led him to act. Longley had already taken steps just three years earlier, when he was Archbishop of York, to secure synodical condemnation in the newly revived York Convocation. He had been translated to Canterbury shortly afterwards, following Sumner’s death in October 1862, but the court proceedings had stayed further action.

In the House of Bishops Longley found strong support for synodical condemnation from Samuel Wilberforce. The latter considered that unless there was synodical action Convocation would be reduced to ‘a mere sham’, and the Church of England appear as though she were careless as to what was taught by her ministers.64 The Bishop of Lincoln took a similar view, acknowledging that both educated and uneducated churchmen had come to realize that Essays and Reviews was both

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62 Edmund F Moore, Reports of cases heard and determined by the Judicial Committee and the Lords of Her Majesty’s most honourable Privy Council. New series, Vol 2, 1863-5, p433.
63 The Preface to Essays and Reviews read: ‘It will be readily understood that the Authors of the ensuing essays are responsible for their respective articles only. They have written in entire independence of each other, and without concert or comparison’. Longley found it difficult to believe that the book could have been conceived without some concerted action and collusion. Dean Stanley wrote to Longley strongly objecting to the Archbishop’s suggestion of collusion. Longley replied: ‘It is impossible to deny that the writers of Essays and Reviews were associated in a common understanding – that of vindicating for the clergy the right of treating openly, in language addressed to the people generally, questions concerning prophecy, miracles, etc’. Longley to Stanley 18 July 1864, Longley Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, 4 ff222-4.
64 C of C, 19 April 1864, p1461.
'subversive of the Gospel' and contained doctrine ‘in contradiction to the doctrine of the Church of England’. By contrast, Archibald Tait, Bishop of London, who held rather more advanced views on biblical criticism than those of Longley and Wilberforce, wrote privately to Longley pointing out the consequences he thought might arise should the bishops attempt to maintain that all scripture was given by divine inspiration. Tait, nevertheless, had ‘no sympathy’ with either Williams or Wilson ‘as to the tone of the essays and the inferences which may be gathered from them’. It was ‘rather the general tone and tenor of the book than the particular statements that put forth which are dangerous’. Tait was opposed to further action by Convocation on the grounds that there were dangers condemning heresy lest one incurred further errors, and further excite agitation. Samuel Wilberforce, however, differed from Tait, arguing that when doctrine was attacked ‘quietness is disloyalty and treason’.

Tait’s advice notwithstanding, Longley remained of the opinion that Convocation ‘had the power, and that it was its province and function to condemn erroneous

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65 C of C 21 June 1864, p1674.
66 ‘… if we lay down that as all Scripture is given by Inspiration, it follows, therefore, that all statements of the Bible – (re science) are infallibly correct. – that all passages of those Scriptures which Saint Paul tells us come from himself are not from God; are directly and inspired by God’. Tait to Longley, 3 November 1863. Longley Papers, Vol 7, ff 163-4.
See also Tait’s statement in Convocation that compilers of the Formularies had never ‘committed the Church to the untenable statement the Bible is not only inspired, and the rule of faith and practice, and God’s Word, but also, without reservation or qualification, an infallible guide in matters which have no connection with faith or morality’. C of C, 21 June 1864, p1669.
67 Ibid.
68 C of C, 21 June 1864, p1662. The previous Archbishop (Sumner) had commented on reading Schedule B attached to the Lower House’s Report on Essays and Reviews, ‘that they [the extracts] were so much less bad than the general tone and tenor of the book that he was surprised so little could be substantiated’. C of C, June 1861, p1662. For the schedule of Report see C of C 18 June 1861, pp674-687.
69 C of C, 21 June, 1864, p1661. Tait considered ‘a great excitement’ had been ‘unwisely caused by the originators’ of the Declaration. The fact that 9,675 clergy in England and Wales and 1,232 in Ireland had signed the declaration did not impress Tait. He evidently did not have a high estimate of the intellectual or academic standing of the signatories. He noted that only eight of thirty English deans, and twelve Irish deans signed. Of twenty-four Oxford college heads, thirteen signed, and three out of sixteen at Cambridge. Of the Oxford professors, nine out of forty-one signed, and at Cambridge none. C of C, 21 June 1864, p1663.
70 C of C 21 June 1864, p1675.
books’.\footnote{\textit{C of C}, 21 June 1864, p1681. Longley had taken legal advice on the 16 June that Convocation was not constrained from declarations of condemnation or disapprobation. \textit{Ibid}, p1681.} Looking back to the earlier declaration made in a letter in February of 1861 by the bishops of the southern province together with his predecessor, Archbishop Sumner, Longley held that his fellow bishops had a duty to make corporate condemnation of \textit{Essays and Reviews}:

\begin{quote}
It is stated that the bishops have already expressed their opinion and their disapproval of the book. This is quite true; but they have done so in their individual capacity. They have not expressed it as a Synod. The Church in its corporate capacity has not expressed it ... I think it would be a dereliction of our duty if we did not proceed in the course which is now proposed.\footnote{\textit{C of C}, 21 June, 1864, p1681-2.}
\end{quote}

Longley considered theological censure differed from judicial condemnation.\footnote{On this point Longley cited Connop Thirlwall, the Bishop of St David: ‘The distinction between a judgment pronounced on a work in its purely theological aspect, and one delivered by a Judge before whom the author is prosecuted for heresy, may appear somewhat subtle and difficult to grasp. But unless it be admitted, and in the sense, that the same person might consistently, when exercising the functions of a Judge, acquit that which he had condemned as a divine, we should be driven to a conclusion revolting to common sense.’ \textit{C of C}, p1682. The Bishop of Llandaff, Alfred Ollivant, took Lushington’s point that there might be much in the \textit{Essays and Reviews} that ‘excited deep regret and is deserving of censure, and yet the law of the Church may not reach it’. \textit{C of C}, p1672. Llandaff noted, against the Bishop of London’s objections, that the Committee had not attempted to define ‘the precise limit between the human and Divine element in inspiration’, but they had referred to passages ‘which appear to us to be entirely inconsistent with the idea of Scripture being a book of authority at all’. \textit{C of C}, p 1672.} In the House of Bishops, the archbishop secured a majority vote in the Upper House condemning the \textit{Essays and Reviews}, following a resolution moved by Bishop Wilberforce.\footnote{‘That this Synod, having appointed Committees of the Upper and Lower Houses to examine and report upon the volume entitled \textit{Essays and Reviews}, and the said Committees having severally reported thereon, doth hereby synodically condemn the said volume, as containing teaching contrary to the doctrine received by the United Church of England and Ireland, in common with the whole Catholic Church of Christ.’ \textit{C of C}, p1683. The motion was seconded by the Bishop of Gloucester, the Evangelical Charles Baring.} The Bishops of London and Lincoln dissented.\footnote{\textit{C of C}, p1683. The Bishop of Lincoln was John Jackson (1811-1885).}

Given widespread adverse reaction to the \textit{Essays and Reviews}, the two archbishops’ pastorals, Longley’s leadership, and the decision arrived at in the House of Bishops, Denison might have expected that his committee’s report, which had languished for
three years since it had been tabled in June of 1861, might now be accepted by the Lower House and a resolution condemnatory of Essays and Reviews be easily secured. However, in the Lower House of Convocation the hesitancy that had been manifested in session of Convocation in June 1861 as to the expediency of synodical condemnation, showed itself again. Less than surprisingly, the liberal Dean of Westminster, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, who, on his appointment to the abbey in late 1863 had become a member of Convocation since Denison’s Committee had reported in 1861, dismissed the notion of synodical judgment as an ‘absurdity’ and ‘useless field of censure’.\(^76\) There were also others, who, though they disliked the Essays, were not in favour of synodical condemnation. Such was the case with Denison’s friend and oft-time supporter, Canon Wordsworth, who rehearsed his reservations expressed before in 1861 as to the constitutional capacity of Convocation to pass such a judgment.\(^77\) A further caveat was advanced by Canon Blakesley, who, although he believed the Essays to be ‘most mischievous’, had concerns that condemnation might possibly inflame the situation.\(^78\) Archdeacon Moore was opposed to immediate action, arguing that the House had not had the opportunity to consider the report of the Upper House ‘seriatim’.\(^79\) More exceptional was Canon Heaverside’s opposition on the grounds that synodical action was ‘distinctly at variance with all the notions of the times in which we live’.\(^80\)

Denison was frustrated by the vacillation of the Lower House. He was unable to comprehend why there should be any doubt, when a formal resolution that there were grounds for ‘Synodical judgement’ had been obtained three years previously in 1861, before Bishop Hamilton’s legal action removed the matter from Convocation to the courts and caused the House to suspend the issue. Exasperated, he declared he was unprepared to allow ‘for men to come down now in 1864, after

\(^{76}\) C of C, 24 June 1864, pp 1784 and 1792. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815-1881) had been, prior to his appointment to the Deanery of Westminster Abbey, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford (1856-63).

\(^{77}\) C of C, June 1864, p1804

\(^{78}\) C of C, June 1864, p1798.

\(^{79}\) C of C, June 1864, p1805.

\(^{80}\) C of C, June 1864, p1813.
what had been done in 1861, and say that our action was very precipitate’. The bishops, as has been noted, had published their declaration censuring Essays and Reviews three years earlier in February 1861. Denison argued that the Lower House had themselves passed a resolution in June 1861. ‘The only thing, therefore, that remains is for the two things to be drawn together.’ Denison wrote of his disappointment at the ‘widespread indifference’ he found in the Lower House. With a membership of one hundred and forty-seven, there were only forty present in the Lower House during its session in June 1864, when Denison carried his motion with a majority of twenty (39 to 19). In keeping with his propensity for definite measures, Denison secured this vote by telegraphing twenty members to come to his aid, of whom fifteen obliged.

While Denison, and a considerable number of contemporary clergy, High Churchmen and Evangelical alike, continued to maintain a world-view dependent on an understanding of the literal truth of scriptural revelation and the operation of providence, Essays and Reviews had shaken the grounds upon which they stood. Recourse to the courts had signally failed. Convocation, which Denison considered to be the providential and authoritative voice of the Church of England in matters of doctrine, had spoken with an uncertain voice. Yet despite the difficulties that Denison met with in overcoming the reluctance and apathy of his colleagues in Convocation in 1864, the reaction of many Churchmen to the Essays and Reviews and the position articulated by the two archbishops demonstrated how widespread was the kind of orthodoxy that shaped Denison’s view of the status of the Bible as an authoritative divine revelation.

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81 C of C, June 1864, p1826. Canon Blakesley interjected that the words in 1861 were ‘Synodical condemnation’ not ‘Synodical judgment,’ Denison reposted, ‘They mean the same thing’. Ibid, p1826.
82 C of C, June 1864, p1826.
83 Life, p294.
84 Ibid.
New Criticism as a subversion of an orthodox world-view

For Denison *Essays and Reviews* represented a profound epistemological shift that subverted the concept of an absolute authoritative divine revelation found in scripture, and undermined the providential world-view of man and society erected on the basis of that revelation. This was well understood by the committee of the Lower House of Convocation, under Denison’s chairmanship, formed to consider the book. Rather than ‘believing in the reality’ of the biblical account, the committee noted New Criticism required that the Bible was to be interpreted: ‘It is urged that many passages of the Holy Scriptures may be understood and explained upon the principles called “ideology,” by which is meant that the reader is at liberty to accept the idea of characters and facts described in the Holy Scriptures, instead of believing in the reality of the characters and facts’.  

The committee well understood that the questioning of the miracles, and in particular the greatest miracle of all - that of creation (as external evidence of God’s revelation to man) – undermined the status of divine revelation. It noted that ‘In many parts of the volume, statements and doctrines of the Holy Scripture are denied, called into question, or disparaged.’

Under attack was the notion of the Bible as a record and history of God’s dealings with man (the narrative of the descent of all mankind from Adam, the fall and original sin, the incarnation, redemption by Christ). The committee also understood that the New Criticism raised questions with respect to creedal statements and doctrine, deeming these essentially speculative. The suggestion that doctrine derived from the scriptures, as these were interpreted by the New Criticism, was necessarily speculative disturbed the committee. They

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85 *C of C*, 18 June 1861, p673.

86 *Ibid*, The Report cited a passage from the *Essays* in which it was argued that Christianity needed to be dissociated from the physical. ‘The more knowledge advances, the more it has been, and will be, acknowledged that Christianity, as a real religion, must be viewed apart from connection with physical things ... More recently the antiquity of the human race, and the development of the species, and the rejection of the idea ‘creation,’ have caused new advances in the same direction. In all these cases there is, indeed, a direct discrepancy between what had been taken for revealed truth and certain undeniable existing monuments to the contrary’. *C of C*, p674 citing p128f of the *Essays*.

87 *Ibid*.

88 *Ibid*, and p687
recognized the tendency to divorce ‘Christian holiness of life from doctrine’. Indeed, Wilson, the principal promoter of *Essays and Reviews*, was radical in his dismissal of doctrine. His view was that the National Church should be concerned with ethical development. A number of passages from Wilson’s essay were cited as demonstrating the separation of doctrine from the practice of the Christian life – a connection for which orthodox High Churchmen fought, and manifest, for example, in the terms of the charter of the National Society. To the minds of orthodox members of the Lower House committee, *Essays and Reviews* had eschewed an essential principle of the orthodox epistemology in its approach to the scriptures, namely a ‘spirit of humility and reverence with which human reason ought ever to approach the study of the Divine truth’. The committee saw the general tendency of *Essays and Reviews* was ‘to exalt the authority of human reason,’ and unsettling faith, leaving the readers to a ‘helpless scepticism’. The subversion of the orthodox understanding of the Bible could only, as Charles Ellicott wrote, offer a bleak scepticism - that there was in fact no God in history.

*Essays and Reviews* engendered distress in orthodox churchmen such as Denison because it subverted their providential worldview – a meta-view of providential divine government of the world and divine economy of salvation, as this was understood to have been revealed in the scriptures. The scepticism of the New Criticism contravened the concept of the workings of a providential God. Thus, Archdeacon Sinclair, in his 1861 charge, expressed dismay at the essayists’ suggestion that the notion of the action of providence in the world was to propose an unnatural intervention in nature. As Sinclair recognized, such a proposition fatally undermined the orthodox understanding of the working of providence,

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92 ‘Unless we are prepared plainly to adopt some of the bleakest theories of scepticism of these latter days; unless we are determined to find civilization and development and not God in history; unless we have resolved to see in the Gospel no fore-ordered dispensation, but only a system of morality, unannounced, unforeshadowed ... then only, can we consistently deny the likelihood and probability of God’s purposes imparted to the world’. Charles John Ellicott, ‘Scripture, and its interpretation’, in William Thomson (ed), *Aids to faith: A series of theological essays by several writers being a reply to “Essays and Reviews”*. 1862, p 452.
particularly in hearing prayer, rewarding virtue, or punishing vice.\textsuperscript{93} By extension, subversion of the concept of the providential moral government undermined orthodox doctrine of society and its government.\textsuperscript{94}

The operation of providence was a concept maintained by both George Denison and his brother, Edward. They had emerged from Oxford strongly imbued with the teachings of High Church orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{95} Edward Denison exhibited a robust traditional view of the role of providence, perceiving the world as a moral system and the scene of the operation of God’s providence. There was, he believed, a ‘system of Providence which was established in the beginning, and had been in operation since the world began’.\textsuperscript{96} He asserted providence operated ‘by laws inscrutable to us, but we doubt not are most excellent, and supremely good. He has extended even to his moral responsibility the social character of man; and has hidden in the abyss of eternity the ultimate outgoings of that most mysterious influence. Which mind as surely exercises upon mind, as matter is acted upon by matter’.\textsuperscript{97} George Denison also readily understood the adverse impact of the New Criticism upon the notion of an authoritative scriptural revelation of the operation of providence. ‘The Essayists and Reviewers have fallen upon a time of the world

\begin{footnotes}
\item[93] John Sinclair, \textit{Ibid}, p320. See, for example, the prayer for the Church militant in the communion service.
\item[94] See chapter two. Cf the concept of the workings of providence held by the High Churchman, as for example by Hugh James Rose, who considered providence was continually mediated in the world: ‘The whole economy of divine government, whether it be reviewed with reference to the character and fate of nations, or the fortunes and duties of individuals, is so regulated, and all the movements of that vast machine, or due subordination, to the fulfilment of that great scheme of mercy, which was decreed before the foundation of the world’. H J Rose, \textit{Christianity always progressive}. 1829, p22.
\item[95] Cf the classic argument of Anglican divines such as Sherlock and Stillingfleet: ‘A belief in God infers a Providence: that if we believe there is a God who made the world, we must believe that the same God who made the world, does govern it too.’ William Sherlock, \textit{A discourse concerning the Divine Providence}, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed, 1725, p3. Edward Stillingfleet argued the necessity of ‘a particular Divine Revelation’ and that fundamental to religion was the presumption that ‘there is a God who rules the world’. \textit{Origines sacrae}, or an account of Christian faith as to the truth and divine authority of the scriptures and the matters therein contained. 1663, p361.
\item[96] Edward Denison, \textit{The sin of causing offence}. 1835, p7.
\item[97] \textit{Ibid}, pp7-8. This, as noted in chapter two, was the position advanced by William Van Mildert (Charles Lloyd’s predecessor as Regius Professor at Oxford). Van Mildert considered that there was an ‘all-wise and powerful disposer of events’ to be an uncontroversibly truth and the principle on which society was ordered and governed. \textit{Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819}. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed 1822, Vol 2, p263.
\end{footnotes}
when men reason why they should believe rather than believe, and argue why they should obey rather than obey. It results that the question between the Essayists and Reviewers are regarded generally more of reason and argument than of authority.\textsuperscript{98} Thus for Denison, the essayists were questioning the absolute reality of the scriptures as God’s providential revelation of an ‘external law’.\textsuperscript{99} Denison maintained an orthodox view that the scriptures were ‘the gift of God, inspired by his spirit, and intended to teach us the knowledge of God and of ourselves, – to reveal to us the doctrine of a future state, and the method of our acceptance with God’.\textsuperscript{100} Indeed, this was the crux of the matter. Denison recognized that in the New Criticism, revelation, rather than being embodied in a unique document revealing the absolute reality of the external law of God, was reduced to a matter of private conviction - a concept Denison considered ‘remote from the teaching of the Church and the declarations of Scripture’.\textsuperscript{101}

**Conservative reaction to the New Criticism**

Denison’s education had led him to be aware of the battle in which orthodox Churchmen had engaged with eighteenth-century ‘Rationalists,’ and he saw the *Essays and Reviews* as an example of a recrudescence of this eighteenth-century rationalism. ‘It [*Essays and Reviews*] contains all the poison which is to be found in Tom Paine’s *Age of Reason*, while it has the additional disadvantage of being written by clergymen’.\textsuperscript{102} So he took up cudgels against the contributors to the *Essays and Reviews* as part of what he perceived as an on-going battle with ‘Rationalism’. Militant as always, he urged orthodox Churchmen to mount attacks

\textsuperscript{98} G A Denison, Preface to *Faith and Peace: being answers to some of the ‘Essays and Reviews.’* p vi.

\textsuperscript{99} *Ibid*, p vi. Archbishop Thomson, defending an orthodox construction of the Bible, wrote that the scripture was not only the basis of faith, but also ‘a guide to practical duties’. *A pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the Province of York*. 1864, p21.

\textsuperscript{100} Cf ‘Preface to the biblical concordance of parallel and illustrative passages’ in *The English version of the polyglot Bible*. 1817 ed, p[vi f].

\textsuperscript{101} G A Denison, Preface to *Faith and Peace: being answers to some of the ‘Essays and Reviews’*, p vi-vii.

\textsuperscript{102} *C of C*, 21 June 1861, p809.
on every possible front: proceedings in court; sermons and warnings by the bishops and the clergy in their parishes; together with treatises argued by both laity and clergy. Denison promoted a series of essays as pamphlets, which were in due course published in book form in 1862 as *Faith and Peace*, to which he supplied the preface. However, there was little need for encouragement from Denison, as the hostile reaction from churchmen, High and Low, was so very widespread, many concurring with Denison’s opinion that the *Essays and Reviews* represented a Rationalist attack on orthodoxy. Denison was thus very far from being exceptional in his views. For example, Christopher Wordsworth junior saw, in the position advanced by some of the essayists, echoes of seventeenth-century English Rationalists and eighteenth-century German Rationalism. Denison’s own bishop, Lord Auckland, attacked the essayists on the same grounds in his charge of May 1861, asserting that the views of the majority of the writers were ‘identical with those held by English Deists, refuted again and

103 Preface to *Faith and Peace*, p vi.

Denison had hoped that both Pusey and Keble would contribute to his scheme. As Ieuan Ellis has commented, had they done so, *Faith and Peace* would have been a significant set of essays. Ieuan Ellis, *Seven against Christ: A study of ‘Essays and Reviews’*. 1980, p123, n 60.

105 See Josef Althoz, *Anatomy of a controversy* - chapters 5 and 6 for responses of this nature to *Essays and Reviews*.

Wilfred Ward, writing of the Oxford Movement (William Ward and the Oxford Movement. 1889, p374), suggested that the Movement was in part a reaction to the emergence of modern biblical criticism. While doubtless the emergence of the so-called ‘New Criticism’ in England during the nineteenth century excited a profound conservative reaction amongst those who associated with the Movement, the reaction to modern biblical criticism was widespread, and far from being limited to the Oxford Movement.

106 Wordsworth recalled German rationalists at the close of the eighteenth century – Paulus, Wegscheider, Bretschneider, Gabler, *et al* were no longer read. They had met the same fate, Wordsworth commented, as that which Burke had observed had overtaken English free-thinkers (Burke, *Works*, Vol 5, p171). A reply to Professor Jowett’s essay on the interpretation of scripture. 1861, p428. Wordsworth estimate of Jowett’s contribution to *Essays and Reviews*, was not complimentary declaring there was not much in his essay which had not been anticipated by J S Semler in 1774. Disparaging outward forms and confessions of faith, Semler had published his plan for the liberal interpretation of Christian doctrine *Institutio ad doctrinum Christianam liberaliter discendam*, 1774. *Ibid*, p491.
again’. Archdeacon Hervey, who was to become Denison’s bishop at Bath and Wells a few years later in 1869, condemned the essayists on like grounds. ‘In short the impression left upon my own mind, when rising fresh from the study of this volume, was that no portion of it rose above Socinianism, that much was simple Deism, that some directly tended to Atheism.’ Archdeacon Sinclair likened the position of the essayists to that which had arisen with the eighteenth-century problems of Arian subscription, citing Waterland’s view that such men upset moral honesty, ‘pretending one thing and meaning another; professing agreement with the Church, and yet disagreeing with it’. Indeed, much distress was occasioned by the mere fact that clergymen holding positions in the Church should seemingly have subverted the doctrines of the Church they purported to serve. Denison’s own diocesan, Bishop Auckland, could not understand ‘how sincere and upright gentlemen who have assented to everything prescribed in the Anglican Church, as being not merely fitting, or reasonable, but purely scriptural, can have put forth such a publication so calculated to undermine belief in the essential doctrines of our holy religion’.

Reason and science

On the foundation of his belief in providentialism, Denison adhered to a classic orthodox understanding of the status and role of human reason – a significant

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107 Auckland, Robert John Eden, The charge of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, at his third visitation, in May, 1861. 1861, p13f.
108 Ibid, p17f. Hervey’s perplexity was widely shared. Edward Bickersteth thought Essays and Reviews owed its publicity ‘not so much to its own merits, as to the fact that the greater proportion was written by Clergymen of our own Church, holding in some instances very important positions’. A Charge … 1861, p28. Even Richard Whately, while defending the liberty of private judgment, considered there was a case against those who held office in the Church while attacking the soundness of the scriptural warrants of its doctrines. Danger from within. A charge … 1861, p13.
110 Auckland, Robert John Eden, The charge of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, at his third visitation, in May, 1861. 1861, p12f.
element of orthodox epistemology considered earlier in this study.\footnote{111} Denison adhered, throughout his long life, to a thoroughly old-fashioned orthodox view as to the limits of the power of man’s reason and the supremacy of revelation over reason. Denison had, by 1850, already identified cracks appearing in this dogma, admitting to being disturbed by the growing tendency he identified among churchmen as ‘commonly accepting the truths of revelation as a matter of private conviction rather than of external law’.\footnote{112} Denison himself, however, could not conceive it possible to question revelation in scripture. This premise was to the fore in his preface to \textit{Faith and Peace}. ‘It is not possible that what God has made part of his revelation should be other than the Truth.’\footnote{113} Denison’s argument turned on his understanding of the use of reason: that reason, when approaching the revelation of God, should limit the exercise of its own powers.\footnote{114} His understanding of the nature of revelation rested on the kind of arguments as to the proper use of reason advanced by orthodox Anglican apologists such as William Jones and William Van Mildert considered earlier in this study, who maintained the primacy of revelatory knowledge to which reason submitted in deference.\footnote{115} Denison’s preface to \textit{Faith and Peace} specifically drew attention to the contrast between the contributors to \textit{Essays and Reviews} and those contributing to \textit{Faith and Peace} in their treatment of reason, or, as Denison more robustly expressed himself, the use and abuse of reason. Denison outlined the orthodox understanding of the use of reason in respect to revelation:

The use of reason in respect of things spiritual is to show how the evidence of works from God’s hands, alike in the moral and physical world, coheres and consists with the account of His dealings with man as revealed in the Bible. That reason may and must be used to confirm and establish man’s belief in that which is prior to all use of reason, and independently of it, is necessarily

\footnotesize\footnote{111} See chapter 2.\footnote{112} G A Denison, Preface, \textit{Faith and Peace}, p vii.\footnote{113} \textit{Ibid}, p viii.\footnote{114} \textit{Ibid}, p viii.\footnote{115} Cf examples of this orthodox argument rehearsed in chapter two.\footnote{116} See, for example, William Van Mildert, \textit{Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819}. 2nd ed; 1822. Vol 2, p267.
true; but it may not, and cannot properly, be used to impair that belief.\footnote{Ibid, p vii.}

Among the extracts identified as objectionable passages from *Essays and Reviews* highlighted by the committee of the Lower House, over which Denison presided, was the dismissal of the kind of orthodoxy maintained by those such as Denison. Their views were characterised as ‘a dull and unpainstaking acquiescence, satisfied with accepting in an unquestioning spirit, and as if they were literally facts, all particulars of a wonderful history, because in some sense it is from God’.\footnote{C of C, 18 June 1861, p683.} There was thus a marked divergence between the epistemology of the essayists and the epistemology of Denison and those who, such as he, looked on the scriptures through a very particular notion of the status and use of reason.

Denison’s providentialism, and his epistemological assumptions, put him at odds with the use made of science in the new critical approach to the Bible. Denison interestingly seems to make no reference to the publication of Darwin’s *On the origin of species* (1859). However, his orthodox notion of the status and role of reason had consequences for his understanding of the status of science. Speaking at a Church Congress in 1867 Denison made a fast distinction between the absolute nature of revelation, and tentativeness of scientific inductive knowledge:

There has been put forward this morning a claim on the part of science to have an equal right with God’s Bible to lay the foundations of truth. Now I deny it. I say that the Bible does not investigate truth, and those who accept the Bible do not investigate truth – they receive it. I say that science and scientific men do investigate and look for truth, and they are permitted by God to do so, but they do fallibly. On the other hand, I say that the Bible delivers the truth; and theologians, if they are theologians at all, receive it all infallibly.\footnote{Church Congress at Wolverhampton, 1 – 4 October 1867, p205f.}
He held it to be a false assumption that scientific discoveries would erode the truth divinely revealed in the scriptures.\textsuperscript{119} Denison did not appear to recognize the potential of advances in knowledge to affect the notion of absolute and authoritative revelation and, therefore, had implications for the re-interpretation of the Bible.

Denison was thus far from exceptional maintaining such a view of the limitations of science and defending the received orthodox views of the special status of the Bible as the inspired word of God.\textsuperscript{120} Given the orthodox epistemology, and orthodox understanding of the status of the Bible as especially an authoritative divine revelation, which had been the esse of their education, it was not obvious to many of Denison’s contemporaries that as new light was shed on the physical, social and religious background of the Bible, this knowledge, \textit{ipso facto}, subverted the meta-narrative of the Bible. Indeed, the tradition of English biblical commentaries through the eighteenth into the nineteenth century was manifestly conservative. The British Library lithographic catalogue shows the scholarship of a small numbers of divines, often from the seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries, being replicated and re-compiled in successive editions, some of this work being reproduced frequently in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{121} Of the more significant works, Brian Walton’s \textit{Biblia sacra polyglota} (first published in 1657 – with its critical apparatus, and variant readings in his introduction) was frequently republished in the first half of the nineteenth century in reduced form as \textit{The English version of the

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid}, p6. As Denison remarked a few years later ‘The mind of man is a wonderful machine for all purposes to which it is the will of God that it should be applied ... beyond that it cannot go’. \textit{The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April 27, 1875}. p7.

\textsuperscript{120} See, for example, Sinclair’s view that the starting point when treating with revelation was establishing that the Bible was the word of God, ‘and then like a sensible man, proceeded to the question, What saith the Scripture? This was in perfect accordance with the principles of true philosophy’. Sinclair considered the essayists proceeded differently. ‘First, he forms a theory as to what the Book of Revelation ought to teach; and then resolves by means of his ‘verifying faculty’, as he calls it, to find his self-originated system in the Word of God’. \textit{Ibid}, p333.

\textsuperscript{121} Significant amongst the Anglican divines were Samuel Clarke 1685-1729, William Burkitt (1650 - 1703), Thomas Wilson (1663-1755). Nonconformists represented an important element in English biblical scholarship, for example John Canne (obit 1667 an independent minister); Matthew Poole (1624-1679, Rector of St Michael le Querne during the interregnum, resigning at the restoration); Jean Frederic Ostervald (1663-1747, a Swiss Protestant pastor).
Denison’s understanding of the unity of the biblical revelation reflected a classic orthodox stream of teaching. As an example, it is to be noted that purpose of the English version of the *Polyglot Bible* was, as the preface declared, to teach precisely that: to assist the reader to understand the harmony of the Old and New Testament through the indispensable operations of the Holy Ghost. ‘As the Scriptures harmonize in their primary and general objects, so they do with regard to the particular subjects comprehended in their plan.’ In the same vein, the champion of Anglican orthodoxy of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, Bishop Samuel Horsley, advocated comparing parallel texts of the Old and New Testaments without other commentary as showing the harmony and interrelation of the scriptures.

Denison’s position was shared by those who would have had better acquaintance of the development of knowledge in the nineteenth century. In the wake of Darwin and the *Essays and Reviews*, over seven hundred scientists, including eighty-six fellows of the Royal Society, signed a declaration affirming their belief in the Bible

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122 See editions 1816; another 1817, 1826, 1828, 1831, 1833, 1834, [1840?], 1841, 1842, [1844], [1845?], 1846, [1847], 1849, 1851, 1857, [1860?]. These editions drew from the pool of scholarship of a number of seventeenth and eighteenth century divines, Anglican, Scottish and independent. The title page of 17th edition cites Thomas Chevalier (French Protestant and Anglican, 1523-1572, Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge: his work was included in Brian Walton original 1657 edition); John Canne (an Independent obit 1667); Rev John Brown (Scottish divine, 1722-1787), Rev Thomas Scott (Anglican, 1747-1821).

123 ‘Preface’ to *The English version of the Polyglott Bible*. 1817, [piv]. ‘Historical accounts are verified by other coincident ones, or by accounts of the persons or places to which they refer. The prophecies of one Prophet, concerning events which were to take place, relating either to kingdoms families, individuals, or the world at large, are consistent with those pronounced by other prophets. The accounts of the Jewish policy under its various vicissitudes, are confirmed by the writings of the Prophets who lived during or after those vicissitudes; while the former tend reciprocally to establish the authenticity of the latter. The histories of the Four Evangelists have a regular connection and parallelism, especially those of Matthew Mark and Luke. The recital of the transactions of the Apostles, after the ascension of our Lord, strongly authenticates the Apostolic Epistles; and Archdeacon Paley has well shown the confirmation which the Epistles of St Paul derive from the circumstances recorded by Luke.’ *Ibid*, [pp ivf].

The referencing apparatus in the *Polyglot Bible* was intended to demonstrate the relationship and interconnectedness of one part of scripture to another as manifesting the revelation of the divine purpose. ‘It has appeared an object of the first magnitude, that the reader of the Holy Scriptures should be assisted by reference from text to text, to have constantly in view the connection of all the divine attributes, and the holy uniformity of God in his government, both of the Church, and of the world.’ Preface to the *English version of the Polyglot Bible*, 1827, p [iii].

as the Word of God, and defended the Paleyan view as to the conformity of the scriptures and the physical world. ‘We conceive that it is impossible for the Word of God, as written in the book of nature, and God’s Word written in Holy Scripture, to contradict one another, however, much they appear to differ.’ Such a reaction was perhaps unsurprising given that Paley’s *Evidences* was studied by those educated at Oxford and Cambridge in the period before 1860, and indeed this work continued to be used into the early twentieth century. That Paley was still current on the eve of the publication of *Essays and Reviews* is shown by Archbishop Richard Whately’s re-publication of his annotations of the *Evidences* in 1859, and again in 1861, in his response to *Essays and Reviews*.

### Textual criticism

It was not only the use of science that conflicted with Denison’s understanding of the right use of reason. There was also the matter of the use of textual criticism. As a classical scholar, albeit of an older generation, he was aware of problems that arose with classical texts, and he allowed that textual criticism might be applied to scriptural texts in the same manner as ‘would be applied to any Greek or Latin author by a competent scholar’. However, his openness to such criticism was again qualified by his pre-conception of the nature and exceptional status of the scriptures. Denison believed the scriptures to be the record of direct divine inspiration. He did not accept the scriptures stood on the same ground as other literature:

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126 An 1850 edition of the Paley’s *Evidences*, with sample examination questions set on Paley at Cambridge, affords an insight to bible teaching at that university in the decade preceding the publication of *Essays and Reviews*. See, for example, ‘A selection of questions on the Evidences and Horae Paulinae, from the Senate-House and College examination papers,’ published at the back of the 1850 edition of Paley’s *A view of the Evidences of Christianity and Horae Paulinae*, edited by Robert Potts.
Before we claim for the Bible like treatment as for other books, we admit its Inspiration, and recognize it as containing a direct divine Revelation, the purport of which can only be ascertained by the application of interpretation, derived from the inspired record itself. When this is granted, then we apply to the text of this volume precisely the same canons of criticism as to any other ancient documents.\textsuperscript{129}

Reviewing Colenso’s volume on the Pentateuch in 1863, Denison’s notion of inspiration is suggested by his belief that the text of the Bible came from ‘from the hands of inspired penmen’.\textsuperscript{130} Further, while conceding the possibility of error in transmission of the manuscript text, he denied this implied the essential integrity of the text had been corrupted. The grounds for this position he advanced in the same article, in which he explained his belief that text of the Bible was protected by the operation of a continuing divine providence. This was effected, he argued, by the Jewish reverence for the letter of the Law – this being a manifestation of the operation of a special providence safeguarding the transmission of scriptural text.\textsuperscript{131} His belief in this regard cohered with a tradition represented in the preface to the \textit{English version of the Polyglot Bible} that divine providence had protected the scriptures.\textsuperscript{132}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid}. Likewise, Christopher Wordsworth Jnr argued the exceptional status of the Bible. It could not be understood ‘except by the light of the Holy Ghost who wrote the Bible: and if we do not read the Bible in a humble and teachable spirit ... we provoke the Holy Ghost to withdraw his light from us. Vain it is ... to apply Learning to the study of Scripture, unless we have those \textit{moral dispositions, and spiritual graces} without which our eyes are veiled’. \textit{The interpretation of the Bible: Five lectures delivered in Westminster Abbey}. 1861, p50.

\item In a like vein Denison’s bishop, Lord Auckland, wrote: ‘We cannot but regret that such men should have given themselves to such a work, but eminent as they may be in the Universities we do not fear that Gospel Truths will succumb to their assaults. Their presumptuous teaching should, in the words of a Reviewer, ‘teach us that we are surrounded by mysteries of God’s presence and working sufficiently to satisfy humble faith of their undoubted reality, but which are impenetrable barriers against the proud curiosity, which evermore leads men to seek to be as gods knowing good and evil’. Auckland, Robert John Eden, \textit{The charge of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, at his third visitation, in May, 1861}. p14.

\item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{C&SR}, Vol 2, p73.

\item \textsuperscript{131} Jewish reverence which ‘has led them to number, not only the words and letters of their Scriptures, but the frequency of the recurrence of every word and of every letter, has doubtless secured their transmission in a far purer state that any other book whatever. Nor can it be wrong to see – not only a miracle indeed, but a special Providence in this extreme and minute jealousy for every tittle of the Law’. \textit{C&SR}, p73.

\item \textsuperscript{132} ‘Preface to the biblical concordance of parallel and illustrative passages’, in \textit{The English version of the Polyglot Bible}. 1817 ed, p[vi].
\end{itemize}
Denison’s understanding of the status of the scriptures was thus not open to the necessity to apply the techniques of the ‘New Criticism’. He could not reconcile his view of the Bible as a providential divine revelation with the implications that lay behind the critics’ suggestion that the text was to be treated as any other literature. And also he found it difficult to accept that the scriptural texts might not only be open to error in the process of transmission, but might even be other than the literal truth, or an accurate historical account of God’s dealing with man.\textsuperscript{133} This was a view shared by John Burgon who held the inspiration of the Bible was entire, ‘every jot and tittle of it’.\textsuperscript{134} For Burgon, as for Denison and many of their contemporaries, the Bible was, as Burgon wrote: ‘the very utterance of the Eternal – as much God’s Word, as if high Heaven were open, and we heard God speaking to us with human voice’\textsuperscript{135}

The controversy over \textit{Essays and Reviews} left Denison unshaken in his view of the special status of the scriptural revelation. Writing in 1875, fifteen years after \textit{Essays and Reviews} was first published, Denison manifested his unaltered view of the superior status of revelation, both with regard to science and the increased knowledge with regard to the background of the Bible. He maintained his orthodox stance, declaring that science was both inferior to religious knowledge, and limited in its scope. Denison’s orthodox epistemology averred that there were, \textit{a priori}, those things that went beyond God’s revelation and thus for mankind remained a mystery.\textsuperscript{136} Five years later, at his visitation of his archdeaconry in 1880, Denison suggested that the problems of \textit{Essays and Reviews} and Bishop Colenso had largely

\textsuperscript{133} G A Denison, \textit{Supplement}, p82.
\textsuperscript{134} ‘not some parts more, some parts less, but all equally, and to overflowing; that we hold it to be, not generally inspired, but particularly; that we see not how with logical consistency we can avoid believing the words as well as the sentences of it; the syllables as well as the words; the letters as well as the syllables; every “jot” and every “tittle” of it (to use our Lord’s expression,) to be divinely inspired.’ \textit{Inspiration and interpretation: seven sermons preached before the University of Oxford: with preliminary remarks: being an answer to a volume entitled ‘Essays and Reviews’.} 1861, p76.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid, p94.
\textsuperscript{136} ‘Science brought face to face with mysteries of creation which it cannot penetrate … folds its hands and bows its head before the eternal gates.’ G A Denison, \textit{The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April 27, 1875}. p8.
receded, although he believed there were still traces of ‘deadly work, deceiving and tempting souls’.\textsuperscript{137}

*Lux Mundi*

Denison deceived himself. While Denison and those who like him – perhaps as Altholz has suggested a majority of churchmen – maintained an orthodox view of the scriptures, *Essays and Reviews* reflected the march of ideas as nineteenth-century critical techniques were used increasingly to examine biblical texts. The genie could not be put back in the bottle, and Denison’s belief that this could halted by synodical condemnation was a misreading of the dynamics of a changing world. In his rural idyll at East Brent, Denison could continue to maintain his old-fashioned ideology; but his was a world-view, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, that was increasingly in tension with a changing intellectual world. This disjunction became manifest when a set of essays, entitled *Lux Mundi*, was published in 1889 by a group of Anglo-Catholic theologians. The purpose of *Lux Mundi*, as the editor, Charles Gore, wrote in his preface to the first edition, was an ‘attempt to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems’.\textsuperscript{138} The volume came as a considerable shock to Denison in his eighty-fourth year, for the issues with which Gore and his co-writers proposed to treat were not those he understood. Denison was distressed by the content of *Lux Mundi*; the more so because it came from the pens of High Churchmen – ‘coming from within’, as he told members of the English Church Union.\textsuperscript{139}

Denison’s distress that High Churchmen should question the status of the scriptures was the more acute because the author of this preface was Principal of Pusey

\textsuperscript{137} G A Denison, *Charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation, April, 1880*, p10.

\textsuperscript{138} *Lux Mundi*, Preface p[vii], taken 12\textsuperscript{th} ed, 1891.

House.\footnote{Charles Gore (1853-1932) moved from his post as Vice-Principal of Cuddesdon to become foundation Principal of Pusey House in 1884. Tensions arose over \textit{Lux Mundi} and his 1891 Bampton Lectures. Denison wrote, ‘For myself I do not understand whether Mr Gore, President of the Pusey House, allowed himself to write his Preface to ‘Lux Mundi’; to edit and publish the book, Nov, 1889, with, or without the formal concurrence of the Trustees. If without, I do not understand upon what rule of conduct he proceeded: if with, upon what rule of conduct the Trustees proceeded. I submit the contributors to the Pusey House have the right to be told one or other of these two things’. \textit{Supplement}, p83. Gore relinquished his position at Pusey House to become Rector of Radley in 1893.}

The house was a foundation Denison had helped to establish within the University of Oxford as a launching-point for the Church’s mission in the university, and a counter to the reforms that he considered had secularized the university.\footnote{G A Denison to Archbishop Tait 28 December 1882. \textit{Tait Papers and Letters}, Vol 8 ff59-64.}

In supporting the foundation of Pusey House, Denison had looked for some way ‘supplied in the Providence of GOD for confronting by \underline{united public effort of clergy and people} [Denison’s emphasis] the power of evil that is upon us’.\footnote{Ibid.} When Pusey died, Denison had gone to Oxford to see Pusey’s body, and the idea had come to him of making Oxford itself the starting point for such a mission.\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Speech of the Archdeacon of Taunton at Freemason’s Tavern, December 12, 1882}, [1883], p8 and p14.} Denison became convinced that God’s providence had made Pusey’s death a spur to an endeavour to ‘carry our war into the camp of the enemy’ – that is Oxford and its curriculum reformed in the 1850s, moving the university on from the orthodox world that had obtained at Oxford when Denison was resident.\footnote{See preface to \textit{Lux Mundi}, p[vii].}

Denison thus did not comprehend the intellectual world the younger generation of Anglo-Catholics felt they needed to confront.\footnote{Denison’s reference was to the Preface in the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 10\textsuperscript{th} editions of \textit{Lux Mundi}. See \textit{The speech of Archdeacon Denison in the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, Session 3 February, 1891}. p12.} He believed the direction of \textit{Lux Mundi} was to adduce ‘a revised faith’.\footnote{} Gore’s \textit{Bampton Lectures}, published shortly after \textit{Lux Mundi} in 1891, confirmed Denison in his view that Gore had
departed from orthodox doctrine. He saw in Gore’s theology the inference that, as a consequence of man’s speculative reason, Christianity was a metaphysical question.¹⁴⁷ This was anathema to Denison, who firmly believed the ‘Truth’ afforded by revelation was absolute: that is, not only was ‘Truth’ a matter of supernaturally imparted revelation and not speculation, but it was the ‘Truth’ until the end of time. He remained firmly wedded in the 1890s to the position he had enunciated in Convocation with regard to Essays and Reviews in 1864:

> We have been told today that there are new phases of thought. I thought there was no such thing in matters of Faith. I thought the doctrines of Christ’s Faith were stereotyped things for all ages, that no science could alter; that no amount of intellect was to have any effect in marring any of them, or leading a man to say that this or that teaching is less credible than when I first heard it.¹⁴⁸

For Denison, Gore’s theological endeavours and those of his fellow writers, were acts of disobedience, and a failure to trust in the promises of God.¹⁴⁹ Though an old man in his mid-eighties, once again Denison went in to bat in defence of the ‘doctrine and discipline of the Church of England’. He found the energy to enter upon on a full-scale campaign in the English Church Union and in Convocation; writing to Gore and the Archbishop of Canterbury; and keeping up the attack through his archdeacon’s charges and a series of six sermons preached at Wells Cathedral.¹⁵⁰ The attack on Gore and Lux Mundi, was Denison’s final burst on the public stage. It demonstrated that his understanding of the scriptures, the Church

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¹⁴⁸ C of C, June 1864, p1827.
¹⁵⁰ G A Denison, A paper read to a meeting of the English Church Union, February 27, 1890. A letter to the Rev C Gore [A paper criticising Charles Gore’s preface to ‘Lux Mundi’. With a covering letter. 1890.] The political heresy and the intellectual heresy of the century XIX in England ... the charge of he Archdeacon of Taunton. 1890. A speech of Archdeacon Denison in the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury Session 3 February, 1891 upon ‘Lux Mundi’ – republished from the Guardian of 4 February], 1891. A third sermon on ‘Lux Mundi’, and the Bampton Lectures for 1891, preached in the Cathedral Church of St Andrew, Wells, November 8, 1891. 1891. The other sermons in the series were published with his Supplement to notes of my life, (1879, and Mr Gladstone, 1886, 1893 as Appendix V. A letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, June 1891. Declaration on the truth of Holy Scripture, December 16, 1891. p144.
and society were shaped by an abiding orthodox world-view – an outlook he confirmed in his *Supplement* (1893) musing on the state of society and the Church, and the changes, which he deplored.

Denison’s indictment of Gore, as the editor of *Lux Mundi*, saw a rehearsal of the same orthodox grounds of argument he had brought to bear against the *Essays and Reviews*. ‘The highest and best exercise of the special gift of the reasoning power’, he declared in Convocation, ‘is the setting bounds to its own action in respect to the things of God’.

He charged Gore and his fellow writers with engaging with rationalism to question the integrity of the holy scriptures - ‘Judging of the divine authority of portions of Holy Scripture’. This he contended was ‘naked Rationalism’.

Denison’s understanding of the scriptures and revealed faith had not changed. His case against Gore rested upon the old-fashioned orthodox *a priori* argument regarding the unique status of the scriptures as a divine revelation, and the limited and qualified role of human reason. Thus he charged Gore: ‘In his Essay the Editor [Gore] appears to be so enamoured of the Right of Reason, as to make all Religion to originate, and depend upon its exercise; and to define the nature of the exercise in every case without stopping to consider that, supposing for a moment his system to be right in itself, it is wholly of impossible application’.

In his *Supplement* of 1893 the orthodox Denison was still manifestly offended by the ‘conceit of “Reasoning Power” as *a priori* judge’. He used the word ‘conceit’ because, given his firm belief in the reality of the meta-narrative of the Bible, such conceit manifested a glorying of the power of man’s reason, and this seemed to him to be a case of falling prey yet again to man’s innate weakness – his wish to be God, the very cause of original sin. The basis underlying the claims of the New Criticism were for him as old as the Genesis account of the Fall. It was an argument he used two years before in Convocation in an attack on *Lux Mundi*:

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152 ‘*Lux Mundi: Sermon I*,’ printed in *Supplement*, p192.
154 *Supplement*, p82.
The Pride of Life is the worship of the reasoning power - our first mother bowed down before it. It was the temptation by which she fell. The Tempter used it to suggest the other two, but he tempted her through her reasoning power – ‘Yea, hath God said?’ He tempted her to doubt the Word of God. It opened the door.

The other temptations followed in its train and the world fell. It is out of this order of Revelation that the temptation through the reasoning power is called especially the temptation ‘of the Devil’ - that which gave the signal to the other two temptations to begin and to do their work. This is the worship of reason.155

Denison’s understanding of the status of the scriptures, and his sense that it was necessary to fight continually to maintain orthodoxy not only reflected the old-fashioned orthodoxy he learnt at Oxford, but was rooted in late seventeenth-century orthodox arguments contra Socinians – namely that man would have himself be as God – the basis of original sin. For example, the late seventeenth-century divine, Robert South (1634-1716), represented this stand stressing the uniqueness of scripture as distinct from all other human learning. Gerard Reedy, in his commentary on South’s teaching, notes the connection between the notion of the limitation of human reason, understood in the context of Genesis, and the meta-narrative of sin and redemption: ‘South takes a pessimistic view of the human mind and heart, which will, on their own, err. “The mind is naturally licentious, and there is nothing which it is more adverse from than duty: nothing which it abhors more than restraint”.’156 South’s view of man’s thirst for knowledge was coloured by Genesis and Adam’s fall: ‘all knowledge is a kind of conquest over the thing we know’.157 This same theme, as Reedy has noted, recurs with Edward Stillingfleet, who preached against the Socinian interpretation of scripture as being a manifestation of human pride.158

156 Gerard Reedy, Robert South (1634-1716). An introduction to his life and sermons. 1992, p 145. The page number in parenthesis refers to South’s collection of sermons, Twelve sermons preached upon several occasions, 2nd Vol, 1694.
157 Ibid, p145.
Denison’s understanding of the status of the Bible was closely linked to his understanding of the Christian faith. This faith was, he declared in a charge of 1880, a confession of the ‘Creative,’ and ‘Illuminable power of God’.\footnote{G A Denison, *The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation, April, 1880*. p5.} It followed for Denison that such a confession admitted only to a ‘simple and literal Record of the Bible’.\footnote{Ibid, p5.} As he declared in Convocation in 1891, speaking on *Lux Mundi*, Man was to set bounds on the gift of reason with regard to the things of God.\footnote{G A Denison, *The speech of Archdeacon Denison in the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury Session 3 February*. Preface, p[3].} He reiterated this argument in a sermon attacking *Lux Mundi* at Wells, where he condemned *Lux Mundi* for ‘the intrusion of the reasoning power of the finite into the mystery of the infinite’.\footnote{G A Denison, ‘Lux Mundi: Sermon I’, reprinted in *Supplement*, p187.} ‘Rationalism’ he contended was ‘irreconcilable with faith’.\footnote{Ibid, p188.}

Denison recounted that in his youth he was ‘brought up in the habit of implicit reverence for the integrity of the Holy Scripture, in humble and unquestioning acceptance of creeds and catechism’.\footnote{G A Denison, *Life*, p20.} It was a mindset he retained through his career as a country parson, the earlier formative influences being further enhanced by his parochial experience set in the midst of a raw, uneducated agricultural population. The theatre of his professional life left him with little empathy for the complexities of academic argument advanced by the New Criticism.\footnote{Denison’s concept of faith, as against the use of reason, qualified his acceptance of academic learning in connection with the scriptural revelation: ‘Learning is not given to enable men to use larger licence in dealing with heavenly things than are other men’. *Lux Mundi: Sermon III*, reprinted in *Supplement*, p226.} He was deeply disturbed by any suggestion that would disturb the faith of his people.\footnote{Thirty years before he had asked in Convocation in connection with the arguments advanced in *Essays and Reviews*: ‘What,’ he asked, ‘is to become of the religion of the poor?’ *C of C*, 21 June 1861, p810.} Denison was not in any way being condescending, for his own faith demanded simplicity, as he understood the Gospel: ‘Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’.\footnote{‘Lux Mundi: Sermon V’ in *Supplement*, p249.} This was a faith that contrasted with ‘the children of Adam, trusting to their own wisdom,
sever themselves from the one Basis, the Word of God’.\textsuperscript{168} For Denison, faith accepted, without question or debate, the scriptures as the one source of all authority.\textsuperscript{169} It was on the basis of this authority that he identified his own primary task as a parish priest as being directed to teaching the faith revealed in the scriptures. ‘The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children, that we may do all the words of the Law. This is what I came to deliver to my portion of the English people in this parish’.\textsuperscript{170}

Faith for Denison was a matter of acceptance, and not, as he felt was the implication of the New Criticism, turning matters the other way round, so that ‘in order to believe you must first understand’.\textsuperscript{171} Had not our Lord said, ‘If thou canst believe: all things are possible to him who believeth’.\textsuperscript{172} Denison’s sense that that there should be a simplicity of faith was not merely a nod to his rural parishioners of his rustic Somerset parish, for Denison’s position was one that had been also advanced by his friend, Canon Christopher Wordsworth junior, whose professional sphere was located within the metropolitan sophistication of Westminster Abbey.\textsuperscript{173} The notion of ‘child-like simplicity of faith’ rested on orthodox epistemology and an orthodox concept of reason. Thus Wordsworth contended: ‘He who would understand the Bible must love the Bible. We must come to it with the

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\textsuperscript{168} ‘Lux Mundi: Sermon IV’ in Supplement, p245.  \\
\textsuperscript{169} The scriptural meaning of the words ‘little children’ is every way clear and complete, and beyond all question or dispute, as we should by faith look to find it in the Word of God; the Book of God – the one guide, according to our Lord’s promise by the Spirit into all truth, by the voice and the hand of the Church.’ Lux Mundi: Sermon V, in Supplement, p249. Cf Denison’s argument that the Christian should eschew speculation: ‘That for the Christian man, in respect of the Authority of “Holy Scripture”, there is a weakness which is stronger than the deepest enquiry, the keenest reasoning power, the most attractive and winning eloquence; and that is child-like simplicity of Faith.’ Lux Mundi: A paper read to a meeting of the English Church Union, February, 1890, reprinted in Supplement, p136.  \\
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, p174.  \\
\textsuperscript{171} Supplement, p82. With regard to the Bible and the promise of salvation, he believed ‘here we can only stand and wait in the simplicity of faith; as little children waiting till the father shows his face’. Supplement, p78. See Denison’s argument against undermining the faith of ordinary Christians, The speech of Archdeacon Denison in the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, Session 3 February, 1891. p19.  \\
\textsuperscript{172} Supplement, p82.  \\
\textsuperscript{173} Christopher Wordsworth Jnr, The interpretation of the Bible: Five lectures delivered in Westminster Abbey. 1861, p51f.
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meek and docile spirit of little children. God revealeth his secrets unto babes – that is, to those who are like children in simplicity’. 174

Denison did acknowledge science as a God-given gift, but his understanding was highly qualified by his epistemological imperative that science should to be seen through the lens of scripture:

In the Word of God the term ‘science’ is found only once, 1 Timothy vi. 20-21, ‘O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith’. So again ‘philosophy’ (Col ii, 8, cf Acts xvi.18): ‘Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ’. 175

In short, with regard to revelation and the issue of faith in respect of a critical approach to the scriptures, Denison’s view of the use of science and other knowledge acquired by man was extremely circumscribed, and turned on his unchanged orthodox understanding of the use and operation of reason: ‘Reason is the gift of God whereby man is enabled to receive Revelation. But it is a special form of reason, called Faith, whereby man is enabled, in humblest thanksgiving before God, to receive Revelation’. 176 Opposing the direction taken in Lux Mundi, as he had opposed modern critical approaches in Essays and Reviews, Denison abhorred differentiation of parts of the Bible as myth, drama, or history. Such techniques of criticism he saw as the ‘discriminating’ of one part of the holy scripture from another. 177 He would not allow criticism that deconstructed the

174 Wordsworth argued the use of reason, but not in pursuit of ‘false philosophy’ whereby reason would supplant faith. ‘Let us, therefore esteem Reason highly; and because we prize it greatly, let us take care to use it rightly; lest perchance, by the abuse of reason, we forfeit the inestimable blessings which may be derived from its use’. This was a highly qualified concept of reason in keeping with orthodox epistemology. Christopher Wordsworth Jnr, The interpretation of the Bible, p39.
175 G A Denison, The speech of the Archdeacon of Taunton in the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury Session 3 February 1891. p27.
176 G A Denison, Third sermon on Lux Mundi in Supplement, p229.
177 Ibid, p237
integrity and unity of the meta-narrative. Denison considered the scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be a unity of divine revelation. There was, as he expressed it, a ‘complete interlacing and interweaving of the Old Scriptures with the Gospels’. The scriptures were a ‘Unity throughout’. They were bound, in their various parts, ‘by a chain which cannot be broken: the Old Scriptures and the New’. The Old Testament record of creation in Genesis, and the ensuing account, was, Denison insisted, ‘delivered to Moses by Inspiration of God’.

A man may say indeed, I understand and believe, that all that was done in Creation, before man was created, was taught of God to Adam, and handed down by Tradition from Adam. But it remains, just the same, that the beginning of Tradition was by Inspiration – ie, by teaching of God.

For Denison, the faith taught by the Church of England remained the faith found in the scriptures taught by ‘the Church of the Apostles and the first fathers of the Church’. It was not a faith to be recast from time to time on the advice of a literary critic: what Denison called ‘a faith as contrasted with the Faith’. It was this ‘Unity’ of revelation that for Denison underpinned the faith, for the scriptures opened ‘the straight gate’ that in turn opened into ‘the way’ that led to heaven. To the very last, writing within three years of his death in March of 1896, Denison continued to assert the unity and integrity of divine revelation: ‘That the Book of God, of Divine Authority throughout; the Book of man, throughout all its own order and administration, in its humble and thankful acceptance of the Book of God as

179 G A Denison, Third sermon on ‘Lux Mundi.’ p1. See also Denison’s Charge ... The ‘Colenso Case’ and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. 1880, p4.
184 Ibid. p14.
delivered to the Church by the Spirit, are witnesses of the Church of England against the delusions of the New Criticism'.

In a resolution, put to the Council of the English Church Union (ECU) on 11 May 1893, Denison attempted to garner support for, and affirmation of, his old-fashioned orthodox beliefs cherished over a long life. He seized upon one of the declared objects of the ECU being ‘to defend and maintain unimpaired the Doctrine of the Church of England against all attacks of Rationalism’. It was significant that, returning to this object of the ECU in 1893, Denison’s attempt to bring the Union’s corporate opinion to bear against *Lux Mundi* in the Church Union was quite fruitless. The world had changed. This was reflected in an amendment to Denison’s motion avering: ‘The President and the Council are of the opinion that the questions which are supposed to be raised by the “New Criticism” are not such as can be discussed under the present circumstances with advantage by a body such as the Union’. The amendment was carried. His report, as Denison recognized, was ‘a dead letter’. Defeated, he resigned from the English Church Union of which he had been a member since its inception thirty-two years before. His resignation terminated an association with the wider Church Union movement of which he had been a part for over half a century, commencing with his affiliation with the Bristol Church Union in 1848. Denison had seemingly outlived the orthodox world in which he had been raised, and which he had defended for so many years.

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185 G A Denison, *Supplement to notes of my life, 1879, and Mr Gladstone, 1886*. 1893, p.79.
187 *Ibid*, p.515
188 The amendment was carried 36 to 14, and then put as a substantive motion, was carried 23 to 14. *LED* p.364. *Supplement*, p.60.
189 Denison’s letter to the President was read at the Council meeting of 24 May 1892. *Minutes of the English Church Union 18 November 1884 – 23 June 1892*, p.522. Lambeth Palace Library, Deposit 14. Attacked by the Rev H R Baker over Denison’s resignation, the President of the ECU responded that the Council had never refused to defend the canonical Scriptures, and never adopted a position of neutrality in regard to the Higher Criticism. ‘It has simply declined to entertain a subject which the Convocation of Canterbury, the Synod of the clergy of this Province, has declined to entertain previously’. Roberts G Bayfield, *The history of the English Church Union*. 1895, p.360f.
Denison’s attack on Gore was, as he remarked, ‘the last and most comprehensive of my many battles for the doctrine of the Church of England’. But his defeat in the ECU did not inhibit him from public musing and reminiscence in a second volume of memoirs, Supplement to Notes on my life, 1879, and Mr Gladstone, 1886, published in 1893, just three years before his death in 1896. In the Supplement he continued to reflect on the recent battle he had fought over Lux Mundi, advancing a pre-critical concept of the scriptures, and eschewing techniques such as textual or form criticism as unnecessary. Asserting divine inspiration and the infallibility of scriptures as divine revelation, Denison deprecated the notion that there were ‘difficulties of Holy Scripture’ that needed to be addressed. Denison’s explanation of this position showed yet again that he stood in a long orthodox tradition in his understanding of the Divine Revelation. While declining to admit to difficulties, he conceded that there were what he termed ‘Mysteries’: ‘Now there are no difficulties in Holy Scripture. There are “Mysteries” in great abundance – in every page of it, but there are ‘no difficulties’. …every page presents or implies one or more.’  Explaining what he meant by ‘Mystery’, he distinguished this from what he intended by ‘Difficulties’ – a distinction which rested on the orthodox notion of the limitations of human reason as it treated with divine revelation: ‘ “Mysteries” are things unapproachable and unfathomable by human reason; things which we are told ‘the angels desire to look into’ … “Difficulties” are things which may be overcome by either physical or intellectual power’.  

The term ‘Mystery’ was significant for Denison, as it was for earlier Anglican divines, as defining the epistemological grounds upon which rested significant Christian doctrine. As Gerard Reedy has noted:

For Anglican divines of the late seventeenth century, ‘mystery’ in a general sense refers to truths which the human mind cannot comprehend; that is, it can assent to their existence, but not understand the manner of their existing. The union of body and

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190 G A Denison to Miss Denison 26 May 1892, LED, p364.
191 Supplement, p77
192 Ibid.
soul in human activity and the foreknowledge of God are examples frequently given of mysteries in this general sense. A scriptural mystery is a revealed truth about which the mind must make the same distinction concerning existence and the manner of existence. The mysteries par excellence of Christianity, and in fact those debated in the 1690’s, are the existence and manner of existing of God as three-in-one and of Jesus as God and man. A third doctrine, the sacrifice of Jesus for sin, depended upon the resolution of the first two.¹⁹³

Denison insisted, *a priori*, that the status of the Bible, as directly divinely inspired, ought to be conceded before admitting to criticism.

Denison’s forays into controversies over biblical criticism in the 1860s and the early 1890s allow a glimpse of a man whose world and outlook was profoundly shaped by his understanding of the scriptures – that is his concept of divine revelation, of God’s dealings with man, and the operation of a continuing divine providence. Denison’s approach to the scriptures was significant, for it forms the ground upon which the other aspects of his world-view were structured – a world-view that was comprehended in terms of the meta-narrative of the Bible as presenting man as a fallen creature in need of redemption, and of a God who would redeem mankind; a creator God, who not only made the world and created mankind, but continues to preserve and sustain his creation – and, was thus a God who had providentially ordered society and its government. This sense of a providentially ordered world is entirely apparent in his *Supplement*, demonstrating how deeply instilled and long-lasting was his conservative, old-fashioned, orthodox outlook. Denison was a man imbued with conservative patrimonial instincts stemming from his upbringing within the mindset and doctrines of an Anglican orthodox world, and reinforced by a life spent in a rural world.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Gerard Reedy, Robert South (1634-1716). *An introduction to his life and sermons*. p127. Reedy notes the lack of uniformity, but observes that in essence ‘Mystery remained a permanent condition of the acceptance of a few theological truths, at least in this life.’ p127.

Good Providence

O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love: Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.


Godly Government

We beseech thee also to save and defend all Christians, Kings, Princes, and Governors; and especially thy servant Victoria our Queen; that under her we may be godly and quietly governed. And grant unto her whole Council, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and indifferently administer justice to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue.

CHAPTER FIVE

Providential ordering of Church, State and society

Providence: The National Church and constitution

In the previous chapter an examination was made of a cornerstone of Denison’s orthodox world-view - the concept of scripture as the revelation of the working of divine providence. This chapter examines Denison’s understanding of the continuing operation of providence as this underpinned his doctrine of the Church and State within the English constitution, as it also underpinned his understanding of the ordering of society and its government as part of the working of that providence.

Several significant facets of Denison’s understanding of the nature of the English constitution followed from this notion of the operation of providence. First, that government was based on the Christian religion. Second, that the Catholic Church – he saw the Church of England to be a branch of the Church universal – was a work of providence, and an intrinsic element of a providentially ordered constitution. Third, that the National Church, as the Catholic Church in England, was the repository of the scriptural revelation ‘once delivered to the saints,’ and the Church of England was ipso facto the authoritative teacher of the Christian faith. Denison’s ecclesiology, within which was included his constitutional and social doctrine, was central to his politics and afford, in large measure, an explanation of his defence of the Church Establishment and his advocacy of the Establishment’s role as a national educator.
Denison’s views on Church and State, and evidence of his wider political theology, as was the case with respect to his views on the scriptures, is to be found in his occasional polemical writings when he engaged with ecclesiastical politics and the dynamics of particular contemporary events and political controversies. His extended pamphlet of two hundred and eighty pages, *Church rates a national trust* (1861) reveals much as regards his doctrine of Church and State as he responded to this particular issue. Further material is to be found in his own periodical, *Church and State Review*, launched in June 1862 its masthead declaring his political purpose – *pro Ecclesia Dei.* There is also further material to be found in his earlier sermons on *The Real Presence* (1853-4), which, although concerned with sacramental doctrine, also addresses his notion of organic society and the corporate trust of the Church. His archdeacon’s charges, from 1859 into the 1860s, and some of a later date, reveal further aspects of his thinking, as do later monographs, such as his lecture on the disestablishment of the Irish Church (*The Churches of England and Ireland one Church by identity of divine trust: a paper read at a special meeting of the Irish Church Society, Dublin, Wed September 30th, 1868*). His sermon, *The Tempters Cup: a sermon preached in the Church of St John the Baptist, Frome-Selwood, July 1, 1875* reveals his reaction to the 1874 Public Worship Regulation Act. Four years later he addressed the subject of the temporal power of the State in causes spiritual (*Lay court of final appeal in causes spiritual.* 1884). These last two publications reflected an anti-establishment turn of mind, and a temporary breach in his advocacy of the inclusion of the Church as an element in the constitution. Within just a few years, by the later 1880s he came to reconsider his position on the Church’s relation to the State (*The Thing vulgarly called: ‘Disestablishment of the Church of England’: properly called: ‘Dis- Inheritance of the Crown and People of England.’ The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, May 3, 1886*). His pamphlet on Gladstone (1886) and his autobiographies (1879 and 1893) afford both a retrospective of earlier events, as Denison saw these, and a re-iteration of his belief in a continuing providence ordering Church, State and society – demonstrating that he continued to hold these views to the end of his days.

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1 The *Church and State Review* (*C&SR*) commenced publication in June of 1862, and ran until 1 December 1864.
Denison maintained a view of a providential Church and State that co-existed in a mutual relationship. He did not, as we shall see, consider the reforms and adjustments of 1828-1832 to have fundamentally altered the constitution and the relationship between Church and State. To a degree he was correct, as the reforms were essentially a pragmatic adjustment, avoiding any thorough-going questioning of the constitution and the principles underlying it.² The motives behind the reforms were, as Geoffrey Best has noted, characterized by expediency.³ The reforms were, as E R Norman has described them, piecemeal and without coherent theory, and they avoided defining principles.⁴ The Establishment remained, but the question was what did this mean in aftermath of the 1828-32 adjustments? For to a considerable extent, as Norman Gash has observed, the reforming legislation was concerned with religion:

Two of the three main legislative changes had directly affected Church-State relations; the third did so indirectly. The repeal of the Test and Corporations Act destroyed the formal principle of Anglican monopoly in offices of State and municipalities; Catholic Emancipation admitted Romanists to the legislature; the Reform Act gave greater political strength to the intellectual enemies of the Establishment.⁵

However, as Machin notes, if the consequences of the reforms were not immediate, the potential was there for alteration of the relation between Church and State. The reasons, Machin argues, were because the enlarged franchise was given to towns where Dissenters were concentrated, and opened the possibility of increased political influence in Parliament. Moreover, the Reform Act marked a shift in the power of the Commons with respect to the Lords, and thereby, as the Church was represented directly in the Lords, the potential for Dissent to challenge the Church.⁶ The consequence was, as Best suggests, the connexion between the Church and the

² Cf Norman Gash’s point that the Church became much stronger than anyone might have predicted in the decade following the 1828-32 reforms. Reaction and reconstruction in English politics 1832-52. 1965, p109.
⁴ E R Norman, Church and society in England, 1779-1970, p5-6f.
⁵ Norman Gash, Reaction and reconstruction in English politics 1832-52, p62.
⁶ G I T Machin, Politics and the churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868, p26.
State became ‘uncertain and fluid,’ the new relation ‘discovered by painful experience’.  

However, the Church Establishment was not challenged immediately by the repeal of the tests. The essence of the 1828 measure was to remove the sacramental test as a requirement for public office or a place in corporations – other restrictions on Nonconformity rendered the repeal a measure allowing of toleration and not of equality. The legislation included a declaration defensive of the Established Church and its rights and privileges. There remained significant religious disabilities for those who did not conform to the Established Church. These ‘grievances’ included admission to universities and degrees; the church rate; tithes; legal requirement for certificates of baptism from Anglican clergy; burial in churchyards according to Anglican rites; legally contracted marriages only could be conducted in parish churches; and liability of Nonconformist chapels to poor rates. Some of these grievances were resolved by 1836 with respect to marriage, the foundation of University College London; the commutation of the tithes; and general registration. Nonconformist aspiration to religious liberty and equality came to be focused on political activism to abolish the church rate. Levied by parish vestries for repairs and improvements to parish churches, the rate was imposed upon all ratepayers – churchmen and non-churchmen alike. The fight against the church rate became part of a campaign to separate the Church from the State, a movement that had its beginnings in 1841 with the foundation of the Nonconformist by Edward

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8 An Act for repealing so much of several Acts as imposes the necessity of receiving the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as a qualification for certain offices and employment. 9 Geo IV.c.17. See Raymond Cowherd, The politics of English Dissenters. 1959, p32f.
9 Peel introduced the defensive declaration (See J C D Clark, English Society 1688-1832, p396) which read: ‘I, A.B. do solemnly declare that I will never exercise my power, authority, or influence, which I may possess by virtue of the office of ---- to injure or weaken the protestant Church as it is by law established within this realm, or to disturb its possession of any rights or privileges to which it is by law entitled.’ 9 Geo IV.c.17, Sect 2.
11 Machin, Politics and the churches in Great Britain 1832-1868, p56; Raymond Cowherd, The politics of English Dissent. The religious aspects of liberal and humanitarian reform from 1815 to 1848, p93.
Miall, who outlined the principles of voluntaryism and the separation of Church and State. In 1843, successful opposition to the pre-eminent role proposed for the Established Church in Graham’s Factories Bill, and the secession of four hundred and seventy Scottish ministers from the Established Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland, gave a fillip to the concept of voluntaryism. In the following year, 1844, Miall founded the Anti-State Church Association, which within a few years developed, as Thompson has remarked, to become ‘one of the best-organized pressure groups’. The issue of church rates, as J P Ellens has stated, went far beyond mere grievance over taxation. The debate raised fundamental questions about the nature of the Church and of the State, and, as a corollary, questioned the old relation between the two:

In contention was a fundamental issue: should public affairs remain based on a religious footing, in continuity with a millennium of tradition, or be reconstituted on a desacralized basis? Arising out of this dispute were two questions on which much of the division centred. The first was whether the State was divinely instituted, with a transcendent mandate and objectives, or whether it was founded solely in contract and confined to temporal concerns. A related but separate question was whether there ought to be an alliance of church and state, or whether the ecclesiastical and civil communities should be entirely separate.

Denison was well aware of the historical problems and contradictions that surrounded the church rate with respect to the toleration that had been extended

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12 Edward Miall (1809-81) was a Congregationalist minister, journalist, and MP (Rochdale 1852-57, and Bradford 1860-74).
13 Miall republished his arguments as a monograph in 1842, *The Nonconformist’s sketch-book: a series of views classified in four groups of a State Church and its attendant evils*. Miall also published *The British Churches in relation to the British people* (1849); and *The title deeds of the Church of England to her parochial endowments* (1862). The latter argued the Church’s temporalities were public property and to be disposed at the will of Parliament.
15 *Ibid*, p210. While Miall’s ‘Association’ became the core of emerging Nonconformist political action, Miall did not represent the whole of Nonconformist opinion, which was far more diffuse on political issues. Something of the complexities of Nonconformist politics in the 1840s and 1850s is recounted by Gash, *Reaction and reconstruction*, chapter 4; See also Raymond Cowherd, *The politics of English Dissent*; and David Thompson, ‘The Liberation Society,’ and Fraser, ‘Edward Baines,’ both in Patricia Hollis (ed), *Pressure from without in early Victorian England*, chapters 8 and 9. Also Machin, *Politics and the churches in Great Britain 1832-1868*, especially chapter 8.
to Dissenters. On the one hand the principle of toleration, which he understood historically Nonconformists saw enshrined as early as 1696 in legislation allowing Quakers to substitute declarations in the place of oaths, ‘as the charter of their ‘religious liberty’; but Denison also noted the same Act provided for the maintenance of a National Church, specifically including Quakers in this liability – a provision confirmed in subsequent legislation. Denison regarded the church rate as an ‘immemorial right’ to be found in ancient common law, unchallenged in the period of the Commonwealth, and enshrined in a series of legislation at the Restoration and subsequently. He observed the politics of the church rate closely, noting that the ‘Reform Association’ had made the church rate one of its grievances in 1833. The foundation of Miall’s Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control in 1845 did not escape Denison, as he took note of the practical steps taken by that body to form a pressure group in the Commons, and from 1855 further activism to create an Electoral Committee to develop a systematic organization to further Nonconformist representation in Parliament. Denison tracked the petitions presented to Parliament by abolitionists and defenders alike, as well as the debates on the subject aired in the Commons from after 1833. As Denison’s annotations demonstrate, voting figures in the Commons generally showed majorities for abolition. The Lords, however, prevented any

17 Church rate a national trust, p70ff. Denison rehearsed the problems arising from the scruples of Quakers in the period of William and Mary, citing the legislation that dealt with this issue, beginning with 7 & 8 Will and Mary. c. 34, For the regulation of ecclesiastical courts in England, and for the more easy recovery of church rates and tithes, and subsequent legislation; and 1 Geo I.c.VI. An act for making perpetual an act of the seventh and eight years of the reign of his late majesty King William the third, entitled, An act for the solemn affirmation of the people called Quakers, etc. Sect 2 contained a clause for the recovery of tithes and rates. There were alterations in forms of oaths and subscriptions to the Hanoverian dynasty (1 Geo I, c 6, and 1 Geo I.c.13. Section 3 of the latter act, however, confirmed all other clauses recited in previous legislation, ie 7 & 8 Wm & Mary and 1 Geo I.c.VI, and thus liability for the church rate remained).

18 7 & 8 William and Mary . c . XXXIV, Solemn affirmation and declaration of the people called Quakers, etc. Quakers were still obliged to pay tithes and church rates, and penalties applied for default. See Section IV of the Act.

19 G A Denison, Church rate a national trust, p68ff.

20 Ibid, p98. Growing out of the Friends of Civil Liberty, a socialist and radical reform movement, was renamed the Reform Association. The Association met in the British Coffee House in Cockspur Street. This group was to be distinguished by its radical and advanced liberal views from the more conservative Whig reformers based on Brookes. The Reform Club founded in 1836 catered for liberals. On the Reform Association see Ian Newbould, Whiggery and reform, 1830-41: the politics of government, p33f.

21 G A Denison, Church rate a national trust, p147f.
possibility of legislation. However, in the years after 1833, it was outside Parliament and at the parochial level that pressure was brought to bear, making the setting and levying of the church rate problematic. Between the years 1833 and 1851 there were some 632 challenges to the rate.

The difficulties of meeting a legal obligation to maintain a parish church for all parishioners, when a majority opposed the setting of a rate were made manifest in 1842 in the case of St George’s, Cole Gate Norwich. The churchwardens, ordered by the archdeacon to levy a rate to discharges debts and paint the church, failed to secure a majority to set a rate. A subsequent attempt by the wardens to force an obligation to vote a rate was prohibited by an action taken in the Queen’s Bench. This tactic was widely adopted across the country. A critical turning point was reached when a case concerning the parish of Braintree reached the House of the Lords. The Braintree wardens had attempted to bypass Nonconformist opposition by setting a rate themselves – an action challenged by the opponents in court. Denison’s brother-in-law, Robert Phillimore, aware of the evidence of successful opposition, introduced a bill to exempt Dissenters. His proposal was that ‘the Church of England shall, for the sake of peace, make a large sacrifice of her unquestionable legal rights’. Not only did Phillimore regard legal proceedings taken against those who declined to pay the church rate as futile, but regarded as equally futile the notion that a rate could be set in the face of majority opposition in a parish. Denison’s brother-in-law’s legal mind was attuned to the significance of the incremental changes in the legal position of Nonconformity achieved by 1853. These included non-parochial registers (ie those other than Church registers) being allowed as evidence; Dissenting chapels had come to be recognized as public places.

22 See Appendix C in G A Denison, Church rate a national trust, pp271-79.
23 See Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Pt I p152. Also House of Lords Sessional papers 1851 XXXII-I, pp 307-309.
24 British Magazine, Vol 14, p608. For other examples of tactics adopted to oppose the church rate see Ellens, Religious routes to Gladstonian liberalism, p95ff.
25 Samuel Courtauld (1793-1881), a Unitarian textile manufacturer, had mounted a campaign of opposition to the Church rate in the contiguous Essex parishes of Braintree, Bocking and Halstead.
27 Ibid, col 568.
28 Ibid, col 574f.
where public notices such as elections might be proclaimed; Nonconformist burial grounds had been allowed; and, from 1852, Nonconformist chapels might be registered with the Registrar-General, and no longer in an ecclesiastical court.\textsuperscript{29}

Above all, Phillimore acknowledged the significance of statistics showing the growth of places of worship outside the pale of the Established Church — registrations of such chapels having reached 54,840 by 1853.\textsuperscript{30} Phillimore’s bill failed to pass the Commons.\textsuperscript{31} However, the factors to which he had made reference all pointed to the contradictions and tensions that existed between a rising Nonconformity and the Church’s old monopoly. The action of the Braintree wardens was ruled invalid in August 1853.\textsuperscript{32} This judgment made it clear, if it was not already, that a church rate could only be set by a majority in open vestry, thus making it possible for Nonconformists to inhibit the setting of a church rate.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Corporate character of the Church versus voluntaryism}

Notwithstanding his close acquaintance with the politics of church rates, Denison’s approach to the issue showed none of the pragmatism displayed by his brother-in-law. Denison’s stance was shaped by his religious world-view. Denison stood in a tradition of Anglican political theology with William Jones, William Stevens, Thomas Rennell, Edmund Burke, William Van Mildert and others reviewed in chapter two, who considered society to be divinely ordered. For these apologists Christianity was the basis upon which society was ordered, and the ‘cement’ in the relationship between individuals in a Christian society.\textsuperscript{34} This was the position Denison rehearsed in the debate over the church rate. For he believed providence had not

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid}, col 572. In addition, chapels no longer incurred liability for poor rates; Nonconformists acquired the right to use their own form of marriage service as part of the new regulations with respect to registration. See Ellens, \textit{Religious routes to Gladstonian liberalism}, p68.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid}, col 573.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}, col 647.


\textsuperscript{33} See Ellens, \textit{Religious routes to Gladstonian liberalism}, p113.

\textsuperscript{34} ‘Cement’ was the term used by Rennell. Cited chapter 2.
only formed humanity, but had linked human beings one with another. Further, he believed it was not possible that man could shape his destiny absolutely on the ground of his own judgment, as it was never possible to exclude God’s influence. To attempt to act independently in a purely individual character, and to talk of the rights of conscience to the exclusion of God was, for Denison, ‘an absurdity and an impiety’.

Providence has so formed man, and so linked man, that it is not possible for any of us, even in those things which are nearest to the soul and its hope, to say with truth that there are no external human influences between God and the judgment, as directed by private conscience. This is true in respect of the social and political life. It is no less true in respect of the religious life. It is one of the privileges of our nature: and the attempt to set up a responsibility for a purely individual character in its place is a thankless rebellion against GOD’s Providence.

Thus, while Denison acknowledged the rights of conscience as ‘a sacred thing, whether in matters temporal or religious’, yet for him such rights were ‘most sacred’ when subordinated in all things to the revealed law of God. Denison considered Christian people had ‘no proper sanctity apart from such subordination’. So Denison repudiated the notion of the right of individual conscience, the very esse of nineteenth-century toleration. Seen from the perspective of Denison’s understanding that ‘man’ was fallen and flawed, claims to the right of individual conscience – the ground of the quest for toleration, and, moreover, the assertion of individualism over and against organic society – appeared to him as a reversion to the original sin of the Fall - man’s pride in his own intellect and judgment. It was a belief he maintained throughout his life against the

35 G A Denison, Church rate a national trust, p81.
36 Ibid, p81.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Denison was fighting against the grain. The right of conscience in religious matters inherent in the great reforms of 1828-32, was notably inserted into the 1834 Poor law Amendment Act 4 & 5 Will IV.c.76. Clause XIX of the Act stipulated that no inmate was obliged to attend services contrary to their religious principles, or any child educated in a religious creed other than that professed by their parents, etc. This clause was rehearsed in subsequent legislation with respect to the factories, etc, viz 7 & 8 Vict.c.101, Sect 43; 20 & 21 Vict. C. 48, Sect 10.
nineteenth-century trend to a liberal assertion of a right to individual conscience. ‘His manhood is not free: the freedom which the pride of reason, man’s chief temptation, suggests is his right, is alike unknown to man’s nature and to the Gospel of Christ’.\footnote{Church rate a National trust, p82.}

Against individualism and right of conscience, in his defence of church rates, Denison argued the significance of the Church of England parish ‘in its collective or corporate character’ as an important and essential entity building relations between individuals and cementing society.\footnote{Ibid, p26.} Denison’s position on the matter of individual conscience rested upon his orthodox idea of divine authority and the proper use of reason – a position addressed above in chapter four, and again in chapter eight in connection with the Noncomformist’s appeal to conscience with respect to the education.

Denison, therefore, saw the church rate as a form of Christian corporate action: ‘It is surely a thing of no little value that in dealing with the church rate this corporate character is called into action for the specific purpose of maintaining, in behalf of all, and transmitting unimpaired to those who shall come after, the same sacred corporate trusts of the same parish’.\footnote{Ibid.} The primary object of the church rate was to furnish and maintain the parish church as the house of God. The money raised by the rate was for Denison of secondary importance, considered against the significance of the implied corporate action. There was for him the principle of communal Christian action:

The living principle of the common interest of all rate payers in maintaining, as members of one body, what is for the use and the blessing of all the members of that body whose lot is cast in the same place. As things are in the Church of England, as things have been for 800 years, every occupier of household or land in each

\footnote{Ibid.}
parish joins with his brethren to maintaining to furnish the houses of God.\textsuperscript{43}

Denison was highly critical of Nonconformists who, he considered, talked glibly about voluntaryism and the marvels of its working amongst Dissenting bodies. He contended there was no real comparison between the working of these groups and that of the Church because Nonconformist voluntaryism did not address the parish in its corporate character.\textsuperscript{44} He did not find in the individualism and the \textit{ad hoc} character of Dissenting bodies, the same responsibility parishes of the Church of England exhibited in their corporate character, passing on from one generation to another ‘the same sacred corporate trusts of the same parish’. Dissenting bodies did not have the same corporate obligation to foster society as members, one of the other, in Christ.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, by their voluntary and schismatic character, he believed this was impossible. Denison’s argument was not without substance. As Ellens has remarked, this absence of a corporate Christian obligation was one of the failings of Nonconformist voluntaryism. Ellens has observed that influenced by A J Morris’ \textit{Anti-State-Church catechism} (1845) Nonconformists distinguished between the temporal and the sacred:

Nonconformity failed to maintain an integrated Christian vision of the society they wished to build. It was particularly their view of the state that voluntarists came under the thrall of desacralized ideals. In its influential Anti-State-Church catechism the ASCA inculcated the lesson that a state church was objectionable because its existence involved misconception of the proper ends of civil government. The catechetical definition of the proper ends of government was given with certainty of inerrancy: ‘Civil is the means by which members of a community combine to seek certain ends. Those ends are temporal and only temporal. They are such as the members of the community naturally appreciate and desire, viz., the preservation of life, liberty, and property. Religion is not one of them.’\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p27.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p26.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{46} Ellens, \textit{Religious routes to Gladstonian liberalism}, p91.
As a country parish priest, Denison was strongly taken with the importance and reality of the community that comprised the parish.\textsuperscript{47} He felt it was a reality, both historical and continuing, to which village churches were a testimony:

Thousands of them, fill the places where they now stand as sentries before the sound of Nonconformity was heard; which will, with God’s blessing, fill the same places still when many of its denominations shall have passed away, - in those houses [parish churches], belonging to all, opened to all, maintained by all, there is the one font of the one Baptism and of the one Lord; the one Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments for the guidance of the worship of all in the one Faith, the one table of the one Bread. Around them the one place of burial to each one who has died.\textsuperscript{48}

Denison firmly believed that corporate action, as in the case of church rates, operated often in an insensible, yet ‘subtle and pervading’ way as a corporate and civic recognition of the blessings received at the hand of God by maintaining the heritage of their parish church.\textsuperscript{49} Above all he was convinced that such corporate action had an influence on the community’s understanding of man’s social character, his mutual ties and affections. In communities such as his at East Brent, members of the village would learn ‘brotherly union and concord’ that would become part of a way of life, and thereby learn, without articulation or expression in words, what was meant by common membership in Christ.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{48} Church rate a national trust, p27f.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p27.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, p26. Denison was sensible of the position of the poor, and felt that the poor had a right to the ministrations of their spiritual wants as anyone else. The ‘Church rate was an endowment of the poor man in respect of his spiritual wants, just as the poor rate was an endowment of his bodily wants’. Ibid, p31.
Beyond his belief in the significance of a corporate Christianity as the bedrock of society, Denison’s stance on the issue of the church rate was also shaped by his belief in the providential relation between Church and State. It was his belief that the 1832 Reform Act, taken together with the abolition of the Test and Corporations Act in 1828 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, had not altered the basis of the old Anglican polity. He did not see that there might be a question regarding the position of the Church of England as a National Church. More fundamentally, he did not believe it possible to remove the ‘Divine element from the State’ by human agency. He believed it was possible to maintain the essentials of an Anglican establishment, and was convinced churchmen should fight to maintain such a polity. Seemingly his position exhibited a failure of political analysis. Other High Churchmen took a different view. Keble subscribed to the same notion of a providential Church of England as did Denison, but unlike Denison, saw that, as a consequence of reform, there was a new principle. As membership of the reformed Parliament was no longer confined to members of the Established Church, Keble recognized the significance for the Church. ‘The Apostolic Church in this realm is henceforth only to stand in the eye of the State, as one sect among many, depending for any pre-eminence she may still appear to retain, merely upon the accident of her having a strong party in the Country.’

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51 Denison noticed an article in the *Guardian*, which argued the Tudor convergence of Church and State had ceased to exist. Denison argued that the granting of recognition and distinct legal status to Nonconformists was not to place them in the same category as the National Church ‘as the means, the only public or national means, of providing churches and divine worship’. *Guardian*, 5 December 1860, p17.

52 Denison maintained this view all his life, except for a period of disillusionment in the 1870s after the disestablishment and dis-endowment of the Irish Church, and the Public Worship Regulation Bill of 1874. In that period he seems to have recognized the effects of the membership of the Commons after 1832, and the incompatibility of the Legislature with the continuing existence of a National Church. (See *The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation, April, 1877*, p7f). The 1867 extension of franchise was far more radical than that of 1832, introducing the urban artisan as a factor in politics. See Asa Briggs, *The age of improvement*, chapter 10.

53 C&SR, Vol 1, p92.

further than Keble, taking the view that in repealing the Test and Corporation Acts ‘the State virtually renounced every connection with religion’.  

Denison, however, did not concede there was a new principle. His appreciation of the positive political position of the Church continuing after the passing of the Great Reform Bill seemed to be supported by subsequent events. The Church establishment did indeed survive the period of reform 1828-32. Though savagely assailed in the campaign leading up to the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill, not only did the Church Establishment weather the storm, but within a few years appeared to be stronger and more secure than it had been for many a year. Not only did the Church attend more assiduously to her duties at the grass roots, but significantly both Conservatives and Whigs took steps to assist the Church to undertake major reform and thus bolstered the Establishment. Peel’s Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission of 1835 was made by the Whigs a permanent incorporated body as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This permanent body enabled the process of reform of the Church to be taken in hand in a considered way, and ensured significant structural reform. As Machin has observed, the Whigs, notwithstanding their alliance with Dissent, pursued an ecclesiastical policy ‘to keep Dissenting support without deserting the Establishment’. But it was an alliance that fell apart after 1837, when the Whigs showed themselves reluctant to be a party to direct attacks upon the Church. There was sympathy amongst Whig

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55 W F Hook to the Hon and Rev A Perceval, 25 May 1831. Extolling the advantages of an Establishment, Hook wrote: ‘one of the offices of the Church is to be the salt of the earth, and indirectly to purify our worldliness. I refer our calamities to the repeal of the Test Acts; for then the State virtually renounced every connexion with religion. It pronounced religion to be, so far as the State is concerned, a thing indifferent.’ Life & letters, vol I, p221. The repeal abolished the sacramental test as a demonstration of conformity to the Established Church: 9 Geo IV.c.17 An Act for repealing so much of several Acts as impose the necessity of receiving the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as a qualification for certain offices and employment.

56 Peel initiated this extra-Parliamentary way of proceeding with the creation of the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission in February 1835. See G F A Best, Temporal Pillars, p297-299. The Whigs turned Peel’s Commission into a permanent corporate body with the passing of the 1836 Established Church Act (6 & 7 Will. IV.c.71) – See Best, p307.

57 G I T Machin, Politics and the churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868, p47.

58 Whig support for the Ecclesiastical Commission, the failure of the 1837 Church Rates Bill, and excising appropriation of temporalities from the 1838 Irish Tithe Bill, left Nonconformists suspicious and dissatisfied. See Gash, Reaction and reconstruction in English politics 1832-1852, p72f.
gentry for the Church noted by Gash, who cites, as an example, Evelyn Denison’s objection to the 1837 Church Rate Bill. Denison told Melbourne ‘no one likes it’.59

Denison’s perception of the nature of the 1832 reform may have owed something to his family’s Whig associations. He admitted later in life to having been in favour of the Great Reform Bill.60 Indeed, his 1829 prize winning essay (The power and stability of federative government) displayed a tone of dispassionate inquiry Quite unlike his later conservative writings. Such politics might possibly explain why, as a don at Oxford, Denison did not fall in with Newman, and indeed, marching to a different tune, accepted a tutorship at Oriel after the resignation of Newman and his associates. Arguably, Denison was not always the dyed-in-the-wool Tory he claimed in later years to have been all his life.61 Indeed, that Denison did not share Keble’s appreciation that there was a new principle inaugurated by the constitutional changes from the late 1820s, can be explained by Denison’s perception that the reform of the franchise in 1832 was a compromise made by the Whigs with the Radicals, rather than the articulation of new principles.62 He seems to have seen the Whigs in historical terms, against the backdrop of the Glorious Revolution, as the constitutional party: their purpose being the maintenance of the Constitution while addressing abuses.63 The Whigs were forced by political circumstances, as Denison saw it, to submit to Radical pressure to make temporary war upon the Church.64

59 Melbourne papers, p331 cited by Gash ibid, p73.
60 Typically, despising as weakness those who were not consistent and had a change of heart, Denison wrote many years later that he was in favour, but only briefly: ‘at the end of six months I came to my senses.’ The brevity of his support for reform may well have been the interpretative gloss of an old man writing in his eighty-first year. G A Denison, Mr Gladstone. 1886, p32.
61 ibid, p2.
63 ibid.
64 ibid.
Antipathy towards Gladstone’s changing political alignments

Denison’s doughty defence of the Church Establishment, against the background of shifts in the nineteenth-century political scene, contrasted with that of Gladstone, whose career demonstrated a willingness to adapt. The contrast between the conservative Denison and Gladstone’s growing liberalism is one that can be usefully made, because Denison’s antipathy towards nineteenth-century liberalism found expression in his focus on the person of Gladstone and the latter’s politics. It was Gladstone, and the rising Liberal Party, that Denison came to identify as the enemy of the Church and the political and ecclesial orthodoxy he sought to preserve. It was an identification which became more readily manifest in the political controversy over church rates, a controversy which was resolved with the abolition of the church rate in 1868 by the Liberals under Gladstone’s premiership. Gladstone’s Liberal administration followed this measure with further legislation which Denison regarded with dismay: namely the disestablishment of the Irish Church effected in January 1869, and in the following year Forster’s Education Act.

Denison, wedded to the defence of an orthodox ecclesial and constitutional ideology of his youth, was unable to understand Gladstone. It was not merely Gladstone’s liberalism which drew Denison’s criticism, but the fact that Gladstone was a High Churchman. Gladstone had defended orthodox principles in his The State in its relations with the Church (1838), Church principles (1840), and The present condition of the Church (1843). From 1847 until 1863, he was one of the University of Oxford’s two MPs. He had formerly apparently stood on ground with which Denison identified, both in term of his providentialism, and his sense that he could argue the claims of the Church of England to be the National Church.

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65 A front-piece at the head of Gladstone’s book expressed an orthodox view of providentialism. In a dedication to the University of Oxford, Gladstone wrote: ‘Inscribed to the University of Oxford; tried, and not found wanting through the vicissitudes of a thousand years: in the belief that she is providentially designed to be a fountain of blessings, spiritual, social and intellectual, etc.’
66 Gladstone had lost his seat at Newark which he had held since 1832.
67 See Gladstone’s argument in Church principles considered in their results. 1840, pp282-90.
Gladstone had opposed the admission of Dissenters to the university, and held qualified views as to the reform of the university, sharing some of Denison’s notions of the merits of the education both men had received at Oxford. Moreover, Gladstone was the man to whom Denison turned during the initial stages of the education battle in 1847, as one of a closely-knit group of High Church laymen who had supported the cause of the National Society in the 1840s. Denison was unable to equate these earlier articulations of Gladstone’s high and providentialist churchmanship with his later political treatment of the Church.

If seen to be a safe pair of hands with regard to the Church when elected to represent Oxford in 1847, Gladstone was one of those who, following Sir Robert Peel in 1846 to vote against the Corn Law tariffs in favour of free trade, fractured the Tory party. After the fall of Peel’s administration in 1846, the surviving members of the Peelite faction found themselves separated from the Protectionist Tories, yet, other than in the matter of Free Trade, were out of sympathy with the Whigs. Even before his adoption by the university electors in 1847, Gladstone had come to believe that political change and adaptation was necessary. In a letter to Christopher Wordsworth junior, Gladstone indicated that he now saw the old relation of Church and State to be at odds with ‘the progress of the democratic principle’. Denison claimed that by 1847 he had already lost confidence in

68 Gladstone reflected later on his early doctrines of Church and State: ‘They made me glorify in an extravagant manner and degree not only the religious character of the State, which in reality stood low, but also the religious mission of the Conservative party. There was in my eyes a certain element of Antichrist in the Reform Act, and that act was cordially hated, though the leaders soon perceived that there would be no step backward. It was only under the second government of Sir Robert Peel that I learned how impotent and barren was the Conservative office for the church, though that government was formed of men able, upright, and extremely well-disposed. It was well for me that the unfolding destiny carried me off in a considerable degree from political ecclesiasticism of which I should at that time have made a sad mess.’ John Morley, Life of Gladstone. 1903, Vol I, p182.

69 Gladstone, together with S F Wood, H E Manning and Dr Spry had promoted ideas within the National Society for teacher education, and instruction. See H J Burgess, Enterprise in Education, p68f.


71 W E Gladstone to Dr Christopher Wordsworth 15 March 1844, in D C Lathbury, Correspondence on Church and religion. 1910, Vol I, p60f. See also Gladstone’s letter to J R Hope of the same year indicating that Gladstone had concluded the relation between the Church and the State required adjustment or face ‘a violent crisis’. Ibid, p61.
Gladstone, but had voted for him at the behest of Bishop Bagot.\textsuperscript{72} Gladstone gradually began to manifest more liberal views, engendering suspicion and opposition amongst some of his university constituents such as Denison. Morley notes, for example, that Gladstone, notwithstanding the resolutions of the university’s Convocation, voted in support of Jewish membership of Parliament, and declined to support measures against the Pope’s introduction of a Roman Catholic hierarchy.\textsuperscript{73}

Politics of the 1850s

Denison may have had further intimation of the direction of Gladstone’s mind regarding his changing views on the relation between the Church and the State, for the latter had written in 1850 to Robert Phillimore suggesting that many of the problems facing the Church were the consequence of ‘the miserable policy of mere resistance to change, and of tenacious adherence to civil privilege, combined with stealthy progress of latitudinarian opinion’.\textsuperscript{74} Denison’s suspicion of Gladstone was fuelled in the course of the 1850s, a period when party politics were in a state of flux. The fall of Lord Derby’s short-lived Conservative government (February to December 1852), was followed by a coalition, led by the Earl of Aberdeen, whose cabinet included the Radical, Sir William Molesworth, six Whigs, and six Peelites, of which latter group Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was one. In the 1852 election following Derby’s resignation, Gladstone retained his seat as a member for Oxford University, though not without opposition, especially from non-resident members.\textsuperscript{75} Denison was one of the non-residents who turned against him. In a relatively small world of familial and political connections Denison’s view of Gladstone may have been coloured by ties the Denison family had with the Earl of Derby. Not only was his eldest brother, Evelyn, close friends with the earl, having

\textsuperscript{72} G A Denison, \textit{Mr Gladstone}, p2.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Life of William Ewart Gladstone}, Vol I, p426f.
\textsuperscript{74} W E Gladstone to Robert Phillimore 26 February 1850, in D C Lathbury (ed), \textit{Correspondence on Church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone}, Vol I, p100.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Life of William Ewart Gladstone}, Vol 1, pp426f.
been a fellow undergraduate at Christ Church, and on terms of close friendship after coming down from Oxford; but William Denison’s wife was related to the Stanleys through her grandmother, née Lucy Stanley. Moreover, within the Tory party Denison had two further close connections – namely his father-in-law, Joseph Henley, a Tory politician who was a supporter of the Earl of Derby, and his brother-in-law, Robert Phillimore. On the other hand, Robert Phillimore was a friend of Gladstone. It was his brother-in-law to whom Denison turned to discover if Gladstone was preparing to form government with the Whigs, declaring his militant stance with regard to Gladstone: ‘Any coalition between Gladstone and the liberals ... I, for one, shall regard as fatal and decisive, and deal with accordingly’. There would not have on this matter been a meeting of minds between brothers-in-law, for Phillimore, having secured a seat in the Commons in February 1853, was, as Doe has noted, generally supportive of the Aberdeen ministry.

Gladstone’s acceptance of a place in Aberdeen’s coalition led to Denison’s perception that Gladstone had been instrumental in bringing down Lord Derby. Denison wrote to Gladstone on Christmas Day as soon as he had firm news of the Coalition: ‘from now on I can place no confidence in you as Representative of the University of Oxford’. Denison considered Gladstone had linked himself with the latitudinarians Lord Lansdowne and Lord John Russell in a cabinet of ‘evidently radical principles’ and betrayed principles for which he had been elected by Oxford University. Moreover, Denison made public his lack of confidence in Gladstone as a representative of Oxford in a pamphlet derogating his participation in the 1852

76 See Angus Hawkins’ account in ODNB.
77 Lucy Stanley was the 12th Earl Derby’s sister, and thus a great Aunt of the 14th Earl Derby.
78 G A Denison to Robert Phillimore, 24 December 1852. LED, p45. Norman Doe notes that Phillimore had supported Gladstone’s bid for an Oxford seat in 1847. ODNB.
79 Phillimore secured the seat for Tavistock in February 1853. ODNB.
80 G A Denison to Gladstone, 25 December 1852. LED, p45.
81 G A Denison, The Coalition of 1852: A letter addressed respectfully to the electors of the University of Oxford. 1853, p3f. Denison had seen Lord Derby as a safe pair of hands under the ‘social, political and religious circumstances of the day’. They had ‘done something [Denison’s emphasis] towards removing the unwise and oppressive restrictions imposed by a Whig Committee of Council on Education upon members of the Church of England.’ Ibid, p5.
coalition. Not all High Churchmen were as suspicious of Gladstone’s action in joining the Aberdeen administration as was Denison. The High Church newspaper, the Guardian, remarked of Denison, ‘that political State Churchman of East Brent’, in defending himself against attack from his own constituency relied entirely on suspicion. ‘He suspects Mr Gladstone will do this and not offer resistance to that. He suspects that the Cabinet will bring forward educational schemes objectionable to himself. He suspects the whole Cabinet of dishonesty and insincerity.’ However, Gladstone’s politics were becoming, in the eyes of the Vicar of East Brent, increasingly elastic with regard to the Church. In the election of 1853 Denison opposed Gladstone, nominating and campaigning in support of Dudley Perceval, a High Churchman distressed by Gladstone’s joining the Coalition. Gladstone was re-elected again as a member for the university, though with a majority over Perceval of only one hundred and twenty-four.

However, there were those amongst Denison’s own constituency who still retained a regard for Gladstone as a High Churchman. The ‘East Brent Church politician’ divided the Church Union movement on this issue. An example of the rift and depth of feeling was exemplified by a letter that Keble wrote to Denison terminating their relationship as a consequence of their differences over Gladstone: ‘They are poor words to use when I say that I write – what will, I fear, be my last letter to you –

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82 G A Denison, The coalition of 1852. A letter addressed respectively to the electors of the University of Oxford. 1853, p5.
83 Guardian, 12 January 1853, reporting on an article in The Times.
84 Dudley Montague Perceval (1800-1856) was the fourth son of the former prime minister, Spencer Perceval. Denison did not propose Perceval to stand against Gladstone, but when Perceval came forward agreed to nominate him. Denison to D H (sic) Perceval, 19 January 1854, LED p54. Described in an obituary as ‘pre-eminently a High Churchman’, Perceval stood on much the same ground as Denison, supporting the relation of the Church with State, supporting of the revival of Convocation, and supportive of Church education, as he was also opposed to the secularizing tendencies of the Privy Council. See obituary in Annual register, or a view of the history and politics of the year 1856, Vol 98, p268.
85 Morley, Life of Gladstone, Vol I, p453. Denison’s advocacy of Percival did not necessarily advance the latter’s cause in the eyes of Evangelicals. The Guardian citing the Record and Morning Herald, noted that ‘Mr Perceval suffers much by being afflicted with Archdeacon Denison’s patronage. There are many clergymen who dislike Mr Gladstone, at this moment hesitating whether it can be worthwhile to go to Oxford merely to vote for a candidate recommended by the Venerable G A Denison’. Guardian, 12 January 1853, p22.
with bitter pain’. Denison’s overt opposition to Gladstone also brought condemnation from the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, who at this stage remained convinced Gladstone would defend the Church. Wilberforce wrote acidly to Denison thanking him for his election pamphlet ‘and much more for not asking my opinion on it. For if forced to express my opinion of your recent line of conduct it would be perhaps as painful for you to read [as] I am sure it would be for me to write it’. Denison’s attack on Gladstone also divided his old colleagues in the Bristol Church Union, which passed a resolution Denison understood to be directed against him for deserting Gladstone.

But Gladstone’s latitudinarian connections did prompt concern and distrust – amongst Evangelicals as well as High Churchmen such as Denison. More attuned than Bishop Samuel Wilberforce in his appreciation of future directions of Westminster alliances, Denison perceived the very real tensions posed for Gladstone and his fellow Peelites in the coalition Cabinet, and the likely repercussions for the ecclesial and orthodox doctrines espoused by those such as Denison. With Peelites in a minority within a coalition with the Whigs, the political weight was decidedly not in favour of the Church. Political alignments in the 1850s continued to change. A Liberal Party, formed under Palmerston’s leadership in 1857, attained power on the fall of Derby’s Conservative government in June of 1859. In this, Palmerston’s second administration, Denison’s estimate of the direction of Gladstone’s political career was realized. Still a member for the

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86 John Keble to Denison, 12 February 1853. LED, p49.
87 Samuel Wilberforce to Denison 1 February 1853. Denison Letters W21/4, Pusey House, Oxford.
88 Guardian, 2 February 1853, p69.
89 Evangelicals were disappointed in Gladstone for having refrained from a vote against the introduction of Roman Catholic sees. As Morley notes, by joining this coalition Gladstone was to be an intimate of Lord John Russell whom some churchmen well recognised as ‘the Latitudinarian, the Erastian, the appropriationist, the despoiler; and worse still, of Molesworth, sometimes denounced as a Socinian, sometimes as editor of the atheist Hobbes, but in either case no fit person to dispense the church patronage of the Duchy of Lancaster. Only a degree less shocking was the thought of the power of filling bishoprics and deaneries by a prime minister himself a Presbyterian’. Life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol 1, p541.
90 John Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784-1864). Aberdeen’s coalition collapsed in January of 1855, to be followed by Palmerston’s first administration (1855-58). Palmerston was succeeded by Derby’s second Conservative government, which survived barely thirteen and a half months (20 February 1858-11 June 1859).
University of Oxford, Gladstone, whom Denison now regarded as the ‘Prince of Opportunists’, had with the remnants of the old Peelites joined forces with Russell and Palmerston, although Gladstone showed himself critical of the latter.91

Notwithstanding suspicion of the Latitudinarian Whigs such as Lord John Russell and Gladstone’s association with such a man, Denison still saw a conservative constitutional element inherent in the Whigs, remaining confident that it was possible to preserve the Church if conservative constitutional opinion held together. But his faith in such an approach to the constitution curiously rested on the person of Lord Palmerston, who headed two Whig administrations (1855 to 1858 and from June 1859 till his death on 18 October 1865). Palmerston had commenced his political life as a Tory, albeit on the liberal wing of that party, holding office under five Tory Prime Ministers.92 Denison regarded Palmerston as representative of ‘a very powerful section of the community, the men who were Reformers in 1832, and Free Traders in 1846, and do not care to abandon the political name by which they have called themselves since they were schoolboys, but their political creed is at this moment thoroughly conservative’.93 Denison divined that it was Palmerston who could retain conservative elements in what was essentially a liberal camp, and indeed could count on the support of Tories at critical moments. This perception of Palmerston, whose Church appointments reflected an attempt to mollify relations between Nonconformists and the Church, attracted none of the ire Denison levelled against Gladstone.94 His estimate of Palmerston’s influence in a conservative direction at that time was shared by the leader of the Conservatives, the Earl of

91 G A Denison, *Mr Gladstone*, pp10-12. See J B Conacher, *The Peelites and the party system 1846-52*. 1972. The ‘Peelites’ were a Tory faction that broke away over the corn tariffs, espousing free trade. Sir Robert Peel split the old Tory party over this issue in 1846. Denison’s brother-in-law, Robert Phillimore, was a Peelite, as was Gladstone. Generally conservative, except on the matter of trade, the faction was weakened when Gladstone, Sir James Graham and Sidney Herbert formed a coalition with the Whigs in 1852. This led to Denison’s attempt to have Gladstone ejected as a member for the University of Oxford in 1853 elections – anendeavour which failed on that occasion. Denison’s suspicion of Gladstone was further fuelled by the coalition of 1859. A few years later, in 1865, Denison campaigned again to eject Gladstone from Oxford. On this occasion, the introduction of a postal vote enabled the non-resident members of the University to effect a change.
92 See Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston the early years 1784-1841*. 1982
Derby, who remarked in 1863, ‘The truth is no one wishes to replace Lord Palmerston. Half the country gentlemen would refuse to join in an attack on him’. Recognising Palmerston’s capacity to hold back rising liberal and radical forces, Denison contemplated the consequences of that statesman leaving office, opining in 1864, a year before Palmerston’s death, that: ‘it can hardly be but that a redistribution of parties will follow … that Parliamentary liberalism will be resolved into its component elements’. In such circumstances, Denison believed Gladstone would, given his intense dislike of Disraeli, become discontented with what the Conservatives had to offer. Further, he believed Gladstone, a member of a Tory faction following Peel on Corn Law Reform, had never been truly amalgamated with the Whigs, and effectively continued isolated in the Commons with a small band of friends and no real party. Denison believed Gladstone faced a dilemma as a consequence of his ‘indecision and inconsistency’, quite natural in one who was drawn in two directions – ‘looking eagerly forward to a radical future’ and yet hesitating ‘to break off relations with a statesmanlike present and abjure a conservative past’. Guedalla’s account of Gladstone’s relations with Palmerston confirms Denison’s perception of Gladstone’s position. ‘A distaste for pure Toryism kept him a Peelite still; but distaste for Palmerston postponed his arrival at the natural destination of the Peelties in the Liberal Party.’

Denison had to wait until 1864 to commence another campaign to dislodge Gladstone from his Oxford seat. Speculating in July 1864 on Gladstone’s future political direction, he predicted Gladstone would ultimately throw his lot in with

95 Cited by Bruce Coleman, Conservatism and the Conservative Party in nineteenth-century Britain, p87.
97 Ibid, p15.
99 Philip Guedalla, Gladstone and Palmerston, being the correspondence of Lord Palmerston with Mr Gladstone 1851-1865. 1928, p52. Gladstone had written ‘I can neither give the most qualified adhesion to the ministry of Lord Palmerston, nor follow the Liberal party in the abandonment of the very principles and bonds of union with it’. And, as Guedalla has commented, Gladstone did not the find the Tories any more congenial, ‘for where Disraeli led, it was not easy for Gladstone to follow’. Ibid.
liberal forces. With an eye for the changing political scene Denison declared, ‘It is impossible to be blind to the close *approchement* between Mr Gladstone and the men of Manchester, or to doubt its reference to the personal ambition of the one, and the party prospects of the other’. The pattern of Gladstone’s political behaviour, Denison concluded, suggested this was the position for which Gladstone had prepared:

> And when we look back over his recent policy - making due allowance for the contradictions, hesitation, inconsistency, and impudence, which are inseparable from his character - we shall see that he has kept this idea in view, and that he has in fact used the resources of his position to prepare for himself an enthusiastic welcome by the Radicals, whenever he shall think fit to throw himself into their arms.

While accurately divining the direction of Gladstone’s political career, it was a path that nevertheless confounded Denison, who, from the ground of his own instinctive ideological conservatism, found it difficult to understand Gladstone’s changing perspective. As Denison wrote, the kind of conservatism Gladstone espoused ‘trusts much to political instincts – to inherent habits of thought which belong to the rational mind’, Gladstone holding no opinion ‘for which he could not give elaborate arguments’. This was incomprehensible to Denison’s conservative mindset. However strong were Gladstone’s moral and aesthetic affinities with Conservatism, his intellectual constitution was always, to Denison’s mind, essentially ‘anti-Conservative’.

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100 C&SR, p3. ‘Mr Gladstone must be a radical, or nothing; and he must stand with a Bright or Cobden or stand utterly alone; he must lead the Rochdale School in their crusade against the whole established order of things, or he must fall “out of the race” and resign himself to having no place in the party combinations of the future.’ *Ibid*, p4.
104 *Ibid*, p2f. Denison’s analysis was not entirely fair. As E D Steele has commented, Gladstone came to be isolated with respect to religious politics: ‘Gladstone began his six years in the second Palmerston cabinet with a High Church, Peelite group of three, and ended religiously isolated.’ Gladstone’s ejection from his Oxford seat sealed this isolation. See E D Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism 1855-1865*, p188.
In July 1865 Gladstone ceased to be bound to the university electors of Oxford, losing his seat to Gathorne Hardy – a loss to which Denison claimed to have contributed no small part. However, Gladstone’s support for further electoral reform, and for the disestablishment of the Irish Church, would surely have outweighed Denison’s personal involvement, as did the introduction of postal voting enabling more easily a protest vote by non-resident members of the university. Gladstone was returned to the Commons a month later as member for Lancashire. Denison’s prediction soon proved to be correct. Lord John Russell succeeded Palmerston as Prime Minister on the latter’s death, but, in the face of party disunity, the Liberal Government fell in June of 1866. Russell went into retirement, the leadership of the Liberals falling to Gladstone.

Denison found it difficult to comprehend Gladstone’s Liberal politics with respect to the Church: ‘It is difficult to adjust to Mr Gladstone’s own Churchmanship what he means by Religious Equality’. Denison’s pamphlet, Mr Gladstone. With appendix containing accumulated evidence of fifty-five years, etc, manifests not only the difficulties Denison had understanding Gladstone as a liberal and reforming High Churchman, but revealed the tensions between Denison’s enduring adherence to an orthodox Anglican ideology and to the modification of society and opinion in the changing world of the nineteenth century. Denison, notwithstanding his metropolitan and political connections, occupied a rural world, which essentially stayed much the same in the course of his life. Gladstone’s place in the world of national politics by contrast exposed to him to the pressures of change. Furthermore, while Denison’s intellectual compass remained static, Gladstone was

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105 ‘I am not magnifying myself: I am only stating the fact, that I had more to do than any other man with the defeat of Mr Gladstone at Oxford.’ Life, p334. Mr Gladstone, p2.
106 Life, p334f, and Mr Gladstone p2f.
108 G A Denison, Supplement, p19.
109 Denison’s pamphlet on Gladstone appeared in three successive editions in 1885, followed by two further editions in 1886. He annexed the pamphlet, with further comments, to his second autobiography, Supplement to notes of my life in 1893.
an avid reader and pursued what David Bebbington has described as the ‘freedom of inquiry’.  

Gladstone, as Vidler has suggested, never abandoned his High Churchmanship, but maintaining his convictions, modified and adjusted his position in the light of the realities of social and political change.  

This was the essence of Peelite Toryism – that conservatism should not be opposed to ‘any rational change in which the lapse of years or the altered circumstances of society might require; but determined to maintain on their ancient footing and foundation our great institutions in Church and State’. Bebbington suggests that Gladstone adopted this notion of modification and adjustment in a deliberate way, and did not cease to be a loyal churchman even ‘as he developed broader sympathies’, and developed ‘a technique of concession’. Gladstone was thus an enigma for Denison. The concept that one might remain a loyal churchman, maintain a belief in the truth and distinctiveness of the Church of England, yet concede liberty to others, was incomprehensible to Denison. Denison, however, was not alone. Samuel Wilberforce’s conservative defence of the Church and failure to engage in Gladstone’s technique of concessions brought a reproach from the latter.  

Nevertheless, Denison’s incomprehension of Gladstone’s liberalism and the tensions between his orthodox world and changing nineteenth-century society was far from exceptional. This is suggested by the sales of his Mr Gladstone. Reprinted many times, seven thousand copies had been produced by April 1886, and, if it is impossible to estimate how many churchmen shared Denison’s orthodox position

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110 David Bebbington, The mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer and politics 2004, p139. Bebbington points out that an important element in Gladstone’s development was his ‘embrace of inquiry’. This flowed from ‘an ideological shift towards a principled assertion of the place of liberty’ which was the ‘germ of Gladstonian liberalism’. p139 & 120f.  
111 Alec R Vidler, The orb and the cross: A normative study in the relations of Church and State with reference to Gladstone’s early writings. 1945, p137f.  
113 David Bebbington, The mind of Gladstone, p107f and p139f.  
and antipathy towards Gladstone’s ecclesiastical policy, the purchases – one cannot be certain that pamphlets purchased were read – suggests there were not a few who thought along the same lines as Denison.

1860s: The battle for church rates, and the politics of disestablishment

If Gladstone’s shift to political Liberalism appeared to Denison as a betrayal of the fight to defend the Church, there were elements by the early 1860s on the conservative side of politics that appeared more encouraging for him. Disraeli, albeit under the leadership of the Earl of Derby, began to emerge as a dynamic figure within a nascent Conservative Party. Disraeli argued that the monarchy and Church secured order, which was the basis of liberty. Buckle has observed that Disraeli’s dictum, ‘There are few great things left in England and the Church is one’, appeared in various forms in his campaign speeches and writing. The Church of England was naturally conservative, and, as Buckle has written, a dynamic Church party in the Commons was a positive element in Disraeli’s cause. With his home and constituency in Buckinghamshire, Disraeli linked himself with the conservative High Church Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, appearing at diocesan meetings and even a rural decanal meeting at Amersham. Wilberforce, having chastised Denison for his attack on Gladstone in

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115 Disraeli succeeded the 14th Earl of Derby as Prime Minister 27 February 1868.
116 Disraeli’s speech to his constituents in 1857, cited by W F Monypenny and G E Buckle, The life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. 1929, p86. As with Gladstone, Disraeli in his youth had published (1835) a defence of the English constitution - Vindication of the English constitution.
117 Ibid, p103.
118 The life of Benjamin Disraeli, Vol 4, p349.
119 Ibid.
120 The life of Benjamin Disraeli, Vol 2, p90f. Samuel Wilberforce came to be disillusioned with Disraeli just a few years later. ‘Wholly unprincipled men like Disraeli are content to use religion as an instrument of obtaining ever so short a tenure of place.’ Wilberforce to the Archbishop of Dublin, 30 December 1868 in A R Ashwell, Life of the Right Reverend Samuel Wilberforce, Vol 3, p273.
1853, would have learnt by 1862 that Gladstone was not the conservative defender of the Church he had supposed. Indeed, only a few years later in 1868, the conservative Wilberforce was reproached by Gladstone for his defensive stance with regard to Church Establishment, rather than moving matters in the direction the Liberal Party desired:

Part of the special work of this age ought to be to clear the relations between Church and State ... there is the Church Rate; there is National Education; there is the Law of Marriage and Divorce; there is Clergy Relief; there is the Court of Appeal; there are Oaths and declarations of Roman Catholics and Dissenters; there was, and in some sense still is, the admission of Jews and others to the legislature; there is Clergy Discipline – and a long list, perhaps might be added ... I think the State has a right to expect from the Church that its episcopal rulers – at last, that the leading and governing spirits among them – shall contribute liberally, and even sometimes boldly, to the solution of these questions.\(^{121}\)

That the Church had been taken up by Disraeli as an element in Conservative parliamentary campaigning perhaps suggested to Denison that the time was opportune to launch his *Church and State Review* in the cause of Church defence in June 1862.\(^{122}\) There were good reasons why churchmen should join with Disraeli, as they came to understand the developments in political alignments, and in particular the electoral strategy pursued by Nonconformity in the 1850s. The Nonconformists’ object was to enlarge their representation in the Commons, and the tactic adopted to achieve this aim was the cultivation of their own local constituencies. Denison was but one of a number of politically alert churchmen who, recognizing the strength and probable consequences of this increasing Nonconformist political activism, came to realize the Established Church would need to counter this tactic by adopting a similar course. Churchmen came to see the politics of the church rate had constitutional and material implications for the National Church that extended well beyond the single issue of the abolition of the rate. They came to realize that,

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\(^{121}\) Gladstone to Samuel Wilberforce 2 October 1862 in D C Lathbury (ed), *Correspondence on Church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, Vol 1, p196ff.

\(^{122}\) The periodical ran until December 1864.
for their opponents, the abolition of the church rate was but one step towards the eventual disestablishment and dis-endowment of the Church.

In fact the church rate was not the only issue used by the opponents of the Church to undermine the structure of the Church Establishment. The Clarendon and Taunton Commissions had inquired into endowed schools, whose statutes placed them under the aegis of the clergy of the Established Church.\footnote{The 1860s saw a series of investigations into education both secondary and elementary. The Clarendon Commission (1861-64) – 1864 [3288] \textit{XX Report from the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the revenues and management of certain schools and colleges} - examined and reported on nine schools (Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, St Paul’s, Merchant Taylors’, Harrow, Rugby, and Shrewsbury), and the Taunton Commission (1867-68) – 1867-68 [3966] \textit{XXVIII Report from the Royal Commission on education for the middle classes} - investigated other endowed grammar schools. Of the schools investigated by the Taunton Commission, there were approximately a thousand foundations offering secondary education. The Newcastle Commission (1858-61), 1861 [2794-1] \textit{XXI Report of the Royal Commission appointed to examine the state of popular education}, examined elementary education.} The moderate Bishop Thirlwall noted, as being of ‘not inferior importance’, the attempt to alter the constitution of the endowed schools, and the religious instruction given according to the Church of England. Thirlwall regarded these moves against Church foundations as ‘mischievous’ in the form in which they were cast, and ‘a deadly thrust at the principle of establishment’.\footnote{Connop Thirlwall, \textit{Charge …1860}, p27. Bishop Thirlwall cited the example of King Edward VI School in Birmingham, where the issue of conscience had been raised, but where he noted there were actually few examples of requests for exemptions from Nonconformists. The call for a conscience clause was seen by some churchmen as a lever used to subvert Church schools. It was used as an instrument early on with little supporting evidence that Church teaching posed a problem for Nonconformists. This was an old tactic. Nearly thirty years earlier, Joseph Wigram (then Secretary of the National Society) giving evidence before a Select Committee on elementary education, faced a question regarding the problem of Church religious teaching posed for Dissenters. Wigram recognized the question for what it was, characterizing it as hypothetical - posing situations which were not borne out by actual evidence on the ground. PP 1834 (572) \textit{IX Report for the Select Committee on the state of Education}, Question 700.} Likewise, with reference to school rates and local boards considered by the Newcastle Commission in its review of elementary education, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce in his charge for 1860 signalled his concerns with respect to Church schools, perceiving a threat to the relationship in which the Church stood with the State.\footnote{Wilberforce made reference to Archdeacon Sinclair’s charge, which, Wilberforce believed, pointed to potential political problems for Church schools. [Sinclair was also a sometime Secretary to the National Society]. ‘Some signs of coming trouble have begun to cloud over happy concert in the work of national education which now for some years succeeded to former difficulties as to the combined action of the Government of the country and the Church.’ \textit{Charge … 1860}, p49.} Archdeacon Utterton remarked on the
‘strong desire by speculative politicians’ to interfere and attempt the secularization of the Church’s schools, both the elementary national schools and the older endowed secondary schools. In the event secularization was avoided largely because of the reputation and success of clerical headmasters such as Thomas Arnold, and Frederick Temple of Rugby, and Samuel Butler and Benjamin Hall Kennedy at Shrewsbury.\textsuperscript{126}

Hitherto, as Roberts has observed, the Church could rely on its connections with an entrenched traditional political leadership with whom churchmen had easy and direct access. But the dynamics of pressure-group politics laid open the possibility that Parliament might be persuaded to deprive the Church of her privileges.\textsuperscript{127} As a reaction to these political forces ranged against the Church Establishment, Churchmen developed defensive strategies.\textsuperscript{128} Henry Hoare, a High Church layman well known to Denison, had proposed a scheme for rural decanal bodies comprising clergy and laymen chaired by the rural dean to work for the interests of the Church.\textsuperscript{129} The intention was to adopt the methods pursued by Dissenters: that is engender local activism with a system of local groups of Church laity working with their clergy. This initiative formed the basis from which the Church Defence Institution grew.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{126} A leading article in \textit{The Times} cited by Utterton essentially made this point: ‘We seldom reflect how entirely education has been in the hands of the clerical body. The very fact that this has come about naturally, without any direct of the Church and State, is the best testimony to the character of our clergy and to the use which they have made of their influence.’ \textit{Charge ... 1860}, p29. John Sutton Utterton (1814-1879) was Archdeacon of Surrey, and from 1874 till his death Suffragan Bishop of Guildford.


\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid}, pp560-82.

\textsuperscript{129} Henry Hoare, a High Church layman, was a member of the well-known family of bankers. Hoare would have been well known to Denison, having been a member of the Bristol Church Union and of the Church Union movement in London, and an advocate of the restoration of Convocation. He and Denison engaged in considerable correspondence. J B Sweet, \textit{Memoir of the late Henry Hoare, MA, with a narrative of the Church movements with which he was connected}, etc. 1869.

\textsuperscript{130} On Church defence see Ellens, \textit{Religious routes to Gladstonian liberalism} p171f.
In pursuit of this object Denison had, in his preparations for his 1859 visitation, circulated his archdeaconry proposing that Hoare’s ideas be adopted. Hoare’s scheme appealed to Denison’s political instinct that the rates should be made ‘a hustings question’. In his 1860 charge, Denison construed the politics of the church rates as a constitutional question: that ‘of preserving the Church in its rights and privileges as the Church of the Nation’.

This was not an epiphany confined to Denison. The previous year, 1859, the Duke of Marlborough had alerted the Lords to the ultimate political aims of the Liberation Society pursued under the guise of alteration to the laws pertaining to the church rate. ‘The real fact’, the Duke asserted, ‘was that the question of the abolition of the church rates was put forward by a large and influential party in the country as a blow aimed at the existence of the Established Church, and as a means of carrying out the object they had in view: namely, that of disconnecting the Church from the State, and the secularization of those vast endowments that now belong to the parochial clergy of this country.’ As to the tactic of focusing on the church rate Marlborough observed the game had been given away by the Congregationalist minister, and the prime mover in the Liberation Society, Edward Miall, who had been opposed to the bald tactics of some of his fellow Liberation Society members. Miall was concerned that they pressed for too much too soon, exposing and thereby endangering the longer-term objectives. Miall’s strategy was more subtle – rather than ‘taking up the faggot bound’, he preferred ‘to take it up stick by stick’.

The Liberation Society’s ‘sticks’, to which Miall alluded, included not only the abolition of the church rate, but also the common use of church buildings, the question of university tests, the status of endowed grammar schools, Scottish university tests, and the common use of burial grounds. A Lords’ Select
Committee, constituted on a motion of the Duke of Marlborough, reported in 1859 and again in 1860, with proposals for the reform of the church rate and adduced further evidence of the real objectives of the Liberation Society. Questioned by the Select Committee, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State and Patronage, James Foster, conceded that the Society had been responsible for much of the political action in the country directed against church rates.¹³⁷ The Select Committee learned further that the aim of the Society went beyond the immediate and ostensible matter of the church rate; the ‘ulterior objects’ being to disestablish the Church and to confiscate all Church property, both that of the Church of England and that of the Church of Scotland, inherited at the time of Reformation.¹³⁸ The revelation that the real objective the Liberation Society’s political machinations was disestablishment and dis-endowment gave, as J P Ellens has written, ‘a remarkable impetus to a burgeoning church defence movement’.¹³⁹ Foster’s acknowledgment that public exposure of the long-term motives of the Liberation Society led to a hardening of attitudes amongst churchmen in Parliament where they had formerly evinced a moderate view with respect to the church rate and were prepared to make concessions.¹⁴⁰

Denison’s charge of 1860, in common with charges delivered by other archdeacons and bishops, outlined the issues revealed by the 1859 interim report of the Duke of Marlborough’s Lords’ Select Committee.¹⁴¹ Denison warned his archdeaconry that

¹³⁷ Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Church rates, 1859 (Sess 2), XVII.1.217. See question 1583.
¹³⁸ Ibid, See questions 1507, 1510, 1583, and 1679.
¹³⁹ Ellens, Religious routes to Gladstonian Liberalism, p168.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p171.
¹⁴¹ For example Alfred Ollivant, Bishop of Llandaff, in his charge of 1860, p60, wrote: ‘So long as Dissenters were contented with that perfect freedom of opinion and action which the tolerant spirit of the age, and I may say of the Church also, readily concedes to all who think it their duty to secede from her communion, her friends are content with the enjoyment of their privileges, and felt no necessity of arming for defence ... The abolition of Church rates has become a war cry of a party, who not only object to the particular payment being levied on themselves, but distinctly avow that they regard the abolition of them as only the precursor of further invasions upon the Church’s rights and property.’

Walter Kerr Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury, in a reference to Archdeacon Hale’s charge of 1860 commented: ‘we now know distinctly what the aims and determination of that body [the Liberation
the ultimate object of those hostile to the National Church was to see the Established Church ‘swept away’. As with the Duke of Marlborough, Denison observed that the Church’s opponents worked piecemeal, bit by bit: ‘They take what they can get from time to time, be it much or little, and upon the strength of what they have got agitate for something more, till in the end they get the whole’.142 Following the developments and pattern of voting in Parliament, Denison was well aware of the growing strength of the Church’s opponents in the Commons and their purpose.143 He told his clergy that not only should they recognize those hostile to the Church would be satisfied with nothing less than its abolition as an Establishment, but also that churchmen would need to ‘bestir’ themselves, not only overcoming supineness and indifference, but also ceasing to question whether or not it was ‘either right or possible’ to defend the privileges of the Church.144

Institutions like our National Church take time to destroy; and if Churchmen will learn to defend it faithfully it will not be destroyed. But the defence must be a very different sort of thing from what it has been, or is. For if men think they can stand by and see the roots of a great tree maimed and severed one by one, and that the tree is still to be anything but a decaying and dying tree, - and if they think that one generation may be allowed to loosen the foundations of a great building, and succeeding generations to pull out stone after stone, and that the entire building, however it may hold together in its solid strength for many years, will not in the end become a ruin, - who would not say these were idle thoughts? And yet they pretty accurately

142 G A Denison, The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April, 1860. p4.
143 Denison noted the history of the electoral objectives of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, and the understanding reached in 1847 that Nonconformists should act in concert to secure effective representation in the Commons. A more systematic approach was taken from 1855. See G A Denison’s citation of a paper presented by E S Pryce, secretary of the Liberation Society electoral committee in Church rate a national trust, p147f. See also Denison’s analysis of the history of the voting pattern on the Church Rate issue in the Commons in his Church rate a national trust, Appendix C, pp272-79.
144 G A Denison, The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April, 1860. p6f.
represent the case of the National Church of England, the assaults of its enemies, and the defence of its many friends.\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Charge}, 1860, p7.}

Churchmen did bestir themselves. One corporate response to political pressure on the Church was the establishment of Church Congresses, the first of which met in Cambridge in November 1861. The minds of churchmen were awakened, as the Cambridge meeting acknowledged, by ‘The restless attacks, the systematic organization, and avowed purposes of the opponents of the Church of England, encouraged by the indifference of the apathetic and backed by supporters of irreligious’ which brought into being the Church Defence Associations throughout the country.\footnote{Preface to the \textit{Report of the proceedings of Church Congress}, Cambridge, 27-29 November 1861. See also the preface to the Congress in the following year which suggested much had been done ‘towards putting the Church into an attitude of successful defence against organized attacks made upon her, in and out of Parliament, by the combined hostility of political Dissent and openly avowed secularism’. This, the Preface claimed, had let to positive outcomes, ‘intensifying the results already gained both of extension and defence; and by developing still further the reviving spirit of systematic organization for Church purposes, might enable the Church to advance with energy and unwavering progress which no amount of isolated and desultory efforts can ever secure’. Preface, \textit{Report of proceedings of Church Congress}, Oxford, 8-10 July, 1862.} The Church Congresses were intended as \textit{fora} to respond in a constructive way to attacks which the Church, as the Archdeacon of Ely remarked, had no other means as an institution of countering.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p1.} While intended to appeal to a broad spectrum of churchmen, the Congresses tended to attract High Churchmen, amongst them Denison. Denison, however, doubted whether the congresses were very effective: ‘I have no belief that they are really helpful towards the growth of Church-life. Rather I believe them to be opportunities only of friendly and social intercourse.’\footnote{\textit{Life}, p332.}
In the early 1860s, in political exchanges over the issue of the church rate, Denison thought it quite possible to defend the Church Establishment and the *status quo* in terms of the ‘Constitution’. Denison convinced himself that consolidated conservative opinion could defeat what he derisively termed ‘that motley aggregate which calls itself the Liberal Party’, or at the very least achieve ‘concession and compromise’. Denison had some grounds for optimism that churchmen would rally. As Roberts has observed, the militancy of the Liberation Society, and the realization that churchmen required something more positive than the Lords to counter the pressures was brought to bear on electorates and MPs. This was the dynamic that gave rise to the Church Defence Institution. Churchmen, Roberts argues, became convinced of the necessity to emulate the techniques adopted by Nonconformity, and develop an electoral base.

### What was it that Denison sought to defend?

Such then was the political background and developments which brought Denison to enter the political fray with respect to the Church Establishment. But what were the grounds on which Denison argued for the continuation of the Establishment in the mid-Victorian decades? His polemical writing in connection with the church rate controversy reveal his continuing Anglican political orthodoxy as the ideological ground on which he defended the National Church. Denison’s reaction to the political question of church rates was not merely a defence of a system of taxation of benefit to the Church, but more profoundly a rehearsal of his belief in the providential character of the National Church as it was set within society and the Constitution. Denison’s engagement with the politics of church rates revealed that there were for him more extensive issues to be considered than the rights of

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individual conscience argued for by opponents of the church rate. As he wrote in his
*Church rate a national trust*:

There is a principle underlying this, deeper than which we cannot
go, and which is the foundation of all National Churches; namely,
that it being the chief privilege and blessing of a people that all
should live ‘in unity of the Faith’, the governing power of the
English people, as representing the whole people, identifies itself
in its corporate character with the holding and teaching, by the
appointed means of the Church, of the ‘one Faith’ ‘once
committed to the saints’; does public homage to the Church in all
its acts; seeks and receives its sanction for all the principal events,
and testifies its faithfulness by guaranteeing the property of its
ministers and the means of providing for the common worship of
the people. Thus we arrive at what is called in England ‘Church
and State’.\(^\text{152}\)

Denison considered the differences between Nonconformists and Churchmen did
not rest solely on religious grounds, but arose from the changing political landscape
as the claims of democracy were asserted. Opposition to the church rate he wrote
were ‘to be found deeper down than passive nonconformity, or even active hostility
to the Church as Established or National’.\(^\text{153}\) Denison saw the claims of democracy
as inherently antipathetic to the notion of the Church and its divine commission.
The claim of democracy was ‘the claim of every citizen, in his own person, to be not
only judge of the administration of government, but to be a party to the details of
that administration by his vote’.\(^\text{154}\) Not only did Denison consider that *in ultimo* this
subverted the notion of government, but the spirit of this political dynamic that
looked to the abolition of the church rate went beyond a call to pull down the
Church Establishment (for this would not destroy the Church itself), but insisted on
denying that there was any institution or authority in the world that claimed to be

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\(^{152}\) G A Denison, *Church rate a national trust*, p10.


The older notion of the function of Parliament was understood to be ‘the deliberative assembly of
the nation’ representing legitimate interest rooted in ‘property and community’. The new pressure
groups offended against this concept. On this see Patricia Hollis’ introduction to *Pressure from
without in early Victorian Britain*, p1ff. Cf Bebbington’s point that Gladstone in his early political
career ‘shared fully the received opinion of his day that democracy was a synonym for mob rule’. *The
grounded on the divine.\textsuperscript{155} This development in politics was a phenomenon he considered to be ‘a principle of human nature’ – understanding this to be explained in terms of man’s primal disobedience.\textsuperscript{156}

Alive to the possibility that this antagonism might have profound consequences for the assumption that Christianity served as the foundation of English society and government,\textsuperscript{157} Denison retained the conviction that the State and the Church existed in an interdependent, mutual relationship, and this relationship interpenetrated the entire fabric of religion, and law, and government.\textsuperscript{158} Thus in the 1860s he sought to defend the Church Establishment on the premise of High Church orthodoxy. Denison maintained that the origin of the Church Establishment did not rest, as contemporary radical opinion would have it, upon a \textit{fiat} of the State to be undone as though it were merely a piece of social regulation.\textsuperscript{159} At the 1861 Church Congress in Cambridge, Denison eschewed the argument that this link should be severed on the grounds of religious liberty ‘according to the fashion of the Nonconformist’.\textsuperscript{160} Rather, he argued, it was an intrinsic part of the constitution: ‘Our Church was undoubtedly bound up with the State: what was the interest of the Church was likewise the interest of the State, and what was the interest of the State was the interest of the Church.’\textsuperscript{161} Moreover, Denison declared ‘he would continue … to resist and combat against any attempt to sever the existing communion between Church and State in this country’.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid}, p74.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{158} G A Denison, \textit{The Churches of England and Ireland one Church by identity and Divine truth. A paper read at a special meeting of the Irish Church Society, Dublin ... 30 September 1868}, p21.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid}, p24. The Liberation Society’s argument for the resumption of Church property was similar to that advanced earlier by French revolutionaries. Edmund Burke noted of the French: ‘they say ecclesiastics are fictitious persons, creatures of the State; whom at pleasure they may destroy, and of course limit and modify in every particular; that the goods they possess are not properly theirs, but belong to the State which created the fiction.’ Edmund Burke, \textit{Reflections on the Revolution in France}, 1868 edition, p 123.
\textsuperscript{160} Church Congress Cambridge, 27-29 1862, p101f. Denison told the Congress: ‘Our Church was undoubtedly bound up with the State: What was the intent of the State was likewise the intent of the Church, and what was the intent of the Church was the intent of the State’. \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid}.
The Establishment was, for Denison, the design of ‘Divine polity’. He would have no truck with theories such as Warburton’s compact or voluntary alliance. Denison asserted that neither English statesmen nor divines had ‘looked upon the Church and State as free agents to unite or separate as they pleased, but was God’s ordinance for the spiritual and temporal welfare of this nation’. He understood the Tudor legislation that defined the principles and arrangements upon which the Church stood in connection with the State to have been providential, and considered Parliament the guardian of this ‘Providential gift’, having a duty to protect the Church in her political rights in her connection with the State, and to further the Church’s spiritual influence. By the same token, churchmen were duty bound to defend the Church Establishment and its connection with the State and society. ‘The duties of Churchmen are ruled by a law higher than public opinion and different from it in kind. Public opinion itself is a shifting thing; guided by no absolute rule external to itself. The law of a Churchman’s duty is a fixed and unchangeable thing, external to man, and independent of his rejection and assent.

Denison maintained the kind of arguments asserted by orthodox High Churchmen in the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars and embraced by orthodox Oxford, rehearsed earlier in this study in chapter two: namely, that

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164 William Warburton (1698-1779) argued that the relationship in which the Church stood to the State was a compact of mutual convenience. The alliance between the Church and the State. 1736.
165 C&SR, Vol 1, 1 October 1864, p217. Cf Gladstone’s Church Principles considered in their results (1840), & his contention that society existed under Divine dispensation: ‘Civil society is an ordinance of God … our combination together in nations and politics, and our relation of subjection as individuals, to the authority of a government, are part and features of our condition as men, which must be referred immediately to the will of our Maker.’ Ibid, p90.
166 C&SR, Vol 5, 1 July 1864, p2. John Keble saw the Reformation arrangements in the same light, arguing that they were providentially so. John Keble, ‘Sermon V,’ in Sermons academical and occasional, p xxvi. Keble addressing the argument of Roman Catholic apologists that the Church of England was a creation of the Tudor State, accepted their point, but contended that this was a manifestation of the working of God’s providence.
167 C&SR, Vol 2, p98. It was as Denison asserted, in his later pamphlet on Gladstone, a matter of providence: To the question ‘How did the Church in England become the Church of England?’ Denison’s response was: ‘The answer is one only – By the gift of God.’ G A Denison, Mr Gladstone. 1886, p21.
Christianity had been adopted as the basis of government, and the National Church was, therefore, the *fons* of orthodox Christian teaching and doctrine, and Christianity the basis of government. Thus, in an article in *Church and State Review* Denison argued: ‘Having adopted the doctrines and disciplines of the Church of England, as the special authorized form in which Christianity shall be inculcated to her members, Parliament is bound to protect the rights and maintain the efficiency of that branch of the Church Catholic, as the necessary condition of the compact which unites the Church and State together’.  

Denison defended the Church of England as the National Church in England as a work of providence. In his 1853 sermons on the Real Presence, he asserted that the Church of England was the Catholic Church in England: the branch of the Catholic Church representing to the English nation ‘the principle of the Universal Church of Christ’ on the basis of an appeal to the Primitive Church.

In classic High Church fashion, Denison averred the English Reformation had removed the accretions and errors of Rome while avoiding the errors of the continental reformers. The Church of England had been shielded from these reformers’ potentially overwhelming destructive influence by God’s providence:

> The marvel is - or rather it would be a marvel, if we did not know how the good Providence of God overrules the councils and the actions of men to the safety of His Church – that the traces of the influence of the Continental Reformers, which appear upon the face of our other Formularies, are so few; and that the few, which do so appear, are of a subordinate character.

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168 *C&SR*, Vol 1, p129.  
170 Denison considered the sixteenth-century reformation of the English Church was both a reaction against the errors and accretions of the Roman Church, and a protest against the breaking up of the Apostolic Order of the Catholic Church. He was equally critical of Rome as he was of the ‘new and strange doctrines of the sacraments’, expounded by Zwinglius, Luther or Calvin, that came in the place of what Denison saw as Apostolic doctrine and ‘broke up the Order of the Catholic Church’. *The Real Presence*. 3rd ed, 1855, pp 87 &75.  
171 *The Real Presence*, p88. Denison considered the Church of England exhibited all the marks of Catholicity, and embodied the legacy of the Universal Church, that is: the canon of scripture; the creeds, sacraments, the liturgies and Apostolic succession, order and discipline, and was thus a branch of the Catholic Church. He considered that within the two covers of the Book of Common Prayer with its administration of the sacraments, were contained all the essentials of the Church. The
Denison was dismissive of Newman’s assertion that the Church of England was not truly Catholic. In Denison’s eyes secessionists such as Newman had turned their backs on a providential gift of God. So doing, they had fallen prey to the very tendency against which they had fought – liberalism. Given the wider implications of the old Anglican polity to which Denison held, Newman, and his fellow secessionists, were held to have done more than abandon the Church of England; they had denied the social, political and ecclesial organisms providentially given and inherited. The Church of England, Denison believed, had been given to the English people as a divine gift by an act of God’s providence, and was the ‘depository of the Truth of the Holy Ghost’. From this premise, he argued the authority of the Church of England as a National Church – it was an authority derived in two ways: through the scriptures and through the consensus of the Catholic Church arrived at the Councils; and both of these through the guidance and operation of the Holy Ghost. The divine character of both revelation and the Catholic Church, Denison argued, rendered them abiding and indestructible:

But the Trust [revelation] itself, and the Church Catholic to whose keeping it has been committed, cannot fail. These remain and abide, and will abide. They are gifts to mankind, and not to be destroyed by this or that people’s unfaithfulness, because that Christ is revealed as the hope of the world, and it has pleased God to perpetuate the revelation, not by continued miracle or other commandments, explained by Jesus Christ, contained the whole moral order of God. From gathered sources, the Prayer Book contained the whole of Catholic worship.

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172 For Newman’s case, see Apologia pro vita sua, (1976 edition) pp100-105.
173 Denison considered Newman had ‘a rationalistic and sceptical mind’ which led him to be ‘deeply tinged with the vice of system-building’. C&SR, Vol 5, p56. In Denison’s eyes those, such as Newman, who went to Rome, did so as a consequence of committing the cardinal sin of looking at the Church ‘through their private judgment’. C&SR, Vol 1, p216. For Newman’s explanation of what he meant by ‘Liberalism’ see Apologia pro vita sua, (1976 edition) p191ff. As further example of the traditional orthodox epistemological ground on which Denison based his view of Newman, cf William Palmer’s critique of Newman’s An essay on the development of Christian doctrine, which Palmer argued was in essence based on rationalism. The doctrine of development and conscience considered in relation to the evidences of Christianity and of the Catholic system. Published 1846. General Books reprint, 2010.
174 G A Denison, The Real Presence, p89.
175 Ibid, p88f. Denison cited Article XX as the Church of England’s claim to authority as ‘a witness and keeper of holy Writ.’ Denison regarded the consensus of the Councils of the Church as being Divinely authoritative, because that consensus had been attained by the ‘guidance and superintendence’ of the Spirit. Ibid, p89. The latter was particularly important as the means by which Church arrived at ‘a consensus of many minds in all ages of Christianity in a certain definite and settled belief’. Ibid, p88.
extraordinary manifestation, but by the voice of the Church Catholic, then first formerly expressed in the records of the general councils as divers heresies gave occasion and made necessary, and subsequently ratified by the consensus of all ages.\textsuperscript{176}

As the Church of England was, for Denison, the National Church by divine providence, it was therefore ‘in rightful possession ... by Divine and human law’ of her temporalities and her place in the constitution.\textsuperscript{177} Denison’s belief in the operation of the laws of divine providence in the affairs of man, led him to conclude that it was an ‘unreality’ to depose the Church of England as the Established National Church ‘having regard to the constitution of man, and the laws of God’s Providence’.\textsuperscript{178}

Addressing Nonconformity’s desire for a system of Free Churches, in his sermons on the Eucharistic presence Denison further fleshed out his case for the authority of the Church by positing the negative character of Nonconformity.\textsuperscript{179} Dissent, he considered, was intrinsically subversive of authority. Furthermore Nonconformity lacked the kind of authority he attributed to the Church. He saw Nonconformity as essentially unstable and on this account liable to drift into Socinianism. He also saw the Nonconformist as being essentially schismatic.\textsuperscript{180} However, there was a part of him that acknowledged Nonconformity was not entirely to blame for its schism from the National Church; that blame rested in part with the Church of England. The Church had failed to provide spiritual food when it was needed, and this should have been a warning to it. He had empathy for George Whitefield (1714-70) and John Wesley (1703-1791) because they had answered the call, as Denison believed,

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid, p108f. 
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid, pp86. 
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, p87. 
\textsuperscript{179} The term ‘Free Church’ began to be used by Nonconformity from around 1843. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. 1957 ed. 
\textsuperscript{180} The Real Presence, p93f.
to meet the spiritual needs of the people.\textsuperscript{181} It was Denison’s conviction that the Church of England ought to be a home-missionary Church.\textsuperscript{182}

Notwithstanding his qualified justification for Nonconformity as a consequence of the Church’s failure, Denison abhorred not only the schism of Nonconformist bodies, but, he also questioned their religious authenticity, believing Nonconformity was not possessed of the guidance of the Holy Ghost, as was the Universal Church distinguished by the consensus arrived at in the Ecumenical Councils. The origins and authority of the Nonconformist bodies were merely the product of a human consensus of recent origin. History showed such bodies were ‘liable to continual degeneracy and decay’.\textsuperscript{183} His explanation for such an outcome was that, unlike the Church guided by the Holy Spirit, Nonconformity engaged in what he termed the ‘dogmatism of ‘private interpretation’. Christian sects which discarded the apostolic order and discipline of their original faith were more liable, he thought, to disintegrate into further schism or slide into Socinianism.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{181} Denison seems to have accepted Wesley’s actions in 1760s, before Wesley made himself a leader of a sect: ‘There is nothing in the religious history of the past 100 years more remarkable than the difference between Wesley's teaching in 1760 when he had not made himself the leader of a sect, and his teaching in 1780, when he had made himself leader of sect; unless it be the difference between Wesley's teaching at the latter period, and the teaching of the Wesleyans in 1860. An excellent illustration may be found by comparison of Wesley's hymn-book of 1760 with his hymn-book of 1780. Some other hymns of the former, which is become very scarce, are reprinted in the appendix to the author's translation of Saravia on the Holy Eucharist. All this is wholly independent of the consideration of the conduct of the Church of England in the last century in not preventing the Wesleyan schism’. G A Denison, \textit{Church rate a national trust}. Note, p89.

\textsuperscript{182} ‘Perhaps no object of what is called Home Mission has been so thoroughly overlooked by our Church authorities and societies.’ \textit{C&SR}, Vol 1, 1 July 1862, p80.

\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid}, p89f.

\textsuperscript{184} ‘Socinianism’ was a reference to Unitarian, or anti-Trinitarian doctrine. The term derived from Faustus Socinus, a late C16 Italian reformer, who spent the latter part of his life in Poland. Although he did not originate anti-Trinitarian doctrine, Socinus’ writings are held to have articulated the leading principles of what became known in England as Unitarianism (Socinianism). Socinians emphasized Christian ethical teaching, but denied scriptural authority for Trinitarian doctrine, holding that Jesus was not divine by nature, but as a consequence of the office he served.
Denison retained his belief in the Church of England as a providential part of the English constitution, and defended the Church establishment to the end of his life, except for a short period when he wavered in the late 1860s and early 1870s. He had not been turned against the Establishment before the mid-1860s, despite various difficulties we have already seen were faced by him and other High Churchmen. But Denison was no Erastian. The relation of Church and State was one of mutual correspondence. That a secular court, albeit with members of the episcopal bench as assessors, had ruled on appeal in the Gorham judgment, suggested to Denison that due regard had not been given to the spirituality, and the constitutional position of the Church. His practical solution after the Gorham judgment was to seek the revival of Convocation in the early 1850s, so that the ‘Church Corporate’,185 as Denison expressed it, might take its place in a complementary way in its relation with the State.186 Denison had expected that the restoration of Convocation would allow the Church to advise the Crown in matters spiritual and legislation affecting the Church.187 However, he came to recognize that his hopes for Convocation were not to be realized – that Parliament ‘was not going to admit an Imperium in Imperio’.188 But this view expressed in his Notes of my Life published in 1878 in the period of his anti-Establishment phase, and coloured by a state of emotional depression – an issue addressed in chapter seven. For by the late 1860s and early 1870s a number of factors conspired to induce Denison to question whether his concept of Church and State could be sustained. A number of issues at this time, such as actions of the state against what Denison conceived to be the best interests of the Church, seemed to nullify his confidence in the Church-state partnership. Significant amongst these were the proceedings of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the Court of Final Appeal in matters touching on

185 Life, p201. Convocation met for the first time for the despatch of business in 1852.
186 See Life, chapter 9 on Convocation.
187 Life, p279.
188 Ibid. Denison recognized that the Crown in Parliament made statute law, but in matters pertaining to the Church and spirituality, Denison argued, was Convocation’s province to advise the Crown. His complaint was that this did not appear to be recognized by Parliament.
Church doctrine; the 1869 Act disestablishing the Irish Church, effective from January 1871; the appointment of Frederick Temple, one of the contributors to Essays and Reviews, as Bishop of Exeter in 1869 in succession to Denison’s old friend Henry Phillpotts; Forster’s Education Act of 1870; and the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874.

Frederick Temple’s appointment, as one of the contributors to Essays and Reviews, flew in the face of all for which Denison had fought in condemning that work. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 confirmed Denison’s worst fears that the State would nullify the work of the Church in National Education. The 1874 Public Worship Regulation Act, although ostensibly directed to the containment of ritualism, had (as will be seen in the following chapter) in Denison’s eyes the appearance of a statutory device for subverting essential orthodox doctrine, promoted at the hands of Archbishop Tait.

The disestablishment of the Irish Church, effective in January 1869 after the 1868 legislation marked a significant alteration in the nexus between Church and State. Denison marked the event with two papers - The Churches of England and Ireland one Church by identity of divine trust: a paper read at a special meeting of the Irish Church Society, Dublin, Wed September 30th, 1868; and The Church of England in 1869. Review of the position. A lecture delivered to the Leeds Church Institution, October 12, 1869. Disestablishment was an act he saw as contrary to the providential ordering of the ‘constitution’. He considered the Irish Church stood on the same grounds with the same divine commission, same duties, privileges and common blessings as the English Church. The Legislature had broken the interconnected ‘fabric of Religion, and government’. As a consequence, Denison had concluded the concept of Church and State, for which he had fought, was ‘no

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189 G A Denison, Churches of England and Ireland one Church by identity and Divine truth. A paper read at a special meeting of the Irish Church Society, Dublin, 30 September, 1868, p21.
longer admissible’. Consequently for a period of a few years in the 1870s Denison was joined, as he put it, ‘to those who are for what is vulgarly called ‘dis-Establishment’’. He convinced himself that ‘the true idea of the Christian Church’ was ‘opposed to its union with the State’. But his anti-Erastian period did not last for long.

Return to the Establishment

By the early 1880s Denison’s actions and writings show he had returned to the defence of the connection between Church and State. In December 1882, Denison was invited to join a committee to meet in the Jerusalem Chamber to consider ideas for a memorial to Archbishop Tait. The proposal for a recumbent effigy was unanimously rejected. In the new year, at a meeting attended, amongst others, by the Prince of Wales and the Lord Mayor, Denison presented the Committee with a far more ambitious plan than that of an effigy – a scheme to erect a building to be known as ‘Church House’. Denison’s proposal was seconded by the Lord Mayor and carried unanimously. Denison conceived that such a building would provide ‘fitting accommodation’ for Convocation, for meetings of church societies, and for ‘other occasions of public religious interest’. It was a proposal which Denison stated had not taken long to draft as it had been exercising his mind for some time. He conceived that Church House would serve the corporate interests of the Church and significantly would stand in juxtaposition with Parliament and the City, not only at the centre of the country’s capital, but at the centre of the empire. Denison had for some years recognized that the boundaries of the Anglican Church

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190 G A Denison, The Church of England in 1869. Review of position. A lecture delivered to the Leeds Church Institute, October 12, 1869, Advertisement, p [iii].
191 G A Denison, Mr Gladstone. 1886, p33.
192 G A Denison, Catholicity without Establishment, or Establishment without Catholicity. 1877, p9.
193 G A Denison, Speech of the Archdeacon of Taunton at the first meeting of the executive committee in the matter of a memorial to the late Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Jerusalem Chamber, January 15, 1883, p6.
195 Ibid, p6f.
existed beyond the shores of England and Wales.\textsuperscript{196} Notwithstanding his battles with Archbishop Tait with regard to the Public Worship Act, Denison had been seized by Tait’s dying exhortation that churchmen be ‘united in action in the great struggle against sin and unbelief’.\textsuperscript{197} So he conceived that the proposed Church House would serve as a centre of the Church of England where clergy and laity ‘might commend the life of the Church to the hearts and minds of men’, advancing and defending the faith.\textsuperscript{198} In the event the idea was not put in hand until 1888, and the first Church House commissioned in 1902.\textsuperscript{199}

Denison’s proposal for a ‘Church House’ reflected his belief in the corporate character of the Church, and the ability of the Church to govern herself. However, this proposal did not of itself suggest that Denison had resumed his belief in and support for the Church Establishment. But any doubts on this score were removed by sentiments expressed in his charge of the following year. In his 1883 charge he referred to a meeting of the Liberation Society at Newcastle in the course of which a Liberal MP had declared ‘the dis-establishment and dis-endowment, as a whole, [to be] one of the most pressing measures to be first adopted by the Government’.\textsuperscript{200} Denison made it apparent he had resumed his defence of a providentially ordered Church and State as an enactment of Divine law, for he retorted: ‘To hold fast to “Church and State” is to be “on the Lord’s side”. To impair, and finally destroy “Church and State” is to be on the “World’s side”. One is to be the “faithful servant of God”, the other is “to rob God”.\textsuperscript{201} Denison showed that,

\textsuperscript{196} One of his arguments against revision of the Prayer Book a few years previously (1879) was that the use of the book extended beyond the Church in England. He recognized the interests of the wider Anglican Communion. \textit{The Prayer Book as it is: A paper read at a diocesan conference at Taunton, October 24, 1879}, p.4. Denison claimed he also done what he could in Convocation (1 May 1866) to bring about the first meeting of bishops at Lambeth in 1867. \textit{Life}, p355.
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid}, p[3].
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{199} The idea was effected by Harvey Godwin, Bishop of Carlisle, to mark Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee (1887). Godwin described the putative building as the chapter house of the Church of England. A body known as the Corporation of Church House was formed in 1888 to oversee the project and the future of the House. The original Church House was replaced by the present building (constructed 1937-40) designed by Sir Herbert Baker.
\textsuperscript{200} G A Denison, \textit{The Church and the world. The law Divine. The world’s law. The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April 1883}. p 26.
\textsuperscript{201} \textit{Ibid}, p17.
despite the very considerable social and political changes that took place in the course of his long life, he retained his belief that the Church was ‘not only an integral part, but a primary part’ of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid, p3.
The act of consecration

It is evident how they [the Primitive Church] teach Christ is personally present ... that Christ assisting this heavenly banquet with his heavenly presence, doth by his own Divine power add to the natural substance thereof supernatural efficacy, which addition to the nature to these consecrated elements CHANGETH THEM and maketh them that unto us which otherwise they could not be.


The real presence

It is confessed by all Divines, that upon the words of Consecration, the Body and Blood of Christ is really and substantially present. Before Consecration we called them God’s creatures of Bread and Wine, so we do so no more after Consecration.

Bishop Overall, *Additional notes to the Book of Common Prayer*. 
CHAPTER SIX

The Sacraments

The subject of this and the following chapter is Denison’s sacramental doctrine. Denison sacramental doctrine underwent a degree of development in the late 1840s and the early 1850s. Subsequently he acquired a reputation as a ritualist. His reputation as a ritualist requires qualification. Despite his adoption of the doctrine of the real presence in the late 1840s, Denison’s liturgical practice (surplice and stole, and celebration at the north end) was not altered for many years. Although ritualist clergy appeared in the 1850s, he knew little about ritualism until he became engaged in discussion of the subject in Convocation in 1866. Eventually he did introduce changes in his liturgical practice in a partial way from the early 1870s, the principal innovations being altar lights and the adoption of the eastward position, but retaining surplice and stole. His notoriety with regard to the doctrine of the real presence was not acquired strictly speaking as a consequence of his high doctrine, but because he was provocative in his treatment of Evangelicals, and because he left himself open to the charge of heresy by attempting to establish the real presence with recourse to a proof-formula as to what the wicked received in the eucharist. His reputation as a ritualist owes rather more to the support he gave to prosecuted ritualist priests, than his own practice. This support arose out of Denison’s concern for doctrine rather than for ritual.

Denison’s sacramental doctrine is considered in two chapters. This chapter examines Denison’s sacramental doctrine and the baptismal controversy that led him to develop a focus on the doctrine of the real presence. Examination is made of
his sermons on the real presence, his trial, and the published research undertaken as part of his defence. The following chapter focuses on Denison’s relation with ritualism and ritualist clergy, as well as noticing the sequel to Denison’s trial – the Bennett case, in which the ruling in the Arches, and in the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, allowed that the doctrine of the real presence could be held in the Church of England.

Sacramental doctrine was the one aspect of Denison’s orthodoxy that underwent modification. This came about as a consequence of Denison’s reaction to the Gorham controversy over baptismal doctrine (1847-50). The controversy arose out of the Revd G C Gorham’s denial that regenerative grace was necessarily given at baptism, nor indeed necessarily at conversion – distinguishing him from more moderate Evangelicals.¹ Denison fully accepted the Book of Common Prayer’s doctrine of regeneration and the efficacy of God’s grace in the sacraments, as against the virtue and faith of the receiver.² Article XXVII Of Baptism declares that this sacrament is ‘a sign of Regeneration’, while the introductory Article on the sacraments (XXV Of the Sacraments) declares that the ‘Sacraments ordained by Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good will towards us’.

Denison was deeply disturbed that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council ruled that Gorham’s denial of the prayer book doctrine might be allowed in a clergyman of the Church of England. Denison was, as we have seen, deeply imbued with the idea of man’s inadequacy as a fallen creature, and he was also strongly drawn to the notion of the efficacy of God’s grace in the sacraments and of God’s ‘goodwill’

¹ The controversy is considered in greater detail below.
² See the prayer for the blessing of water at baptism in The book of common prayer: ‘sanctify this Water to the mystical washing away of sin; and grant that this child, now to be baptized therein, may receive the fullness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children.’ Cf also the text of the earlier bidding prayer: ‘None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the holy Ghost.’
towards men and women. *Contra* Gorham and receptionism, Denison wanted to emphasise God’s grace in the sacraments. This attracted him to the doctrine of the eucharistic real presence, which drew attention to the instrumentality of grace. This was a doctrine he adopted and began to expound in the early 1850s. This was a more developed expression of the eucharistic presence than he might have learnt as an orthodox High Churchman. In chapter two, it was observed that Denison was formed as a High Churchman at Oxford within the circle of Charles Lloyd with whom Denison was on friendly terms. It is probable that both George Denison, and his elder brother, Edward, absorbed something of Charles Lloyd’s interest in sacramental theology. The kind of theological *milieu* in which Denison’s High Church theology was nourished within Lloyd’s circle at Oxford can be inferred from William Palmer’s liturgical study, *Origines liturgicae*, published in 1839, which was based on Lloyd’s notes which had been passed to Palmer by Lloyd’s protégé and successor, Dr Burton. Palmer noted the rubrical requirement of the prayer book that the sacrament was to be received kneeling. Palmer considered that rubric reflected the Church of England’s recognition of Christ’s mystical presence at the holy communion, but that the Church of England eschewed any attempt to define nature of Christ’s presence.

The Church of England ... protests against the idea of adoring ‘sacramental’ bread and wine and abjures the imputation of worshipping ‘any corporal presence of Christ’s natural flesh and blood’: as if she believed the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation; yet she believes in the mysterious presence of the Redeemer, whose ‘body and blood’ she declares are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful.

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3 On this last point see Nockles *The Oxford Movement in context*, p244ff.
4 I derive the suggestion of this idea from Alf Härdelin, *The Tractarian understanding of the Eucharist*, p128.
5 For Palmer’s obligations to Bishop Lloyd, and reference to Lloyd’s lectures on the liturgy, see Palmer’s ‘Preface’ to *Origines liturgicae*, pp iv-v.
6 William Palmer (of Worcester) *Origines liturgicae*, 2nd edition, Vol 2, p15. See also Palmer’s further elaboration of eucharistic doctrine: ‘She [the Church] believes that the eucharist is not the sign of an absent body, and those who partake of it receive not merely the figure or shadow, or sign of Christ’s body, but the reality itself. And as Christ’s divine and human natures are inseparably united, so she believes we receive in the eucharist, not only the flesh and blood of Christ, but Christ himself, both God and man.’ *A Treatise on the Church of Christ*. 2nd ed, vol 1, p527f.

Palmer also touched on the matter of reception by the wicked in his consideration of Catholic opinion with regard to *The Thirty-nine Articles*. Ibid, Vol 2, p263. Denison was associated with Palmer
Denison was, by his own admission, no theologian, nor was his an original mind. His adoption, therefore, of the doctrine of an objective real presence seems likely to have been induced as he followed the disputes over sacramental doctrine, as this was pursued by others, such as Pusey, in the late 1830 and 1840s. We turn, therefore, to consider briefly these disputes as they served as a catalyst engendering developments in sacramental doctrine.

Developments in Eucharistic doctrine

In November 1837, while Denison was still a Fellow of Oriel, Pusey published a tract, *Testimony of writers in the later English Church to the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice, etc*, in which he traced the alterations of the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice in the various English prayer books, and the position adopted by the Caroline divines at the Restoration, the effect of which, he posited, was that the Anglican Church was linked in a chain to the Primitive Church. Pusey’s exposition pointed to Christ being truly present in the eucharist. The following year, 1838, Newman addressed the doctrine of the real presence in the eucharist quite extensively in a *Letter to Rev Godfrey Faussett on certain points of faith and practice*. His argument, supported in good part by material taken from Cosin and Hooker, asserted that the English Church allowed a presence ‘really and literally present’ without defining how, ‘it being a mystery’. Newman held Faussett to be guilty of incorrectly and crudely associating the doctrine of the presence of Christ in

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7 E B Pusey, Tract No 81, *Catena patrum. No IV.*

8 Godfrey Faussett, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, in a sermon preached in Newman’s own church, attacked the Tracts. See Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his age*, p178f, for an outline of the circumstances of Newman’s reply to Faussett.

9 See Newman’s letter to Faussett published in *The via media of the Anglican Church*, 1877, p230. For Newman’s treatment of the real presence in this letter, see p216f, and pp220-35. Newman drew on Cosin’s case for the Anglican doctrine of the real presence which had been republished four years previously in 1834 as Tracts Nos XXVII, and XXVIII (JHN drew from Tract XXVII); ii) Richard Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity* V; iii) the Homilies and Catechism. Beyond the citation of these authorities, Newman allowed himself a brief reflection of his own on the meaning of the presence, p227f.
the eucharist with a form of consubstantiation.\textsuperscript{10} The exchange between Newman and Faussett was significant in view of Denison’s conflict in the 1850s over sacramental doctrine with those that he termed neo-evangelicals who prosecuted Denison in a case resting on a crude characterization of the doctrine of consubstantiation. Further, the school represented by Faussett regarded the doctrine of the presence as novel, and associated with the revival of popery.\textsuperscript{11} Newman charged Faussett with a downward tendency in doctrine, and, again significantly with regard to Denison’s own position by the 1850s, demonstrated Faussett’s capacity to ignore a considerable body of Anglican theology which allowed that Christ was literally present at the eucharist.\textsuperscript{12}

The following year, 1839, Pusey addressed a number of doctrinal matters in a tract couched as a letter to Bishop Bagot.\textsuperscript{13} As had Newman, Pusey identified an element with the Church of England that was strongly anti-Romanist; an element that Pusey believed was unacquainted with the teachings of Church of England divines. This element identified liturgical order, even obedience to the rubric to pray the offices twice daily, as a manifestation of Romanizing tendency, and considered the ‘communion table’ placed altar-wise as papist.\textsuperscript{14} Inter alia, Pusey touched on justification and the unity of the Gospel sacraments,\textsuperscript{15} and the issue that was to exercise Denison in his sermons on the eucharist some years later, that of justification by man’s faith as opposed to the merits of Christ through the channel

\textsuperscript{10} The Margaret Professor of Divinity in Oxford unable even in thought to distinguish it [the presence of Christ in the sacrament] from Consubstantiation, considering it “highly objectionable and dangerous”, and in spite of Hooker and Cosin denying that individuals holding it are “safe and consistent members of the Church of England”.\textsuperscript{Ibid, p235} Faussett’s association of the real presence with a form of consubstantiation was the line adopted by Denison’s prosecutors some fifteen years later.

\textsuperscript{11} Newman wrote: ‘You speak as if the opinions held by the writers you censure were novel in our Church, and you connect them with the ‘revival of Popery’. Does any one doubt that on all points of doctrine on which a question can occur, there is a large school in our Church, consisting of her far most learned men, mainly agreeing with those writers’.\textsuperscript{Ibid, p202}

\textsuperscript{12} \textsuperscript{Ibid, p235}

\textsuperscript{13} E B Pusey, A letter to ... Richard Lord Bishop of Oxford, on the tendency to Romanism imputed to doctrines held of old, as now, in the English Church. See p131, and p148ff.

\textsuperscript{14} \textsuperscript{Ibid, p226f.}

\textsuperscript{15} Pusey cited Bishop Jewell
of the sacraments. Pusey argued the body and blood of Christ were conveyed by the elements; they were ‘given,’ by the priest and ‘taken and received’ by the communicants. Denison owned a copy of Pusey’s pamphlet addressed to Bishop Bagot. Denison’s close relationship with Bishop Bagot would have lent Pusey’s tract significance.

As the differences between churchmen regarding the ‘presence’ in the eucharist continued, Denison in all probability would have been aware of a brief cause célèbre, the plight of John Keble’s curate, Peter Young, who in 1841 had been refused admittance to priest orders by Charles Sumner, the Evangelical Bishop of Winchester. In the unlikely event Denison had forgotten, he would have been reminded by Henry Phillpotts’ adverse reference to the episode ten years later as example of the denial of Catholic truth. Young had declined to comply with the bishop’s demand that he ‘deny all mysterious Presence of our Blessed Lord’s Body and Blood in the holy Eucharist, excepting in the faithful receiver’. Even more notable was Pusey’s sermon, The holy eucharist, a comfort to the penitent, that led to his suspension as a preacher within the University of Oxford. Pusey’s intention had been to treat with the issue of post-baptismal sin by drawing attention to the life-giving property of the sacrament of the eucharist. Baptism, Pusey stated, ‘engrafts into the true vine’, while the sacrament of the eucharist ‘preserves and

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16 Ibid, pp 64-69. Bishop Bramhall: ‘We distinguish between the visible sign, and invisible grace; between the external sacramental ablution, and the grace of the sacrament, that is, interior regeneration. We believe that whosoever hath the former, hath the latter also, [Pusey’s italics] so that he do put a bar against the of the efficacy of the Sacrament by infidelity and hypocrisy, of which a child is capable.’ Ibid, p113.
17 Ibid, p126f. Cf also Pusey linking of the two great sacraments as partaking of Christ’s body with reference to Bishop Jewell: ‘Are we not partakers of the same Divine Substance in the Sacrament of Baptism?’ - and to St Augustine: ‘By baptism we are incorporate into Christ, and are made one Body with His Body.’ Ibid, p116.
18 The pamphlet is amongst Denison’s collection of pamphlets at Pusey House, Item 28.
19 Henry Phillpotts, A pastoral letter to the clergy of the Diocese of Exeter on the present state of the Church. 4th ed, 1851, p49ff.
21 The background giving occasion to the sermon and an account of the controversy within the University of Oxford is given by H P Liddon, Life of Edward Bourverie Pusey. 3rd ed, Vol 2, ch 29.
enlarges life’. Central to Pusey’s argument was the nature of the eucharistic sacrament. Citing Bishops Andrewes and Bramhall, Pusey dismissed the notion that the eucharist was ‘only a thankful commemoration’. Pusey spoke positively of the effects of the words of institution consecrating the elements as Christ’s body and blood, and the liturgy’s sense of an act in the present tense of the act whereby body and blood of Christ is being given in the eucharist. Copeland’s ‘Catena of Anglican divines’ added in the published version of the sermon, gave evidence for the contention that the Church of England’s doctrine of the eucharist supported the doctrine that Christ’s body was spiritually present in the sacrament. In fact these Anglican divines had been recited previously in Tract LXXXI, in Newman’s Letter to Dr Faussett, and some use made of them in Bishop Phillpotts’ charge of 1842. The sermon was, as Liddon recounted, rather in advance of contemporary ‘devotional temper’ and its language drew adverse attention within the University of Oxford. Pusey’s suspension by the Vice Chancellor from preaching in the university for two years became yet another cause célèbre. In the wake of the very considerable publicity raised by the events at Oxford, Pusey’s sermon sold in its thousands. Denison acknowledged reading this sermon. Denison may well have been aware of a further controversy which reflected the continuing theme in the series of controversies that touched on the presence in the eucharistic sacrament. This dispute arose in 1844 when the Regius Professor of Divinity, R D Hampden, failed

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22 E B Pusey, The holy eucharist a comfort to the penitent, p4 (the page numbers refer to the transcript of Pusey’s sermon published on the Project Canterbury website).
24 ‘He consecrated for ever elements of this world to be His Body and Blood,’ commenting that the dominical words of Institution were spoken of as a present act: ‘This is my Body which is given for you, etc’ Ibid, p20f.
25 Ibid, See note e, p vi. William John Copeland (1804-1885) was an authority on Anglican divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A fellow of Trinity College, Oxford (1832-1849), and Rector of Farnham, Essex (1849-1885), he served as a curate at Hackney, where he came into contact with leading members of the Phalanx. On his appointment as a fellow of Trinity, Copeland assisted Newman at St Mary’s, and in 1840 became curate at Littlemore. ODNB.
27 Ibid, p328.
R G MacMullen for the bachelor of divinity. MacMullen had argued the significance and effect of consecration in the dominical words of institution, and the corollary – the real presence of Christ.29

The controversies over sacramental theology that agitated the Church of England in the course of the 1830s and 1840s led to an exploration of the Fathers, Anglican divines and liturgy. As Härdelin has suggested, High Church theologians such as Newman, Pusey, and Keble, gradually developed ‘new insights’, and in their sacramental theology the doctrine of the real presence gradually came to the fore.30 The process was in part a revival. Patristic writings, and those of Anglican divines, were studied and brought to mind once again in nineteenth-century editions. In the preface to his published sermon, Pusey declared that his views on the sacrament of the eucharist were learnt from Bishop Andrewes and Archbishop Bramhall, whom Pusey came to see as ‘the type of the teaching of our Church’.31 Pusey propounded something more definite than the ‘Mysterious Presence’ Palmer considered was acknowledged by the prayer book rubrics. Pusey wrote, ‘From them, and with them [Andrewes and Bramhall], I learnt to receive in their literal sense, our Blessed Lord’s solemn words, ‘This is My Body’, that by those words at the consecration the elements became ‘truly and really, yet spiritually and in an ineffable way, His Body

29 R D Hampden, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, failed R G MacMullen for the degree of BD. Hampden had proposed as an exercise for the BD the thesis: ‘The Church of England does not teach, nor can it be proved from Scripture, that any change takes place in the elements in the Lord’s Supper.’ The candidate, MacMullen, insisted that the act of consecration effected a change: one that the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer indicated ‘terminates upon the sacramental elements, and not on the recipients of the Sacrament’. MacMullen argued, if consecration had no effect, the sacrament would be a form ‘without spirit or life’ and merely lend a degree of solemnity to a memorial of our Saviour’s death. The question of the effect of consecration, which was of such import for Denison, had been touched on by a number of writers in the 1830s. Keble had already considered the relation between consecration and the sacrament implied by the rubrical directions in the Prayer Book in an unpublished tract, The blood of Christ in the eucharist.

30 Alf Härdelin wrote of Newman, Pusey and Keble’s eucharistic theology, ‘They were aware of new possessions to be gained, and old shortcomings to be remedied. The frequency of the theme in their works, the fervour of their language, and the continual development of their Eucharistic thought, mark them out from their contemporaries. The Eucharist is not treated by them as one locus among many, but constantly in connection with the vital interests of religion’. The Tractarian understanding of the eucharist, p128.

and Blood’. Pusey, however, was careful to avoid any definition of the *mode* of the presence, which the Church of England might disallow.

### Early years in Diocese of Bath and Wells

The events that formed the immediate background leading to Denison’s engagement with sacramental doctrine began at the time of his appointment to the East Brent vicarage. Within weeks of Denison’s move to his new Somerset parish, Bishop Bagot was translated from Oxford to Bath and Wells, becoming Denison’s new bishop. As with his brother Edward, Denison had in Bagot a High Church bishop with whom he had been associated by social ties while he was a curate at Cuddesdon. At seventy-two years of age, and in poor health, Bagot had sought to be relieved of burdens he had experienced in the Oxford diocese. The friendly relationship between the two men, and Denison’s close proximity, allowed the older man to place some of the burdens of responsibility on the shoulders of the energetic forty year old, making him his examining chaplain in 1845 and, six years later, in September 1851, Archdeacon of Taunton.

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32 Ibid.
33 A rural incumbent for many years, Bagot was one of those parish priests who had contributed to renewal of parish life at its grass-roots. In his primary charge to his clergy in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, Bagot encouraged them to live by the system prescribed by *The Book of Common Prayer*, exhorting them do away with slovenly methods in the conduct of the offices, and address the problem of churches left damp and dilapidated. *A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Bath and Wells at his primary visitation, May 1847,* p29ff. As did Bishop Edward Denison, Bagot looked to more frequent communion, complaining that the sacrament was administered only four times a year, and some even less frequently, in a large number of parishes in his diocese. There were one hundred and seventy-seven parishes in this category. *Ibid,*p23.

Bagot’s sacramentalism is evident in his comments on the lack of participation: ’They may gaze at the preparation for its celebration with something of superstitious awe; but they are so far from looking to participation in it as a means of strengthening and refreshing their souls, that they seem to have lost all sense of personal interest, or individual responsibility, on the subject. Yet if, as we believe, the merits of Christ’s atoning blood are supplied to those only who receive Christ in His Holy Sacrament; and if to slight that Sacrament is to slight His Blood, there must be something very wrong in our present system. The preaching, or practice, or both, must be very deficient.’ *Ibid,* p34.
34 See Nockles in *ODNB*.
However, beyond the confines of Wells and East Brent, there was another significant connection, made in 1847, that influenced Denison and drew him into the controversies over sacramental doctrine – his association with the redoubtable Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter.\(^{35}\) The connection with Phillpotts was made in August of 1847 – the very month that Gorham was presented to Bramford Speke, and Phillpott’s refusal to institute, sparking the beginning of what to become a notorious controversy.\(^{36}\) Phillpotts invited Denison to come and stay at Bishopstowe. The invitation was in all probability a consequence of Denison’s two pamphlets on Church education published in 1847.\(^{37}\) The two men developed a rapport, and subsequently, as Denison recorded in his autobiography, for the next twenty years he visited Phillpotts every autumn, and ‘had the honour of intimate and confidential correspondence’ with the bishop.\(^{38}\) At Bishopstowe, Denison would have had contact William Maskell, who had been appointed Phillpotts’ domestic chaplain in June 1845 on the recommendation of Bishop Edward Denison.\(^{39}\) Maskell was both involved with Phillpotts in the examination of Gorham, and deeply engaged in the controversy over the sacraments.\(^{40}\) Maskell, whom Denison may have well known in the Salisbury Diocese, became one of Denison’s correspondents in this period.

Although Denison’s membership of the Bristol Church Union has been already noted in this study, it is to be observed that Denison’s election to the union on 10 April 1848 was in the period of the Gorham controversy, and was thus a further important association made at this time – reinforcing the connection made with

\(^{35}\) Henry Phillpotts (1778-1869) was preferred to the See of Exeter in 1830. A High Church Tory, Phillpotts defended the old political order, opposing the abolition of the Tests, and proposals for Catholic emancipation. \textit{ODNB}.

\(^{36}\) \textit{Life}, p190.

\(^{37}\) \textit{Church schools and State interference} (1847), and \textit{Correspondence with the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education: April and May 1847}.

\(^{38}\) \textit{Life}, p190.

\(^{39}\) William Maskell (1814-1890) had been ordained by Edward Denison, and became an incumbent in the Salisbury diocese. Maskell had dedicated his \textit{Monumenta ritualia ecclesiae Anglicanae, or occasional offices of the Church of England according to the ancient use of Salisbury, etc} (1846-7), to Edward Denison. \textit{ODNB}.

\(^{40}\) Maskell published \textit{Holy baptism: a dissertation}, 1848; \textit{The outward means of grace: a sermon preached in the church of St Mary, Totnes}, 1848.
Phillotts. The union had been founded by William Palmer and others to remonstrate against Lord John Russell’s appointment of R D Hampden to the see of Hereford in 1847. The Bristol Union soon, however, turned its attention to the Gorham case, and Denison was thus afforded the company of like-minded activists, and an organization ready to campaign on behalf of Bishop Phillotts. The Church Remembrancer noted that Bristol was ‘a very important centre of churchmanship’ drawing in clergy from both the Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, and from the Diocese of Bath and Wells. Denison quickly became a ready participant in the union’s affairs, marking the beginning of his exertions as an ecclesiastical politician and activist.

Gorham’s response to Phillotts’ refusal to institute him to his living was to seek a remedy in the church courts, but he lost his case. Gorham’s appeal from the church court to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council stirred Denison into a flurry of activity. The Bristol Church Union committee minutes of 28 January 1850 record Denison as having been in London coordinating campaign plans. He was again in London on 8 March 1850 with his friend, Lord John Thynne, to hear the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council adjudicate in favour of Gorham, albeit not unanimously. The Committee ruled that Gorham’s views were not repugnant to the doctrines of the Church of England and he should enjoy the liberty of latitude allowed by the variety of opinion found amongst Anglican divines.

41 Bristol Church Union, Minutes of general meetings 20 January 1848 – 2 April 1867.
42 William Palmer, A statement of circumstances connected with the proposal of resolutions at a special meeting of the Bristol Church Union, 1 October 1850, p12ff.
43 The Church Remembrancer, Vol XXXIX, 1860, p90.
44 The judgment of Sir Herbert Jenner Fust, delivered in the Arches Court of Canterbury on the 2nd August, 1849, p84.
45 Bristol Church Union, Committee Minute Book 1 October 1848 to 5 November 1855. Denison’s protest at East Brent was tabled at a committee meeting of the Bristol Church Union. Ibid, p77.
46 The Rev Lord John Thynne (1798-1881) was a Canon and Sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey. His brother, the Rev Lord Charles Thynne (1813-1894), was Rector of Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire and married to one of Bishop Bagot’s daughters, Harriet.
47 Significantly the Court’s judgment was based on its own construction of Gorham’s words, rather than Gorham’s own language, giving a more favourable complexion. Gorham v the Bishop of Exeter: the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, delivered March 8, 1850, p16. A full account of the Gorham case is to be found in J C S Nias, Gorham and the Bishop of Exeter. 1951.
The Privy Council judgment was a cause of considerable angst for Denison, and appears to have been a turning point for him. Within two days of the Privy Council judgment, Denison, a mere country incumbent, solemnly read two protests in his vestry at East Brent with his churchwardens as witnesses.\(^{48}\) Denison questioned the competency of the Judicial Committee to determine matters of doctrine, which, he asserted, was the privilege of the Church.\(^{49}\) In his second protest, Denison declared that Gorham’s denial of regeneration was heretical, contrary to the Catholic doctrine of the sacrament of baptism. Denison was disquieted by the notion that the Church, if she did nothing to counter the Privy Council, might be seen to be acquiescent and accepting of heretical teaching.\(^{50}\) As has been observed in the previous chapter, he placed considerable store upon the providential relationship between the Church and the Crown, but in this instance objected to the unconstitutional position allowing the Privy Council Judicial Committee, as a purely secular court, to over-rule a Church court in a matter of doctrine.\(^{51}\)

In London, Denison worked with leading High Churchmen, both lay and clerical, to effect a synodical declaration by both the Convocations of York and Canterbury ‘to re-affirm the Doctrine of the Church of England on the subject of Holy Baptism’.\(^{52}\) This affirmation was publicized as a declaration over the signatures of Churchmen headed by Henry Manning, and included, amongst others, John Keble, Edward Pusey, Robert and Henry Wilberforce, Richard Cavendish, James Hope and Denison himself.\(^{53}\) The declaration signalled two important issues arising as a consequence

\(^{48}\) *Life*, pp193-5.
\(^{49}\) *Life*, Protest A, pp193f.
\(^{50}\) *Life*, Protest B, p194.
\(^{51}\) Joseph Hume had asked in the Commons what notice the Government was going to take of Denison’s impugning the judgment of the Judicial Committee. PD, 3rd Series, Vol 109, 18 March 1850, col 1054. Denison had asserted: ‘I have not denied, and do not deny, that the Queen’s Majesty is Supreme Governor of this Church and Realm; ... But I humbly conceive that the Constitution does not attribute to the Crown without a Synod lawfully assembled, the right of deciding a question of Doctrine; and this – although disclaimed by the Lords of the Judicial Committee of Her Majesty’s Privy Council – is what, as appears to me, has been done, indirectly indeed, but unequivocally, in the late case of ‘Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter’’. *Life*, p196.
\(^{52}\) *Life*, p200.
\(^{53}\) *Life*, p198. The declaration was published in *The Times*, 20 March 1850. The other signatories were Thomas Thorp, a leading member of the Bristol Union; William Mill, Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge; William Dodsworth, Incumbent of Christ Church St Pancras; W J E Bennett, Incumbent of
of the Privy Council’s decision. First was an objection to the intrusion of a secular court as arbiter in matters of doctrine; and, as a corollary, objection to the perpetual suspension of Convocation’s power to conduct business preventing the Church of England exercising her own corporate judgment in such matters. Second, an objection to the judgment of the Judicial Committee as abandoning an article of the Creed - ‘one baptism for the remission of sins’, – and thus an abandonment of the Catholic Faith.54 If this were so, then there arose two related questions: what was the authority for the doctrine taught by the Church of England; and what were the grounds for believing in the validity of her sacraments, if she was in fact separated from the universal Catholic Church?55 Denison was frustrated that nothing effective had been done to refute the Privy Council judgment on this point. He wrote to the Rev W H Hoare expressing his frustration:

I cannot think anything that has been done yet – since the delivery of a judgment by a supreme Court of Appeal, which goes the full length of saying that the Church of England is not a branch of the Church Catholic, because it goes the full length of denying the essential meaning in an article of the Creed – can be regarded as amounting in reality to anything like a sufficient repudiation of the deadly heresy which has been attempted to be fastened upon us – the beginning of such a repudiation has, in my belief and judgment, still to be made.56

The problem that faced the Church of England following the Gorham Case was she had no instrument to effect a corporate response. Since 1717 the crown had inhibited the Convocations of Canterbury and York from conducting business.57 Bishop Blomfield of London addressed the issue in Parliament, noting that ‘the Church of England is the only Church in Christendom, which is deprived of the powers of Synodical deliberation’.58 Blomfield introduced a bill to create a new

St Paul's Knightsbridge (later to be Vicar of Frome, Somerset); Richard Cavendish; and three barristers - Edward Badeley, J C Talbot & J R Hope. A list of the signatories is published in Life, p199.
54 The text published in Life p198f
55 See para VI and VII of the Resolutions, Life p198.
56 G A Denison to W H Hoare, 5 June 1850. LED, p13f.
58 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 111, 3 June 1850, col 606. Blomfield was definitely of the view that Gorham’s doctrine was wrong, his assertions serving ‘to deprive holy Baptism of its sacramental character, and
tribunal to hear appeals on matters of doctrine. The bill was defeated in the Lords at its second reading by a majority of thirty-three – the Bishops of Durham, Down, Worcester, and Norwich voting against. This failure was seen by Denison as feeble. ‘When the majority of them [the bishops] having agreed at their second meeting to the principle and substance of a declaration, afterwards shrank from it, upon what I have heard called by one of their number “the most frivolous pretences” – I believe that a greater chill and despondency seized upon many hearts.’

Denison’s disillusionment at Blomfield’s failure to legislate for a new tribunal was the greater because he had been at work with William Palmer to garner support to remove appeals in ecclesiastical causes from the purview of the secular Judicial Committee, and then to re-activate Convocation. Palmer had been positive with regard to Blomfield’s bill: ‘I find there has been a great effort made by the right minded amongst the bishops to correct one of the grievances – the Court of Appeal.’ However, Denison was incensed by the lack of united action by the episcopal bench in the Lords. ‘There is no Bishop who is not in a fright, except the Bishop of Exeter [Phillpotts] and yourself.’ He believed the bishops’ failure to defend the Church’s teaching on the sacraments would see further erosion of doctrine. ‘What shall be assailed next, when the outwork of Sacramental truth has been thus stormed by the enemy? The history of Ultra-Protestant Communion and

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59 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 111, 3 June 1850, col 606.
60 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
64 G A Denison to the Bishop of [not named – I have not able to confirm the identity of the bishop as there is no addressee. Likely to have been either Wilberforce, or Bagot], 13 November 1851. LED, p28.
their almost universal descent into Socinianism is a warning to the Church of England.  

During the summer of 1850, Denison was busy stirring the Church Unions in Bristol and London to action. This led to two large meetings on 23 July in St Martin’s Hall and the Freemason’s Tavern. Denison and his fellow organizers were supported by Bishop Bagot who attended both meetings – his presence the more remarkable because of the absence of support by others on the episcopal bench. The Bishop of Exeter was delighted by the meetings and the efforts made by the Bristol Union to support him, communicated by Denison. Phillpotts wrote: ‘I am anxious to know what steps are intended to follow up the glorious meeting in St Martin’s and Freemason’s Hall. I am more than pleased with the declaration of Archdeacons Manning and Wilberforce, and Dr Hall. What names are these?’  

In August of 1850, the Metropolitan Church Union sent a memorial to Archbishop Sumner begging him not to take steps to institute Gorham, ‘imploring’ him that ‘he would unite with the great body of the clergy and laity of the Church of England in maintaining the true doctrine of the Holy Sacraments’. At a meeting of the Bristol Church Union on 12 August 1850 Denison noted that the Court of Arches, when issuing a commission for the institution of Gorham, ‘expressly declared that it acted ministerially, not carrying out its own decree, but the decree of a superior court, in obedience to Her Majesty’s command’. The import of this declaration, Denison believed, was that the ecclesiastical court had not revoked its own judgment that Gorham was unfit for institution, and ‘that Mr Gorham is still under the formal

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65 G A Denison to W H Hoare, 5 June 1850. LED, p14.
66 Denison’s account of Bagot’s attendance at the meetings appears in Life, p201.
67 Ibid, 9 September 1850, p103.
68 The memorial was recorded by the Bristol Church Union, Minutes of the general meetings, p100.
69 Ibid, 12 August 1850, p99. Sir Herbert Fust, the Dean of Arches, notwithstanding his own ruling, was obliged to issue the commission for Gorham’s institution, which took place 6 August 1850.
censure of the Church for false doctrine which is undoubted heresy by ancient Church law’.  

In the midst of all this activity in 1850, Denison had been in correspondence with his old provost, Edward Hawkins. The latter, while going some way with Denison on the dangers to the faith, did not concur with regard to the Gorham case, which Hawkins considered the Judicial Committee had got substantially right, ‘and so do others whose learning and judgment and orthodoxy you could not dispute’. Hawkins tried to pour cold water on Denison’s alarm, suggesting he took an ‘exaggerated view of the present question’. However, Hawkins’ equanimity was not shared either by Denison or by the Bishop of Exeter, who not only considered the Privy Council Committee had allowed heresy, but that in so doing it had irredeemably compromised the Church of England. Denison supported the line taken by Phillipotts, as he demonstrated in a resolution moved in the Bristol Church Union. ‘That the respectful thanks of this meeting be tendered to the Lord Bishop of Exeter for his Protest brought into the Court of Arches on the 20th day of July in the present year against the institution of the Rev’d George Cornelius Gorham BD to the vicarage of Bramford Speke in the County of Devon in the Diocese of Exeter.’

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70 Ibid, 12 August 1850, p100.
73 In the very extensive pamphlet war following the Judgment of the Judicial Committee, J C S Nias (Gorham and the Bishop of Exeter, 1951) has identified four broad classes among the writers involved. There were those such as Phillipotts, whom Nias has indentified as holding a high doctrine of baptism, and maintaining a doctrine of justification that insisted on the centrality of grace imparted at baptism. Those who thought like Phillipotts considered the Church of England to have been irredeemably compromised. A second class comprised Pusey and Keble, who shared the same doctrine as Phillipotts, but were less convinced that the Church was critically compromised, as the judgment had been made by a civil, rather than an ecclesiastical court. In the third class, Nias identified William Goode, who had provided theological advice to Gorham’s lawyers. Less extreme than Gorham, Goode allowed that regeneration was given in baptism in some cases. The fourth class was constituted by Gorham, and those such as he, who entirely denied baptismal regeneration. Denison falls into Nias’ first category, as being one who believed the Gorham judgment was ‘an intolerable challenge to sound doctrine and an indication that the Church of England had betrayed her trust’.
74 Bristol Church Union, Minutes of general meetings 20 January 1848 – 2 April 1867, p99.
Denison associated himself with the campaign Phillpotts directed against Archbishop Sumner’s role as an assessor on the Judicial Committee, when in November 1851 he went down to Devon where a strategy for war against Sumner was deliberated. He found himself in the company of John Keble, Thomas Cloughton, William Scott and others. They resolved upon an address (petition) to be introduced to both Houses of the Convocation of Canterbury, when it assembled in February 1852, seeking remedy for wrongs done to the Church, principally by the actions of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Convocation had lain dormant since 1717. In 1851, for the first time in nearly a century and a half, Convocation showed an indication it was to become active again receiving petitions if not yet undertaking business. Samuel Wilberforce the following year petitioned the queen to allow Convocation a royal licence to conduct business. Convocation sat for the first time in November 1852 without being prorogued.

Phillpotts’ militant stance in defence of the Church’s faith, and the reasoning he advanced in his attacks on the archbishop, appear to have had a degree of influence on Denison’s own public stance on sacramental doctrine. Denison’s inclusion in the group that met at Exeter to plan a strategy to attack Sumner was arguably significant, as was his high regard for Phillpotts’ determination to stand his ground in contrast with the passivity of the other bishops. In his *Letter to the Archbishop* (1850), Phillpotts defended the doctrine of sacramental grace – that the gift of grace in baptism, whether of an infant, or that of an adult, was absolutely independent of anything in the receiver. Phillpotts kept up the pressure the following year with his *Pastoral letter to the clergy of the diocese of Exeter* (1851).

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75 Thomas Leigh Cloughton (1808-1892) was at this time Vicar of Kidderminster. He became Bishop of Rochester (1867) and the first Bishop of St Alban’s (1877); William Scott (1813-1872). Evidently earlier differences were in some ways overcome and Keble’s relations with Denison were resumed. However, Denison was advised by William Palmer that Keble and Pusey did not trust GAD. See below.

76 Denison to the Bishop of [not named], 13 November 1851. *LED*, p27f. The group assembled at Exeter was looking to find a bishop to present the address at Convocation. Denison was under the impression Phillpotts did not feel he could do this, so Denison wrote to sound out another bishop, whose name is not recorded.


78 Denison owned a copy of this pamphlet, as he did Phillpotts’ *Letter to the churchwardens of Bramford Speke* (1850). Items 145 and 171 in the Denison’s pamphlet collection held at Pusey House.
with further comment on the Church of England’s sacramental system and her Catholic character.\textsuperscript{79} Phillpotts assailed Sumner’s doctrine of the Church and the sacraments, taking the archbishop to task for an earlier attack on Gladstone’s High Church doctrine of the Church.\textsuperscript{80} He recognized that Sumner’s sally against Gladstone was significant, as revealing Sumner’s ecclesiology and explaining the archbishop’s stance in the Gorham controversy.\textsuperscript{81} He considered Sumner’s doctrine of the Church was defined by his seeing it through the eyes of the individual. How, Sumner had asked, ‘can we venture to interpose the Church instead of Christ, as mediator between God and man? It is simply as members of the body that we have any rights at all.’\textsuperscript{82} From the same perspective Phillpotts attacked Sumner’s notion that the efficacy of the sacraments was qualified by an individual’s faith, as he also attacked Sumner with regard to the doctrine of justification and the archbishop’s emphasis upon fideism – a doctrine which accorded with Summer’s doctrine of the Church.\textsuperscript{83}

The differences between Phillpotts’ and Sumner’s sacramental doctrine, doctrine of justification, and ecclesiology were, at root, a profound difference in their understanding of the identity of the Church of England – a difference, as will be explored below, that brought Denison distress. In the aftermath of the Gorham

\textsuperscript{79} Henry Phillpotts, \textit{Pastoral letter}, p2; the sacramental system pp 64-71, especially 70f.

\textsuperscript{80} Phillpotts characterized Sumner’s attack on Gladstone’s adumbration of the Catholic doctrine of the Church in \textit{Church principles} (1840) as a ‘whole load of invective’. Gladstone had written: ‘Now the Catholic doctrine of the Church is intended to bring home to the mind the joint ideas, that we are members of a body, that that body is the Body of Christ, and that the Body of Christ is also the spouse of Christ, under the law that two shall be one flesh. The doctrine that represents the Church as the ground of our privileges, so represents it, because this in fact is the most accurate, the most comprehensive, the most profound and inward manner of exhibiting our close and vital relation to the redeemer as the very organs of that Body in which He fulfils from day to day.’ \textit{Church principles considered in their results}, p150f.

\textsuperscript{81} Phillpotts accused Sumner of dishonesty. He observed that all references to Gladstone’s work had been silently removed in the second edition of Sumner’s Charge (1841), and instead Sumner redirected his attack to Tract XLVIII, citing passages that Phillpotts found were in fact words of Bishop Pearson arguing the necessity of believing in the Holy Catholic Church as an article of the Creed. Phillpotts noted that Sumner, by contradistinction, considered ‘the Church’ to be merely a term that comprehended those who believe in Christ, Sumner having stated: ‘We may personify a body, for the convenience of discourse, and by degrees forget that community is not a person’. J B Sumner, \textit{Charge} p30, cited by Phillpotts in his \textit{Pastoral letter}, p31.

\textsuperscript{82} Henry Phillpotts, \textit{A pastoral letter to the clergy of the Diocese of Exeter on the present state of the Church}. 4\textsuperscript{th} ed 1851, p29. J B Sumner, \textit{Charge}, p137.

\textsuperscript{83} Henry Phillpotts, \textit{A pastoral letter}, 15ff.
case, Phillpotts identified the rise of an element within the Church of England opposed to a Catholic understanding of the reformed Church of England, as a new element in the Church – an element Phillpotts considered Sumner had facilitated. He charged the archbishop with rabble-rousing under the guise of opposing so-called Romanising, as threatening the ‘very existence of the Church of England as a sound branch of the Catholic Church of Christ’. Phillpotts’ differences with Sumner were not surprising, for Archbishop Sumner was, as Chadwick has observed, the first Archbishop of Canterbury ‘as “Reformed” as Archbishops Grindal, Whitgift or Abbot’.

That Phillpotts was an exemplar for Denison is shown when, joining the fray in 1851 in support of Phillpotts with a pamphlet, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords*, he noted that it was only from the Diocese of Exeter that he could identify any resistance to the Privy Council judgment. Denison’s 1851 pamphlet was his first extended commentary on the doctrine of the sacraments. It was directed against Gorham: ‘What has the Church of England DONE, either by her clergy, or her people, to show that she does not hold what Mr Gorham holds?’ The controversy arising from Gorham’s belief in the necessity of prevenient grace, and denial of the efficacy of baptismal grace through the outward and visible sign of the water of baptism, led Denison to consider the parallel in eucharistic doctrine, and to refute the argument that grace communicated in baptism and at the eucharist was dependent upon the worthiness of the receiver. Denison was seized by the idea of God’s saving grace in the economy of salvation. He argued the sacraments of baptism and communion could not be separated, as in both the efficacy of the sacraments (baptism and communion) was by the grace of God. There was, therefore Denison argued, an inter-connection of sacramental doctrine – baptism

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87 G A Denison, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords?* p15f.  
88 ‘Man born into the world a member of old creation, is born again a member of a new creation – “born of water and of the Spirit” – in and by Holy Baptism: and the principle of life in Christ thus imparted to man in and by Holy Baptism is renewed and carried unto such perfection as is attainable in this life, in and by Holy Communion’. *Ibid*, p16.
and holy communion. At baptism an individual was made a child of God, ‘renewed from time to time in communion’. At communion, the gift of grace was always given to everyone who received the sacrament.89

Now if the doctrine be one, it will follow that the acceptance of it must be one – truth of belief is not divisible. Wherefore to make it correct to say of any one that he holds THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, it must appear that he is of sound belief alike in respect of holy Baptism and holy Communion; ie that he holds alike REGENERATION in holy Baptism, and the REAL PRESENCE in holy Communion. And further, that there is no room for a sound belief in REGENERATION in holy Baptism without a sound belief in the real presence in Holy Communion, and vice versa.90

Denison extended his argument with respect to the parallel between regeneration in baptism, by appealing to the doctrine of the real presence in the eucharist.

Wherefore to make it correct to say of any one that he holds THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, it must appear that he is of sound belief alike in respect of holy Baptism and holy Communion; ie that he holds alike REGENERATION in the holy Baptism, and THE REAL PRESENCE in the holy Communion, and vice versa.91

Denison made no attempt to elaborate on the doctrine of the real presence in his 1851 pamphlet. Not only is there no elaboration, but the doctrine of the real presence is subordinate to his principal object – that of arguing the unity of the sacraments, and the efficacy of God’s grace under the visible and outward signs, which Denison sought to emphasize as not being dependent on the effort or worthiness of the recipient. This he articulated in a series of propositions:

IV. That the GIFT may be RECEIVED, in the case of adults, worthily, or unworthily, but it is always RECEIVED.

V. That the Body and Blood of Christ are GIVEN to everyone who RECEIVES the sacramental Bread and Wine.

89 Ibid, p15f.
90 Ibid, p16.
91 Ibid.
That the GIFT may be RECEIVED worthily or unworthily, but it is always received.92

Denison’s formulation of his argument may have owed something to Palmer’s Treatise on the Church of Christ, in which Palmer opined that, contrary to the notion that reception of the sacrament was dependent upon the worthiness of the receiver, the sacrament received by the worthy and the unworthy was the same, although to the condemnation of the latter.93 Whatever the case, Denison’s 1851 pamphlet, Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords?, show his arguments with respect to the doctrine of the sacraments were cast in a particular form directed to the Gorham Case. This is of significance, as Denison remained wedded to this form in which he cast his views on the doctrine of the sacraments. Denison’s views on sacramental doctrine became widely broadcast – his pamphlet Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords? sold well, undergoing three reprints.

Papal aggression and charges of Romanising

The Gorham judgment of 1850, however, was not the only shadow over the Church of England in that year. In the autumn of 1850 the Church was challenged by the introduction of a Roman Catholic hierarchy. The immediate widespread reaction was severely hostile, and the prospect of a Roman Catholic revival brought populist cries of ‘No Popery’.94 Furthermore, secession to Rome of notable Anglicans, including Phillpotts’ chaplain, William Maskell,95 was a matter of concern and

92 Ibid, p15.
93 ‘It is a pious, probable, and Catholic opinion, that the wicked eat not the flesh of the Christ in the Eucharist, because our Lord himself said, “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life”: but since these words may possibly refer to a worthy participation in the Lord’s Supper, and since many in the church have held that the wicked so in fact receive the Body of Christ, though to their condemnation; this doctrine is taught by the Church of England as the more pious and probable opinion.’ William Palmer, A treatise on the Church of Christ. 2nd ed, vol 2, p263.
94 On anti-Catholic sentiments in this period see E R Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, and Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church.
95 William Maskell (1814-1890) was received into the Roman Church in June 1850. ODNB.
embarrassment for Denison and the Church Union, as was the conversion of Lord Fielding, who had been a leading layman in the Church Union movement and so recently had chaired the ‘Great Meeting’ at the Freemason’s Tavern in the aftermath of the Gorham case. Denison certainly had intimation of the direction of Maskell’s mind, for the latter had written in March 1850: ‘I think [Maskell’s emphasis] I have determined to go to town, on or about the 9\(^{th}\) [April] and not to publish or resign, until I have made one more effort.’\(^6\) Maskell’s letter suggests Denison himself was close to resignation, for Maskell commented on a draft Denison had forwarded:

I cannot see any objection whatever to your printing it; indeed if you could express even more thoroughly your conviction that a distinct position must now be taken – whatever the end be – it would probably do good. It seems to necessary that you should at least hint as to what your course would be, after resigning (if so obliged) your benefice – I know many who may never go to Rome, at a repudiation of such a contingency, as being possible, now.\(^7\)

Denison and William Palmer made common cause in the Bristol Church Union in October 1850 in an attempt to dissociate the union from perceptions of Romanising tendencies while defending the Catholic character of the Church of England. At a special meeting of the Bristol Church Union of 1 October 1850, Palmer proposed a ‘Statement of Principles’, subscription to which would aver loyalty to the Church of England. However, Pusey, amongst others, argued Palmer’s proposal introduced ‘a declaration of faith over and above the formularies of the Church of England’.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) William Maskell to Denison 30 March 1850. Denison Papers, M16/12, Pusey House.

\(^7\) Ibid. Denison’s outward correspondence of this period was accidently destroyed.

\(^8\) Palmer’s resolution was scuppered by a motion of Lord Forbes seconded by A B J Hope. Bristol Church Union. Minutes of General Meetings 20 January 1848 – 2 April 1867, p111. Forbes and Hope doubtless represented a view widely held by leading members of the Church Union. This view was put forcefully by Pusey at a meeting of the London Church Union convened to consider the problems in the Bristol Union. Pusey did not believe they could put in hand ‘statements which our Church has not put forward’. Guardian, 16 October 1850, p734. M W Mayow acknowledged Palmer was opposed to additional terms of subscription, but the practical consequence of the adoption of his Principles would have amounted to just such a test. Guardian, 7 October 1850, p715.
Denison, looking for assertions of loyalty, declared: ‘The Statement of Principles affirms the distinctive position of the Catholic Church of England as Reformed, and repudiating on the one hand the existing features of the Roman system; on the other, the abuse of private judgment, negative Protestantism, Rationalism and Latitudinarianism.’

Anticipating a majority opposed to Palmer’s resolution, Denison and others had prepared the previous day for a new union – the Bristol and Somerset Union. The union movement was thrown into disarray, and in the following months the Bristol Church Union suffered a succession of resignations; indeed, the records of the union show the Bristol Union was abandoned at this time.

Denison seems not have thought of himself at this time as a party man, or linked in that sense to the Tractarian leaders, as he had asserted in correspondence with Edward Hawkins. Palmer counseled Denison, ‘Do not suppose that Keble and his

99 Ibid. Denison could not conceive why men could not understand that a statement, such as Palmer’s Principles, was ‘imperatively called for at this time’; nor could he comprehend why ‘it is regarded as a new test’. Guardian, 7 October 1850, p715. M W Mayow conceded the problem seen by Denison that ‘in the uninformed public mind’ the Union was identified with the pretensions of Rome, and therefore this led to the desire to have a ‘fresh statement of adhesion to the church of England’. Guardian, 7 October 1850, p715.

100 ‘We had anticipated the rejection of Mr Palmer’s paper.’ Denison to Editor of the Guardian 9 October 1850. Denison continued the fight, attempting to secure support for Palmer’s Principles within the Union movement, taking up cudgels against the London Union. See copy of Denison’s Resolution forwarded to the Bristol Church Union and recorded in the Committee Minutes, 14 October 1850, p125; also Alexander Watson’s letter to Denison published in the Guardian, 6 November 1850, p798. Beyond the politics of the Union movement, Denison managed in his own diocese the following month, 14 November, to prosecute the case for High Church loyalty within the Church of England by moving an ‘Address of loyalty’ to Bagot. Life, p216.

101 Mayow wrote: ‘there is now an open division among those fighting the battle of the Church of England ... it is evident to the world that such is the fact ... the Bristol and Somerset Union in existence from the evening of October 1st, and avowedly set on foot by those who are dissatisfied with the proceedings of the day in the special meeting of the Bristol Church Union, most undeniably and amply testifies it.’ Guardian, 7 October 1850, p715.

102 The series of resignations began to be recorded at the meeting of the Committee on 7 October, when, among others, Biber, Palmer and Henry Hoare resigned. Denison resigned as secretary, but seemingly not as a member. Bristol Church Union, Committee Minutes 7 October 1850, p123. In the following months the Committee recorded resignations that cumulatively amounted to a sizeable proportion of the total membership. Committee Minutes, 14 October - 18 resignations; 21 October, - 3 resignations; 9 December - 7 resignations; 16 December - 10 resignations; 23 December - 5 resignations; 30 December - 6 resignations; 7 January 1851 - 10 resignations; 13 January - 7 resignations; 20 January - 18 resignations.

103 Hawkins offered an insightful rejoinder: ‘You do not admit that you belong to any party, and I am happy to hear you say so. I hope you would not always agree in doctrine with some of those with
clique trust you – They do not! Palmer’s correspondence with Denison showed the former’s distrust of Pusey’s influence, and of Pusey’s and Keble’s judgment. Palmer feared the alienation of the educated class of laymen, and moreover was alarmed at the prospect that the ‘Church Movement’ (the Church Unions) would under Pusey’s and Keble’s influence take on ‘the character of a ‘Tractarian’ Movement’, and with their poor judgment they would influence men’s loyalty to the Church of England. Palmer agreed with Denison that they should not stress an anti-Rome sentiment as a negative, but Palmer did want open declarations of loyalty to the doctrine and discipline of the English Church, and defence of her doctrine in the matter of baptism.

The reproach levelled at the Tractarians for tendencies to Romanising was famously made by Lord John Russell in a letter to Bishop Maltby of Durham, published in The Times on 7 November 1850, in which Russell linked the papal incursion with the behaviour of Tractarian clergy who had emboldened Rome. Closer to home Denison had good cause to fear the detrimental association made between High Churchmen, and the alleged Romanising of Tractarians. The Dean of Bristol, Gilbert Elliot, at a meeting of clergy in Bristol, contended that the introduction of the Roman episcopate could be linked with the Tractarians.
The Papists themselves seem to admit that all this unwonted success, astonishing themselves, and all their new-born hopes, are attributable to the existence and the working of Tractarianism. It does not need that the papist should address himself to, or enter into discussion with, the confirmed Protestant. They allege freely, they have never concealed, that Tractarianism is doing their work. It is when Tractarianism has unsettled the Protestant that the Romanists step in.\(^{109}\)

Many on the episcopal bench also looked askance at what seemed to them to be Romanising tendencies within Tractarianism. Archbishop Sumner told his diocesan clergy: ‘Our first duty, therefore, in the present crisis is to retrace our steps wherever they have tended to Romish doctrine or Romish superstition; and, we appeal to the Legislature to protect our Church from foreign invasion, to be specially careful that we are not betrayed by enemies within.’\(^{110}\) Even the High Church bishops, amongst them Denison’s own brother, were concerned with the direction of events, though Edward Denison was more moderate in his criticism.

The people of England are assuredly not disposed to take upon themselves again the yoke of a foreign bondage, or to accept as articles of faith doctrines incapable of proof from the word of God, and unsupported by the practice of the first ages of the Church. And, however we may lament that some of us have proved faithless to the trust committed to them, and that in some few quarters a tendency may manifest itself to approach too nearly to the system of the Church of Rome, do not let us either ourselves imagine, or, by vague and general charges or insinuation, lead others to suppose, that this evil is more extensive than it really is.\(^{111}\)

\(^{109}\) _Speech of the very Rev the Dean of Bristol 12 November, 1850._ Cited in _The Roman Catholic question_, p115. William Gresley responded to the Dean’s speeches on Romanising influences in a pamphlet, _A letter to the Dean of Bristol on what he considers the ‘fundamental error’ of Tractarianism._ 1851.

\(^{110}\) John Bird Sumner, _To the Archdeacons and clergy of the Diocese of Canterbury._ 21 November 1850. Cited in _The Roman Catholic question_, p163.

\(^{111}\) Edward Denison, ‘To the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Wiltshire, 11 November 1850’; cited in _The Roman Catholic question_, p182.
George Denison took the opposite view to that of the two archbishops and other critics. While contending the Romans had in fact done nothing that civil liberties and the law of the land did not permit them to do, he contended that any success the Romans might have had in converting members of the Church of England was not because of Romanising tendencies, but because her Catholic nature was dismissed and undermined.\(^\text{112}\) In a letter to the *Guardian* of 1 November 1850, Denison argued that the Romans had power or influence in England only in proportion to the subversion of the Catholic character of the Church of England by the actions of the State in the Gorham Case, the appointment of Hampden to Hereford, and the crushing of Church education.\(^\text{113}\) Denison was not alone in this appraisal. Archdeacon Benjamin Harrison thought the Romanists had been encouraged by the anomalies and perplexities arising out of the relationship of the Church with the State.\(^\text{114}\) This was a theme to which Denison recurred frequently in the years to come.

**Bishop Spencer and Bishop Bagot**

Denison’s 1851 pamphlet, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords*, made it evident he was not one to entertain, or allow, anomalies and perplexities to persist. On his appointment as examining chaplain for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, he seized the opportunity to dispel doubts as to the Church’s teaching on sacramental doctrine. He had already intimated in his 1851 pamphlet there was a need for better preparation and grounding of candidates for ordination in sound doctrine.\(^\text{115}\) He believed many candidates did not truly know the prayer

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\(^\text{112}\) G A Denison to the Editor of *The Times*, 5 November 1850; cited in *The Roman Catholic question*, p29. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham, W B Ullathorne, argued the Roman Catholics conformed to the latitude allowed by the 1829 Catholic Emancipation measure. Ullathorne to *The Times*, 22 October 1850; cited in *The Roman Catholic question*, p23.

\(^\text{113}\) Denison to the editor of the *Guardian*, 1 November 1850; cited in *The Roman Catholic question*, p30.

\(^\text{114}\) Benjamin Harrison, *The present position of the Church of England and consequent duties of her ministers. A charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Maidstone*. 1851, p36.

\(^\text{115}\) G A Denison, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords?* p23f. See also *Life* p220f. Denison observed that in many dioceses only six months notice was required to be given by
book or their Bible. Specifically, he believed many ordinands had not been taught the Church’s doctrine; they did not know ‘exactly and particularly’ what the Church holds as a branch of the CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST’. To ensure that ordinands were acquainted ‘exactly and particularly’ with the doctrines of the Church, he examined thoroughly the sacramental doctrine of those offering for ordination, rejecting those who did not satisfy him.

Denison’s appointment as Archdeacon of Taunton in 1851, afforded him an outlet for his views in visitation charges, the first of which was delivered in May of 1852. Making reference to the false position in which he considered the Church to have been placed because her Catholic and apostolic character marred and obscured, Denison believed circumstances called for Churchmen to affirm the doctrine of the Church.

I believe that all circumstances, within and without the Church of England, are rapidly combining to present Her before the world, not in theory only, but in practice also, as what She really is, a true branch of the Catholic Church of Christ; holding all the Truth; neither adding thereto nor diminishing therefrom; in doctrine Evangelical, in order Apostolical; and going forth in renewed vigour.

With Bishop Bagot in increasingly poor health, considerable power and influence accrued to Denison. Bagot’s declining powers came to prevent him from conducting ordinations, on which account he licensed George Trevor Spencer, the retired Bishop of Madras, as commissary to ordain in his stead – the first occasion being at the Advent ordination in 1852. Trouble arose for Denison in early 1853, candidates for ordination. On giving notice, the candidates were supplied with a reading list which formed the basis of a cursory examination. Denison’s complaint was that these books were ‘got up’ quickly, and there was no requirement for a wider and more profound theological knowledge.

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117 G A Denison, Primary Charge, May 1852. p15.
118 Denison had obtained from Bagot sole authority to examine ordination candidates. See Joyce Coombs, George Anthony Denison, p108.
119 George Trevor Spencer (1799-1866) was the second Bishop of Madras (1837-49). He was appointed commissary to Bishop Bagot, 4 October 1852.
when a deacon, William Fisher, wrote to Bishop Spencer to complain of the doctrine to which Denison required acquiescence as a condition of ordination to the priesthood. Fisher’s letter revealed that the archdeacon’s requirements, as a demonstration of holding a sound doctrine of the sacraments, was an affirmation of regeneration in baptism and of the real presence in the eucharist. Furthermore, Denison was alleged to have imposed on ordination candidates a proof test as to the efficacy of God’s grace in both sacraments under the visible and outward signs. This test was derived from Denison’s propositions published in his 1851 pamphlet, *Why should the bishops sit in the House of Lords?* A very public disagreement broke out between Spencer and Denison, the former declaring Denison’s doctrine was not that of the Church of England. Their differences were aired in public with the publication of their correspondence and statements of their respective views. The consistency of Denison’s position can be shown by the republication of his statements on the doctrine of the sacraments published in his 1851 pamphlet, and printed in parallel columns alongside the statements made in his exchanges with Bishop Spencer and published in the preface to his sermons on the real presence. Denison’s object remained as before – namely to argue that the efficacy of the sacraments were not dependent upon the effort and worthiness of the receiver. Denison had, in correspondence with Bishop Spencer, altered the wording of his propositions to place a little more emphasis on the real presence, but nevertheless he remained wedded to the objective and essentials of the form in which he cast his argument in 1851.

That there is a Real Presence of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Sacramental Bread and Wine, in a manner which, as the Holy Scripture has not explained, the Church has not defined. That the Body and Blood of CHRIST, being really present in the Sacramental Bread and Wine, are given in and by the outward sign to all, and are received by all.  

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120 See above p22.  
121 G A Denison, *The real presence*, pp6-10.  
122 Denison published his doctrine in 1851, and republished this again as a preface to his sermons on the real presence in parallel with the statements he made in correspondence with Bishop Spencer. *The real presence*, pp 6-10.  
123 *The real presence*, p7. Denison was careful to deny transubstantiation, stating he held the real presence ‘to be purely and absolutely a Spiritual Presence’. *Ibid*, p9.
Denison was careful to qualify the latter statement, declaring whether the gift of
the sacrament was ‘received “unto life,”’ or “unto death” depended upon the ‘heart
and mind of the receiver’’. Nevertheless, he declared the same sacrament was
given to both the worthy and unworthy: ‘in other words, that the Body and Blood of
CHRIST are present to all objectively, – subjectively, that they are present to the
faithful only.’

The exchanges between Denison and Bishop Spencer did not reflect well on
either man. A reviewer in The Ecclesiastical Review and Theologian described their
correspondence as ‘humiliating’. Spencer was dismissed as being theologically
inadequate. ‘In Bishop Spencer, indeed, we find simply the English untheological
mind, but when the subject on which the mind is engaged is one of the deepest
mysteries of our Faith, and owner of it, one of the Church’s chief pastors, the
exceeding painfulness of the result must be at once realized.’ But Denison was
also found wanting. His attitude towards those with whom he disagreed was
criticised as having the appearance of aggression. Furthermore, given Bishop
Bagot’s poor health and dependence, his resignation as examining chaplain was
construed as an act of self-centredness:

But neither, unhappily, can we approve altogether of the
Archdeacon’s share in the transaction. His language we are bound
to say, both towards the Bishop and towards the Deacon ... is
wanting in courtesy, and his statements are unnecessarily harsh
and repulsive: besides which his interpretation of the Catechism is
not to be commended, and his final resignation from his
chaplaincy looks like the act of a man who thinks too much of
vindicating his own personal consistency and courage.

125 John Ward Spencer, A letter to the Hon and Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, and G A
Denison, Correspondence: being a supplement to the letter addressed by the Rt Rev Bishop Spencer
to the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells. For Denison’s account of his difference with Bishop Spencer
see Life pp222-33; see also Joyce Coombs on this episode, George Anthony Denison: The Firebrand,
pp107-123.
126 The Ecclesiastical and Theologian, Vol XV (Jan-Dec) 1853, p334.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
Denison was further criticized for pushing too far his doctrine regarding reception by the wicked, a point on which, the reviewer argued, the Church was in fact silent:

Which, if a distinction is to be made between an Objective and a Subjective Presence, must of necessity be limited to those who are qualified to receive. But in point of fact the Catechism makes no such distinction; not because there is no difference between the Sacramentum and the Res Sacramenti; but simply because here, as in all her services, she assumes that such as come to take part in them are duly qualified. With the case of the wicked and such as have not a ‘lively faith’ and other necessary graces, it has, ex hypothesi, nothing at all to do, and therefore pronounces no opinion.  

Pusey questioned Denison’s contention that the gift was always given, suggesting, ‘It might please God to withdraw the res sacramenti as well as the gratia sacramenti.’ Pusey considered Denison’s argument contestable, and was greatly disturbed by Denison’s testing of his ordination candidates on this point. ‘I wish very much that you had not proposed the point, as a point of belief for one to be ordained priest: and I am very thankful that it has not come into a court.’ Pusey suggested this was a less than satisfactory way of arguing for the real presence should Denison be challenged in a court of law, and Denison would be better to focus directly on the doctrine of the real presence itself. Pusey had every reason for cautioning Denison given the outcome of the Gorham case.

Denison, however, remained wedded to the form in which he cast his arguments contra Gorham in 1851, and showed an arrogant disregard for such criticism, as he also dismissed the counsel of close friends who were worried about the consequences should he engage in further polemical exchanges in public. One such

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129 Ibid, pp134-5
130 Pusey to Denison [nd; Denison marked the letter as being received in July, and the Pusey’s reference to awaiting the publication of his sermon of 1853 suggests the year to be 1853].
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
friend, Dr Joseph Wolff, warned not only of the possibility of legal action, but the possibility that the Court of Arches, the Privy Council or indeed both of them might decide against him. Denison did not believe such an outcome was possible. Responding to Wolff, Denison rejecting his advice, wrote: ‘I don’t believe a syllable of it. My kind friends, and yourself among them, will not, I am sure, think me unmindful of their care and anxiety, or disposed needlessly to begin a great controversy, when I say that I have a very clear opinion formed, after long and patient consideration of the whole case, that their counsel is not good.’ Writing to his father-in-law, Joseph Henley in the autumn of 1854, Denison manifested a militant sense of purpose, declaring that he would do ‘all that lies in me to maintain truth of Doctrine’. Another letter written at this time reveals Denison’s self-appointed crusading spirit.

‘High Churchmen’ are an odd class. If a man goes to Rome, he has ‘a conscience’. If a man has no thought of Rome, he has no thought, nor ever had – and is forced, in defending himself against a formal charge of unsound doctrine, formally and publically to maintain the entire Doctrine of the Church of England, that man is ‘indiscreet’ – his conscience goes for nothing with ‘High Churchmen’. ... Which are the most earnest? Evangelicals who deny the doctrine of the Sacrament – and so do all they can to destroy it – or High Churchmen who affirm, but do not defend it?

The first sermon

Fully determined to pursue his course, and ignoring the advice of his friends, Denison preached a series of sermons on the real presence in Wells Cathedral. The first was delivered on 7 August 1853, the second on 6 November. Both sermons were published in London in the same year. A later third sermon was delivered the

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133 Joseph Wolff (1798-1862) was Vicar of Isle Brewers, Somerset, 1845-62.
134 G A Denison to the Rev Dr Joseph Wolff, 1 August 1853, pp53-4. Denison’s confidence may have been founded on Phillimore’s assessment. See LED, p54.
135 Denison to the Rev Dr Joseph Wolff 1 August 1853, LED, p53.
136 G A Denison to J W Henley, 6 October 1854. LED, p58.
137 G A Denison to Canon Cecil Wray, 6 December 1854. LED, p61.
following year on 14 May 1854, and also published. By the time Denison came to preach his first sermon in August 1853, Pusey’s sermon, *The presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist*, had been delivered in January of 1853 in Christ Church Cathedral, and published some weeks later with footnote references to the Church Fathers. A few months later, shortly before Whitsuntide 1853, Robert Wilberforce’s *The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* was published. Acknowledging reading these books and making use of them at several points to support his own arguments, Denison did not retire from the field with a sense that others with better theological qualifications had argued the doctrine for which he had contended.

Ignoring Pusey’s earlier counsel, he ploughed on determined to argue for the real presence in the peculiar form in which he had previously cast it. Once again he advanced his argument in the form of propositions:

1. That the Body and Blood of CHRIST are Really Present in the Consecrated Bread and Wine.

2. That the Body and Blood of CHRIST are Really Present in the Consecrated Bread and Wine, after a manner not material, or as it is said ‘ Corporal’, but immaterial and Spiritual.

3. That the Body and Blood of CHRIST being Really Present, after an immaterial and Spiritual manner, in the Consecrated Bread and Wine, are therein and thereby given to all, and received by all who come to the Lord’s table.

While two of the three propositions in the 1853 sermon related to the real presence, this doctrine remained, as before, subordinate to Denison’s primary purpose conceived in the controversy over Gorham’s doctrine of baptism - namely that there was a unitary doctrine of the two chief sacraments – baptism and eucharist. Denison continued to reiterate arguments advanced two years earlier in his 1851 pamphlet, *Why should the bishops continue to sit in the house of Lords?* That the doctrine of the real presence was secondary is further indicated by

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138 Only the first two sermons were adduced as evidence at the Bath Court.  
139 H P Liddon recorded Wilberforce’s book was published just before Whitsuntide 1853. See *Life of Pusey*, vol 3, p423, note 1.  
140 G A Denison, *The real presence*, p18.
Denison’s statement that purpose of his sermons was to counter Spencer’s refutation of Denison’s proposition that ‘the Body and Blood of Christ, being REALLY PRESENT in the sacramental Bread and Wine, are given, in and by the outward sign, to all, and are received by all’ as not being doctrine held by the Church of England.\textsuperscript{141}

Although titled \textit{The real presence}, Denison’s sermons were weighted in defence of his third proposition, and this shaped subsequent events when Denison published his sermons. Nevertheless, in \textit{The real presence}, Denison enlarged on his understanding of the doctrine to which he had previously only made brief reference by name in propositions. Denison believed that doctrine of the real presence was to be found in the liturgy of the Church of England, her catechism, as well as the homilies and articles.\textsuperscript{142} He was careful in his language advancing the doctrine of the real presence. He taught that the body and blood of Christ were present under the form of bread and wine by the act of consecration.\textsuperscript{143} He distinctly rejected any suggestion of Roman teaching, stating that Christ’s presence was not material or corporal, but ‘after an immaterial and spiritual manner, – a manner, which, as Holy Scripture has not explained, the Church has not defined’.\textsuperscript{144} He took care also to deny specifically a corporal presence, holding that Christ’s words in John, chapter 6, indicated the presence was a ‘Spiritual Presence’,\textsuperscript{145} and appealing to the Pauline tenet that the ‘types’ of covenant works are spiritual.\textsuperscript{146} Denison contended that that the dominical words at the institution were not to be understood as merely figurative, and declared himself to be ‘fully and unreservedly’ in agreement with Pusey’s argument that the principle of literal interpretation was to be applied the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid}, p10.
\item\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Ibid}, p17.
\item\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Ibid}, p18, & p91.
\item\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid}, p18.
\item\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid}, p23. Denison argued this was supported by our Lord’s words in Jn 6:61-63: ‘It is the spirit which quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.’
\item\textsuperscript{146} 1 Cor 10: 3-4. ‘where he is speaking of types of the Holy Eucharist, the Manna and the Rock, applies to both the word πνευματικον (spiritual). For if the types of covenant works were ‘spiritual’, so much more must we believe this of the antitypes of the Covenant of Grace.’ \textit{Ibid}, p27.
\end{enumerate}
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words of institution, and the same principle applied also to the words employed by the Gospels and St Paul to designate the elements after consecration.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p26. E B Pusey, \textit{The presence of Christ in the holy eucharist, etc.} 1843, pp25-33.}

Denison was not content, however, to present a straight-forward argument for the doctrine of the real presence. Ignoring Pusey’s admonition that it was preferable to argue the case for the real presence directly, he continued to annex his case for the real presence to his argument as to what was received – both by the worthy and the unworthy. Denison’s reasoned from his sense of the significance of the act of consecration – that the words of the dominical institution effected the sacrament. The act of consecration was of primary significance for Denison defining the nature of the eucharistic sacraments. In the form in which he represented the doctrine of the real presence, the contention, that all who received the consecrated bread and wine received the body and blood of Christ, was not just deduction, but inherently part of the doctrine itself.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p19.} Denison went further, declaring that as we do not know that the presence was withdrawn [in the instance of unworthy receivers], and the bread and wine cease to be what it had become by consecration, so, as Denison claimed on the ground of scripture, it followed that the body and blood of Christ ‘are given by the consecrated bread and wine to all, and are received by all who come to the Lord’s table.’\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p20.} Acknowledging this to be the root of the difference between himself and Bishop Spencer, Denison contended that this proposition was ‘a test of truth of doctrine, and soundness of faith’.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p20.} He showed himself wedded to the form in which he had cast his polemic on the doctrine of the sacraments in his 1851 pamphlet.

Denison’s first sermon on the real presence received a luke-warm reception, and attracted many of the same criticisms as had his earlier exchanges with Bishop Spencer. \textit{The Christian Remembrancer} reviewed Denison’s sermons together with
Pusey’s sermon, *The presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist*, and Robert Wilberforce’s *The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. The reviewer described Denison’s standing as a theologian disparagingly, though not unkindly. Once again it was observed that the archdeacon was trying to force his point:

Archdeacon Denison claims our respect and our sympathy, by his straight forward honesty and courage in standing up for the truth. But he is among divines what a noble and high-minded schoolboy is among men, and does not always see so much of the case before him, as persons of longer experience or calmer thought. He sees the point clearly himself, and does not see why other people should not see it clearly, when he puts it before them in plain words.\(^\text{151}\)

*The Ecclesiastic and Theologian* was kinder to Denison, and was supportive of his exposition of the nature of the eucharist and his insistence upon the real presence.\(^\text{152}\) However, both the *Ecclesiastic* and the *Remembrancer* were reluctant to travel as far as Denison with his ‘proof’ proposition concerning reception by the wicked. *The Remembrancer’s* reviewer was concerned by the extent to which Denison had gone, imposing a test upon a point on which the Church was silent:

Now this particular test is a proposition which the framers of the Articles of the Church of England were as careful not to affirm, as they were not to deny it. Their language implies that they were aware that such expression might be used in more than one sense, and they satisfied themselves with guarding against the superstition of delusive confidence in the reception of the Viaticum.\(^\text{153}\)


\(^{152}\) *Ibid*, p40. Cf the statement approved by the Reviewer: ‘The Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is therefore, not – as I believe it is very generally supposed to be – the presence of an Influence emanating from a Thing absent, but the invisible and supernatural presence of a Thing present; of His Body and Blood “under the Form of Bread and Wine”.’ G A Denison, *The real presence*, p80, note *.

The _Ecclesiastic_ remarked, ‘We cannot quite agree with Archdeacon Denison that the most available proof of the presence of this Res or Thing, is that it is received by every one who receives the outward sign’.  

The second sermon

Such criticism did not deter Denison from preaching a second sermon in November 1853. Indeed, the preface to this sermon shows that Denison did not hesitate to argue again his third proposition. To the reviewer’s suggestion that this amounted to a test, he asserted he had simply ‘ascertained’ and ‘declared’ the doctrine of the sacraments. So ignoring the criticism of his first sermon, he wrote: ‘What I have required of candidates for Holy Orders is that they should be able to state what that is which they affirm to be the Doctrine of the Church of England.’

His response to the reviewers’ criticism manifested combativeness and suggestion of self-righteousness defending his actions as examining chaplain. However this may have been, there was a further probable explanation for Denison’s stance – namely an emotional commitment stemming from a profound sense of the saving power of the sacraments as a manifestation of God’s mercy. No less than his Evangelical opponents, he was, as seen in an earlier chapter on the scriptures, thoroughly taken with the reality of the meta-narrative of the Bible: the reality of the fall and of God’s redeeming mercy mediated through Christ – available through the gift of the sacraments. Denison could not believe that the individual could redeem himself by his own unaided efforts – by virtue of his or her faith. He did

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154 _The Ecclesiastic and Theologian_, Vol XVI (Jan-Dec) 1854, p41.
155 ‘Viz, That to all who come to the Lord’s Table, to those who eat and drink worthily, and to those who eat and drink unworthily, the Body and Blood of CHRIST are given; and that by all who come to the Lord’s Table, by those who eat and drink worthily, and by those who eat and drink unworthily, the Body and Blood of CHRIST are received. ‘Advertisement’ [as preface to the second sermon] in _The real presence_, [np].
156 _Ibid_, p70.
157 ‘I cannot doubt he [the reviewer] would not have an Examining Chaplain … take heed that the persons he presents to the Bishop, be apt and meet, for their learning and Godly conversation, to exercise heir Ministry duly … – I cannot doubt that he would not have an Examining Chaplain do this without having ascertained, as best he may, what is the understanding of the persons, whom he is about to present to the Bishop, touching the DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS.’ _Ibid_, p64f
believe that God’s mercy was available as a gift. He was also committed to the notion that it was his role, as a priest, to administer this gift to his people.

Oh Priests of the Church God, to us is given to be the channels and agents whereby the Holy Ghost doth thus make the Body and the Blood of Christ to be Really, though invisibly and supernaturally, Present under the Form of Bread and Wine in the Lord’s Supper – to us it is given to ‘give’ His Body and His Blood unto His People.

Denison’s commitment to the idea of the gift of grace in the sacraments bore upon his understanding of justification, and here lay the root of his difficulty with receptionism. This was a matter he addressed in his second sermon.

In his first sermon, Denison had advanced his argument from the scriptures. In the second, he turned to the liturgy, catechism, homilies and articles. In these – ‘taken as a whole’ – Denison considered that the ‘Eternal Verities of the Gospel’ were to be found ‘unimpaired, complete, express and full’. Denison’s perspective was informed by a particular understanding of the English Reformation – that the reformers had cleared away the accretions and restored the Church of England so as to be in conformity with the Primitive Church. Denison did not subscribe to the concept of doctrinal development he saw in Rome and the Protestant reformers. He denied the influence of continental reformers, thus ‘preserving to the Church of England and to the Churches of her Communion Apostolic Doctrine’. His view of the sixteenth-century formularies was thus qualified:

Let it be admitted that, in these of her Formularies, which date from the Sixteenth Century, there is, here and there, to be found

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158 ‘The first thing then that is taught by the authority of the Church, is that which may be called the foundation of the Doctrine of the Sacraments; the revelation of the mysterious Gift of the new nature in Christ communicated to us by the use of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism.’ *Ibid*, p128.
159 Cf In his concern that his people received the sacraments, Denison stood in a High Church tradition that was articulated for example by Bishop Thomas Wilson in his *Instructions for better understanding the Lord’s supper*. In Denison’s day, Bishop Bagot expressed the same concern that sacraments were ignored. See Bagot, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Bath and Wells at his primary visitation, May 1847*, p34.
an expression, bearing the stamp of the times, and which to the uninformed and untheological mind, requires explanation and comparison and collation with general substance and form and manner of expression of the Formularies, taken as a whole.163

In the First Exhortation in the ‘Administration of Holy Communion’, he noted the prayer book declared that the sacrament to be ‘the Body and Blood of Christ’ and further that the sacrament was to be received by Christ’s people ‘in remembrance of his most meritorious Cross and Passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven’.164 Denison believed these statements not only refuted the notion that the grace of the sacraments was dependent upon the virtue of the receiver, but had no meaning unless his propositions were not true - that the sacrament was not the bare elements, and the sacraments were a gift of grace.165

Pursuing the idea that the sacraments were a gift and an instrument of God’s saving mercy,166 Denison considered the Church of England’s doctrine of justification was to be understood in conjunction with a number of other significant doctrines retained by the Church of England that distinguished her from continental Protestantism. On these doctrines (the authority of apostolic succession, private confession to a priest, public and private absolution, regeneration in holy baptism) manifested the relationship between the gift of God’s grace in the sacraments and the office and authority of the priesthood. Denison had a pastoral concern that men and women should not be deterred from coming to the holy communion. Thus, with regard to the Church’s general warning that communicants should not approach holy things lightly or in an unworthy state,167 he pointed to the words of encouragement contained in the liturgy, calling on those who did not despise the warning to make their humble confession to Almighty God, granting them

absolution, and then again the words of the Prayer of Humble Access, reminding communicants they were about to ‘eat the flesh’, and ‘drink the blood’ of Jesus Christ, and, ‘that it may be they will eat His Flesh and drink His Blood not to their soul’s health’.\footnote{Ibid, p106.} The prayer book did not, Denison observed, pray ‘simpliciter’ that the communicant would eat and drink, but that the communicant would eat ‘in a certain way’, that is worthily.\footnote{Ibid, p106. Denison notes what the Scriptures said of ‘eating and drinking’. John 6: 50f, and 1 Cor 11: 27-29.} For Denison, this meant ‘humbling ourselves in body and soul before God’ in ‘deep supplication and earnest outpouring of heart before Him’.\footnote{Ibid, p107.} But this said, Denison reaffirmed the function of the act of consecration as creating the real presence, rather than any inferred worthiness of the communicant.\footnote{Ibid, p107.}

Denison, however, was not satisfied with arguing a positive case for the real presence on the grounds of the effect of consecration, the authority of the Church’s ministry, and his understanding of justification. He continued to pursue his test-proposition turning on what was received by the communicant at the eucharist. The question was: if the bread and wine, retaining their natural substances, become the body and blood of Christ, was it the case that the body and blood of Christ was withdrawn when the sacrament was received by the unworthy?\footnote{Denison observed that the Catechism distinguished between the ‘Sacramentum’, the ‘Res Sacramenti’, and the ‘Virtus’ or ‘Gratia Sacramenti’. These distinctions, however, he argued, were for the purpose of teaching. Ibid, p101. Other than in the Catechism, Denison noted the term ‘Holy Sacrament’ was not used by the Church of England in her Articles and Liturgy to denote the outward part, or ‘Sacramentum’ only. Sermon II, p101. Denison cited T H Briton’s Horae sacramentales, p49f, for a reference to Jewel in support of this position.}\footnote{Ibid, p107.} The answer for Denison was in the negative:

> Seeing that we do not know, as we certainly do not, that the Presence thus vouchsafed is, under any circumstances, withdrawn, so that the Bread and Wine cease to be that which by consecration they have become – it follows, as I say, from Holy Scripture and ‘ex necessite rei’ that the Body and Blood of Christ

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\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p106.} \footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p106. Denison notes what the Scriptures said of ‘eating and drinking’. John 6: 50f, and 1 Cor 11: 27-29.} \footnote{Ibid, p107.} \footnote{Ibid, p107.} \footnote{Denison observed that the Catechism distinguished between the ‘Sacramentum’, the ‘Res Sacramenti’, and the ‘Virtus’ or ‘Gratia Sacramenti’. These distinctions, however, he argued, were for the purpose of teaching. \textit{Ibid}, p101. Other than in the Catechism, Denison noted the term ‘Holy Sacrament’ was not used by the Church of England in her Articles and Liturgy to denote the outward part, or ‘Sacramentum’ only. Sermon II, p101. Denison cited T H Briton’s \textit{Horae sacramentales}, p49f, for a reference to Jewel in support of this position.}
are given in and by the consecrated Bread and Wine to all, and are received by all who come to the Lord’s table.\textsuperscript{173}

Arguing the effect of the act of consecration, Denison held, on this account, that the sacrament received by both the worthy and the unworthy was the same.\textsuperscript{174} Denison again refuted receptionist doctrine that the efficacy of the sacraments at the eucharist was dependant upon the faith of the receiver.\textsuperscript{175} Denison cited Article XI in support: ‘We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith’. The last phrase he qualified, noting the phrase in the Latin text of the Articles was rendered \textit{per fidem} – through faith.

Denison turned from the liturgy to the homilies for further consideration of what was understood by the sacrament and unworthy reception. Looking to the homily, \textit{Of the worthy receiving and reverent esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ}, Denison considered that in the mind of the Church there was both worthy and unworthy reception: but he averred both received ‘THE SAME THING’ in the sense that the gift was present in the consecrated sacrament, citing the authority of the homily as to what was present at the Holy Communion. This homily, he suggested, answered the question as to ‘what THAT is which is Present in the Holy Communion’.\textsuperscript{176} Denison noted that the homily states unbelievers and the faithless cannot feed on Christ’s body, but he believed this position was to be interpreted and qualified by the terms of the sentence that followed in the homily: namely, that the faithful have life and incorporation in Christ. The unfaithful, Denison was clear, do not have life as the homily states. He considered the homily

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid}, p19f.\textsuperscript{173}.

\textsuperscript{174} ‘Now as Christ died for all, tough all are not saved, so He gives Himself for the Food of all the baptized, though all do not Feed upon Him to their soul’s health and strength. All men receive the Gift of the Atonement, but all do not come to God thereby.’ \textit{Ibid}, p98.

\textsuperscript{175} ‘Man can neither by his virtue, nor holiness, nor prayers, \textit{add} one tittle to the efficacy of the sacraments, nor by his own reverence or infidelity \textit{diminish}, although he may \textit{deprive himself} of and \textit{refuse} the benefits which God always offers.’ \textit{Ibid}, footnote †, p101f.

\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Ibid}, p110. ‘Take then this lesson, O thou that are desirous of this table, of Emissenus, a godly father, that when thou goest up to the reverend communion, to be satisfied with spiritual meats, ‘thou look up with faith upon the Holy Body and Blood of thy God, thou marvel with reverence, thou touch it with thy mind, thou receive it with the hand of thy heart, and thou take fully with thy inward man.’ \textit{Certain sermons or homilies ... 1852 edition}, p418.
supported the point he wished to make – namely the presence is in the sacrament both for the faithful and unfaithful as the homily contrasts the consequence for the respective class of receiver – the unworthy ‘receive not to life, but to death, not salvation, but to destruction’.  

So at this his table we receive not only the outward sacrament, but the spiritual thing also; not the figure, but the truth; not the shadow only, but the Body; not to death, but to life; not to destruction, but to salvation: which God grant us to do, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour: to whom be all honour and glory for ever.’

Turning to the second section of the homily and its reference to the necessity of being ‘fit and decent partakers of the celestial food’ Denison cited further passages in support of his argument that there was a presence in the sacrament, whatever the condition of the receiver: but, for the unworthy receiver, the eating and drinking of the sacrament had dire consequences. The reason for such dire consequences was the presence of our Lord confirmed by the words of the homily.

Denison also drew a positive view of the doctrine of the sacraments from the catechism – namely: ‘the revelation of the mysterious Gift of the new nature of Christ’. This he understood to be the whole ground of the doctrine of the sacraments, and intrinsic to the nature of the sacraments – that is: a gift given by God. There was the gift given in baptism, as there was a gift given in the holy communion ‘to each and every communicant’. Adverting to the use of ‘faithful’,

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177 Ibid, p110.
178 Certain sermons or homilies ..., 1852 edition, p418.
179 Denison, Ibid, p111, citing Certain sermons or homilies, p419.
180 Ibid. ‘Wherefore if servants dare not to presume to an earthly master’s table whom they have offended, let us take heed we come not with our sins unexamined into this presence of our Lord and Judge.’ The last phrase of this passage Denison emphasized with capitals – ‘... THIS Presence of our Lord and Judge’ - concluding his assertion that the homily supplied proof that the doctrine of the real presence held and taught by Church of England. Certain sermons or homilies, p423.
181 Ibid, p128.
182 Ibid, p127.
or ‘fideles’, in the catechism, Denison posited that in ‘common use in theological language’ the word denoted, as it did in Article XXIX, those who had been baptized. The word did not intimate quality of belief, or justification by faith, but those received as members of Christ’s body in baptism.

Denison was obliged to deal with the Articles of Religion that treated with the sacraments, and not least Article XXIX, Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper. His approach to those articles which treated with the sacraments was correlative (XXV Of the sacraments, XXVIII of the Lord’s Supper; and Article XXIX Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper). He deemed Article XXV to be primary, and argued that the last clause of that article set out ‘the leading rules and principles which govern the whole doctrine of the sacraments’ and afforded a rule and test against which any passage of subsequent article might be brought if the meaning was unclear. Addressing the text of Article XXIX, Denison argued the meaning of this article was made clear by the concluding paragraph of Article XXV. Denison considered the purpose of Article XXIX in relation to Article XXV to be: first - a careful distinction between the receiving of the sacraments, and their effect of operation; second - that it was the same sacraments received worthily or unworthily; and third - the wholesome effect of receiving worthy, and the consequence of receiving unworthily being damnation. Denison conceded that, neither the homilies, nor Augustine (from whom Article XXIX was drawn), were always consistently clear that it was the same sacrament received by the worthy and unworthy. Yet his

183 Denison made comparison of the use of the term in Article XIX ‘The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men’; Article XXVI ‘Although in the visible Church evil be ever mixed with the good’; and Article XXXIII ‘The whole company of faithful people’. Ibid, p129.

184 Ibid, p113.

185 Ibid, p113. ‘The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as Saint Paul saith.’ Article XXV.

186 Ibid, p113.


188 Denison suggested Augustine was not always exact or consistent in his use of defined terms or phrases. However, Denison asserted an examination of Augustine’s works showed that he never
conclusion was that clarification was to be had in the tradition of Catholic teaching which Denison asserted ‘in this great matter’ had ‘been systematized’.\textsuperscript{189} Furthermore, Denison felt he was on safe ground arguing that as regards the relation and meaning of the articles themselves, one could not argue from Article XXIX against XXV.\textsuperscript{190} Denison believed there were only two ways of escaping the consequences of his argument. The first was to deny the effects of the act of consecration.\textsuperscript{191} The second was to assume that the sacrament was unmade at the point of reception when partaken of by the wicked or unworthy.\textsuperscript{192}

Doubtless anticipating the possible charges of heresy that might levelled against him, Denison was careful repeat in the second sermon the earlier denial of the \textit{opus operatum} made in his first sermon.\textsuperscript{193} But he affirmed his contention that the administration of the sacraments involved a ‘saving power, effect or operation, irrespective of the state of heart in the mind of the receiver’.\textsuperscript{194} Denison also explicitly denied the doctrine of transubstantiation, declaring that the natural body and blood of Christ were not present in the elements.\textsuperscript{195} But he did assert it was true that ‘Christ’s Body and Blood are REALLY PRESENT in the Holy Eucharist ‘under the form of Bread and Wine’ – ie PRESENT THINGS – and though they be Present after a manner ineffable, incomprehensible by man, and not cognisable by the senses’.\textsuperscript{196} Further, he affirmed the teaching of the articles that as the consecrated elements were not themselves changed, they may not be adored.\textsuperscript{197} But he did assert the worship was ‘due to the REAL, though indivisible and a supernatural,

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, \textit{p}115, note. \\
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Ibid}, \textit{p}114. \\
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Ibid}, \textit{p}115. \\
\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Ibid}, \textit{p}116. \\
\textsuperscript{193} First iterated in Sermon I, \textit{Ibid}, \textit{p}21. He reiterated this denial in Sermon II, declaring it was not true that the gift given in the Sacraments was always ‘unto life.’ But he insisted ‘the Gift is always and in all cases conveyed and received in and by the administration of the Holy Sacraments’. \textit{Ibid}, \textit{p}79f. \\
\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Ibid, Sermon I, p}21. \\
\textsuperscript{195} See Article XXVIII, para 2. \\
\textsuperscript{196} \textit{Ibid, pp}80f. \\
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid, p}81. Cf Article XXVIII directed against the doctrine of transubstantiation, the text of which declared: ‘The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be reserved, carried about, lifted up or worshipped’. 
\end{quote}
PRESENCE of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, “under the Form of Bread and Wine”.\(^{198}\)

The consequences

Notwithstanding careful denials on important points of doctrine, Denison had in his second sermon ignored the criticism leveled against his first, and gone very much further in contending for his third proposition;\(^{199}\) that the sacrament, effected by the act of consecration, was received by both the worthy and the unworthy. While appealing to scripture, the liturgy, catechism, homilies and articles, he approached these sources with interpretations that were grounded on a particular view of the English Reformation – namely that the Reformation restored the Church of England in conformity with the Primitive Church. Not least, Denison had ventured (in keeping with his own view of the Reformation and therefore of the character of the articles) on an interpretation of the articles of religion. In doing so Denison exposed himself to attack by his opponents. Following his second sermon,\(^{200}\) the overall sense was that while Denison was right in maintaining the real presence, he had been impetuous and hasty. But both Pusey and Keble were of the view it would have been better both for Denison and the Church to ‘leave things quiet’, and Pusey deprecated both Denison’s approach and the manner in which he dealt with his opponents. Pusey believed that it was as a wise rule ‘not to bring anything to a crisis’.\(^{201}\) Moreover, Pusey felt that Denison had been provocative. ‘I felt sure that no good would come from your [? – Pusey’s handwriting is illegible] of defiance, goading people on.’\(^{202}\)

\(^{198}\) *Ibid*, p81

\(^{199}\) His doctrinal proof test of the real presence – ‘That the Body and Blood of CHRIST being Really Present, after an immaterial and Spiritual manner, in the Consecrated Bread and Wine, are therein and thereby given to all, and received by all who come to the Lord’s table’. G A Denison, *The real presence*, p18.

\(^{200}\) Denison’s third sermon delivered in May 1854, was a reaction to the news that legal proceedings were being taken against him. The third sermon was not included as part of the proceedings.

\(^{201}\) Pusey to Denison 11 December 1854, *Denison Letters*, P42/4 (ii), Pusey House.

Denison had taken little account of the reservations his friends, and persons such as Pusey, might have of the state of the Church courts – reservations made with the earlier example of the Gorham judgment before them. Denison was also seemingly oblivious that the form in which he had cast his sermons – justifying his proof-test – obscured a straight-forward consideration of the doctrine of the real presence. Nevertheless, Denison naïvely believed it was possible to open the doctrinal question for discussion. ‘I desire to do what I can to put matters in train for reference of all such questions to fitting and competent authority.’

One such authority, the Archbishop of York, had put in hand proceedings against Robert Wilberforce. When, with Wilberforce’s resignation of his preferments 30 August 1854 and reception into the Roman Church in October, legal proceedings ceased, Denison realized the focus of attention might be turned on him.

Denison’s attitude to Evangelicals while Bagot’s examining chaplain, his clash with the Bishop Spencer, and now his sermons, attracted the ire of that large party within the Church of England. The Evangelical Alliance mounted a prosecution ostensibly through the Rev Joseph Ditcher, Denison’s clerical neighbour as the Vicar of South Brent. A campaign had been mounted to fund the prosecution – a campaign for which Robert Phillimore found evidence in London in the form of circulars soliciting for subventions over the signature of Lord Shaftesbury. Pusey’s regret that Denison had focused on the reception of the wicked, rather than dealing with the doctrine of the real presence in a straight-forward way, was prescient – for

203 G A Denison to Rev Dr Wolff, 27 July 1853, LED, pp52-3.
204 David Newsome, Parting of friends, p400f, and ODNB.
205 Following Wilberforce’s resignation, Denison observed two possibilities regarding the proceedings against himself – it might create a diversion, and attract attention away, ‘or it may make the appetite for them more keen’. G A Denison to Robert Phillimore, 4 September 1854, LED, p56.
206 Joseph Ditcher was ordained as a literate in London 1818. Lambeth MA in 1827. Admitted as a ‘ten year man’ Queens’, Cambridge, 1829. Chaplain in Honduras (1819 – 21); PC Holy Trinity, Ditton, Gloucester (1821-35); Curate of Hutton, 1835-6; Principal acting surrogate of the Episcopal Court, Diocese of Bath and Wells (1836-41); Vicar South Brent, Somerset (1841-76). Alum Cant.
   I have found no evidence to suggest why Ditcher undertook to serve as plaintiff in the Denison case, other than his earlier office as acting surrogate in the diocesan consistory court. The two men remained on good terms after the legal saga ended in 1858. Ditcher was good to Denison in the period of his illness in 1870, but nevertheless stood against Denison and his nephew over the liturgical changes at East Brent.
207 Proceedings at Bath. 1857, p89.
this approach to the subject proved to be Denison’s Achilles’ heel. Denison’s prosecutors were able to attack him on a narrow front, arraigning him under the Church Discipline Act of 1840 with an offence against 13 Eliz.c.12., viz ‘maintaining and affirming doctrines’ contrary to the Articles of Religion. With recourse to the Elizabethan statute, Denison’s opponents looked for a punitive outcome, because, if successful, punishment under the terms of the statute was deprivation. There was thus a real possibility that the Evangelical Alliance could bring about the end of Denison’s career in the Church.

The terms of the Church Discipline Act referred cases in the first instance to the ordinary, but neither Bishop Bagot, nor his successor, Lord Auckland, would entertain referral of the doctrine raised by Denison’s sermons to the courts. Recourse was then had to Archbishop Sumner, who was persuaded by Ditcher, and those he represented, to issue a commission under the Clergy Discipline Act.

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208 3 & 4 Vict. c.86. An Act for better enforcing Church discipline. This Act repealed 1 Hen. VII.c.4., An Act for bishops to punish priests and other religious men for dishonest lives. 13 Eliz.c.12., An Act to refourme certayne disorders touching Ministers of the Church, was directed against ministers ordained other than in the reigns of Edward VI, or Elizabeth: they were to subscribe to the Articles of Religion agreed by Convocation in 1562 on the pain of deprivation.

209 Bishop Bagot died on 15 May, four days after his letter to Denison. Bagot was unwilling to bring an action: ‘The more deeply I have considered the matter, the more reluctant I feel to send this high and serious subject for legal adjudication, especially as our Courts are now constituted.’

Correspondence between the Hon and Rt Rev Richard late Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, and the Venerable George Anthony Denison, Archdeacon of Taunton, etc. 1854, p3. The bishop did make inquiry into Denison’s sermons. Bagot sent his judgment to the archdeacon, 16 April 1854, cautioning Denison to be more careful for the future in his mode of teaching, but declared that Denison was free to hold the doctrine he had enunciated in his sermons. While noting Denison distinctly denied transubstantiation, the bishop considered the archdeacon had ‘fallen into an error of allowing yourself to speculate the conditions of that supernatural Presence; with asserting the Reality of which your Church has been wisely contented. And in doing this you appear to me to have spoken as if you could reason concerning supernatural Presence, as if subject to natural laws. Further, you have in my judgment been led into the error of requiring consent to your opinion as though it were the dogmatic teaching of the Church’. Ibid. Bagot agreed with Denison that what the Church censured in Article XXIX was that ‘the Body of Christ is received to the profit of the receive, ‘ex operae operato’’. The old bishop noted that Denison had withdrawn from the opinionated view he had maintained as examining chaplain: ‘I have noticed with much pleasure from your statement to me that you admit ‘that it is not for you to say what statements of doctrine may or may not justify exclusion from the ministry’. Ibid, pp7-9.

210 J B Sumner to G A Denison, 5 September 1854. ‘Correspondence’, in Proceedings, p2. Denison protested against the particular way of proceeding on a question of doctrine, which he believed went beyond the legal remit of the Clergy Discipline Act involving questions of ‘far graver, and wider, and deeper import’.
Appointment of a commission was a primary step, the purpose being to establish whether there was a *prima facie* case.

Sumner was remarkably lax, and left appointments to the commission in the hands of proctors representing the prosecution – Denison’s adversaries being allowed to nominate all its members. Appreciating what had happened, Denison wrote to Sumner protesting. ‘Having formally and publicly protested against the proposed Commission, and against all acts had or done by virtue of it, as null and illegal, I leave to others to judge of its composition as now communicated to me by your Grace’

When the commission met, Sir Robert Phillimore, representing Denison, drew attention to the injustice of the method of appointing the commission. Further, he advanced evidence showing that one of the commissioners in particular had recently behaved in such a way towards Denison as to indicate a bias that should have disqualified him from sitting on the commission. Phillimore argued: ‘There ought not to be the possibility of a suspicion that they have been carefully and studiously selected out of a large diocese, because they were known to entertain views opposite to those of the person whose case they were to try’. The commission declined to hear arguments and evidence in Denison’s defence, arguing that the

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211 G A Denison to J B Sumner 9 October 1854. ‘Correspondence’, in *Proceedings*, p xvii. Those appointed to the Commission were Bishop Carr; Rev Charles Langdon - Vicar of Queen’s-Camel; Rev Charles Pole - Rector of Yeovilton; Rev R C Phelps - Rector of Wincanton; and Rev H Parr – Rector of Shipton-on-Stour. Attachment to Sumner’s letter, 7 October 1854. ‘Correspondence,’ in *Proceedings*, pp xvii.

212 *Ibid*, p3. With regard to the allegation of a stacked Commission, Phillimore minuted for the record his plea of *recusatio judicium* [refusal of judges], p30. Phillimore’s case was that the Evangelical Archdeacon Law had been instrumental in proposing the names of the Clevedon commissioners to Sumner.
commission was not a trial. But Phillimore argued the difficulty of this position – that the question before the commission was whether, and in what manner, Denison’s doctrine was contrary to the formularies of the Church of England. This was a point that, Phillimore contended, ‘must be argued at some time, or another, because the Commissioners would not decide upon it without being satisfied by argument that these sermons did contain heretical matter. However, without hearing any such arguments, the commissioners arrived at the determination there was a prima facie case for further proceedings, concluding Denison’s doctrines were ‘unsupported by the Articles taken in their literal and grammatical sense, are contrary to the Doctrines and Teaching of the Church of England, and have a very dangerous tendency’.

The charge was loose and undefined, and rendered not a little contradictory by the commissioners’ rider exonerating Denison of the imputation of Romanism, and acknowledging Denison had in his sermons expressed his full assent to the articles and condemned the doctrines of Rome, particularly transubstantiation. David Chambers (1805-1893), a barrister by profession and Recorder of Sarum, was a member of the High Church coterie of lawyers at Lincoln’s Inn. He published on both legal and ecclesiastical subjects, and had written a highly critical appraisal of the Judicial Committee’s judgment in the Gorham case in an open letter addressed to Bishop Edward Denison. Chambers was astounded by the Commission’s findings. He declared that Archbishop Sumner had, with his acceptance of the report of the Commission, reduced Anglican eucharistic theology to a bare Calvinism.

A bishop, of great eminence in the Church of England, has (it is believed for the first time in the last hundred years), ex cathedra, reproduced and re-asserted the bare Calvinistic opinion, (for it

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214 Ibid, p27.
216 Ibid.
cannot be called by any higher name) that ‘the Body and Blood of Christ are received in a purely spiritual sense’, and that ‘to embrace the notion of a bodily’ (or, as elsewhere expressed, a ‘corporal’) ‘Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, is virtually to embrace the doctrine of Transubstantiation’.218

Chambers felt it was ‘monstrous’ that this had become the grounds of proceedings against Denison, because condemnation of Denison’s doctrine ipso facto condemned the writings and opinions of a considerable body of Anglican divines, and in particular those who had been responsible for the revision of the 1662 Prayer book, and therefore subverted the Restoration settlement.219

For those supportive of Denison, and involved with his defence, the decision of the Clevedon Commission was a call to arms. Chambers, Grueber, Pusey, Joseph Wolff and, indeed, Denison himself, set out to gather a considerable body of evidence to counter the commission’s narrow presumption as to what was the sacramental teaching of the Church of England. This material, compiled in the period following the commission’s declaration in January of 1854, supplied evidence adduced in Denison’s defence when the trial commenced in the Pro-Diocesan Court in July of 1856. It was published as The defence of the Archdeacon of Taunton after the trial.220 Chamber’s systematic review of the theology of Herbert Thorndike, one of the commissioners appointed to revise The Book of Common Prayer at the Restoration, advanced an argument for the centrality of the act of consecration. Denison himself contributed with a translation of a sixteenth-century treatise on the eucharist written by Adrian Saravia – a canon of Westminster Abbey and a close friend of Richard Hooker.221 Denison’s interest in this work was the subject of consecration and of reception by the good and bad alike of the sacrament.222

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218 John David Chambers, The doctrine of the holy eucharist, etc. 1855. p[5].
219 Ibid, p[v].
220 Much of this research is to be found in the Defence of the Archdeacon of Taunton. July 1856. [Documents and speeches presented in the trial of G A Denison in the Pro-Diocesan Court of Bath and Wells.] 1856.
221 G A Denison [Translator], Saravia on the Holy Eucharist. The original Latin from the MS in the British Museum, 1855. Denison’s source was Saravia’s De sacra eucharistica tractatus, circa 1605-6. Adrian Saravia (1532-1613) was a Dutchman, who fled to England from the Netherlands in 1588.
Pusey, who had published his 1853 sermon on the eucharist with supporting references to Anglican divines, published further extensive notes in 1855 to support of the doctrine contained in that sermon, The doctrine of the Real Presence as contained in the Fathers, etc. Charles Grueber had already prepared for submission to the commission at Clevedon a pamphlet on the construction and interpretation of Article XXIX.\(^{223}\) Given that the articles would the focus in the coming trial, as Denison was being prosecuted for impugning the articles under the 1562 Statute, Grueber undertook to extend the material he had prepared to provide an extensive consideration of the history, construction and interpretation of Articles XXV, XXVIII and XXIX.\(^{224}\)

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Saravia was appointed Rector of Tatenhill (1588), a Prebendary of Gloucester (1591), Prebend of Canterbury and Vicar of Lewisham (1595); Canon of Westminster Abbey (1601); Rector Great Chard, Keny (1610). ODNB.

\(^{222}\) With respect to the consecration, Saravia wrote: ‘Nam panis factus Corporis Christi sacramentum relationem habet ad Corpus, et vinum as Sanguinem ex institutione divina, ita ut qui panem habet habeat certo et vere Corpus, et qui vinum sanguinem’. Denison’s translation: ‘For the bread, which is made the Sacrament of the Body of Christ, hath a relation to His Body, and the wine to His Blood, by Divine institution, so that he who hath the bread hath certainly and really the Body, and he who hath the wine hath the Blood.’ \textit{Ibid}, pp26-7.

On the matter of what was received, Saravia wrote: ‘Ibid (inquam) Sacraentum totum, nulla sui parte diminutum, est in ore omnium bonorum et malorum: eadem res externa aeque sacra et divina cum interna et caelesti Re, id est, Christi Carne et Sanguine, offertur, et recipitur, piis pariter ac ab impiis’ Denison’s translation: ‘I say that the same Sacrament, the whole sacrament, robbed of no part of itself, is in the mouth of all, good and bad; the same outward thing equally sacred and Divine in all cases, is together with the inward and Heavenly Thing, that is, the Flesh and Blood of Christ, given to, and received by, the good and bad alike’ \textit{Ibid}, pp104-5.

Saravia also denied that the institution was to be understood in a figurative sense: ‘Quae allegari solent ex sexto Johannis, ut probentur impii nec Carnem Christi manducare, nec Sanguinem bibere, aliena sunt, quia ibid Dominus de manducatione Sacraentali non loquitur, sed de Spirituali, quae ad hujus Sacramenti virtutem et gratiam Sacramentalia referatur. Nam hoc semper retinendum est, Sacramentum duabus rebus constare, quae in Sacramento non magis ab invicem separari possunt quam unio duarum naturarum personalis dissolvi in Christo, [etc] … Nam fixum atque immotum hoc mihi est, panem Carne Christi non esse Sacramentum Carnis Christi.’ Denison’s translation: ‘All those considerations which are adduced from the 6th of S John to prove the wicked neither eat the Flesh of Christ, nor drink His Blood, are foreign to the purpose; because the Lord in that place is not speaking about Sacramental eating, but about Spiritual eating, which hath to do with the Virtue of the sacrament and Sacramental Grace. For this is ever to be firmly kept in mind, that the Sacrament consisteth of two things, which, being the Sacrament, may no more be separated one bread, except so far as it be the Sacrament of the Body [etc] … For, in my judgment, this is a certain and established principle of the Faith, that the bread without the Flesh of Christ is not the Sacrament of the Flesh of Christ.’ \textit{Ibid}, pp104-5

\(^{223}\) C S Grueber, \textit{Article XXIX considered in reference to the three sermons of the Archdeacon of Taunton}. 1854. The Commission allowed no arguments on doctrine to be heard. Grueber’s supporting material was annexed to the documents submitted by the defence.

\(^{224}\) C S Grueber, \textit{A tabular view of Articles XXV, XXVIII, XXIX. With consideration upon ‘The true and legal exposition of Arts 28, 29’, as set forth by the Court at Bath in the trial of the Ven. The Archdeacon of Taunton}. 1856.
Some while after the Clevedon Commission had sat the archbishop underwent a change of mind. Sumner appears to have realized, if belatedly, that a battle in the courts would not resolve the doctrinal differences in the Church. He decided, therefore, that ‘no good purpose would be answered’ by further legal proceedings, as any such judgment ‘would have no weight with members of the Church’. Sumner, however, had opened Pandora’s box. Denison’s opponents were not in a mood to heed the archbishop’s new-found hesitation. Ditcher applied for a writ in the Queen’s Bench to force the archbishop’s hand. A Rule Peremptory issued in April 1856 obliged Sumner to act under Section XXIV of the Church Discipline Act, which provided for the archbishop to act in the place of a diocesan when the latter was patron of a living, as was the case at East Brent.

The legal saga thus continued, manifesting further incompetence. The commission’s report was not properly signed, nor was it lodged, as was required by law, at the diocesan registry at Wells until a year after the articles of indictment. Sumner, complying with a writ issued by the Queen’s Bench, cited Denison to appear in London at the Hall of Doctor’s Commons on 27 May 1856. This, however, was a legal error. The citation was quashed on appeal to the Queen’s Bench, as being a citation to appear out of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and therefore void. Denison was cited again on 10 June 1856, this time to appear before the archbishop and his assessors in the Guildhall at Bath on 22 July 1856.

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225 ‘The Queen, on the prosecution of Joseph Ditcher, Clerk, against The Most Reverend John Bird, Archbishop of Canterbury’, in Thomas Flower Ellis and Colin Blackburn, Reports of cases argued and determined in the Court of Queen’s Bench, and Court of the Exchequer Chamber on error from the Court of the Queen’s Bench. Vol 6, 1857, p557.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid., p49.

228 As the Archbishop of Canterbury was acting in loco for the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Denison should not have been cited outside that diocese. Reports of cases argued and determined in the Court of Queen’s Bench, and Court of the Exchequer Chamber on error from the Court of the Queen’s Bench. Vol 6, 1857, p559-565.
The Bath Court

In the court at Bath, links with the earlier Gorham controversy were evident in the *dramatis personae*. The prosecution was undertaken by Dr Bayford,229 who had represented Gorham in his legal action against Bishop Phillpotts. Bayford was advised on theological matters by the Rev William Goode,230 who had performed the same role in the Gorham case. Sumner presided in a technical capacity *in loco* the Bishop of Bath and Wells.231 The assessors comprised Dr Stephen Lushington, who oversaw the proceedings, together with the Rev Dr Heurtley (Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Oxford), and the Rev George Sacheverell Johnson (Dean of Wells).232

Phillimore invoked the principle upon which the Gorham case was decided – namely that as the Court was not competent to rule on matters of theology, the issue to be determined was whether opinions similar to Denison’s had been maintained

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229 Augustus Frederick Bayford (1809-1874), Kensington Grammar School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge; LLB 1830, LLD 1839. Called to the Bar (Middle Temple in 1830) Bayford was an advocate in Doctors’ Commons; he was Chancellor of the Diocese of Manchester (c1857-71) and Chief Registrar of the Court of Probate (1858-72).

230 Goode’s refutation of Denison was published in 1856 – *The nature of Christ’s presence in the eucharist: or, The true doctrine of the real presence vindicated in opposition to the fictitious real presence asserted by Archdeacon Denison, Mr (late Archdeacon) Wilberforce, and Dr Pusey, etc.*

William Goode, the younger (1801-1868), St Paul’s and Trinity College, Cambridge, BA 1825; deaconed and priested 1825; Rector of St Antholin, Watling Street (1835); preferred by Archbishop Sumner to Allhallows the Great, London; preffered by the Lord Chanceller to St Margaret’s, Lothbury; appointed Dean of Ripon by Lord Palmerston (1860). *ODNB.*

Goode had engaged in polemical exchanges with Henry Phillpotts from 1848, see *Vindication of the ‘Defence of the XXXIX Articles as the legal and canonical test of doctrine in the Church of England, in all points treated in them’: in reply to the recent charge of the Lord Bishop of Exeter, 1848*; and *Doctrine of the Church of England as to the effects of baptism in the case of infants. 1849.* Goode published a response to the Dean of Arches’ judgment in Gorham’s case against Phillpotts – *Review of the judgment of Sir H J Fust, Kt, in the case of Gorham v the Bishop of Exeter.1850.* Goode also responded to Phillpotts’ letter to the Archbishop following the Gorham judgment delivered by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council – *Letter to the Bishop of Exeter: containing an examination of his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. 1850.*


232 George Henry Sacheverell Johnson(1808-1881) was a Fellow of Queen’s, Oxford; Savilian Professor of Astronomy 1839-42; Whyte Professor of Moral Philosophy 1842-45; Dean of Wells 1854. *ODNB.* Charles Abel Heurtley (1806-1895) was a Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford; Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity 1853-93. Heurtley was of evangelical persuasion, but not a party man. *ODNB.*
unmolested in the Church of England.233 Phillimore was allowed to present extensive material that encompassed the Fathers, Anglican divines, the 1662 prayer book and the homilies.234 There was a certain irony in this defence, as Denison had in his sermons eschewed reference to the writings of these divines, as he considered they spoke with ‘an uncertain voice’ on the doctrine of the real presence.235 However, this wide-ranging appeal, if heard by the Bath Court, was in ultimo ignored by it. The judgment owed nothing to the defence submission along such lines, but was confined to the narrow matter couched by the Clevedon Commission of Denison’s alleged impugning of the Articles in their ‘literal and grammatical sense’.

Bayford’s conduct of the prosecution realized the fears Bishop Bagot and his successor had held, and indeed the dismay that Pusey had entertained, at the prospect of doctrine being considered in a court. The treatment of eucharistic doctrine at Bayford’s hands was crude. Addressing Denison’s argument as to the effect of consecration, Bayford parodied the notion of the connection between the outward sign and the inward spiritual grace, suggesting ‘that whosoever received the elements in his mouth in that act received the Body and Blood of Christ in his mouth’. This Bayford suggested was consubstantiation, and went on to suggest that not even the Roman Catholics contended the change at transubstantiation made a presence that was sensible to the senses.236 Bayford recast Denison’s words to allow for a construction that suggested a corporal presence, and proceeded with a crude argument against Denison’s position that Christ’s body and blood were present in a spiritual manner:

> It did seem illogical to say that a body can be present in a spiritual manner, if it was a bodily presence; to his mind the Archdeacon’s proposition was a misuse of terms: a body was a body and not a spirit; as far as he could understand, a body could not be present in a spiritual manner; a spirit might be present after the manner

233 Ibid, p81f.
234 This material was published as Defence of the Archdeacon of Taunton, 1856.
236 Proceedings, p68f.
of a spirit; but a body, if present at all, must be present after the manner of a body.\textsuperscript{237}

Bayford argued that although Denison had denied both consubstantiation and transubstantiation, ‘the Archdeacon had used the language of those who upheld one of those doctrines’. Attacking the archdeacon’s view that adoration was due to the presence of Christ in the elements, Bayford’s construction of Denison’s doctrine opened the way to argue that adoration was idolatrous.\textsuperscript{238}

The Pro-Dioecesan Court at Bath delivered its sentence on 1 October 1856. The court took a limited view of its obligations, declaring it was ‘a court of justice and ecclesiastical law’ and not ‘a school of theology’.\textsuperscript{239} With a narrow view of its remit, the assessors at Bath apprehended that their duty was to decide only whether Denison’s doctrines were repugnant to the articles. Nearly all, therefore, that Phillimore had been allowed to present for the defence was of no account. The \textit{dictum} of the Court was that the Royal Declaration attached to the Articles of Religion should be followed, requiring that the articles be construed by ‘their plain and grammatical meaning’.\textsuperscript{240} Sumner and his fellow assessors adjudged that Denison had maintained and affirmed doctrines ‘directly contrary and repugnant’ to the XXV, XXVII, XXIX and XXXV Articles of Religion. They also declared that Denison had placed an inadmissible construction on the XXVII and XXIX Articles of Religion, namely ‘that the Body and Blood of Christ becomes so joined to the consecrated elements by the act of consecration that the unworthy receivers receive in the elements the Body and Blood of Christ is not true or an admissible construction of the said Articles of Religion’.\textsuperscript{241}

Though the court had asserted the meaning of Articles XXVIII and XXIX were quite plain according to their own internal construction, the court subverted its own

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid, p72f.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid, p73.
\textsuperscript{239} ‘Judgment of the Court at Bath’, in Proceedings, p216.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid, p224.
principle by framing a paraphrase and construction of its own to explain the
meaning of these two articles. This construction the court declared to be ‘the true
and legal exposition of the said Articles’:

That the Body and Blood of Christ are taken and received by the
worthy receivers only, who in taking and receiving the same by
faith to spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his Blood, while
the wicked and unworthy, by eating the Bread and drinking the
Wine without faith, do not in anywise eat, take, or receive the
Body and Blood of Christ, being void of faith, whereby only the
Body and Blood of Christ can be eaten, taken and received. 242

Denison was given the opportunity to revoke his doctrine. This he declined to do,
submitting a rebuttal of the Court’s judgment in a Paper delivered into the Registry
of the Dioceses of Bath and Wells, September 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1856. The court, Denison
charged, had abstracted passages from the prosecution indictment without
discrimination, so that material aspects of Denison’s doctrine were omitted. 243
Denison complained that a significant statement of his doctrine had not been
noticed: namely that the unworthy received was ‘unto condemnation’, and his clear
denial of the benefits of the sacrament as \textit{ex opere operato}. 244 He further
complained that with regard to ‘adoration’ the Court required him to make
revocation, notwithstanding his statement that the elements of bread and wine
should not be adored as they remained in their natural substance. 245

The differences between Denison and the assessors hinged on their respective
understandings of the nature of the sacraments. Nowhere was this more plain than
in the differences between Denison’s and the court’s understanding of the effect of
the act of consecration. Denison contended his position was a logical consequence

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{242} \textit{Ibid}, p225.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Namely that reception by the unworthy was ‘unto condemnation’, and Denison’s denial that the
sacrament saved \textit{ex opere operato}. \textit{Ibid}, p144.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Denison had averred in his sermons: 1 ‘That the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ in the
Lord’s Supper by those receiving unworthily is ‘unto condemnation’, and 2. That it is not true that
the Holy Sacraments save ‘\textit{ex opere operato}’, in the ordinary acceptance of that phrase, ie by the
\item \textsuperscript{245} \textit{Proceedings}, p144.
\end{itemize}
of the effect of consecration, turning to the concluding paragraph of Article XXV in support of his position.\textsuperscript{246} Having previously eschewed an appeal to Anglican divines in his sermons, Denison now listed a catena of Anglican divines to reinforce his point, and asserted his language was in keeping with ‘the last revision of the prayer book [1662]’ and in particular was in harmony with those Anglican divines responsible for that revision.\textsuperscript{247} Not having revoked his teaching, Denison was deprived of his archdeaconry, his vicarage, prebendal stall and other ecclesiastical rights.\textsuperscript{248} Denison was left in a poor emotional state and in some uncertainty as to how he stood. Writing to Keble, he appeared confused. ‘What the practical result as bearing upon my future teaching – of adapting and substituting my own statements any statements of others – would seem to me not easy to say. The legal bearing of it I have not had explained to me and I do not understand.’\textsuperscript{249} Far from proving his point, the legal saga had, Denison now belatedly realised, left wide open the question as to what was meant by the sacrament. ‘Now all the whole controversy is wrapped up – what is the exact meaning of the word “Sacrament”.’\textsuperscript{250}

Denison appealed the Bath ruling to the Court of Arches of the Province of Canterbury.\textsuperscript{251} Robert Phillimore and James Deane, appearing for Denison, rehearsed the protests Phillimore had minuted at the beginning the proceedings at Bath. First, that the articles served on Denison in July of 1856 did not specify the alleged offence for which Denison was cited. Second, that the prosecution was out of time, and the archbishop on this account had had no jurisdiction at Bath.\textsuperscript{252} The

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Denison to Keble, 11 October 1856. \textit{LED}, p65.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{This was achieved with some difficulty, as the Dean of Arches, Sir John Dodson, initially took the view that Denison’s case had already been heard by the archbishop. Dodgson was persuaded by Phillimore that the archbishop had not \textit{sat qua} archbishop but under a measure of Parliament \textit{in loco} the Bishop of Bath and Wells. \textit{LED}, p66, n1.}
\footnote{Denison v Ditcher in the Court of Arches. \textit{Report of Cases decided in the Ecclesiastical Courts at Doctors’ Commons 1855 to 1857}. 1858, p341.}
\end{footnotes}
Dean of Arches, Sir John Dodson, pronounced for Denison on 23 April 1857.253 Ditcher appealed Dodson’s judgment to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, who handed down their judgment on 6 February 1858, confirming the Dean of Arches’ determination of the suit being ‘barred by time’.254

Though the appeal had saved Denison from deprivation, the technical grounds on which the appeal was allowed meant the theological issues were not aired. Consequently, Denison failed to secure his essential object – an authoritative judgment establishing that his doctrine was the doctrine of the Church of England. Walter Phillimore, Robert Phillimore’s son, recorded that his uncle had wished to fight ‘nothing but the question of heresy’ in the Arches, but his legal advisors, Robert Phillimore and James Deane, would not allow him ‘to discard any of his grounds of appeal’.255 The closing remarks of the Judicial Committee characterized Denison’s dilemma. ‘Of course it is understood that upon the question of heterodoxy, the question whether the Respondent has at any time uttered heretical doctrine or committed any ecclesiastical offence, their Lordships have intimated no opinion.’256 It was not until Sir Robert Phillimore was presiding as Dean of Arches in the Bennett case some thirteen years on, as will be seen in the following chapter, that an affirmative judgment was given allowing the doctrine for which Denison contended.257

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253 Denison had been prosecuted under of 3 & 4 Vict. c. 86, Section 20 of the Act, which limited the time that an action might commenced to two years following the committal of the alleged offence. The argument hinged on whether the suit commenced with the Commission or the Court at Bath. Dodson ruled that the Commission did not constitute a competent court. See Denison v Ditcher Report of Cases decided in the Ecclesiastical Courts at Doctors’ Commons 1855 to 1857. 1858, pp334-353.


255 Lucy Denison recorded Walter Phillimore’s recollection of the case in which his father represented his uncle. Led, p66.-67, n1. On his father’s death in 1885, Walter Phillimore became Denison’s legal advisor.

256 A collection of the judgments of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in ecclesiastical cases. 1865, p175.

257 See chapter seven, where the Bennett case is dealt with.
The theological sniping, therefore, continued. William Goode took aim at Denison’s doctrine, publishing *The nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist: or, the true doctrine of the Real Presence vindicated, etc.* (1856). For his part, Denison gave vent to his feelings in a pamphlet: *Some remarks upon the dictum of the Pro-Diocesan Court assembled at Bath ... upon the ‘true and legal exposition’ of Articles XXVIII, XXIX, etc*:

No man can reasonably expect me to be satisfied with the breaking down on a point of law, of a prosecution for alleged false doctrine; especially when it is taken into account that such prosecution had been carried, through the strange and anomalous proceedings of an improperly constituted Commission, to a Sentence of deprivation before a Court, although such a Sentence be part of ‘proceedings altogether groundless and bad’ [the judgment of the Judicial Committee].

From amongst Denison’s allies, Charles Grueber remonstrated with Goode for grossly misrepresenting portions of Denison’s doctrine. Amongst those who had supported Denison closely through his trial was Henry Phillpotts. Nevertheless the bishop, acknowledging receipt of Denison’s answer to the Wells’ Court, wrote that he did not agree with Denison ‘in all his statements’. In his *Notes on my life*, Denison recorded that the bishop was concerned that he [Denison] had speculated and dogmatized about the manner of the presence – a stance which Denison admitted was a common impression, but which he denied. Ten years later Denison wrote to say that he concurred with Phillpotts’ exposition of the manner of the presence: ‘I want only to say – what I know I may say – that it is of deep comfort to me to find set out now in your own words [Appendix A to Archdeacon of Exeter’s book] what I have often heard from your own lips. This is what I have always held and maintained touching the manner of The Presence’. The phrasing of Phillpotts’ reply (19 March 1866) in fact suggests he had continued to be concerned that

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258 G A Denison, *Some remarks upon the dictum of the Pro-Diocesan Court*. p[1].
260 *Life* p259.
261 *Ibid*.
262 *Life*. 

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Denison had been overly dogmatic. ‘I cannot forbear thanking your for your expression of acquiescence in the statement I have made in the matter of the ‘Real Presence’ in the Eucharist.’\textsuperscript{263}

If Denison could not be satisfied with the outcome of the long legal saga, and if he felt his opponents had been unscrupulous and unfair in the pursuit of their cause, he was not, by all accounts, a man who held personal grudges or maintained a spirit of enmity against those with whom he clashed or disagreed. When he returned to East Brent after the Privy Council ruling one of his first acts was to call upon his neighbor, Joseph Ditcher, to open the door to their previous friendly relations. Reciprocating, Ditcher proved to be one of Denison’s ‘kindest friends’ during latter’s serious illness in 1870-71.\textsuperscript{264}

Some positive outcomes

Denison had patently failed in his objective. His hubris insisting on advancing his proof test as part of the doctrine of presence had brought down on his head a long legal saga. With that came considerable emotional and financial costs.\textsuperscript{265} There were, however, also positive outcomes. Denison’s prosecution engendered a considerable body of research into Anglican Eucharistic doctrine. Grueber published the defence’s evidence incorporating extensive material.\textsuperscript{266} He also mounted a detailed rebuttal of the Bath Judgment published in the form of open letters to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{263} \textit{Ibid}.
\item \textsuperscript{264} \textit{Life}, p266f. When Ditcher died in 1875, his widow asked Denison to come and preach at South Brent on the Sunday after the funeral. Denison wrote: ‘The request moved me deeply; and my compliance with it was a compliance of deep thankfulness.’ \textit{Ibid}, p267.
\item \textsuperscript{265} \textit{Life}, p244f. At the beginning of the case Denison recounts there was a committee comprising himself, Pusey and Keble to accept donations to defray the costs. This plan came to grief because of Keble’s reservations about Denison’s insistence on reception by the wicked. Denison proceeded on his own, and received help from other friends after the Bath judgment. Given the contributions made by others, whether financial or as contributions of unpaid time and labour, Denison considered his own contribution small.
\item \textsuperscript{266} \textit{The Defence of the Archdeacon of Taunton, 1854, 1855, and Proceedings against the Archdeacon of Taunton in 1854, 1855, and 1856}, 1856.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Lushington and to Sumner. Throughout the Denison case, Grueber had kept in touch with Keble. At the outset of the proceedings Grueber found Keble hesitant, but eventually he won Keble’s confidence. Keble’s Eucharistical adoration of 1857 was a response to the Bath Court. Pusey also made a contribution. As a refutation of the Bath judgment, he published, The real presence of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ the doctrine of the English Church, with a vindication of the reception of the wicked and of the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ truly present. Pusey’s book was directed against William Goode. While arising immediately out of the Denison case, the book was also directed against Goode’s attack on Robert Wilberforce’s 1853 work on the eucharist. A further contribution was made by Thomas Carter, who addressed the subject of consecration as this arose at Bath, and in The doctrine of the Christian priesthood in the Church of England advanced the argument for the real presence and the role of the priest at the eucharist. Denison was delighted by these publications and considered Pusey’s book one of the remarkable outcomes of the controversy. Indeed, that significant Churchmen, such as Pusey and Keble, had written as a consequence of the prosecution was a matter of some satisfaction for Denison.

Partisanship – ongoing dynamic

The unsatisfactory outcome of the Denison case as regards doctrine was recognized by a number of High Churchmen who appealed to Sumner’s successor, Archbishop

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267 C S Grueber, A letter to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, with statements and documents relating to the trial of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Taunton and appendix, containing the leading arguments of the counsel for the prosecution, 1856; A second letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, being an exposure of the Rev W Goode’s book, 1856; and A letter to the Rt Hon Stephen Lushington, legal assessor to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the trial of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Taunton, 1856.

268 G A Denison to Robert Phillimore 17 July 1857. LED, p71.

269 See p148ff of Keble’s work in which he addresses Bayford’s arguments at Bath, cf Proceedings, p70f.

270 On the matter at issue at Bath, see Carter’s Exposition of eucharistic doctrine, pp37-45. Carter made reference to the Savoy Conference which asserted the necessity of the priesthood to which was committed absolution and consecration. See p154ff.

271 G A Denison to Robert Phillimore 17 July 1857. LED, p70f.
Longley, asking him to submit the matter to the Church’s synod. Among the
signatories were Pusey, Keble, Isaac Williams, and James Woodford, who became
Bishop of Ely in 1873. Archdeacon Churton, in a terse and incisive review (1856)
of the legal and doctrinal issues, took a detached and ironic view of the lengthy
case. ‘A Commission of Somersetshire Clerks had decided, much according to the
genius of the soil, that there were grounds for further proceedings, while their
reasons pointed the other way.’ Churton’s estimation of Denison as a theologian
was not high, and he considered Denison had been appropriately dealt with by
Bishop Bagot. ‘He [Denison] proposed his new definitions, not only sound in
themselves, but as tests of sound doctrine in others. But that inconvenience was at
once checked by the determination of the late good Bishop of Bath and Wells.’
Churton’s view of Denison’s case imparted a sense of perspective upon the
proceedings. Churton did not sympathize with Denison, his rashness being ‘without
warrant, advancing, as Catholic truth, a matter of uncertain and questionable
opinion’. But the legal proceedings he considered to have been unwarranted and
futile. That they were embarked upon at all was a responsibility he placed upon the
shoulders of the judges and the short-sighted prosecutors.

It is not so much as pretended, whatever his doctrine may be, that
it is identical with the modern Church of Rome. It is his own
opinion that it is equally distinct from what he calls the inventions
of Zuinglius, and Luther, and Calvin. If it is so, it is clear that the
Article cannot be directed against it. For if he is right, he agrees
with the Church of England: if he is wrong, the Article cannot have
prescribed against a form of error, which was then unknown.

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272 Life, pp255-7. Longley declined to give a private opinion in a matter that might come before the
courts. Although Denison had been ruled to have held doctrine repugnant to the articles of the
Church of England, Longley acknowledged that the state of affairs following the success of Denison’s
appeal was that it was possible to hold Denison’s doctrine. ‘In the present state of the case,
therefore, it cannot be said to be penal to hold the doctrine promulgated by the Archdeacon.’
Archbishop Longley’s draft reply [nd] to a memorial from twenty-one clergymen concerning the
Denison case. Longley Papers, 5 f96. Lambeth Palace Library
274 ibid, p21.
275 ibid, p22.
276 ibid, p21
Churton recognized that there was an unpleasant aspect to Denison’s prosecution. ‘There has been something of this judicial retribution in the vexatious suit, under which Archdeacon Denison has so long been oppressed.’

The differences between Evangelicals and High Churchmen had became more marked as a consequence of the renewal in the Church of England, and identities of High Churchmen and Evangelicals more pronounced. Bishop Bagot had recognized this earlier. He recognized the great spirit of renewal, which was identified with Oxford, a local attribution which Bagot suggested was inaccurate, as the renewal knew no locality. But he also recognized both the dangerous tendencies which he did his best to modify, as he also recognized the reaction of mistrust, and declamations against men who had led blameless lives held up as ‘a synagogue of Satan’, branded as heretics, and ‘treated with rude, coarse abuse’ which party spirit would elicit from ‘ill-conditioned’ minds. Bagot could see all too readily the inclination to persecution:

> Persecution never has, never will, answer its object; – there is something in the very constitution of our common nature, which inclines men to side with those whom they think unfairly treated ... Whether their opinions [Tractarians'] are right or wrong, I verily believe, that the temper in which their advocates have been attacked has gained them more adherents than, perhaps, any other cause.

Richard Bagot understood, as well as any man, the tensions that wracked the Church of England – the spirit of reform and renewal, the problems of Romanising tendencies, the problems arising when the establishment failed to live by her own prayer book and doctrine (desertion to Rome), the rise of party spirit and neo-Calvinism.

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277 Ibid.
280 Ibid, p9f.
281 Ibid, p13
Bagot’s successor as Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, saw Denison’s prosecution as a form of persecution by those he identified as ‘Puritans’. Wilberforce, involved at an early stage in assisting the elderly Bishop Bagot frame his statement on, and censure of Denison’s doctrine in April 1854, had followed Denison’s prosecution, and corresponded with Gladstone, who, in turn, was in contact with Phillimore. Of the Bath Judgment, Wilberforce’s opinion was caustic:

There is not a hint even in this opinion that they condemn the objective presence of our Lord in the Holy sacrament; and what is the worth of opinion granted that it is carried into judgment? That judgment will be appealed against, and probably at once set aside on legal grounds in the very next court. Then we shall stand thus: the Puritans, thinking their time come, will have made an attempt to persecute; they will have extracted from the Archbishop, a Socinian lawyer, a Neologian dean, and a Puritan professor, a declaration that they think they could safely use the Article to put down an obnoxious High Churchman.

Gladstone was less sanguine than Churton, feeling that the Bath Court was a blow to the ‘dogmatic principle in the Established Church: the principle on which, as a Church, it rests and on which as an Establishment it seems less and less permitted to rest’. As was Wilberforce, Gladstone was unhappy with the conduct of the Bath trial, and deeply suspicious of Archbishop Sumner, who had attacked his doctrine of the Church. He had had no great expectations of Sumner on the latter’s appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury:

A contingency of this kind is what I have contemplated, as too probable almost ever since the appointment of Archbishop Sumner, and to a great degree in consequence of that appointment. My mind is made up that, if belief in the Eucharist as a reality is proscribed by law in the Church of England, everything I hold dear in life shall be given and devoted to

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283 Wilberforce to an unnamed correspondent 1 September 1856. Ibid, p327f.
However, Wilberforce expected that the Bath judgment would be overturned, Denison’s opponents would lose face, and High Church doctrine be shown to have been taught by Anglican Divines: ‘They will have failed in their attempt on legal grounds; the subject will have been well ventilated; the high tone of the Church of England doctors proved, and no one will venture in our day again to try persecution.’

Bishop Wilberforce was wrong. Pusey understood better than Wilberforce that Denison’s prosecutors were engaged in a war. While the prosecution of Denison failed on technical grounds, his opponents felt they had been justified, and their appetite for prosecution and persecution was enlarged. This was a view Denison came to adopt when the Evangelicals began to persecute the ritualists – a topic examined in the following chapter.

286 Ibid, p328.
287 E B Pusey, The real presence of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. 1857, p xxviiif.
Denison’s attitude to vestments

I am no advocate for the revival of vestments or rites long disused – which is indeed only a partial account of what is included in ‘Ritualism’. I earnestly deprecate such a revival, as a matter of discretion, under the circumstances of the Church. For myself, I believe that I can teach the Doctrine [real presence] better in a surplice and stole than I could in ‘Vestments’ – without incense than with it; in the simple form and manner in which I have been used to for more than thirty years to administer the Lord’s Supper, than in any other manner.

Denison, ‘Ritualism’ and the Real Presence; A letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. 1866, p5.

Denison’s reasons for limited ritual

Finding after many years’ experience, that Catholic Truth, however carefully taught in the Church, in the school, and from house to house, but not accompanied with its true and appropriate ceremonial, had failed to reach the hearts and influence the lives of my people, I have in my measure, made good the defect.

Denison, Loyalty to the Church: A letter to the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, etc, 1873, p6.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Ritualism

Denison was essentially old-fashioned in his view of ritualism. He was wary of ostentation and did not rejoice in outward forms. Nevertheless, he came to recognize that the objections to the ritualists were implicitly also objections to the Catholic and primitive doctrine he believed to be the sacramental teaching of the reformed English Church. On these grounds he gradually came to side with the ritualists and to see the value of some ceremonial in so far as this might serve to convey a deeper sense of the reality of the power of grace in the sacraments. In this shift he was considerably influenced by his nephew, Henry Denison.

What, then, was ‘ritualism’? As Gladstone was to observe in 1874, ritualism was regarded as a great evil – as something that should be put down, but he could not find any clear statement as to what ritualism actually was.¹ A contemporary definition, however, is to be found in the preface to the first edition of the Directorium Anglicanum (1858) – a definition made relevant by the fact that it was elements of this publication (the Six Points) that Denison came to consider when Convocation debated issues arising from ritualism.² The purposes of ‘ritualism’, as

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¹ PD, 3rd Series, Vol 22, 1874, col 1376.
² ‘The primary use of Ritual and Ceremonial is founded on the claims of Almighty God upon the homage of His creatures’. pxvi. The purpose of ritualism was, as this was advanced by the Directorium, to counter the deprecation of the Holy Eucharist. Against the Puritan notion of divine service as confession, prayer and intercessions for our wants, the Directorium presented the Eucharist as the ‘principal worship of the Church on earth’ as it embodied ‘a great action, even the perpetuation of the Sacrifice made on the Cross, in an unbloody manner on the altar’. (pp ix & xii) The Directorium pointed to the unity of the Church in heaven and on earth, a point advance by Keble in his Eucharistical Adoration, written in the aftermath of Denison’s prosecution: ‘The Church in Heaven and on earth is indeed one, and the Holy Eucharist, as a sacrifice, is all one with the memorial made by our great High Priest Himself in the very Sanctuary, where He is both Priest after the order of Melchisedec, and an Offering, by the perpetual presentation of His Body and Blood; the
stated in the *Directorium*, were: ‘Safeguards of the Sacraments; expressions of doctrine, and witness to the Sacramental system of the Catholic religion; habitual and minute acts of love; and securities for respect – promoting God’s Glory in the eyes of Man.’³ ‘Ritual’, thus defined, was an expression of the doctrines of the Church, the sacraments and justification. In this respect the *Directorium*, by and large, represented the Catholic doctrine which Denison had fought to defend. The *Directorium*, however, went rather further in terms of ceremonial and outward form: there was a great deal more advocated with regard to practices, dress and other minutiae that approximated Roman Catholic usage. This startled and alarmed contemporaries, and found little favour with High Churchmen of Denison’s generation. One such example was Denison’s friend Thomas Thorp, Archdeacon of Bristol, who believed the liturgy of the Holy Communion ought to be ‘dignified by ritual and distinguished by the dress of the priest from other offices’.⁴ But Thorp, who had adopted the eastward position in 1866, eschewed vestments and anything that might offend his people. While he sympathized with ritualists, he felt they did not sufficiently take into account the feelings and wishes of their congregations.⁵

Denison was, as he reflected in his autobiography of 1878, formed as an Establishment man ‘*pur et simple*’.⁶ He did not rejoice in outward forms for their own sake. Moreover, he understood the strength of anti-papist sentiments following the introduction of a Roman hierarchy in 1850. As ritualism emerged in the 1860s as a dynamic within the Church of England, Denison in 1865 counseled discretion, securing the approbation of Archbishop Sumner for advising caution in the matter of the introduction of vestments.⁷

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³ Ibid, ppxvi - xvii.
⁴ Thomas Thorp, *C of C*, 26 June 1866.
⁵ Ibid.
⁷ Sumner wrote: ‘I am glad of this opportunity of saying how much I approve your letter on vestments. Would that supporters of this innovation could imbibe a little of the spirit of him who has taught us that there may be things lawful which are not expedient.’ J B Sumner to Denison, 30 October 1865. *Life*, p341.
In 1866 the matter of ritualism came to be considered by Convocation – how it might be reined in, and the degree of uniformity that might be secured in public worship. Denison showed distinct caution when the ‘Six Points’ of ritual,\(^8\) advanced by ritualists as their desiderata, were considered by a Lower House committee on which he sat, serving as chairman for part of the time. He did not warm to the ‘Six Points’. He regarded the surplice as sufficient compliance with the Church’s requirements, and introduced riders inhibiting the introduction of vestments and lights without reference to the ordinary, and expressing disapproval of other practices such as censing and elevation.\(^9\)

Something of a change, however, came over Denison soon after Convocation. He came to realize that implicit in attacks on ritualism was an attack on the doctrine of the eucharistic presence. Some five months after the sitting of Convocation in June 1866, he made this point in a letter written in November to his brother-in-law, Robert Phillimore: ‘I do not agree with the ritualist in his way of maintaining The Real Presence – I am heart and soul with him, as you, in the thing.’\(^10\) While decrying ritualist excesses, Denison was prepared to identify himself as an Anglo-Catholic, seeing this as ‘the true Religion’\(^11\). Thus he insisted that maintaining the Catholic heritage of the Apostolic Church within the reformed English Church was not to be considered as Romanizing. Denison did not regard the holding the doctrine of the

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\(^8\) The ‘Six Points’ were: 1) the eastward position; 2) use of incense; 3) use of altar lights; 4) the mixed chalice; 5) the use of vestments; 6) the use of wafer bread.

\(^9\) Denison wrote to his wife from the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster, where the Lower House was sitting, of his success in securing the passage of these riders. The third rider expressed ‘entire disapproval of the practice of censing persons and things, and of elevation of the Elements after Consecration, and considered both the attendance of Non-communicants during the Celebration of the Holy Communion, and the use of Wafer Bread to be discouraged except in special cases’. Denison to Mrs Denison 28 June 1866. *LED*, p87.

\(^10\) G A Denison to Robert Phillimore, 7 November 1866. *LED*, 88f. Phillimore may have counselled Denison to be cautious in his public statements on the real objective presence, for Denison wrote: ‘My two-fold position in respect of Doctrine, and in respect of Ritualism, makes it impossible for me to keep silence at this juncture.’ He conceded the risk, but declared: ‘I have no fear of any proceedings, and that, if I had, it would make no difference.’ Denison to Phillimore 14 November 1866. *LED*, p88.

real presence as being disloyal to the Church of England and its prayer book doctrine. However, he firmly denied being a ritualist. His position at this time is evident in his reaction to a sermon of Charles Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol.\textsuperscript{12} He wrote to the bishop:

Having identified ‘Ritualism’ (so called) with belief in the doctrine of ‘The Real Presence,’ you proceed to infer that to adopt ‘Ritualism’ is to be ‘disloyal’ to the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and the Articles of Religion: that is to the Church of England. At this I am deeply grieved: First, because I, with many others who are not ‘Ritualists’ are therein charged by no mean authority, charged very formally and solemnly, and quasi ex cathedra, with disloyalty to the Church of England.\textsuperscript{13}

Denison was distressed that Ellicott, whom he regarded ‘as an exponent of sound English Churchmanship’, had raised the question of loyalty. The bishop, in his reply, stated he did not pass judgment on ‘one so hearty and straightforward’ as Denison, but identified his fear of the direction of ritualism in its most developed form as ‘tending to sub-introduce changes in our formularies’.\textsuperscript{14}

Ellicott’s reply to Denison showed the suspicion in which ritualism was held, even amongst those who were, as Denison phrased it, sound churchmen. The more militant Protestant element within the Church was not merely suspicious, but openly hostile and quite dissatisfied with the way Convocation had addressed the matter of ritual. This dissatisfaction manifested itself in subsequent developments. It was the direction of these developments that served to move Denison increasingly to empathize with the ritualists. We therefore review these developments before turning to examine Denison’s reactions.

\textsuperscript{12} Charles James Ellicott (1819-1905), Fellow St John’s, Cambridge; Professor of Divinity, King’s College, London (1848-61); Hulsean Professor of Divinity, Cambridge (1860-61); Dean of Exeter (1861-63), Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (1863 – resigned Bristol 1897, resigned Gloucester 1905). Ellicott was elected a member of Nobody’s Club in 1861, Club of Nobody’s Friends, Biographical list, p174.

\textsuperscript{13} G A Denison, ‘Ritualism’ and the real presence: A letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. 1866, p6.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p13.
Lord Shaftesbury and the Church Association (formed in 1865 as a counter to the English Church Union) had set in train prosecutions against ritualists, notably Alexander Mackonochie and John Purchas. As Convocation had only deprecated excess, but was not disposed to introduce changes to the prayer book to inhibit ritual, Lord Shaftesbury turned to Parliament to secure more tangible measures. His bill to inhibit ritualism, however, only managed to reach a second reading. Samuel Wilberforce derided Shaftesbury’s legislative attempts to curb ritual ‘as exactly the idea for his cramped, puritanical and persecuting mind’. However, not all bishops shared Wilberforce’s position. The northern bishops, the Archbishop of Canterbury and some of the bishops of the southern province shared Shaftesbury’s view that the ritualists should be curbed and determined to act on their own account. The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol drafted and introduced a bill entitled: ‘An Act for removing doubts as to the mode of conducting public worship’. In the event the bishop’s bill was abandoned when Gladstone, who was opposed to the mood of ‘authoritative condemnation’ intervened and persuaded Lord Derby’s cabinet to steer the bishops away from legislation and substitute a commission in its place.

The Ritual Commission sat over a period of several years, producing four reports between 1867 and 1870. The matters under consideration were not confined to ritual, but included the revision of the lectionary and other matters. On the central

16 C of C 26 June 1866.
17 This was the Clerical Vestments Bill introduced 28 March 1867. Shaftesbury told the Lords that his bill had been prompted by ‘the introduction into the service of the Church of innovations so little in accordance with the long-established system of public worship, and more particularly by that which relates to sacrificial vestments’. The bill was intended to fill a lacuna, the Earl taking it that other matters, such as candles and incense, had been previously dealt with by the Privy Council judgments. PD, 3rd Series, Vol 185, col 1624ff.
19 Ibid, p212. For Gladstone’s attitude on this subject see his letter to Samuel Wilberforce, 31 December 1865, in D C Lathbury (ed), Correspondence on Church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol I, p377ff.
issue of ritual, the commissioners offered dissenting reports and the exercise failed to satisfy any of the parties. In fact the deliberations of the commission and the actions of the Church Association served to emphasize the doctrinal fault lines in the Church of England. The commission’s concerns over with ritualism were focused on the similarity to Roman ritual. Little notice was taken of ritualism as an expression of doctrine. But the debate on ritual as Denison’s old friend, the Bishop of Exeter, well understood, reflected differences over doctrine held within the Church of England. ‘Is it not rather true,’ Phillpotts suggested to his brother bishops, ‘that differences on incomparably higher matters, grave questions of doctrine, are those that really interfere with the unity and peace of the Church?’ Phillpotts derided the idea that the divisions could be healed ‘by a few honeyed words’.21

Opposed to the idea that uniformity be imposed, the liberal Dean Stanley and J D Coleridge sapiently observed that rigid uniformity in matters not essential was not possible if the Church of England was to remain the National Church. ‘The Church of England had always contained within it two parties, one caring much for outward observance and ceremonial, the other careless or even hostile to them.’22 Nevertheless, some commissioners held to the notion that ritual and ceremonial could both be regulated and restricted to the alleged usage of the previous three centuries. By contrast, High Church members of the Commission questioned why the rule for ceremonial should be based on a period of indifference and disuse.23

These party differences noted by Stanley were apparent in the commission. Denison’s brother-in-law, Robert Phillimore, appointed a member, joined with

21 Ibid, p121.  
23 The Earl of Beauchamp objected to the notion of disuse and indifference being made the rule. He objected also to bishops being deprived of discretion and the liberties of congregations being circumscribed. Second Report, p4. [Phillimore had dissented on the same grounds in the First Report, p15]. The Rev Thomas Perry observed that the proposal would be a bar to improvement in worship. More importantly, Perry queried the practical problems of regulating every detail. Second Report, p5. Perry was the author of Lawful Church ornaments, etc (1857) written in the wake of Westerton versus Liddell.
group of High Churchmen to form a private committee to defend their corner.\textsuperscript{24} However, it was not only in the commission, but also in the courts (the Arches and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council) that these differences came to be aired, or more accurately, fought over. Importantly for Denison, it was again Robert Phillimore who played a significant role in the court battles over ritual and doctrine, for Phillimore was appointed Dean of Arches in 1867 in succession to Sir Stephen Lushington.

Thwarted in Convocation, the Church Association brought legal proceedings against leading ritualists. These cases thus came before Phillimore in the Court of Arches. Phillimore held the same view as did Denison with respect to the character of the Church of England – namely that the reformed English Church was primitive and Catholic. In the Mackonochie case, Phillimore ruled that lights on the altar, as symbolic of the real presence, were legal.\textsuperscript{25} His ruling diverged from the antipathy to such doctrine evident both in the commission and the generality of the episcopal bench, which was prepared to narrow the comprehensiveness of the English Church in order to inhibit ritualism. Summing up in Martin \textit{versus} Mackonochie Phillimore declared: ‘The basis of the religious establishment was ... intended to be broad and not narrow. Within its walls there is room, if they would cease from litigation, for both the parties represented by the promoter and the defendant.’\textsuperscript{26} Phillimore had supported his ruling, and his assertion of the comprehensive nature of the Church of England, with reference to the Judicial Committee’s judgment in the case of Westerton \textit{versus} Liddell: ‘Their Lordships are not disposed in any case to restrict within narrower limits than the law has imposed, the discretion which within these limits is justly allowed to congregations by the rules both of the Ecclesiastical and Common Law Courts.’\textsuperscript{27} On appeal, however, the Privy Council overturned Phillimore’s ruling in the Mackonochie case on altar candles, condemning their use.
except for the purpose of providing light when needed for practical purposes. The Judicial Committee thus withdrew most of the air from their statement of principle made in Westerton versus Liddell. Their ruling against the ceremonial use of lights struck against those, such as Denison, who regarded the lights as symbols of the real presence.

Two more significant cases on ritual and doctrine came before Robert Phillimore - that of John Purchas in November 1869, prosecuted by the Church Association, and also in 1869, that of a Somerset colleague of Denison, the Rev W J E Bennett, Vicar of Frome-Selwood. This second case was of direct and intimate concern for the East Brent vicarage which he had sought to defend in the Bath Court. As Denison had succeeded in his appeal on a legal technicality (namely the prosecution was out of time) without being able to air the substance of the doctrinal issues, Bennett, immediately after Denison’s successful appeal, attempted to reactivate the case so that the legality of the doctrines might be tested. He produced a pamphlet, An examination of faith on the doctrine of the holy eucharist, and in the preface, addressed to the Bishop of Bath and Wells (Lord Auckland – Bagot’s successor). The bishop declined to take action against Bennett, as he had earlier declined to prosecute Denison. Eleven years later, Bennett attracted the attention of the Church Association with his essay ‘Some results of the Tractarian Movement of

28 Mackonochie was first cited to appear before the Arches in March of 1867. The Alliance appealed to the Privy Council in 1868 and asked for costs. The Alliance complained of Mackonochie again in December of 1869, and yet again in March of 1870. Further representations by the Alliance before the Privy Council saw Mackonochie suspended for three months. Further action against Mackonochie was mooted at the annual meeting of the Alliance in March of 1874.

29 William James Early Bennett (1804-1886) had been Incumbent of Saint Paul’s, Knightsbridge and St Barnabas, Pimlico. St Paul’s was a parish created to relieve St George’s, Hanover Square. The new parish had two faces - a wealthy part at Knightsbridge, and another in Pimlico, with bad housing inhabited by the London poor. In Pimlico, Bennett built a second church incorporated within a college dedicated to St Barnabas to meet the needs of the district. St Barnabas attracted accusations of ritualism, and after a dispute with Bishop Blomfield, Bennett resigned the living in 1851. The High Church Marchioness of Bath preferred Bennett to Frome-Selwood in January of 1852. See Frederick Bennett, The life of the Rev W J E Bennett. 1909, p160f, and chs iv – viii for an account of St Barnabas.

1833 together with another pamphlet, *A plea for toleration in the Church of England, addressed as a letter to the Rev E B Pusey*, in which he again advanced eucharistic teaching as Denison had taught it. On this occasion, Lord Arthur Hervey (Lord Auckland’s successor as Bishop of Bath and Wells) while declining to try Bennett himself, departed from the example of his predecessor’s refusal to act in any way by issuing Letters of Request. Bennett’s case came before Sir Robert Phillimore in 1869, on the motion of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The promoters once again were the Church Association. But circumstances differed in a significant respect from the position Denison found himself in 1854, as the indictment against Bennett was brought within the cognizance of general ecclesiastical law under the provisions of 3 & 4 Vict. c. 86 – that is within the jurisdiction of a regular ecclesiastical court and not an untried *ad hoc* tribunal as in the instance of Denison’s prosecution. Further, Bennett was not indicted under the punitive and narrow provisions of 13 Eliz. c. 12. However, Bennett’s prosecution not unnaturally sent Denison into a flurry of activity, as he sought to air the issues through the English Church Union and bring a declaration to Convocation.

Phillimore opened the way to a wider consideration of the doctrinal controversy than had been allowed by the Bath Court. He struck out the article out that charged Bennett with contravention of Article XXIX (*Of the wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper*), as Bennett had only cited Denison, and there being no evidence adduced that Bennett himself had taught in contravention of the Article. Against the promoters’ argument that the judgment against Denison at Bath had determined the Church of England’s doctrine on the real presence, Phillimore declined to accept that the decision of the Bath Court had any validity, or was binding in the Bennett case.

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31 Published in *The Church and the world: essays on questions of the day*. 1866, 1867, edited by Orby Shipley.

32 A letter of Request, or Letter Rogatory, was an instrument whereby the bishop waiving his right of jurisdiction, requested the Arches, as the higher court, to hear the case. Phillimore refused, in the first instance, to accept the Bishop’s Letters of Request, but the Association successfully appealed to the Privy Council.

33 See ECU Minutes April 1868-March 1870, p60f, p192, & p198.
The inference, that because the appellant was successful *in limine* upon the first objection [namely the archbishop had no jurisdiction at Bath, as the suit was out of time] which he took, he would not have been successful on his other objections which he had not an opportunity of stating, but on which he confidently relied, would indeed be a novel doctrine of jurisprudence.\(^{34}\)

The point left at issue, therefore, was whether the doctrine of the real presence, as Denison and Bennett represented that doctrine, might be allowed in the Church of England.\(^{35}\)

Significantly for a re-consideration of the doctrine Denison had defended at Bath, the conduct of the case in the Arches was shaped by Bennett’s refusal to be represented in court.\(^{36}\) The Dean of Arches felt obliged to address the problem as to how, without a defence counsel, the wider interests of the Church, as well as those of Bennett, might be considered. Phillimore, therefore, took upon himself the task of rehearsing evidence supporting the argument that the doctrine of the real presence was held in the Church of England. The Dean of Arches introduced one hundred and twenty pages of references (Anglican divines, the Fathers and other sources) material with which Phillimore would have been familiar, as much of it had been prepared for Denison’s defence, or published subsequently as a rebuttal of the Bath Court.\(^{37}\)

In a preface to the publication of his judgments handed down during his term of office as Dean of Arches, Phillimore stated the principles from which he had arrived

\(^{34}\) Robert Phillimore, *The principal ecclesiastical judgments, etc.*, p292.


\(^{36}\) Bennett evidently ignored the whole legal proceedings. He accepted the citation delivered to his parsonage, placed it on a table and never looked at the document. Bennett wrote to the *Guardian* to correct a report of the case: ‘I beg to inform you that I never employed any counsel in this case. I know nothing of the proceedings, and I have never interfered in what is going on in any way whatever.’ *The story of W J E Bennett*, p223.

\(^{37}\) Phillimore stated: ‘But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that I am not trying Mr Bennett alone, but also the divines eminent for piety, learning and eloquence, whose opinions Mr Bennett has borrowed, and in some respects caricatured, but does not allow, by the course he has taken, to be vindicated or explained.’ *Principal ecclesiastical judgments, etc*, p330.
at his decisions in cases involving ritual and discipline. These principles were very much those of the Denison family camp. Phillimore saw the identity of the Church of England to be reflected in her prayer book, her liturgy based on the ancient liturgies of the Western Church and restored at the Reformation to the ‘godly and decent order of the ancient fathers’. Moreover, he observed that attempts (at the Reformation) to strike out laudable practices of the whole Catholic Church had been rejected. The prayer book calendar contained tables of feasts, vigils and fasts, ‘which were in accordance with the primitive and Catholic use; while the ornaments of the Church and vestments of the ministers were such as to present to the people some of the most prominent features of the ancient service’. The Court of Arches under Phillimore was not, therefore, disposed to accept Ultra-Protestant interpretations of the prayer book and articles of the Church, and thus condemn ornaments and ceremony as ipso facto manifestations of Romanizing.

The similarity of the ornaments and practices in question with those in the Church of Rome did not furnish a safe criterion whereby to try the question of their legality in the Church of England. That the true criterion is conformity with primitive and Catholic use, and not mere antagonism to Rome. And acting on the same principle, I held one fundamental truth was to be borne in mind, namely that the end and object of our Church was so to reform her Doctrine and Ritual as to bring them into general harmony with those of the Primitive Catholic undivided Church.

With respect to the other ritualist case Phillimore heard at this time – that of the Rev John Purchas – his judgment delivered in February 1870, allowed vestments, wine mixed with water (provided this was not ceremonial (it was to be mixed before the service in the vestry), wafer bread and the eastward position.

38 Robert Phillimore, Ibid, p54
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid, pxi.
In the Bennett case, which was entirely concerned with doctrine, Phillimore handed down judgment some five months after Purchas, in July 1870, ruling in Bennett’s favour, allowing the real presence, sacrifice³¹ and adoration.²²

I say that the Objective, Actual, and Real Presence, or Spiritual, Real Presence, a Presence external to the act of the Communicant, appears to me to be the doctrine which the Formularies of our church, duly considered and constructed so as to be harmonious, intended to maintain. But I do not lay down this as a position of law, nor do I say that which is called Receptionist Doctrine is inadmissible; nor do I pronounce on any other teaching with respect to the mode of Presence. I mean to do no such thing by this judgment. I mean it to pronounce only that to describe the mode of the Presence as Objective, Real, Actual and Spiritual, is certainly not contrary to the law.⁴³

With Phillimore’s ruling in the Bennett case, the battle Denison had fought over the doctrine of the sacraments appeared to be won. But if Denison’s doctrine was allowed by the Arches, the archdeacon found no retrospective justification for his militant treatment of those who disagreed with him when he served as Bishop Bagot’s examining chaplain. For, significantly, Phillimore’s carefully worded judgment avoided ruling that receptionism was disallowed in the Church of England. The Dean of Arches thus avoided narrowing the comprehensive nature of the Church along party lines. However, on the question of the identity of the Church of England, Phillimore was definite in maintaining that the Reformation had not excluded the primitive Catholic element in the Church of England. He held in the Bennett case, as he had in the Mackonochie and Purchas cases, that ‘one fundamental truth must be borne in mind: namely that the end of our Church was to reform her doctrine and ritual so as to bring them into general harmony with

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³¹ On this point Phillimore made use of Keble, Pusey, Bishop Moberly and Edward Churton’s recently published work on Waterland. Churton argued the value of Waterland to the nineteenth-century debate over the sacraments was ‘the clear refutation it supplies to the leading Socinian glosses on the doctrine of the Eucharist, reducing it to a bare memorial of an absent friend’. *Fourteen letters from Daniel Waterland to Zachary Pierce. 1868,* edited with an historical and critical preface by Edward Churton.


those of the Primitive Catholic Undivided Church'.\textsuperscript{44} This Phillimore declared was what emerged when the history of the Church was examined.\textsuperscript{45}

Denison’s attitude to ritualism 1866-1870

We turn now to consider changes in Denison’s attitude to ritualism in the light of the Ritual Commission and the prosecution of ritualists just examined. When the notion of a ritual commission was mooted in 1867, Denison was hostile to the idea. He suspected such a commission might deny that the reformed Church of England incorporated a primitive Catholic tradition. High Church members of the Commission\textsuperscript{46} questioned why the rule for ceremonial, based on a period of indifference and disuse, should be the rule, and, equally importantly, how it could be fixed by law.\textsuperscript{47} Some Commissioners, amongst them a significant number of bishops, held to the notion that ritual and ceremonial could both be regulated and restricted to the alleged usage of the previous three centuries.

A principle has of late been avowed and acted upon, which, if admitted, would justify far greater and more uncertain changes. It is this: that, as the Church of England is the ancient and Catholic Church settled in this land before the Reformation, and was therefore reformed only by the casting away of certain strictly defined corruptions; therefore, whatever form or usage, existed in the Church before the Reformation, may now be freely introduced

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid}, p220.
\textsuperscript{45} ‘This truth is indeed elementary to all who have studied the ecclesiastical history of England, and examined the legal foundations upon which the Church was established in these realms; nevertheless, it is a truth to which in former litigation perhaps I may be permitted to say due prominence has scarcely been given, or which has been occasionally lost sight of in the multiplicity of facts and details which surround the gradual progress of that epoch which is somewhat vaguely called the Reformation in this kingdom.’ \textit{Ibid}, p220.
\textsuperscript{46} The group consisted of Lord Beauchamp, Samuel Wilberforce (Bp of Oxford), Harvey Goodwin (Dean of Ely), Sir Robert Phillimore, J G Hubbard, A J B Beresford Hope, Rev T W Perry. See R G Wilberforce, \textit{Life of Bishop Wilberforce}, Vol 3, p214.
and observed, unless there can be alleged against it the distinct letter of some form of prohibition. 48

As did Bishop Phillpotts, Denison saw that behind the dislike of ritualism there was a narrow view of the identity of the Church of England. In a speech in the Lower House of Convocation delivered in February 1868, Denison declared: ‘I understand why an attack on doctrine is disclaimed because you cannot put down doctrine. All the Archbishops and parliaments in the world cannot put down doctrine.’ 49 Denison’s inclination was to work to seek moderation. He had been satisfied with the Lower House 1866 report on ritual as being representative of the mind of the Church. This report had not taken just a single view, or snapshot of a particular period of the Reformation or subsequent history of the Church, and thus the report had, to Denison’s mind, retained the comprehensiveness that was characteristic of the Church of England. This comprehensiveness, Denison believed, included ‘recognition of the Church Catholic and of their extension as such by our brand of it at the time of the Reformation, partly particular precedents of our own, partly of Statute, partly of canon, partly of direction from time to time of lawful authority, partly by prescription of use’. 50

When the ritual commission was appointed Denison engaged with others in the English Church Union to consider the issue of ritualism. The union took a cautious line, taking the view that elaborate ritual was inexpedient – a position which accorded with the line Denison had adopted in Convocation. 51 Denison had adopted to this point, maintaining that primitive and Catholic doctrine, and the use of ceremonial was part of the law of the Church of England, but that elaborate ritual was considered inexpedient. However, he deprecated any attempt to impose uniformity of ritual, and wished to see the Church permit differences of practice in

48 1867 [3951] XX First Report, p120.
49 C of C February 1868, p1312.
50 Ibid.
51 See activities of the ECU in this period in G Bayfield Roberts, The history of the English Church Union 1859-1894.
differing circumstances that the committee of the Lower House considered ‘to be part of the happiness of the Church of England, and opposition will only induce a more determined adoption of it’.\(^5\)

However, the course of events served to move Denison from his moderate stance, and saw him adopt a position sympathetic to the ritualists. Until 1868 he had seen the Act of Uniformity as a sufficient statutory instrument to enable the disciplining of clergy who neglected and omitted the requirements of the canons and rubrics of the prayer book, as it might also curb the enthusiasm of the ritualists. But he had a change of heart when he saw ritualists being attacked, while no measures were taken to discipline those Low Churchmen who, he considered, disregarded the canons and prayer book.\(^5\) Given his understanding that a one-sided approach was being played out, he came to believe that any new measures to impose uniformity were likely to narrow the doctrinal comprehensiveness of the English Church.\(^5\) In Convocation, Denison explained his position.

I am no Ritualist; I never have been. I have been a priest of the Church of England for thirty-six years, and have never done otherwise than I do now. I have never changed anything in my Church except adopt the practice of weekly communion, which I regret I did not do earlier. I have changed nothing against the will of my people so far as I know, and do not mean to change, and will not if I can help it give offence to any man in my parish.\(^5\)

Denison’s unwillingness to disturb others on account of vestments and other such matters, and his antipathy to a one-sided uniformity, is shown in an exchange between the archdeacon and an incumbent: ‘Yesterday morning, the old Rector came to me in a great fright, and said: “The Protestant Editor tells me you are a confirmed Ritualist”. I said, “Dear Mr Rector, I told you yesterday that I will preach in your Church just as you preach, ie in a gown”.’ As regards ritualists he advocated

\(^5\) C of C February 1868, p1312
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid, p1306.
\(^5\) Ibid, p1305.
a similar principle – that they should not be interfered with. ‘I have always said let them alone’. However, Denison found the ritualists were not left alone.

Illness and state of mind in the early 1870s

In 1870 Denison fell ill. His was a long and serious illness that prevented him from going about his duties and removed him from residence in his parish for well over a year. Denison perhaps did not expect to live. Whatever the case, his illness appears to have influenced his perspective on life at this time. Reacting to the news of the death of his diocesan bishop, Lord Auckland, on 25 April 1870, he mused: ‘Dear Lord Auckland is dead – a kind and honest friend to us – one more sign to us of the breaking up around us of all things here. How short life is to dispute and trouble in, to do anything in but love and help!’ A sense of mortality adduced a contrite letter to Gladstone, in which Denison asked forgiveness for any uncharitableness he might have shown. In the latter part of 1871, after his recovery, he continued in a reflective mood evident in a letter written to a friend:

After a year’s absence from the provincial Synod of Canterbury, I have been spared to return to it when better men than I have died. I have continually before me the words of one of these, a dear kind friend. Writing to me at a time when his illness appeared to take a favourable turn, he said: ‘How awful a thing it

56 Denison to Mrs Denison, 9 October 1869. LED, p106. There was a long established practice of wearing a gown to preach, though with no rubrical or canonical authority. Canon 58 required that ministers wore a surplice to read the offices and administer communion. Bishop Phillpotts and Bishop Blomfield had attempted to enforce the wearing of the surplice in the years 1843 and 1844. Blomfield insisted that the place of the sermon after the creed in the communion service made it an intrinsic part of the service, and the surplice should therefore be worn. C J Blomfield, Charge to the clergy of the Diocese of London at the visitation in October MDCCCLII, 1843, p33f; Henry Phillpotts also insisted on the surplice. See Denis Paz, Popular anti-Catholicism in mid-Victorian England. 1992, p245.
57 G A Denison to Mrs Denison 27 April 1870. LED, p114. Robert Eden, third Baron Auckland (1799 - 1870) had succeeded Richard Bagot as Bishop of Bath and Wells in June 1854.
58 ‘A sick bed calls out and tests many cravings of the soul. I could not be satisfied, having regard to the relations of our lives, without simply asking your pardon for anything written or said by me which may carry with it, lack of charity.’ G A Denison to W E Gladstone 13 July 1870. LED, p116.
is to have been seeming near death, and to be sent forth again to work in The Vineyard’.  

Amidst his contemplation of change and mortality, Denison knew full well the tensions and contradictions in the Church of England. Much for which he had fought had been lost. In Parliament there had been legislation with respect to marriage and divorce, the abolition of the church rate, Forster’s Education Act and disestablishment of the Irish Church. In Convocation there was the new lectionary, revision of the Bible, review of the Athanasian Creed and the suggestion of revisions to the prayer book. Furthermore, Phillimore’s rulings in the Purchas and Bennett cases, handed down respectively in February and July 1870, were both appealed by the Church Association to the Privy Council. Two years were to pass before the outcomes of these appeals were heard in 1872. There was, moreover, an element of an older man’s disinclination to consider change, but for Denison there was more than this. The nexus between Church and State, to which he subscribed, seemed to be broken, and equally distressing to Denison was the path being trod by Erastian bishops, and the failure of Convocation, as he believed, to act as a true synod of the Church. As a consequence, Denison entered upon an anti-Establishment phase, distinguishing between the Church as the Body of Christ, and the legal construct that was the Church Establishment.

Denison appears to have been overtaken in this period by an emotional sense of crisis arising from what he considered to be a policy of persecution pursued by certain elements who denied the Catholic identity of the Church of England, and were assisted in their object by the civil jurisdiction of the Privy Council. He was disturbed by the persecution of a priest such as Mackonochie, who, Denison considered, was a hard working priest attempting to reach out to his people. ‘What

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59 G A Denison, The Three policies. A letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. 1871, p[3].
60 See The Three policies, etc, pp4-16.
61 ‘Of late the ’Establishment’ has shown many symptoms of rapid decay ... Parliament at present votes for the ’Establishment’, not for the ’Church’, with which it does not, and indeed, cannot concern itself.’ Ibid, p22.
Mr Mackonochie says is that high ceremonial helps devotion, and it is a fit assistance in teaching people, and he claims to pursue it within the limits of the Church of England. But in 1868, if he empathized with Mackonochie’s pastoral missionary objective, Denison still did not identify himself as a ritualist, stating at that time, ‘I do not care for High Ceremonial’; but he objected to those who did being subjected to the crude accusation of popery.

No crisis is of a more determined and final character than that which is brought about by a collision of the law of the land, or what claims to be the law of the land, and the conscience of a considerable proportion of the people; and the position is aggravated, and the antagonism is intensified, when the subject matter is Religion in any of its aspects; most of all its Doctrinal aspects. Liberty is then assailed in its tenderest point, and sought to be trampled under the form in which is most precious, and should be most inviolate.

By 1871, following his return to East Brent vicarage after his long illness, Denison had come to identify himself more strongly with the cause of Purchas and Bennett, whose cases awaited decision by the Privy Council. If he had been definite in his statements regarding Catholic doctrine and his view of the identity of the Church of England, in his attitude towards ritualism Denison had hitherto been cautious while yet being supportive of those who had been brought before the Courts. However, he had come to see the use of the courts by one party in the Church as an abuse, and a blatant attempt to push the Catholic element out of the English Church. His letter to Bishop Ellicott in 1871 disclosed much as to this outlook.

Law abused, strained, perverted, in the highest places, made a tool of popular ignorance, and of the persecuting hand of heresies and schisms, speedily loses respect, and falls into contempt, of men; and finally, weighed in the scales of another Justice, kicks the beam. Meantime wrong, injury, wide-spread suffering, is

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62 C of C, February 1868, p1308.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid, p18.
65 Denison was involved with the English Church Union’s Legal Committee established in January of 1868. A sub-Committee was established to assist Mackonochie. Robert Phillimore gave the Committee legal advice. ECU Minutes of the Legal Committee 22 February 1869, p140.
inflicted upon Clergy and People, and the work of CHRIST is hindered grievously under the name of upholding The Majesty of the Law.\textsuperscript{66}

In another letter of 1871 he expressed his doubts about having doctrinal issues in the hands of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

If the Court of final appeal constituting itself the instrument of persecution in respect of The Doctrine, as of the usage and ceremonial, of The Lord’s Supper, shall condemn Mr Bennett, it will have judged – first, against its own principles, as laid down in 1850 for enabling to arrive at its ‘Judgment’ in the ‘Gorham case’. Further, it will have judged against the Law of the Church; against the Judgment of the Judge who, of all Judges in England, is best informed on the matter in question.\textsuperscript{67}

In June 1872, the Privy Council overruled Phillimore’s judgment in the Purchas case on all points, declaring illegal the use of vestments, wine mixed with water, wafer bread and the eastward position. However, only four days later, the Judicial Committee confirmed the ruling of the Arches Court in the Bennett case on all points. Ostensibly, therefore, confirmation of Phillimore’s judgment in this latter case affirmed the notion of the identity of the Church of England as primitive and Catholic – the principles which Phillimore had adduced when arriving at his decision. But these two decisions of the Judicial Committee were contradictory. On the one hand, the Catholic doctrines for which Denison and Bennett had contended, were judged to be lawful. On the other, the ornaments and ceremonies which were understood by their protagonists as symbolizing these doctrines were ruled unlawful.

There was a further aspect regarding the grounds of the Privy Council ruling in the Purchas appeal. In this case the Judicial Committee introduced a new principle – namely, disuse, or neglect, \textit{ipso facto} rendered illegal vestments and other ritual

\textsuperscript{66} G A Denison, \textit{The three policies, etc}, p18f.  
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid}, p28.
usages. This new principle brought a sharp response. Amongst the Denison circle, Charles Grueber published a pamphlet demonstrating the many inconsistencies that arose from the Privy Council’s dictum. Phillimore’s son, and Denison’s nephew, Walter Phillimore, wrote a highly critical and uncomplimentary review of the Judicial Committee’s inconsistency, suggesting that some members had shown bias. Walter Phillimore’s criticism summed up not only the feelings of the Denison family circle, but there was also dissent evident in a wider circle of Tractarians and High Churchmen. Canon H P Liddon, for example, considered the Privy Council had strayed from its judicial role and adopted a quasi legislative or political function. Liddon thought its inconsistent judgments could only be made intelligible if it was understood to be taking political considerations and expediency into account – namely satisfying the opinions of the Low Church party. Liddon divined that the

68 Rev Charles Grueber, Strictures on the recent decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. 1871.

69 Although at this stage of his life a young lawyer, Walter Phillimos’ criticism reflected the Denison family camp’s sense that the Privy Council judgments were contradictory and suggested political bias.

‘For their judgement in this, the Purchas case, the Privy Council have directly contradicted the previous judgments of the same tribunal in Westerton v Liddell and Martin v Mackinochie. They have given a force to the Canons repudiated by every court of justice in England. They have stated that a construction of the Ornaments rubric in our Prayer Book to be “a modern one,” … They have relied on argument from usage and desuetude, when the very foundation of that argument has been sapped by an historical analysis, unnoticed by them though necessarily before their eyes, … They have quoted authorities when in their favour, and have not even recorded the same authorities when they were against them. When we see phenomena such as these occurring in a judgment drawn up by men of ability and great position, we regret that it should seem impossible to explain them upon any other hypothesis than that of a predetermined and ineradicable intention in the minds of the majority of the court to condemn at all hazards the “novel practices” of so-called Ritualists. Walter Phillimore, Remarks on the judgment of the Privy Council in Herbert v Purchas. 1871, p20.

Walter George Frank Phillimore (1845-1919) after pursuing a brilliant course as a student at Oxford, and being elected a fellow of All Souls in 1866, was called the bar in 1868, following his father’s career as a barrister. Like his father, Walter became an eminent ecclesiastical lawyer, and later in his career a judge of the High Court, and Justice of Appeal. He succeeded to his father’s baronetcy in 1885, and was raised to the peerage in 1918. ODNB. Walter served as Denison’s legal advisor after Robert Phillimore’s death.


Responding to Coleridge’s assurance that the Judges on the Privy Council Committee had not engaged in politics, that is they had not taken into account ‘the interests of the Church of England, as they understood those interests’ rather than interpreting the plain words of the prayer book as in the Gorham case, etc – Liddon seems to have been unconvinced: ‘But if you assure me that the Judges take no such view of their duties, I must of course bow unreservedly to your authority; although at the cost of new difficulties in explaining to myself their proceedings as critics who mean only to “ascertain” and “interpret” the law, and who disavow all wish to provide for the interests of
Church Association were bent on driving out of the Church those with whom they disagreed, engaging informants and spies in order to prosecute those who did not conform to rulings of the Privy Council. He fully expected there would be passive resistance by clergy who did not recognize in the Judicial Committee’s judgments an authority in spiritual matters; whose decisions, if complied with, would alter the character of the English Church. At St Paul’s Cathedral, Liddon and his fellow canon, Robert Gregory, declined to cease celebrating from the eastward position in defiance of the Privy Council judgment in the Purchas case. They conveyed their determination to the Bishop of London, hoping that proceedings would be brought against them rather than against lesser clergy. In the Diocese of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce recognized the dilemma following the Purchas case, and resolved not to proceed in his diocese against clergy who complied with decisions of the ecclesiastical courts, even when these had been overruled by the Privy Council.

For the Church Association, however, the Purchas judgment induced a sense of triumph, and fortified their determination to prosecute any clergyman who infringed the Privy Council’s rulings. At the annual meeting of the Church Association in 1871, the Evangelical Dean of Carlisle, Francis Close, rejoiced at the triumphal results of the judgment in the Purchas case, and tone that was induced as

the Church by decisions which are not forced upon them by the obvious construction of the letter of the document which they have to interpret.’ *Ibid*, p20.

Liddon cited the report of the annual meeting of the Church Association published in *The Record*, 3 March 1871. The chairman of that meeting had stated: ‘Let us not forget that we ourselves have a duty to perform. The law is so clearly defined now that we can have no doubt about it; and the Church Association intend to embody in a hand-book the late judgment, so that no man or woman can plead ignorance as to what is the law and what is not the law. It our duty as members to see that the law is obeyed. Let not the Bishops have this excuse, “We have no complaints”. When there is violation of the law, let be an abundance of complaints’.


John Jackson (Bishop of London 1869-85) had been translated from Lincoln to London on Tait’s translation to Canterbury.


The Cathedral did not conform to the Privy Council’s judgment, and no prosecution ensued. Gladstone’s appointment of R W Church as Dean in 1871 reinforced the stance taken by Liddon and Gregory.

Wilberforce’s view was shared by Earl Nelson commenting on the introduction of the Public Worship Bill in the Lords in April 1874. PD, 3rd Series, Vol 218, col 802f.
a result at the Association’s meeting. Although he was to be disappointed, Close fully expected that, consistent with their previous rulings, the Privy Council would also find against Bennett’s doctrines and overthrow Phillimore’s decision in the Arches. Indeed Phillimore’s court was derided by Dean Close: ‘This Court of Arches – (“Dark Arches”) – yes, Gothic arches of the middle ages – this Court is, I say, called humorously enough, “the Court below”, I suppose because its judgments are generally set aside by the Court above’.76

Denison’s return to East Brent and his curates

Denison’s illness in 1870 and his return to his parish in 1871 is to be set against the background of the Purchas case and, more particularly, the issue of the real presence raised in the Bennett case. Replying to a letter he had received from Canon Liddon, Denison wrote: ‘I fear most of all – what I gather you fear – not the loss of “Establishment”, but the persistent deterioration of it until it becomes a mass of Protestant negations, with just so much “salt” remaining as those remaining faithful in it will be able to preserve’.77 Prior to the Judicial Committee’s decision in the Bennett case, Denison told Liddon that the possibility of a judgment against Bennett in the appeal before the Privy Council was ‘always before my mind’.78 Denison suffered a feeling of despair, and with the possibility of an adverse judgment by the Judicial Committee deciding against the doctrines he held dear, thought he might be forced to retreat from the outer redoubts of the Church Establishment. Against this possible outcome in the Bennett case, he manifested a determination to defend the inner keep. He felt he could still fight for the Church of Christ: ‘The Faith of Christ as the one foundation upon which it is possible to build securely.’ This he felt he could do by fighting on his own ground – in his own parish, – toiling and striving ‘for his own and others’ souls’. Denison could only evince

76 Record, 3 March 1871.
77 G A Denison to H P Liddon 25 July 1871. LED, p117.
78 G A Denison to H P Liddon 30 December 1871. LED, p122.
'thankfulness that we are admitted and enabled in all things to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily, and to follow Christ'.

With this determination, Denison’s resumption of his parochial duties in 1871 saw a number of significant changes to the services and liturgical practice at East Brent. Up till this time Denison had remained untouched by any form of ritualism. When he arrived at East Brent in 1845, Denison found the surplice had been worn by his predecessor, William Law. Denison continued his predecessor’s example, wearing a surplice with a stole for the eucharist. The altar was permanently covered with a cloth of Sarum red, and Denison, according to Henry Denison’s account, celebrated at the north end. Denison, as he conceded, knew very little of ritual. However, in the 1870s he adopted a new stance, one of quasi-nonconformity as he rejected the direction taken by Privy Council in its rulings on ritualist cases. He was mindful, however, that he conformed to the rulings of the Arches – a court he regarded as the legitimate arbiter in ecclesiastical causes. Several facets of the changes he introduced at East Brent, while in defiance of the Judicial Committee, were in conformity with the judgments handed down by Sir Robert Phillimore.

An immediate and very personal influence on Denison at this time was that of his young nephew, Henry Denison, who represented a younger generation of High Churchmanship. Henry had lived in the East Brent vicarage since 1861, when his father, General William Denison, went to India. The general had a large family, and as George Denison was childless there appears to have been a family arrangement that effectively left Henry in the archdeacon’s and Mrs Denison’s care as an unofficially adopted son. Other than a short spell at Winchester, Henry was tutored at home in the vicarage. Going up to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1866, some

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79 G A Denison, The three policies, etc, p31.
80 H P Denison, Seventy-two years’ Church recollection, p21.
81 Henry was evidently closely attached to his uncle and aunt. He remained his uncle’s assistant until the latter’s death in 1896, when he moved to London as Vicar of St Michael’s, North Kensington. His aunt moved with him and remained with Henry till her death in 1908. Of his aunt Henry wrote, ‘No words can say what she was to me in the forty-seven years I had the privilege of the closest of companionship’. Seventy-two years’, p50.
forty-two years after his uncle, Henry encountered a more advanced Anglo-Catholicism than he had experienced in his uncle’s church. His account in Seventy-two years’ Church recollections recalled the immediate and abiding influence of this more advanced churchmanship. Henry influenced his uncle to introduce a liturgical sequence of colours, altar linen and the like. Henry contended ‘the real fact of the matter being my dear uncle, glad and anxious to improve things by degrees, but never having been in the way of knowing how things were done, trusted to my Oxford experience to see that whatever might be done was done right’.\textsuperscript{82} During Denison’s illness, the parish was left in the hands of a young Anglo-Catholic priest, the Rev Charles Hawkins,\textsuperscript{83} who had been recommended by Bishop Hamilton to whom Denison had turned for help. Hamilton had been a colleague and a close friend of Edward Denison.\textsuperscript{84} Henry’s influence, and presumably that of Hawkins, saw a change of temper at East Bent. In his retrospect of this period, Henry Denison claimed that his uncle during his enforced absence from East Brent underwent a change of heart as to the way things were done at St Mary’s.\textsuperscript{85} Denison himself acknowledged this change of mind. ‘I went on seeing more light, but stumbling all along over the stones of the old foundation, which I helped to pull out, till my illness in 1870-71. I then for the first time grasped all the principles of the case.’\textsuperscript{86} Whatever the case, at Trinity-tide of 1871 Henry was ordained deacon and licensed as his uncle’s curate at East Brent. The archdeacon thus had two curates, both representatives of a younger generation of Anglo-Catholics.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, p55.
\textsuperscript{83} The Rev Charles Frederick Hawkins (1841-1884). Trinity Coll, Cambridge, BA 1864, MA 1867. Ordained in Salisbury Diocese (dn 1864, pr 1865), Hawkins held a series of curacies: Bedwyn Magna, Wilts (1864-9); Uphill, Soms (1869-70), Stoke Courcy, Soms, (1870); East Brent, Soms, (1870-2); Dunham, Notts, (1874-5); St Mary’s Southampton, (1875-8). He held the vicarage of East Grafton, Wilts 1878 till his death in April 1884. Alum Cant.
\textsuperscript{84} Walter Kerr Hamilton (1808-1869) succeeded Edward Denison as Bishop of Salisbury on the latter’s death in 1854. Hamilton’s father had been Archdeacon of Taunton. Hamilton was a Fellow of Merton with Edward Denison, and became Edward’s Curate at St Peter-in-the-East at Oxford, succeeding Edward Denison as Vicar. He became Bishop Denison’s Examining Chaplain in 1837, and joined Edward Denison at Salisbury as Precentor of the Cathedral in 1841. It was Edward Denison’s wish that Hamilton should succeed him as bishop. H P Liddon, Walter Kerr Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury, a sketch. 1869.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, p56.
\textsuperscript{86} Life, p348f.
Denison had seemingly in the late 1860s increased the number celebrations of Holy Communion from monthly to weekly, presumably as an early service, retaining matins as the principal morning service. According to Henry, his uncle now decided to have communion as the principal service on Sundays. Under the new dispensation Matins and the litany were said, followed by sung communion. Henry seems to have been allowed to shape the ceremony, introducing servers dressed in red cassocks and cottas. Denison did not use vestments, but continued his practice of wearing a surplice with a stole. George Denison himself had, prior to these alterations to liturgical practice at East Brent, determined that the candles on the altar should be lit during the celebration.\(^87\) This decision perhaps followed on Phillimore’s ruling in the Mackonochie case that lighted candles on the altar were lawful ‘for the signification that Christ is the very true light of the world’ – a ruling that was to be quashed by the Judicial Committee hearing appeal in the Purchas case.\(^88\) Notwithstanding the ruling in the Purchas case (or perhaps deliberately in opposition), under the new order of things at East Brent the old stout pewter candlesticks were swept away, to be replaced by two five-branch candlesticks. Henry Denison recounted that one of the East Brent farmers, meeting with criticism of these candles by a fellow farmer at market, countered that he liked it as it drew attention to the communion, echoing George Denison’s teaching.\(^89\) Sometime after his return to his parish, Denison began to celebrate in the eastward position.\(^90\) This alteration in Denison’s practice again seems to be linked with Phillimore’s ruling of 3 February 1870 in the Purchas case, that the eastward position was legal.\(^91\) Denison evidently had no intention of acknowledging the ruling of the Privy Council on this matter. The practice came into the courts again when Alexander Mackonochie was charged with celebrating in the eastward position in 1874. These changes in the Sunday worship were tempered by the use of simple music for the eucharist, supported by Henry Denison and the large village choir in the gallery, and the

\(^{87}\) *Seventy-two years’, p55.


\(^{89}\) *Seventy-two years’, p61.

\(^{90}\) See below. Denison argued the eastward position was thing settled in his correspondence with Bishop Hervey.

\(^{91}\) *Principal ecclesiastical judgments*, p158.
continuing use of popular and well-loved hymns. However, higher ceremonial was not confined to the communion. Evensong on Sundays and at Festivals was marked with greater solemnity, the candles on the altar being lit during the first lesson, and the officiant standing in medio altaris during the singing of the Magnificat. In addition to the prayer book services, East Brent saw the introduction of mission services, their form and content seemingly compiled by Henry. These services were introduced at Rookbridge, a small hamlet some one and a half miles from the vicarage. Henry would sleep there overnight and celebrate at 5.30 am for the field workers. Three years later, in August of 1874, Denison made a further innovation at East Brent, commencing daily celebrations of the eucharist.

The changes introduced to East Brent had divergent consequences. The communicants who had even at Easter numbered at best no more than forty-eight, quickly rose to one hundred and fifty, or more, as the parish church began to attract people at the great festivals. As Henry Denison recalled: ‘on the great festivals the street was like a fair with the number of gigs and carts from a distance, and at evensong on a great festival the church was crammed from end to end, and I have even known about forty or fifty people standing about outside unable to get in! There were some parishioners, however, who did not take to the changes. Amongst these were those who remained on good terms with Denison, but preferred to worship in a neighbouring parish. But there were also those who contested the changes and complained to the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The complaints led to

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92 Seventy-two years’, p67f.
93 Ibid, p57.
94 Extract from The Bristol Times and Mirror, republished in The Church Times 9 August 1895, p149. Neither Henry Denison in his Seventy-two years’ church recollections, nor George Denison describe these services. The bishop’s complaint with respect to these services suggest Henry’s enthusiasm and churchmanship may have been the issue. There was evidently a printed form of mission service of which the bishop had a copy. He objected specifically to the forms of confession and absolution used in the mission services. Correspondence between the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Archdeacon of Taunton, etc. 1872, p49.
95 G A Denison to a friend 18 August, 1874. LED, p157.
96 Seventy-two years’, p65.
series of sharp exchanges between the new bishop, Lord Arthur Hervey and Denison, leading to difficult relations for the next three years.97

In Richard Bagot and Lord Auckland, Denison had known bishops of High Church sympathies. Hervey was of a different stamp, being a moderate churchman who distinctly shank from ritualism.98 Formerly Archdeacon of Sudbury, Hervey and Denison would have met in Convocation, and have understood where each other stood on matters of churchmanship. The differences were evident, for example, in a debate in Convocation in 1868, only a year before Hervey was consecrated bishop. Hervey had challenged Denison over ritualism and Romanizing. Arguing against Denison’s contention that repression of ritualism was an encouragement to the Roman Catholics, Hervey suggested that fences erected against Romanizing were one by one being removed. There was now the introduction of prayers for the dead, invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the lighting of candles. At what point, he asked Denison, was the Church of England to intervene and restrain these innovations? ‘I would ask my excellent friend Archdeacon Denison whether he is prepared to say when we should interpose?’99 Hervey’s antipathy to ritualism was evident in an anecdote he narrated to the Lower House of Convocation.

I found my conscience aggrieved very lately. I saw a clergyman pop into a pulpit, arrayed in a bright-coloured garment of green and red – a green stole and a red something else … I felt inclined to smile, but this feeling quickly changed. The communion was administered, but I felt I could not with a safe conscience go up to

97 Lord Arthur Hervey (1808-94), Bishop of Bath and Wells (1869-94), was a Cambridge man and a good biblical scholar. He was a member of the committee appointed to undertake revision of the 1611 version of the Old Testament, and contributed to Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible and Evelyn Denison’s Speaker’s commentary, 1871, 13 Vols. Ordained in 1832, the same year as Denison, he held the family living of Ickworth-cum-Chedburgh in Suffolk. Bishop Turton of Ely appointed Hervey Archdeacon of Sudbury in 1862.

98 Hervey wanted to avoid differences in the hope that Churchmen might present a united front. It was not just ritualism that concerned him. Like Denison in the matter of the politics of church rates, Hervey recognized the power of the opponents of the Church. However, he seems to have considered there was a central position in the Church of England, and the Church would be rendered practically more efficient ‘if the clergy did not permit amongst themselves a difference of opinion upon points not fundamental’. Charge delivered to the clergy and churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury at his primary visitation held in April and May 1861, p4.

the table, because everything I saw conveyed to me irresistibly
the idea that the sacrifice of the Mass was about to be offered.\footnote{Ibid, p1337.}

As an archdeacon, Hervey had not been satisfied with Convocation’s report on
ritualism. He concurred with those who believed the Report did not touch upon ‘the
studious approximation of the mode of celebrating the holy communion in our
churches to the Romish mass’.\footnote{Hervey supported Canon Blakesley’s amendment in the Lower House. C of C, June 1866, p413.} Thus it was, when changes were made at East Brent, the complaints of a local anti-ritualist faction found in the new Bishop of Bath
and Wells a sympathetic ear, sparking a collision between bishop and archdeacon.

The opposition to the changes at East Brent was led by a small group within the
parish, assisted by Denison’s former prosecutor, the Rev Joseph Ditcher and
another clergyman, the Rev Philip Filleul.\footnote{The Rev P V M Filleul was Rector of Biddisham near Weston Super Mare.} The bishop wanted Denison to restore
his services to their former state. However, Hervey stung his archdeacon with his
suggestion of Romanizing. ‘Dangerous approximation to the Ritual and Doctrine of
the Church they [the Parishioners] neither will nor ought to tolerate.’\footnote{Correspondence between the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Archdeacon of Taunton, Vicar of East Brent, etc. 1872, p9.} The correspondence, subsequently made public, show Hervey’s tone to have been
overall eirenic, if perhaps optimistic in his belief that he might bring his archdeacon
into conformity with his own distaste for ritualism. Denison, however, was
pugnacious and his response sharp. ‘I will not, nor ought I, tolerate vague
imputations such as these upon my faithfulness to the Church of England cast upon
me by my Bishop exercising the office of Judge.’\footnote{Ibid, p9.} In December of 1871, the
opponents of the changes at East Brent wrote to the bishop listing innovations to
which they objected: adoration; a multitude of burning candles on the altar when
not needed for light; elevation at the consecration; acolytes; crossings; minister
turning his back to the congregation (eastward position); tolling the bell and
uncovering the altar on Good Friday, and exhortation to private confession.\footnote{Ibid, p39.}
Denison was unyielding. As to adoration, he stated ‘We adore our LORD JESUS CHRIST Present, not materially, but Spiritually, Supernaturally, Ineffably, Really Present, in the Blessed Sacrament’. Denison would not resile from the use illuminated lights, ‘symbolizing Him who is “The Light of the World” ’. He denied elevation except as necessary in the act of consecration in accordance with the manual acts. He denied invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary; knew of no law against acolytes, or crossings, nor of any law forbidding the tolling of the bell and uncovering the table. He stood firm on the eastward position, and contended the matter of confession was entirely within the precepts of the Book of Common Prayer.

In January, the bishop responded with a series of prohibitions touching adoration and lights. He skirted around the eastward position. Hervey appealed not only to matters such as lights, declared illegal by the Privy Council, but touched on other matters such as crossing, adopting the Privy Council’s principle underlying their ruling in the Purchas case that what had not been retained in the past three hundred years had been deemed illegal. Hervey’s archdeacon refused to be turned. Denison’s response conformed to the position at which he had arrived just a few years before, and expounded in his Three policies: A letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (1871).

I have now therefore to say, finally, that I had rather cease to teach in the Church of England as Vicar of East Brent than to continue to do so under the conditions which you are seeking to impose on me. First, generally, by a partial and inequitable administration of the law of the Church of England. Second, particularly, by substituting for that law a certain modern and self-stultifying interpretation of it by a Civil Court.

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106 Hervey could only conceive this meant a corporal presence. Ibid, p48.
107 Ibid, p41f.
108 Denison took the view that the Purchas case was an attack on the liberty of the clergy in the Church of England ‘in respect of the manner of celebrating the Blessed Sacrament’, and forced them to choose between ‘Catholic usage and a more Judicial interpretation’. C of C, June 1871, p319.
109 Ibid, p54.
The bishop had given notice of his prohibitions to the complainants, with every likelihood that they might bring an action against Denison. The curates had their licences revoked.\textsuperscript{110} Denison determined to make a stand against persecution on his home ground at East Brent. As he had asserted earlier in his published letter to Bishop Charles Ellicott, he would not desert his Church of his own accord: ‘I will not desert the Church of England for any other Catholic Communion.’ He would, paraphrasing words of Bishop Ken (buried not far away at Bennett’s parish of Frome-Selwood), ‘die where I have lived’.\textsuperscript{111} Prepared to face prosecution and deprivation, Denison wrote to Hervey: ‘You will therefore, I conclude, procure proceedings to be taken against me in order to my ultimate deprivation. God is judge between us. Into his hands I commit my cause, nothing doubting.’\textsuperscript{112} But the bishop did not take up the challenge, neither did Denison’s neighbour, Joseph Ditcher, nor anyone else.\textsuperscript{113}

Hervey had formed the impression that Henry’s influence had been at work. The bishop was not the only one who under this apprehension. One of the Denison’s close family friends, the Rev J H Stephenson, considered the controversies were brought about by Henry Denison’s impetuosity. In later life, a more mature Henry Denison conceded that he may have been ‘a tiresome young person, greatly wanting in tact and patience’.\textsuperscript{114} Stephenson observed that: ‘During the whole

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{111} G A Denison, \textit{Three policies}, p25. Bishop Ken’s statement of his faith was annexed to his will and in letter to the Bishop of Salisbury: ‘I die in the holy catholic and apostolic faith, professed by the whole church before the division of East and West; more particularly I die in the communion of the Church of England, as it stands distinguished from all papal and puritan innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the cross.’ William Hawkins, ‘A short account of his life’ in \textit{The prose works of the Rt Rev Thomas Ken, DD, etc}. 1838 ed, p17. According to Hawkins, Ken was buried at Frome-Selwood as being the nearest parish in his diocese to the place where he died. \textit{Ibid}, p24.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{C of C}, June 1871, p54. In 1871, Denison did not follow his own advice given just a few years earlier, when he counselled in Convocation that: ‘changes in ritual and in the mode of conducting the service ought to be first submitted to the Bishop, and in no case introduced contrary to his own prohibition’.

\textit{C of C}, June 1866, p412.

\textsuperscript{113} The notion that a portion of the High Church party were being driven out had been aired a few years previously. The liberal Dean Stanley raised the question whether one of the solutions was ‘to get rid of them? Eject them?’ Stanley evinced a considerable tolerance, regarding the ritualists as a species of Nonconformity. \textit{C of C}, June 1866, p431.

\textsuperscript{114} H P Denison, \textit{Seventy-two years}, p57.
period of his incumbency [George Denison’s], till lately, the parish of East Brent has been harmonious and happy. It is now sadly divided by the introduction of Ritual excesses. The problems at East Brent Stephenson firmly laid at Henry’s door. ‘Henry Denison is a truly pious and able young man, of the stamp of our mutual friend Fortescue; but his opinions and practice are most extravagant. I am deeply sorry for the line he has taken.’ That Henry’s practices and teaching were extravagant was also a view taken by the bishop. Amongst the matters of which the bishop taken note was the allegation that Henry had invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary, prayed for the dead, talked on a number of occasions in his sermons of the purgatorial state, and encouraged private confession.

Though Hervey did not proceed against Denison, he was able to move against the curates with the revocation of their licences. A state of war thus existed between the vicarage at East Brent and the palace at Wells. The Denison forces promptly appealed to Archbishop Tait, with the assistance of Robert Phillimore, against the revocation of the licences. Hawkins had already left the parish and his licence had lapsed. However, Henry Denison’s licence was restored. The outcome of the appeal was met with approval according to the Dean of Wells, who was critical of Bishop Hervey’s action. He wrote to Archbishop Tait expressing criticism of the bishop’s actions:

I do not know, of course, exactly on what ground Denison’s curates were suspended: but then I know that almost everyone rejoices at the result. The reason is that the Bishop is thought by everyone in these parts to have used his powers foolishly. He is

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116 Ibid.  
117 G A Denison, Correspondence between the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Archdeacon of Taunton, etc. 1972, pp30, & p49.  
119 Denison obtained support from the ECU, and the Union had obtained an opinion from two lawyers, Dr Stephens and Mr Charles. Ibid, Meeting, 20 February 1872, p225. The ECU contributed £100 towards the costs of £600. Ibid, Meeting, 12 November 1872, p289f.
getting more unpopular and continuing; in my opinion is wholly unfit for his office.\textsuperscript{120}

Bishop Hervey added to the fire burning in his diocese the following year when he took the opportunity at his visitation to attack Romanizing tendencies in the Church of England. His reach was wide-ranging, and not a little acid in its observation of some of the minutiae of ritualism.

Among other things, the clergy are instructed as to what is necessary to a devout celebration and communion. Among them I find that he ought not to brush his teeth in the morning before he communicates, for fear of drinking a drop of water, and so breaking his fast, not to cough afterwards; and that it is the celebrant’s duty to rinse out the chalice after celebration, and to pour water over his fingers into the chalice, and then to drink the water, with much more of the same kind which it is sickening to mention.\textsuperscript{121}

Hervey’s attack was evidently considered, for his charge was read, of all places, in Bennett’s church at Frome-Selwood. After delivering his charge, the bishop challenged Bennett to disprove the authorities he had adduced.\textsuperscript{122} Within the diocese, the charge provoked replies from Bennett, Grueber and Denison.\textsuperscript{123} The Privy Council’s affirmation of Phillimore’s judgment in June 1872 afforded Denison ammunition with which to attack Hervey’s deprecation of Denison’s doctrine of the real presence, as well as the grounds on which the bishop had revoked the East Brent curates’ licences.

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\textsuperscript{120} The Very Rev George Henry Sacheverell Johnson (Dean of Wells 1854-81).
\textsuperscript{121} A C Hervey, \textit{Charge delivered to the clergy and churchwardens of the Diocese of Bath and Wells at the general visitation held in April and May, 1873}, p12.
\textsuperscript{122} W J E Bennett, \textit{A defence of the Catholic faith being a reply to the late charge of the Bishop of Bath and Wells}. 1973, p3.
\textsuperscript{123} Bennett, \textit{A defence of the Catholic faith}. 1873; C S Grueber, \textit{The Presence, the Sacrifice, the Adoration: a letter to the Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells on certain statements of his Lordships charge in reference to the Holy Eucharist}, 1873; G A Denison, \textit{Loyalty to the Church of England}, 1873.
\end{footnotesize}
Hervey’s fears, that at East Brent the congregation were being led to adore the eucharistic elements, may have had more to do with Henry Denison’s teaching than that of his uncle.\textsuperscript{124} However, Denison had been stung by Hervey’s repetition of the accusation that there were those in the Church of England who sought to shape Anglican worship as closely as was possible to Rome, deprecating the Bible, reintroducing corrupt doctrine, and in the process subverting the Reformation.\textsuperscript{125} Denison, with his High Church distinction between the maintenance of primitive Catholic and the corruptions of Rome, took this as a charge of disloyalty. He was once again robust in his response. ‘I am, with others, held up by my Bishop to the aversion and contempt of the Diocese, as Romanizing, immoral, dishonest, disloyal, unfaithful, and a concocter of plots to get rid of the Church of England.’\textsuperscript{126} Denison was scathing of his bishop’s willingness to listen those who had complained of East Brent, as demonstrating that Hervey had associated himself with a faction of narrow-minded men who were bent on persecution above all else, even to the detriment of the Church and its mission. On this point, Denison identified with the ritualists, deploring the narrow-minded persecution pursuing men who laboured hard in their pastoral work. He saw such persecution as subverting the mission of the Church.

This is the School against which your Lordship has lifted up all the power and influence of your high position. This is the School which your Lordship represents as trifling with holy things, and wasting the energies of the Church about superstition and Popery. Others may neglect, or violate, as they please, the plain requirements of the Church, but so long as they are not ‘of the Ritualists’, there is no hard word for them; only so much modified

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\item \textsuperscript{124} Correspondence between the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Archdeacon of Taunton, p48.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p10f.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid, p8. In addition to his pamphlet, The Presence, the Sacrifice, the Adoration, C S Grueber made a further response to Hervey the following year publishing A primitive and Catholic ritual and primitive and Catholic usage the inheritance of the Church of England, and trust committed to her keeping. 1874. The bishop had asserted: ‘For any English Churchman to disobey his bishop, on the pleas of so-called Catholic usage which the Church has rejected, and to endeavour by sheer obstinacy, to overrule the provisions which he has sworn to obey, and to substitute others for them, is to my apprehension a plain act of immorality, and contrary to all principles of true Churchmanship.’ Charge … 1873, p10.
\end{itemize}
and cursory reproval as is lost in the flood of vituperation poured out upon us.¹²⁷

Denison’s anger was aroused by attacks on something always close to his heart – the mission of the Church. He recognized that many ritualist clergy carried good work often in impoverished communities – missionary work the merit of which the Church Association and its allies were seemingly impervious. With his experience following the changes at East Brent, he came to see that some degree of ritual could increase the vibrancy of the church; particularly as this was linked with teaching and observance of the Church’s office.¹²⁸ It was, Denison declared, that part of the Church which the bishop had denounced as Romish which brought life to the Church of England. He claimed his ground as a loyal member of the Church of England. ‘We are not driven out – we do not mean to be driven out. We will remain, God helping us, and if need be, harm and loss at our Bishop’s hands.’¹²⁹ Denison complained that the bishop had taken heed only of the complaints while ignoring supporters. Two hundred and thirty parishioners, of whom seventy were communicants, had written to the bishop in support. The complainants amounted to thirty persons, few of whom were communicants and some of them dissenters.¹³⁰

The bishop continued to view East Brent, and especially its curate, with suspicion and hostility. If obliged to relicense Henry Denison in July of 1872, Hervey declined to allow Henry Denison his examination preparatory to priesting, and, in a curious comment, informed him that he did not regard him as the curate of East Bent, notwithstanding the restoration of his licence.¹³¹ Henry Denison believed that Hervey was set against him. He thought this was manifested by the bishop’s

¹²⁷ Ibid, p16.
¹²⁸ Ibid, p14ff. Denison contended that all the work of teaching in the school, or house to house, had hitherto failed to really touch the hearts of his parishioners, until he had introduced appropriate ceremonial. ‘I am thankful that the remedy has been largely blessed.’ Ibid, p10.
¹²⁹ Ibid, p16f.
¹³¹ Henry Phipps Denison, The facts of the case as between the Bishop of Bath and Wells and Henry Phipps Denison. 1874, p4ff.
inconsistency, the latter being prepared to ordain priest Bennett’s curate at Frome-Selwood, notwithstanding Hervey’s attack on Bennett. And in a further instance, another deacon in the diocese, previously rejected by Hervey for Roman teaching, was also priested. Henry Denison’s sense that Hervey appeared to be acting ‘on personal considerations’ was in all probability correct. The circumstances were made public when Henry published an account of the troubled relation between Bishop Hervey and the curates of East Brent in June 1874.\footnote{Ibid.}

It was outside intervention that resolved the estrangement between the Denison family and Hervey, and established relations between the palace and the East Brent vicarage on a new footing.\footnote{Henry Denison did not name the intermediary responsible for securing the rapprochement. \textit{Seventy-two years’}, p58. Gladstone had corresponded with Hervey at this time (February and March 1872) on the subject of lights on the altar, as he also argued against Hervey’s condemnation of prayers for the dead. See Lathbury, \textit{Letters on Church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone}, Vol I, letters Nos 190 and 191. It is possible, that Gladstone may well have been one of those who intervened.} Having been refused ordination to the priesthood for four years in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, it was agreed that Henry Denison would be ordained by the Bishop of Oxford, John Mackarness, to serve a title at St Thomas’, Oxford, for twelve months, and then return as his uncle’s parish as curate. In the event Bishop Hervey recalled Henry to East Brent before the year was up.\footnote{Henry Denison wrote of the altered relationship that from the time he returned as curate to his uncle to the day the bishop died: ‘I experienced the greatest possible kindness from him and his, and I have the tenderest affection for his memory.’ \textit{Seventy-two years’}, p58.} Archdeacon and bishop seem to have mended their relationship. But neither man had changed their ground, though Denison was able to write: ‘The uniform kindness of the Bishop of Bath and Wells has made it easy to put out of sight altogether all the conflict of differences; the difference itself remaining exactly where it was.’\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p353. Cf Denison’s comment: ‘Private relations between Bishop of Bath and Wells, and myself as good as ever, notwithstanding [differences on this occasion regarding revision of the Prayer Book]. He writes privately to-day with most hearty kindness.’ Denison to the Hon C L Wood, 16 June 1879. \textit{LED}, p214.}

On this basis Hervey and Denison worked together amicably for the next twenty years, and Denison mourned Hervey when the latter died in 1894. ‘The dear Bishop’s death was like his life. How shall I miss him publically, privately, words
cannot tell.' In a note to Gladstone, Denison wrote of the gap left with the bishop’s passing: ‘It is difficult to fill dear Arthur Hervey’s room.’

Public Worship Regulation Act

So by the early 1870s, Denison had come to identify himself with the ritualist cause, and the innovations made in his parish stamped St Mary’s, East Brent, with the identity of a Catholic reformed church. However, the conflict over the identity of the Church of England continued beyond the borders of East Brent and the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

The series of reports from the ritual commission were not by 1874 able to restrain Archbishop Tait’s urge to legislate against ritualism. Denison could not but regard as incongruous the referral of a matter such as the Church’s worship and ritual to a Parliament which had, amongst other matters, legislated to abolish the church rate, and introduced the 1870 Education Act. Furthermore, he objected to the constitutional impropriety of Tait’s action introducing legislation in the Lords before he had consulted with Convocation: ‘over and above the general claim of the clergy to be heard by their representatives in the Convocation upon matters affecting the Church, before proposing to legislate, there is a special claim in respect of the matter of the discipline of the clergy’. Tait’s introduction of his Bill in Parliament before consulting Convocation made the claim appear ‘to not have been recognized’. A similar objection to Tait’s Erastian procedure was remarked upon in the Lords by Denison’s old friend, Christopher Wordsworth, by now Bishop of

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136 G A Denison to Miss Phillimore 12 June 1894. LED, p377.
137 G A Denison to W E Gladstone 14 December 1894. Letter in writer’s possession.
138 The old relations of Church and State Denison thought were passing away. The effect of maintaining the Establishment would, to Denison’s mind, result in ‘a compound of all denominations’ and, therefore, ‘creedless and un-sacramental,’ so that it may become ‘National,’ not in the true sense of the word, but in the sense of including ‘all religion and no religion’. G A Denison, Charge of the Archdeacon of Tauntun. 1872, p4.
139 GA Denison to A C Tait 29 May 1869. Tait Papers 86 140-1. The archbishop introduced his Bill in the Lords 20 April 1874. PD, 3rd Series, Vol 218, Col 786.
Lincoln, who suggested it was ‘a grave matter if the Bishops appeared with such a matter as ritualism in Parliament other than as Father in God’. Beyond the constitutional issue, Denison deplored the archbishop’s ‘do-something policy’ and the narrow object of his legislation, and one-sided at that – the putting down of ritual. There was nothing on the other side with respect to false doctrine, or neglect of the use of the prayer book and its rubrics and canons. Denison complained of the ‘lawlessness of defect’ with respect to the saying of daily matins and evensong – a defect about which the bishops did nothing. Earl Nelson noted that Tait had, in speaking against ritualism, offered only extreme cases as justification for his legislation, but Nelson noted, making the same point as had Denison, that there was no indication that the archbishop would take to task the far larger group of clergy, who by negligence or considered omission, ignored the requirements of the prayer book and canons.

Given the propensity of the Church Association to litigate, Denison surmised that Tait’s proposed legislation would be an invitation to promote litigation, and consequently the legislation would become clothed with the character of inquisition and persecution. Denison derided Tait’s Bill (An act for the better administration of the laws respecting the regulation of public worship) parodying the title as an ‘Act for the better maintenance of lawyers and the more effectual subjugation and impoverishing of certain of the clergy’. The final indignity, in Denison’s eyes, was

140 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 218, col 804.
141 G A Denison, The Archbishop’s bill. Speeches of the Archdeacon of Taunton ... in the Lower House of Convocation, sessions April 30, and May 1, 1874. p5.
143 The tempter’s cup, etc. 1875, p35.
144 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 218, cols 802-3.
145 Ibid, p12.
146 Ibid, p10. Disraeli, after some vacillation, had supported the archbishop’s legislation. He commented that a small number of clergymen had subverted the Reformation, copying Roman ceremonies: ‘What we object to is Mass in masquerade.’ PD, 3rd Series, vol 221, 1874, cols 80-81. In a comment on Disraeli’s opportunism, Denison remarked: ‘It is all very well and convenient to Mr Disraeli to talk about “the Mass in masquerade”, but no man can know better than himself that when he said it he was talking nonsense, however, it suited the atmosphere of the time and place and there are other “masquerades” not a few in and out of Parliament.’ Charge ... 1874, p10. Gladstone was highly critical of the Public Worship Regulation Bill, not least that ‘ritualism’ was denominated a great evil and objectionable, but those proposing legislation did not define what ‘ritualism’ was: ‘somebody said that something should be done to put it down. There is a vague idea
the appointment of Lord Penzance, late of the divorce court, to administer the archbishop’s act.\textsuperscript{147} Denison considered the Public Worship Regulation Act an attempt to divide the High Church: to distinguish between those who held high doctrine, but did not use symbolism to convey and teach doctrine, and those who favoured fuller ritual. Denison saw the ‘shadow of the inquisition’ to have fallen on the palaces of English bishops, and that the legislation by its very nature would invite and promote litigation.\textsuperscript{148} With some foresight, he believed it would be ‘impossible to divest’ the measure ‘of the character of persecution’.\textsuperscript{149} For this reason Denison welcomed persecution as this, he believed, would be the inevitable consequence of the Act. It would have the opposite effect from the one intended – namely that of putting down ritualism – and instead, attract opprobrium.

The passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act brought Denison once again to question the Erastianism of the episcopate. Particularly, he questioned the tendency to compromise on the part of those bishops, who, as priests, he knew had been definitely Catholic in their doctrine. As he wrote by way of explanation to Robert Phillimore, he indicted the bishops because they had allowed political considerations to compromise their duty to uphold the doctrines expounded in the prayer book and the Articles of the Church, which he was confident worked in favour of his own position.\textsuperscript{150} ‘My indictment is not \textit{in the first instance} against the Episcopate, but against that phase of the Church of England commonly called “The Establishment”, which involves, of necessity, the double voice of each and every one of its Bishops.’\textsuperscript{151} Denison had reached the decidedly ‘anti-Establishment’ phase described earlier in chapter five. The whole tenor of the preface to his pamphlet with its curious Latin title, \textit{Episcopatus bilinguis},\textsuperscript{152} was directed against the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] G A Denison to the Hon C L Wood, 4 August 1874. \textit{LED}, p154.
\item[148] \textit{Ibid}, p12.
\item[149] \textit{Ibid}, p20.
\item[152] Bishop Connop Thirwall commented on Denison’s title: ‘Are you trying to read the Archdeacon’s \textit{Episcopus Bilinguis}? I find it hard work, and should prefer a page of Tertullian. What possessed him to
\end{footnotes}
Establishment ‘as of an evil character, and producing corresponding effects’.\textsuperscript{153} His former attachment to the Church Establishment had been quite transformed. ‘I am content that the Establishment should be destroyed, rather than be compelled to take the one alternative of keeping it at the present price: that is to say, at the price of its Catholicity, which the bishops are selling as fast they can.’\textsuperscript{154}

Having lost his faith in the Establishment at this stage of life, and despairing of Convocation and diocesan synods, the Parliament and the civil courts, he welcomed the possibility of attracting persecution. All else had proved vain. ‘Letters in newspapers, meetings and resolutions, memorials, arguments in court are only so much waste of time and child’s play. The \textit{ultimo ratio} has been reached – one ounce of suffering is worth a ton of such things.’\textsuperscript{155}

In his 1877 charge, Denison concluded the relationship of the Church with the State had for many years set a ‘downward course’ in the Church’s affairs; the Church, both clergy and people, had been feeble in their defence of the Church.\textsuperscript{156} Denison was determined to cease from any further participation in Convocation – a resolution that did not last long as he was back in action the following year.\textsuperscript{157} In early 1877, in a gesture of anti-Establishmentarianism, Denison joined the Church League, an organization seeking separation of Church and State. He presented a paper to this body in July 1877 in support of disestablishment, in which he attacked Convocation and its stance on the subject of confession and on the proposal for a new ornaments rubric.\textsuperscript{158} His action was seen by his associates in Convocation as

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\textsuperscript{153} G A Denison to Robert Phillimore 24 December 1873. \textit{LED}, p135. Denison also republished his earlier 1851 attack on the bishops, \textit{Why should the Bishops sit in the House of Lords?}
\textsuperscript{154} G A Denison, \textit{The tempter’s cup, etc}, p28.
\textsuperscript{155} G A Denison, \textit{The persecution of 1874, and the Elementary Education Act of 1870: the Charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation}, 1874, p5.
\textsuperscript{156} G A Denison, \textit{Charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at the visitation, April, 1877}. [p5f ]
\textsuperscript{157} Life, pp367, and 357.
\textsuperscript{158} G A Denison, \textit{Catholicity without Establishment, or Establishment without Catholicity. A paper read at a meeting of The Church League, July 3, 1877.}
\end{flushright}
‘breaking up the party’ \textsuperscript{159} Eschewing his old friends and associates in Convocation, Denison sought the company of those who might support his doctrinal position, joining the Society for the Maintenance of Faith in the mid-1870s, the Society of the Holy Cross in 1877, and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. \textsuperscript{160} Denison had joined the ranks of the more extreme exponents of ritualism - those whom Dean Stanley regarded as a new body of Nonconformists. \textsuperscript{161} However, while he had anti-Establishment sentiments, it is not clear how far Denison felt comfortable outside the pale. He had just finished writing his autobiography, in which he expressed his sense of the downward course of things. Thanking Phillimore for all he had done for him, Denison describes his emotional state and inclination to withdraw from public life in the Church:

\begin{quote}
It disposes me more and more to withdraw, for what time may remain to me, from taking part in any public action. I cannot act with those I used to act with. They are too much ‘Establishmentarian’ for me – much too much that is, preferring to keep ‘Establishment’ at any cost. And I know of no others with whom I can act. So I think I have made my bow, and no doubt shall be considerably hissed. Nevertheless, I comfort myself with thinking that I have not made personal enemies – how many kind and loving friends, it would not be easy to reckon up. \textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

In his attack on the Establishment and Erastian episcopacy, Denison lamented the dethronement of his orthodox theistic view of the world. For example, with regard to the issue of church schools and the 1870 Education Act, he believed that the ‘golden thread’ linking religion with everything else in life had been broken. ‘Religion is a thing of less value than money. Every man has his own truth. Men put this readily enough into the place of God’s truth; and are quite content with the exchange.’ \textsuperscript{163} The matter at issue for Denison was the degree to which men, and the

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Life}, p367. For Denison’s account for his reason for disillusionment, see \textit{Life}, pp353-374.

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{161} See above p 33. Stanley’s comment made some years earlier that ritualists were a new species of Nonconformists. \textit{C of C}, June 1866, p431.

\textsuperscript{162} Denison to Phillimore, 21 November 1878. \textit{LED}, p203f.

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Episcopatus bilinguis}, p37. See also \textit{The tempter’s cup, etc}. 
Church corporate, submitted themselves to God, or rebelled.\textsuperscript{164} In this regard, Denison’s sympathy with the ritualists was twofold. First – ever since the Gorham controversy Denison saw himself engaged in a battle against those who would introduce a second Reformation. The cry is ‘against us’, he observed, as making a ‘second reformation’.\textsuperscript{165} But for Denison, the case was otherwise: he believed the principle of the English Reformation was to preserve and retain the primitive Catholic element, and to restore or purify such elements where they had been impaired or overlaid. His understanding of the principle of the Reformation was ‘to preserve where retained, and to restore or purify where overlaid the Primitive and Catholic element setting aside all that had been engrafted upon it, or added to it, being contrary thereto’. The Reformation had nothing of the anti-dogmatic principle. However, the principle of the ‘Second Reformation,’ was by contradistinction, ‘to set aside what is Primitive and Catholic, believing it is also Roman Catholic’.\textsuperscript{166} There was in this, in Denison’s view, but ‘a short-sighted fear of Rome’. The fact was, Denison argued, that that most of those who had converted to Rome were, albeit they had been through a phase of High Churchmanship, originally Evangelicals – Denison had kept a list.\textsuperscript{167}

Adopting an anti-Establishment stance, Denison refused to accept the authority of secular courts in matters ecclesiastical. He did not accept the remit of Lord Penzance’s court created under the 1874 Public Worship Act.\textsuperscript{168} He shared with others a suspicion of the quasi-political character of the Privy Council Judicial Committee in ritual cases, raised after the Purchas case. The Judicial Committee’s judgments came into question once more in the aftermath of the Ridsdale case, when Sir Fitzroy Herbert wrote to The Times with information that he [Herbert], Sir Robert Phillimore and Lord Justice Amphlett dissented, and suggesting that the

\begin{thebibliography}
\bibitem{164} Ibid, p5.
\bibitem{165} G A Dension, \textit{The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton, April 27, 1875}, p11.
\bibitem{166} Ibid, p12.
\bibitem{167} Ibid.
\bibitem{168} Denison supported Arthur Tooth’s refusal to acknowledge Lord Penzance’s court in 1876, and published a pamphlet as a letter to his old friend Thomas Claughton, Bishop of Rochester, under whose jurisdiction Tooth fell. \textit{The present persecution. A letter to the Bishop Rochester.} [1876], p3.
\end{thebibliography}
judgment was political.\footnote{On this see James Bentley, \textit{Ritualism and politics in Victorian Britain}. 1993, p98.} In the wake of this opinion, Denison considered the administration of justice in ecclesiastical causes was becoming ‘unpleasant in the nostrils’. Moreover, Denison was distressed by the ugly motives which prompted the legal suits. ‘When it is brimful of all kinds of dirt, then there pours in the stream which floats the “Establishment” and drowns the “Church”.’\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{The Bishops of century XIX. A letter to the Lord Bishop of Ely [James Russell Woodford]}, 1877, p13.}

Bad though the Privy Council was, worse in Denison’s eyes was Tait’s 1874 Public Worship Regulation Act – worse because it was an archbishop who had created another secular court which enroached upon the spirituality. The legislation was seen by Denison as both uncanonical and unconstitutional.\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Catholicity without Establishment, or Establishment without Catholicity: a paper read at a meeting of the Church League at the Freemasons’ Tavern, July 3, 1877}, p16f.} The Public Worship Regulation Act was, in Denison’s eyes, the culmination of a process begun with the Gorham case, in which he saw the civil power encroaching upon the spirituality in matters of doctrine.

There is a much vaunted, but very unmeaning rule of the Judicial Committee, that it does not declare what is, or what is not, Doctrine. But in the Bennett case it broke its own rule, and pronouncing that Mr Bennett’s Doctrine was not the Doctrine of the Church of England, allowed it – as in the converse Gorham case – to be tolerated nevertheless, because the Court dare not face the consequence of condemning it. The Gorham heresy, and Mr Bennett’s Catholic Truth, come under the same category of things permitted by the Judicial Committee. Such ‘Judgments’ as these bring the law into deep and deserved disrepute. But what I insist upon principally is the ‘animus’ they display. This, if it be nothing else, is uniform, and in its uniformity hostile to the Church.\footnote{G A Dension, \textit{The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation, April, 1877}, p9.}

Denison considered the Establishment, namely its archbishops and bishops, assisted by the secular courts, had endeavoured ‘to eject and extrude’ the primitive Catholic

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\footnotetext[169]{On this see James Bentley, \textit{Ritualism and politics in Victorian Britain}. 1993, p98.}
\footnotetext[170]{G A Denison, \textit{The Bishops of century XIX. A letter to the Lord Bishop of Ely [James Russell Woodford]}, 1877, p13.}
\footnotetext[171]{G A Denison, \textit{Catholicity without Establishment, or Establishment without Catholicity: a paper read at a meeting of the Church League at the Freemasons’ Tavern, July 3, 1877}, p16f.}
\footnotetext[172]{G A Dension, \textit{The charge of the Archdeacon of Taunton at his visitation, April, 1877}, p9.}
\end{thebibliography}
element of the Reformed English Church.\textsuperscript{173} These circumstances had been brought about by those whom Denison considered to be an ultra-Protestant element seeking revision of the 1662 Restoration settlement, with the cry ‘\textit{Delenda est Catholica Ecclesia}’, and attempting to secure their object by incitement to passion and violence with appeals to popular ignorance and prejudice.\textsuperscript{174} These stresses within the Church appeared to Denison to have reached their nadir during Tait’s occupancy of the throne of Augustine.

All our experience of his Archi-episcopate has served to shew his idea of the Church of England is limited to what may be found in the four corners of Acts of Parliament, provided always that such Acts suit his policy, or can by some curious process be adapted thereto. If in any particular he cannot find an Act ready to his hand, he makes one. Again, if in his capacity as President of the Synod of Canterbury, he does not obtain the concurrence of the two Houses, he goes to Parliament for an Act, and therein stultifies the action of Synod of which he is President and Guardian. As for the Church’s primary law of Worship, he suggests, and then grants, dispensation from it – being statute law not repealed – law which the Archbishop is bound quite as much as the priest he dispenses; and he communicates his dispensation much as if it were sent upon a halfpenny card.\textsuperscript{175}

Bradley’s assessment of the radical dynamic present in the Evangelical part of the Church at this time suggests that Denison was not altogether mistaken in his perception of the ‘ultra-Protestant’ objectives of those whom Denison counted as ‘neo-Evangelical’.\textsuperscript{176} Denison does not define his terms, but he stood in that tradition of High Churchmen, which, as Chadwick has observed, perceived the Calvinism as an alien element within the Anglican Church.\textsuperscript{177} Denison had, as has been observed, empathy with Wesley’s evangelism. His identification of a neo-Evangelical element in the Church owed something the emergence of a new element amongst some Evangelicals. Bradley has written of the emergence of a

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{173} Catholicity without Establishment, p16.\textsuperscript{173}
\bibitem{174} Ibid, p16 & p18.\textsuperscript{174}
\bibitem{175} Ibid, p22.\textsuperscript{175}
\bibitem{176} Life, p345.\textsuperscript{176}
\bibitem{177} Owen Chadwick, The spirit of the Oxford movement. 1990, p10.\textsuperscript{177}
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strand of violent anti-Catholicism that emerged in the Evangelical part of the Church in the late 1850s. This element ‘radically changed the character of the movement and inspired adherents who were more fanatical, more bigoted and more introverted than those who followed Wilberforce and Shaftesbury’.178

The prayer book and proposed revision

Denison rejected in toto the judgments of the Judicial Committee as authoritative in matters of faith and worship, as he did Tait’s Erastian new court.179 As a reaction he entered an anti- Establishment phase for a few years in the 1870s. In this period of quasi-nonconformity. If thereby he found fellow-travellers who might support his doctrinal position with regard to the real presence, he also became associated with those whose language and temper was what surely Denison would have previously have considered as Romanizing. The Society of the Holy Cross, for example, used terms such as the ‘Mass’, and spoke of the ‘Sacrament of Penance’ and encouraged sacramental confession. Denison’s association with such a group clearly contradicted his earlier monitions to exercise caution and avoid such damaging manifestations of Romanizing.

Prima facie membership of these bodies might suggest Denison had developed into a full-blown ritualist. His autobiography, published in 1879, is a reflection of his anti- Establishment mind-set in this period of his life. However, notwithstanding his mindset in this period, the conservative Denison had not undergone a complete change of heart. Having declared himself a ritualist in the course of his battles with Bishop Hervey, he conceded that his ritualism was, and would continue to be, only limited. ‘My adoption of ritualism has been partial only. I have never worn vestments; I have never used incense in any shape, nor what is properly called

179 Life, p350f.
“wafer bread”. I have confined myself to the Eastward position, the altar lights, the mixed chalice.”

Moreover, notwithstanding his membership of these ritualist societies, Denison maintained a conservative adherence to *The book of common prayer*. This is illustrated by the controversy which arose over confession. His membership of the Society of the Holy Cross seemingly connected him with those who promoted regular sacramental confession as a necessary precursor to the eucharist, akin to Roman practice. When in 1877 the contents of the Rev J C Chambers’ *Priest in Absolution* became known publically, the Society faced a crisis and its members contemplated disbanding. Denison, albeit a new member, in his militant way wrote arguing that the Society should not disband, particularly as he had just turned towards the Society for the support of its members. However, Denison had not read the manual. Denison had already entered upon the subject of confession in the midst of his battle with his bishop in the course of 1873, when the subject came to prominence following a petition to Convocation requesting consideration of a proposal to authorize the licensing of confessors to hear sacramental confessions. Denison articulated his views in his 1873 sermon, *Confession, Absolution and Holy Communion*. Following the adverse public reaction to Chambers’ manual, he touched on the same subject again in 1877 in a published letter to Bishop Woodford, *The century XIX: A letter to the Bishop of Ely*. Denison was distressed by the severe reaction of the bishops to the subject of confession. He objected to the automatic vulgar anti-papist sentiment which became conjoined with the subject. There was, he remarked, plenty of ‘popular ignorance and

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180 *Life*, p349.
184 The sermon seems to have wide circulation. Some five thousand copies were printed.
excitement’ – “plenty of anti-Romish”, but ‘nothing of the pro-Catholic element,’ that was part of the English Church.\textsuperscript{185}

Denison, however, was not an advocate of sacramental confession, but rather was concerned that the provisions of the prayer book were being ignored. He considered the manner in which the subject of confession was treated by the bishops left the impression that a reformed Church, such as the Church of England, had allowed no place for confession and absolution, which thereby ignored or even denied the provisions of the prayer book. He objected to the attribution of ‘the odium of old abuse’ in order to restrict confession to occasional moments in a person’s life. ‘The uninformed public can only reasonably conclude that, in the judgment of those who ought to know best, it is forbidden by the Reformed Church to make or hear “Confession” except in extreme cases: a conclusion not warranted by anything in the letter or spirit of the prayer book.’\textsuperscript{186}

Denison did not advocate sacramental confession. It was, he stated, clear that as a reformed Church the Church of England did not insist upon private confession and absolution: it is ‘not taught and prescribed as “habitual”’.\textsuperscript{187} But he was also clear that according to the ordinal and the words at the laying on of hands, the Church of England considered her priests were empowered to hear confession and grant absolution: ‘Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sin thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sin thou dost retain, they are retained.’\textsuperscript{188} He argued that confession, if occasional, ought to be determined, as he

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\textsuperscript{185} G A Denison, Confession, Absolution, and Holy Communion. A sermon preached in the Cathedral of St Andrew, Wells ... August 10, 1873. [1873].
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, p[3].
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, p9.
\textsuperscript{188} ‘The Ordering of priests’, in Book of common prayer. G A Denison, Confession, absolution, and Holy Communion. A sermon preached in the cathedral of St Andrew, Wells ... August 10, 1873. [1873]. p6.
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Nineteenth-century bishops in the late 1860s and the 1870s seemed, in the face of ritualism, to have shied away from the more definite statements of Caroline bishops such as Usher and Lancelot Andrews, both cited by Bishop Wilson. Archbishop Usher had declared: ‘No kind of confession, either
understood the prayer book indicated, by ‘a man’s need, and be measured by nothing else.’ ¹⁸⁹ Denison’s appeal was not to Roman sources, but to the tradition of Anglican divines, whom he cited, giving a list of those who had given direct testimony on the subject of confession and absolution by a priest. ¹⁹⁰ Denison’s position on confession and absolution remained firmly within the boundaries prescribed by the prayer book.

Notwithstanding, therefore, Denison’s association with ritualist societies, his period of quasi-nonconformity did not see him drawn in a Romanizing direction. He remained firmly within the Church of England and its prayer book tradition. This position was further made manifest by his steadfast opposition to attempts to revise the prayer book – a position adopted for the simple reason he believed any alteration was likely to be in downward direction in terms of doctrine. Denison continued to fight in defence for what he saw as the Catholic element, when in the late 1870s there was an attempt to legislate for amendments to the prayer book to regulate ceremony. In 1879 the Bishop of Carlisle (the former Dean of Ely, Hervey Goodwin) suggested enabling legislation that would allow the united Convocations of Canterbury and York to order regulations regarding ceremony for approval by Her Majesty in Council. ¹⁹¹ Goodwin’s proposed enabling legislation professed to eschew doctrinal controversy – the preamble to the Bill stating that it did not allow for alteration of doctrine. ¹⁹² Notwithstanding the ‘impartial benevolence’ of the Bill’s proponent, Denison saw the difficulty trying to divorce ceremony and doctrine, considering it was not possible to ignore doctrine while regulating ceremony. He

¹⁸⁹ ibid, p10.
¹⁹¹ A bill intitled an Act to provide facilities for the amendment from time to time of the rites and ceremonies of the said Church, as changes of circumstances may require.
¹⁹² ibid, p v.
charged those responsible as bringing on the Bill under ‘false colours’.  

He saw Goodwin’s proposal as an extension of the attempt to suppress the Catholic element in the Church of England. ‘The plot’ was not, he believed, ‘going to be abandoned readily or extinguished easily.’ Any alteration ‘will be in the downward, ie anti-Catholic direction’. He also considered the situation was more complex than the bishop’s scheme implied, noting that those who had an interest in revisions to the prayer book were not confined to the Church at home, but included the wider Anglican Communion, whose synods also ought to be considered.

In all of this Denison was consistent. He wanted to maintain the Catholic Faith, and the doctrine taught by the Reformed Church of England, as a manifestation of teaching of the Primitive Catholic Church, as this was contained within *The book of common prayer*. ‘Now we have received the prayer book to keep and deliver. We are “content” with the Prayer Book as it is. I do not say “satisfied” – for under it we can teach all Truth.’ Denison did not feel the need to look elsewhere, but fought for the doctrines he saw embedded in the Prayer Book. He understood the proposals to revise elements of the Prayer Book – regulating ceremonies and ornaments, while leaving untouched the Church’s doctrine, were but part of a long campaign on the part of the Protestant element in the Church of England to erode her comprehensiveness, and her Catholic doctrine. ‘They may keep paring away the Truth,’ but, Denison contended, ‘there is no margin of the Prayer Book to be cut off. We cannot afford to part with a shred of the Prayer Book.’

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Distinction between secular and religious education

What is meant is this, that there is a real distinction between the religious, and the secular, business of life, and that religion is a thing to be, as it were, superadded, and to be confined to its proper place; an abstraction rather than a reality; not an all-pervading principle, but an adventitious ornament.

G A Denison, The Church and the school: Two sermons preached in S Peter’s Church, Derby. 1851. {11/70ff}
CHAPTER EIGHT

The battle for Church schools

In this chapter examination is made of the position Denison adopted on the ‘Education Question’ – that is the question that arose with respect to the relationship between voluntarism and the State, and specifically the question of the respective roles of the Established Church and the State in the provision of education for the poorer classes in the nineteenth century. Denison entered into the debate over State intervention in Church schools in 1847, becoming almost immediately a leading figure in this controversy. He fought for six years until admitting defeat in 1853. But before turning to examine the events of those years, it is necessary to look back and review the background to the circumstances that caused Denison to enter the fray and do battle for Church schools. This background can be considered under two headings – the orthodox doctrinal character of the National Society and the ambivalent approach of the State to popular education.

Foundation of the National Society 1811

The reasons for the founding of the National Society, and thus its character and purpose, bore directly on Denison’s understanding of the purpose of Church schools. The origin of the National Society lay with a Cambridge don, Herbert Marsh,¹ and a group of orthodox High Churchmen linked with the Hackney Phalanx. From amongst this body, Edward Churton attributed the foundation of the society principally to the efforts of John Bowles, Henry Norris, and Joshua Watson.² At the

¹ Herbert Marsh (1757-1839), sometime Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Cambridge; subsequently Bishop of Llandaff (1816) and then Peterborough (1819).
² Edward Churton, Memoir of Joshua Watson, vol I, p103.
outset the motivating force behind the idea of the society was for it to be an instrument to promote the Church’s mission, to counteract Socinianism and Utilitarian rationalism, and to propagate the orthodox tenets of the Established Church. But also High Churchmen were conscious that the monitorial system, introduced by Bell and Lancaster,³ afforded Dissenters and opponents of the Church the potential to outflank the Established Church by building non-Church schools. It was Herbert Marsh who issued a clarion call to the Church to engage in education. His seminal Charity Schools sermon at St Paul’s Cathedral in 1811 led to the foundation of the National Society within a matter of four months.⁴ Marsh presented Churchmen with a stark choice. ‘We have’, he declared, ‘the choice, therefore, of the new system in two different forms. In one form it is Church of

³ Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838). His educational initiative was given support in 1808 with formation of the Society for the promotion of the Lancastrian System for the Education of the Poor. The British and Foreign Schools Society grew out of this system. The Rev Andrew Bell (1753-1832) developed a scheme of ‘mutual tuition’ at Madras. His method was described in his An analysis of the experiment in education made at Egmore, near Madras, first published in 1797. On his return to England, Bell introduced his system to the school at St Botolph’s, Aldgate, as well to the school he ran in his parish at Swanage, Dorset. Bell’s methods were used as the basis of the system of teaching in the new National Society schools. See Burgess, Enterprise in Education, p20f.

John Chappel Woodhouse, A sermon preached … June 16, 1808 … at the yearly meeting of the children educated in the charity schools in and about the cities of London and Westminster. 1808, p17.

⁴ Robert Braine has noted the significance of Marsh’s sermon: ‘The importance of the original sermon, though, was immediately evident. The new Society’s name (the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church) was inspired by his sermon. The SPCK immediately resolved that the sermon be printed. Five editions and five thousand copies appeared before the Society’s own edition.’ The life and writings of Herbert Marsh (1757-1839). PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, 1989, p214. The Society was established 21 October 1811 at a meeting chaired by Archbishop Manners-Sutton in St Mary le Bow. There Marsh met with members of the Hackney Phalanx (Watson, Norris and Bowles) as an ‘interior cabinet’ to develop their ideas for an education society at a meeting held at St Mary le Bow on 21 October. Herbert Marsh to Joshua Watson 13 October 1811, in Edward Churton, Memoir of Joshua Watson, Vol I, p107ff.
England education; and in the other form it is not so.’\(^5\) Marsh believed there could be no neutrality. ‘Education, on whatever principles it was conducted, must have some influence, either favourable or unfavourable, on established religion. Moreover, Marsh saw that education would constitute a foundation to support the broader pastoral work of the clergy.\(^6\)

It is to be observed that defence and propagation of the Church’s doctrines exercised the minds of those who founded the National Society. At root was the question as to whether Christianity was to be seen merely as an expression of morality, or whether it was something more definite. Marsh, for example, opposed the notion that schools should eschew specific doctrine and teach Christian morality, as Joseph Lancaster contended should be done, on the ‘grand basis of Christianity’.\(^7\) This issue lay at the heart of later controversy in which Denison became involved. The position adopted by the founders of the National Society is manifest in the writings of John Bowles,\(^8\) who argued Christianity was defined by doctrine. ‘Christianity (as far as it consists in Faith, which, I presume, it will not be denied, must constitute its basis) is a belief of all the essential doctrines of the Gospel.\(^9\) Against teaching on the principles of what he termed ‘vapid morality’ Bowles adumbrated his view of the necessary basis of national schooling:

\[\text{My position is, that they should be taught all the essentials of Christianity, since otherwise they would not be taught Christianity itself; and as, when educated in our national schools, they must be brought up in the National Church, they will of course be}\]

\(^5\) Herbert Marsh, *The national religion the foundation of national education, etc.* 1811, p30.
\(^6\) Ibid, p40.
\(^7\) Marsh cited Lancaster’s phrase, *Ibid*, p23. This read in full: ‘The grand basis of Christianity alone is broad enough for the whole bulk of mankind to stand on, and join hands as children of one family. This basis is, Glory to God, and increase of peace and good-will among men.’ *Improvements in education, as it respects the industrious classes of the community*, p25.
\(^8\) John Bowles (1751-1819) was a barrister and was associated with Joshua Watson and the Hackney Phalanx in the foundation of the National Society. See Emma Macleod’s biography in *ODNB*. Henry Handley Norris (1771-1850) incumbent of South Hackney, was another leading figure within the Hackney Phalanx, and High Church circles. See Peter Nockles’ biography in *ODNB*. Joshua Watson (1771-1855), a wine merchant, was a prominent layman in the Church of England, and the Hackney Phalanx. See Peter Nockles’ biography in *ODNB*.
\(^9\) John Bowles, *Education of the lower orders. A second letter addressed to Samuel Whitbread, Esq MP, containing observations on his Bill for the establishment of parochial schools in South Britain ...* 1808. [Nov 20, 1807], pp64-5.
taught the doctrines which the Church holds to be essential. These doctrines she has taken care to inculcate in her catechism, and to incorporate into her liturgy; and it admits of the clearest proof that they had been considered as essential and fundamental by the Christian Church, from the period of its establishment.\textsuperscript{10}

Anglican orthodox doctrine thus shaped the objectives of the National Society, and came to be enshrined in its founding charter: ‘that the national religion should be made the groundwork of national education’; and, second, ‘that the first and chief thing to be taught to the children of the poor was the doctrine of the Gospel, according to the excellent Liturgy and Catechism provided by the Church of England.’\textsuperscript{11}

The second matter to be noted with respect to the National Society is that it operated as a national body promoting Church schools. The founders’ concept was ambitious. They envisaged a national system of education under the auspices of the Church Establishment.\textsuperscript{12} Their vision was fulfilled as their foundation became a considerable movement. Established with headquarters in London, the society’s work came to be supported in the provinces with the creation of diocesan boards of education assisting the local endeavours of clergy in the parishes. From as early as 1812 the society had a central training school at Baldwin Gardens serving as the principal model school and training institution for teachers. Model schools and training were extended beyond the metropoli, as for example in the case of Bishop Denison’s college at Salisbury. Such institutions were established in major centres and cathedral cities across the country.\textsuperscript{13} The National Society had, as Burgess has written, established ‘what amounted to a national system of education under the

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\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid}, pp78-9.
\textsuperscript{11} This objective was expounded in the first report of the National Society, quoted by Edward Churton in \textit{Memoir of Joshua Watson}, Vol I, pp103-4.
\textsuperscript{12} Marsh saw the SPCK as a model. The SPCK had in June 1810 created diocesan committees, which had the immediate effect of bringing about an increase in membership. The ‘Society of Patrons of the Anniversary of Charity Schools’, associated with the SPCK, had one thousand members. This suggested ways an appeal might be made to Churchmen to promote definite Church teaching.
\textsuperscript{13} Henry Burgess lists the following: Canterbury, York, Colchester, Chelmsford, Winchester, Bath, Dorchester, Carlisle, Chichester, Exeter, Truro, Leicester, Huntingdon, Lichfield, Norwich, Ipswich, Bury, Peterborough, Salisbury and Trowbridge. \textit{Enterprise in education}, p34.
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auspices of the Church’. The society had done this by adopting policies and attaching these as conditions of its grants. The provision that schools receiving grants should accept terms of union with the society ensured that these schools would mirror the charter of the Society and proclaim their Church of England character. Denison became part of this system when, when on his arrival in first living at Broad Windsor in 1838, he set about building a village a school, at expense to himself. Founding this school in connection with the National Society, Denison understood he was subscribing to the tenets of the charter of the society - ‘that the first and chief thing to be taught to the children of the poor was the doctrine of the Gospel, according to the excellent Liturgy and Catechism provided by the Church of England.’

The State and popular education

The State’s earliest involvement in popular education came in 1833 twenty-two years after the foundation of the society in 1811, when Parliament voted a small

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14 Henry Burgess, Enterprise in Education, p27.
16 This objective was expounded in the first report of the National Society, quoted by Edward Churton in Memoir of Joshua Watson, Vol I, pp103-4.
17 Parliament had had the opportunity to consider the question of popular education in the twenty-six years before the Reformed Parliament, when Samuel Whitbread introduced successive bills to the Commons in 1807 and 1808.

Whitbread’s proposed legislation for village schools relied on implementation by local vestries supervised and regulated by the justices of the peace. (1806-7 (143) l 105, April 17 1807, A Bill for establishing parochial schools in England and Wales, for the construction of the children of the poor). Whitbread’s Bill sought to establish a school in every Parish within one year of the Act; ministers, Churchwardens & overseers, were to purchase or hire suitable buildings for a school. Masters & mistresses to be appointed by vestries – these appointments and salaries to be ratified by justices; vestries were to present reports to justices on the occasion of the special sessions for the appointment of overseers; justices were to serve as visitors and supervise the regulation of schools. Article 9 loosely covered the curriculum. The capital and recurrent costs were to be met out of the poor rates.

Henry Brougham had been instrumental in securing the establishment of a Commons Select Committee in 1815, reporting in 1816. Further reports were made over the ensuing years 1817, 1818, and 1819. In 1820, Brougham attempted to promote an education Bill, but this was not even debated. Three years later in 1823, Peel, as Home Secretary, rejected an appeal by the British and Foreign Schools Society for a Government grant on the grounds that it would set a precedent ‘extremely inconvenient to Government’. See A S Bishop, The rise of a central authority for English Education, 1971, p8.
18 I have used ‘popular education’ as denoting schooling for the lower orders and poorer classes. Such education was qualified not only by the strata of society to which it was directed, but also by its limited
annual grant for the provision of education for the poor. In making this grant the Whig administration offered a measure of support for voluntary effort, but eschewed direct government engagement. At the same time the administration placed tight limits on government funding, there being no political will to fund the real costs of education of the lower orders with taxpayers’ money. Lord Althorp’s proposal was that Parliament should ‘consider whether they could not acquire education for the people without the immediate and direct interference of the Government’. It was also the case that Parliament had neither a concept of what might constitute a national system of education, nor any practical means to implement any such putative scheme. Without its own administrative machinery the government decided monies voted for education should be distributed through the agency of the several voluntary societies, of which the National Society, and British and Foreign School Society, were the leading bodies.

The fundamental principle of the 1833 grant, therefore, was that voluntary contributions should underwrite the greater part of the cost of the education of the poor. This remained the principle until Forster’s 1870 Education Act when a system of funding from the rates was introduced removing the direct burden on the treasury. In the period 1833-70 the parliamentary grant remained but a portion of the total expenditure on popular education. Indeed, opposition to the increasing burden of the grant led to an attempt to curtail expenditure after 1861 with the introduction of the Revised Code. The major contributors to popular education for educational objectives.

19 There was apprehension that increase in taxation to support popular education was politically unacceptable, as well as a fear that government interference would see a fall in voluntary financial contribution. On the subject of taxation see the Lord Chancellor’s views in answer to Question 2821 in PP (572) IX, Report from the Select Committee on the state of education.
21 In the debate on Roebuck’s motion, Sir Robert Peel touched on these two issues, suggesting that Roebuck’s motion was ‘vague’, and questioned ‘how it was practicable’. Peel wished to know what would a system of national education would comprise? PD, 3rd series, Vol XX, 30 July 1833, col 172f. An example of the lack of a suitable bureaucracy was demonstrated, for example, by the problems the Home Office had collating the raw data from evidence collected in the course of inquiries made by the 1834 Select Committee on Education. The Home Office was a small department with twenty-nine clerks. The only two large departments were Revenue and the Board of Customs and Excise with a staff of 15,836 between them, and the War Department employing 1,740 staff. On this see W C Lubenow, The politics of government growth: early Victorian attitudes towards State intervention 1833-1848. 1971, p15.
the first two thirds of the nineteenth century were voluntaryist bodies. Of these the largest was the Church of England.

If the principle established in 1833 that the education grant was to serve to supplement voluntaryist endeavour largely remained until 1870, the method by which the grant was administered, that is by being farmed out to voluntaryist societies (of which the National Society was the largest) soon came into question. In 1838 a Select Committee on Education drew attention to the difficulties in obtaining data to assess the effectiveness of the parliamentary grants, observing that the need for such assessment appeared to have escaped notice. The government’s response to this criticism was to establish a body whereby it could take to itself a greater responsibility for the administration of the education grant. It did this by creating in April 1839 a committee of the Privy Council – the Committee of Council on Education. The establishment of this committee was a neat executive device that looked to secure some control over public expenditure on popular education, but avoided becoming embroiled in debate in Parliament on government interference in voluntaryist education – interference which would have been strongly opposed by the Church and Dissenters alike.

The extra-parliamentary executive fiat did not escape reaction and comment. Sir Robert Peel raised the issue of the latent powers of the committee; he considered it a body that would have ‘the widest possible discretion,’ untrammelled by parliamentary scrutiny or debate on policy. The Privy Council committee would not be answerable to Parliament for any departure from this policy. But tellingly, Russell had bypassed the Church not only in Parliament, where the lords spiritual had their place in the Upper House, but also in the Privy Council. This did not escape

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22 PP 1837-38 (589) Vol VII, Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes, 13 July 1838, p[iii].
23 Many Nonconformists were inclined to favour voluntaryism and opposed Statist interference. Cf Edward Baines for example. The concept of charitable voluntaryism was powerful. The matter is treated later in this chapter in connection with Kay-Shuttleworth’s resignation in 1849 as Secretary to the Committee of Council on Education.
24 PD 35 Series, Vol 45, 12 February 1839, cols 303-4
the notice of Archbishop Howley who observed that neither of the two archbishops, nor any of the bishops who were members of the Privy Council, had been consulted about the formation of the committee.  

Moreover, he noted that membership of the Committee of Council on Education was constituted by members of the Whig administration and did not include any of the episcopal bench who were privy councillors. Archbishop Howley, and bishops, such as Blomfield and Phillpotts, representing the strand of continuing Anglican orthodox the National Society was founded to propagate, saw the creation of the Committee of Council on Education signalled a new development, which they were prepared to fight.

Denison who had only a year before moved to Broad Windsor and was busy in his parish rebuilding the vicarage, and erecting a new school, followed events as he noted in his autobiography. The Whig administration considered teaching could be on the basis of a general Christianity, that is Bible-based without doctrine – the approach used by the British and Foreign Schools, and the line urged by Joseph Lancaster. This was a position with which Lord John Russell empathized (he being a member of the British and Foreign Schools Society). Blomfield believed this notion raised a fundamental principle – that there could be not be a Christian religion without the peculiarity of its doctrine. As had Bowles twenty-eight years earlier, the bishop attacked the premise of bible-based teaching without doctrine.

Deprive Christianity of what is essentially peculiar to itself, – take away the doctrine of man’s sinfulness and corruption, the necessity for Atonement to be made by a Divine Saviour, Justification through faith in that Saviour, Sanctification by Spirit into obedience, – take away these doctrines, and the doctrines of Sacrament Grace, and what remains? Not CHRISTIANITY! Not even a faint adumbration of Christianity; not

25 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 48, 5 July 1839, col 1247. This was an issue taken up by Peel. William Howley (1766-1848) was Archbishop of Canterbury 1828-48. Howley was Blomfield’s patron appointing him his private chaplain in 1817, and then Archdeacon of Colchester. Consecrated Bishop of Chester in 1824, Blomfield was translated from Chester to succeed Howley as Bishop of London in 1828.

26 Ibid, col 1254. The committee was established by an Order in Council 10 April 1839. The membership comprised members of the government, namely the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Home Secretary.

27 G A Denison, Life, p162f.
even the true religion of a less perfect dispensation, but a mere caput mortuum of Deism.\textsuperscript{28}

The High Church Howley was equally clear on this point. As Manners Sutton’s lieutenant as Bishop of London, Howley had taken part in the establishment of the National Society and had been on the first committee,\textsuperscript{29} and was thus fully cognizant of the reasons for founding the National Society. The archbishop attacked the notion of generalized Christian morality, equating this with natural religion, and argued the place of revealed religion.\textsuperscript{30} Howley argued religious truths had to be taught with authority. ‘Teachers do not appeal to the reason of the child, but taught him on authority. They said such and such is the truth; such and such is the law of God; such and such is the rule of morality.’\textsuperscript{31} He firmly asserted the right of the Church to educate her own children and argued that rather than being excluded from the deliberations on education, the Established Church deserved consideration from the government. Howley claims were couched in the language of Anglican orthodoxy.

Now, considering the relation in the Church stood to the State – considering the number of its members – considering the purity of its doctrines – considering the excellence of the moral and religious feelings which it tended to promote, and considering its obedience to the laws of the Government and of the State – he did not think it too much to if it looked up to the Government of this country to assist it in promoting education.\textsuperscript{32}

The latent power to intervene in the Church’s role in education now lay, however, not with Parliament, but more immediately with the Committee of Council on Education, and in particular with its new secretary. The appointment of James Kay-

\textsuperscript{28} PD, 3\textsuperscript{rd} series, Vol 48, 5 July 1839, col 1248.
\textsuperscript{29} The preface to the Society’s Annual Report, 1812, records Howley chairing the early business of the Society.
\textsuperscript{30} PD, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Series, Vol 48, 5 July 1839, col 1247f.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}, col 1249. Howley moved a series of resolutions designed to inhibit any move by the new Committee of Council to establish a normal school without reference to the Lords, as one branch of the legislature. \textit{Ibid}, cols 1253ff.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid}, col 1240
Shuttleworth as secretary to the Committee of Council on Education was significant both for the issues raised for Churchmen in 1839, as it was for Denison just a few years later. The appointment introduced a man of Nonconformist origins – a Congregationalist. He was educated in the Nonconformist academy tradition at Salford and later qualified at Edinburgh as a medical practitioner. During his early career in Manchester, he developed an interest in economics and social science, becoming imbued with the notion, as Selleck has written, ‘that policy could be based on scientific information’. Kay-Shuttleworth’s experience in Manchester led him to look unfavourably on voluntaryism, and convinced him it was necessary to use what he termed ‘municipal power’, to effect ‘progressive improvements’ and supply services such as police, the administration of justice, lighting and drainage. There were objects he saw as ‘too vast, or too complicated’ to be left to voluntary action; they required ‘the assertion of the power and the application of the resources of the majority’. In Kay-Shuttleworth, the Committee of Council on Education had a man who was neither sympathetic to voluntaryism, nor as a Nonconformist, one who empathised with clergy who associated themselves closely with their Church schools. Not only was he convinced that the State ought to be more active in the sphere of education, but he also had the experience as an administrator, and a talent for eliciting detailed data which would enable him to extend the remit of the committee on education.

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33 Dr James Phillips Kay (1804-1877), as he was styled at the date of his appointment. He assumed the double-barrelled name in 1842 on his marriage to the heiress Janet Shuttleworth. He was created a baronet in 1849 on his resignation as secretary. I have, for convenience, used throughout the name he adopted on marriage. Although usually referred to as the ‘Secretary’, Kay-Shuttleworth serving a committee of the Privy Council was technically an assistant secretary – the Secretary, or clerk-in-chief to the Privy Council was Charles Grenville.

34 See Selleck’s article in ODNB. Kay-Shuttleworth was a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. He also played a leading part in the founding of the Manchester Statistical Society – the first in Britain.

35 Kay-Shuttleworth, The school in its relations to the State, the Church, and the Congregation, etc. 1847, p15.

36 Ibid.

37 Kay-Shuttleworth’s thoroughness was manifested soon after he was appointed – a thoroughness reflected in the detailed questionnaire he compiled for the guidance for inspectors. They were instructed to inquire into the tenure of school sites, the school buildings, sanitation, heating, lighting, ventilation, organization and discipline in schools, registration and attendance, playground provision, libraries, relations between teachers and parents, and school finances.
The direction Kay-Shuttleworth looked to adopt became apparent soon after he took office in the course of negotiations with the Rev John Sinclair, secretary to the National Society, regarding appointment of inspectors. Kay-Shuttleworth asserted that school inspectors would be appointed by the Privy Council. This was a first indication of the former’s propensity to seize the initiative when opportunity showed itself.38 In an attempt to forestall suggestions that the government was proposing to interfere in religious teaching, he added that the inspectors would not claim the right ‘to interfere with religious teaching, and will not claim or exercise any authority as to discipline and management of the schools, otherwise than reporting the result of their examination to the Committee of the Privy Council’.39 This, however, was seen by Churchmen as implying a divide between religion and the secular. Moreover, Kay-Shuttleworth proposed inspectors would report to himself, thereby raising the question of the Church’s authority with respect to the control and management of her own schools. The National Society rejected Kay-Shuttleworth’s proposals and instead looked to a full instigation of their own system of inspectors covering the whole of the curriculum and appointed under the authority of the Church, and organized under the agency of diocesan boards of education.40 The society’s firm resistance was largely engineered by John Sinclair.

38 Kay-Shuttleworth possibly thought he saw signs of weakness in the National Society after Bishop Phillpotts had written to Lord John Russell intimating his willingness to promote discussion between the bench of bishops and the Education Committee: ‘I should rejoice to see instituted a conference between the Committee of Council on Education and the Bishops for the purpose of devising measures to carry into effect your Lordship’s very just and moderate principle [viz give assistance to others not being members of the Church], and at the same time to give to the Church that public recognition of being the fit guardian and Administratix of National Education, with which your Lordship’s principles can so well be reconciled.’ Phillpotts to Russell 16 October 1839, reproduced in Kay-Shuttleworth’s pamphlet, Recent measures for the promotion of education in England. 1839, pxxi.

39 Kay-Shuttleworth to the secretary of the National Society, 17 August 1839, reprinted in John Sinclair, Correspondence of the National Society with the Lords of the Treasury and with the Committee of Council on Education. 1839, p21. Regulation (A) stated: ‘The right of inspection will be required in all cases. Inspectors authorised by Her Majesty in Council, will be appointed from time to time to visit schools, to be henceforth aided by public money. The inspectors will not interfere with religious instruction, or discipline, or management of the school; it being their object to collect facts and information, and to report the result of their inspection to the Committee of Council.’ Ibid, p26.

40 Circular sent out by the National Society to its members & copy to the Committee of Council, 23 September 1839, reprinted in Correspondence of the National Society with the Lords of the Treasury and with the Committee of Council on Education, p24.
At the same time, Archbishop Howley continued to campaign, and in the Lords succeeded in carrying an address to the queen in a series of resolution which he brought to a vote with a majority of 118.\textsuperscript{41} The archbishop’s object was to counter Russell’s executive coup creating the Privy Council Committee and, as James Garrard has noted, to put a wedge between Parliament’s grant and the new committee of council.\textsuperscript{42} Howley had partial success, securing an agreement with the Whigs in 1840, the terms of which recognized two principles: that the State had the right to ensure its funds were properly applied; and that the Church had the right to educate according to its principles and doctrine. In the matter of inspection, the Church had deflected Kay-Shuttleworth, and secured both her claim to exercise authority over her own schools, as well as sustaining her argument with respect to the unity of religious and secular knowledge. Thus it was agreed that appointments by the Privy Council of inspectors for schools in connection with the National Society were to be ratified by the two archbishops in their respective provinces, and inspections were to include reports on religious education. Reports were to be communicated at one and the same time to the Committee of Council on Education as well as to the archbishop of the province, and additionally to the bishop of the diocese in which a school was situated.\textsuperscript{43}

Kay-Shuttleworth outflanking the National Society

In his \textit{Notes of my life}, George Denison recalled his feelings as he had watched Archbishop Howley and his suffragans fight back. After listening to Charles Blomfield’s speech in the House of Lords, he recounted his sense of relief: ‘with what thankfulness I came away, fully persuading myself that a great deal was really going to be done towards maintaining and extending in all its integrity, the teaching

\textsuperscript{41} PD, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Series, Vol XLIX, col 332.
of the Church; that the establishment of a latitudinarian school-teaching agency, by way of a government department, was a thing no longer possible.\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p162f.}

Denison, however, was wrong. Russell’s stratagem allowed the government to establish the principle of the government’s prior right to extend their control of education, a principle that was tacitly accepted by the subsequent Tory administration, which retained the Privy Council Committee on Education. With the creation of the committee there now existed two competing principles; the earlier principle that voluntarism should underwrite a major part of the cost of popular education; and a new principle that the State might make grants conditional on the acceptance of regulations, thereby intervening in the management and direction of schools founded by churchmen in connection with the National Society. But at this stage with agreement reached with the government such a state of affairs seemed to have been averted. Nevertheless the Church had notably failed to secure any definition of the scope of the Committee on Education – this, therefore, remained an open question. As one Churchman observed just three years after Howley’s negotiations with the Whigs, the real point to be established was the limits to the powers of the Committee: ‘We must rather endeavour to have its functions so far defined as to secure the Church against all interference in matters of religion, and all unnecessary control in other matters.’\footnote{TDA [Presumably Thomas D Allen of Gloucs], \textit{The English Journal of Education}, Vol I, 1843, p130.} The Privy Council Committee and its latent powers remained indeterminate and undefined. In retrospect, Denison described his optimistic expectation in 1840 as ‘a weak and silly anticipation’.\footnote{G A Denison, \textit{Life}, p163. ‘I may go further still, for if common report says true, no man had more to do with consulting upon the original scheme of the management clauses than the Bishop of London.’} His later disillusionment was the greater, having formed a positive view of the part played by Bishop Blomfield at the time of the establishment of the committee of council, to see the bishop allow himself a few years later to be drawn by Kay-Shuttleworth into giving tentative approval to a scheme for the management clauses, thus opening the way to influence and control of Church schools.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p163.}
Denison had been satisfied, as were many other Churchmen, with the concordat arrived at in 1840. Moreover, developments in the years following saw voluntary effort assisted in part by government grants enabling the extension of popular education across the country. However, government and diocesan inspectors’ reports identified the need for improvements, making Churchmen increasingly aware of deficiencies.\footnote{For example the National Society’s (Mozley’s) Report on Midland District schools was critical of the mechanical learning, and the monitorial system. The English Churchman, Vol IV (161), 29 January 1846, p77. A similar assessment was made by Allen in his report on schools in Bedford, Cambridge, & Huntingdon. Ibid.} Two clerical inspectors, J B Mozley and John Allen, revealed the unsatisfactory instruction in most parish schools reliant on monitors, whose average age was eleven.\footnote{Allen’s report was printed in the Christian Remembrancer, Vol XI, pp65-95, and also published in the English Churchman, 29 January 1846, p77. The text of Mozley’s Report was printed in the English Churchman, Vol IV, 12 March 1846, p169f. Criticism of the teaching of the Catechism in Mr Watkin’s report was published in the English Churchman, Vol IV 28 May 1846.} The monitorial system showed itself inadequate to meet higher expectations in the developing school system. There was a pressing need for a cadre of adequately trained teachers, and the means to remunerate them. With Russell’s return to the treasury benches in June 1846 this aspect of popular education was addressed. The Committee of Council on Education proposed a scheme to assist teacher training and salaries. This was incorporated in the first set of 1846 minutes passed by the committee in 25 August, followed by long minutes defining details of the scheme in December 1846, tabled in the Lords by Lord Lansdowne on 5 February 1847.\footnote{PD 3rd Series Vol 89, 5 February 1847, cols 858-869.
\footnote{Life, p99.}}

The government’s proposals for education were generally well received by Churchmen as contributing positively to the improvement of popular education. Denison was one of those who shared the prevailing optimism arising from the education committee’s minutes 1846-47. He had been advised his friend, the Rev H W Bellairs – an inspector under the 1840 concordat – to apply for assistance for his school under the 1846 Minutes. ‘Like many other people before and since, I wanted to help; so I listened to the alluring voice, and made my application late in 1846, or early 1847.’\footnote{Amongst the High Church press, the Guardian recognized that popular}
education had reached an important stage of development making it desirable to raise the standards required of teachers. ‘If we by contributions, public or private, raise a class of superior schoolmasters, we have committed ourselves to a course; and must pay more for them when they are raised. We must be consistent. We must respect our creation, we must go on with what we have begun.’

On the back of the initiatives indicated in the 1846 minutes, Kay-Shuttleworth entered into negotiation with the Committee of the National Society in the process of which the National Society was outflanked by him with the imposition of management clauses as a condition of grants. Terms of union with the National Society presumed the existence of committees for the management of Church schools. Indeed, the society always referred to school managers in the plural, never suggesting the clergyman was the sole manager of his school. But in many schools, committees were remarkable only by their absence. Sinclair acknowledged the terms of union were unsatisfactory on this point.

The society, aware of these difficulties, had had the subject under consideration before Kay-Shuttleworth began discussions. The Committee of the National Society would have been happy to accept management clauses from the Privy Council provided they did not, as Burgess has observed, disturb the unity of education (that is no distinction between religious and secular, or useful knowledge) maintained local freedom, ensured bona fide Church membership of school managers, and the appointment of managers was kept in the hands of subscribers – that is those who contributed to the recurrent costs of a school. In the event, of the four model deeds drawn up by Kay-Shuttleworth, Sinclair noted

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52 Guardian, 10 February 1847, p89.
54 John Sinclair, National education and Church extension. A charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Middlesex. 1849, p12.
55 Ibid, p12.
57 H J Burgess, Enterprise in education, p149.
that the only possible deed acceptable to the Church ‘omitted most of the important securities’ enumerated above. It is remarkable that the Committee of the National Society had not acted to remove the kind of anomalies Sinclair noted, and provide models of suitable deeds before 1846. It is also remarkable that Kay-Shuttleworth was able to side-step the securities asked for by the National Society. This was the more so if, as Sinclair noted, Archbishop Howley had held discussions with Lord Wharncliffe in 1840 on the subject of management clauses, and had reached an understanding on such points. It had been proposed ‘that, for the satisfaction of the Church, these important arrangements would be confirmed by a minute of Council.’ However, Sinclair recorded that shortly after, Lord Wharncliffe requested that the Church should not insist on a minute, ‘but be satisfied with a mutual understanding established verbally between the parties, lest discussion in Parliament be raised.’ Sinclair had kept a copy of the memorandum, noting these terms had been kept by both Lord Wharncliffe and his successor. It is

58 John Sinclair, National education and Church extension, etc, p13.
59 Sinclair conceded that often the older National Schools committees were ‘impractically large, and in the mode of their election too democratical. Nor was proper care always taken to uphold the influence of the parochial clergyman. Many points were overlooked which ought to have been provided for. Sometimes the Trust Deed contained no provision that the school should be in union with the National Society; nor that the clergyman should preside at the meeting of the managers; nor that the managers themselves, nor the subscribers who elected them, nor even any of the teachers employed, should be members of the Church; nor that an appeal on a disputed point should be made to any tribunal; nor even to the bishop in regard to religious instruction’. Ibid, p12.
60 John Sinclair, Ibid, p15. Amongst the terms of agreement Sinclair recorded:

1st. With reference to Trustees of Schools, the Committee of Council will give no preference to the Corporation, consisting of the Minister, Churchwardens, and Overseers of the poor, in any parish, (for the Overseers might be Dissenters): but will show equal favour to the corporations, recognized under the Act 4 & 5 Vict. C.38.
2ndly. With reference to Managers of Schools, their Lordships will not insist upon a provision in the Trust Deed for the nomination of a school Committee by Subscribers, nor object to the nomination of the Committee annually by the parochial minister: and in cases where persons of respectability, properly qualified to be Managers, cannot be found within a parish, they will be permit the promoters and contributors to place the sole management in his hands.
3rdly. On the subject of School Plans, the Committee of Council will not insist on any particular mode of fitting up the interior of School Rooms.
And 4thly. In the case of Church Schools, not in union with the National Society, their Lordships will not recommend the adoption of form No 4 (a Latitudinarian form); but will admit other forms, not constructed upon the same principles.60

This memorandum, inter alia, contained a clause that prevented the Committee of Council on Education from interfering with the arrangements of schoolrooms. Wigram, another former secretary of the National Society, had found evidence in his Archdeaconry of Kay-Shuttleworth insisting on a different arrangement of

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unlikely, in view the discussion held with the National Society, that Kay-Shuttleworth was not acquainted with this memorandum of understanding, and, given Sinclair’s involvement with discussions between the National Society, that Kay-Shuttleworth had not been apprised of the deficiencies as they were perceived by the society. Sinclair came to believe that the objects of the Privy Council Committee on Education, or at least those of its assistant secretary, were more extensive than was publically owned.

Sinclair’s suspicions were confirmed on learning that Kay-Shuttleworth, avoiding public announcement, had began to negotiate privately with individual clergy as they applied for grants, annexing *sub rosa* management clauses as a condition. The news that new conditions were being imposed was made public for the first time by Henry Wilberforce in a pamphlet published in 1847, *On the danger of State interference with the Trust deeds of Church Schools*. Wilberforce charged the government with the introduction of a new and fundamentally different principle from that agreed under the concordat of 1840, and that the Church had been given no notice grant aid would be on entirely new terms. He also noted that no minute adumbrating the changes existed in the Privy Council office.

Wilberforce’s pamphlet was significant because it was the first public intimation Churchmen had that new regulatory conditions existed. It was also the first to draw attention to the lack of surety that Church of England schools might have to ensure they maintained their Church character, should Kay-Shuttleworth’s management

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61 On this point Manning in his charge the following year (1849) concluded that the management clauses had been imposed without the National Society’s agreement, and in contravention not only of the agreement reached in 1840, but also of the subsequent understanding in 1842: ‘Are we then to understand that the recommending of these clauses had been commenced without the knowledge of the National Society? If so, and I see no other interpretation, how is it consistent with the clear and open agreement of 1840; confirmed in this particular by the express assurance of the Lord President of the Council in 1842?’ A charge delivered at the ordinary visitation of the Archdeaconry of Chichester 1849, p15.


clauses be imposed. Wilberforce drew attention to four principal deficiencies. First; that there was no requirement that teachers should be members of the Church of England and be of good character.\textsuperscript{64} Second; the wording of the clauses requiring members of school committees to be members of the Church of England gave no security as the law considered all Englishmen to be members of the Church - thus ‘Roman Catholics and Dissenters, all Roman Priests and Dissenting ministers’ could serve on Church of England school committees.\textsuperscript{65} Third; the provision for churchwardens to serve \textit{ex officio} on school committees posed a problem, as there were parishes where wardens were Dissenters or Methodists. Fourth; other than religious instruction being subject to the clergyman and the bishop, ‘the management, control and government’ was in all other respects to be vested ‘without appeal in the Committee’. This implied the division of a Church school into religious and secular elements,\textsuperscript{66} and suggested the parish clergyman was to be sidelined by the power of the proposed committees, not only of uncertain character, but also untrammelled by appeal to any higher authority.\textsuperscript{67}

Wilberforce’s pamphlet was thus the first contemporary notice of the anomaly posed by the State’s increased involvement in popular education through activities of the Committee of Council on Education and its secretary. He observed there was a new principle: namely, in exchange for a small contribution, and still in expectation that Churchmen would maintain their generosity, the new conditions would allow others control of Church schools.

In return for a comparatively trifling aid toward the original erection of school-rooms, the Committee of the Privy Council is to dictate the whole system of control and management by which our future schools are to be regulated, and that for ever. In the moderate official language of the Committee, ‘it is their Lordships’

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, p27.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, p26.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, p27.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, p28. The other clauses supposedly met dangers above. But Wilberforce was dismayed that clauses (B C D) provided membership for life: ‘Two or three ill-conditioned and Dissenting committee-men, once elected, may render a school a curse instead of a blessing as long they live.’ ‘What,’ Wilberforce asked, ‘will be the situation of a new Incumbent who finds his Church schools in such hands, and that no authority can either deprive them of power or control its exercise?’ \textit{Ibid}, p33.
duty to promote those arrangements for the management of schools which their experience may prove to be most generally applicable’. That is, our future Church schools are to be regulated for ever, not upon the principles of the Church, but upon such as shall happen to meet the wishes of those noblemen and gentlemen, who may constitute at each successive period the Committee of Council; or perhaps more frequently of some able Secretary who may obtain influence over their Lordships.  

Moreover, there was also more than touch of anti-clericalism in Kay-Shuttlworth’s treatment of the management clauses. By and large the establishment and effectiveness of parish schools, especially in the numerous rural parishes, rested on the good offices of the clergy. Whatever deficiencies that existed – and inspectors reports showed these to be considerable – those reports also showed the considerable part played by the clergy. Such was the evidence of the Rev H W Bellairs, whose district included Denison’s County of Somerset:

The advantage of a daily attendance of the parochial clergyman, and conducting by him of the religious instruction, can, I think, scarcely be over-rated. The master is encouraged and aided in his work by the presence and assistance of a superior. The parents are pleased to see him who, in most cases in the West of England, is the principal person in the village, engaged in the work of teaching their children; and the parishioners generally acquire higher views of the office of tuition.

While acknowledging the damning criticism of the quality of teachers and the problems training monitors, Bellairs found clergy contributing to the education and training of monitors, ‘not only on general subjects, but also especially the art of teaching. This has been attended with considerable benefits’. As has been seen in chapter three, the contribution made by the clergy remained to schooling in rural communities remained significant in the following decades. Given the important

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69 Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1847 (660) Vol XLV, p244  
70 Ibid, p 246.  
71 This was evident from the 1861 Newcastle Report and evidence adduced by Royal Commissions of the late 1860s seen in chapter three.
contribution made by parish clergy, Kay-Shuttleworth’s desire to circumscribe the clergy’s role in the management of parochial schools was surprising. With his considerable experience as an assistant Poor Law commissioner, Kay-Shuttleworth would have well known that one of the objects of the 1834 Poor law Amendment Act had been to dispose of parochial officers whose skills and efficiency as managers had been shown to be distinctly deficient. Yet the management clauses would see just such persons being re-introduced to manage schools in small towns and villages where there was least likely to be a source of suitable persons. This was a point seized upon by Henry Wilberforce, who suggested Kay-Shuttleworth’s proposals would ‘throw away all the lessons of experience’.  

Denison’s entry upon the battle-field of the Education Question

Denison entered the lists with two pamphlets in 1847: *Church schools and State interference*, and *Correspondence with the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education*. He was alarmed that the terms of the concordat arrived at between Archbishop Howley and the Whig Government appeared to breach the two principles of the concordat of 1840: namely that the State had the right to ensure its funds were properly applied, and, the Church had the right to educate its members according to its principles and doctrine. As it became apparent that new conditions were being imposed for grant-aid, Denison considered the fears entertained by Archbishop Howley of the latent potential of the Committee of Council to enlarge its powers were being realized. Denison believed he saw such dangers manifested in the committee’s minutes:

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72 Henry Wilberforce, *On the danger of State interference, etc.* 1847, p29. That popular committees had been declared unfit in the case of the Poor law was also noticed by a correspondent to the Guardian. For example, evidence of one clergyman whose trust deed had nominated the rector and two churchwardens as trustees. The Churchwardens having been apprised of the management clauses, and they being in a majority two to one over the rector, assumed control of the school-house for use as a relieving office every Monday. *Guardian*, 3 November 1847, p659.
It is obvious that there is here a vast and increasing machinery, which it will not only be easy to make a channel of State influence, that which can scarcely fail, if the principle of State interference be not surrendered altogether, to carry into the schools of the Church whatever may happen to be the peculiar views of the managers of the Minutes for the time being.\textsuperscript{73}

These new regulatory conditions suggested to Denison there were new developments in the policies of the Committee of Council on Education. Denison’s perception was at one with that formed by Sinclair, who had had the opportunity to observe developments from within the National Society. The suggestions, advice, and recommendations from Kay-Shuttleworth, Sinclair considered, ‘formed a small part of what was intended at the Council Office’, leaving the impression that Kay-Shuttleworth looked to assert overall authority.\textsuperscript{74} Denison claimed he was initially made aware of the committee’s intentions by Gladstone after the latter wrote to him on the subject.\textsuperscript{75} Denison’s sense that something was afoot had been heightened by an anonymous pamphlet, \textit{The school in its relations with the State, the Church, and the Congregation}, the authorship of which was widely ascribed to the Secretary of the Committee on Education, James Kay-Shuttleworth.\textsuperscript{76} Published in 1847, the pamphlet purported to be an explanation of the 1846 minutes, but went beyond mere explanation to float ideas that introduced issues Churchmen believed had been previously resolved by Archbishop Howley under the terms of the 1840 concordat. In opposition to the Church’s schools under the aegis of the National Society, the pamphlet looked to a national system of schools, which would combine together all the different religious communions.\textsuperscript{77} Such a ‘combined’ system divided religious education into general and special – general being the reading of the Bible without note or comment and doctrine classed as special, the latter being separately outside the main curriculum – one of the principal points

\textsuperscript{73} G A Denison, \textit{Church schools and State interference, etc}, p25.
\textsuperscript{74} John Sinclair, \textit{National education and Church extension, etc}, p14.
\textsuperscript{75} G A Denison, \textit{Church schools and State interference}, p4. Denison made the same assertion in a letter to Christopher Wordsworth, 4 January 1854, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 2145.
\textsuperscript{76} See Frank Smith, \textit{The life and work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth}, p182, and R J W Selleck in \textit{ODNB}.
\textsuperscript{77} Kay-Shuttleworth, \textit{The school in its relations with the State, etc}, p58, 78f, and p70.
that had been successfully dealt with by Howley and Blomfield in 1840.\textsuperscript{78} Significant as grounds of Denison’s reactions to Kay-Shuttleworth, the pamphlet was also critical of the part played by the Church of England clergy in the management of schools as though it was ‘a purely clerical function’.\textsuperscript{79} By contrast the part played by Nonconformist deacons and laity in the management of their schools was extolled.

Denison’s reading of this pamphlet, taken together with the supplementary minutes of July 1847, led him to conclude that the committee of council although not prepared to move openly, this being politically inexpedient, looked to secure control of Church schools ‘covertly’ and ‘by undermining, rather than by breach’.\textsuperscript{80} Much of Denison’s subsequent political tactics between 1847 and 1853 were determined by this appraisal, sensing Kay-Shuttleworth would probe the Church’s defences and advance wherever he found weaknesses. Denison came to believe that the outcome would depend, therefore, on how firmly the government’s move was met by Churchmen.\textsuperscript{81}

Denison’s sharp reaction to the supplementary minutes and Kay-Shuttleworth’s pamphlet are to be explained by two factors. The State would oblige the Church to conduct her schools along the lines promoted earlier by Joseph Lancaster, eschewing doctrine and the creeds for an average or generalized Christianity – the very direction which the National Society had been founded to counteract. Denison attacked the notion that substituting orthodox Christianity with a general sort of Christianity was to be enlightened.

That ‘general and comprehensive’ religion which would discard the Creeds of the Church, her one faith, and her Apostolic constitution, as things obsolete, unsuited to a country in which

\begin{flushright}
\textit{\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, p64f.} \\
\textit{\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, p74.} \\
\textit{\textsuperscript{80} G A Denison, \textit{Correspondence with the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education April and May, 1847}. p[3].} \\
\textit{\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, p4.}
\end{flushright}
there exists ‘many and various forms of Faith,’ and unworthy of
the enlightened intelligence of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{82}

He further believed Kay-Shuttleworth’s methods, whereby he sought to impose
new conditions upon the Church, suggested an unconstitutional attempt to bypass
both parliamentary scrutiny and sanction, as well as bypassing the consent of the
Church.\textsuperscript{83} The unconstitutionality of Kay-Shuttleworth’s methods was significant for
Denison, who maintained both a belief in the constitutional nexus between Church
and State, and a belief in the authority of the Church.

Denison’s perception, therefore, of the tendencies of the 1846 and 1847 minutes,
reinforced by his reading of Kay-Shuttleworth’s pamphlet, as well as intelligence of
Kay-Shuttleworth’s independent dealings with individual clergy, was that the
concordat was exploded. Beyond this, Denison had concluded that the committee
of council and its secretary intended to use the Church to create a system of State
schools: ‘They are not simply granting aid, they are constructing a system of
education.’\textsuperscript{84} But he recognized there was an impasse: on the one hand the State
could not, under the political circumstances of the day, create a system of schools
on its own; on the other, the Church could not extend or improve its system of
schools without government assistance. Denison surmised that while the
government would continue to recognize that it was ‘only through the
instrumentality of the Church schools is it possible to do anything on an extended
scale for the education of the people’. At the same time the government hoped
that, by a gradual process, Church schools would become ‘so mixed up with, and so
dependent upon, State assistance, that it would, but in a distant time, be
comparatively easy to graft upon them a State character’.\textsuperscript{85} In the words of an
anonymous correspondent in the \textit{Guardian}, the government intended to introduce
a system of combined education, and Church schools were to be made ‘wide

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid}, p[3].
\item \textsuperscript{83} G A Denison, \textit{Church schools and State interference, etc}, p19.
\item \textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid}, p7.
\item \textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid}, pp18-19.
\end{itemize}
enough for that purpose’. Downing Street’s expectations of the Church were made clear enough in the *Explanatory Minute* of 28 June: that the clergy and laity would consider ‘the view they take of the obligations resting upon them, as to the invocation of religious truth, must be limited by the duty to recognise the state of the law as to the toleration of diversities in religious belief’.  

Denison did not consider the Church ought to acquiesce in arrangements that went beyond the concordat arrived at in 1840. To broach this question, he formed a view that a stand should be taken on the ground of the management clauses, as these introduced the principle of State regulation of National Society schools in a way that had the potential to alter their Church character. He saw in the clauses the introduction of a principle that would allow of ‘perpetual meddling’ in the regulation of Church schools.

Denison’s membership of the Bristol Church Union after his arrival at East Brent placed him in the company of High Church activists, not only in the West Country, but through the corresponding Church Unions in London and across other dioceses. Within the Diocese of Bath and Wells, he had in Bagot an empathetic bishop on this issue. Denison claimed also to have the support of one of the founders of the National Society, the Rev H H Norris, who had asked Denison to go and see him. He had in addition, he claimed, the concurrence of Joshua Watson for his action. He found in such company encouragement therefore, to marshal a body of Churchmen opposed to the government’s actions. Determined to attack this new principle of regulation, the politician in Denison suggested that Churchmen adopt pressure group politics and campaign to arouse public opinion against Kay-Shuttleworth and the committee of council:

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86 *Guardian*, 3 November 1847, p659.
87 *Explanatory Minute June 18 1847* (660) XLV, sect 8.
90 *Life*, p144.
91 *Life*, p144.
It is very important also to bear in mind, that it is just in proportion as the alarm and disapproval of the Church is openly and generally declared, as well by individual Churchmen as through the Diocesan Boards of Education, that there will be a reasonable hope of persuading the State to retrace her steps.  

Attacking the Committee of Council on Education

Without an active Convocation in 1847, Denison resorted to the National Society both as a representative body, and an organization where he could secure a public platform. The 1847 annual meeting of the National Society was the occasion when Denison first sought to bring matters to a head. He told the meeting the intention of the Committee of Council on Education was ‘to force their way into the Church schools’.  

Denison was critical of the Committee of the National Society, declaring that it was a matter of regret that they had not been open in their proceedings and had become ‘mixed up’ with the management clauses.  

Loud cheers greeted Denison’s assertion that once the principle of internal interference was admitted, ‘you will establish the principle of Government interference upon a basis which you will find utterly impossible to shake off’.  

Christopher Wordsworth, seconding Denison, was more tactful, but equally condemnatory of the position in which the Church found itself in its relations with the Privy Council: ‘I do with great deference to your Grace, humbly consider that the present question is this; whether we shall have in this country a civil minister of public instruction, or no’.  

Wordsworth, however, was equally adamant in rejecting the assertions of the committee of council to dictate terms to Church schools:

I cannot help saying that I think it is a great pity that this Society should be about to affirm, either directly or indirectly, that it shall

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92 Church schools and state interference, etc, p27.
93 National Society, Minutes of the Annual Meeting 1847, p98.
94 Ibid, p120f
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid, p146.
be in the power of an irresponsible board, or it may be of an individual to dictate laws to the Church.  

The bishops recognized the dangerous nature of Denison’s motion should it be supported by the meeting, as the National Society would as a consequence openly declare itself opposed to the government. Samuel Wilberforce was deputed to deal with Denison. The bishop denied the government had motives of the kind ascribed to them, despite appearances. In an exercise in obfuscation, Wilberforce told the meeting that he gave Lord Lansdowne, president of the Privy Council, ‘credit all the time for meaning altogether from what these things made his meaning appear’.  

On this occasion, the bishops managed to deflect Denison.

Denison’s campaign to arouse public opinion was greatly assisted in the months following the National Society’s annual meeting, because the issue had seized the attention of some of the High Church press. Correspondence in 1846 between the Committee of the National Society and the Privy Council was published 28 June, a few weeks after the annual meeting, and showed the National Society to have been compromised by their negotiation with Kay-Shuttleworth. The society had failed to establish a definitive wording of the management clauses before signalling their qualified assent. The society, in its desire to co-operate with the Privy Council, had been relegated to a subordinate position by Kay-Shuttleworth’s superior negotiating technique. This was reflected in the language, whereby the National Society’s proposal were read as ‘suggestions’ to be accepted or rejected by the committee of council. The fact was that the Committee of the National Society had

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97 Ibid, p147.  
98 National Society, Minutes of the Annual Meeting 1847, p167.  
99 The Rev W J Kennedy had written 12 May 1846 to state that the Committee of the National Society had considered the management clauses A, B, C, and D, and were prepared ‘to concur with the Committee of Council in recommending the above clauses to applicants for grants, it being understood that applicants may select the clause most adapted to their own case’. Explanatory Minute June 28 1847 (660) XLV, p14. In his reply, Kay-Shuttleworth ignored the National Society’s qualification of their assent, merely asserting: ‘My Lords are therefore desirous that the Committee of the National Society are prepared to employ their influence with the promoters of parochial schools on all occasions, to promote the adoption of the clauses relating to the management of schools, on the approval of which they have in a letter of the 12th May, declared their concurrence with the Committee of Council on Education.’ Ibid, p14.
agreed to promote the management clauses with the proviso that promoters had liberty of choice as formerly.\textsuperscript{100} This proviso was rehearsed again in Archbishop Howley’s letter to Kay-Shuttleworth.\textsuperscript{101} This qualification was again ignored by Kay-Shuttleworth.

The new dispensation only gradually manifested itself when clergy made applications for grants in the course of 1847, as Kay-Shuttleworth treated with individual clergy. ‘\textit{Divide et impera} is the present motto, the whole country clergy are to be vanquished by a series of single combats with the GOLIAH of education, Dr Kay-Shuttleworth’ was the \textit{Guardian’s} characterization of Kay-Shuttleworth’s method.\textsuperscript{102} The consequence of Kay-Shuttleworth’s tactics in his dealings with clergy was that he undermined the positive expectations held by Churchmen and prompted feelings of resentment. The \textit{Guardian} concluded Kay-Shuttleworth’s object to be ‘that of placing the education of the country in the hands of a state minister – that is to say his own’.\textsuperscript{103}

There is no violence, no coup de main, – everything is done easily, quietly, with a reasonable art and much civility ... Yet somehow or other it is not possible to get rid of the feeling that the system and its masters are shaking themselves into order of battle. We cannot help reading a new Educational Minute with the suspicion that, among the bundle of decisions of which it is composed, some enroachment is commenced or consummated, some lever planted or mine laid. And, even if we see no mischief, we are half inclined to suspect that it must be our own stupidity, and that Dr Kay-Shuttleworth is enjoying a quiet laugh in his sleeve at our expense.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{100} Kennedy to Kay-Shuttleworth 12 May 1846 \textit{Ibid}, p14.
\textsuperscript{101} Archbishop Howley to Kay-Shuttleworth 29 September 1846. \textit{Ibid}, p14f.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Guardian}, 7 July 1847, p425.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{ibid}, p504.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid}. p504.
Suspicion and resentment erupted at the 1848 annual meeting of the National Society.\textsuperscript{105} The customary motion to accept the society’s annual report was amended, and became, in effect, a vote of censure upon the society’s committee. At the meeting Denison argued that the issue of the management clauses – the question of the admission or the exclusion of the laity to the management of Church schools – was a red-herring.\textsuperscript{106} He argued that the clauses were not necessary to ensure the legal trusts of schools, and government inspection provided the means to ensure official grants were properly spent.\textsuperscript{107} He saw as inequitable that the committee of council required of Church of England schools what was not required of schools maintained by the Roman Catholics or the Wesleyans. Denison had no difficulty with the grant being made to these bodies under different terms, but argued the lack of justice when similar terms were not made available to the Church. ‘Why then, we ask, should the grant be withheld, from, for want of better expression, we will call “High Church” schools, because they are “High Church”? We want simple and equal justice.’\textsuperscript{108} This demand for equal treatment by the committee of council – that the Church be treated in ways parallel to those which had been afforded to Nonconformist bodies and the Roman Catholics, was the essence of Denison’s case. Christopher Wordsworth, who again seconded Denison, was, if anything, more blunt than Denison as regards the power of the committee of council and its intention to circumscribe Church teaching. He told the meeting it was quite apparent that ‘every effort has been made, short of direct interference, to procure a rescinding of the rule of the National Society, by which the scholars are required to learn the Church Catechism and to attend church on Sundays: that these efforts had been almost successful’.\textsuperscript{109}

The 1848 annual meeting was potentially dangerous. A revolt against the National Society’s committee by a significant proportion of the subscribing members laid open the possibility of a schism in the society. Equally, refusal to accept the

\textsuperscript{105} G W to the Editor of the \textit{Guardian}, 14 June 1848, p387.
\textsuperscript{106} G A Denison to the Editor of the \textit{Guardian}, 23 August 1848, p547.
\textsuperscript{107} G A Denison to the Editor of the \textit{Guardian}, 2 September 1848, p578.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Guardian} 14 June 1848, p384.
committee’s annual report amounted to a censure of the episcopal bench who were *ex officio* members of the society’s committee, as it would also appear as censure of the line adopted by the society’s committee’s in its negotiation with the Privy Council, and thus a declaration of open rupture with the government. Wilberforce had to deal with the subscribers’ manifest dissatisfaction with the Committee of the National Society. He acknowledged the meeting ‘shewed a wide spread and intense dissatisfaction with the Government, and specially with Mr Kay Shuttleworth’.

Privately, Wilberforce shared the views which he attributed to the clergy, notwithstanding his reassurances made at the annual meeting of the National Society the previous year. This private view he confided in correspondence with Henry Phillpotts. Wilberforce told the Bishop of Exeter he believed there was a case for management clauses in order to enshrine fixed and secure conditions for the protection of the Church. Wilberforce thought this would protect the clergy from ‘their simplicity and Shuttleworth’s subtlety’. At the annual meeting, however, Wilberforce, was obliged to defend the record of the society’s committee, and disclaim any idea that the committee had purposed to betray the Church’s interests, and declared the committee’s intention of maintaining those interests.

This meant the Committee of the National Society would need to re-open negotiations with the Committee of Council on Education, and it was with this in view that matters were left at the end of the 1848 annual meeting. In correspondence conducted the following month, the society’s committee attempted to secure a fixed definition of the conditions of grants made by the committee of council. However, the resumption of negotiation demonstrated the effectiveness of Kay-Shuttleworth’s tactics. The exchanges did not enter at all on matters of principle, particularly as regards the alteration of principles agreed in

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112 Committee of the National Society 5 July 1848, published in the *Guardian* 10 July 1849, p29.
1840. Rather negotiations were confined to detail, and conducted on Kay-Shuttleworth’s terms, as they had been previously, as to whether the several details raised would, or, would not, be allowed by ‘their Lordships’.113

The problem for Denison essaying to use the National Society to regain ground and re-establish the principles of 1840 was the nature of the National Society’s committee, which was a self-perpetuating oligarchy with close ties to the Privy Council. The committee comprised the Archbishop of Canterbury as ex officio president, the Archbishop of York and the diocesan bishops ex officio: there were besides ten laymen of Privy Council rank who were vice-presidents – their places on the committee being filled by themselves. Lastly there were sixteen elected members rotating every three years, but eligible for re-election. The choice of these candidates, however, was made by the archbishop, and presented to the subscribers at the annual meeting. The opportunity to express an opinion on these candidates at an annual meeting was the only power able to be exercised by ordinary subscribing members. Denison’s tactic of using the forum of the National Society’s annual meetings as a focus to arouse the opinion of Churchmen was in some measure successful. But it was almost impossible to prosecute executive action through such a committee. The National Society’s committee was by its make-up difficult to assemble, poor at negotiating, and, as a body, disposed to adopt a conciliatory attitude to the Privy Council’s Committee on Education.

This last characteristic saw the National Society’s negotiations conducted on Kay-Shuttleworth’s terms, and this was an inherent weakness for Churchmen’s protests against the committee of council conducted through the agency of the National Society. This was noticed in the Bristol Church Union. Denison and his allies

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113 See, for example, Kay-Shuttleworth to the Archbishop of Canterbury 30 August 1848. ‘My Lord Archbishop, The Lord President of the Council has brought the letter signed by your Grace as President of the National Society, and dated August 12, under the consideration of the Committee of Council on Education. ... Their Lordships intention ... my Lords have modified this clause as follows ... On these grounds their Lordships must finally declare that they cannot allow, etc.’ Letter reproduced in History and present state of the education question, 1850. p44f.
analysed in considerable detail the state of the negotiations with Kay-Shuttleworth. *Inter alia,* it was noted that unsatisfactory response had been given to the National Society’s condition with regard to i) freedom of choice for promoters of schools respecting the constitution;\(^{114}\) ii) the proposal that clergymen had the moral and religious superintendence of a school;\(^{115}\) and iii) the proposal that appeals should be to the respective diocesan bishops.\(^{116}\) The denial of these points suggested a shift of control from the school promoters to the committee of council, a shift which Kay-Shuttleworth justified on the grounds of the State’s financial contribution: but a justification which ignored the larger proportion contributed voluntarily.\(^{117}\) The Bristol Union prepared a memorial to the Committee of the National Society, and a form of petition to the Lords calling for Parliament to dispense with management clauses, and allow grants be made on condition of a trust to secure the school site and government inspection under the arrangements made in 1840.\(^{118}\)

By January 1849, Denison had concluded that given the difficulties negotiating with Kay-Shuttleworth, the National Society should turn to Parliament for a settlement of the differences between itself and the Privy Council. He wanted a special general meeting of the National Society to define the grounds of an appeal to the legislature, and to give that appeal some public force. ‘No such basis exists in the present case: not can it be constructed without a public discussion; nor ascertained and fixed without a vote of a general meeting.’\(^ {119}\) However, the committee of the National Society would not openly discuss the ‘present relations between the

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\(^{114}\) The Bristol Church Union noted that the National Society had asked ‘That a free choice be left to the Promoters of schools amongst the different Management Clauses’. Instead clauses were prescribed by Downing Street. *Ibid*, p40ff.

\(^{115}\) This was met with a qualified concession that clergy might have superintendence of the moral and religious instruction of the scholars. *Ibid*, p40.

\(^{116}\) Appeals to the ordinary were refused. *Ibid*, p44.

\(^{117}\) ‘Their Lordships must finally declare that they cannot consent to permit the permanent Constitution of the school, in so important a matter as the establishment of an appeal to the Bishop of the Diocese in matters not relating to Religious instruction, to be determined by the local subscribers to Schools, to the establishment and support of which it is now provided that the State should so largely contribute.’ 30 August 1848. *Ibid*, p44.

\(^{118}\) *Ibid*, p47f.

\(^{119}\) G A Denison to Sinclair, 1 January 1849, reproduced in the *Guardian*, 17 January 1849, p41.
Committee of the Society and the Committee of Council on Education’.  

Archbishop Sumner, having succeeded the aged Howley who had died 11 February 1848, declined to call such a meeting. 

Denison defined a ‘Church school’ as one ‘which is so constituted and administered that effective control and management of *in all respects*, is in the hands of the clergyman of the parish, subject to appeal to the bishop’. Denison and his allies continued to work on the matter in the Bristol Union, and in 1849 published their position at some length as a pamphlet. 

Having failed to secure a special meeting the engagement resumed at the 1849 annual meeting of the National Society on the sixth of June. Denison’s resolution acknowledged the right of the State to demand security of tenure in return for grant assistance, but condemned any other condition the State might impose as a right. In essence, he continued to seek a return to the *status quo ante* – the agreement under the 1840 Concordat. Denison told the meeting that the Privy Council had adopted plenary power to determine the composition of the membership of parochial school management committees. This he saw as an attempt to ‘substitute for her old parochial system of schools’ an altogether

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120 Sinclair to Denison, 11 January 1849, reproduced in the *Guardian*, 17 January 1849, p42.
121 Archbishop Sumner to Denison reproduced in *The English Churchman*, Vol VII (314) 4 January 1849, p132. Sumner, while cognizant of the issues, had a more positive view of the negotiations: ‘In the early stages of correspondence, the Committee of Council manifested a ready disposition to accede to the difference, which were in consequence adjusted.’ The archbishop, therefore, remained confident: ‘And we may confidently rely on the continuance of a similar disposition with respect to other points, where the reason of the case can be made apparent, and conclusively established.’ J B Sumner, *Charge delivered to the clergy of the Diocese of Canterbury in 1849 at his primary visitation 1849*, p11.
122 *Guardian*, 28 February 1849, p144.
123 *The Church of England, and the Committee of Council on Education: what are the National Society and all other members of the Church of England to appeal to Parliament? A letter addressed, by permission, to the Hon and Rt Rev Richard, Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells ... With an appendix, containing the report a memorial of the Church and Union assembling at Bristol. 1849*. A second edition was published the same year.
124 ‘That it is the opinion of this meeting that no arrangement which shall involve the compulsory imposition of any Management Clause whatsoever, as a condition of State assistance, or of any condition whatsoever, except the legal tenure of the site, or the right of inspection, as defined and ascertained in 1840, can be satisfactory to, or ought to be accepted by the Church.’ Denison’s resolution reproduced in *History and present state of the Education Question*. 1850, p60.
different system ‘which had no distinct Church character’. He reiterated his earlier appeal to stand by the founding origins and purposes of the National Society. Again, Christopher Wordsworth seconded Denison, speaking against the compulsory imposition of the management clauses as in effect ‘legislative clauses’ imposed by the committee of council ‘assuming to themselves most unconstitutional powers’.

Rejecting the management clauses in any form, except to allow for security of tenure and inspection on the basis of the 1840 concordat, Denison and Wordsworth’s resolution was an outright rebuttal of the education committee’s claim to impose quasi-legislative conditions on the Church. Again, as in the previous year, Denison’s motion, if it were voted by the meeting, constituted an open and declared crisis of confidence in the society’s committee, as well as making a declaration of a very public difference between Churchmen and the government. Both Denison and Wordsworth recognized this. Wordsworth considered that the Church did not owe blind loyalty to the State, as the State should not ‘profanely meddle with the duty of the Church; but must enable, assist, and encourage the Church to do its own work in its own way’. He maintained an old-fashioned orthodox view of the usefulness of the Church to the State, arguing that it was ‘National Education’ that had kept the country from revolution, when ‘Europe had been convulsed’, a subject on which he had preached and published a pamphlet. An expression of Anglican orthodoxy, that appealed an as antidote to revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, continued to be relevant as Wordsworth considered revolution that spread across Europe in 1848, and in France the monarchy overthrown. In England the country faced the uncertainty of Chartist agitation

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125 Ibid, p61.
126 Ibid, p61f.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid, p64. See Christopher Wordsworth, National warnings on national education: a sermon preached in aid of the parochial schools at the Parish Church of South Hackney. 1848.
129 Brougham was astonished hearing of the large number of children involved in the continental demonstrations and riots. A letter to the Marquess of Lansdowne ... on the late revolutions in France. 1848, p93.
with enormous demonstrations and unrest, and the threat of the overthrow of Parliament and its replacement with a national assembly.

The Bishop of Chichester’s contribution to the meeting expressed the fears of the bishops. He did not believe the National Society’s committee could ignore Denison’s resolution if it was adopted by their ‘constituency’. If this happened they would alienate support in the parliament and would be a ‘fatal step’. He did not believe ‘the time had yet come’, when in the cause of the Church and education they should place themselves ‘in collision with the State’. In the event, Archdeacon Manning amended the motion to achieve a more conciliatory tone. This was adopted by the meeting with Denison’s concurrence. Denison believed he had established his and Wordsworth’s argument that the Church should have liberty to constitute her schools on her own principles, and when desired by founders to be under the supervision of the clergy and diocesan bishops. However, Manning’s amendment stepped back from confronting Kay-Shuttleworth’s ascendant position in the negotiations with the education committee. Thus, as Denison came to realize, his whole position was lost, as the assertion of Church principles was dependant upon re-establishing the position of the Church with respect to its relative standing with the secretary of the Privy Council Committee on Education.

In the aftermath of the 1849 annual meeting, Gladstone, having been present, wrote to Wordsworth giving support to the view that there were some grounds for believing the Church had been less than well treated. He declared: ‘though far from

\[\text{130 Ibid, p70.}\]
\[\text{131 Denison believed the amendment was conceived by his brother, Edward Denison, and Samuel Wilberforce. Life, p170.}\]
\[\text{132 ‘That this meeting acknowledges the care and attention of the Committee in conducting the correspondence still pending with the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, and regrets to find that a satisfactory conclusion has not yet been attained.’}\]
\[\text{‘Secondly, That while this meeting desires fully to co-operate with the State in promoting the education of the people, it is under the necessity of declaring, that no terms of co-operation can be satisfactory which shall not allow to the clergy and laity full freedom to constitute schools upon such principles and models as are fully sanctioned and commended by the order and practice of the Church of England; and, in particular, where they shall so desire it, to put the management of their schools solely in the clergyman of the parish and the bishop of the diocese.’ History and present state of the Education Question, p68f.}\]
being a Denisonian (however, he respected his honesty and firmness of purpose)’ [Gladstone’s gloss] he felt there was much reason in Wordsworth’s view of the danger to the Church ‘from the want of publicity with regard to her grievances in dealings with the Privy Council’. 133 This left open the question as to how and in what way the Church might air those grievances. Denison was intent upon taking matters to Parliament. Gladstone, however, did not share the view held by Denison and those like him, lay and clerical, who held out for a settlement by the legislature. Gladstone’s sense was that the best practical settlement was if the matter could be resolved between the government and the National Society, rather than come into Parliament. 134 There were others also, who, although dissatisfied with the education committee, hesitated to go along with Denison’s scheme of appealing to the legislature. Wordsworth wrote to Denison stating there were voices favouring further action in the National Society, suggesting that the consequence of going outside the Society would be considerable divisions. 135

However, dissatisfaction with the position in which the National Society found itself in its relations with the Committee of Council was not easily suppressed. The day following the National Society’s annual meeting, a committee was formed by the Metropolitan Union to follow the course of correspondence between the National Society and the committee of council. 136 Denison joined a group that was constituted by some seventy-six High Church clergy and laity, and included names with connections to the Hackney Phalanx and founders of the National Society. Amongst these was one of the founders – the Rev H H Norris, but also Archdeacon Churton, who was associated with the Hackney Phalanx and Joshua Watson’s biographer, the Rev Alexander Watson. William Palmer was also a member, as was John Keble. 137 Dr Spry wrote, on behalf of this committee, to the secretary of the National Society, expressing the firm view that the committee of the National Society should maintain the principles on the basis of which the National Society

133 W E Gladstone to Christopher Wordsworth Jnr, 12 July 1849, Lambeth Palace Library MS 2148 (72).
134 Ibid.
135 Wordsworth to Denison, 24 August 1849, Lambeth palace Library, MS 2144 (55).
136 History and present state of the education question, p72.
137 Ibid, p72f.
had been founded and incorporated. Spry expressed concern with the society’s committee, and its ability to deal in a business-like manner with Kay-Shuttleworth. For it was noted that the society’s committee was not due to meet for another six months, meanwhile ‘the Committee of Council on Education was concerting its measures privately, executing them silently and secretly’. Spry noted the Committee of Council had declined the society’s request that management clauses originally agreed to recommend be now adopted, and that provision should be made for appeals to respective diocesan bishops. Spry therefore asked Lonsdale whether, in view of its charter, the committee of the National Society would ‘now continue to recommend the management clauses?’

Outside of the metropolis, Denison was also active in his diocese. At the annual meeting of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Societies, Denison continued his absolute objection to the Privy Council’s interference in Church schools. In his speech at Bath and Wells, he again rehearsed his disquiet with the negotiations between the committee of council and the Committee of the National Society based on the society seeking concessions, as this ‘implied an assumption, and an admission of a right to interference with the internal regulation of Church schools, which is the very thing that cannot be admitted’. The encroachment by Kay-Shuttleworth was, in Denison’s view, so sweeping that the secretary could afford concessions as he had left himself a wide margin.

In a more profound sense Denison’s stance was informed by his perception that there was ‘animus towards the Church’: one that would eventually destroy her as a Church and perhaps as an establishment. He believed there was, at root, an anti-

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138 Dr Spry to the Rev J G Lonsdale 6 November 1849 reproduced in History and present state of the education question, p74.
139 Ibid, p76.
140 Ibid, p87.
141 Ibid, p87.
142 Ibid, p87.
Christian element in the policies of the Education Committee.\textsuperscript{143} His chief fear was that the intrusion by the Committee of Council would subvert the character of Church schools \textit{qua} Church schools. This he saw to be inherent in the management clauses because they allowed as managers of Church schools those who were not Churchmen, and had, furthermore, given the managers the right to appoint teachers rather than allowing this power to the parish clergyman, and denied the avenue of appeal in matters such as the conduct of teachers to diocesan bishops.\textsuperscript{144} Significantly, however, Denison did not ascribe the introduction of the management clauses as some thought ‘merely to the trickery of a secretary, or even the falsification of pledges by a Government department’. Rather he thought the changes rested on politics – a change of attitude regarding education in the upper levels of the government that permitted the Church to be subject ‘to the whims and adroitness of a secretary’.\textsuperscript{145} That is to say, he believed the alterations to the agreement made with the Church in 1840 owed as much to politicians as they did to the artifices of Kay-Shuttleworth.

By this stage, Denison had, with regard to his own parish school, made up his mind to sever any connection with the Privy Council. ‘I have refused to allow the committee of council to lay so much as their little finger upon the East Brent school. I have been compelled to close the door of the school to the Government inspector.’\textsuperscript{146} Notwithstanding his humorous account in his autobiography of his threat to have his boys cast the inspector into the pond if he called again to inspect the East Brent school,\textsuperscript{147} Denison appreciated the work of the inspectors as he stated at the 1847 annual meeting of the National Society.\textsuperscript{148} Given the difficulties

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  \item \textsuperscript{143} One of Denison’s Bath and Wells colleagues, Prebendary Clarke, described the attitude of the Committee of Council on Education towards the doctrines and disciple of the Church as ‘only tolerated with a niggardly sufferance’. \textit{Ibid}, p99.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid}, p89.
  \item \textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid}, p89.
  \item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{Ibid}, p96f.
  \item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid}.
  \item \textsuperscript{148} Denison stated at the 1847 meeting: ‘My resolution, as many seem to suppose, does not go to impugn the inspection of the Government: I am glad of it because I think it better than diocesan inspection. We are safe in their hands. They are bound not interfere with religious teaching.’ National Society Annual Meeting 1847 p113f.
\end{itemize}
of funding schools, Denison was less than practical when he now promoted the idea that Churchmen should declare their independence of the Privy Council committee, declining their grants and establishing instead a ‘Church Education Fund’. Apart from the impracticality of the idea, his pamphlet extolling this idea was cast in high blown language – ‘counteracting the evil effects and tendencies of the system of the Committee of the Privy Council’. Indulgence of this nature did little to persuade and suggested extremism. However, Denison looked to draw a line in the sand as he believed the negotiations between the Committee of the National Society and the Privy Council were bound to fail:

Negotiations, which in my judgment should have never been begun at all, have been brought to a final close. That is, as might be expected from the whole character of these negotiations, the final rejection on the part of the Committee of Council, of the demand for liberty of founders of Church schools seeking State assistance.\(^{150}\)

He remained convinced that the National Society had entered upon negotiations with the committee of the Privy Council on the wrong basis, comprehensively failing to address the principle at issue:

If it were details that we were fighting about, it would be another matter: but it is not details, but great and sacred principles: it is upholding the office of the ministry of the Church, as charged by God with the responsibility of educating the people. It is the defence of the formularies of the faith: of the Creeds of the Church Catholic, and of the Catechism of the Church of England.\(^{151}\)

As Denison had come to see, the difficulties negotiating with the Committee of Council on Education were insurmountable. In a letter to Lonsdale,\(^{152}\) Denison observed that the Education Committee had simply ignored what the National

\(^{149}\) G A Denison, *Church education. The present state of the Management Clause Question, with a proposal for meeting and counteracting the evil effects and tendencies of the system of the Committee of Council on Education, by the establishment of a Church Education Fund.* 1849.

\(^{150}\) Ibid, p96

\(^{151}\) Ibid, p96.

\(^{152}\) Rev John Gilby Lonsdale succeeded Sinclair as secretary in 1849. *Crockfords.*
Society was asking.\textsuperscript{153} The committee of the National Society could not bring about a consideration of principle, and had failed in its negotiation to reverse Kay-Shuttleworth’s earlier success turning the society’s ‘recommendation’ of management clauses into a ‘compulsory’ condition, ignoring the Society’s qualifications. The society’s failure was plainly manifest by the contents of a letter dated 11 December 1849 terminating further correspondence with Downing Street on the matter of the management clauses, and stating the committee of the National Society had reverted to its original position, and would vote grants in accordance with its charter. It would not therefore recommend any of Kay-Shuttleworth’s management clauses.\textsuperscript{154} There was, however, also a casualty at Downing Street. Kay-Shuttleworth, ill and worn out by work, offered his resignation. His departure from office was a drawn out affair. He went abroad in May, but in expectation that he might resume his duties later in the year. However, he was not, as Selleck has noted in his biography of Kay-Shuttleworth, encouraged to stay – his severance from the Privy Council Committee was paid for by a baronetcy.\textsuperscript{155} In a number of respects he had come to be seen a liability – a matter which will be considered in the conclusion of this chapter. It was, therefore to Kay-Shuttleworth’s successor, R R W Lingen, that Lonsdale addressed his letter.\textsuperscript{156}

The society, Lonsdale wrote, had entered into negotiations in an earnest desire ‘to act in concert with their Lordships; and to secure this end were ready to acquiesce in any measure consistent with the principle which they have always maintained, that local views and feelings are to be studiously consulted’.\textsuperscript{157} This, broadly, was the argument advanced by Denison. But Denison was correct in his perception – the society had been outmanoeuvred. In its desire to co-operate it been obliged to accept subordinate position its relations with the Committee of Council on

\textsuperscript{153} Denison to Lonsdale, reproduced in \textit{The English Churchman}, Vol VII (350), 13 September 1849, p586.
\textsuperscript{154} John G Lonsdale to R R W Lingen, 11 December 1849. Reproduced in \textit{History and present state of the education question}, p58.
\textsuperscript{156} Lingen’s official appointment dated from 8 January 1850. \textit{Ibid}, p255.
\textsuperscript{157} John G Lonsdale to R W Lingen. Reproduced in \textit{History and present state of the education question}, p58.
Education. Lonsdale’s letter manifested the dilemma in which the National Society was placed:

But since the Committee [of the National Society] now find, to their deep regret and disappointment, that if they are to cooperate with their Lordships in constituting school-trusts, they must be prepared to set aside the general principle of local freedom, and to treat the proposed Clauses as indispensable to the efficiency of Church schools, they consider themselves under the necessity of resuming their original position. Leaving to the Legislature the settlement of the terms on which the Parliamentary vote shall be distributed, they see no other course for themselves, under existing circumstances, than to continue to vote grants according to the Charter of the Society, and without joining in any recommendation of the Management Clauses, to leave the promoters of schools either to adopt, or to decline the proposed Government Clauses, provided they constitute their schools in a manner consistent with the Society’s terms of union.\footnote{Ibid, p58f.}

The battle with the Committee of Council was lost. Prompted by the failure of the society’s negotiation, some twelve hundred clergy and laity met in the Willis’ Rooms in February 1850 to consider the future course. Denison joined the meeting. The principal matter for consideration was the relation of the Church with the State brought into question by the powers exercised by the Privy Council Committee on Education.\footnote{Guardian, 8 February 1850, p79.} J C Talbot, chairing the meeting, was critical of the legislative powers assumed by the committee.\footnote{[They] ‘have taken upon themselves that power which was not given to them – I mean the power for legislating (for in effect it comes to that) on the management and constitution, then necessarily on the teaching and doctrine inculcated in those schools’. Ibid.} Richard Cavendish spoke to the constitutional issue raised by the Committee of Council on Education. He attacked the attempt ‘to represent the whole question as one between the clergy and the laity, and not, as the truth in fact is, a question between the Church and the State’. Equally Cavendish denied the dispute was ‘wrangling about these petty details’.\footnote{Ibid.} The Bishop of Chichester, Ashurst Gilbert, taking a stronger line than that which he had adopted in

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Ibid, p58f.}
  \item \footnote{Guardian, 8 February 1850, p79.}
  \item \footnote{[They] ‘have taken upon themselves that power which was not given to them – I mean the power for legislating (for in effect it comes to that) on the management and constitution, then necessarily on the teaching and doctrine inculcated in those schools’. Ibid.}
  \item \footnote{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
the 1849 National Society meeting, took up the issue of the Privy Councils refusal to
treat with the Church in the matter of the management clauses on the same basis
as they had the Dissenters. The bishop told the meeting that he had attended
because he believed they ought to look for justice and fair treatment. The MP,
Joseph Napier, drew attention to the difference between the character of
Dissenting opinion and the nature of Church and its canonical discipline. Napier
pointed out that in the matter of education, the Church’s position was not like that
of the Dissenters, who could say, ‘when I can satisfy my own customers, the case is
complete so far as I am concerned’.

Received with much cheering, Denison’s address pointed to the great work that was
being done in the revival of the Church. ‘We have, it would seem, advanced in many
things. Schools and churches are being built rapidly both by private benefice and
combined public efforts.’ Denison had already shown that his stance on the
Education Question was determined by the orthodox emphasis upon the
significance of doctrine. On this occasion, however, the differences with the Privy
Council were coupled with the developments over the Gorham controversy. The
breach made in the baptismal doctrine of regeneration bore upon the question of
the relation of the Church to the State, and in turn upon the foundation of Church
schooling. And here lay the rub for Denison – ‘with my finger upon the Catechism
and the Office of Baptism that all Church education depends and flows from, the

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162 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p82. ‘I doubt not the upright intentions on the part of the Committee of the
Privy Council – but they still are Minutes which I say are partly considered arbitrary, insomuch as they do not,
whatever their intentions may have been, regard equally claims of all parties. ... But when I see – and it is not
difficult to point out the manner – when I see that the principles of the Church of England are not admitted
with reference to the schools, then I say that the administration of these funds are not true to the principle of
regard to religious tenets, and of admitting all to the participation on their own religious grounds which they
profess.’ Ibid, p82.

163 ‘We should show the public and the nation at large, as well as to the Committee of the Privy Council, and
those who are able to assist us in vindicating our just claims and fair rights, that we do at this time feel we
have not been fairly dealt with on those principles of fairness, of equal rights and justice, to which the Church
of England is at least equally entitled with every other portion of her Majesty’s subjects.’ Guardian,
8 February 1850, p82.

164 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p79. Sir Joseph Napier (1804-1882) was an MP, who represented Trinity
College Dublin. [cf his pamphlet England or Rome: which shall govern Ireland, opposing the introduction of
Roman episcopacy in England. He held office in Derby’s administration as Lord Chancellor of Ireland. ODNB
165 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p80.
catholic doctrines of Regeneration in Baptism ... We have lived to see it called into question before a supreme court of appeal’. The Gorham judgment coupled with the State’s intervention in the management of Church schools seemed to Denison to threaten the Church home missionary work and the teaching of the faith. Denison asked:

Can we shut our eyes to the fact that there is the greatest danger, in the midst of what looks so hopeful, but these schools should subserve the purpose of State instruction, and not church education; lest our children should be brought up to worship, but not worship in ‘spirit and in truth’; lest schools and churches should alike witness the gradual undermining of Church teaching, and that which must surely wait upon it, the gradual disappearance, from among the people of this land, of the Catholic-faith, and the outpouring of Socinianism in its stead.

Denison saw the Committee of Council on Education as a party to the ideological pressures of indifferentism and Socinianism, and thus an inherent threat to the Church. In a moment of unreality, he told the meeting there could be no security for Church schools until the power and influence of the Committee of Council was ‘broken down and swept away’. The outcome of the meeting was that the matters should be raised in Parliament, the Bishop of Chichester stating he would pursue the issue of the Privy Council’s dealings with the Church in the House of Lords, and ask for an inquiry to be put in hand.

In Parliament on March 1850, Lord Stanley took up the issue of the Privy Council’s refusal to allow appeals to diocesan bishops, instancing a school which had been

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166 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p80.
167 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p79.
168 Denison saw the Committee as having assumed powers bypassing the legislature notwithstanding the conditions agreed in Parliament: ‘[I]t is rapidly assuming the attitude, and engrossing the functions of a Legislative Board of Public Instruction, in a manner hitherto unknown to the laws of the land, and at variance with the constitution; and thereby fully realizing the apprehensions which were expressed in Parliament in the year 1839, by eminent prelates and laymen of the Church, and which formed the subject of certain resolutions moved by his Grace, the late Archbishop of Canterbury and carried in the House of Lords by an overwhelming majority.’ Guardian, 8 February 1850, p80.
169 Guardian, 8 February 1850, p82.
denied a grant because they wanted to enshrine appeal to the bishop in their trust deed. Bishop Blomfield took up the matter, suggesting the time had come for the Lords to establish a select committee to inquire into the process whereby the Committee of Council on Education distributed grants, on the basis that this committee had been experimental, and it was timely to examine the results. The Whig administration was not, however, inclined to be forthcoming. Lord Lansdowne, President of the Council, denied there was any plan in the Privy Council Committee to prevent education from being connected with religion. Moreover, he declared that in a series of minutes there were regulations making ‘examination and instruction by the clergyman of the Church of England in the catechism and formularies of the Church of England an indispensable condition’.

1850 Headwinds:

Denison’s declining influence in the education debate

With no resolution to the Privy Council management clauses in Parliament, Denison turned once again to the National Society’s annual meeting. His resolution, seconded by his brother-in-law, Lord John Manners, proposed that the committee of the National Society should publish amended management clauses, and present them to the country as ‘clauses of which the Church approved’. Lord Harrowby, an early committee member of the National Society, declared that if the National Society were to do such a thing it would have ‘assumed a function of the Church with which we were not entrusted’. Denison motion was lost. By this stage there were conflicting views regarding Denison’s activism at the National Society meetings. The difficulty of Denson’s position was articulated by the Rev Henry

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170 The school was at Rockfield, Monmouthshire. Ibid, col 295.
171 Ibid, col 308f.
172 Guardian, 1 June 1850, p38f.
173 Dudley Ryder, 2nd Earl Harrowby (1798-1882), was MP for Tiverton 1819-31, and then of Liverpool 1831-47. He served in Grey’s administration, and that of Palmerston. Notwithstanding his Whig politics, he was a staunch defender of the Church of England. ODNB.
Hughes thought Denison’s motion contributed to the impression that the Church was ‘an impractical body in reference to the education question’ when it was impossible to secure its co-operation on ‘fast and reasonable terms’. The political consequence in Hughes’ opinion was that Churchmen were losing their influence in the eyes of statesmen. Nevertheless Hughes, as the Guardian pointed out, was amongst the substantial number, including Lord Harrowby and the liberal MP, William Page Wood, who continued to feel there was an injustice in the way the Church had been treated with respect to the management clauses.

By 1850, the Denison’s activism in the National Society, and his fight against the Committee of Council on Education was not only difficult to sustain, but was regarded with suspicion by those who were not High Churchmen. Denison’s army had fallen away after the earlier flushes of enthusiastic activism. Earlier alarm at, and suspicion of Kay-Shuttleworth’s less than straight-forward dealings had roused a great number of clergy, and this was manifest in the annual meetings of the National Society. In these circumstances Denison had attracted considerable support for several years. But with the passage of time it was difficult to sustain an army of activists. Moreover, the position Denison adopted – rigid wholesale opposition to the Committee of Council on Education in the face of failure to renegotiate satisfactory terms with the Privy Council – failed to sway more moderate opinion. If opposed to arbitrary extension of claims by the Committee of Council, many clergy were not prepared to support Denison’s now more extravagant position condemning all government engagement with popular education as ‘mischievous’. A practical viewpoint was represented by the moderate Evangelical Edward Girdlestone, who took a realpolitik view of the relation

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174 I have not been able to identify this clergyman. Two Henry Hughes appear in Crockfords: one rector of Layham, Suffolk; the other, perpetual curate of Haddenham, Isle of Ely.

175 Guardian, 1 June 1850, p387.

176 William Page Wood, 1st Baron Hatherley (1801-81) was a lawyer of Lincoln’s Inn, a staunch High Churchman, although liberal in politics. He was MP for Oxford 1847. Appointed vice-chancellor by Aberdeen in 1853, Wood served a chancery judge for many years, rising to become a Lord Justice of Appeal in 1868, and then Lord Chancellor in Gladstone’s administration. ODNB.

177 Guardian, 1 June 1850, p394.

178 Guardian, 7 May 1851, p851.
between the Church and the Committee of Council. Girdlestone recognized that while Churchmen could often raise funds to erect buildings when they established a school, the real difficult arose with the recurrent costs.  

A more radical view was taken by Richard Dawes, a Hampshire incumbent. Dawes considered the National Society, and many clergy, held old-fashioned social views and were out of step with the direction in which national education needed to be taken. Dawes took a positive view of the Privy Council Committee, believing it a force for good, improving standards and spreading elementary and middle-class education. Dawes held remarkably advanced views, but in certain respects he overlooked the realities of the day. The State, as Russell well knew, remained reliant on voluntaryism, and had neither the political will to finance, nor the administrative means to implement a universal education scheme throughout the country. Reliance on voluntaryist efforts was particularly marked in rural areas, as was seen in chapter three of this study. Dawes’ criticism of Denison, Manning, Wigram and Sinclair, overlooked the inconvenient fact that the Committee of Council itself, and particularly its secretary, had brought about tensions with Churchmen by introducing the management clauses in an underhand way, and had treated Church of England schools differently from other bodies such as the Roman Catholics and the Wesleyans.

But Denison’s extravagant language and position had damaged his cause. However, against Dawes’ views, there were other contemporary voices which suggest the perception Denison formed of the Committee of Council and Kay-Shuttleworth’s role was not unfounded. One such voice was that of Archdeacon Wigram. Wigram

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180 ‘The National Society, and perhaps a majority of the clergy, wish to introduce a system of education, which would establish in every parish a charity school for the education of the poor – a charity, at all events, as regards money matters, whatever it might be in other things – to make the face of the country ‘a net-work’ of schools on eleemosynary principles, keeping the labouring classes, in their education and habits formed in early life, entirely apart from the classes immediately above them.’ Richard Dawes, *Remarks occasioned by the present crusade against the educational plans of the Committee of Council on Education.* 1850, p8.
was well acquainted with the issues, having been secretary of the National Society from 1827 to 1839. Moreover, Wigram was no extreme High Churchman, but was more of an Evangelical persuasion, though he was clearly orthodox subscribing to Church principles. Wigram was critical of Kay-Shuttleworth’s dealings with the clergy, declaring him responsible for the ‘widespread feeling of uneasiness’ arising in 1847. Wigram revealed that at the outset the society had considered the management clauses a significant departure and argued that, in view of this, legislative sanction should be sought: ‘the previous sanction of the two Houses of Parliament shall be made requisite for every important step to be taken by any public authority in the matter of National Education’. He was condemnatory of the way Churchmen had been treated. ‘Surely the proceedings of our body have not made it needful that any other policy should be observed towards it, than is open and expressed.’ Agreeing with the principle of good management clauses, Wigram questioned Kay-Shuttleworth’s method of implementation, and the reasons behind his methods:

Admitting this as unquestionable, how strange it is that they who build on such reasoning [ie the necessity for effective management clauses], should actually have settled management clauses by private negotiations with individuals, before they were publicly made known; and when inquiry was made, should have defended the enforcement of them, by contending that they had been unostentatiously in operation for a length of time.

Within a few years of the outset of the controversy between the Society and the Committee in 1847, the dynamics of the controversy within the society were significantly affected by party differences, made more marked by the extended Gorham controversy. The Gorham controversy had festered since 1847, with a final

182 Wigram survived the politics of education, being appointed bishop of Rochester by Palmerston in 1860. Nigel Scotland has described Wigram ‘as a conscientious bishop of evangelical views’. ODNB.
183 J Wigram, A charge delivered to the clergy and churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of Winchester … 1849, p17.
184 Ibid, p17. Wigram took Kay-Shuttleworth to task for his special pleading: ‘aiding only’; of ‘respecting feelings’; and mere ‘suggestion of remedies’, as at complete variance with Kay-Shuttleworth’s dogmatic prescription of rules ‘which do violence to some men’s conscience, and of compulsory enforcement (on pain of forfeiting a public grant) of arrangements which had always been at the discretion of the parties concerned’. Ibid, p18
judgment on appeal in 1850. Party differences were also heightened by Newman’s conversion in 1845, and a series of secessions to Rome of disciples. Fear of Romeward tendencies were further fuelled by the introduction of a Roman hierarchy in 1850. With ant-Papist sensitivities heightened, Denison, as an active supporter of Bishop Phillpotts during the Gorham controversy, became identified with High Church sacramentalism, and perceived by some to be a Tractarian. Articles in the Church press critical of Denison and of the National Society appear in this period. Thus *The Church of England Quarterly Journal* represented Denison’s argument for the clergyman’s role in the parish school as a Roman principle, elevating the standing of the clergy above the laity, notwithstanding that Denison did not deny the role of the laity at many points during his career. ‘It is a direct repudiation of the truly Roman principle that the Church consists of the clergy alone, through a direct assertion of the claims of the laity to be assumed with the clergy in every good work.’ The journal pronounced against Denison and his supporters, and declared they ‘should not as heretofore have all their own way and continue their mischievous course of agitation against the civil power’, and called on Churchmen ‘of every shade of opinion not Tractarian’ to join together, and ‘to rescue the Society from the denomination of a Party’.

The issue of the management clauses was raised for a second time in Parliament in July 1850 with a memorial from the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Bath. This was met with dismissive asperity by Earl Grey. Grey claimed that the Committee of Council had the full support of clergy who did not share the views being expressed in the National Society. Grey denied an infringement of the rights of the clergy,

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185 *Ibid*, p199. *The Church of England Quarterly Review* was also critical of the Committee of the National Society as ‘censurers of Government measures of which they really approve, and approvers as appears of Romanizing practices which they really abhor.’ The latter was a reference to the appointment of Mr Daymore, ‘a condemned Romanizer of Brighton’ as the Journal described him, to fill the post of master at St Mark’s College. p197.


187 The memorial was presumed to have come from Denison. PD 3rd series, Vol 112, 1 July 1850, col 943.
stating ‘the Committee had the full concurrence of a portion of the clergy who did not enter into the views of the National Society’.\textsuperscript{188}

W P Wood did not consider Grey could justify a summary dismissal of the claims of the Church merely because he had cited the views of ‘some gentlemen entertaining strong views’. Wood considered there was substance to the complaints about the education committee’s imposition of the management clauses, and the fear entertained by those who contributed two thirds of the costs were being threatened with being deprived of control. ‘It was not reasonable that of the parties founding a school the party contributing one-third should claim to lay down all the management rules.’\textsuperscript{189} There were other conservative voices in Parliament expressing disquiet with the treatment of the Church. A number of those who spoke had been part of the meeting in the Willis Rooms. The MP for Somerset East, William Miles,\textsuperscript{190} was critical of the way management clauses had been introduced citing Archdeacon Sinclair’s opinion that ‘suspicion and distrust had been engendered by the proceedings of the Committee of Council’.\textsuperscript{191} Lord John Manners, MP for Colchester and C B Adderly, MP for Staffordshire, both argued that the treatment of the Church regarding the constitution of management clause should be negotiated on the same and equal basis as they had been in the case of other religious bodies. Manners objected to the infringement of Churchmen’s religious liberty, disregard for Churchmen’s consciences, the suggestion that clergy could not run schools efficiently: ‘Let them [the Committee of Council] do justice – even-handed justice – that as all he asked.’\textsuperscript{192}

Neither the MP, William Fox,\textsuperscript{193} nor Roundell Palmer\textsuperscript{194} could not see why the State did not allow liberty to promoters of schools and look for results, rather than

\textsuperscript{188} PD, 3rd Series, Vol 112, 1 July 1850, col 938.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, col 943f.
\textsuperscript{190} William Miles MP was of the Metropolitan Church Union Committee that met in 1849.
\textsuperscript{191} PD 3rd series, Vol 112, 1 July 1850, 936.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} William Johnson Fox (1786-1864) was MP for Oldham at various times 1847-1862. A good orator he
impose regulations. Denison’s father-in-law, Joseph Henley, concurred with Fox that the government ought to be concerned with results and not the character of trust deeds, and drew attention to an aspect which the management clause signally failed to address, namely the circumstances that obtained in many rural parishes:

The rules of Committee of the Privy Council worked particularly hard and unjustly in the case of small agricultural parishes, because under no circumstances could they avail themselves of the grants made in other places to masters, pupil teachers, and the other machinery that the Government had introduced. The children in these parishes went out to work so early, and the masters were of such inferior a class, arising from the slenderness of their emoluments, that the only advantage they could get from the grant was that which the Government used to afford them in the building of school-houses. Of this advantage they were, however, now debarred, because in many of these parishes there did not exist the materials to form a lay committee.

As has been observed earlier, Russell’s creation of the Privy Council Committee on Education had removed the controversial matter of popular education from Parliament. Fox’s proposals for further action to be taken by the state to promote popular education were assiduously avoided by the government. Russell’s position was that of compromise. He continued to tread a path whereby he indirectly acknowledged the political necessity of voluntaryism. Ewart’s and Fox’s proposal for a minister of education would have rocked the boat and drawn the

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194 Roundell Palmer (1812-1895) was at this time a Peelite Conservative. Later he served in Palmerston’s, Russell’s and Gladstone’s administrations.

195 Roundell Palmer *Ibid*, col 947. Fox argued from a liberal stand point: ‘He thought that the most perfect freedom of action should be conceded to those who in any way whatever attempted to promote the great object of the education of the poor. That all churches and all individuals who thus manifested their liberality should be free to make whatever regulations they pleased, and to manage their schools in whatever manner they thought best. The business of the State in its encouragement of them was to look to results, rather than to arrangements and management, and to extend its liberality in proportion as they showed themselves efficient in producing moral, useful and industrious members of society. He therefore thought no school ought to be excluded, because its founders thought fit to put it most entirely under ecclesiastical management.’ *Ibid*, col 948.


197 In February 1850, William Fox introduced a bill ‘to promote the secular education of the people of England and Wales’. PD 3rd series, Vol 109, 26 February 1850, col 27ff.
government into a political affray it would prefer to avoid, as well as bringing financial commitments Russell had previously indicated were unacceptable. In consequence Denison’s appeal to Parliament was a failure. The Whigs had no wish to have the ‘Education Question’ made a live issue, and Denison’s inability to convey his point in moderate and politically acceptable terms afforded the Whigs every ground to be dismissive and avoid debate. However, there were some conservative High Church parliamentarians, as well as some liberal Peelites who believed there was a case for an inquiry into the Committee of Council’s dealings over the management clauses. Such opinion in Parliament afforded Denison some prospect of a hearing should the government change.

Having already refused government assistance and inspection for his school, Denison took a further step in a declaration of independence by establishing his own school to train teachers. In an advertisement in the columns of the Guardian he outline his scheme for a training school with no connection to the Committee of Council on Education. He appealed for furniture, books, school apparatus, and funds to make alterations to his vicarage. He also asked for yearly subscriptions towards the salary of the master and his assistants, half the cost of the maintenance of twenty students and the wages of the servants. The middle school was opened in January 1852, the larger half of his vicarage having been converted to its use. He claimed the school ‘prospered exceedingly’. As a further declaration of independence under Bishop Bagot, Denison and his colleagues had established a system for examining teachers in the diocese and issued certificates of merit. Richard Dawes, who noted this development, observed that the merit certificates were unlikely to bring an augmentation of salary, but did commend Denison for not just complaining of the Privy Council Committee, but taking independent action.
The training school was, however, a short-lived enterprise. The expenses and distractions brought on by the legal action occasioned by his sermons on the real presence led the school to be closed in 1854.\textsuperscript{202} But Denison was not a lone figure attempting to establish a middle school. The \textit{Guardian}, for example, had drawn attention to the Rev Edward Monro’s agricultural college in his parish at Harrow Weald as a good example of a middle school.\textsuperscript{203}

The Manchester and Salford scheme

Having given up in the National Society after the failure of negotiations, Denison was drawn in 1851 to engage once again. This was occasioned by a scheme proposed in the Manchester and Salford area whereby schools would be erected and maintained with a local education rate. Under the scheme a conscience clause would be introduced allowing denominational religious education to be given at specified times, otherwise there were no denominational distinctions, a principle which applied also to the managers of the schools. The scheme was significant as having the potential to indicate the future direction of national education. As Richard Cobden suggested in a speech, what was determined in Manchester would determine ‘the kind of education which is likely to be adopted in this country’.\textsuperscript{204} Denison shared Cobden’s view believing the scheme could become the template for the whole country. Consequently, the scheme was opposed by Denison, partly because the teachers and lay managers of the Church schools involved in the scheme would not necessarily be communicant members of the Church; but his principal reason was that a ‘conscience clause’ was a central feature of the scheme. If Church schools were to accept a conscience clause, existing Church schools whose trusts included union with the National Society, would need to seek an agreement with the Society to amend the terms of union. Denison’s argued that any alteration

\textsuperscript{202} \textit{Life}, p180.
\textsuperscript{203} Edward Monro (1815-1866), an undergraduate Oriel 1833, was perpetual curate of Harrow Weald, Middlesex 1842-60, and vicar of St John’s, Leeds, 1860-66. \textit{ODNB}.
\textsuperscript{204} Richard Cobden, \textit{Speeches on questions of public policy}. 1870, Vol 2 [delivered 1 December 1851].

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of the terms of union would alter the character of Church schools as the object of
the National Society was to promote the education of the poor in the principles of
the Established Church. The Church schools wishing to join the scheme had
agreed on a resolution which would necessitate a relaxation of strict observance of
the terms of union:

That in all Church of England schools, we fell it imperatively our
duty to require, that the distinctive teaching of the Church of
England should be fully maintained with respect to those of her
communion; but it should in no such schools be obligatory, that
children of parents, not being in Church of England Communion,
receive other direct religious instruction, than that involved in the
daily reading of the Holy Scripture.

Looking at the effect of a conscience clause, Denison took up the issue of daily
reading of the Bible questioning ‘the vague idea’ that it exist as antecedent to, and
apart from doctrine. He believed that such reading of scriptures would be entirely
disconnected from any religious body or congregation. Redolent of Marsh’s and
Bowles’ argument forty years before, Denison saw this kind of approach as
reductionist – bringing Christianity into conformity with ‘the great moral, religious,
and intellectual panacea for the evils of our social state’. He argued it was the
Church’s role, shown in the Bible itself, to expound and interpret the scriptures.
William Entwistle, one of the Churchmen proposing the scheme, challenged
Denison to produce an extract of scripture to justify his assertion that teaching and
doctrine were inseparable. This challenge allowed Denison the opportunity to
demonstrate the connection. He chose the Sermon on the Mount as this raised the
question of the authority of the teacher, thus begging the question of the doctrine
of the person of Christ. Entwistle argued the Bible preceded doctrine and that there
were Christians in the world before the catechism. Denison granted this, but
responded that there were no Christians before the doctrine of Christ’s person, and

205 G A Denison, A reply to the committee of the promoters of the Manchester and Salford Education scheme. 1851, p iii f.
206 Ibid, cited by Denison p34.
207 The Church and the school, p4.
208 A reply to the committee of promoters, etc, p17. Cf the same point in The Church and the school, p4.
that is what the catechism delivered.\textsuperscript{209} Denison firmly believed that the Church could not separate the teaching of the scriptures and dogmatic teaching: ‘The Church knows of no education which is not based upon the doctrine of the Catholic Faith, and conducted throughout [Denison’s emphasis] with reference to those doctrines as supplying the principle of a Christian life.’\textsuperscript{210}

In the April 1851 edition of its monthly paper, the National Society published the terms for management clauses negotiated by the Roman Catholics with the Committee of Council on Education. Denison saw this as grounds for fresh hope that the terms of the management clauses might be revisited. There were close parallels between the Roman Catholic management clauses and ‘Clause D’ rarely allowed by the Committee of Council to the Church of England. There were, however, some differences. Under management clause ‘D’ for Church of England schools eligible members of a school committees, and the electors, were required to be resident property owners: there was no such restrictions for the Roman Catholics. By contrast, in the case of Roman Catholic schools, a bishop and his clergy were allowed to serve as sole managers. Further, the Roman Catholic’s clause enabled a priest to suspend a teacher, or excluded books from use in his parish school on religious grounds, and such determinations to endure until appeal from a superior authority was heard.\textsuperscript{211}

Denison believed Roman Catholics had succeeded where the Church of England had failed because they had stuck with their principles: ‘but having principles of their own, and refusing under any circumstances to compromise the whole, or any portion of them, they have beaten back her Majesty’s Government’ and thus acquired their own management clauses.\textsuperscript{212} With a sense of resignation Denison wrote to the \textit{Guardian}: ‘The Church of England has principles, no less than the

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid, p32.
\textsuperscript{210} The Church and the school, p17.
\textsuperscript{211} \textit{Guardian}, 24 April 1851, p295.
\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Guardian}, 9 April 1850, p264.
Church of Rome has, but making no stand, in her corporate capacity, in defence of her principles against the aggression of the State, the Church of England is, not undeservedly, the only victim.\textsuperscript{213} With the example of the success of the Roman Catholics, therefore, Denison raised the issue of the management clauses once again at the 1851 annual meeting with a resolution addressing the place of the clergy and diocesan bishop with respect to Church schools:

That the meeting deeply regret HM Government continue to disallow the equitable claim of members of the Church of England – as set forth in the resolution of the annual meeting of this society, June 6 1849 – that those founders of Church schools, who see fit to ‘place the management of their schools solely in the clergyman of the parish and the Bishop of the diocese’ should not on that account, be excluded from State assistance towards the building of their schools.\textsuperscript{214}

There were differences of opinion amongst Churchmen as to the wisdom of continuing to fight for alterations to the management clauses along Denison’s lines, arguing for the role of the clergyman in parish schools and the teaching of the catechism. The Oxford diocesan inspectors unanimously considered there was little point and it was unwise to support Denison’s argument for the role of the clergyman, given the overtones of ‘clericism’ and a suggestion of anti-lay sentiment, which was unnecessary given that lay managers were required to be communicants of three years standing.\textsuperscript{215} John Keble came to Denison’s defence pointing out the fact that the requirement lay managers be communicants of three years standing was a recent amendment, and did not appear in the original management clauses. Keble attributed the alteration to Denison. ‘We may reasonably conjecture, until we hear otherwise from unquestioned authority, that we are indebted for them to the movement in which Mr Denison has taken the lead.’\textsuperscript{216} That alteration alone, Keble

\textsuperscript{213} Guardian, 9 April 1850, p264.
\textsuperscript{214} Guardian, 16 April 1851, p283.
\textsuperscript{215} An Oxford Diocesan Inspector to the Editor of the Guardian 17 March 1852, p176f. The issue was covered extensively by the Rev R A Gordon, The Church’s claims and Archdeacon Denison’s resolution compared: A letter to the Lord Bishop of Oxford on the present state of the controversy over the Management Clauses of the Committee of the Privy Council. 1852.
\textsuperscript{216} John Keble to Editor, Guardian, 31 March 1852, p20.
considered, made the movement worthwhile.²¹⁷ Others did not consider Denison’s claim for place of the clergyman in the supervision of a Church stance necessarily implied the exclusion of the laity.²¹⁸ One writer drew attention to the efforts made by clergy, and the relatively larger burden they bore relative to the laymen’s contribution: ‘they [the clergy] seem disposed to make education (not merely catechizing, but secular education as joined with it, for they cannot now be separated), a department of pastoral care, that they generally tax themselves to build and support schools to a much larger extent than laymen.’²²⁰ On this basis, and also because the State contributed a small proportion of the costs of schools, the writer could not see why Denison’s argument should be seen as unreasonable:

So long as the school is a voluntary affair on the part of the clergyman and his parishioners, and the aid given by the government bears but a small proportion to the whole charge, I really cannot see why the simple plan which Mr Denison proposes is not the best. If we had a school rate, or the government aid were very largely increased, the case would be otherwise.²²⁰

That same year, circumstances suggested to Denison that it might be possible to achieve a successful appeal to the legislature. In February 1852, Russell’s administration fell, to be replaced by Tory government led by Edward Stanley, the fourteenth Earl of Derby. With the earl, Denison had family links, and moreover the earl had previously taken a stand in 1839 against the formation of the Committee of Council on Education.²²¹ Denison recorded that three days before the National Society’s 1852 annual meeting, scheduled for 11 June 1852, Denison was asked to go up to London to be shown a draft of a proposal for the modification of the

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²¹⁸ One writer sympathetic to Denison did not believe Denison had any intention of ‘excluding or deprecating the laity’ and thought the majority of the members of the National Society supported freedom of choice from founders of schools framing constitutions, but doubted whether Denison’s Resolution would unite members on the principle. SWD to Editor, *Guardian*, 21 April 1852, p255.
²²¹ FDD to the Editor, *Guardian*, 24 March 1852, p190.
²²² For family links see chapter 2, p12 note 40. Lord Stanley had spoken in the Commons against the creation of the Privy Council Committee. PD, 3rd Series, Vol 48, 14 June 1839, cols 229-301. Stanley’s speech was published in full by the Metropolitan Union in *History and present state of the Education Question*, p135ff. Stanley had begun his political career as a Whig under the mentorship of Lord Lansdowne, but had moved in a conservative direction.
Committee of Council’s management clauses. Denison accepted the terms proposed, and agreed to withdraw his resolution to be moved at the National Society.222

The changes allowed by the new government provided for the points for which Denison had fought – that the supervision of the clergy should be extended to moral as well as religious matters, and the powers of the clergyman were to be expanded to allow the provisional suspension of a teacher, pending reference to the diocesan bishop. The new government’s object was to bring to an end the strife, and ‘to reconcile, previous to the annual meeting, the great body of Churchmen upon a subject with regard to which there had hitherto been most unfortunate, and he thought, unprofitable discussion between them’.223 Derby conceded the argument about the lack of liberty regarding the management clauses allowed Church of England schools that had been granted to other religious bodies, stating he did not believe ‘that the Church of England was making an extravagant or unreasonable demand if they required the same liberty which was given to other denominations should be enjoyed by members of the Church of England also’.224 At the same time the earl dealt with the argument that new conditions had been imposed without the sanction of Parliament.225 As they had previously, the Whigs

222 Denison to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 7 June 1852, reproduced in Life, p174
223 PD, 3rd Series, Vol 122, 14 June 1852, col 559.
224 ‘We have never concealed our opinion that in respect of the Church of England, that in that respect the Church of England have cause to complain of the stringency of those clauses.’ PD, 3rd Series, Vol 122, 11 June 1852, col 470.
225 The Earl of Derby reviewing the history of the introduction of the management clauses noted that a supplementary Minute was agreed 10 July 1847, but a date subsequent to the Annual Supply Vote, this having been agreed 24 April 1847. Moreover, the supplementary Minute was not tabled in the Commons until 22 July, and on the following day, 23 July 1847, Parliament was prorogued, thus was neither scrutinized nor voted upon by the legislature. Consequently, Derby stated ‘the management clauses A,B,C, and D, which regulated, for the first time, the whole of the restrictions imposed upon grants to Church of England schools, bore the date the 28th of June, 1847, and for the first time they were laid before Parliament, not in the course of that Session – not only previously to taking the grant for that Session – but they were not laid before Parliament until they appeared as part of the blue book; subsequently taking the vote – not for that – but for the succeeding Session of Parliament. In short the management clauses were passed after the vote for the year was taken, whilst Parliament was sitting, and were not submitted separately to parliament at all. The vote for the following year, 1848, was taken on the 23rd of August, and the management clauses so contained in the blue book were laid before their Lordships’ House on the same day; but they appear not to have been laid before the Commons until the 22nd August, the day after the vote was taken, and then they were produced without any explanation. Again, after considerable discussion with the National Society for
manifested considerable hostility, opposing the alterations. Lansdowne contended the management clauses, if an important change, did not fundamentally alter the principle on which grants were administered. Bishop Wilberforce, however, countered Lansdowne arguing that Parliament ought to have been fully consulted on alterations such as management clauses and have had ‘the opportunity of expressing an opinion’. Instead, Wilberforce observed that ‘very important changes’ had been repeatedly introduced by the Whigs without parliamentary scrutiny.

Amongst others who spoke on the ‘Education Question,’ Gladstone was supportive of the two changes, believing them to be reasonable. He was supportive of lay involvement in schools, but recognized the problems with which Denison and his fellow clergy contended in rural parishes, Gladstone was critical of aspects of the consequences of the anti-clerical provisions of the management clauses. He did not consider the Committee of Council on Education had allowed for the ‘thousands of small and remote country parishes, where there are perhaps, in addition to the clergyman, not more than three or four men above the class of labourers. You cannot compel them to institute a committee in these cases.’ By contrast with the unyielding resistance of Lansdowne and Russell, Gladstone took a more relaxed to the issue. He did not regard the education minutes as set in stone, seeing them ‘as only experimental and provisional’. For, as he observed there had not been a year when there has not been some alteration of these Minutes. ‘I think we are by these Minutes feeling our way gradually to the details of our system.’

The on-going implications of the Manchester-Salford education scheme led Denison to embark on a further crusade within the National Society. In the past,

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226 Lord John Russell defended Lansdowne’s actions. Ibid, col 1090.
227 Ibid, col 560f.
228 Ibid, col 1107.
229 Ibid, col 1108.
notwithstanding terms of union requiring schools to keep to the National Society’s objectives, there were informal breaches, whereby clergy accommodated Dissenters in their parishes. The Manchester and Salford scheme, however, demanded a public alteration of the basis of union. This Denison opposed. Given his own growing unpopularity with the National Society, he drafted in Keble to secure the society’s opposition to any alteration in its terms of union. Keble accordingly produced addressed a memorial to the committee, which obliged him by undertaking an inquiry through the diocesan bishops.\textsuperscript{230} The result of the inquiry showed that by and large the terms of union were ‘faithfully observed’.\textsuperscript{231}

By 1853 a number of factors led Denison to recognize he was defeated in the matter of the ‘Education Question’. In December 1852 Earl Derby’s minority government fell to be replaced by a coalition predominantly of Whigs and Peelites under Lord Aberdeen. Gladstone’s decision to join this coalition was a matter of considerable distress to Denison, bringing forth a pamphlet, \textit{The coalition of 1852. A letter addressed respectfully to the electors of Oxford University}, followed in early 1853 by a further pamphlet addressed to members of the Bristol Church Union.\textsuperscript{232} This attack on Gladstone alienated Denison’s own constituency amongst High Churchmen and within the Union movement, but he justified it by pointing to the consequence the coalition would have for the ‘Education Question’. On this he was correct, as the new government rescinded the changes Derby had made to the management clauses.\textsuperscript{233} In his charge of May 1853, Denison attacked the defecting Peelites on education, seeing Peel as having abandoned the education provisions of

\textsuperscript{230} On this see Burgess, \textit{Enterprise in education}. Coming from Keble rather than Denison, the former’s standing secured a civil reply from the National Society’s committee. The Society’s secretary, John Lonsdale, in his reply to Keble 8 June 1852, wrote that the committee would have inquiries made of the diocesan bishops, with the help of diocesan inspectors to discover what practices obtained.

\textsuperscript{231} Henry Burgess, \textit{Enterprise in education}, p165.

\textsuperscript{232} Oxford University election. \textit{The Coalition of December, 1852, and the contest of January, 1853. A letter addressed to the members of the Bristol Church Union}. 1853.

\textsuperscript{233} Derby’s government had actually suspended the Minute of 12 June shortly after the National Society 1852 annual meeting. See Denison comment on this. \textit{Life}, p159.
the 1842 factory bill, and having ‘extended the administration of the Education department of the Privy Council’. 234

In 1853 Denison crossed swords once again with Kay-Shuttleworth. The latter published a pamphlet, Public Education as affected by the minutes of the Committee of Council on Education from 1846 to 1852: with suggestions as to future policy, characterizing Denison and his allies as the ‘medieval party’. 235 In his 1853 Charge Denison restated that it was new to him that the Reformation principle of primitive Christianity could be characterized as medieval. 236 Kay-Shuttleworth, by contrast, saw the reformation as movement whereby the monarchy countered the domination of the Church. 237 If Kay-Shuttleworth’s Dissenting origins led him to understand more clearly the issue of toleration, the great point of difference was his belief in State intervention. 238 Denison, by contrast, could neither reconcile himself to the principle of toleration, nor State interference on that principle.

However, by Christmas 1853, Denison’s fight over the management clauses was over. This he conceded in a letter to Christopher Wordsworth, declaring himself utterly defeated. 239 Other religious bodies, Denison believed, fought for their principles, but in the case of members the Church of England they fell back on the Establishment when discouraged or defeated. 240

Having been entirely and irrevocably defeated in respect of the whole attempt which commenced in 1847 – not through anything said or done by opponents, but through the vacillation and desertion of friends, and through the apparent resolve of the Bishops of the Church of England to let the Committee of Council have its own way – I do not propose to expend upon that attempt,

234 The catechism of the Church of England, etc. 1853, p38.
235 Public Education, p23.
236 The catechism of the Church of England, etc, p19.
238 Ibid, p52f.
240 Life, p161.
so far as the Management Clauses are concerned, any further amount of my time and energy.\textsuperscript{241}

Denison’s strategy to engage in pressure-group political campaigns, rousing Churchmen to bear upon the government of the day to adjust the management clauses had failed, and he was disappointed in his friends and allies, and in conservative politicians:

Meantime it is very sad to see the supineness and indifference of Churchmen, their want of moral courage and united action, have allowed the Council Office to succeed, during the last five years, in transferring to itself without law a large proportion of that influence and control, which is the Church’s right and the Church’s trust for the people’s sake.\textsuperscript{242}

‘The Education army’, as it had been used to muster in London for five years, was broken up in 1853 by differences over the re-election of Gladstone as MP for Oxford. The break-up of his support base was followed by the beginning of the long legal saga over the real presence, and consequent worry and expense, which saw the closure of his middle school and training of teachers. During the early years of his fight for Church schools Denison had enjoyed the support of his bishop, but following Bishop Bagot’s death in May 1854 Denison found his successor did not agree with him on educational matters. The diocesan army of Bath and Wells broke up in 1855, under the episcopate of Lord Auckland, who succeeded to the See in 1854.\textsuperscript{243} Denison met his match at a meeting of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education in January 1855. Attempting to maintain the teaching of the catechism as a defining characteristic of a Church school, and therefore a condition for grants awarded by the Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education, Denison motion was scuppered by Lord Auckland who, as the numbers were equally divided in a vote on this matter at a board meeting, used his casting vote as chairman to reject

\textsuperscript{241} Life, p164.
\textsuperscript{242} G A Denison, The Church and the school, p16.
\textsuperscript{243} Life, p184f.
Denison’s resolution. Defeated on his home ground, Denison made only rare appearances at the Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education, and ceased attending altogether after 1870.

If defeated on the management clauses, Denison continued for the remainder of his life to have something to say on education, but his subsequent commentary was largely repetitive. He remained on the same ground – that the agreement reached by the Church with the government in 1840 should have been maintained. In a speech in Convocation in 1866, he stated he carried the minutes of 1839-40 wherever he went, and knew the contents intimately. Having failed in his objectives, Denison nevertheless kept an eye on the National Society and its terms of union. Pressure on the National Society to relax the terms of union had left the Society in something of a quandary for some years. From 1856, Lingen had insisted as a condition of grants for new Church schools in a parish where the school was likely to be the only school, on the insertion on a clause in the trust deed exempting the children that were not members of the Church from teaching on prayer book doctrine. The committee of the National Society was cautious. The secretary, the Rev John Lonsdale, attempted to avoid a conscience clause, suggesting instead a clause referring the matter of exemption to the discretion of the clergyman. This brought Denison out onto the field of battle once again. At the 1862 annual meeting, and later in print, he attacked the society and its secretary, declaring that the conscience of Churchmen were ‘not to be overruled’. In the same cause, he made a rare appearance at the Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education in October 1864 and again in 1865, when he moved resolutions against a conscience clause as weakening Church schools. He devoted a speech to the subject of the

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244 *Life*, p185. Denison had, as he had done before on many occasions, organized supporting votes for his resolutions, but this time two of his supporters missed their train. *Life*, Note p185.
245 *Life*, Note p185f.
248 *C&SR*, 1 November 1862, p252ff.
249 *Life*, p186.
By 1853 Denison had concluded there could be ‘no agreement and no safe co-operation between Churchmen and the Committee of Council on Education’. This appears extreme. However, for Denison this was a position consistent with his orthodox tenets, as well as consistent with the view that as a reforming priest he took of his Church school as an instrument of pastoral work. Burgess, the historian of the National Society, has seen Denison as an obstructionist, suggesting that but for Denison negotiations between the society and the education committee would have been more fruitful. But Burgess’ account is essentially centrist focusing on the relationship between the National Society and the State – a focus which tends to a teleological bias. Instead, as this study argues, Denison’s opposition to the Committee of Council on Education reflected on the one hand his support for the orthodox purposes of the National Society, and on the other the problems inherent in the ambivalent approach taken by the State to popular education noted earlier in this chapter. The difficulties of this approach were observed in a report included with the 1851 census. Burgess’ characterisation of Denison does not supply an explanation of the forces at work in 1847, without which Denison would not have found support. The outbreak of controversy in 1847 can be explained in part because, however worthy his intentions, Kay-Shuttleworth’s calumniatory anti-clericism left out of account the essential contribution and ongoing commitment of clergy to education that made schooling

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253 G A Denison, National unthankfulness: its fruits and punishment, etc. 1854, p45.
255 The report commented the approach adopted at the beginning as the basis on which the first grants for education were made in 1833, observing that ‘the action of the Government has ever since been limited to co-operation with religious bodies ... each grant being made conditional upon a previous voluntary contribution in a specified proportion to the grant’. PP 1854 [1764] LIX, Census of Great Britain, 1851. Education in England and Wales. Report and tables, p xviii.
possible in many parishes. Moreover, the unflattering accounts of Kay-Shuttleworth’s methods in his dealings with clergy, attested to by Joseph Wigram and John Sinclair who served the National Society at different times as secretary, go a considerable way to suggest the reason why Denison was able secure a considerable body of support in 1847 and in the following years.

But the reasons for the battle over Church schools, and Denison’s engagement in that fight, went beyond Kay-Shuttleworth’s methods. Kay-Shuttleworth saw Churchmen, such as Denison, as opposed to public opinion. This was a charge to which Denison readily admitted. But, as has been seen in this study with respect to the reaction to Essays and Reviews, Kay-Shuttleworth’s attempt to dismiss men such as Denison as out of touch ignored the fact that Denison’s world-view grounded on a pre-critical view of the Bible was widespread. It was a world-view which explained the motives of many clergy. Denison was aware, as is suggested by his exchanges with Entwistle, that orthodox Christianity was challenged by the spirit of the age. Denison recognized this spirit sought to bring Christianity into conformity with ‘the great moral, religious, and intellectual panacea for the evils of our social state’. There was, as Howard Murphy has suggested, conflict between ‘orthodox dogmas and the meliorist ethical basis of the age’. There was tension, on one hand, between orthodox belief in original sin and salvation in Christ, and, on the other, as J S Mill observed, society’s increasing conviction that the human condition could be ‘progressively improved through a sustained application of human effort and intelligence’. Such notions Denison saw as a misconception. That the human race could improve its condition by its own unaided powers, Denison considered to be a manifestation of pride and, thus, of original sin.

256 Ibid, p5f.
257 The Church and the school, p4.
258 Howard Murphy, ‘Ethical revolt against Christian orthodoxy in early Victorian England’, in The American Historical Review, 60 (4), July 1955, p800f. Cf Auguste Javary’s view ‘if there is some idea that belongs particularly to one century it is, so it seems to me, the idea of Progress, conceived as a general law of history and the future of humanity’. De l’idée de progrès, 1847, p1.
The fundamental reason for Denison’s opposition to Kay-Shuttleworth was in defence of orthodox dogma, and his belief that it was necessary to teach the doctrines of the faith clearly so that these might form the foundations of a Christian belief and of the living of a Christian life.²⁶¹ Fighting for Church schools on the floor of the annual meetings of the National Society, Denison exemplified a continuing strand of orthodoxy – principles which bishops such as Howley, Blomfield and Phillipotts, advanced in defence of the National Society in 1839-40; orthodox principles which those who established the National Society declared was the foundation’s purpose to propagate.

Similarly, Denison’s objection to a conscience clause was not simply a piece of intolerant bigotry, but was consistent with his orthodoxy. He understood that others saw the kind of objections he made to the Committee of Council on Education and to the Manchester and Salford education scheme to be ‘the phantoms of a diseased imagination, or the product of a restless spirit’.²⁶² His difficulty was that the argument for the right of individual conscience collided with the orthodox idea of the proper use of reason.²⁶³ This was the difference he saw between himself and Kay-Shuttleworth. The latter’s religion involved ‘private interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and the rejection of external authority’.²⁶⁴ Denison saw the concession to the Nonconformists as yielding ‘to the unequivocal rejection of all authority over the conscience, and to the assertion of the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the scriptures’.²⁶⁵

An advocate of the providential place of the Church of England within the constitution, and opposed to nonconformity as schismatic, there was a certain irony that Denison was obliged in his battle for Church schools to adopt the argument that the Church of England should be treated as were other religious bodies such as

²⁶³ See chapter 4.
the Roman Catholics and Methodists. That in the matter of education, Denison as an upholder of the Establishment would have the Church treated effectively as a denomination, whereas the Whigs were prepared to adopt the schools of the national Church for national purposes.
Memorial service for Denison at East Brent

Text of sermon preached by the Rev A Hanbury-Tracey, vicar of Frome, on Isaiah 1:7 ‘I have set my face like a flint and I know I will not be ashamed.’

*The Church Times*, 2nd April 1896, p404

Obituary in Guardian

Throughout the earliest days of the revival [of Convocation] Archdeacon Denison was regarded as the leader of the side that in principle agreed with him. But the word ‘leader’ must be understood in a very modified sense, as from the first there have been no recognized parties in Convocation.

A further cause for his later failure in Convocation arose from in not taking to heart the changes in popular feeling, and the lessons that might have been learnt from experience … The actions of the Archdeacon [with respect to Lux Mundi] illustrate the unchanged dogged perseverance which he ever exhibited in bringing forward for condemnation principles and teaching of which he disapproved, and also because it shows how little his views were changed with respect to the manner in which error should be opposed from what he held when he first entered upon public life.

‘In memoriam George Anthony Denison,’ in the *Guardian* 1 April 1896, p509.
CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

This study was prompted by David Newsome’s argument that the nineteenth ‘High Churchmanship’ should be understood more loosely and more broadly, and specifically by Newsome’s contention that Denison’s Churchmanship should be seen as ‘an indigenous and fiercely conservative Anglicanism’. The objective of the study has been to explore the question what it is to be understood by this ‘conservative Anglicanism’ that Newsome attributed to Denison.

It has been argued that Denison’s High Churchmanship is explained as resting on the Anglican orthodoxy that was still part of the declared purpose of an Oxford education in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Against Mozley’s assertion that Denison was gradually and silently drawn by Newman to Tractarianism, it is more likely the formative influences which shaped Denison were closer to home. For while Denison was a contemporary at Oriel College with the authors of the Tracts for the times he was not intimate with them, as he himself admitted. His obituarist went further, observing that while Denison was ‘contemporary with the commencement of the Tract for the times he was never influenced by their authors’. Denison (a man from a wealthy family, a Christ Church man, a hunting man) stood apart socially from the Tractarian leaders. Nevertheless, Denison clearly did absorb something as Oxford, as this study has sought to demonstrate is manifest in his writings. Denison and his brother Edward were part of the circle of Charles Lloyd. Edward Denison shows there was a continuing strand of High Churchmanship in early nineteenth-century Oxford University that did not owe its existence to the Tractarians. Edward was of significance in George’s

formation as a clergyman. It was he who gave his younger brother his livings. George served by his brother’s side as chaplain for some years in the Salisbury diocese, accompanying Edward on his visitations. He would, therefore, have witnessed his brother’s demanding and reforming expectations of his clergy’s ministry. Another significant influences in Denison’s formative years would appear to have been his tutor, Charles Drury, who was responsible for forming Denison as an accurate classical scholar. The relationship between tutor and pupil continued after Denison had graduated and into later life. Although difficult to estimate his influence, another person in Denison’s years at Oxford was the High Church Bishop Bagot who gave Denison his curacy at Cuddesdon. Denison’s friendly relations with the bishop, and his family, suggests that Denison not only fitted in socially, but also that, as a young clergyman, Denison was acceptable to the High Church Bishop Bagot.

Facets of Anglican orthodoxy, with which it has been argued Denison identified, were reviewed in chapter two in order to demonstrate the connections with the themes explored in Denison’s writings. This Anglican orthodoxy was both a reaction to the Enlightenment and anti-Socinian. It was characterised by a defence of Christian revelation – the scriptures conceived as authoritative, and the interpretation of scripture allied to a particular epistemology, which qualified reason and its use as subordinate to faith. Moreover, as Christian revelation manifested a God in history, so this orthodoxy saw the operation of divine providence ordering society and its governance. This resurgent orthodoxy rejected the Enlightenment’s natural rights, advancing instead a notion of mutual obligation and interdependence of individuals, and asserted a very different view of human race as fundamentally flawed.

While Denison as a polemicist was not systematic, analysis of his writings undertaken in this study shows he exhibited many of the leading tenets of Anglican orthodoxy outlined in chapter two. The foundation of Denison’s world-view
corresponded closely with Anglican orthodoxy’s defence of revelation. Denison demonstrates what it was to hold a pre-critical view of the status of the scriptures. He held the Bible to be a unique document that revealed, as an absolute reality, the external law of God. This revelation was the inspired word of God. Moreover, there was harmony of the Old Testament and the New, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and, by the same token, the providential operation of the Holy Spirit protected the integrity of the text.

Denison’s understanding of the status of the scriptures rested on a particular epistemology – an important plank of Anglican orthodoxy. He accepted revelation as primary and assigned a subordinate place to reason; reason submitted in deference to the absolute authority of revelation. Thus, Denison held the authority of revelation could not be reduced by private conviction, nor, indeed by science or other new knowledge.

Denison’s writings show he maintained another significant orthodox tenet – a belief in the operation of providence. This flowed from a concept of the scriptures as a divine revelation of the continuing operation of God’s providence. Providence was responsible for the creation of humanity, and had linked human beings one with another. Providence ordered society and its government. Denison’s high view of the Church was premised on his belief in its providential character, and ipso facto the place of the national Church within the constitution as a divine gift. The place of the national Church within the constitution was not, in Denison’s eyes, dependant on a fiat of the state, and thus could not be undone. There was a further consequence arising from this view of the nature of society and its government – that English society was Christian.

This orthodox view of the operation of providence also had implications for Denison’s view of community. He subscribed to another leading orthodox tenet – the organic nature of society. He identified community as being the
interrelationships and bonds that individuals had with one another. This Denison understood in Christian terms, seeing these bonds as mutual ties of affection reflecting union with Christ.

There was one aspect of Denison’s conservative Anglicanism that did undergo a degree of development. He espoused in more definite terms the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist; this contrasted with the acknowledgement, undefined, of a mysterious presence such as William Palmer considered the prayer book admitted. Although Denison did owe something to others, particularly Pusey and Robert Wilberforce, (for Denison was not an original thinker) this was not the only factor in his development. Although difficult to estimate, the narrative suggests Henry Phillpotts, the Tory, orthodox, High Church Bishop of Exeter, must be counted, in this connection, as another influential figure in Denison life. Denison’s personal engagement in support of Bishop Phillpott’s stand against Gorham and against Archbishop Sumner was a catalyst for Denison’s adoption of an advanced doctrine of the real presence. The process whereby Denison adopted this more advanced doctrine was, however, one he developed in his own way as a reaction to the Gorham controversy – shown by his insistence on his proof-proposition that the wicked received the sacrament. Denison’s doctrine was individualistic and, as Churton observed, merely Denison’s own opinion set against the continental reformers. The form in which Denison cast his doctrine was criticised by Pusey, amongst others, as contestable and a less than satisfactory way of arguing the doctrine of the real presence. Denison’s alleged offence against Article XXIX (Of the wicked which eat not the body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s supper) rather than the doctrine of the real presence was the focus of the Bath Court.

Arguably, Denison’s high view of the sacraments ought not to be considered in isolation, but explained in connection with his orthodox high view of the scriptures, and his high theology of the Church and its ministry. His insistence on the sacraments as a gift of God acting in his mercy makes sense when considered in
connection with his understanding of the absolute reality of the Bible meta-
narrative, and thus the reality of humanity’s fallen nature, and humanity’s
justification by the merits of Christ. There was, in Denison’s sense of the importance
of the sacraments, an emotional strain that came out his notion of his role as a
priest and shepherd to his people. And again this also connected with his orthodox
concept of community as bonded in the body of Christ.

Something of the emotional side of Denison’s character is demonstrated in
connection with ritualism. Denison had little knowledge of ritualism until he met
with it when sitting on a committee of Convocation in 1866. In the following years,
he developed a growing empathy with ritualists on the ground that they stood for
Catholic doctrine. Such ritual that Denison adopted late in life in the early 1870s
was an expression of sacramental doctrine he developed in the late 1840s and early
1850s. Although, after 1870, under the influence of his nephew there were some
innovations in the worship at East Brent, Denison was satisfied with a relatively
simple expression of this doctrine, the most significant features of which were lights
on the altar and the eastward position. It has been shown in chapter seven that
Denison had an emotional commitment to doctrine and was prepared to fight for
what he believed. However, he was simply not interested in the minutiae of
ritualism. A year before he died, a report appeared in the Church Times with a
description of the parish of East Brent. Having visited the parish, the writer
concluded that the parish and its vicar were far from being an example of high-
blown ritualism:

The Archdeacon never was, and is not now, what is called a
Ritualist. The prosecution was on doctrinal grounds. People would
imagine East Brent Church to be the theatre of all the latest fads
of the most extreme developers. It is nothing of the kind. The
sanctuary is well-arranged, and lights are used at the celebration
of the Holy Sacrament. And tell it in Gath to the modern and
sometimes fussy Ritualist, there is an Elizabethan or Jacobean
West gallery, in which is placed an organ, the case of which would
do honour to an old-fashioned meeting house, and in which sit a
choir of women on the north side, and men and boys on the
south. ... servers attend the officiant at the altar, it is true ..., but the choir stalls are occupied by parishioners, and there is no going out or coming in, no processing or recessing in two and twos, for there is no surpliced choir.²

The notion that Denison was a ritualist has been shown to require substantial qualification and an indication that ritualism was not limited to explicit followers of the Tractarians.

The position Denison adopted with respect to the ‘Education Question’ is explained by his adherence to orthodox principles. It has been shown that Denison’s battle for Church schools was in accord with founding principles of the National Society created to propagate Anglican orthodoxy. The Society was to be an instrument of the Church’s mission, counteracting Socinianism and Utilitarian rationalism, and to propagate the tenets of the Established Church, and buttressing society (as orthodoxy understood this) and the constitution. More particularly the National Society was to counter the teaching of a generalized morality, and teach the Christian faith as this was expressed in the Church’s doctrines and creeds. The ground of Denison’s defence of the Church school was predicated on the same grounds that had motivated the founders of the National Society. He regarded a Church school as an instrument of the Church’s mission. He shared the founders’ conviction that Christianity was defined by her doctrine and the creeds, so he opposed interference in Church schools that might change their character. Not least he opposed the notion of generalized Christianity – that is teaching the Bible without note and comment, eschewing doctrine.

Denison’s conservative orthodoxy had further implications for his stance on the ‘Education Question’. Denison was opposed to the esse of nineteenth-century liberalism and toleration as this was expressed as ‘rights of conscience’. His belief in an authoritative Bible and the limits to use of human reason did not allow for

² *Church Times*, 9 August 1895, p149f.
expression and questioning of individual conscience. Further, his belief in the bonds of community or organic society led him to oppose the appeal to individualism – ironically notwithstanding his own manifest individualism in the conduct of his own life. Denison did not address the question of rights, as had William Jones of Nayland, but argued against rights of conscience in the context of Church schools, on the twofold ground of the authority of the scriptures and orthodox epistemology that subordinated reason.

Beyond those factors contributing to Denison’s conservative Anglican ideology, a further determinant of Denison’s life taken into account in this study was his long career of over fifty years as a rural parson and country archdeacon. This long career also shaped his viewpoint and attitude to issues in which he became engaged. The rural clergy of the nineteenth century retained a dominant role in their communities, where the exercise of strong individualism persisted, and where, in the absence of other agencies, local problems could be addressed within local communities without reference to any other authority. Denison thrived in an environment allowing scope for individualistic and independent action. This study has drawn on evidence drawn from Royal Commissions to illustrate the background to Denison’s life as country incumbent. Such evidence show country clergy to have been important agents in nineteenth-century rural society, ameliorating conditions amongst the poor, promoting education, and other benefits. Denison was an example of the reforming and innovative clergy, of various theological hues, who in the wake of the adjustments of 1828-32, looked to bolster the Church from the grassroots – by attention being paid to ministerial duty and effective pastoral oversight of parishes. Denison’s resistance to centrist authority, and opposition to a man such as Kay-Shuttleworth, when taken with a view to this wider canvas, was not exceptional. Kay-Shuttleworth could be said to fall into the class of the new breed of civil servants such as Chadwick and Trevelyan, who, as Oliver MacDonagh has written, were ‘crusading, war-lording and empire-building,’ and were often
'statesmen in disguise’ engaging in politics. It was Kay-Shuttlworth’s centralizing policies that Lauren Goodlad has argued were his undoing. His career, Goodlad has contended, exemplified the profound incompatibility between the aims and methods of modern bureaucracy and the moral identity of Britain’s middle classes. Denison’s oversight of his rural community and his allied role in the debate over the ‘Education Question’ ought to considered in the context the dominance of voluntarism and local autonomy over centralized State action that Goodland has argued continued through the nineteenth century up until the First World War.

Denison’s career demonstrates that religion cannot be discounted as an element within historical explanation. A practical activist within the domain of his parish, Denison did not work in an ideological vacuum – his work was conceived in religious terms, and shaped by his conservative Anglican orthodoxy. He provided leadership in his rural community in his office as vicar, which he believed divine providence had provided for spiritual benefit and physical well-being of his parishioners. Denison saw the golden thread of religion in all he did and all that his community did. His religious understanding of his office and of the world are fundamental as explaining the man. His Supplement to notes on my life (1893), clearly demonstrates that to the end of his days his understanding of the world and society was unchanged – shaped by prescriptions of a conservative High Church Anglican ideology.

3 Oliver McDonagh, Early Victorian government 1830-1870, p200f.
5 Ibid, p612.
Table showing comparative clerical stipends

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Table of comparative clerical stipends derived from 1835 XXII, *Report of the Commissioners ... to inquire into the ecclesiastical revenues of England and Wales*, p450
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