

Storm over a chapel

a history of the chapel at
Churchill College Cambridge

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Churchill College
Cambridge
2024

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First published (in typescript) in 2007, on the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the chapel, and extending a short version that appeared in the *Churchill Review*, 39 (2002), pp. 27-38. This further revised version was first made available on the Chapel website in 2024.

The author is an historian and Fellow of Churchill College. This essay is the draft of a chapter due to appear in a book-length history of the College.

Except where otherwise stated, the sources are the College Archives: CCAR 800-803 and CCPP 1/7/3; and the Cockcroft Papers, 12/48-53. CR = the *Churchill Review*.

The author is indebted to conversations with the late Lord Beaumont, the late Bishop Montefiore, and several Fellows of the College. The title used in 2007 was 'God's Bordello', which was owed to the Revd Prof. Bryan Spinks, and borrows a famous remark by Francis Crick, recounted below.

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Storm over a Chapel

The unravelling of Francis Crick

There is a chapel *at* Churchill College, but there is no chapel *of* Churchill College. The preposition is important. It was deliberately chosen. It denotes a truce after a battle, a sophisticated donnish compromise. It was a device by which those who passionately wanted a chapel, and those who passionately did not want it, could live together. The storm over the chapel lies deep in the College's folklore, a painful quarrel in a community ordinarily neither factious nor fractious. If, in the twenty-first century, many new members are unaware of the saga, in earlier years every new Fellow would be regaled with it. It was a storm that brought the College national notoriety. In 1961 a TV documentary about the College dwelt upon the chapel row; in 1965 a broadcast play was based on it. The affair was, wrote the authors of a book about Cambridge published in 1962, 'a saga worthy of C. P. Snow, who actually participated'.¹

Notoriety came chiefly because Francis Crick resigned his Fellowship in protest against the College's intention to build a chapel. Crick was famous, soon to receive a Nobel Prize, the man who had unravelled DNA, the secret of life itself. As a militant atheist, he thought that in the second half of the twentieth century a college dedicated to science, to the rational pursuit of knowledge and free speculation, had no business promoting superstitious nonsense. The historic task of reason was to seize from the mystics the mysteries of the universe and hand them over to science. Whenever he published to a wider audience, this was his theme. In *Of Molecules and Men* (1966), he announced that the discovery of the genetic code destroyed the last remnants of 'vitalism', by which he meant any theory that supposed that human life was other than chemistry and mechanics.

In 1970 Bernard Levin, the distinguished columnist of *The Times*, wrote a book about British society in the 1960s in which, in the opening pages, he recounted the Churchill chapel saga. Levin, a man of conservative disposition, wryly exposed what he saw as the wilder shores of 1960s fashionable opinion. For him, the storm over the Churchill chapel was an example of the zanyism of the times. His message was that supposedly 'rational' scientists could be as wacky as the psychedelic hippies and the mystical gurus. His account is worth quoting at length:

It was not only the foolish who were fooled, not only the credulous who believed. Dr Francis Crick, for instance, would never describe himself, and would hardly be described by others, as one of nature's boobies. A Nobel prize-winner in the exacting field of molecular biology, with a third share in one of the most important discoveries ever made in this science ... Crick was appointed one of the first Fellows of Churchill College, Cambridge. ... While Churchill College was building, the question was raised, whether it should have a chapel attached, and those responsible for the project decided that it should. Whereupon some of the Fellows of the as yet non-existent college protested that such pandering to outworn superstition was unjustified, particularly since the money it was to cost (some £30,000) could be better spent. Deadlock ensued, broken by a wealthy Christian philanthropist, the Reverend Timothy Beaumont (subsequently

ennobled as Lord Beaumont of Whitley), who offered to meet the entire cost of the chapel, thus simultaneously relieving the foundation's funds of pressure and its Fellows of embarrassment. To the astonishment of many who believed that scientists were rational, Crick refused to be relieved of his embarrassment in this manner, and insisted on resigning his Fellowship if the chapel were built, even at private expense. It was explained to him that he would not be expected to enter it; that no student would be compelled to attend services therein; that it need offend him no more than the existence of Canterbury Cathedral or the Woking Mosque. In vain; Crick, perhaps fearing that cowed monks and wimpled nuns would creep to his room in the dead of night and drag him into the chapel, there to practise upon him hideous rites ranging from baptism to crucifixion, insisted on resigning if the chapel were built. It was, and he did.²

In fact, Crick resigned in September 1961, long before the chapel was built. He sent Sir Winston Churchill a short note tendering his resignation. And Winston wrote back:

I was sorry to learn that you have resigned from Churchill College, and I am puzzled by your reason. The money for the chapel was provided specifically for that purpose by Mr Beaumont and not taken from the general College funds. A chapel, whatever one's views on religion, is an amenity which many of those who will live in the College may enjoy, and none need enter it unless they wish.³

(Sir Winston – or rather his secretary, Anthony Montague Brown – was plainly not *au fait* with developments in the natural sciences, for he first sent a note to the Master, Sir John Cockcroft, saying, of Crick, 'I do not know whether he is really a Fellow who has resigned, or just an eccentric'. Cockcroft replied that he was 'a very distinguished molecular biologist'.)

Winston's reply prompted Crick to explain his reasons, in what must be one of the most extraordinary letters ever written by a great scientist to a great statesman. He told Sir Winston that Churchill College might just as well establish a brothel as a chapel, and he enclosed a cheque for ten guineas towards such a project. This is what Crick wrote, from his home, 'The Golden Helix', in Portugal Place, Cambridge, on 12 October 1961. (To understand it, one needs to know that *hetairae* were Greek courtesans.)

Dear Sir Winston

It was kind of you to write. I am sorry you do not understand why I resigned.

To make my position a little clearer I enclose a cheque for ten guineas to open the Churchill College Hetairae fund. My hope is that eventually it will be possible to build permanent accommodation within the College, to house a carefully chosen selection of young ladies in the charge of a suitable Madam who, once the institution has become traditional, will doubtless be provided, without offence, with dining rights at the High Table.

Such a building will, I feel confident, be an amenity which many who live in the College will enjoy very much, and yet the instruction need not be compulsory and none need enter it unless they wish. Moreover it would be open (conscience permitting) not merely to members of the Church of England, but

also to Catholics, Non-Conformists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Zen Buddhists and even to atheists and agnostics such as myself.

And yet I cannot help feeling that when you pass on my offer to the other Trustees – as I hope you will – they may not share my enthusiasm for such a truly educational project. They may feel, being men of the world, that to house such an establishment, however great the need and however correctly conducted, within the actual College would not command universal respect. They may even feel my offer of ten guineas to be a joke in rather poor taste.

But that is exactly my view of the proposal of the Trustees to build a chapel, after the middle of the 20th century, in a new College and in particular in one with a special emphasis on science. Naturally some members of the College will be Christian, at least for the next decade or so, but I do not see why the College should tacitly endorse their beliefs by providing them with special facilities. The churches in the town, it has been said, are half empty. Let them go there. It will be no further than they have to go to their lectures.

Even a joke in poor taste can be enjoyed, but I regret that my enjoyment of it has entailed my resignation from the College which bears your illustrious name.⁴

To this Winston did not reply. Pencilled at the top corner are the words, ‘cheque returned with comps’.⁵ Crick’s wartime naval boss, Sir Edward Collingwood, evidently saw the letter: ‘I can see you enjoyed writing it’, yet ‘I can’t help being sorry you were in such a hurry to get this into the letter-box’.⁶ Crick was unrepentant and later wore his resignation as a badge of honour. In 1965 he warned the organisers of a lecture series that he would offer what might be regarded as ‘Anti-Christian propaganda’: ‘I am an atheist and a few years ago resigned my Fellowship at Churchill College because they threatened to build a College Chapel’. His animus continued to pepper his public pronouncements for the rest of his life. ‘The God hypothesis is bankrupt’, he wrote in 2004 in the closing months of his life.⁷ The ghost of his resignation is never laid. On the chapel’s twenty-first anniversary in 1988 the headline in the *Cambridge Evening News* was ‘Top man quit his Fellowship’. But even Crick compromised with the College sufficiently when he accepted an Honorary Fellowship in 1965.

Two years after his resignation Crick donated £100 to the Cambridge Humanist Society for a competition for the best essay on ‘What can be done with the college chapels?’ The novelist and Fellow of King’s College E. M. Forster was among the judges, and the winner proposed that they be turned into swimming pools. It was rumoured that the colleges’ chaplains offered a rival prize on the subject, ‘What can be done with Dr Crick?’⁸

Bernard Levin’s review of the Sixties decade put Francis Crick centre-stage in the Churchill chapel saga. A wider view of contemporary attitudes and of the potential political ramifications, and another symptom of the saga’s national notoriety, occurred in a TV play screened on BBC television on 13 January 1965. This was Simon Raven’s *Sir Jocelyn, the Minister Would Like a Word*, a ‘comedy of intrigue’. A genial farce, it throws into relief the Sixties culture war between Science and Religion. Sir Jocelyn Symonds chairs the Founding Committee of a brand new institution to be called Kennedy College. It was to be a ‘magnificent compliment to a great man. The college was to be everything up to date, full to bursting with scientists, sociologists, technologists and what have you’. Yet it was also ‘a meeting place for the ancient, and the modern, a venture in

enlightenment, an invitation to the Arts and Sciences to join hands, to lie down together like the lion and the lamb'. In the opening scene, Sir Jocelyn's committee inspects a scale model of the brashly modern college. The architect is excited by his centrepiece, a lecture hall with every mod con, equipped for TV and cinema and concerts. But the Bursar-elect complains that there is no chapel. The committee falls to quarrelling. The anti-religious are incensed. 'The whole of this university's crammed with chapels and churches' ... 'full of cranks in dog-collars' ... 'grotesque superstitions' ... 'obscurantism'. The professor of astronomy intones: 'The faith which is to bind this college is a faith in *intellect*; religion must an incidental matter ... To put up a chapel would be to declare an *official* religion, to suggest a false basis of community, and, worst of all, to *commit* the college in the eyes of the country'. But the Bursar retorts that the country is rotten with atheism, and that the college's founders were bound not to desert the ancient faith of a Christian university, bound not to 'stand by while the gates of hell prevail against us'. The quarrel turns into a choice between building a chapel and building the technologists' dream of a state-of-the-art lecture hall.

The committee is to meet again in two weeks, to vote on the issue. In the interval, the issue hits the nation's front pages. The archbishop of Canterbury pronounces that a college without a chapel commits the sin of intellectual pride. The Minister of Education is worried about public opinion – and worried that students will complain that they don't have the same religious amenities as everyone else – so he tries to lean on Sir Jocelyn, with confidential promises of being appointed to the Order of Merit. Around the university, in labs, on punts, at the cricket ground, committee members consult their friends and their consciences, and are leant on. The college's biologist is virulently anti-religious – he was brutalised in childhood by his clergyman father. The inorganic chemist dreams of a fully equipped lab in college, and of the funds he needs for it. But the Vice Master's nephew wants a chaplaincy; the town mayor wants to get a building contract for a local firm; the classicist fears the new world of 'philistines [and] technologists'; while Baroness Cleethorpe, a left-wing peer, is active on behalf of the Society of Rational Humanists. The Bursar, seeking compromise, blandishes the architect with dreams of an illustrious legacy, if he should build a chapel that could celebrate 'not a dogmatic truth, but the aspiration of man ... man the explorer, man the scholar, man the maker'. In the end, Sir Jocelyn's casting vote tips the balance against the chapel. He gets his 'gong' anyway, because the Minister of Education has learnt that the latest national opinion poll has swung nine points against a chapel at Kennedy College. 'The people now think its money should be spent on something really modern, and this multi-purpose lecture hall exactly fits the bill.'⁹

This was the Churchill College chapel saga as fictional TV satire. What actually happened?

An embarrassment of riches

Francis Crick had already turned down a Fellowship at King's on the ground that it had a chapel, and was disinclined to accept Churchill's offer because there was an intention to build one there. But the geophysicist Sir Edward Bullard talked him into it, telling him that since there was only ten guineas in the chapel fund, and the Trustees would not build without earmarked donations, it would never get off the ground.¹⁰ A chapel had been envisaged from an early moment, as John Morrison was at pains to explain. Morrison, the first Vice Master and Senior Tutor, was deeply opposed to Crick's stand:

this conservative Christian classical scholar locked horns with the atheist biologist and came close to resigning himself, in despair that a chapel might not be built.

It is true that the founding Trustees did not at first intend a chapel. Sir Winston, not a man famous for piety, remarked ‘Why should we have a chapel? – Cambridge is full of churches already’.¹¹ A chapel entered the reckoning on 17 May 1958 when the student newspaper, *Varsity*, pronounced ‘deplorable’ the absence of a chapel in the scheme for the new College announced two days earlier. It commissioned Mervyn Stockwood, the charismatic vicar of Great St Mary’s Church and future bishop of Southwark, to write in protest. That the student newspaper should, on its front page, take this stand is a measure of the strength of Christian earnestness among Cambridge undergraduates in the 1950s. Under Stockwood’s leadership, Great St Mary’s was commanding Sunday congregations of 1500 people; in 1957 he got leading scientists such as Fred Hoyle, Neville Mott, Sir George Thomson, and Robert Thouless, to deliver lectures in Great St Mary’s on the theme of ‘Religion and the Scientists’.¹² There is little doubt that in the ensuing debates the agnostic dons felt somewhat embattled by Cambridge’s apparent religious zeal, although it was typical of the sensitivities of the culture wars (then and now), that both sides felt on the defensive: Stockwood complained that, within the university, theology ‘is regarded as a peripheral Cinderella’.¹³ At Churchill the agnostics would have the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of what, they felt, ought to be a secular and scientific modernity.¹⁴

If the Churchill atheists felt that the future was in their bones, their secular New Jerusalem still seemed a long way off. Britain experienced its last significant religious revival in the 1950s. Most measures of church affiliation showed it at a high point. An influential book in conservative university circles was Sir Walter Moberly’s *Crisis in the University* (1949), which upheld Christian moral education and denounced ‘specialisation, mechanisation, and secularisation’. In 1961 sales of the *New English Bible* and the *Church Times* peaked; and, as late as 1971, an Oxford college excluded a great philosopher from its headship because he was an atheist.¹⁵ Academics lived in a different mental sphere from the wider public. When Stephen Roskill became a Fellow in 1961, a career naval officer with no previous university experience, he remarked, ‘The strongly anti-Christian, and especially anti-Anglican prejudices of many Cambridge men came as a shock and a surprise to me’.¹⁶ The historian Callum Brown has argued that the secularisation of Britain happened late and happened rapidly, in the 1960s.¹⁷

On 22 May 1958 the Trustees noted that ‘a small body of public opinion’ was calling for a chapel, and agreed it should be ‘borne in mind, but that no action should be taken at present’. On the 24th the *Cambridge Review* carried a letter from the Revds Hugh Montefiore and Barry Till, the Deans of Gonville and Caius and Jesus College respectively, asserting that the Trustees ‘have a duty to inform the University at large ... about their intentions with respect to the religious side of the proposed college’. They protested that the proposed college ‘excludes religion’ and will have neither a chapel nor a dean. Both men had distinguished Church careers ahead of them. Montefiore would become one of England’s best-known bishops. Till became Principal of Morley College, London. Stockwood wrote to the *Review* as well. ‘The Christian religion is not an *hors d’oeuvre* nor a savoury that can be tacked on to the main dish for those who want a bit of extra: it is the main dish. ... Our University has a Christian foundation and we exist, among other things, for the promotion of religion’. Noel Annan, the agnostic and pragmatic Provost of King’s and a Churchill Trustee, replied that he ‘had no doubt that the Trustees would welcome donations for building a chapel and endowing services ...

May I ask the Deans of Caius and Jesus whether they wish the chapel should be like that of Harvard – nondenominational?’¹⁸ Montefiore left this question unanswered, but promptly responded with a cheque for ten guineas, earmarked for a chapel. Montefiore later recounted his part in the saga in his memoir, *Oh God, What Next?* (1995). His version is that he and Till went to see Annan about the absence of a chapel, and Annan exclaimed, ‘You won’t believe it, but we forgot!’. He promised to ask ‘the old man’ (Churchill). But Churchill, when asked, said that ‘a quiet room will do’.¹⁹

It was Montefiore’s ten guineas that lit the fuse. Yet the Trustees still havered. In 1958 they minuted that ‘it was generally agreed that a chapel ought to be built for the College, although there were many places of public worship in Cambridge’. In August the executive committee listed a chapel, along with a swimming pool and ice rink, as desirable extras, if funds allowed. In November the Trustees’ specification for the architect included a chapel, ‘at present [to] take the form of a room of approximately 1,500 square feet, but space is to be left on the site plan for a free-standing chapel to be built later if subscriptions are raised’. In many of the twenty architects’ schemes submitted to the College in the following year, the prominence of a chapel is striking, though this probably had as much to do with memorialising Winston as serving Christianity. One scheme offered ‘Chapel Court’ alongside ‘Great Court’ and ‘Hall Court’; another had ‘Chapel Quad’ as well as Master’s, Fellows’, and Library Quads. In Richard Sheppard’s winning design, the chapel was the tallest building, dominating the entrance, intending to provide a kind of Churchillian Valhalla, though it was soon modified, even before it was cut out altogether in the ensuing furore.

Pressure for a chapel at the new College did not come only from Cambridge’s Christians. In July 1958, £10,000 for the College’s general Appeal arrived from a businessman, Mr A. Owen of Rubery Owen (Engineering) Ltd of Darlaston, Staffordshire, with a postscript regretting that no chapel was to be provided, and hoping that, in the new venture, God as well as industry would be joined with higher education. Lord Tedder replied that if the Appeal target were exceeded,

serious consideration will be given to providing a place of worship. This might take the form of a ground floor room with pews in the nave to seat about fifty people, and consecrated in the Church of England. But I tell you this in confidence because the Trustees have decided, for the present, to make no announcement as to whether or not they will eventually build a chapel.

Mr Owen duly sent ten guineas for the chapel fund. In 1959 an eager ordinand wrote to the Trustees asking what was to be done by way of ‘religious instruction’ at Churchill College. He thought it an urgent question, given the College’s special purpose:

It would be a happy thought if the foundation of a college in our scientific age were marked by significant practical steps to show that the divorce between scientific study and the Christian religion is a baseless fiction.

He was assured that the architect’s plan included ‘a prominent position for a future chapel’, and that the draft statutes specified a chaplain.

In November 1958 the proposal to establish the new College had been the topic of a University discussion in the Senate House. The matter of a chapel was sufficiently sensitive for one of the Trustees, the Nobel chemist Sir Alexander Todd, to mention the

issue in his speech. Observing that ‘there has been some concern about the absence of any mention of a chapel in the original Memorandum’, he conceded that ‘the Trustees did not envisage a free-standing chapel in their initial plans’. But he assured the University that an ‘appropriate room’ was now included in the building plans, and that there was a site should a chapel be under ‘consideration at a later stage’. This did not placate Dr R. F. Henderson:

This College, it is hoped, is to retain all the virtues of the Cambridge Colleges. My own College I think, among others, was founded for the promotion of religion, learning, and research. It was not a practice in those foundations to leave the establishment of a chapel to be dealt with afterwards as a minor matter.

If the weight of Cambridge’s Christian past seemed to set a precedent for the new College, Noel Annan, closing the Senate House debate, was armed with other kinds of precedents.

Dr Henderson felt strongly that a chapel was not a minor matter which should be left until the future. Now, in fact, there have been colleges which have been founded without chapels in their initial stages. I believe that Peterhouse was one, and I am certain Downing was another; Downing had no chapel for 150 years, in the sense in which the word is usually used in Cambridge. Surely these Colleges were entitled to come into being without what is called in architectural language ‘a free-standing chapel’.²⁰

Henderson was quite right that ‘religion, learning, and research’ was the familiar formula in the statutes of the ancient colleges. In many colleges, newly elected Fellows today still vow, sometimes in the college chapel itself, to uphold that triad. At Churchill ‘religion’ was never included in the statutory formula of the College’s purposes, nor in the declaration made at the induction of new Fellows (the inclusion of ‘religion’ was initially proposed by the Trustees’ Executive Committee in 1958, but soon dropped).²¹ None the less, when the College came into existence in 1960, the statutes were far from wholly secular. Statute 30 read:

(1) Services in the Chapel shall normally be held in accordance with the usage of the Church of England. The Council shall make such regulations in regard to the holding of services in the Chapel as it may think fit.

(2) There shall be a Chaplain who shall be appointed and shall be removable by the Council. The Council shall define the Chaplain’s duties and determine his stipend and the Chaplain shall be answerable to the Council.

In the meantime, the Revd Hugh Montefiore kept up the pressure. He got up a campaign among his colleagues, the deans of chapels in other colleges. The Sunday chapel collection boxes rattled to save the souls of the future members of Churchill College. £4 10s 5d came from Gonville and Caius; £12 17s 6d from Peterhouse; £43 12s 4d from King’s; and so on. Such sums do not build a chapel: the point was to offer money that was earmarked. Montefiore then netted a far bigger fish:

I then set about finding a donor. Unfortunately the old rich people whom I knew were all Jews, who could hardly be asked for a chapel. There was, however, a wealthy priest whose father had served in the same regiment as I had been during the war. Timothy, now Lord Beaumont, after reading Agriculture at Oxford, had come to Westcott [an Anglican training college in Cambridge] to train for the priesthood when I was Vice Principal there. He had come into his inheritance and had been immensely generous in giving away large sums, so that today he is no longer wealthy.

In February 1960, Montefiore told Cockcroft that he had found a donor willing to fund the entire cost of a chapel. Beaumont wanted a free-standing chapel. The two clergymen had in mind a building of perhaps 60 feet by 30, to seat about 100 people. Cockcroft met Beaumont at Buck's Club on 5 May 1960 to seal the benefaction. The newly appointed chaplain, Canon Noel Duckworth, took discussions further. In February 1961, Beaumont signed a covenant amounting to £28,000 (approaching £550,000 in current values). The benefactor's name was supposed to be kept confidential, but it was soon public knowledge.

Beaumont, then only 31 years old, was a remarkable man, an Anglican priest and a Liberal politician, the editor not only of *Modern Religious Verse* but also of *The Liberal Cookbook*. In 1960-1 he was owner and editor of the political and literary magazine *Time and Tide* and he went on to edit other artistic and Christian journals, and to be a successful publisher, becoming chairman of Studio Vista Books. A foodie, he wrote a culinary column in the *Illustrated London News*. He was made a life peer in 1967 and for many years was Liberal spokesman in the House of Lords on education and the arts. Cockcroft and Beaumont were colleagues in the higher reaches of the Liberal Party: the former was elected national president in 1967 and the latter in 1969 (Beaumont persuaded Cockcroft to accept the presidency, over breakfast at Churchill College).²² By the end of the century, Beaumont, now a bearded sage, was sitting in the House of Lords as its sole Green Party member.

Why should Beaumont have offered so large a sum to the new college? It was impulsive largesse, to Christianise a project that had captured the national imagination. He later declared that he had been chiefly influenced by the passionate persuasiveness of Montefiore and Cockcroft.²³ But his motives were probably mixed. In part it was sheer devilish mischief-making, or at least heavy irony, at Winston Churchill's expense. Winston was irreligious, and not everyone liked his politics. Beaumont's father, a squirearchical high Tory, detested Churchill, as did most Conservatives before 1940. George Steiner wrote, 'I always felt [his motives] to be political and intended to make trouble'. Montefiore thought the College 'fools' to accept the money without thinking of the consequences.²⁴

With Beaumont's covenant signed, a Chapel Committee set to work to consider a building.²⁵ It was to stand at the very portals of the College, to the north of the main entrance, between the porters' lodge and the squash courts. 'The position of the chapel is ideal from every point of view', enthused Canon Duckworth. It would form the east side of a courtyard, opposite the sheer wall of the great dining hall, with its own miniature triple barrel-vault echoing the great triple barrel-vault of the hall. In May 1961 construction of the central buildings of the College commenced. The foundation piles for the chapel were driven. That is as far as it ever got. The piles still lie beneath the ground, but the east side of the courtyard was never built. A fond folktale is that the

squash courts were built to fill the gap: this is untrue, but it has apocryphal charm, a game of squash being the secular don's weekly sacrament, and the massive bulk of the squash courts, standing as they do at the front of the College, symbolise a distinctly worldly sense of human well-being.

Disestablishing the church

On 8 July 1961 the Master received a request from Sir Edward Bullard, on behalf of 'a number of Fellows', requesting that the matter of the chapel be discussed by the Governing Body, because the Fellowship had not had the opportunity to express a view. Bullard pulled no punches:

Strictly, I suppose, this is a matter for the Trustees, but I think it would be unfortunate if they built a chapel and then found that a large proportion of the Fellows felt strongly against it, particularly if any Fellows were to resign over the matter. My impression is that a few Fellows feel strongly anti-chapel, but that a vote would show us pretty evenly divided.

Bullard did not say on whose behalf he wrote, but John Morrison noted that they numbered Francis Crick, Richard Adrian (future Master of Pembroke College), and Anthony Kelly (future Vice Chancellor of Surrey University), and 'one or two more'. The economist Frank Hahn, the chemist Alan Katritzky, the physicist Archie Howie, and the zoologist Martin Wells, were among others hostile to a chapel. Yet these were not exclusively non- or anti-Christian: Kelly was a practising Roman Catholic, but not only did he think a chapel 'irrelevant', but also there was in him an element of the traditional Catholic (and Nonconformist) distaste for the Anglican 'Establishment'.²⁶ Cockcroft agreed that the matter should be discussed when the Governing Body next met, after the summer vacation. He added a postscript, 'Even MIT has a chapel! Why should we be less tolerant?'

Crick's resignation later in the summer, before any formal discussion by the Fellows, was a bombshell. Even the chapel sceptics thought it a bizarre over-reaction. 'I think the *general* reaction to this has been that the action is a foolish and indefensible one', wrote Morrison on 20 September. Richard Keynes had written to Crick in August trying to dissuade him. The Fellows, he said, were 'powerless' to reverse the Trustees' acceptance of the chapel gift; resignation 'would be futile, if a noble gesture! Will the chapel do any really positive harm? Surely you do not rate the proselytizing powers of the Church of England very high?' If people like Crick resigned, the College would 'rapidly degenerate into just another college. Resignation of persons like yourself will only accelerate this process, so please don't.' On the phone, Keynes wondered if Crick would find it acceptable if all the religious fabric in the chapel were movable: no Christian fixtures or fittings.²⁷ Crick later regretted that he did not stay long enough to argue his case. But he had other things on his mind in autumn 1961, since, for all the importance of his 1953 breakthrough, it was only now that subsequent experimental work was reaching its climax. Within three months of his resignation, he and his colleagues published in *Nature* a landmark paper on the 'General Nature of the Genetic Code for Proteins'. Only now did the national press begin to give him wide coverage and to talk of his 'unravelling the secret of life'. Crick had no time to spare for senior

common room quarrels over chapels. Even so, he found time to prepare a letter to the Master explaining himself:

I am sure there are many people in Cambridge, especially scientists, who believe that nowadays Christianity is a firm superstition, and who feel that this will become increasingly obvious to most educated people in the future. Apparently this does not prevent unbelievers from accepting college fellowships. Indeed some of them go so far as to have their children christened, which seems to me ridiculous. One can only conclude that they regard Christianity as a completely harmless set of beliefs and that they tolerate it as one might humour a somewhat eccentric aunt. I cannot agree with this point of view. It seems to me shameful that a great university should be used for the furtherance of superstitions and although Christianity is no longer virulent, it is surely not yet harmless.²⁸

We now need to note what did *not* happen next, for there is, in print, a flawed narrative written by the one other Fellow who claimed to be heroically alone in sharing the extremity of Crick's view. This was the College's first Fellow in history, Andrew Sinclair, who had published two successful novels while still an undergraduate, and was completing his PhD thesis on the American Prohibition era. In his autobiographical history of the 1960s, he wrote:

At a special meeting of the 25 Fellows, the two doyens of the scientific Establishment, the agnostic Charles Snow and the embattled John Cockcroft, challenged each other. The speeches were those of another age and might have been spoken in the controversy over Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. Eventually, the vote went by 13 to 12 against the Anglican chapel. But within twenty-four hours, Lord [*sic*] Cockcroft had broken the opposition, approaching each of the rebellious thirteen with the statement that he might resign as Master and destroy the nascent College unless we changed our vote. Eleven did so, but Francis Crick and myself would not. It was a matter of principle. Either the Fellows ran our policy by our votes or the Master did as an autocracy. And both of us soon resigned our Fellowships, although Cockcroft assured me that I could come back when I changed my mind.²⁹

There is, however, no evidence of a 'special meeting' taking place before the ordinary Governing Body meeting in October, by which time Crick had already resigned. There is no record of a vote of '13 to 12 against the Anglican chapel'. Nor do the records suggest that the issue turned upon the Master's authority, or that Cockcroft threatened resignation. None the less, there may here at least be some capturing of the mood of the October discussion: the College was indeed staging a set piece replay of the Victorian contest between Science and Religion. And how apt it was that the still small Fellowship counted among its members a great-grandson of Charles Darwin (Richard Darwin Keynes, together with his brother-in-law Richard Adrian), and a grandson of the militantly atheist visionary of science's brave new world, H. G. Wells (Martin Wells). Both were against the chapel.

The meeting of the Governing Body on 11 October 1961, just days after the admission of the first undergraduates, was a tense one. Morrison put in a paper showing

that a chapel had long been intended and that Statute 30 required that its religious services should normally be of an Anglican character. Into the middle ground between Morrison and the departed Crick stepped eleven Fellows: among them a few Christians (two would later be members of the Chapel Trust), but mostly an agnostic phalanx in search of an acceptable compromise. They signed a paper accepting a chapel, but a chapel which would bear no signs or symbols of any particular beliefs. This is what they wrote:

The older Cambridge colleges have an historical association with the Church of England. This association, which is maintained by compromises not always free from embarrassment, would be difficult to break. In the case of a new college, it seems to us proper to provide facilities for the religious activities of our members, but we should be sorry if the College appeared to sponsor any particular set of religious beliefs. We hope the Governing Body ... will adopt the following propositions ... (1) The chapel is provided as a place of worship for any member of the College. (2) The chapel shall be available for any religious service. Application for use of the chapel shall be made to the Council. The Council shall have the power to refuse any application it considers frivolous. (3) When a service is not in progress the chapel shall be open for prayer and meditation; the design and decoration of the chapel shall not be such as might prevent any member of the College using the chapel for those purposes. If these propositions are adopted ... we suggest that the necessary procedure be started to amend Statute 30.

In essence, the agnostic phalanx's chapel would be a meditation room, dedicated to a high-minded but contentless humanist universalism, but available for use by any and all who preferred something more specific. In one sense, it was quite prescient, for, around that time, there were demands on other university campuses for a designated all-purpose faith space. One is reminded of the carefully neutral room in the United Nations Headquarters, adorned with a meditation supplied by Dag Hammarskold. There is also such a building on the campus of the University of Sussex, where agnosticism had also to be appeased: it is a visually stunning but symbolically neutral 'Meeting House', opened in 1965. (Malcolm Bradbury's campus novel, *The History Man* (1975), satirises a 'multi-denominational chapel, named, to avoid offence, the Contemplation Centre'.³⁰) At Churchill, the signatories to the agnostic compromise included scions of Cambridge's 'intellectual aristocracy', Keynes, Adrian, and Wells (all men of the life sciences), together with the College's doyens of central European secular Judaism – the economist Frank Hahn and the student of comparative literature George Steiner.³¹

Support for this somewhat airy spiritual universalism came also from another Fellow, John Oriel, a retired Shell executive who had been blinded in the trenches of the First World War. He told Cockcroft that he believed that Statute 30 should be upheld but that Anglicanism could be interpreted pretty 'freely':

My feeling therefore is that the 'Oratory', for such I should prefer to call it, in form and framework should follow the Anglican Church, but as the first College to be founded at Cambridge in the new age, Churchill could do much to lead in the enlightened study of religion from the Buddhism of Aldous Huxley to the

'new humanism' of Julian Huxley, getting speakers of all countries and all faiths to put forward their creeds.³²

The 11 October meeting brought no resolution. Richard Adrian developed the phalanx's thinking in a further paper. Statute 30 should be amended; religious symbols in the chapel would all be moveable so as 'to preclude the display of a cross in the chapel except during a Christian service'. The next meeting on 8 November approved the phalanx's three propositions, by a narrow majority. The third proposition was now reworded to close with the phrase:

There shall be no symbolic objects on permanent display or incorporated in the fabric which might prevent any members of the College using the chapel.³³

The Master was instructed to communicate these propositions to Timothy Beaumont. Deadlock ensued. The stronger-minded Anglicans continued to take advice from Montefiore. Morrison went to see him. He also heard from Anthony Hewish, who had known him at Caius College, where he had been a Fellow until his recent transfer to Churchill. Hewish was a sidesman at the Church of St Edward King and Martyr in Cambridge; later he would win a Nobel Prize for his work in astronomy. (In this saga, the score of Nobel Laureates was two-to-one in favour of a chapel.) Montefiore was angry: 'the three resolutions, although liberal in form, were really an attack on Christianity'.³⁴ Morrison contemplated resignation: 'I cannot be Senior Tutor in a College which does not profess and call itself Christian'. (When Hahn suggested that a multi-purpose building could have a crucifix which could be spirited away at the touch of a button, he was summoned to Morrison's home, who opened by demanding to know why he hated the cross.)³⁵

Beaumont was distressed that his benefaction had 'caused a disruption'. As to the three resolutions, 'I am considerably perturbed by the third one'. His benefaction had been grounded on Statute 30; he did not wish to repudiate his gift, but nor did he wish that it be used for a purpose alien to him. 'As a Christian priest', he wrote, 'I should not wish to give large sums for a religiously neutral building ... I hope you will not think me illiberal in my views'. He was willing that occasionally non-Christians could worship in the chapel, though he could not imagine that that would be a frequent occurrence. He was willing that there be moveable furnishings, which could be removed on such rare occasions. But his gift was for a building that was fundamentally a Christian chapel.³⁶ Beaumont stood his ground: to withdraw his benefaction would be to give in. 'Neither Montefiore nor Beaumont wanted anti-Christ to win.'³⁷ Many years later, Beaumont found an apposite quotation from T. S. Eliot, derived in turn from the book of Nehemiah: 'There are those who would build the Temple, / And those who prefer that the Temple should not be built.'³⁸

In the early weeks of 1962 all of Cambridge was talking of the fracas at Churchill. The donor was firm; so were the agnostics and liberals. On 14 February, the Governing Body considered Beaumont's reply, and voted by 17 to 7 to re-affirm the three propositions. If Beaumont was unable to accept them, he should be released from his covenant. In that event, the College would set aside a simple room defined by the three propositions.³⁹

The issue for Christianity was now as sharp as it could be. The Governing Body would allow no permanent cross in the chapel, the central symbol of Christianity. Beaumont felt that this was

a moment when one should take the scandal of the Cross perhaps even more literally than St Paul meant it, and dig our toes in. The only compromise I can think of might be the inclusion of a separate Chapel of Unity for meditation in the main chapel, but this is probably going to complicate the architect's task.⁴⁰

It was young Fellow in Classics, John Killen, who, late in February 1962, proposed the compromise that would provide the eventual solution. Killen put the suggestion to Morrison, who made it his own proposition. He did so with a heavy heart, for it meant abandoning the historical ideal of a chapel integral to the central fabric of the College. He suggested that a Christian chapel be built with Beaumont's gift at some distance from the main College buildings, and that within the College there would simply be a Meditation Room for general use. This notion was prompted by a conversation with George Steiner and Richard Keynes after the October meeting of the Governing Body. They had said, 'Why not buy St Michael's Church?' This was the redundant medieval church in Trinity Street, opposite Caius College.⁴¹ Morrison had expressed surprise at this notion: 'But it's full of Christian symbols'. That didn't matter, they replied, because it would not be part of the College. This seeded an ingenious idea: a chapel that would not formally be part of the College, but which could be physically much closer than St Michael's. Killen suggested the legal form of the compromise: Beaumont should be asked to transfer his gift to an independent trust to comprise 'those Fellows of the College who were keen on having a Christian chapel'. The trust would ask the College to make over a plot of land on its periphery, 'so as not to be technically a part of the College, or visibly attached to the complex of College buildings'. The trust would build a chapel 'as a place of Christian worship by any Christian denomination'. Morrison concluded that the Churchill College Chapel Society Trust would, as the provider of a private but proximate amenity, be comparable to, say, the College Squash Club, though the latter 'will however be in a more favoured position with regard to its building'. Morrison talked through the scheme with Montefiore on 22 February, and quickly won over the Master and the Bursar.

This was the proposal that the Governing Body accepted on 21 March 1962. Thereupon, the chapel ceased, strictly speaking, to be the business of the College: it would now be a matter for an independent Trust. There would be no chapel in the heart of the College: there would be a Quiet Room instead. (In fact, no such Quiet Room came into being.) The architect was invited to consider 'how best to fill the gap left by the removal of the chapel'.⁴² It is said, perhaps apocryphally, that Cockcroft took a knife and cut out the chapel from the architect's balsawood model of the College.

The resolution of the crisis, and the achievement of a chapel, albeit in compromised form, prompted from the College's chaplain, Canon Duckworth, a characteristically excitable outburst: 'The building will stand *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, as a witness to the Faith of the Founding Fathers'. He seemed to view the Master, the Vice Master, and the other Christian Fellows as standing heroically *contra mundum*, like the martyrs of the early Church in the face of the pagan Roman Empire. As for Crick, Cockcroft begged him to reconsider, but got the response: 'no chapel of any sort'.⁴³

A variation of the compromise was briefly entertained. In May 1962 Cockcroft and Morrison met Rosemary Murray, President of the new nearby women's college, New Hall, to consider the possibility of a shared chapel. Fitzwilliam College was also asked if it wished to join in. But both colleges declined the offer, saying they hoped eventually to have chapels of their own. Fitzwilliam built its own in 1994; New Hall (now called Murray Edwards) still has none.

During 1962 a chapel committee was formed. It would draft a Trust deed whose objects would be to build 'a Christian college chapel' and to appoint a chaplain 'of any Christian faith'.⁴⁴ At the close of the year it got to work to consider the design and fittings of the independent chapel. It drew upon the expertise of Montefiore, Charles Moule (Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity), Victor de Waal (chaplain of King's College and later Dean of Canterbury), and his wife, Dr Esther de Waal of Newnham College, who were experts in modern liturgy and its architectural setting.⁴⁵ The committee toyed with commissioning a different architect from the College's. This produced a predictable outburst from Richard Sheppard: 'The chapel has always been a part of the College and I have never been told that it was abandoned – merely that it would not be built in the position which had been agreed'.⁴⁶ The architectural adviser Sir Leslie Martin recommended asking instead Colin ('Sandy') Wilson, the College's own Fellow in architecture, later the designer of the new British Library, but it was decided to stick with Sheppard.⁴⁷ In fact, Sheppard would devote rather more personal attention to designing the chapel than he gave to much of the College for which he was formally responsible.

The wheels turned slowly. Legal opinion was sought on the complexity of the semi-detached relationship between the College and the Trust. The wording of the Trust deed was still causing problems in 1964, for tact was also needed within the Christian ranks. The draft referred to religious services 'according to the use of the Church of England and also according to the use of other Christian bodies'. Canon Duckworth pointed out that to imply that the Church of England had a special position might 'raise the most violent objections'. The draft was revised to read 'according to the use of such Christian churches commonly accepted as are permitted by the Trustees to use it'.

In 1964 the chapel committee asked the College for a 99-year lease of a plot of land upon which to build a chapel. The chapel issue now returned to the College in a new form. Where, within the College grounds, would the Fellows tolerate a chapel? In July 1965 the new Vice Master, Kenneth McQuillen, warned that there was 'still much (if not more) opposition to the building of a chapel anywhere on College land'. Several Fellows still believed that the Trust should build elsewhere. McQuillen told the Master that the issue at Governing Body would probably 'lead to an impassioned debate and a likely defeat of the proposal and some bitterness'. However, having taken the precaution of discovering in advance, by questionnaire, where opinion stood, it turned out that 37 Fellows would allow a chapel somewhere on the site, with probably only six flatly opposed. What placated the doubters was that the site was to be as far away as possible from the main body of the College on the western boundary.

The questionnaire responses are remarkable. Most accepted that the College must abide by the decision taken three years before. Even so, the sceptics engaged in fulsome rehearsals of indignation, and disquisitions on liberalism, secularism, Christianity, and multi-faith societies. Perhaps the most contorted response was that of a Fellow who insisted that the chapel must be sited such that access would only be from a public highway and not across College land. Several repeated the thought that Cambridge was scarcely short of places of worship and that £25,000 could be better spent. One

respondent averred that what Cambridge needed was faster roads and shopping malls, not chapels. Some repeated their objection that the chapel would be Christian, for, in a College with strong Commonwealth connections, was this not insulting to Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims? Was not Sussex University's Meeting House a multi-faith building? Some, who were otherwise neutral, thought the deciding factor was the wish of students to have a chapel, so that this was a matter of tolerating the enthusiasms of youth: 'It is right for the College to assist, in the same way that it assists other activities by groups of undergraduates'. Another spoke as if it were still the 1920s: 'so long as chapel-going is not compulsory'. One lofty atheist concluded that it was, on balance, less dangerous to allow than to refuse the chapel: 'While I am as reluctant as anyone to assist in the propagation of error, I have concluded that to refuse the request would be more likely to encourage militant Christianity, than to agree to it. And that while to accept would in no way damage the College's scholarly reputation, to refuse might well provide material for hostile journalists for many years to come'. Another feared an infestation of 'Holy Rollers and Grahamites' (followers of Billy Graham, the American evangelist). Another unbeliever pronounced that 'the College should do nothing which establishes one set of beliefs as somehow more official than others'. One of the most famous Fellows, C. P. Snow, wrote that he was 'lukewarm about the chapel': 'My inclination in general is strongly in favour of the College marking itself out as distinct from the other large Cambridge colleges. But I doubt whether, since the Chapel affair has gone so far, this is the right issue to fight on. I would rather clamour for more money and the heterodox use of some of it.' John Oriel, the Shell executive, an Edwardian agnostic, penned a lengthy secular sermon. He had, he wrote, spent long enough in the Middle East to have witnessed the sheer arrogance of Christianity. People ought to have no need of a god, but plainly many found solace in religion and they should not be begrudged. Yet it was a pity that weak humanity had need of such props: better the 'Undying Fire' of the scientific outlook – he was here quoting the title of H. G. Wells's 1919 novel.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, on a Sunday evening in February 1965 a student meeting passed a resolution requesting that 'steps be taken with respect to the establishment of a College chapel' and that construction should commence 'at the earliest possible date'. Why the undergraduates were imbued with such religious fervour is not clear, though Canon Duckworth was suspected of inciting it. He was gleeful at this turn towards piety, remarking that three years earlier the students would have been violently hostile. It moved him to quote the Reformation theologian Theodore Beza: 'the church is an anvil that hath worn out many hammers'.⁴⁹

During 1965 the Governing Body voted to repeal Statute 30. The first paragraph concerning Anglican worship in a College chapel disappeared; the second paragraph, concerning the chaplain, was transferred to Ordinances, and amended to read 'chaplain or other welfare officer', raising the possibility of a secular alternative.

It was not until 1966 that the Chapel Trust formally came into existence. There were to be between four and eight Trustees, who must be members of the Governing Body, and therefore Fellows of the College. The Chapel Fund was handed over. The Trust had about £30,000 at its disposal. It resolved to allocate £20,000 to build the chapel and £8,000 for an endowment to sustain running expenses. In the event the building cost £24,000.

Building began in July 1966. The *Sunday Telegraph* announced that 'work ... will start this month after eight years of controversy'.⁵⁰ The chapel was opened on 15

October 1967, an event overshadowed by the sudden death of the first Master. His widow, Lady Elizabeth Cockcroft, formally unlocked the door. Timothy Beaumont preached the first sermon. They were joined by the Bishop of Ely and clergy representing the Catholic, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist denominations. Within four years 5000 people had signed the visitors' book.

Building for the liturgical revolution

The chapel lies 500 yards from the main body of the College – a deterrent to unenergetic church-goers – but it is strikingly visible beyond the playing fields, on the highest terrace, majestically solitary against the screen of trees that separates the College from the University's Astronomical Observatory.⁵¹ The architectural critics Philip Booth and Nicholas Taylor complained that Richard Sheppard

attempted to give it a come-back on the College scene by grossly over-scaling it as a kind of garden temple silhouetted against trees – the equivalent of a late eighteenth-century Doric eye-catcher. From the College, it groups happily with the other sculptures by Moore and Hepworth. But from close quarters the heavy-handed beams almost overwhelm ...⁵²

The design of churches and chapels is not a matter of stylistic whim. It is driven by liturgical considerations. Down the ages, Christians have spent great passions, and spilt blood as well as ink, on intricate questions of 'ecclesiology' – theories about the proper arrangement of church interiors and the proper style of exteriors. The presence and shape of chancels, the position of altars, the use of rood screens, the avoidance of 'idolatrous' images, the appeal to Gothic and Classical and Baroque, have all divided Christians in past times.

The design of the chapel at Churchill was entirely novel in a Cambridge collegiate setting, and was shaped by liturgical developments that came to the fore in the 1960s. As with the College's architecture as a whole, we need to remind ourselves that what is now a familiar modernism once offered the shock of the new. A free-standing chapel in its remote position allowed more liberty for experiment than would have been possible in its original location at the heart of the College. Moreover, the design of a chapel in the mid-1960s was likely to heed a wind of liturgical change not yet sufficiently felt when Sheppard first planned the College in the late 1950s. It is important to grasp how radically different the chapel that was built in 1966 was from that first envisaged in 1960. The 1960 chapel would have been modernist in architectural form yet traditional in plan.

The traditional collegiate pattern for a chapel was rectangular – for example, Christopher Wren's classical double cube at Pembroke. The altar table is placed at the east end, and there are fixed choir stalls facing each other the length of the chapel. This served the choral tradition of the ancient colleges and descended from the antiphony of medieval monks. Twentieth-century chapels had not departed from this pattern. At Westminster College, the Presbyterian seminary near to Churchill, the chapel, built in 1921, is a 1,400 square foot rectangle. This was still the pattern for Downing College, the most recent model to hand, built in the 1950s. This was 54 by 30 feet (1,600 square feet), with a spacious antechapel. The variation at Westminster and Downing was that the east end was apsidal – a hint of the Byzantine fashion that would affect Sheppard's design at

Churchill. The Churchill College chapel as first envisaged in 1960 would have faithfully followed the old model. Canon Duckworth drew a sketch in December 1960. The altar is at the east end; seating is placed in facing tiers, choir-stall style; there are stalls at the west end reserved for the Master and Vice Master; behind them is a screen and an antechapel. A vestry and organ were placed on either side of the sanctuary. The chapel would seat 168 people in the stalls, with a further 64 on moveable chairs in the broad aisle. A few months later, the draft instructions to the architect followed suit. Even when the later chapel was designed, there was initially talk of having fixed choir stalls around the walls and a stall reserved for the Master. The 1960 chapel of Churchill would have looked very like the chapel of Downing.

However, by the mid-1960s two new desiderata came to the fore. First, the chapel was to be interdenominational and ecumenical, and must therefore be flexible enough to meet divergent liturgical needs. Even aside from this consideration, the extent of liturgical experiment within the modern Church at large was such as to demand flexible floorspace, in which fixtures and fittings were a hindrance. Canon Duckworth pronounced that the fittings and furnishings should not be fixed: in ‘an age of change’ worship must be ‘unfettered’. Secondly, a liturgical wind of change was sweeping the altar table from the east end towards the heart of the congregation. Where the medieval sacramental liturgy had been practically invisible, screened off in the chancel at the east end, the congregation being merely passive observers of priestly Latin mummery, the modern liturgy by contrast placed the minister at the heart of an actively participating congregation, worship now corporate and vernacular. This liturgical revolution was most marked in the Roman Catholic Church: as a result of the Second Vatican Council tens of thousands of altars were moved westwards so that the priest could celebrate Mass facing the congregation. For ancient buildings, the application of these desiderata entailed, in the minds of many, unforgivable aesthetic vandalism. But at Churchill, such considerations could be incarnated in a new building. Two persuasive books in reshaping British church architecture in the 1960s were Peter Hammond’s *Liturgy and Architecture* (1960) and his *Towards a Church Architecture* (1962). The Anglican ‘Liturgical Movement’ found its most influential expression in St Paul’s Church, Bow Common, London, designed by Robert Maguire and Keith Murray, and built in 1958-60, a cube with a central altar under a lantern roof. More famous is Liverpool’s dramatic Roman Catholic Cathedral (nicknamed ‘Paddy’s Wigwam’), opened in 1967, where the altar is placed at the centre of a circular church.⁵³ Likewise, the keynote of the new design at Churchill was to be its central plan, and the abandonment of the ancient east-west axial orientation. As Duckworth wrote, it ‘caught the spirit of the modern liturgical movement’. Whereas Basil Spence’s new Coventry Cathedral (1956-62) was liturgically antiquated the day it opened, and whereas a Churchill chapel in 1960 would, like Coventry, have had a rectangular nave and an east end chancel, the chapel, as built, put aside a thousand years of church design.⁵⁴

Liturgical flexibility meant mobility. The altar table, lecterns, font, organ, and seating were all to be moveable. (In the event, the font and organ were fixed.) Duckworth wrote that ‘if anybody using the chapel wished to “play church” the furniture could be moved to create the atmosphere congenial to and consistent with every particular ritual or lack of it’. An ecclesiastical toolkit was to be made equally available for the ministry of the sacrament or the ministry of the word. ‘The guitar is as much at home in it as a full orchestra. In it, the said service is as sincere as the elaborateness of High Mass or full Evensong.’ The central position of the altar would

allow the congregation to gather around it, engendering an ‘exciting community’ of devotion. These were again Duckworth’s phrases.⁵⁵ (In practice, however, since the 1970s the table has been moved to the eastward flank of the central square, between the pillars, the other three sides formed by the congregation. This might be read as a conservative move, an eastward tendency re-asserting itself; or it might be thought of as an evangelical move, de-emphasising the altar in favour of the lectern. At the design stage, the Trustees had wobbled over the central placement, but Sheppard insisted that the design of the whole building depended upon the central top lit altar.)

The draft instructions for the architect in 1963 called for a building of about 2,000 square feet, to seat 100 people. It specified clergy and choir vestries, and perhaps an ante-chapel. Something ‘warm, cheerful, light’ was asked for. The Trustees got something cool, austere, dark. But it was a little larger: 48 feet square, and 14 feet high. It seats 100 comfortably, 200 at a squeeze. Sheppard fretted, as he always did, at the financial constraints. He worried that the money available made it inevitable that the building ‘could only be a small one’, and that it might look insignificant on its site. By placing the entrance at one corner, so that one enters on the diagonal, he enhanced the sense of space. This placement was, however, a late decision. The original intention was to have a cloister or veranda along the west flank, with the entrance at the centre — which would indeed have been the traditional position for a church door. The cloister, and a garden, were dropped, to save money.

The building is a modern interpretation of a Byzantine basilica. The key feature is the plan and section, which take the form of a Greek cross. The four concrete beams on their supporting columns make four crosses which form the inner square. The roof is of timber. Above the centre is a pine lantern, to provide top lighting to the altar below: this was meant to be the chief source of natural light. At the east end is a shallow embrasure of one and half feet, not for an altar, but for an organ. To improve the acoustic, a large area of internal brickwork was left with 2¼ inch spaces between each vertical joint, these backed by absorbent material. For the fabric, Sheppard retained the idiom he had already used in the College.⁵⁶ The same medium brown Stamfordstone bricks were used, with a reinforced concrete frame, bricks and concrete both exposed, internally and externally. Externally, the dominant features are the four chunky triangles of concrete that rise over the centre — the muscular over-scaling that Booth and Taylor complained about. They were no more complimentary about the internal layout. They thought the centralized plan ‘naive’, since

younger liturgical architects years ago realized the simple fact that a priest occupies less space than the congregation he faces: so fan-shaped or elliptical plans are more suitable than circles (as at Liverpool Cathedral) or squares (as here).⁵⁷

The chapel was intended to achieve a feeling of withdrawal and stillness by an almost complete absence of windows in the external walls. No other buildings can be seen from inside the chapel, and almost nothing can be heard of the world outside. There are eight narrow vertical slit windows beneath the cantilevered beams. Originally they were painted blue; now they contain stained glass. The exception is the large pane on the west side, which looks towards a copse — but this west end was intended to have been a meeting room, available for extra chapel seating, and normally to be closed off by

a sliding partition, which was never put in. In consequence, more daylight enters a nevertheless dark chapel than the architect intended.

Sensitive to possible charges of 'idolatry' that might come from the plainer sort of Christian, the Trustees were cautious about accepting gifts of ornaments. An abstract three-dimensional hanging cross, designed by Keith Thyssen of Sheffield, and a set of four candlesticks, were given by the Goldsmiths' Company. Duckworth affirmed that 'the strictest demander of plainness in worship feels no sense of idolatry at the presence of the hanging cross, nor do the impressive standard candlesticks cause embarrassment'. The altar table was given by Revd Dr A. C. Bouquet, vicar of All Saints Church and lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity. A set of one hundred 'Coventry chairs' were commissioned from Sir Gordon Russell, Britain's pre-eminent furniture designer and leading light of the Festival of Britain, the model being the chairs designed for that epitome of post-war Modernist ecclesiastical taste, Coventry Cathedral. The lecterns were designed by Richard Sheppard and donated by the contractor, Rattee and Kett. The stone font was designed by Peter Sellwood. The credence table was the gift of Mowbray's, the Christian booksellers and church furnishers. The kneelers were designed by Julia Ball, and, as if to introduce a whiff of the social world of a traditional English rural parish, they were embroidered by the lady wives of some of the Fellows, led by Mrs Stephen Roskill. Outside, a small bell tower was erected over the entrance, carrying a 150lb bell, from the aircraft carrier HMS Hermes, which had been launched in 1953 by Lady Spencer-Churchill, and was acquired from the Admiralty by the naval historian Captain Roskill.

In 1964 the organ of the Central Methodist Church at Todmorden, built in 1908, was dismantled and put in store for reuse at Churchill. This was arranged by Cockcroft's brother Eric, who ran the family textile mill. Cockcroft hoped that thereby the spirit of his Yorkshire Methodist roots could be resurrected in the new chapel and he told Eric that he looked forward to its use on 'important choral occasions'. But it was not a sensible idea. The organ had 2,085 pipes, larger than that of the University Church of Great St Mary's. It would have had to be reduced to a quarter of its size; even then, it would need a space nearly ten feet square; the cost of transport and rebuilding was put at £7,000; and its tonal character was quite unsuitable. In 1966 the Trust recognised it made no sense and sold the Todmorden organ. In the matter of what to do next, George Guest, the organist at St John's, was kept busy, organ builders visiting his college rooms with vexing frequency. At Sheppard's suggestion, Noel Mander of Hackney, London, provided a temporary organ, in the expectation of building a permanent one when funds became available. Mander was at that time building the Winston Churchill Memorial organ at Westminster College, Missouri, and had recently restored the organ at Peterhouse. There were negotiations with Mander in 1968 for a permanent organ, but the Trustees balked at his price of £7,000. In the event they turned for advice to David Willcocks, the renowned director of music at King's College, and it was decided to commission a smaller organ, costing £3,750, from a local firm, E. J. Johnson of Queen Edith's Way. The order was placed in 1971 and the organ, which has two manuals with pedals and mechanical action, was dedicated in 1973, six years after the opening of the chapel.

The other late addition is John Piper's wonderful stained glass. Piper (1903-92), a designer of stage sets, tapestry, fabrics, ceramics, and mosaics, a painter and book illustrator, was, above all, the most distinguished contributor to the post-war revival of ecclesiastical stained glass in Britain. He produced glass for Coventry Cathedral,

Liverpool Catholic Cathedral, Eton College chapel, Nuffield College, Oxford, chapel, the Churchill Memorial Window in the National Cathedral in Washington DC, the Benjamin Britten Window at Aldeburgh, and, in 1981, Robinson College chapel, Cambridge. Lord Beaumont wrote that ‘there is certainly no one in England who would do the windows better than John Piper’. He was commissioned by the Trustees in 1967, and the windows were unveiled in October 1970 as a memorial to Sir John Cockcroft. Executed by Patrick Reyntiens, they are made of glass (Piper originally considered fibre glass) and set in bronze. They fill the eight tall narrow windows. The theme is ‘Let there be light’ (Genesis 1: 3). At the east: humanity’s search for truth and God’s revelation. At the west: humanity’s industry and God’s creativity. At the north: humanity’s search for beauty and God’s response. At the south: humanity’s search for love and God’s response. Respectively, in blue, mauve, gold, and green. Piper’s friend, an Anglican minister named V. E. G. McKenna, urged upon him a less purely abstract design, wishing him to include drops of blood, to signify Christ’s remission of sins. Regretting their absence, he wrote to Piper, ‘Perhaps after all Divine Providence had a hand in it and Churchill got the windows it deserved. They never really wanted Christianity.’⁵⁸

With remarkable dedication, the Trustees, and Canon Duckworth, had raised from private subscriptions the whole cost of both organ and windows. The College contributed no more than £500, for the organ – as much again came from Richard Hey, Fellow in geology, who succeeded Cockcroft as chair of the Trustees. The cost of the glass, £6500, was borne especially by Lord Beaumont and the families of Cockcroft and Oriel, including a donation from the Cockcroft textile mill at Todmorden. No stone was left unturned. The children of Pocklington School in Yorkshire gave £29, left over after raising the cost of a piano to be sent to a mission school in Dar es Salaam.

It is possible that the College’s chapel dispute indirectly won for Piper his final major work in stained glass, at Robinson College chapel. The College’s benefactor was David Robinson, who had made his fortune from television and radio rentals. According to the founding Warden, Lord (Jack) Lewis, when Robinson heard there might be objections to having a chapel, the reply came back: ‘Very simple, Lewis. No chapel, no college’. Robinson called for Piper in 1977, after seeing Piper’s work in a TV documentary about Coventry Cathedral, and then took an active part with Piper in the chapel’s design. Robinson’s chapel stands at the heart of that College.⁵⁹

Chaplains muscular and mystical

Until the mid-1980s the matter of chaplains was sometimes as vexed as the matter of chapels. In part this was an unavoidable legacy of the chapel compromise, and in part it stemmed from the remarkable and contrary personalities of the first two chaplains.

The early College statutes laid down that there shall be ‘one or more chaplains or such other officers concerned with the welfare of the students’, a phrase which nicely translates a sacred character into a ‘welfare officer’. Until 1983 the College chose to appoint a chaplain, and only then did the College take the further secularising step of appointing a professional lay counsellor instead of an ordained minister. Formally speaking, until 1983 the College had a chaplain but no chapel. The Chapel Trust, conversely, had a chapel, but no money to salary a chaplain. The chaplain was salaried by the College to provide counsel to its members, but not to minister God’s Word. He had separately to be invited by the Chapel Trust to serve as priest-in-charge of the chapel.

This was a doctrine of the Holy Dyad, two persons in one chaplain. The distinction was immaterial while College and Trust were content to appoint the same incumbent. But in 1981, to the Trustees' deep consternation, the College reappointed the existing chaplain, whose relations with the Trustees had deteriorated so badly that they declined to reappoint him as priest-in-charge. For a year the College chaplain had no chapel, a bizarre outcome that would have persisted longer had it not driven the holder to resign his College post. We shall see what kind of man provoked this impasse. The Trust meanwhile appointed a different person as part-time priest-in-charge. The two institutions have gone their separate ways since. In 1982 the College advertised the post of 'chaplain or other welfare officer', and considered a shortlist that was part lay and part ordained. Rather to its own surprise, it found itself the first college in Cambridge to appoint a trained lay (and female) counsellor instead of an ordained clergyman. This was Philippa Comber. The chapel has consequently been forced to appoint a priest-in-charge from outside, who earns a living by other means, and the appointees since 1982 have included a schoolteacher, a general practitioner, and a retired academic. Morrison had foreseen the problem in 1962, when he suggested to Cockcroft that the Trustees endow the Chapel Trust with sufficient funds to salary a chaplain, but there was never a realistic hope of that.⁶⁰

To describe the two extraordinary, and utterly unlike, men who held the chaplaincy from 1961 to 1983 is to exemplify the profound cultural divergences within English churchmanship in the second half of the twentieth century. The story takes us from the 'hearty' muscular Christianity of the 1930s (and the savagery of the Second World War) to the utopian mysticism of the hippie generation of the 1960s.

Canon Noel Duckworth arrived with the first undergraduates in 1961, saw the building of the chapel, and retired in 1973.⁶¹ Short in stature, with a cherubic, rather boyish countenance, he was endowed with irrepressible enthusiasm. He was Cockcroft's choice, who had known him at St John's College before the War. Born in 1912, of a Yorkshire clerical family – his father and two brothers were clergymen – he graduated from St John's in 1934 with a rowing blue. He coxed the winning Cambridge crew in the Varsity Boat Race three years running, 1934-6: the 1934 race was won in record time. He coxed the British eight at the Berlin Olympics of 1936, under the eyes of Adolph Hitler. This was the Olympiad where Hitler had to face the triumph on the running track of the black American athlete Jesse Owen. Duckworth's obituarist in *The Times* called him 'one of the outstanding coxswains in British rowing'. The College archive conserves his stopwatch. His bravura on the river gave him the lifelong nickname of 'The Little Bastard'. He belonged to a Victorian world of muscular Christianity, in which colleges were extensions of public schools, and their main purpose was 'building character'. He was appointed in part because 'he would be able to help in establishing the initial organisation of the athletic and other clubs', and there were doubts about the academic suitability of his appointment. He frankly admitted he 'could not manage to combine the cult of the rower with academical performance'.⁶²

During the War, Duckworth, having been ordained in 1938, served in the Far East as an army padre and medical orderly with the Cambridgeshire Regiment. The fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942, with the capture of 40,000 British and Australian troops, was the most catastrophic defeat in British military history, as Winston Churchill admitted. Historians now see it as the fatal crack in the carapace of the British Empire. As the peninsula fell, the advancing Japanese slaughtered the wounded too sick or disabled to retreat. At Batu Pahat Duckworth disobeyed an order to retreat and stayed

behind to die with 300 wounded men. But when the Japanese arrived, he was spared. In one version, the Japanese were dumbfounded by this seeming boy bellowing Anglo-Saxon obscenities at them. In another, a surely apocryphal story, he was recognised by a Japanese officer who had coxed the Tokyo eight. During the next three years, incarcerated in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Thailand, Duckworth saved the lives, by lifting the spirits, of hundreds of fellow prisoners. He brought a defiant discipline to the men who were forced to build the notorious Railway of Death – a story told, misleadingly, in David Lean’s 1957 film, *Bridge on the River Kwai*. The story was also told in the bestseller *The Naked Island* (1951), by the Australian soldier and future novelist and biographer Russell Braddon, which is dedicated to Duckworth, ‘who lived more fearlessly and more gently than all others’.⁶³ Duckworth’s impact on the captive society was, he wrote, ‘drastically revitalizing’. Amid the squalor, the disease, and the brutality, his ‘mad spirit of defiance’ and ‘incorrigible sense of humour’ was all-sustaining. He brought not so much prayer as ribald tales of the world-beating Cambridge eight. His sermons were passionate revilings against the Japanese. He masterminded those petty negotiations with captors that won vital concessions. In this, he was ‘the most bare-faced liar, the shrewdest spiv, the most lyrical exponent of bad language and the cheeriest man of God we shall ever encounter’. Savagely beaten for his defiance, Duckworth managed to survive while hundreds around him died of starvation and disease. Another fellow prisoner was the artist and illustrator, Ronald Searle, whose secret drawings vividly record the nightmare. Searle’s drawing of Duckworth negotiating with a Japanese guard was later hung in the chapel, but more recently removed from view because of its unfavourable depiction of the Japanese guard.⁶⁴ Upon liberation, Duckworth’s 1945 BBC broadcast made known to the world the Railway of Death.⁶⁵ He was twice mentioned in despatches, but – scandalously to all who knew him – he received no medal. He deserved, said Braddon, the George Cross or a bishopric. Instead, he got star billing by appearing in BBC Television’s famous series, *This is Your Life*, and in the no less famous radio series, *Desert Island Discs*.⁶⁶

Duckworth could never forget the terrible period of captivity. On ‘St George’s Day’ 1966, impatient at slow progress on the College chapel, he told the Master that ‘the main thing is what the Japanese used to shout at us on the Burma Railway, “speedo, speedo”’. And it was to his comrades in arms that he turned in his efforts to raise donations for the chapel – ten pounds from Jughar Singh of Highgate, London, a Sikh (‘we were POWs together’); ten pounds from E. M. Milne, DFC, ex-fighter pilot.⁶⁷ This was, after all, the chapel at the national memorial to Sir Winston Churchill.

After the War, Duckworth trudged the East Anglian villages comforting those who had lost husbands and sons whom he had buried. He was chaplain at his old college from 1946 to 1948, and then for ten years Dean and Senior Tutor at the newly established University College of the Gold Coast (later Ghana), and Canon of Accra. The white men running this intended ‘Oxbridge of the Tropics’ were removed when Ghana became independent under Kwame Nkrumah in 1957. Duckworth was chaplain at Pocklington School in Yorkshire when he got the invitation to come to Churchill.

The College bar, boathouse, and chapel, were Duckworth’s milieux. He devoted himself with a passion to building up the Boat Club. Pedalling frantically down the towpath, he yelled imprecations at the crews. From 1961, before there were College buildings, he held Sunday services for College members in the chapel of Westminster College. In a temporary Quiet Room and then in the new chapel he recited morning prayers at 8 a.m. every day during term. He got the student Chapel Society going. Its first

secretary was John Gladwin, undergraduate in history, who, in 1995, became the first College alumnus to become a bishop. Duckworth's attitudes served the semi-detached chapel well. When he took up his appointment, he insisted that the chaplain should not be part of the College 'establishment'; he would offer religion as a 'non-propagandist' and as an 'ex gratia service' to those who sought it. He was unsectarian, and it was not through his Christian ministry (narrowly conceived) that most College members encountered him. He was beloved by students. Well into the twenty-first century alumni of that era fondly remembered him, rather more than they did their academic tutors. He propped up the bar, 'talking in a most unclerically robust manner'. Cocoa, cake, and alcohol were liberally available in his College rooms, where he lived, for he never married. Boisterous, bibulous, hilarious, irreverent, verbose, he seemed a perpetually exuberant adolescent, the archetypal 'College hearty'. His theological inclination, so far as it was visible, was moderate High Church, in his reverence for the eucharistic sacrament, and also in his readiness to permit Roman Catholic Mass in the chapel, but there was no whiff of incense. The evangelical Christian Union rejected him, and he their 'hard-faced self-righteousness'.⁶⁸

And he annoyed some. The Senior Tutor, Dick Tizard, found him exasperating, but knew he was popular. Duckworth provoked Tizard's puritan academicism by remarking that the admissions policy was undermining the College's prowess on the river. Duckworth disliked 'progressives'. He muttered about 'communists' and 'commissars' who would turn Oxbridge colleges into 'comprehensive communes'. In a struggle over the allocation of student funds, he applauded the Junior Common Room for saving Boat Club funds that would 'otherwise have been spent on mercy missions to Moscow and all places Left'. Duckworth could be rude and silly. A 'wise man' but a 'small boy', wrote Braddon.

In 1961 Duckworth had been appointed for seven years. He was reappointed to 1971; that was to be final. But a petition by 27 Fellows in 1970 called for a further extension. College Council was unmoved. Then 80 per cent of the students petitioned to keep him. This time the Council was moved. In 1971, with an undertaking that he would retire at sixty, Duckworth was again renewed. When 1973 came he could hardly bear to give it up. He retired to Yorkshire, where he died in 1980.

Council set about finding a successor. On 15 May 1972 the *Sunday Telegraph* weighed in with a headline, 'College may end chaplaincy', claiming that undergraduates had mounted a campaign to abolish the chaplaincy. 'Marxist and Socialist students claim that a share of money for the chaplain's salary comes from their contributions to college funds. They would prefer the money paid to a welfare officer.' In fact, two undergraduates had put a motion to an Open Meeting: 60 had shown up and had promptly voted down the radicals by 42 votes to 12. In 1972 it was possible for Fellows and students to *think* of having a lay 'welfare officer', but it would take another decade to act on the thought.

The Revd Richard Cain arrived in 1973. He did not belong on the same planet as Noel Duckworth. True, both men were rumbustious, beloved, provocative, and youthful for their years; but there the similarity ended. Swarthy, bearded, sandaled, and exuding physical intimacy and simple joy, Richard Cain looked like he had stepped out of a hippie commune. In fact, he had stepped out of the chaplaincy of Warwick University, where the student handbook honoured him as a 'super freak'. His letter of application announced that, for him, the aim of liturgy was to 'celebrate life as a spontaneous expression of community'. For him the Church was scarcely an institution at all, it was a

congregation of loving humanity. Born in 1920, he had a degree in anthropology from Edinburgh, and had spent most of the 1950s serving in the diocese of Trinidad and Tobago. With his wife, Judith, and six children, he moved into a nearby house, where curry parties were laid on. Stories are legion of encounters with Richard Cain. They tend to involve meeting a bearded man cross-legged under a table at a party in a marijuana-filled room and discovering that he was the chaplain at Churchill.

The College could not complain that it had not been warned. The headmaster of Winchester College said, 'he is not ecclesiastical' and 'his theology is not particularly orthodox', but he was 'a man of intense sensitivity'. The famous (or notorious) 'Death of God' theologian, Bishop John Robinson, wrote that 'you would not find him dull ... I can't guarantee that he might not exasperate some, but I would quickly expect him to disarm such reaction by his sheer humanity ... Trinity [College] ... would not be the place for him ... If you can contain him without quenching him, I think you would be doing a good and great thing'. Another wrote, 'Very good with sceptics. Not good with the very devout and orthodox'. And so it proved.

Even Duckworth had thought himself rather forward, liturgically speaking. The service card for the opening of the chapel in 1967 had announced that 'bold experiments in worship will be tried out'. And in Duckworth's days the chapel Service Book records 'experimental' worship. But now the experimenting really began. During 1974-5 the Service Book records: 'Exciting experience of Indian mystics'; 'No liturgical form; a moving and spontaneous Last Supper'; 'Homosexuality and the gospel of liberation'; 'Jesus and the Upanishads'; and a black blues choir from Brixton who 'danced for an hour'. In 1977 Bishop John Daly from the Korean diocese spoke, but Cain thought him 'an oldy worldly missionary of bygone imperialist days'. In 1979 Jim Garrison, the American peace campaigner, spoke on the nuclear threat. Diarmaid MacCulloch, an undergraduate who later became, and later still ceased to be, an Anglican priest, and a professor of church history at Oxford, recollected Cain's 'creative wildness', the sermons that delighted and shocked – and the dancing in chapel. An alumna, later a Baptist minister, recalled: 'Richard was one of the most holy men that I have ever met. I was never quite sure what religion he was following.'

A clash of cultures became acute. On one Sunday, Captain Stephen Roskill preached in praise of traditional Anglicanism in the shape of the 1662 Prayer Book; but on another Sunday, Cain led a 'meaningful celebration of sexuality'. Relations between Cain and the conservative Trustees broke down. Roskill pronounced that he 'dearly loved' the Prayer Book, and that he 'cannot raise any enthusiasm for being asked to sing the Agnus Dei in Zambian'. He objected to ten minute silences for meditation as 'quite excessive'. He wanted traditional Evensong, and Hymns Ancient and Modern. He doubted whether the eucharistic bread and wine were being canonically consecrated. He felt he could no longer attend, and that others were being driven away too.

By 1978 resentment was acute. It was doubted whether Cain's services were recognizably Christian. A conservative Catholic Fellow, Michael Hoskin, was angry. For Captain Roskill, the announcement of 'Sufi dancing' and 'dynamic meditation' was the last straw. Cain riposted that the Trustees were 'marginal' and not theologically competent. In 1979, the Trustees, while still believing, in principle, that the offices of College counsellor and chapel chaplain ought to be held by the same person, decided that if Council were to reappoint Cain to the former, they would not reappoint him to the latter.

The tutors and the atheists ganged up to get the chaplain re-appointed. Ten Fellows signed a letter calling for an extraordinary meeting of the Governing Body to consider the matter.⁶⁹ The atheists wished to annoy the Chapel Trustees; the tutors thought Cain outstanding in his care of students and staff. Cain had an ability to spread uninhibited warmth in desiccated donnish spaces; he floated about, hugging people. A large petition was also brought to bear. Council resolved to reappoint him for five years ‘in a position to be defined, probably not called Chaplain’; it took six months to ponder a new title, before falling back on ‘chaplain’. The Trustees would not have him. The lay elders had excommunicated their heretic minister. Cain announced, with pained bravura, that he was the only chaplain in Cambridge to be refused his chapel. But he did not cope with it for long. Over the years he had become increasingly attracted to the Indian mystic Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and in summer 1977 he had visited the Bhagwan’s ashram near Poona. This was the guru whose saffron-robed followers chanted their hari-krishnas in suburban high streets. Cain left the College in 1981, sold his worldly goods, and, with Judith, lived for several years in the Baghwan’s communes. Later he went to live hermit-like on an isolated hillside in Spain. He died in Wiltshire in 1995.

The Chapel Trustees now entered upon quieter waters. In 1980 they appointed the Revd Bryan Spinks, a local schoolteacher, who took the Sunday service. Closer to the conventional institutional life of the Church of England than either of his predecessors, and with a more understated personal manner, Spinks survived longer than they. Awarded a doctorate of divinity for his work on the liturgy of the early Christian church, he lectured on the history of liturgy in the Faculty of Divinity. He was more in the mould of the scholarly Deans of Chapel to be found in older colleges. In 1998 he left to take up a chair in liturgical history at Yale University. His successor was Revd Dr John Rawlinson, a general practitioner, who was followed, in 2023, by the Revd Canon Nigel Cooper, recently retired as University Chaplain at Anglia Ruskin University, and an environmental scientist.

Retrospect

We should not think of Churchill’s chapel controversy as an isolated aberration in the University’s history. It is a late echo of a Victorian din. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Oxford and Cambridge were the seminaries of the Church of England. It is true that they were also finishing schools for gentlemen, but most of those who actually took degrees became clergymen. Members were obliged to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. No Protestant Nonconformists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, or unbelievers could attend. Dons were forbidden to marry; typically they were young clergymen who, after a few years, moved on to matrimony and rural vicarages. All this began to change after 1850. Over the next twenty years ‘the revolution of the dons’ occurred, partly through pressure from within by such seminal figures as the agnostic philosopher Henry Sidgwick, and partly from the outside pressure of parliamentary legislation. A major component of this revolution was the secularisation of the university. Non-Anglicans were admitted; dons were no longer required to be celibate, or to be ordained. Grange Road and the streets thereabouts were built to house a new breed of married dons and their wives, children, and servants. In reaction against this new trend, Selwyn College was created as a haven of Anglican exclusivity, preserving

what had until recently been the character of the whole university: until as late as 1983 all Selwyn's Masters were clergymen.

In most colleges, attendance at chapel remained compulsory until the First World War and sometimes expected until the Second. At Trinity College, Francis Cornford, author of the famous skit on university politics, *Microcosmographia Academica*, led a fierce campaign, in 1904, against compulsory chapel. The proper nature of a university, he argued, was 'absolute impartiality towards all matters of speculation'; such impartiality toward 'all theoretical beliefs' was 'the first duty of a body ... engaged in advanced education and in the pursuit of truth'. His views were denounced as 'pernicious' and tending to 'irreligious anarchy'; the unformed intellect of youth ought not to be given such 'unlimited freedom'. Cornford persisted, asserting that if there was any case for an Anglican chapel, there ought also to be 'a mosque, a Hindu temple, a Baptist chapel and so on'. His final thought was that in due time, theology would be reduced to its proper place as a branch of anthropology.⁷⁰ Cornford's arguments in the 1900s were the same as those heard at Churchill several decades later.

For traditionalists, the secularisation of Cambridge was a disastrous undermining of a Christian society. For progressives, it was a necessary truth that in a free society no civil disabilities, such as denial of access to educational opportunity, should attach to one's religious preferences. The abolition by parliamentary statute in 1871 of the religious 'tests' for admission to the University has a curious echo in Article 3 of Churchill College's charter, written nearly a century later. It reads: 'no member of the College, or any candidate for membership, shall be subject to any test of a religious, political or social character'. Until the great Victorian transformation occurred, dons could suffer bitter agonies of conscience because of the 'tests'. In an oppressively Christian collegiate society, those who came to doubt their faith, like Leslie Stephen (father of Virginia Woolf), were forced to resign their Fellowships.

That 1960 echoed 1870 is nicely brought out by a passage in the satirical novel *Lothair*, by the Victorian statesman Benjamin Disraeli, which alludes to the campaign to abolish religious tests. He depicts a progressive Oxford don who 'had passed his life in alternately fighting at barricades and discovering planets' and who is of advanced opinions 'on all subjects, religious, social, and political'. The don pronounces, 'I would maintain Oxford under any circumstances with the necessary changes'. When asked what those changes might be, he replies: 'In reality not much. I would get rid of the religion'. Reassuringly, he adds, 'The shock would not be greater [than] the change from the Papal to the Reformed Faith. Besides, universities have nothing to do with religion'. To which his interlocutor archly responds, 'I thought universities were universal and had something to do with everything'.⁷¹

Girton College, launched in 1869, had its own chapel controversy, and Muriel Bradbrook's history of the college is called *That Infidel Place*. (The two original women's colleges, Girton and Newnham, were bitterly divided over whether to mimic men's colleges, or strike out on new paths – Newnham has never had a chapel.) Girton's founder, Emily Davies, wanted to include religious observance in the Articles of Association, and was determined to have a chapel, if need be via a private fund, but she was blocked by the trustees, who included Jews and Protestant Nonconformists, and above all by the College's patroness, Lady Stanley of Alderley, an ardent advanced Liberal. Emily Davies did not get her chapel until 1902; even then, Lady Stanley's granddaughter, then an undergraduate, wrote that 'lots of the students are angry at it and call it a waste of money, and half the college is Nonconformist'. At that time the tension

was between Anglicans and Nonconformists; half a century later it was played out at Churchill between Christians and agnostics.⁷²

Successive chairmen (thus far they have all been male) of the Churchill Chapel Trust have tried to ‘normalise’ the chapel’s relationship with the College, to little avail. In 1983 Kenneth Livesley wrote that the existence of an independent Trust was ‘a continual reminder ... of the unhappy history of the chapel bequest’, and that the recent separation of chaplain from counsellor had exacerbated the problem. He invited the Council to nominate two Fellows for co-option to the Trustees, hoping to make the Trust more like other College committees, which, ‘in the long run, might help the College to bring the “chapel issue” to a solution’. Council produced a carefully balanced response. It agreed to nominate two Fellows; it went further, agreeing to finance the maintenance of the fabric of the chapel; but it also reminded the Trust that it was ‘a formally separate body’. This compromise was the work of the Senior Tutor, Colin Campbell, himself a practising Anglican. He had begun by thinking that the schism was ‘ridiculous’ – a chaplain with no chapel, and a chapel with no money to pay a chaplain. But he concluded that it was best to keep the chapel at arm’s length, for ‘it frees the College from any need to maintain an “established church”’. In 1989 the next chair of the Trustees, Graham Allan, wrote that he hoped to move toward regularising relations with the College, by dissolving the Trust. ‘In almost all respects the chapel functions as a College chapel’, he argued. For example, memorial services ‘are, virtually, official College occasions’. He cautioned that ‘the issue *might* still be a sensitive one’, but ‘I *do* think that the curious position of the chapel (with its suggestion of an ethos of nineteenth-century “rationalism”) does make the College look slightly silly’. He was certainly correct that funerals are the chief occasions for filling the chapel, with people of all religions and none.

But as to ‘normalization’, non-believers still do not agree. It is true that the chapel row occurred at a moment in mid-twentieth-century history when agnosticism and organised humanism were more militant than they are today – and also when Christian observance and orthodoxy were stronger. But it would be hard to argue, in a nation which records, in censuses, ever increasing percentages of non-believers and non-Christians, in which less than one-tenth of the population are regular churchgoers, in a world where most state constitutions have no established church, and where student populations are international and include Muslims, Jews, and Hindus, that a college dedicated to free intellectual speculation should formally endorse Christianity by ‘establishing’ its chapel. It is true that two collegiate chapels have been built since Churchill’s, at Robinson (1979) and Fitzwilliam (1994). But it is equally the case that six other modern colleges, Clare Hall, Darwin, Lucy Cavendish, Murray Edwards, Newnham, and Wolfson, do not have chapels. Newnham was a deliberately agnostic foundation in 1869. Today’s Clare Hall, a postgraduate college founded in 1966, takes a robustly simple line: ‘Many religions and faiths are represented in Cambridge, details of which can be found in Yellow Pages [the phone directory]’.⁷³ The best argument for ‘normalisation’ at Churchill is that the chapel serves one among many minority interests which are pursued by College members: it is a facility, like the squash courts, which a pluralist college should support. But that is broadly the present position in any case. The College pays much of the chapel building’s maintenance costs; it gives the priest-in-charge a rent-free room and dining rights; it recommends Fellows for co-option to the Chapel Trust. In the eyes of non-churchgoers, let alone dedicated Muslims or Humanists, that will seem favour enough. Moreover, the arrangement frees the chaplain

from ambiguity. As the third chaplain, Bryan Spinks, wrote, ‘He no longer has to try to be an expert at counselling, or justify himself as being anything other than a man of God’.⁷⁴

There has been little sign, since 1990, of the Trustees rocking the boat of the status quo. Another un-rocked boat is the Anglican affiliation of the chaplains. Since the chapel is nondenominational it has always been open to the Trustees to appoint from another Christian tradition. Among the Cambridge colleges this has happened at least twice, with the appointment of a Baptist at Fitzwilliam and at Robinson. If, on the other side of the relationship, an increasing number of Fellows of the College are unaware of the ancient Chapel saga, even so some things are wholly unimaginable at Churchill, such as Fitzwilliam College’s launch, in 2002, of an appeal for £450,000 to endow the College chaplaincy.⁷⁵

Like most college chapels, Churchill’s draws to its regular services only a tiny minority of the College, and yet it has been able not only to use its Cambridge cachet to draw a string of distinguished preachers, but also to provide a ritual space for the College to commemorate its dead, and for members to hold weddings and christenings.⁷⁶ The building, too, fascinates, especially its glorious Piper glass. Canon Duckworth lamented that there was ‘almost universal interest in the building, if not in the religious rites practised there’.⁷⁷ In 1963 Duckworth envisaged daily morning and evening prayers, organ recitals, musical soirees, and religious drama. There have been no daily prayers since 1973. The opening of the College music recital rooms in 1980 reduced the chapel’s use as a concert venue, though the annual carol service still draws a hundred people. Catholic Mass was regularly said in the chapel in its early years, and still occasionally; the Finnish Lutherans have used it; Lucy Cavendish College has held its commemoration of benefactors there. The chaplains confect ‘blended liturgies’ to accommodate interfaith marriages. On the other hand, the Christian Union remained standoffish, characteristically suspicious of theological liberalism.

A galaxy of well-known people have preached. The chaplains have been vigorous entrepreneurs in this respect. A string of bishops; distinguished theologians like Charles Moule and church historians like Charles Smythe; in 1967-8 the television intellectual Malcolm Muggeridge, the entertainer Joyce Grenfell, and the actor Andrew Cruickshank (from BBC TV’s *Dr Findlay’s Casebook*) drew large crowds; in the 1990s Julian Filochowski, the head of Cafod, the Catholic international aid charity, who had been JCR President and member of the Chapel Committee in the year the chapel opened; in the 1960s Cardinal John Heenan; in 1988, Cardinal Basil Hume (‘Cardinal supports science in religion’, said the *Cambridge Evening News*, ever mindful of the old chapel row); in 1989 the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie; in 2017 the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. Lord Beaumont’s sermon at the chapel’s fortieth anniversary celebration was his final public address.

In the 2010s and 2020s the chapel’s musical offerings expanded markedly, under the guidance of the College’s Director of Music Mark Gotham, a post which the College created in 2006, and his successor Euan Campbell. Since the Church of England offers a rich choral tradition upon which the Director prefers to draw, the impression has inadvertently been given, at least to one Baptist alumna, that the chapel has slid toward becoming more conventionally Anglican. As it happens, in 2017, conscious that many choir members joined for the music and not for the religion, the Director resolved to alternate sacred and secular performances and venues. One musical decision by the College Council caused a ripple of consternation in 2008, when it was decided to

institute for the first time in the College's history an Organ Scholarship. One Fellow resigned from College Council in protest, partly because University admissions conditions were deemed unfairly favourable for candidates for organ scholarships, and partly because such scholarships were inherently biased towards Anglican Christianity and hence amounted to favourable treatment. The creation of Choral Scholarships followed in 2015, without protest.⁷⁸

Most members of the College today are probably unaware that the chapel is constitutionally peculiar. But few would deny that the College's public ethos continues to be stubbornly secular. In 2001 the Gideon Society wished to deliver a copy of the Bible to every student room: the College Council minuted, 'There was no support for a copy of the Bible being placed in every room of a College which took a secular stance, but there was no objection to a central delivery from which students could take a copy.'⁷⁹ The chapel scarcely functions even as a provider of secular symbols of community: it is the abstract form of Barbara Hepworth's sculpture, *Four Square Walk Through*, which supplies the locus for College gatherings at moments of mourning and commemoration. When news of '9/11' came, people gathered around 'the Hepworth'. Anti-religious remarks still regularly surface in conversation in the Senior Common Room. There are certainly those who still hold starkly that science supersedes, or ought to supersede, religion, and that no serious university should have a department of theology. Near the end of his life, Crick repeated his view 'that in the end all knowledge will be based on science', and called upon the College to 'compel' all undergraduates to hear lectures which would explain the phenomenon of religious belief in terms of 'biological and social evolution'.⁸⁰ This construal of religion as an evolutionary artefact, destined for the rubbish heap of history, is a view others continued to voice, for example the chemist Dudley Williams. There are probably fewer clergy among Churchill's alumni than at other colleges – when told that there was a handful, the agnostic Vice Master Kenneth McQuillen teased, 'Where did we go wrong?' The third Master, Sir Hermann Bondi, installed in 1983, was President of the British Humanist Association, and a campaigner to exclude religion from tax-funded schools. It has been argued that his famous cosmological hypothesis of a steady-state universe was in part motivated 'by the hope that the removal of a "moment of creation" would be a blow to religious belief'.⁸¹

Perhaps the most striking fact of all is that theology is a subject in which the College has never admitted students, and never had a teaching Fellow. When, in 1995, the chairman of the Faculty of Divinity asked whether the proscription on theology might be lifted, the College Council politely declined. Occasionally postdoctoral Research Fellows have been elected who studied something suspiciously theological, but it was prudently disguised as literature or history. When, in 2023, a scholar of religion, formerly an Affiliated Lecturer in the Divinity Faculty, was appointed as Senior Postgraduate Tutor, he was designated a 'Fellow in History'. In the 1990s the chapel chaplain asked to join the head porter, librarian, and nurse in speaking at the annual induction of new undergraduates: the Senior Tutor refused. In 2004 Crick's biographer was struck that some of the older Fellows were still 'atheistically righteous', while others were still quietly 'furious' at the enmity against the chapel.⁸² 'The godless institute of Gower Street' was the nickname given to University College, London, when it opened in the 1830s: Churchill remains the godless institute of Madingley Road.

The College's continuing contest over its secular tradition achieved a half-century revival when, in 2009, the Governing Body debated a proposal that undergraduates be admitted, at long last, in theology. The two proposers⁸³ objected that

the College publicly advertised that it admitted students in every University course except Theology (and Land Economy). The occasion of their protest was an impending celebration of the life of Noel Duckworth, which prompted from them a rehearsal of Duckworth's wartime bravery in the face of his Japanese captors, and Britain's heroic stand against evil in the Second World War. This was perhaps the last time that the wartime generation would be heard on this theme with such personal passion. Both proposers were in their eighties, and this was a quintessentially Churchillian moment in which the College, in their minds, remained imaginatively anchored to its wartime origins. Inevitably 'May 1940' was invoked. The initial opposers, the Senior Tutor among them,⁸⁴ confined themselves to arguing, pragmatically, that while there was no principled objection to students studying religion, for religion was a major phenomenon of human societies, and many Fellows and students do in fact study religion, nonetheless there was no room on the Humanities side for a further discipline, there being already fifteen Triposes struggling for 45 available annual places at admission. But this emollient view was dramatically overtaken by several speakers who categorically pronounced their principled objection to the study of theology. One curtly said that the College should have nothing to do with the study of 'superstition', adding that this 'secular' institution already had a chapel and grace at dinner, and that while religion as ritual could just about be tolerated, its substantive study must be resisted. This view was underscored by another, who declared that he spoke as an alumnus, as one who had chosen Churchill as his college precisely because it did not teach religion. To offer theology would be 'retrograde' and not in keeping with the College's 'progressive' character.⁸⁵ This loosened other tongues. One Fellow announced himself to be Treasurer of the Cambridge University Atheists' and Agnostics' Society. He agreed that religion ought to be studied: but in so far as it was history, then in History; or philosophy, then in Philosophy; but there was no place for the formal study of 'nonsense on stilts'. Another, a chemist, speaking 'for the ghost of Francis Crick', argued that, as a science and technology college, it was incumbent upon it to confine itself to 'evidence-based disciplines'. In the year in which the University was celebrating the 150th anniversary of *The Origin of Species* and proclaiming its author as its greatest alumnus, it was entirely inappropriate to reinstate theology.⁸⁶ The 'Treasurer of the Atheists' Society' was briskly followed by the 'Chairman of the Chapel Trust', but since the latter held that overturning half-a-century of not admitting theologians was not an apt way of commemorating Duckworth, the case for Theology plainly stood no chance. One of the proposers made a last stand by quoting the Book of Deuteronomy, and deploring those who got their view of religion secondhand from Richard Dawkins;⁸⁷ to be met by a challenge from an atheist-Biblical-commentator's greater mastery of Deuteronomy.⁸⁸ The Vice Master had no difficulty summing up without a vote.

In 2022 the College resolved, with negligible objection, to replace the grace that is said before formal dinner. Since its foundation the College had used a version common in Cambridge colleges, the short form of which is: 'Benedictus benedicat' ('May the Blessed One give a blessing'). Although the theological content was negligible, it was nonetheless resolved to switch to an entirely secular grace (still, of course, in Latin): 'Gratias agimus pro cibo' ('We give thanks for the meal'). The longer version (rarely used) quotes the ancient Roman philosopher Virgil.⁸⁹

In the twenty-first century the question of religion in the public sphere has, everywhere, become pressing in new ways. Some people hold that secular liberalism, despite its claims to tolerant universalism, is not neutral towards religion, because it

banishes it to secluded privacy and treats it as a matter purely of individual conscience, rather than recognising that religions embody a community, an ethos, and way of life that has a legitimate right to public presence. By the 2000s many on the intellectual Left regarded ‘liberalism’ as nothing but a version of supremacism on behalf of established elites: there is a curious alliance between this view and those Christians who, with a degree of *schadenfreude*, rejoice at the evidence for the contemporary revival of religion, who speak of ‘post-secularism’, and have taken to speaking of secular liberalism as a superannuated dogma of the late Enlightenment. In 2010 the regius professor of divinity berated the College’s non-admission of theology students, regarding it as prejudiced and sectarian, and arguing in just this way that secularism was an historical aberration, whose time has past.⁹⁰

Under the UK Equalities Act (2010) religion is one of six ‘protected characteristics’, discrimination against which is unlawful. Throughout UK higher education there has been a rapid growth in demands for the designation of spaces set aside for religious observance. Nationally, responses have often been ad hoc and muddled.⁹¹ By the mid-teens the *Cambridge University Alternative Prospectus* included checkboxes for ‘prayer space’, alongside ‘gym’, ‘theatre space’, and ‘music space’, in its summary highlights of facilities for each college. Curiously, student sentiment has returned to the 1950s – it will be recalled that it was the student newspaper *Varsity* which first, in 1958, called attention to Churchill College’s failure to have a chapel – but today the sentiment is driven not by earnest Christianity but by multiculturalism.

The issue arose, and was duly fudged, at Churchill in 2015, when a proposal was put to Governing Body for ‘use of a cloakroom for meditation, contemplation, or prayer’. The case was made that students, visitors, staff, and conference guests had been seeking such a space. ‘Making no provision of meditative or religious space for non-Christians risks restricting the College’s potential intake of students, in practice especially from ethnic-minority, widening-participation, and access backgrounds, and could have staff-retention or commercial implications’. The proposers recognised that the suggested space was unsatisfactory for the long term; that the proposal might seem to be ‘against the College’s ethos as a determinedly secular institution’; and that it might lead to ‘intolerable’ demands for instance for ‘gender-segregated prayer-space or even student staircases’.⁹² Opponents were forthright:

The College is a liberal and secular organisation. ... We are secular because we are all aware of the divisions that religion can bring and we reject the authoritarian dictates that can be associated with religious practice. ... The proposal makes religious practice part of the daily life of the College. ... We should reject the introduction of religion and maintain a separation of church and state. We should do this so that all feel included in all aspects of the life of the College. We should not be quietly secular and meekly accept the introduction of religion ... For many of our students Churchill will be their first experience of secularity. Many will have come from backgrounds where religion is imposed ... Churchill has a duty to demonstrate that secular liberalism and tolerance is a viable mode of society. Introducing a prayer room does not promote secularity.

The secularists recognised that the College embodied an historic compromise, in the existence of a chapel at Churchill. They accordingly called on the chapel to become a ‘multifaith room’ and criticised the Chapel for ‘sectarian’ confinement to Christianity, a

sectarianism which ‘cannot be acceptable to a liberal secular institution’. The secularists were also prepared to allow the designation of another space so long as it carried a neutral name such as ‘Quiet Room’ or ‘Meditation Room’.⁹³ The secularists’ stance was so downright that it is grist to the religious post-liberals described above, who hold that secularism, for all its claims to inclusion, is exclusionary in its dogmatic banishment of religious practice from the public sphere. The Governing Body (in its grand tradition of using words to paper over cracks) resolved ‘that a “quiet room” be offered to visitors and staff needing private space’.⁹⁴

Could the Churchill chapel controversy of 1961 have occurred half-a-century later? It is hard to say. On the strength of recent incidents, it could readily do so; the controversy has not gone away. On the other hand, it is not clear that the terms would be quite the same. The Churchill agnostics of 1961 believed they spoke for a new age of science and reason; many felt confident that religion would soon wither away. Faith in science, as well as in Christianity, has suffered a retreat since 1960, at least in its imperial claim to provide a universal epistemology or the secret of ‘progress’. And it is now harder to assert that secularisation is a one-way process to be equated with modernity. There is today a greater acceptance of the radical incommensurability of diverse modes of understanding, and less readiness to reduce all knowledge to a single, reductive epistemology. Many Christians find the atheistic scientist’s conception of theology naive: the theologian’s deity is not merely the First Cause, the great watchmaker, whose existence fills gaps in our knowledge about nature.⁹⁵ Much recent theology has been anti-realist, denying that religion is in the business of providing cosmologies. In the twenty-first century, religions tend, furthermore, to fashion themselves, not as systems of doctrine, but as ethnicities. Accordingly, it is harder now to criticise religion than it was in the mid-twentieth century, because the critic is likely to be seen as insulting a community, a way of life, a ‘heritage’. Furthermore, liberal Christianity has proved so absorptive of secular liberal values, especially in the moral sphere, that militantly opposing it can now look faintly ridiculous, a war without an enemy. Yet if ‘science’ may struggle to continue to provide the trump card against the presence of religion in the public sphere, the claims of secular liberalism may prove more resilient. There is still strength to the case that to provide a religious, or any other, facility for members of a community is one thing; but formally to endorse and institutionalise a contested body of beliefs and practices is another.

Endnotes

- ¹ CR, 8 (1971), pp. 18-20; Philip Booth and Nicholas Taylor, *A Guide to Cambridge New Architecture* (London, 1972), p. 12.
- ² Bernard Levin, *The Pendulum Years* (London, 1970), pp. 19-20.
- ³ Churchill College Archives, Churchill Papers, 2/571: Churchill to Crick, 9 Oct. 1961. On 31 October Montague Brown told the Bursar that Winston's view was that if money had been donated expressly for a chapel 'there could be no possible objection to the chapel being built' (CCGB 200/2).
- ⁴ Churchill Papers, 2/571: Crick to Churchill. A photograph of the letter appears in Peter Pagnamenta, ed., *The University of Cambridge: An 800th Anniversary Portrait* (London, 2008), p. 263.
- ⁵ The account given here, previously published in CR, 39 (2002), pp. 27-38, is followed by Matt Ridley, *Francis Crick: Discoverer of the Genetic Code* (London, 2006), pp. 121-5. For a fuller picture of Crick's part, and his polemics against religion, see Robert Olby, *Francis Crick: Hunter of Life's Secrets* (New York, 2009), ch. 16.
- ⁶ Crick Papers, University of California, San Diego: qu. Olby, *Crick*, p. 317.
- ⁷ Qu. Olby, *Crick*, pp. 327, 337.
- ⁸ Olby, *Crick*, p. 322.
- ⁹ The play (which had a broadcast length of 1hr 15 mins.) is published in Simon Raven, *Royal Foundation and Other Plays* (London, 1966). Raven (1927-2001) was a friend of the Provost of King's, Noel Annan, who was presumably a chief source of information. Michael Horden starred as Sir Jocelyn. Christopher Frayling records that seeing the play prompted him to apply to be a student at the College, on the grounds that if it was a place where controversy attracted national media attention, it must be an interesting place to go to.
- ¹⁰ CR, 39 (2002), p. 35.
- ¹¹ Alexander Todd, *A Time to Remember* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 147.
- ¹² Mervyn Stockwood, ed., *Religion and the Scientists: Addresses Delivered in the University Church, Cambridge* (London, 1959). Thouless, student of the psychology of religion, was the father of Churchill Fellow and later Nobel Laureate David Thouless. For Stockwood's time at Great St Mary's see his *Chanctonbury Ring: An Autobiography* (London, 1982), ch. 5.
- ¹³ Stockwood, *Religion and the Scientists*, Preface.
- ¹⁴ There is a case for arguing that 1930s Cambridge saw a more strongly atheistical climate than the 1950s. Stockwood writes of his undergraduate years: 'Religion in Cambridge in the 1930s was at a disadvantage. Optimistic liberalism was still the vogue. Man was the master of his destiny ... the world was progressing towards the scientific utopia'. *Chanctonbury Ring*, p. 21.
- ¹⁵ Nicola Lacey, *A Life of H. L. A. Hart* (Oxford, 2004), p. 314.
- ¹⁶ Captain Stephen Roskill, unpublished autobiography, p. 205.
- ¹⁷ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (London, 2000).
- ¹⁸ *Cambridge Review*, 79 (1957-8), pp. 585, 608; 80 (1958-9), p. 203.
- ¹⁹ Hugh Montefiore, *Oh God, What Next?* (London, 1995), p. 103. Montefiore (1920-2005) was later Bishop of Birmingham); Barry Till, DD (1923-2013).
- ²⁰ *Cambridge University Reporter*, 26 Nov. 1958, pp. 439-44.
- ²¹ The 'traditional' formula is in fact no older than the 1880s: Christopher Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge, IV, 1870-1990* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 104. Even the Churchill chapel's prayer for the College omits, with nice courtesy, 'religion' from the College's purposes. 'O Eternal God, bless the work of Churchill College that it may continue to flourish as a society for the advancement of education, learning, and research; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find in thee the source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord'.
- ²² Cockcroft did not live to take up the Liberal presidency, dying suddenly on the eve of the annual Party conference.
- ²³ Pers. com., 13 Jan. 2006.
- ²⁴ Montefiore, *Oh God*, p. 103; Montefiore and Steiner, pers. coms., 4 and 22 Nov. 2000.
- ²⁵ Comprising Cockcroft, Morrison, Jack Hamilton, Richard Hey, Kenneth Livesley, and Canon Duckworth.
- ²⁶ Conversely, there were remnants in the College of traditional anti-Catholicism: his arrival in the Fellowship prompted a couple of mutterings about electing an Irish Catholic. Pers. com.
- ²⁷ Keynes to Crick, 22 Aug. 1961: Crick Papers, qu. Olby, *Crick*, p. 318.
- ²⁸ Crick to Cockcroft, n.d.: Crick Papers, qu. Olby, *Crick*, pp. 318-9.
- ²⁹ Andrew Sinclair, *In Love and Anger* (London, 1994), p. 122.

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- ³⁰ Malcolm Bradbury, *The History Man* (London, 1975), p. 64.
- ³¹ The other signatories were Sandy Ashmore, Archie Howie, Anthony Kelly, John Killen, Kenneth McQuillen, and Peter Squire. (The authors of *Cambridge New Architecture* speak of C. P. Snow's involvement, and his proposal for 'an inter-religious Hall of Meditation'. They cite no evidence.)
- ³² Oriel to Cockcroft, 1 Nov. 1961.
- ³³ Governing Body, Mins. 85, 94.
- ³⁴ John Peart-Binns, *Bishop Hugh Montefiore* (London, 1990), p. 145.
- ³⁵ Morrison to Cockcroft, 15 Feb. 1962; and *CR*, 39 (2002), p. 38. When Morrison became founding President of University (later Wolfson) College in 1965, no chapel was built (the College was impecunious), but soon there was a termly interdenominational Christian college service.
- ³⁶ Beaumont to Cockcroft, 4 Jan. 1962.
- ³⁷ Peart-Binns, *Montefiore*, p. 147.
- ³⁸ T. S. Eliot, *The Rock* (London, 1934).
- ³⁹ Governing Body, Min. 99.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in Peart-Binns, *Montefiore*, p. 148.
- ⁴¹ In later years the building was mooted as a college library for Gonville and Caius College and as a place of worship for the University's Roman Catholic community. It is now a café, but retains a role for worship.
- ⁴² Governing Body, Min. 108.
- ⁴³ CCA: CCPP 1/6/10: Crick to Cockcroft, 19 Aug. 1962.
- ⁴⁴ The first members of the Chapel Society Trust committee were Cockcroft (the Master), Maj. Gen. Hamilton (Bursar), Morrison (Senior Tutor), Richard Hey, and John Killen. In 1965 they were joined by Anthony Hewish, Anthony Kelly, Stephen Roskill, and Andrew Schofield.
- ⁴⁵ Parents of the ceramicist, Edmund de Waal; their family history is told in the latter's *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* (2010); the de Waals had fled the Netherlands in the face of the Nazis.
- ⁴⁶ Sheppard to Cockcroft, 25 Nov. 1963.
- ⁴⁷ Leslie Martin to Cockcroft, 11 Mar. 1963.
- ⁴⁸ CCA: CCPP 1/7/4.
- ⁴⁹ Duckworth to Cockcroft, 23 Feb. 1965.
- ⁵⁰ *Sunday Telegraph*, 3 July 1966.
- ⁵¹ The chapel's monopoly of the vista was compromised in 1992 when the College's Møller Centre tower was completed, which looks more ecclesiastical than the chapel and is twice as tall. There is an absurd error in the University's octocentennial volume, where a picture of the Møller Centre tower is captioned 'the chapel at Churchill College': Pagnamenta, ed., *University of Cambridge*, pp. 262-3.
- ⁵² Booth and Taylor, *Cambridge New Architecture*, p. 12.
- ⁵³ The architect was Frederick Gibberd, who was one of the competitors to build Churchill College. The Catholic Clifton Cathedral in Bristol (1970-73) is a centrally configured hexagon built in reinforced concrete.
- ⁵⁴ For background see Elaine Harwood, 'Liturgy and Architecture: The Development of the Centralised Eucharistic Space', *The Twentieth-Century Church (Twentieth-Century Architecture*, 3, 1998), pp. 49-74.
- ⁵⁵ 'Churchill College Chapel', *Church-building*, 25 (1968), pp. 21-3.
- ⁵⁶ Although, unlike the rest of the College, it had electric underfloor heating, abandoned in the mid 1970s.
- ⁵⁷ Booth and Taylor, *Cambridge New Architecture*, p. 12. The chapel featured as The Twentieth-Century Society's Building of the Month in October 2007. See: c20society.org.uk.
- ⁵⁸ Frances Spalding, *John Piper – Myfanny Piper: Lives in Art* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 420-3; qu. at p. 422.
- ⁵⁹ The story is told in Spalding, *Piper*, pp. 453-4, and came from Lewis; she also records Fellows voting against a chapel. However, there is no corroboration in the College archive and founder Fellows have no recollection of such a discussion.
- ⁶⁰ Montefiore remarked: 'Later I found that the chapel had fallen on evil days, served by an outside priest, with a secular counsellor rather than a pastoral priest available to undergraduates in need of help'. *Oh God*, p. 104.
- ⁶¹ For what follows see Michael Smyth, *Canon Noel Duckworth* (booklet, Churchill College, 2012); *CR*, 7 (1970), pp. 7-10; *CR*, 9 (1972), p. 32; *CR*, 10 (1973), p. 46; *CR*, 17 (1980), pp. 10-14; Obituary, *The Times*, 1 Dec. 1980.
- ⁶² Smyth, *Duckworth*, 73.
- ⁶³ See especially pp. 113-16. The title is taken from Churchill's *The Hinge of Fate*.

- ⁶⁴ See Ronald Searle, *To the Kwai and Back: War Drawings* (1986). The drawing of Duckworth is illustrated in Smyth, *Duckworth*, p. 42. The drawing was taken down in c.2021, its negative depiction of a Japanese deemed improper.
- ⁶⁵ A phrase from the broadcast, adapted from Psalm 23, is inscribed on a plaque commemorating the Far Eastern PoWs at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas: ‘The spirit of the jungle hovered over this valley of the shadow of death.’
- ⁶⁶ The former in 1959, the latter in 1961. In the latter, his chosen favourite record was Handel’s ‘I know that my redeemer liveth’; his book, Thomas a Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*; his luxury, a radio.
- ⁶⁷ Duckworth to Cockcroft, 28 Oct. 1965; 14 Mar. and 23 Apr. 1966.
- ⁶⁸ Quoted in Smyth, *Duckworth*, p. 80.
- ⁶⁹ Signed by Edward Craig, Geoffrey Eagleson, Alison Finch, Alan Findlay, Mark Goldie, Peter McLaren, Philip Richards, Richard Tizard, Andrew Tristram, and Peter Whittle.
- ⁷⁰ Quoted in Gordon Johnson, *University Politics: F. M. Cornford’s Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 28-32. For the demise of compulsory chapel see Brooke, *History of the University*, ch. 4.
- ⁷¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *Lothair*, ed. Vernon Bogdanor (Oxford, 1975), p. 79.
- ⁷² Dorothy Howard to her mother, 28 Apr. 1901: Girton College Archives (thanks to Joan Bullock-Anderson for this reference). For a 1932 chapel controversy in Oxford see Pauline Adams, *Somerville for Women* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 181-5. Sidney Sussex College’s High Church chapel of the 1910s was a reaction against Cambridge’s Edwardian unbelievers, especially the anthropologist J. G. Frazer (author of *The Golden Bough*) and the philosopher G. E. Moore (author of *Principia Ethica*): C. S. B. Pyke in D. E. D. Beales and H. B. Nisbet, *Sidney Sussex College Cambridge* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 245.
- ⁷³ Clare Hall, College Prospectus, 2002.
- ⁷⁴ CR, 21 (1984), p. 47.
- ⁷⁵ *Optima* [Fitzwilliam College alumni magazine], 9 (2006), p. 2.
- ⁷⁶ The chapel is authorised by the Registrar General as an interdenominational chapel and licensed for marriages, but since it is not an Anglican chapel it is not under a bishop’s jurisdiction, and Anglican weddings require the archbishop’s licence and are registered in the local parish of the Ascension.
- ⁷⁷ CR, 8 (1971), pp. 18-20.
- ⁷⁸ The organ scholarship was urged by Anthony Kelly, the choral by Mark Gotham. The objector to the former was Colm Caulfield. The organ scholarship is funded by the Chapel Trust and the choral scholarships jointly by the Trust and the College.
- ⁷⁹ Council Minutes, 13 Mar. 2001.
- ⁸⁰ CR, 39 (2002), p. 36.
- ⁸¹ John Polkinghorne, in Pagnamenta, ed., *University of Cambridge*, p. 263.
- ⁸² Robert Olby, pers. com., 2004.
- ⁸³ Anthony Kelly and Andrew Schofield. Governing Body, 16 Oct. 2009.
- ⁸⁴ Richard Partington, Mark Goldie, Matthew Kramer.
- ⁸⁵ The speakers were Alex Webb and Colm Caulfield.
- ⁸⁶ Respectively, Piers Brendon and Dudley Williams.
- ⁸⁷ The best-known ‘New Atheist’ writing in Britain in the early 21st century.
- ⁸⁸ Matthew Kramer.
- ⁸⁹ The new grace was devised by Benedikt Löwe and Jerry Toner, respectively a mathematician and classicist. For the earlier version see Reginald Adams, *The College Graces of Oxford and Cambridge* (Oxford, 2013).
- ⁹⁰ David Ford speaking to Mark Goldie.
- ⁹¹ See Jonathan Smith, ‘Multi-Faith Muddle: Trends in Managing Prayer Spaces at UK Universities’ (research paper, 2016): <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306078073>.
- ⁹² The proposal was brought by the Senior Tutor, Richard Partington, and the Domestic Bursar, Shelley Surtees.
- ⁹³ Those supporting the secularist position included Ross Anderson, Piers Brendon, Alison Finch, Colm Caulfield, Ray Goldstein, Melissa Hines, Simon Laughlin, Barry Phipps, David Ron, and Alex Webb.
- ⁹⁴ Minute 3656 (May 2015). The room in question is 2 x 1.5 metres square, windowless, a lobby to a former toilet; in 2017 there was no identification on the door, and it was being used to store housekeeping materials, though it did contain a chair.
- ⁹⁵ Nor is this problem confined to unbelieving scientists. For an example of the propensity of practising scientists who are Christian to adopt a highly conventional theological cosmology, see Colin Humphreys, *The Miracles of*

Exodus (London, 2003). Humphreys, Emeritus Professor of Materials Science and alumnus of Churchill, argues that science 'proves' as 'factually accurate' the literal truth of the Old Testament Exodus narrative.