

This is the second of a series of articles on the history of youth work in the UK by Allan R. Clyne, a PhD student at the University of Strathclyde where he is researching the relationship between Christianity and youth work. He has also worked with young people in both Christian and secular environments, with churches, voluntary organisations and in the statutory sector.

A Genealogy of Youth Work's Languages: Shapers

Introduction

In this article I return to the work Bright (2015), Dawes (1975), Eagar (1953), Percival (1951), and Springhall (1977); to youth work's second generation, born in or after 1856. I have named them youth work's shapers: who translated youth work's foundational Christian language beyond its initial tongue. Before providing a short biographical summary of these shapers I give a description of the most significant translations in youth work language; the move from its original Christian language into mono-theism and then into *providential deism*. I have called these, *minor translations*. Minor translations occur when a language's motifs remain the same: 'God', 'religion', 'spiritual', 'salvation', 'belief', 'worship' but their application changes. The understanding of God, for example, extends beyond a Christian understanding, to an identifiable acknowledgement of a 'deity'. Similarly, there remains a commitment to faith, but what faith means changes. I go on to show the nature of these translations before concluding that, despite these changes, youth work maintained differing forms of its foundational Christian language.

Providential Deism

Providential Deism is a particular world view described by Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* (2007:221-269). Here I present some pertinent points drawn from that book, and his earlier publication *Sources of the Self* (1992).

According to Taylor, providential deism is an intermediate stage in the journey into secularisation. This became a significant viewpoint among influential people at the end of the seventeenth century and, although it began to fade, by the mid- to late-

eighteenth century, it continued to be influential into the nineteenth. Developing from earlier expressions of the Christian faith, particularly from the Reformed tradition, it minimised the need for a Christian devotional life and the transcendent aspects of the faith: spiritual redemption from sin and the existence of hell. While it maintained a commitment to the after-life this was generally understood to be a reward for right-living in the here-and-now. Whilst God continued to require our ‘allegiance and worship’ (2007:233), it proposed that God’s purposes were to be equated with human happiness: ‘God’s goodness consists in seeking our good’ (1992:271); ‘we owe him nothing more than the ‘the achievement of our own good’ (2007:222). This ‘good’ had a particular emphasis on the ideas of civilising: living according to a particular moral order which included self-control and a commitment to good government along with the avoidance of certain vices such as sloth, sensuality, disorder and violence. To be thought of as ‘good’ one had to live with an attitude of benevolence towards those less fortunate.

It might also be considered as a ‘re-writing of the Christian faith’ (1992:271) and while it maintained a form of Christianity with an emphasis on what we would now call social action, it also contained, at least potentially, two other world views. These were, first, a form of pantheism often found in Romanticism, where god could also be encountered in nature, and secular humanism, where God was no longer part of the story. We encounter all of these perspectives, often intertwined with each other, in the translations of youth work’s foundational Christian language. For example, by the early 1900 it is already recognised that some youth work, although in a minority, had no religious input at all (Neuman et al. 1900, Russell and Rigby 1908). The shapers of youth work were working in a period of change, something evidenced in the breadth of views that they held.

Shapers of the youth work discourse

Shapers of the developing youth work discourse were people like Lily Montagu (1873–1963) and Basil Henriques (1890–1961), who were both of the Jewish Faith. Ernest M. S. Pilkington (1858–1925) wrote *An Eton Playing Field* in 1896 and also a chapter in Neuman’s *The Boys' Club: A Manual of Suggestions for Workers* (1900).

Jane Addams (1860—1935) was significant in developing the second generation of the Settlement Movement. Charles E. B. Russell (1866-1917) who along with Rigby, his future wife, ‘wrote what was the standard text on ‘lads’ work’ (Smith 2001a) *Working Lads’ Clubs* (1908). Kuenstler said that Russell’s work was an exhibit of his ‘deeply religious humanity’ (1960:2). Robert Baden-Powell (1857–1941) founded the Boy Scouts in 1906. Two other men whose youth movements seceded from Scouting in the early twentieth century were born in this period. Edward Westlake (1856–1922) was the founder of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry in 1916. He was brought up as an evangelical Quaker, although his later beliefs might better be described as Christian deism, and John Hargrave (1894—1982) who founded the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift in 1920. Also from a Quaker background Eagar described the Kibbo Kift as having a form of mysticism that went with ‘jerkens long-haired politics—Jibbabs and gibberish’ (1953:331). Another of its founding members was Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867–1954), the author of *The Working Girls’ Club* (1898). She was an evangelical in her early years, whose beliefs moved through Christian socialism to a form of Deism and Theosophy. William Hartley Carnegie (1860–1936) established The Street Boys’ Union in Birmingham, which in 1907 was to become the Street Children’s Union. Norman Chamberlin (1884–1917), who had lived for a time at Toynbee Hall, moved to Birmingham where he organised and ran clubs for boys who were deemed too rough for Carnegie’s Street Boys’ Union in the early years of twentieth century. Alexander Devine (1869–1930), laid claim to founding the first boys’ club in the country and was characterised by Eagar as a flamboyant, ill-informed liability who ‘was conscious and too proud of his power over boys, reckless of its dangers and careless of the obligations it carried’ (Eagar 1953:273). Along with the above named, two people, born in the twentieth century also shaped the discourse of youth work; Josephine McAllister Brew (1904-1957), whose book *Service of Youth* (Brew 1943) was said to be the first ‘statement of “modern” youth work’ (Smith 2001b:208), and Leslie Paul (1905–1985), who split from the Kibbo Kift to form Woodcraft Folk in 1925. This new organisation was considered by Springhall (1977) to be the first socialist youth movement in the UK. Paul was also involved in the writing of the Albemarle Report, by which time he had returned to the Christian faith of his childhood.

Some of the individuals named above had, for a variety of reasons, no lasting influence on youth work. Others were central to its minor translation, the first of these being from Christian to mono-theistic.

Youth work's first minor translation: from Christian to mono-theistic.

Almost instantaneously after its conception, youth work's foundational Christian language was expanded in a number of different directions, the first being Judaism (Holdorph 2015, Kadish 1995). Russell and Rigby observe in a chapter in their book entitled 'Religion and Connection with Religious Bodies': 'This chapter would be incomplete without some reference to the Jewish clubs, which are among the largest and best managed in London' (1908:213). Perhaps this translation is unsurprising. Henriques (1951b) was inspired by and wished to replicate the living faith dynamic of the Christians he met at the Oxford and Bermondsey Boys' Club. Lily Montagu's expression of Judaism also shared an understanding of spirituality with Christianity (Devine 2012, Langton 2010). She once wrote 'The God whom the Jews seek to serve is the God of the Christians' (Montagu quoted in Spence 1984:94). In this sense there was also little to distinguish Jewish practice from its Christian counterparts (Braithwaite 1904, Dove 1996; Holdorph 2015; Kadish 1995; Spence 2004).

This expansion of the Christian language of youth work into the Jewish faith was a translation into mono-theism. While it can be considered as youth work's first minor translation it was accompanied by another; from mono-theism to providential deism.

Youth work's second minor translation: from theistic to deistic

The transition from mono-theistic into different strands of providential deism can be seen in a number of examples. The first of these was a re-translation of its Christianity.

There is a subtle difference between Pelham's 1889 ideal, that the Bible class of the Boys' Club was to 'bring home to boys, however rough, the vital truth that Christ died

for their redemption' (Eagar 1953:242), and Russell and Rigby's idea of 'awakening [boys] higher nature' or 'further[ing] their spiritual development' (1908:20). They defined their practice and purpose as being educational which was neither evangelistic or proselytising. This was a translation reflected on by Eagar when he wrote of the change from Stansfeld's evangelical perspective and the generation which followed him; the 'newer spiritual vintage' he called it (1953:236).

A similar minor translation is encountered in the evolution of the Young Woman's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.): from its early days in the 1900s when 'souls won for Christ and lives lived for God—these things are the very *raison d'être* of the Association—are fruit for eternity' (Moor nd [c1910]:46) to the 1950s, when its beliefs changed to conform to the more generic Christian ideas of providential deism. This view minimised the eternal dimensions and instead emphasised enjoying God's blessing in the here-and-now, through positive healthy social activities (see Y.W.C.A in Great Britain; American Y.W.C.A Magazine quoted in Percival 1951:181).

An equally evident series of minor translations in the language of youth work is encountered in the development of uniformed organisations. There is a distinct difference between the religion of Boys' and Church Brigades, the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, and that of Scouting. 'Every Scout should have a religion' wrote Baden-Powell (1908:261), yet it wasn't necessarily Christian. This was a religion focused on mysticism rather than Christianity (Warren 1987). The strength of this mysticism can also be seen in two off-shoots of Scouting. The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry was said to have a strong mystical hue (Craven 1998) and, while the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift, which was considered by Hargrave to be a religious movement (Hargrave writing circa 1927 quoted in Pollen 2015), its ideas and imagery were actually drawn from occult writing of this period (Eagar 1953; Paul 1951; Pollen 2015). Eventually a split occurred, and in 1925 the Woodcraft Folk (Paul 1951), the first socialist and clearly defined non-religious youth movement, came into existence (Eagar 1953, Springhall 1977). By the 1940s, Scouting was understood to be secular (Morgan 1948).

Further evidence of this translation from mono-theism to deism and into secular humanism is found within the Settlement Movement. There is a distinct difference between the theological views of Samuel Barnett and Jane Addams. Barnett, one of the founders of the University Settlement Movement in England, is clear about its purpose: 'there is no other end worth reaching than the knowledge of God, which is eternal life' (1915:vi). In contrast, Addams was said to consider herself a Deist, rather than a Christian (Linn 1935).

In the establishment of the Passmore Edwards Settlement in 1896, we encounter another shift into secular humanism. Ashley observes that all Settlements engaged actively in religious activities, yet he called the Passmore Edwards Settlement 'a new form of an older institution' (1911:176). It was a Settlement which deliberately avoided making any reference to God (Eagar 1953). Rose wrote of the religious trajectory of the Settlement movement in terms of 'a new secular religion' (2001:27). This evolution is not unimportant as Hendrick's (1990) suggests it was from this movement that the spirit of the Boys' Clubs grew.

From the above disappointments it is clear that, while youth work's language was translated into the language of providential deism, it is also evident that this was a journey towards a further translation in which youth work's Christian language became a distinct philosophy.

Youth work's third minor translation: from deism to 'Christian' ideology

The third minor translation of youth work's Christian language becomes visible in the literature of youth work around 1939. This was a significant period, with the establishment of The Youth Service enhancing the involvement of the state in its provision (Davies 1999, Davies 2001, Edwards-Rees 1943; Morgan 1948; Roberts 2004), and the publication of a number of noteworthy documents (see Board of Education 1944; British Government 1939; Ministry of Education 1947; Youth Advisory Council 1943; Youth Advisory Council 1945). In this environment Henriques, Montagu and Eagar were still powerful voices shaping youth work's image (Jeffs 2003). New writing also appeared (for example Brew 1943, Brew 1946,

Brew 1955, Brew 1957, Brew nd; Edwards-Rees 1943; Edwards-Rees 1944; Jephcott 1948; Jephcott 1954). Within this new environment we encounter evidence for a further translation of youth work's foundational Christian language into a distinct ideology. Hedges (1943), for example, juxtaposes Christian youth and Hitler youth. However, perhaps the clearest example of this translation is found in the words of the Youth Advisory Council:

We are concerned to see preserved, or born, a genuinely Christian civilisation. This we take to mean, not a civilisation all of whose members are necessarily professing Christians, but one in which the Christian belief in God and all that is consequent upon it for human liberty and brotherhood, the Christ-like ideal of life, and the preservation of fundamental ideals of truth, goodness and beauty, set the tone for society. (1943:11)

The Educational Institute of Scotland (1943) used similar language¹ and Brew's writing also reveals this shift: 'the essence of religion is that it should provide standards, a way of living, a way of choosing, and a purpose in life' (1957:276; 1968:217). More recently, Bunt and Gargrave (1980) observe that the re-publication of Russell and Russell's *Working Lads' Clubs* in 1932 had already moved to present their ideas of the Boys' Club work in ideological rather than religious terms. Yet, despite all these changes youth work's language remained tied to its Christian source.

Youth work's theistic continuity

From the early 1900s up until the end of the 1950s, youth work's language continued to reflect its foundational Christian language. Neuman's (1900) book dedicated a complete section to the role of religion in the club, and in doing so, set the template for most youth work books up until the 1950s, including those written from a state

¹ While education in Scotland was distinctive, Frizell suggests that in this period youth work in Scotland was also significantly shaped by the UK government's wartime publications. Frizell, J. B. 1967. *The Youth Service in Scotland*. In: Leicester, J. H. & Farndale, W. a. J. (eds.) *Trends in the Services for Youth*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

perspective (British Government 1939; Edwards-Rees 1944). In all of these there is a continuity of language: whether Christian, mono-theistic, deistic, secular or philosophical, the language found in youth work's publications continued to have a place for God and religion, ideals which points back towards its Christian source. In them we find expressions such as 'God-fearing citizens' and 'Almighty God' (Russell and Rigby 1908:19 and 210). Sentiments like, 'it is absolutely contrary to man's conception of justice to believe that a child of the rich is more precious to God than the son of the poor...' (Henriques 1933:2, Henriques 1943:2).

Visions of the youth club described it as a 'fellowship where lads and girls grow up together, and if it is permeated with the spirit and purpose of Christ we believe they cannot but be drawn to Him' (Whithead, J. K. writing in the foreword of Edwards-Rees 1944:6). Its purpose was 'to attune [young people's] souls to be in harmony with the Infinite, so that, for the love of God, they may be inspired to righteousness, and so that, with the help of God, they may become strong in temptation and haters of all things evil' (Henriques 1951a:11), a place where, 'Whatever its religious atmosphere or background may be, [the club] must teach that man's mind and spirit dwell in his body, and man—and we would say God— must be served in the beauty of that Holiness...' (National Association of Boys' Clubs 1930:11) and where the 'ideal of fitness for which the boys' clubs stand is the fitness to pave the way for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth' (Henriques 1933:9, Henriques 1943:9).

The youth club was seen as a place where the spiritual development of the young people was central to its mission: 'a club does less than the best for its members if it fails to show that ultimate spiritual values are one, and if it does not evoke from them the desire to worship the highest when they see it' (Brew 1946:17), and where the 'the needs of the spirit must... be of utmost importance'... 'how can the desire for truth be awakened'... 'the passion for righteousness quickened' (Brew 1946:17). Brew presents her view of the relationship between the youth service and God as follows:

It seems to me that the whole motive power of Youth Service is this devoted "betting your life" that there is a God. (Brew 1957:284, Brew 1968:224). All this provides evidence that Morgan and Hubery's observations were accurate: 'it is certainly a fact

that almost all the juvenile organisations put religion in the forefront of their objects' (Morgan 1943:165):

Spiritual development, the avowed object of giving birth to a new Christian civilisation, and concern for Christian ethics to lie at the heart of community life—these are not merely phrases of Churchmen, but also those who have framed and sought to define the purpose of the Youth Service. (Hubery 1963:63)

Yet there were always individual clubs and leaders which paid little regard to religion (Brew 1968, Bunt and Gargrave 1980, Jeffs 2003). New, non-religious, youth movements began to offer alternative, co-educational youth work (Paul 1951, Springhall et al. 1983) and the involvement of the state increased its journey towards secularisation (Morgan 1939). Youth work's older religious certainties were disappearing and society as a whole was changing.

Conclusion

Despite undergoing these minor translations, through mono-theism, the different strands of providential deism and 'Christian' philosophy, it is evident that youth work's language predominantly remained bound to its Christian source. There was no dramatic shift in terminology. However while these terms such as, God, religion and faith may have sounded the same, and in some instances meant the same, they could also have been used in very different ways without causing too much of a stir. One reason for this is that in a period when the institutions of church and state functioned in unison there would be little observable divergence between understandings of Christianity and Empire (Ricoeur 2007). In the early- to mid-twentieth century God and empire could not be easily disassociated, according to Brown:

... people's lives in the 1950s were very acutely affected by genuflection to religious symbols, authority and activities. Christianity intruded in very personal ways into the manner of people's comportment through their lives, through the rites of passage and through their Sundays. (2001:7)

The continuation of youth work to reference its foundational Christian language was in part due to the wider social narrative where the ideals and culture of ‘Christian Britain’ continued to infuse the warp and weave of society.

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