Social Christianity in Britain, Germany and the United States, 1848-1930

[ECHS08009]

Course Manager:  Professor Stewart J Brown
s.j.brown@ed.ac.uk; 0131 650 8951; Room 2.07 New College
Office Hours:  By appointment

Tutors:  To be arranged

Class Contact Hours:  Semester 2
Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:10-3:00 pm

Class Venue:  Martin Hall

Initial Class Meeting:  Monday, 12 January 2015, 2:10 pm, Martin Hall

Description of Course:
How has the Christian faith responded to the problems of modern urban-industrial societies?  Is it possible to have a Christian society amid the complexities of industrialisation, urbanisation, global trade networks, and democratic politics?  How much influence can the Churches as institutions exercise in the multi-ethnic cultures created by the mass migrations of peoples in the emerging global economy?  This course will explore these questions by considering the responses of the Churches to modernisation in the world’s three most advanced industrial nations—Great Britain, Germany and the United States—during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.  In particular, the course will investigate the complex movement known as ‘social Christianity’, ‘Christian socialism’, or the ‘social gospel’, in which Christians struggled to revive the idea of the Kingdom of God amid the turmoil of class strife, racial and ethnic tensions, mass deprivation, rapid social and economic change, the struggle for women’s rights, international rivalries, and world war.  We will give special attention to Christian social thought as illustrated by certain key proponents of social Christianity, including F.D. Maurice and William Temple in Great Britain, Adolph Harnack and Karl Barth in German-speaking Europe, and Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr in the United States.

Prerequisites for Course:
This is a second-level course aimed primarily at undergraduates in the second year of their degree; also available to non-graduating students.

Learning Outcomes:
The course will provide a broad overview of social Christianity within its social context, and it will give an understanding of how the ‘social gospel’ played a major role in shaping Christian thought in the modern Western world.  The lectures will promote a critical understanding of the past and will introduce some of the historical interpretations of the period, while seminar meetings and blogging exercises will enhance skills in the analysis of
primary documents and in orderly and accurate oral presentation of ideas. The preparation of
the essay will strengthen writing skills and enhance abilities in research and in the
development of arguments.

Requirements and Assessment:
The assessment will have three components: a 2000-word essay (counting 30% of the final
course mark), on a theme chosen from a number of recommended topics, to be submitted by
Monday, 2 March), quality of contributions to the blogging exercises and seminar
discussions (counting 10%), and a final examination in the June diet lasting two hours and
consisting of nine questions (three questions from the British section, three questions from the
German section, and three questions from the United States section) with three questions to be
answered, one from each section (counting 60%). Attendance at the weekly seminars is
required, and students are expected to complete the blogging exercises and assigned reading.

Assessment Criteria:
The assessment criteria for the degree examination, seminar participation and essay include:
1. knowledge of the required readings for the course
2. appreciation of the religious, social, political and economic context of the North
Atlantic World in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
3. understanding of the issues raised by the Churches’ efforts to respond to the problems
of industrialisation, urbanisation, social class and ethnic tensions them in terms of
Christian self-understanding
4. awareness both of the achievements and of the failings of key Christian thinkers and
activists in confronting these social challenges.

Outline

Week 1: The Social and Intellectual Background
1. Introduction to the Course (12 January)
2. The Making of Mature Industrial Society in the North Atlantic World (13 January)
3. The Nature and Development of Socialism in the Nineteenth Century (15 January)

Recommended Reading:
E. J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875 (1975), chaps. 2, 12
E. J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire, 1875-1914 (1987), chaps. 2, 5
A. Briggs and P. Clavin, Modern Europe, 1789-1989 (1997), chaps. 3-4
J. Joll, Europe since 1870: An International History (1973), chaps. 2-3
D. S. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus (1972), chap. 5
Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station (1940)

Week 2: Social Christianity in Mid-Victorian Britain
1. The First Christian Socialist Movement 1848-1854 (19 January)
2. The Social Conscience in Mid-Victorian Britain 1854-1877 (20 January)
3. Seminar: Charles Kingsley and Christian Socialism (22 January)
   [Seminar groups will meet in rooms to be notified]

Recommended Reading:
C. E. Raven, *Christian Socialism 1848-1854* (1920)
D. O. Wagner, *The Church of England and Social Reform* (1930), pp. 50-60, chap. 3

**Week 3: Social Christianity in Late-Victorian Britain**
2. Into the Mainstream: The Christian Social Union and the Church Socialist League (27 January)

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 4: The Social Crisis in Early Twentieth-Century Britain**
1. From Parish Community to Christian Socialism: The Social Gospel in Scotland 1870-1914 (2 February)
2. The First World War and Reconstruction (3 February)

**Recommended Reading:**
Week 5: German-Speaking Europe
1. The Awakening of Social Christianity in German-Speaking Europe (9 February)
2. Johann Wichern, the Revolution of 1848 and the ‘Inner Mission’ (10 February)

Recommended Reading:
A. L. Drummond, German Protestantism since Luther (1951), chap. 3
K. S. Latourette, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, vol 2 (1959), chap. 10
W. O. Shanahan, German Protestants Face the Social Question, vol 1 (1954)

Week 6: Innovative Learning Week [no class meetings]

Week 7: German-Speaking Europe
1. Harnack, Liberal Protestantism and Imperial Germany (23 February)
2. The Urban Social Gospel, Stöcker and Anti-Semitism (24 February)

Recommended Reading:
C. Welch, Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, vol 2, 1870-1914 (1985), pp 239-45
H. McLeod, Poverty and Piety (1996), chap. 1
P. Göhre, The Evangelical-Social Movement in Germany (1898), chaps. i, iv, vi

Week 8: German-Speaking Europe
1. Wilhelm von Ketteler and Social Catholicism in Industrial Germany (2 March)
2. Religious Socialism and the Theology of Crisis: Ragaz, Barth and the Great War (3 March)

Recommended Reading:
F. S. Nitti, Catholic Socialism (1895), chap. 5
A. R. Vidler, A Century of Social Catholicism (1964), chap. 5
J. Bentley, Between Marx and Christ (1982)
J. Bentley, ‘Christoph Blumhardt: Preacher of Hope’, Theology, 78 (1975), pp. 577-82
E. Busch, Karl Barth, 2nd edn (1976)

Week 9: The United States
1. Christianity and Slavery (9 March)
2. The Churches, Abolition and the Civil War (10 March)
3. Seminar: Christianity and Slavery: Frederick Douglass and American Slavery (12 March)

**Recommended Reading:**
F. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, written by Himself* (1845)

**Week 10: The United States**
1. The Industrialisation of the United States and the Crisis of the Protestant State (16 March)
3. Seminar: Washington Gladden and Social Salvation (19 March)

**Recommended Reading:**
H. McLeod, *Poverty and Piety*, chap. 3

**Week 11: The United States**
1. The Radical Social Gospel of the 1890s: George D. Herron and the Kingdom Movement; Women and the Social Gospel (23 March)
2. The Kingdom in the Urban Slum: Walter Rauschenbusch and the Social Crisis (24 March)

**Recommended Reading:**
R. T. Handy, ‘George D. Herron and the Kingdom Movement’, *Church History*, vol. 19 (June 1950), pp. 97-115

**Week 12: The United States**
1. A Divided Country, the Waning of the Social Gospel, and Reinhold Niebuhr (30 March)
2. Review Session (31 March)
3. Seminar: Reinhold Niebuhr: Race and Class in Detroit (2 April)

**Recommended Reading:**