

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-83977-8 - The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, 1920-1960

S. J. D. Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## The Passing of Protestant England

In *The Passing of Protestant England*, S. J. D. Green offers an important new account of the causes, courses and consequences of the secularisation of English society. He argues that the critical cultural transformation of modern English society was forged in the agonised abandonment of a long-domesticated protestant, Christian tradition between 1920 and 1960. Its effects were felt across the nation and among all classes. Yet their significance in the evolution of contemporary indigenous identities remains curiously neglected in most mainstream accounts of post-Victorian Britain. Dr Green traces the decline of English ecclesiastical institutions after 1918. He also investigates the eclipse of once-common moral sensibilities during the years up to 1945. Finally, he examines why subsequent efforts to reverse these trends so comprehensively failed. His work will be of enduring interest to modern historians, sociologists of religion and all those concerned with the future of faith in Britain and beyond.

S. J. D. GREEN is Extraordinary Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford University, and Reader in Modern British History at the University of Leeds.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-83977-8 - The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, 1920-1960

S. J. D. Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# The Passing of Protestant England

*Secularisation and Social Change,  
c. 1920–1960*

---

S. J. D. Green

*All Souls College, Oxford*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-83977-8 - The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, 1920-1960

S. J. D. Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,  
New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521839778](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521839778)

© S. J. D. Green 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Green, S. J. D. (Simon J. D.)

The passing of Protestant England : secularisation and social change,  
c. 1920-1960 / S. J. D. Green.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-83977-8

1. Great Britain – Church history – 20th century. 2. Great Britain –  
Religious life and customs – History – 20th century. 3. Protestantism – Great  
Britain – History – 20th century. 4. Religious institutions – Great Britain –  
History – 20th century. 5. Secularism – Great Britain – History – 20th  
century. 6. Secularization (Theology) I. Title.

BR759.G744 2010

274.2'082 – dc22 2010040289

ISBN 978-0-521-83977-8 Hardback

---

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,  
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

---

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-83977-8 - The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, 1920-1960  
S. J. D. Green  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

For E.A.H., at last

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page viii</i>
 <b>Part I Outline of the problem</b>	
1 Towards a social history of religion in modern Britain: secularisation theory, religious change and the fate of protestant England	3
2 Religion in the twilight zone: a narrative of religious decline and religious change in Britain, c. 1920–1960	29
 <b>Part II Disclosures of decline</b>	
3 The ‘soul of England’ in an ‘age of disintegration’: Dean Inge and the ‘trial of the churches’ in the wake of World War I	95
4 The strange death of puritan England	135
5 Social science and the discovery of a ‘post-protestant people’: Rowntree’s surveys of York and their other legacy	180
 <b>Part III Resistance, revival and resignation</b>	
6 The 1944 Education Act: a church–state perspective	211
7 Was there an English religious revival in the 1950s?	242
8 Slouching towards a secular society: expert analysis and lay opinion in the early 1960s	273
Conclusion: the passing of protestant England	303
<i>Index</i>	317

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-83977-8 - The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, 1920-1960

S. J. D. Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgements

---

I am grateful to Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press for commissioning this study in the first place; and scarcely less for his immense patience in awaiting the final version. Archivists and librarians at All Souls, the Bodleian Library, Magdalene and Trinity Colleges in Cambridge, Lambeth Palace Library, the London Library, the Centre for the Study of Methodist History at Oxford Brookes University and the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York proved graciously and endlessly helpful. My college continues to provide the ideal conditions in which to undertake this kind of work. Would that the results achieved matched the opportunities afforded. Humaira Ahmed transformed my scrawl into a typescript. Michael Bentley cast a severe and sympathetic eye over the outcome. The author took heed whenever he was sensible. Elizabeth Harwick did the same; ditto. Some portions of the book have appeared, under very different guises, in print before. Shorter and slighter versions of chapter 2 first appeared as ‘Le Crépuscule de la religion en Grande-Bretagne, 1920–1960’, in Hugh McLeod, Stuart Mews and Christiane d’Haussy (eds.), *Histoire religieuse de la Grande-Bretagne* (Paris, Éditions Cerf, 1997); of chapter 4 as ‘The Strange Death of Puritan England, c. 1914–1945’, in Wm. Roger Louis (ed.), *Yet More Adventures with Britannia* (London, I. B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 185–211; of chapter 5 as ‘Social Science and the Discovery of Post-Protestant England: Rowntree’s Surveys of York and their Other Legacy’, *Northern History*, 45 (2008), 87–109; of chapter 6 as ‘The 1944 Education Act: a Church–State Perspective’, *Parliamentary History*, 19 (2000), 147–65; and of chapter 7 as ‘Was There a Religious Revival in Britain in the 1950s?’, *Journal of the United Reformed Church Historical Society*, 7 (2006), 517–38. My thanks to the various editors and publishers for permission to reprint here.