

CHRISTIANITY AND RELIGIOUS
PLURALITY

EDITED BY

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ABBREVIATIONS

BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> , vols 1–50; <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester</i> , vols 51–4; <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i> , vol. 55 on (1903–)
Bodl.	Bodleian Library
BN	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CChr.CM	Corpus Christianorum, <i>continuatio medievalis</i> (1966–)
CHC	<i>Cambridge History of Christianity</i> , 9 vols (Cambridge, 2005–9)
ChH	<i>Church History</i> (1932–)
CSM	<i>Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum</i> , ed. Juan Gil, 2 vols (Madrid, 1973)
CTT	Crusade Texts in Translation
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> (1941–)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i> (1886–)
EME	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i> (1992–)
ET	English translation
IRM	<i>International Review of Missions</i> , vols 1–57; <i>International Review of Mission</i> , vols 58 on (1912–)
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> (1967–)
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i> (1950–)
JMedH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i> (1975–)
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> , ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann, 55 vols (St Louis, MO, 1955–75)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab a. c. 500 usque ad a. 1500</i> , ed. G. H. Pertz et al. (Hanover, Berlin, etc., 1826–)
MGH AA	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores anti- quissimi</i> , 15 vols (1877–1919)
MGH Conc.	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Concilia</i> (1893–)

ABBREVIATIONS

MGH Epp. Sel.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae Selectae (1916–)
MGH S	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, 29 vols (1826–94)
MGH SRG i.u.s.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum sepe-ratum editi (1871–)
MGH SRM	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum (1884–1951)
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in folio) (1826–)
MW	<i>Moslem World</i> , vols 1–37; <i>Muslim World</i> , vols 38 on (1911–)
n.d.	no date
n.s.	new series
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford, 2004)
OMT	Oxford Medieval Texts
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols (Paris, 1857–66)
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols + 4 index vols (Paris, 1844–65)
RHC Or.	Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens orientaux, 5 vols (Paris, 1872–1906)
RS	<i>Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores</i> , 99 vols (London, 1858–1911) = Rolls Series
s.a.	<i>sub anno</i> ('under the year')
SCH	Studies in Church History
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SHCM	Studies in the History of Christian Missions
s.n.	<i>sub nomine</i> ('under the name')
TNA	The National Archives
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> , ed. J. K. F. Knaake, G. Kawerau et al. (Weimar, 1883–)
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

RACE, RELIGION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY
IN SIXTIES BRITAIN: MICHAEL RAMSEY,
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, AND HIS
ENCOUNTER WITH OTHER FAITHS*

by PETER WEBSTER

The twentieth century saw the opening of wider spaces in which the settled historic Christianity of the UK could encounter other faiths. By the time Michael Ramsey became archbishop of Canterbury in 1961, developments both in England and in the international Anglican Communion made the task more present and more urgent. Ramsey was enabled by the expansion of air travel to visit more of the countries of the former empire in which Anglicans still worshipped, as Geoffrey Fisher before him had begun to do.¹ Added to this was his willingness to intervene in international affairs, whether the war in Vietnam or the apartheid regime in South Africa.² As such, there were new opportunities for Ramsey to come into contact with leaders of the other world faiths, and with local conflicts in other nations that had religious elements to them.

At home, the post-war English generation was the first that had widespread experience of having neighbours who practised other faiths.³ There had of course long been significant Jewish communities in the UK, and some smaller concentrations of Muslims. However, the immigrants from the New Commonwealth after 1945 were much more widely spread and in much greater numbers. Ramsey therefore headed a Church engaged in national debates about the appropriate levels of immigration and the means of fostering what is now called social cohesion, and whose clergy worked in precisely those local communities that

* I am grateful to the editors and peer reviewer of *Studies in Church History*, and to Clare Brown, Graham Macklin, John Maiden and Stephen Parker for their comments on this essay.

¹ Andrew Chandler and David Hein, *Archbishop Fisher, 1945–1961* (Farnham, 2012), 76–91.

² See Peter Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey, 1961–74* (Farnham, 2015), ch. 5.

³ See Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration* (London, 1992).

struggled to adapt successfully to cultural difference, which had wrapped up in it a strong religious element.⁴

Perhaps surprisingly, this interaction of race, religion and national identity has hitherto been relatively marginal to scholarly concern, particularly in the case of work on the Church of England.⁵ Historical work on the extreme political right has tended to concentrate on the question of race and colour to the exclusion of the religious element in national identity.⁶ The growing body of scholarship on secularization and the sixties has been more concerned with the weakening of the historic Christianity of white Anglo-Saxon English people; the major competitor for allegiance was not the faiths of the newly arrived immigrant communities, but a more general unbelief.⁷ There has been important work on the role of the Church of England in the dechristianization of the moral law on capital punishment, divorce and homosexuality, but little on the sequence of legislative changes in relation to immigration and race relations.⁸ Such work as there is has focused on the Church's interventions in matters of racial and social justice, and not on the interactions of the faiths as faiths.⁹

This essay explores two main themes, one major and one minor. After an examination of Ramsey's own engagement with inter-

⁴ See Nira Yuval-Davis and Philip Marfleet, eds, *Secularism, Racism and the Politics of Belonging* (London, 2012).

⁵ Most recently, see Matthew Grimley, 'The Church of England, Race and Multi-Culturalism, 1962–2012', in Jane Garnett and Alana Harris, eds, *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis* (Farnham, 2013), 207–21. See also Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007), 120–2, 239; Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2006), 256–7. There are several useful essays in Gerald Parsons, ed., *The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945*, 2 vols (London, 1993–4). Issues of race and immigration are largely absent from older studies such as Paul Welsby, *A History of the Church of England 1945–1980* (Oxford, 1984).

⁶ See, for instance, Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front*, rev. edn (London, 1998), 230–57.

⁷ The non-Christian religions feature only marginally in Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000*, 2nd edn (London, 2009).

⁸ Matthew Grimley, 'Law, Morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954–1967', *JEH* 60 (2009), 725–41; Harry Potter, *Hanging in Judgment: Religion and the Death Penalty in England* (New York, 1993); Jane Lewis and Patrick Wallis, 'Fault, Breakdown and the Church of England's Involvement in the 1969 Divorce Reform', *Twentieth Century British History* 11 (2000), 308–32.

⁹ See, for example, G. I. T. Machin, *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 205–9.

faith theology in the abstract, it briefly considers his interventions on behalf of Anglican minorities caught up in religiously inflected conflict overseas. The main preoccupation of the essay, however, is with the interaction between the Church of England and the emerging non-Christian minorities in the UK. It examines the role of the archbishop in the diplomatic interaction between faiths nationally, and also his interventions on behalf of religious minorities, whether in relation to the admission of immigrants or to their lot once they arrived. Whilst Ramsey was no syncretist in his theology, he knew that the mission situation both at home and abroad required that the Church of England became less and less the embodiment of Protestant Englishness, and (to borrow a phrase) more and more the defender of faiths.

The SS *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury in 1948, an event that has come to symbolize the beginning of mass post-war immigration to the UK from the New Commonwealth. In 1948 Ramsey was already forty-three years of age, professor of divinity in the University of Durham, consultant to the World Council of Churches and identified as one of the leading theologians of a self-confident Anglo-Catholicism. Ramsey's theological formation had required little in the way of theological engagement with the fact of the other world religions, either abroad or at home.¹⁰ It was a younger generation of theologians who by the mid-sixties were beginning to grapple with the substantive theological issues involved.¹¹ Some of that work could be seen in the collection of *Lambeth Essays on Faith*, commissioned by Ramsey for the 1968 Lambeth Conference. In it Henry Chadwick and Kenneth Cragg attempted to chart the spaces available for genuine interchange between the world faiths whilst asserting, gently but firmly, the ultimate superiority of the Christian revelation.¹² The conference itself recommended the committal of people and money to the task of inter-faith dialogue, and called for serious study of other faiths and for cooperation in 'economic, social and moral action'.¹³

¹⁰ Owen Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford, 1991), 26–78.

¹¹ Myrtle S. Langley, 'The Challenge of the Religions', in Rupert Davies, ed., *The Testing of the Churches, 1932–1982* (London, 1982), 132–44.

¹² Henry Chadwick, 'The "Finality" of the Christian Faith', and Kenneth Cragg, 'Dialogue with other Faiths', in [Michael Ramsey], ed., *Lambeth Essays on Faith: Essays written for the Lambeth Conference, 1968* (London, 1969), 22–31, 32–9 respectively.

¹³ *The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports* (London, 1968), 31–2.

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Ramsey's own view was summed up in two short addresses, both given in 1969: one in St Paul's Cathedral in commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi, and the second at a quinquenary celebration of Guru Nanak at the Royal Albert Hall. 'Now, I am a Christian', he told the Sikh audience, 'and you know that means I believe Jesus Christ to be the only perfect, complete revelation of God. No Christian can surrender the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.'¹⁴ However, Christians 'reverence the divine image in every man' and the divine light had shone 'in good men of other religions' such as Gandhi. Gandhi had shown forth important things: he 'made non-violence his ideal, put simplicity of life before wealth and comfort, put the things of the spirit before material things, made the cause of the poor and outcast his own, and sealed it all by a martyr's death'. Ramsey prayed that 'to us the same light will shine and we shall follow it'.¹⁵

If Ramsey was not himself greatly influenced by contemporary trends in inter-faith theology, there were other forces in play. As an undergraduate he had been active in Liberal politics in Cambridge, and although the path to a political career that he seriously considered was not the one he took, the task of interpreting his actions involves separating out political motivation from religious, while recognizing that often the two ran together, and inseparably.¹⁶ His liberalism meant that, even if he had not had occasion to engage theologically with other faiths, he had long since been exercised by the issue of racial discrimination. At the assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Illinois, in 1954, he had noted the visible struggles of conscience in a delegate from the Dutch Reformed Church over apartheid, and the situation in South Africa was to exercise him throughout his time as archbishop.¹⁷

Equally important was the religious element in Ramsey's family background. Unlike many of his predecessors, Ramsey was not a son of the established Church, but had grown up within Congregationalism, a background which gave him an acute sensitivity to

¹⁴ London, LPL, Ramsey Papers, vol. 169, fols 243-4, typescript of speech given at a dinner connected with the event on 6 November 1969. The Ramsey Papers are cited by kind permission of the Librarian of Lambeth Palace.

¹⁵ Michael Ramsey, 'Gandhi', in idem, *Canterbury Pilgrim* (London, 1974), at 137-8.

¹⁶ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 18-21.

¹⁷ Michael Ramsey, 'Evanston', in idem, *Durham Essays and Addresses* (London, 1956), 81-4, at 83; see also Webster, *Ramsey*, ch. 5.

Michael Ramsey and other Faiths

the position of the religious minority in a hostile environment.¹⁸ The history of British Nonconformity had much to teach those seeking to understand the position of the non-Christian faiths in a changed Britain. Finally, Ramsey's interventions were in no small part motivated by a simple Christian compassion; the same compassion that he felt for homosexual men vulnerable to blackmail by dint of their criminality under the law at that time, or for couples in damaging marriages that could not be dissolved without the services of a pliant chambermaid.¹⁹

There was an older strain of inter-faith endeavour which lacked the rigour and realism of Cragg or Chadwick, and which Ramsey knew was a dead end. Ramsey was approached for an interview by the World Fellowship of Religions, but the advice of his Council on Foreign Relations was that the organization was dubious, and so the invitation was politely declined.²⁰ Rather more respectable was the World Congress of Faiths, which counted as its president Edward Carpenter, later dean of Westminster.²¹ Ramsey nonetheless refused invitations to services and meetings held under its auspices, citing a basic disagreement with the approach: 'I do not believe that "religion" is a kind of banner under which we should all unite as if it contained the essence of what is good versus "irreligion" as its opposite.'²²

There was also an attempt to create a national Council of Faiths, mirroring the British Council of Churches, and it was the Oxford philosopher Michael Dummett, himself a Roman Catholic, who contacted Ramsey about this in 1967. In a secularized context, Dummett argued, the threat to any one faith was not conversion from one to another, but unbelief. Muslim, Hindu and Sikh

¹⁸ I am indebted to Clyde Binfield for discussions on this point; see also Peter Webster, 'Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Evangelicals in the Church of England', in Andrew Atherstone and John Maiden, eds, *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century: Reform, Resistance and Renewal* (Woodbridge, 2014), 162–82, at 170–2.

¹⁹ On Ramsey's involvement in efforts to reform the various elements of the moral law, see Webster, *Ramsey*; Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 145–7, 150.

²⁰ Ramsey Papers, vol. 90, fol. 40, William Theobald Fray von Blomberg to Ramsey, 5 October 1965; *ibid.*, fol. 45, John Satterthwaite to Robert Beloe (Ramsey's lay secretary), 11 October 1965. The Council for Foreign Relations was the department at Lambeth charged with handling relationships with overseas Churches, and with religious affairs in other countries more generally.

²¹ Alan Webster, obituary of Carpenter, *Independent*, 28 August 1998.

²² Ramsey to Carpenter, late 1969, quoted by Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 407.

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arrivals from the Commonwealth were particularly vulnerable to losing their historic faith as they sought to integrate, and so it was in the interest of all the faiths to support each other against a common enemy.²³ Ramsey thought the idea of securing the official support of the Churches nationally to be hopelessly unrealistic, and favoured local cooperation on matters of integration, and joint study and exchange of ideas.²⁴

There were some matters on which the religions could unite. February 1968 saw a remarkable joint statement on the war in Vietnam, initiated by the British Council of Churches and signed by Ramsey and John Heenan, cardinal archbishop of Westminster, along with the chief rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits and the president of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. It called for an end to the 'intolerable suffering [of] the people of Vietnam' and for religious people both to pray for peace and to give aid.²⁵ This matched the mood of the Lambeth Conference in July and August of the same year, which asked Ramsey to look into the possibility of a conference of world faith leaders 'at which in concert they would speak in the interests of humanity on behalf of world peace'.²⁶

As well as this type of joint humanitarian action, there were troubled parts of the world where Ramsey had a more direct interest as head of the Anglican Communion. In 1967 civil war in Nigeria led to its disintegration into a Muslim majority north and a mostly Christian east; the latter seceded and renamed itself Biafra, but the Labour government of Harold Wilson continued to arm Nigeria's federal government. Faced with incredulity in Biafra that the archbishop of Canterbury had not prevented the British government aiding the wrong side in an apparently religious war, Ramsey spoke against the supply of arms in the House of Lords, tried to promote fundraising for aid, and sent delegations to both sides to intercede.²⁷ Another failed state in which Anglicans were at risk was Sudan, which in 1965 collapsed into civil war between Muslim north and partly Christian south, cutting off the Chris-

²³ Ramsey Papers, vol. 134, fols 281–3, Dummett to Ramsey, 1 January 1968.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, fols 279–80, Ramsey to Dummett, 31 January 1968.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 148, fol. 161, appeal dated 13 February 1968.

²⁶ *Lambeth Conference 1968*, 31.

²⁷ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 250–5.

tians in the south from their bishop in Khartoum. Ramsey met with the Sudanese ambassador to London and spoke out against the 'terrible and relentless persecution of Christians'.²⁸ Ramsey had often intervened internationally on the side of peace, but in these cases the balance was hard to strike between seeking to be on one hand a disinterested peacemaker and on the other the confidant of religious leaders on one side of the conflict.

Perhaps the faith which had made least impression on the British consciousness at this point was Buddhism. Since few of the immigrants to Britain were Buddhists, contact with them remained always as with visitors from overseas, and retained a touch of the exotic. George Appleton, rector of St Botolph, Aldgate, had a particular association with British and international Buddhism, formed during two decades' work in Burma, and it was he who accompanied a delegation of Burmese Buddhists to Lambeth Palace in 1961 at the behest of the British Council.²⁹ The group had met with Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office to discuss the religious situation in China and Burma, and with Ramsey they spoke and strolled in the palace gardens.³⁰

If there was some contact between Anglican and Muslim in other countries, there was in Ramsey's time little direct contact in Britain at national level. David Feldman has highlighted the solidifying effect that the establishment of 'usual channels' tended to have on internal politics within faith communities.³¹ However, there was little in the way of such national representative bodies for British Muslims, and it was through such channels that inter-faith diplomacy tended to be conducted. In the later sixties, the preponderant community amongst immigrants from south Asia

²⁸ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 267–71.

²⁹ Appleton had been a missionary with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (which in 1965 became the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and then archdeacon of Rangoon; he was later to be archbishop of Perth and then in Jerusalem: see, *inter alia*, his *The Christian Approach to the Buddhist* (London, 1958).

³⁰ Ramsey Papers, vol. 4, fol. 244, press release from the Church Information Office about the visit, 2 August 1961; *ibid.*, fols 241–3, typescript memorandum of meeting with Lansdowne.

³¹ David Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History', in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History: Essays for Gareth Stedman Jones*, ed. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2011), 281–302, at 302; see also, in this volume, John Maiden, "'What could be more Christian than to allow the Sikhs to use it?'" Church Redundancy and Minority Religion in Bedford, 1977–8', 399–411.

was that of the Sikhs, making up more than three-quarters of the total, and it was Sikhs who were first to establish national community representation, in the form of Shromani Khalsa Dal UK (The Supreme Body of Sikhs in Britain). The Supreme Body invited Ramsey, as head of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (of which more below), to address its first national conference, as it began ‘to prepare the Sikh Community to integrate properly into this multiracial society ... thus making it a healthier and more productive organ of this very adopted country [sic]’.³² Ramsey was otherwise engaged, but hoped that ‘this plan will set forward the happiness and welfare of the Sikh community in this country’.³³ Even then, it was not always easy to know with whom the Church should be dealing. In 1969, the lay chaplain to Donald Coggan, archbishop of York, wrote to Lambeth in some confusion as Coggan had been invited to two rival events to mark the quincentenary of Guru Nanak and did not know which was the official one.³⁴ This particular confusion was resolved through contact between Lambeth and the Community Relations Commission, set up by the Race Relations Act of 1968;³⁵ but it was certainly easier if Lambeth knew with whom it should work.

One faith connected to Christianity in a unique way, and for which ‘usual channels’ did exist, was Judaism. The Council of Christians and Jews had been set up in 1942 by a joint initiative involving William Temple.³⁶ Since that point, the archbishops of Canterbury and York had been joint presidents of the Council, along with the chief rabbi, the moderator of the Church of Scotland and the moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, and Ramsey gladly accepted the role in his turn. Ramsey was also on friendly terms of long standing with Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen, Lord Mayor of London and friend of the Council, whose father Robert had been involved in its inception.³⁷ Ramsey also sought

³² Ramsey Papers., vol. 145, fol. 213, Joginder Singh Sadhu (president) to Ramsey, 27 July 1968.

³³ Ibid., fol. 214, Ramsey to Sadhu, 30 July 1968.

³⁴ Ibid., vol. 169, fol. 241, David Blunt to Geoffrey Tiarks, 6 October 1969.

³⁵ Ibid., fol. 242, Hugh Whitworth to Blunt, 10 October 1969.

³⁶ Marcus Braybrooke, *Children of One God: A History of the Council of Christians and Jews* (London, 1991), 13–14.

³⁷ Ramsey Papers, vol. 6, fol. 312, W.W. Simpson (general secretary) to Ramsey, 20 January 1960; Ramsey’s reply is at *ibid.*, fol. 313.

to involve representatives of British Jewry in international religio-diplomatic discourse, such as the meeting with the patriarch of Moscow in 1964: the chief rabbi Israel Brodie was invited but was unable to attend.³⁸

As the reflexive superiority of English Christians waned with the empire that had engendered it, there were signs of changing attitudes towards the other faiths. In 1962 the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, of which Ramsey was patron, proposed to drop the word 'missions' from the long version of its name in favour of 'ministry', a change which Ramsey supported.³⁹ Awareness of the Holocaust had set Christians to thinking more seriously about the Christian roots of European anti-Semitism.⁴⁰ Ahead of Holy Week 1964, Ramsey was approached by Martin Sullivan, archdeacon of London and in charge of the London Diocesan Council for Christian-Jewish Understanding, who was concerned that the gospel narrative of Good Friday was often presented to the detriment of the Jews. Ramsey responded with a short statement. It could not be right to lay blame upon the Jews, he argued, since the Roman governor had been no less responsible. Ultimately, the crucifixion had been a clash between the love of God and the sinfulness of the whole human race, in which those who crucified him stood as true representatives of all humankind: 'We must all see ourselves judged by the crucifixion of Christ.'⁴¹ The statement caused some concern overseas. Najib Cuba'in, the Arab bishop of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, feared the consequences for Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours if the West was seen to exonerate the Jews of a responsibility long attributed to them.⁴² As the speed at which news could travel increased, statements from the archbishop had repercussions in places and situations far away from Lambeth.

Religious diplomacy of the kind so far examined had been

³⁸ Ibid., vol. 59, fol. 269, Brodie to Ramsey, 23 September 1964.

³⁹ The proposed change was from 'Church Missions to Jews' to 'Church Ministry to the Jews': *ibid.*, vol. 18, fols 104–5, W.A. Curtis (secretary) to Ramsey, 23 May 1962, and Ramsey's reply.

⁴⁰ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 221.

⁴¹ Ramsey Papers, vol. 59, fols 264–5, Ramsey to Sullivan, 18 March 1964. On the reaction, see *ibid.*, fols 266–7. The text is reproduced at Braybrooke, *Children of One God*, 53.

⁴² Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 222.

part and parcel of the work of the archbishops for many years, a game with established rules by which it should be played. There were however broader issues of identity at stake, in which conceptions of Englishness in all its racial, cultural and religious aspects interacted with brute economic and social fact in local neighbourhoods. The sixties saw two related series of legislation, one which dismayed liberal opinion and a second which pleased it. Successive Acts, beginning with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, limited for the first time the total number of immigrants to Britain and introduced what amounted to a racial qualification for that entry. In parallel, mounting social tension from west London to the west Midlands was the catalyst for legislation to protect the immigrant population from discrimination once they had reached and settled in the UK.⁴³ Ramsey was in the thick of these matters in a very public way: Cantuar the gentle but insistent prodder of the national conscience.

On the matter of immigration, Ramsey denounced the 1962 Act in the House of Lords in the strongest terms, as both a renegeing on historic responsibilities of Britain to its former colonies and an offence against basic Christian belief in the equality of all in the eyes of God.⁴⁴ The rapid introduction in 1968 of legislation to deny entry to the UK to Kenyans of Asian descent fleeing the government of Jomo Kenyatta was, for Ramsey, a similar abrogation of national duty, but also threatened to upset the precarious balance of community relations by creating mistrust amongst the immigrant communities behind whom it was intended that the door be shut.⁴⁵

Not all interventions by peers in the House of Lords are based on first-hand experience of the issues involved; but Ramsey had just such experience. Prime Minister Wilson had asked Ramsey to chair the new National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI), set up by the government to monitor the situation of immigrants in the UK.⁴⁶ The NCCI was for some an unwarranted interference with the right of Englishmen to discriminate

⁴³ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, 51–6, 71–6.

⁴⁴ *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 238, cols 25–6, 12 March 1962.

⁴⁵ Ramsey, 'Kenya Asians', in *Canterbury Pilgrim*, 148–52, at 150.

⁴⁶ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 166–76.

against the outsider as they pleased, while for others – including Ramsey – it was nothing like as powerful as it needed to be.

One element of Ramsey's work with the NCCI was its collaboration with an attempt to outlaw discrimination on religious grounds. In 1966 the Labour peer Fenner Brockway introduced a Racial and Religious Discrimination Bill, which sought to extend the general principle of the 1965 Race Relations Act to close a possible loophole, in the words of the bishop of Winchester, 'for those who might claim that they are ready to serve coloured people but are not ready to serve Hindus, Moslems or Sikhs'. Amending the 1965 Act in this way was essential, the bishop continued, to protect the Jews 'as a religious, rather than as a racial group' and because 'religious discrimination is as unjustified in principle as racial discrimination'.⁴⁷ The NCCI had been through the bill clause by clause, but Ramsey himself was not able to be present in the Lords to debate it, although he had wished to.⁴⁸ It failed at second reading, although it was supported by the bishops of Winchester, Truro and Southwark; but the process shows the Church of England using its position to act on behalf not only of other Christian groups, but of other faiths.

At a local level, the archbishops were often in demand to make visits and to cut ribbons on new buildings. In 1968 Ramsey declined an invitation to open a new gurdwara at Gravesend (in his own diocese), as he was otherwise engaged, but he did visit the Hindu temple at Golders Green in 1970.⁴⁹ However, he had gained a reputation as a friend of the minority, which made him the subject of direct appeals for help in specific situations. He was approached by the Ealing Community Relations Council on behalf of the Muslim community of Greenford, outraged not only at the levelling of Muslim graves in Greenford cemetery but at the brusque response of Ealing Borough Council to their complaint.⁵⁰ In 1969 Michael Dummett called on him to intervene in the then public dispute regarding discrimination over the wearing by Sikhs of turbans and beards while working for Wolver-

⁴⁷ *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 278, cols 1855, 1857, 19 December 1966.

⁴⁸ Ramsey Papers, vol. 104, fol. 272, Beloe to Brockway, 16 December 1966.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 145, fol. 218, Ramsey to Charles Revis, 24 September 1968; Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 407.

⁵⁰ Ramsey Papers, vol. 277, fol. 215, memorandum from Hugh Whitworth, 23 April 1974.

hampton Transport. No other religious leader had acted publicly, and for Dummett it was time for Ramsey to ‘speak out loudly and clearly on this issue’.⁵¹ Some such approaches came from local religious communities themselves. Ramsey was asked by a Sikh leader from Amritsar to intervene with Hammersmith Borough Council in 1967 in a dispute over the siting of a new gurdwara in the borough, over which there were injured feelings.⁵² In none of these particular cases did Ramsey allow himself to become involved, but together they indicate the degree to which he as archbishop was viewed as an honest broker in difficult matters, and as a friend of the minority, whether Christian or not.

In the summer of 1968 the Conservative cabinet minister Enoch Powell made an infamous speech to a party meeting in Wolverhampton, now commonly known as the ‘rivers of blood’ speech. In it he accused all the elites in the UK of sleepwalking into disaster, as uncontrolled immigration led to the gradual dilution and extinction of the native English. To what extent could the Church of England, and Ramsey in particular, be held culpable as the nation engaged, in Powell’s phrase, in ‘heaping up its own funeral pyre’?⁵³ It was not only Powell who thought that the Church should have accommodated less, and resisted more, the process of assimilation of aliens in culture, language and religion. Ramsey was under police protection for a time in June 1968, in the aftermath of Powell’s speech. In September supporters of the National Front marched to Lambeth, and others disrupted a meeting in a church in Essex in December, at which Ramsey spoke, with cries of ‘Traitor!’⁵⁴ There was also limited but notable support amongst Anglican clergy and more widely amongst laity for a view of Britishness in which both whiteness and Christian religion were key. For those who held this view, Ramsey represented precisely the dangerous liberalizing tide that had moved the established Church away from its ‘traditional’ role in supporting such a view of Britishness.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 169, fols 238–9, Michael Dummett to Ramsey, 9 April 1969. On the affair, see Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans’, 281–2.

⁵² Ramsey Papers, vol. 121, fol. 260, Beloe to Sant Fateh Singh, 17 April 1967.

⁵³ Roy Lewis, *Enoch Powell* (London, 1979), 105–9.

⁵⁴ Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 174–6.

⁵⁵ Paul Jackson, ‘Extremes of Faith and Nation: British Fascism and Christianity’, *Religion Compass* 4 (2010), 507–27, esp. 513–16; Owen Chadwick, *Ramsey*, 167.

Michael Ramsey and other Faiths

By and large Ramsey was not much exercised by apparent symbolic defeats for the established Church in relation to other faiths. Andrew Chandler has documented the case of St Mary, Savile Town, a chapel of ease in Dewsbury in the diocese of Wakefield, in which local Christian and Muslim communities, along with the diocese and the national Church, wrestled with the prospect of allowing a redundant building to be taken over for Muslim use.⁵⁶ Ramsey intervened through the Church Commissioners, in whose hands the decision lay, to allow such a use, as opposed to demolition. 'I should regret the making of a contrary decision', he wrote, 'having regard to the whole missionary situation in this country and overseas'.⁵⁷

This phrase is the key to understanding Ramsey's view of the changing position of the Church of England. He knew that Christian minorities overseas found their freedom to worship under pressure from governments which conceived of national identity as religious in character. The safety and peace of Anglicans elsewhere was partly dependent on how the established Church in a Christian nation dealt with its own religious minorities. And the situation in the UK was a missionary one too, no longer one in which an easy congruence of Church, nation and people could be assumed, as some were wont to do, particularly when confronted with the fact of Britons adhering to other faiths.

Feldman has recently described the recurrence of a conservative pluralism in British history: a form of adaptation that created space for religious minorities within the British and imperial polity which was at the same time structurally conservative and which 'buttresses the position of an otherwise beleaguered Anglican establishment'.⁵⁸ Whilst this was the effect of Ramsey's work, he would have articulated its purpose in rather more positive terms. Ramsey oversaw the freeing of the Church of England from parliamentary control of its worship and doctrine, and the decisive separation of the moral law from Christian discipline, with regard

⁵⁶ Andrew Chandler, *The Church of England in the Twentieth Century: The Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform, 1948–1998* (Woodbridge, 2006), 231–9; see also Maiden, 'Church Redundancy and Minority Religion'.

⁵⁷ Ramsey Papers, vol. 210, fol. 47, Ramsey to Kenneth Ryle, 14 October 1971.

⁵⁸ Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans', 302; see also idem, 'Conservative Pluralism and the Politics of Multiculturalism', in Yuval-Davis and Marfleet, eds, *Secularism*, 10–12.

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to divorce, abortion and homosexuality, amongst other matters. He did what he could to support the civil rights of religious minorities, and to aid constructive religious dialogue that was at the same time realistic about the real claims to uniqueness and finality of each faith. Without quite being a programme of work, all this had a coherence. The Church of England was, in its own eyes if not in law, becoming less established and more national; a Church less bound to the state but retaining a national dimension in its sense of its own mission. This strongly implied a more equal partnership with other Christian Churches, but also that the Church of England needed to act, in an embryonic but significant way, as a defender of faith.

Chichester