Crossley, James G. "This was England: The Similitudes of Enoch Powell." *Harnessing Chaos: The Bible in English Political Discourse Since 1968*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014. 70–92. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567659347.ch-003>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 05:27 UTC.

Copyright © James G. Crossley 2014. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Chapter 3

THIS WAS ENGLAND: THE SIMILITUDES OF ENOCH POWELL

1. Rivers of Blood

If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour ('unofficial' slogan during the 1964 General Election Campaign in Smethwick, Birmingham).¹

It is easy to think about 1968 being a year of revolution and student upheavals and the 1960s being a decade of dramatic cultural change. But while there were hippies, flower-power, Vietnam protests, free-love, recreational drugs, and Christopher Hill, capitalism was not the only thing not overthrown. Even though the student upheavals would point to a future of increasingly liberal attitudes and the advent of cultural postmodernity, things were not-so-obvious on the ground, where reactions to change also manifested themselves in a number of cultural forms. The 1960s may have brought the world the music of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Kinks but it also brought spectacular success for Cliff Richard, *The Sound of Music*, Ken Dodd, and Engelbert Humperdinck. As Dominic Sandbrook claimed in his perhaps overstated corrective to the nostalgic recollections of the seemingly widespread radicalism of the 1960s: 'amid the hurly-burly of the late sixties and

1. The slogan (and its variants) was (rightly or wrongly) attributed to the Tory MP Peter Griffiths. For further of the slogan see e.g. 'Looking back at race relations', *BBC News* (October 29, 1999), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/482565.stm>; E. Lange, 'Afro-Caribbean Communities', in P. Childs and M. Storry (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 13-14; D. Brown, 'A new language of racism in politics', *Guardian* (April 27, 2001); A. Geddes, *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe* (London: Sage, 2003), p. 34; D. Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Abacus, 2006), pp. 668-68; Anonymous, 'Peter Griffiths: an obituary', *Telegraph* (November 27, 2013); A. Bonnett, *Radicalism, Anti-racism and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 20.

seventies, millions of people shared the old-fashioned vision of England...'²

In British political circles, 1968 – April 20, 1968, to be precise – has arguably become at least as well-known for the infamous Rivers of Blood speech on immigration delivered by Enoch Powell (1912–1998) to the Conservative Political Centre, Birmingham:

A week or two ago I fell into conversation with a constituent, a middle-aged, quite ordinary working man employed in one of our nationalised industries... [H]e suddenly said:... 'I have three children, all of them been through grammar school and two of them married now, with family. I shan't be satisfied till I have seen them all settled overseas. In this country in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.'

...What he is saying, thousands and hundreds of thousands are saying and thinking – not throughout Great Britain, perhaps, but in the areas that are already undergoing the total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history... Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population... I am going to allow just one of those hundreds of people to speak for me: 'Eight years ago in a respectable street in Wolverhampton a house was sold to a Negro. Now only one white (a woman old-age pensioner) lives there. This is her story. She lost her husband and both her sons in the war. So she turned her seven-roomed house, her only asset, into a boarding house. She worked hard and did well, paid off her mortgage and began to put something by for her old age. Then the immigrants moved in. With growing fear, she saw one house after another taken over. The quiet street became a place of noise and confusion... She is becoming afraid to go out. Windows are broken. She finds excreta pushed through her letter box. When she goes to the shops, she is followed by children, charming, wide-grinning piccaninnies. They cannot speak English, but one word they know. "Racialist", they chant. When the new Race Relations Bill is passed, this woman is convinced she will go to prison. And is she so wrong? I begin to wonder.'

...Here is the means of showing that the immigrant communities can organise to consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens... As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'.³

2. Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 792.

3. E. Powell, 'To the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre (Birmingham, April 20, 1968)', in *Reflections: Selected Writings and Speeches of Enoch Powell* (London: Bellew, 1992), pp. 161-69. According to Tom Paulin, around the time of Powell's speech, John Robinson (Bishop of Woolwich and New Testament scholar) claimed that if Jesus returned as

This speech – which also advocated expatriation – was personally significant for Powell. His career as a successful Conservative Member of Parliament was effectively at an end. Powell was a Conservative MP between 1950 and 1974, a Minister of Health between 1960 and 1963, and then Shadow Defence Secretary. However, the Conservative leader Ted Heath had little choice but to sack him from the shadow front bench for this extraordinarily provocative speech with its far-right racial slurs and propaganda.⁴ But, while the political and media establishment largely denounced him, the speech had given Powell remarkable levels of popular support (notably from traditional Labour voters too) in the form of thousands of letters, petitions for his reinstatement, overwhelming backing in opinion polls, dockers and meat porters marching in his defence, and even strikes in his favour.⁵

In some ways Powell's story is a lesson in how a politician might become a successful front-bench politician or an unsuccessful politician doomed to a life on the back-benches and high on ideals but low on power and influence. It is certainly common for a successful politician to speak generally about immigration negatively, and even to use the language of 'swamping' or claim to empathise with 'the ordinary voter' who is, so the rhetoric goes, emphatically 'not racist'. But there are more liberal restrictions (and voters) and one feature that has united the major post-War political parties: to identify themselves over against known

Blake had suggested in 'Jerusalem', he would be stopped by immigration officers! Powell was said to have claimed in response that the poem was blasphemous. See N. Spencer, 'Into the mystic', *Observer* (October 22, 2000).

4. Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 680: 'Powell's story about the old lady, the "excreta" and the "piccaninnies" seemed to have been borrowed directly from the stock racist fables of the far right. Although newspapers sent reporters to discover the woman in question, she was never found, and probably never existed. Very similar anecdotes were circulated in the late sixties by the National Front, the British National Party and others: it was the kind of story that most councillors and MPs regularly dismissed as extremist rabble-rousing.'

5. D. Childs, *Britain since 1945: A Political History* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 149-50. Tony Benn, *Office without Power: Diaries 1968-72* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), p. 60, conveys some of the unease: 'The press is still full of the repercussions of Enoch Powell's speech just before the weekend. Yesterday 200 dockers came to the House of Commons and shouted obscene things at Labour MPs and called Ian Mikardo a "bloody Chinese Jew". He recognised some of the East End Fascist leaders among these guys. The white trash have picked this speech up. It has suddenly liberated them and there are strikes all over the place in support of Enoch Powell. He really has opened Pandora's Box. I should think Enoch Powell will get an enormous vote in his constituency, but from the Government's point of view the situation could be very dangerous and difficult.'

far-right groups and individuals, a move which partly functions as a means to prove that such politicians and parties are ‘not racist’ when talking about immigration in particular.⁶ It would be unlikely for a *successful* career-politician in the UK (with very few exceptions) to tell propagandist tales about ‘wide-grinning piccaninnies’ and predict that shortly ‘the black man will have the whip hand over the white man’.⁷

Powell’s political career was certainly not a success in the sense that he did not become a leading front-bench politician or Conservative Party leader (as some were predicting). He would eventually serve out his time as a controversial Ulster Unionist MP between 1974 and 1987, often making life uncomfortable (but little more) for the Conservative front bench. However, it is difficult to think of a failed post-War political politician who has wielded so much influence or who held such cultural currency as Powell. Already by 1968 Powell was developing the combination of neoliberal and nationalistic ideas that would later be taken up by Thatcher who, for all Powell’s criticisms of her, claimed that he was one of the most important influences on her Conservative leadership.⁸ From 1968 onward, Powell would become one of the most divisive figures in late twentieth-century political discourse, being eulogised by nationalist and far-right groups and being condemned by anti-racist and anti-fascist groups. 1968 would thus mark the rise of Powell as a cultural

6. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism*, pp. 10–12.

7. Boris Johnson also once used the term, along with ‘watermelon smiles’ in a *Telegraph* article, though more patronising than Powell-style provocation and not about immigration nor ‘the white man’ being under the whip hand of ‘the black man’: ‘What a relief it must be for Blair to get out of England. It is said that the Queen has come to love the Commonwealth, partly because it supplies her with regular cheering crowds of flag-waving piccaninnies; and one can imagine that Blair, twice victor abroad but enmired at home, is similarly seduced by foreign politeness. They say he is shortly off to the Congo. No doubt the AK47s will fall silent, and the pangas will stop their hacking of human flesh, and the tribal warriors will all break out in watermelon smiles to see the big white chief touch down in his big white British taxpayer-funded bird’ (B. Johnson, ‘If Blair’s so good at running the Congo, let him stay there’, *Telegraph* [January 10, 2002]). Johnson is one of those rare politicians who appear to be able to use language that would potentially end any other politician’s career. With his bumbling upper-class persona he is constantly the exception that proves the rule and is even expected to make such remarks. The *Telegraph* article re-emerged in a 2008 London mayoral debate and Johnson, typically, apologised. Clearly, this has not harmed Johnson’s career but it is notable that he did apologise over offence caused when it was raised. See O. Bowcott and S. Jones, ‘Johnson’s “piccaninnies” apology’, *Guardian* (January 23, 2008).

8. S. Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 958.

icon; phrases such as 'Enoch Powell was right' and 'Powell for PM' entered popular parlance while Powell was named BBC 'Man of the Year' in 1972, voted the Number 1 would-be face on beer-mats by the Society of British Beer-Mat Collectors, and as late as 2002 (and amidst the mass of celebrities and the occasional politician) he could still gain enough votes to come 55th in the BBC's 100 Greatest Britons.⁹ Powell even claimed he owned an 'Enoch for Prime Minister' t-shirt.¹⁰ And we should not forget that, throughout the period of Powell's fame, the popular working-class Conservative and similarly controversial TV character, Alf Garnett, was infused with the spirit of Powell in Johnny Speight's successful sitcoms, *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965–75) and *In Sickness and in Health* (1985–92). Indeed, in the 1972 Christmas special, Garnett even commented on the status of Jesus (who was English) and God (who was Church of England) in a monologue on the decline of the Englishness of Christmas.

But when Powell was comparing himself to 'the Roman' and foreseeing the Tiber foaming with blood, the sun had just about set on the British Empire. And yet it was, of course, a direct consequence of the Empire that saw mass immigration from former colonies in Asia and the Caribbean that so troubled Powell and has been an issue that has never left the political agenda. Post-War British and English mainstream and sub-cultural political discourse surrounding immigration has been tied with a range of emotive perceptions, including a lost British imperialism, cultural difference, class, employment, housing, and, of course, questions about what it 'means' to be English and British, particularly in relation to an immigrant Other, and even questions about the nature of the nation state itself. Indeed, the post-War period of 'imperial decline' right up to the present has spawned a number of far-right 'street' movements and minor political parties such as the National Front, British National Party, Combat 18, and the English Defence League, and generated groups and movements formed in reaction such as Rock against Racism, Anti-Nazi League, Unite against Fascism, and Love Music Hate Racism. Indeed, Rock against Racism was effectively founded after a 1976 Eric Clapton concert in Birmingham (where Powell delivered the Rivers of Blood speech) when Clapton drunkenly proclaimed: 'Vote for Enoch Powell... I think Enoch's right, I think we should send them all back. Stop Britain

9. H. Pedraza, *Winston Churchill, Enoch Powell and the Nation* (London: Cleveland, 1986), pp. 124, 166–67; '100 great British heroes', *BBC News* (August 21, 2002), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/2208671.stm>.

10. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 166–67.

from becoming a black colony. Get the foreigners out. Get the wogs out. Get the coons out. Keep Britain white.’¹¹ Clapton has since tried to defend his remarks against allegations of racism.¹² In a sober interview on the *South Bank Show* in 2007, he continued to defend Powell by claiming that the speech at his concert was not as important as people thought but that the government’s attitude towards immigration was ‘corrupt and hypocritical’ and that his impression of Powell was that he was telling the truth about the situation and ‘predicting that there would be trouble, and of course there was, and is’. Clapton denied that this was a ‘racial thing’ because he ‘always identified strongly’ with ‘the black community’.¹³

Such sentiments reveal some of the inconsistencies, confusions, and tensions surrounding the post-War debates about immigration and race in the UK where the reception of Powell has become softened into the idea that he simply predicted tensions among the populace. Like others who continue to claim that ‘Enoch was right’, Clapton made no mention of the story about the ‘wide-grinning piccaninnies’, ‘excreta’ posted through the door, or the prediction that ‘the black man will have the whip hand over the white man’ in 15-20 years’ time, and it would be interesting to know how he would otherwise classify the use of language such as ‘black colony’ (mentioned to Clapton in the interview), ‘get the wogs out’, ‘get the coons out’, ‘keep Britain white’, or how such language managed to make its way into such ‘honest debates’ about immigration. Or we could stop being respectful about such things and just state more bluntly that no matter how hard people try, no matter what their intentions may be, no matter how convincing the common arguments that Powell’s speech was not personally racist may or may not be, race and racism has only ever been superficially removed from debates about immigration and what it apparently ‘means’ to be English or British. And we should not forget this whenever we read or hear any discussion of the nation state and immigration, no matter how idealised or rarefied, intellectual or liberal, the rhetoric may be.

11. R. Heddle and L. Bellingham, ‘Anti-Fascism: That Was Then, This Is Now’ *Socialist Review* (June 2004), <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8931>; L. Bainbridge, ‘Ten right-wing rockers’, *Guardian* (October 14, 2007); I. Goodyer, *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock against Racism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 10, 18.

12. E. Clapton, *Clapton: The Autobiography* (London: Century, 2007), p. 100.

13. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YTmEw5IqMU>.

2. Rethinking the Post-Imperial Nation

As the allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid* and identification with 'the Roman' in the Rivers of Blood speech might suggest, Powell had a love of Classics.¹⁴ Indeed, by this point Powell had already had some significant career success as a Classicist, as had so many who had taken up major public roles in the service of king, country, and Empire. In 1937, aged just 25, he became Professor of Classics at Sydney University (almost matching his hero Nietzsche who achieved professorial status at 24) and went on to publish a number of significant academic works, such as *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (1938), *The History of Herodotus* (1939), and *Herodotus: A Translation* (1949).¹⁵ This interest in Classics was not, however, simply some disinterested hobby, as Powell himself once implied.¹⁶ Consciously or not, it was connected to his admiration of the Roman Empire,¹⁷ itself a reflection of his admiration of the British Empire and assumptions of civilisation, language, and culture derived from the Greeks.¹⁸ But his love of imperial culture and civilisation was not something restricted to the ancient past or the patriotic present or recent past. As a teenager and young man, Powell developed a great admiration for, and affinity with, the achievements of Germanic culture, including an appreciation of German language and a perception of Germanic scientific rigour.¹⁹ Coupled with the impact of his early biblical study and growing dedication to atheism, his interest in things Germanic was increasingly tied in with his particular love of Nietzsche (he read all

14. For earlier developments of ideas in the rest of this chapter with reference to concepts of 'homeland' and 'Holy Land', see J.G. Crossley, 'Enoch Powell and the Gospel Tradition: A Search for a Homeland', in K.W. Whitlam (ed.), *Holy Land as Homeland? Models for Constructing the Historic Landscapes of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), pp. 134-50.

15. J.[E.] Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938); J.[E.] Powell, *The History of Herodotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939); J.[E.] Powell, *Herodotus: A Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949). See further, R.B. Todd, 'Enoch Powell's Classical Scholarship: A Bibliography', *Quaderni di Storia* 42 (1995), pp. 89-96; R.B. Todd, 'Enoch Powell as a Classicist: Two Studies', *Quaderni di Storia* 45 (1997), pp. 81-103; M. Mountford, 'Enoch Powell as a Classicist', in Lord Howard of Rising (ed.), *Enoch at 100: A Re-evaluation of the Life, Politics and Philosophy of Enoch Powell* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2012), pp. 237-50.

16. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 46.

17. See e.g. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 28.

18. Mountford, 'Enoch Powell as Classicist', pp. 239-40.

19. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 83-84; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 10, 24.

of Nietzsche by his early twenties).²⁰ There was a problem, however; in the post war years Powell was becoming convinced that another Great War with Germany would follow – though the immediate rise of Hitler did not worry Powell any more than usual²¹ – which would cause some tension between Powell's Germanophilia and patriotism. This tension was drastically eased – both historically and personally – in 1934 on the Night of the Long Knives. For Powell, the greatness of Germanic culture had 'all been an illusion, all fantasy, all a self-created myth'. The music, philosophy, poetry, science, and language 'was demolished, broken to bits on the cliffs of a monstrous reality'. For Powell, Germany could no longer be a 'spiritual homeland' because 'nothing can be a homeland... where there is no justice, where justice does not reign'. Powell's spiritual homeland had 'disappeared' and he now claimed he was left with only his 'geographical homeland'.²²

Powell never lost interest in German culture but now his patriotism could dominate his thinking for the rest of his life. Fighting in World War II (he rose rapidly through the ranks to reach Brigadier) also meant defending the British Empire, another great Powell-passion doomed to failure. This concern for the preservation of the British Empire in the face of internal talk and external threats concerning its disintegration was to be found in his career ambitions (he wanted to be Viceroy of India) to the extent that, when in India in 1944, he decided the battle would be best fought as an MP.²³ But World War II would, of course, usher in the decline of the British Empire, including independence for Sudan and, most symbolically, India. Powell was less than impressed with the replacement for the Empire: the Commonwealth (a 'gigantic farce').²⁴ Unlike the apparent nostalgia of the Conservative party line, Powell was a realist during the Suez Crisis. He opposed the 1956 intervention and believed that Britain should stop pretending it was an Empire and accept that it had no real power in the Middle East, a view he held throughout his political career. Powell may have entered Parliament intending to save the Empire but by the 1950s he had to re-evaluate his thinking in terms of nationalism without Empire, including, at least in abstract terms, some strongly anti-Empire ideas

20. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 22-23.

21. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 83-84; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 22.

22. Quoted in Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 24; cf. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 83-84.

23. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 89.

24. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 95; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 350. See also Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 106-107; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 132, 335-40.

after the surrender of India... He now felt Britain should be unchanged by the passage of Empire; that, as a nation, she had never depended on the Empire for her self-awareness or identification – an idea he would be forced publicly to contradict at the next two elections. He exorcised from his spirit the idea of the nation he had formerly held.²⁵

But even with Powell's pragmatic nationalism and disdain for the Commonwealth, and despite the apparent influence of the seemingly faux imperialism of certain Tories, Powell could not quite let go of his nostalgic view of the British Empire. Counterfactually speaking from this sort of perspective, if Britain had not given up India then might things not have turned out differently? In 1991, when his main research on the Gospels was being published, Powell made some revealing remarks to the Institute of Contemporary British History's Summer School at the London School of Economics:

When I resigned my chair in Australia in 1939 in order to come home to enlist, had I been asked 'What is the State whose uniform you wish to wear and in whose service you expect to perish?' I would have said 'The British Empire'... I also know that, on my deathbed, I shall still be believing with one part of my brain that somewhere on every ocean of the world there is a great, grey ship with three funnels and sixteen-inch guns which can blow out of the water any other navy which is likely to face it. I know it is not so. Indeed, I realised at a relatively early age that it is not so. But that factor – that emotional factor... will not die until I, the carrier of it, am dead.²⁶

Powell's post-war thinking may have included a seam of pessimism due to his views on the British Commonwealth and immigration but there was also a seam of optimism based on English and/or British culture and a concept of 'Englishness' focussed on, for instance, values, culture, a state of mind, economics, and institutions, which were in turn a product of a distinctly English evolution and key institutions of Parliament and Church.²⁷ Such thinking could at times be sentimental but contemporary examples proved the point for Powell. For example, he thought that the Falklands War was a prime example of how Britain as a nation could fight a war, just as he thought that Britain as a nation had the resources to compete economically with other nations.²⁸ Unlike the dominant feature of post-war Conservative thinking, particularly in the 1980s, Powell's

25. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 120; cf. pp. 119-21, 335, 431-32.

26. Quoted in P. Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. xiv-xv; see also Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 172-73.

27. For useful overviews see Pedraza, *Enoch Powell, passim*; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 334-40.

28. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 147

nationalism developed into a strong disdain for American power from which he believed Britain should be distinct, not least because, in an extension of the pragmatic awareness that ran alongside his idealism, the United States will ultimately care about the United States and not Britain. From this logic, it followed that a hermeneutic of suspicion was cast over other dominant and ostensibly pan-national organisations such as NATO, the UN, and the EEC.²⁹ So strong were Powell's views of this critical distance that in 1974 he advised people to vote Labour over Conservative on the issue of the EEC. Powell certainly disliked anything faintly socialist but at least Labour promised to renegotiate terms of entry into the EEC and a referendum.³⁰

For Powell, then, the nation was the ultimate political reality and one worth dying for.³¹ The nation dictated virtually all of Powell's thinking and this nationalism was as much embodied in Parliament as it was manifest in Powell's support for Ulster and opposition to the European Common Market and American power.³² But the concept of the nation was also embodied in another institution that was less obviously 'political' by the mid-twentieth century: the Church of England.

3. Church of England

Despite – or, if we take the old *Yes, Prime Minister* cliché about the Church of England, because of – his atheistic and Nietzschean thinking, Powell converted from atheism to Anglicanism in 1949. Given his nationalism, it should probably not be a surprise that Powell would answer 'Anglican' when asked about being a Christian, nor that he would be keen on understanding the social function of religion and its relationship to the state.³³ Powell's emphasis on a this-worldly English church was obviously important for his nationalism. But it was also important for Powell on an emotional level and clearly provided a degree of replacement for the failures of Germany and the Empire. All these factors were recalled in Powell's recollection of the calling of the Evensong bells of St Peter's church in Wolverhampton:

29. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 147-50; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 517, 579-80.

30. Cf. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 118; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 579-80.

31. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 125, 167; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 5, 153, 334-40, 580, 822, 843; A. Roberts, 'Enoch Powell and the Nation State', in Rising (ed.), *Enoch at 100*, pp. 123-42.

32. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 92, 103; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 116, 119, 338-39.

33. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 131, 134-38.

However, ashamed or not, I came again and again, until presently I realised that I was caught fast...by an inner logic or necessity... [O]nce got within the walls, physical and liturgical, of the Church of England, I was proud enough to see that it was a goodly inheritance from which, like a prodigal son, I had so long deliberately exiled myself... [L]ike someone who returns after a long absence to an ancestral home, I looked at the half-familiar scenes with new eyes... I had stepped inside the Church Universal...compelled to acknowledge a truth that is corporate... I noticed that the loyalties I had lived with in war and peace had been corporate too.³⁴

Powell would also become identified with the High Tory Anglo-Catholicism with emphasis placed on 'tradition' in worship. Tellingly, Powell would distinguish himself from the 'evangelical' and 'literalist' believers.³⁵

For Powell, the intertwining of Anglicanism and nation had deep historic roots. 'Perhaps the Celtic Church, distinctive though it was, cannot be thus classified [as a national church]', Powell speculated, 'but there was certainly a Gallican Church and an Anglican Church before the Reformation was dreamt of'. Powell argued that in the twelfth century, the king, like any modern Prime Minister, was insistent on the right to nominate bishops and in the Middle Ages the *Ecclesia anglicana* 'was an accepted political as well as ecclesiastical reality... [T]he Church, the universal, catholic church, could also be a national church.' A decisive moment in Powell's history of England is when Henry VIII as monarch asserted spiritual authority through Parliament which would be the beginning of the end of external influence on national affairs.³⁶ The English church evolved through compromise and debate, and with its own distinctively English character. But the authority of the Church was, like Parliament, firmly grounded in the Crown.³⁷ While Powell was hardly immune to thinking along the lines of the Cultural Bible, nationalism must always take priority – even over aesthetics. On the legislating

34. Quoted in Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 91. Compare E. Powell, 'Interview with Anne Brown, BBC Radio, April 13, 1986', in Powell, *Reflections*, pp. 27-38 (30-31): 'One night...I passed St Peter's Church and the bells were ringing for Evensong... I opened a prayer book and I thought to myself... "This is wonderful".'

35. J.E. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), pp. 87-94; J.E. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', *JSNT* 42 (1991), pp. 5-16; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 135-36.

36. E. Powell, 'A National Church (1981)', in Powell, *Reflections*, pp. 72-76 (73).

37. For a summary of Powell's context in wider debates over the place of the Church of England, see Filby, 'God and Mrs Thatcher', pp. 138-75.

of the entrenchment of the Book of Common Prayer in 1981, Powell believed too much stress had been placed on the 'literary and linguistic excellences of the Prayer book' because the real gain is that Parliament is the guardian of the Prayer Book which 'embodies forms of worship and expressions of faith that are broad, generous and deep enough to embrace the wide spectrum which a national church must comprehend... [A] Church of all the English.'³⁸ It is no doubt significant that the opening essay in Powell's book of sermons, exegesis, and religious reflection is on 'Patriotism'.³⁹

This prioritising of the power of nation over church would again suggest that it was partly *because of* his admiration for Nietzsche that Powell could espouse the kind of Anglicanism he did. In fact it is not even clear that the importance of Powell's atheism disappeared in his conversion to Anglicanism. Even in 1962 Powell was still recalling the influence of J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* on his own thought and his boyhood atheism.⁴⁰ Powell had little interest in personal faith and belief and towards the end of his life he would claim greater interest in a more materialistic reading of religion as a significant factor in the history of human survival, an idea which had already come through by the mid-1970s in, for instance, his discussion of immortality.⁴¹ Simon Heffer has claimed that 'one of his [Powell's] closest friends, himself deeply religious', suggested that Powell never ceased to be an atheist and that the role of the church as a social and national institution kept him within the fold. Another close friend and Powell archivist, Richard Ritchie, said that the aging Powell at least did not believe in an afterlife, while another friend, the MP and churchman Frank Field, claimed Powell had no concern for the mission of the Church.⁴²

Whatever the truth of Powell's actual belief in the existence of God and life eternal, it is clear that, as a Member of Parliament, Powell's concerns for the Church consistently related to issues of the church-state relationship.⁴³ Powell was also not a supporter of the idea that the Bible and Christianity had serious relevance for contemporary political

38. Powell, 'National Church', pp. 73-74.

39. See also his essay, 'God Save the Queen', in Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 74-82.

40. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 11.

41. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 65-70.

42. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, pp. 134-36; cf. Pedraza, *Enoch Powell*, p. 103. For Powell's intellectualized reflections see Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 52-58, 65-70.

43. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 136.

issues. 'Faith in action' was, at best, meaningless or, at worst, dangerous.⁴⁴ 'Christianity', Powell claimed, 'does not help me decide to vote for or against a United Kingdom in the European Community, or for or against the capital penalty for murder, or for a flat-rate or graduated system of state pensions or, for that matter, for or against state pensions at all'.⁴⁵ For Powell, such politically active thinking was a misreading of the Bible and a naïve understanding of the nation and politics. The modern clergy, he argued, should only be providing guidance and preparation for kingdom come and had no authority to provide guidance for an earthly kingdom in the here and now. As Powell emphatically claimed, 'Christianity does not, repeat not, look forward to a gradual betterment of human behaviour and society or to the progressive spread of peace and justice upon earth. Still less does Christianity purport to offer a scheme or general outline for bringing that about. Quite the reverse...'⁴⁶ Not even the Archbishop of Canterbury was immune from this sort of criticism: Powell accused Donald Coggan of 'bad elementary economics... economic errors...damaging to this nation and its people' when Coggan spoke about issues of neglecting the needs of other nations. Of Coggan's role as Archbishop of Canterbury, Powell claimed that:

I owe respect to Dr Coggan, as Archbishop of Canterbury, a respect which I gladly yield. I also owe him more than respect when he speaks with the voice of his Master, to tell me that the blessed are the poor, the hungry, the thirsty and the oppressed, and that a rich man – and presumably a nation of rich men – cannot by any contrivance enter into his Kingdom. But it is not with that voice that his Grace was speaking in the words I have just quoted. He was speaking the language of materialism and bad elementary economics, and when he so speaks, it is the right and duty of a politician...to refute and to rebuke.⁴⁷

4. Like the Roman? The Lost Gospel of Enoch

Powell's Anglo-Catholicism and lack of concern for the 'relevance' of the Bible did not mean an avoidance of the Bible, however. While Powell may have seen the present threatened by immigration and Europe, this did not stop him creatively, and perhaps 'unconsciously', creating his

44. See e.g. Powell's chapters 'Christianity and the Curse of Cain', 'Action for World Development', 'My Country, Right or Wrong', and 'Christianity and Social Activity', in Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 12-13, 14-19, 20-24, 30-51.

45. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 63-64.

46. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, p. 61.

47. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, p. 20.

own nostalgic and idealised version of an invented tradition of English nationhood and British Empire with the help of the Bible and reconstruction of what the Bible ‘really says’. Powell’s politics would certainly have to overrule anything smacking of the Radical Bible. But one thing that can be said about the Radical Bible is that there are at least some seemingly clear-cut passages which manifest a degree of confrontation against economic injustices. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is one of the most explicit passages in the New Testament but Powell rejected any apparently superficial reading of this passage which might condemn the rich man to Hades for being rich and put the poor man into the embrace of Abraham for being poor because such readings would inevitably put people off reading the Bible!⁴⁸ Of one of the other most famous New Testament passages condemning wealth – the Rich Man and the Eye of the Needle – Powell insisted that it was instead an attack on personal merit and reliance on works, which was something Powell believed to be more typical of Judaism and/or the early Jewish church.⁴⁹

Biblical studies appear in books in which he combined his academic, confessional, and popularist interests, such as *No Easy Answers* (1973) and the more developed *Wrestling with the Angel* (1977).⁵⁰ But Powell’s academic study of the Bible – the genesis of Matthew’s Gospel in particular – came to fruition towards the end of his life. *The Evolution of the Gospel* was published in 1994 but it was foreshadowed by a *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* article in 1991, a published version of a lecture he gave at the University of Sheffield.⁵¹ His study of Matthew was heavily philological and an outworking of his career as a Classicist.⁵² In *Evolution of the Gospel*, for instance, and echoing his work on Herodotus, Powell provided his own translation of Matthew’s Greek and an accompanying commentary. Powell of course knew Greek and even as a schoolboy he had already memorized the entirety of Galatians in Greek.⁵³ In the research for the book, Powell had liaised with celebrated scholars of early Christian history. For example, in the acknowledgments in *Evolution of the Gospel*, Powell gives due credit to Henry Chadwick

48. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 137.

49. Powell, ‘Genesis of the Gospel’, p. 12; cf. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 30–34, 39–40.

50. E. Powell, *No Easy Answers* (London: Sheldon Press, 1973); Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*.

51. Powell, ‘Genesis of the Gospel’; J.E. Powell, *The Evolution of the Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

52. Cf. Mountford, ‘Enoch Powell as Classicist’, p. 248.

53. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 12.

and William Horbury. Powell also consulted – as he did for his other work on the Gospel tradition – with Semitic and Ethiopic expert, and Fellow of the British Academy, Edward Ullendorff. On the surface, then, Powell's approach to Matthew was very much in the tradition of the Cultural Bible, particularly in the sense of Enlightenment biblical criticism. However, the more 'unconscious' political function of his work clearly relates to his version of liberal parliamentary democracy which is also in line with a more traditionalist version of the Liberal Bible. To reveal this political unconscious requires a closer look at Powell's exegetical approach to Matthew.

Powell's views on Matthew and the Gospel tradition could be deemed somewhat eccentric in scholarly terms. For instance, Powell argued that the historical Jesus was not in fact crucified by the Romans but stoned to death by Jewish authorities. While this was probably the most unlikely view to be found in New Testament scholarship,⁵⁴ Powell's major work on Matthew remained idiosyncratic. Whereas the overwhelmingly dominant view in Gospel scholarship for about a century has been that Mark's Gospel was the earliest and that Matthew and Luke used Mark, Powell argued that Matthew's Gospel (in approximately the form we now know it) was the earliest Gospel and was used by Luke and Mark, with Mark also using Luke. When Mark and Luke deviated from Matthew, this was, Powell argued, because of their own creative freedom rather than their use of alternative sources. The primacy of Matthew thus meant that Matthew demanded a dedicated analysis.⁵⁵ And when the Matthean tradition was to be studied in depth, Powell believed it was possible to find an underlying text, a text 'severely re-edited, with theological and polemical intent', and with the resulting edition then recombined with the underlying text to produce the Gospel of Matthew.⁵⁶ For Powell, the distinctive features of the final form of Matthew's Gospel (e.g. contradictions, duplications, and abrupt breaks) betray a lack of smooth editing of the sort which Powell believed were found in

54. Compare Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 94: 'though the oldest teachings on this question also point to stoning'. Heffer provided no indication of what these 'oldest teachings' are. Heffer is not reflecting any mainstream scholarly view on this matter. For a slightly different reaction, compare the comments of Frank Field, 'Enoch Powell as a Parliamentarian', in Rising (ed.), *Enoch at 100*, pp. 47-53 (53): "'You're opening yourself up for a heresy trial", I replied, for this beautifully written text argued either that Jesus was stoned to death or that the key New Testament figure was John the Baptist. I cannot now remember which. Enoch laughed.'

55. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xii-xvii; see also Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 108-21.

56. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xi-xii; Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel'.

Mark and Luke. For Powell, these Matthean ‘blemishes’ are revealing clues about the compositional history of a Gospel ‘produced in haste and under pressure’.⁵⁷

Duplications were among the most important ‘blemishes’ in helping establish the earliest history behind Matthew’s Gospel, the ‘underlying book’, and the earliest theological developments in the Christian church. Powell focused heavily on the feeding miracles and, as part of his understanding of the historical Jesus’ death, he went as far as claiming that there are ‘vestiges at least of a duplicate execution’.⁵⁸ The ‘most portentous’ of the duplications was deemed to be the trial before the high priest and the trial before the Romans, the former being known to the latter. The apparent disputes behind such duplications concerned the identity of Jesus. For Powell’s underlying narrative the identity of Jesus concerned the incarnation: ‘he was divine, a victim and victor, not Jewish, but universal’. It was the theology of this text which generated a rival and alternative Jewish narrative.⁵⁹

Unsurprisingly, then, Powell’s earliest reconstructed text had concern for a Gentile mission. The narrative ‘starting point’ was the ‘Galilee of the gentiles’ (Matt. 4.14-15) which Powell argued ‘was an allegory of the great sea which united the Roman world’.⁶⁰ In order for believers to inherit the kingdom of everlasting life they would become sons of God through faith in Jesus’ identity. This, according to Powell, does not require fulfilment of the Law because Jesus’ death brought mercy and forgiveness. The earliest level of the Matthean tradition is a historical narrative which roughly approximated to historical reality and was also designed to establish Jesus’ identity as Son of God and in a way that is constructed over against Judaism. This is where we find Powell’s most striking argument – Jesus was stoned to death – which meant that he was convicted by the ‘Jewish establishment’ and this was because of ‘the blasphemy of allowing himself to be called “the son of God”’.⁶¹

Powell’s book was not well received and, despite acknowledgment of his learning, was even ridiculed.⁶² But Powell’s construction of a

57. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. xviii.

58. Powell, ‘Genesis of the Gospel’, p. 9. For Powell’s earlier interest in the feeding miracles see Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, pp. 95-98.

59. Powell, ‘Genesis of the Gospel’, p. 9.

60. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xxiii.

61. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xxi, 207-208.

62. Compare, for instance, N.T. Wright’s assessment: ‘This is clearly a work of great erudition, which seems to have lost touch with the distinction between that which is possible and that which is plausible... There is something to be said for starting again from scratch, but the catty answer is that he has chosen to ignore

negative Jewish foil, in particular that 'the Jewish establishment' had Jesus stoned to death, led to more serious criticisms. Hyam Maccoby was reported as claiming that 'It could undoubtedly have anti-Semitic repercussions' which were already present, Maccoby claimed, in the Gospels. 'If it is now said that the Romans did not do the executions, the Jews did, this intensifies the blame against the Jews even more'.⁶³ Obviously, this is hardly an unfair reading of Powell's exegesis but we should not single Powell out for blame for the negative construction of Judaism and we should probably not, should we be tempted, tie such negative constructions of Judaism too closely with his views on immigration. Powell was almost certainly not motivated by a personal antisemitism. He even argued that World War II was less a battle against the Nazis and more against a development of the negative Germanic traits such as hero-worship, power hunger, a love of force, and anti-semitism, all of which were apparently out of kilter with an English mindset.⁶⁴ Irrespective of whether this is a fair reading of national 'mindsets', Powell believed that antisemitism was most 'un-English'.

Having said that it is undeniable that Judaism was constructed negatively in Powell's exegesis and that he does make remarks about Jews and Judaism which are hardly complimentary. We might, for instance, compare Powell's comments about Jewish and Christian eschatology published in the 1970s:

This, like so much else that is Christian, represents a reinterpretation of the Jewish revelation so profound as to be a contradiction of it. The Jew looked forward – still does look forward – with the practical, earthbound, matter-of-factness characteristic of the Jew, to the actual establishment of his own theocracy in the world... The Christian is at once more humble and more realistic, and his hope is of a different sort...⁶⁵

This is typical of a long tradition of downgrading Judaism found throughout the history of biblical scholarship. Christian supersessionism and nineteenth-century discussions of the 'Jewish question' have both had a significant influence on modern biblical scholarship.⁶⁶ Since

everyone else, so he can't grumble if they return the compliment.' Reported in A. Brown, 'Gospel according to Powell: Christ was stoned to death', *Independent* (August 16, 1994).

63. Reported in Brown, 'Gospel according to Powell'.

64. Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 60.

65. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, p. 61.

66. See e.g. M. Casey, 'Some Anti-Semitic Assumptions in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', *NovT* 41 (1999), pp. 280-91; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000);

E.P. Sanders' widely praised criticisms of anti-Jewish readings in New Testament scholarship (published in 1977),⁶⁷ New Testament scholarship has regularly patted itself on the back for praising Judaism and using Judaism as the most important context for understanding the New Testament. However, the downgrading of Judaism and the superiority of Christianity remains but now with a more liberalising and rhetorically positive gloss. For all the emphasis on Jesus the Jew, Jesus regularly comes out over against Judaism in one way or another. This 'Jewish... but not that Jewish' Jesus (and New Testament) and the stress on a stable Jewish background identity is partly a product of the limited tolerance of liberal multiculturalism, reactions to globalisation, and an intense Anglo-American interest in Israel and Judaism after the 1967 Six Day War.⁶⁸

This tradition of using Judaism as a negative foil in Powell is likewise ideologically significant but also because the Roman Empire comes out positively.⁶⁹ Integral to Powell's reconstruction of Matthew is the importance of Rome and the Empire. Even some of Powell's description of Jesus is dressed up in imperial language: 'like the centurion ordering soldiers, Jesus designates missionaries to do his bidding, and dispatches them to work in the mission field'.⁷⁰ Powell's reading of the geography of Matthew's narrative, or at least of the underlying book, has probably more to say about the Roman Empire than the area it purports to be describing, Galilee. We should recall that, for Powell, the 'sea' in Matthew was an 'allegory of the great sea which united the Roman world', and a code word 'which often, if not always, represents the Mediterranean and signifies the gentile mission field'.⁷¹ We might even

S. Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London: Routledge, 2002); P. Head, 'The Nazi Quest for an Aryan Jesus', *JSHJ* 2 (2004), pp. 55-89; W. Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity* (London: Equinox, 2005); J.G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Quests for a New American Century* (London: Equinox, 2008); S. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); T. Penner, 'Die Judenfrage and the Construction of Ancient Judaism: Toward a Foregrounding of the Backgrounds Approach to Early Christianity', in P. Gray and G. O'Day (eds.), *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 429-55; Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism*.

67. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

68. Arnal, *Symbolic Jesus*; Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror*, pp. 143-94; Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism*, pp. 105-32.

69. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', p. 15.

70. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. xxiv.

71. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xxiii, xxvi.

suggest that, 'like the Roman', Powell effectively conquers Galilee for the Empire. Here another Powell idiosyncrasy becomes important. Unlike the dominant scholarly view which locates the writing of Matthew's Gospel somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean such as Antioch, Powell is adamant ('there would be little hesitation about the answer') that the provenance of the underlying book is Rome. Powell's argument for this is telling: it is because of the apparent Roman bias and Gentile mission which Powell believed was brought to the fore in the Matthean tradition. While Powell gives no indication about how he would account for any pro-Roman bias and concern for a Gentile mission elsewhere in early Christianity, the other Gospels evolve 'presumably in other quarters of the Mediterranean world'.⁷²

Clearly Powell's idiosyncrasies betray more than mere scholarly curiosity. And the ultimate idiosyncrasy perhaps reveals Powell's bias best: Rome had nothing to do with the death of Jesus and Jesus was emphatically not a threat to Roman power. But here Powell had a problem: whatever the historical reality, the Gospel of Matthew *does* have Jesus receive the punishment of crucifixion. Powell dealt with this by arguing that substituting crucifixion for stoning was 'made conditional' upon Pontius Pilate being exonerated from blame.⁷³ Powell also faced a similar kind of problem with the Kingdom of Heaven which Powell realised was 'not self-evidently compatible with the *imperium Romanum*'. However, Powell once again turned to the negative Jewish foil and developed a reading clearly reminiscent of his views on the role of the Anglican clergy. He argued that the Kingdom was 'painstakingly distanced' from the Jewish uprising (Matt. 24.27) and 'allowed to remain in an unexplored limbo between individual immortality and a new world order'. Importantly for Powell, as Pilate did not really believe Jesus was guilty (Matt. 27.23), 'Caesar's judgement-seat was in no imminent danger of being replaced by God's'. Instead, Powell claimed, the blame for Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew, as it was for the stoning in the underlying text, gets laid upon 'the Jews themselves', who were likewise to blame for the destruction of the Temple.⁷⁴

No doubt this use of the negative Jewish foil to produce a 'pro-Roman' reading of Matthew and Matthean tradition owed much to Powell's own idealistic views of Empire. Of course, Powell believed that Britain was no longer a serious imperial force and he was far from impressed with contemporary American imperialism but, as we saw,

72. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. xxvii.

73. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xxiii, 207-208.

74. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. xxiii.

Powell did find himself getting sentimental about the British Empire and he did have a profound admiration for the Roman Empire and ‘classical civilisation’. Powell’s reading of Matthew was clearly an idealised retelling of his own views on what an/the Empire really ought to be, but also implicit here is Powell’s idea of the hierarchy of political power where the State has priority over the subservient Church. We find this made more explicit, and with reference to Rome, in Powell’s reading of other New Testament texts:

‘Fear God, honour the king’ in the First Epistle General of St Peter (2.17), or St Paul’s injunction (Rom. 13.1-4) to ‘be subject unto the higher powers’ because ‘the power’ ‘is the minister of God’, who ‘beareth not the sword in vain’, will get us nowhere. Those are admonitions that were addressed to a tiny religious community who ‘confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth’ (Heb. 11.13), advising them that it was not their duty therefore to revolt against the Roman world-empire. Good behaviour and passive obedience were to be their proper attitudes towards it.⁷⁵

Powell may have written more truth than he thought when he claimed that ‘when we read the New Testament we all do our own expurgation... [C]ertainly every age has proceeded in this way with the Gospel.’⁷⁶

Powell might have claimed that worship is not dependent on textual history and ‘derives its authority and its persuasiveness from the immemorial practice and experience of the Church itself’,⁷⁷ but it remains clear that such immemorial practices are an integral part of his reading of the Gospel tradition. For instance, he claimed, in language that could easily be reapplied to his understanding of the Anglican Church, that ‘the most surprising experience has been to be led to perceive from how early a period in the evolution of the gospel the forms and ideas of worship were recognizably the same as they have continued down the ages’.⁷⁸ This comes through in Powell’s understanding of the duplications in Matthew’s Gospel, and the feeding miracles in particular, which were given most attention. The duplication of feeding miracles, Powell argued, did not mean they were to be understood as actual historical events but rather ‘symbolically’ in order to understand a theological or liturgical history and the evolution of church history with its compromises and cohesion. For Powell, the language of the feedings of the Five Thousand and the Four Thousand ‘unmistakably’ and ‘self-evident

75. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, p. 79.

76. Powell, *Wrestling with the Angel*, p. 59.

77. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. viii.

78. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. viii.

to anybody not determined to avoid its implications' alluded to 'the liturgical act of the Church known as the holy communion or mass... Those who originally read or heard the narrative could not fail to understand what it was about.'⁷⁹ This obviousness was because Jesus created a large surplus – including consecrated bread – which could then be taken up after the multitude had eaten and remain 'supernaturally' equal to the food consumed by the multitude.⁸⁰ For Powell, the feeding miracle was composed in an 'already existing Church with an already recognizable liturgical practice'.⁸¹ However, the duplication also reveals conflict and tension in Powell's argument. The feeding miracle was also part of a quarrel over the significance of the consecrated elements and the duplication is evidence of reconciliation between two opposing schools ('dare I say churches?') over disputed Eucharistic details.⁸²

As with Powell's understanding of Anglicanism, tracing the history of the earliest church was important for Powell because ecclesiastical evolution should reflect the culture and interests of its people. The anachronistic *ἐκκλησία* 'church' of the narrative underlying Matthew was, Powell claimed, no less an authority than the Church of Peter, whose theology was unquestionably orthodox, while the less orthodox alternative version lost out, even if it was absorbed into Matthew's text.⁸³ The orthodoxy of the Church of Peter included an emphasis on the incarnation, 'mass', and the Gentile mission. This was a church for the whole world where works of the Law and personal merit are no longer required because of, as we saw, faith in the propitiation and the identity of Jesus. And, significantly, the Church of Peter already possessed a book. But it was a church prepared to compromise. It had been in conflict with a Jewish church centred on the role of the Law. This Jewish church had used the Gentile Gospel to create its own myth of origins where Jesus was a prophet hero and martyr for Israel. To deal with this alternative and potential schism, a 'concordat' was drawn up and compromise reached between the Gentile and Jewish churches. The new single Gospel of Matthew, with its duplication and tensions, represented a mutual agreement.

Powell's reading of the Gospel tradition was, then, replicating the idea of a church of consensus and a Gospel of societal cohesion. Powell pushed this idea close to being a historical and theological necessity

79. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', p. 6.

80. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', pp. 6-7.

81. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', p. 6.

82. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', pp. 8-9.

83. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', p. 11.

because a narrative was required for missionaries of the sort who would have converted Gentiles such as the addressees of Paul's letters. What was needed, Powell argued, was 'a book accepted by every section of Christianity – in Jerusalem as well as in Rome. That would be a book such as might have evolved by AD 100 into the document which we possess under the title of "the gospel according to Matthew"'.⁸⁴ And now we arrive at the final idiosyncrasy where Powell was at odds with dominant trends in biblical scholarship, that is, Powell's claim that Paul and Matthew represented the same orthodox Christian tradition. In fact, Powell went further still and claimed that the Pauline epistles could assume familiarity with the Matthean traditions: 'the theology of the principal Pauline epistles is quite at home in the environment where Matthew originated'.⁸⁵ This gradual evolution of Christian orthodoxy ultimately became crystallised in the Gospel of Matthew which, we should not forget, was also engaged with its own compromises with the secular world. Powell admitted he could not prove precisely why this Gospel came about but would claim that it is 'impossible to avoid the fact' that the Gentile church had been validated by the Roman victory in Jerusalem: 'the *imperium Romanum* could be seen as, however involuntarily and unconsciously, the executant of the divine purpose'.⁸⁶ And we are now back to the implicit claims for priority of imperial and secular power in Powell's idealised understanding of Church, Crown, and Empire.

Yet, as Powell was only too aware, his nostalgic dream was dead in the water long before he died. He did not need to be on his deathbed to know that those great, grey ships with three funnels and sixteen-inch guns were no longer going to be blowing out of the water any other navy which is likely to face it, as much as he wished it so. That Britain had been blown out of the water by World War II. But the idea of reading a Church into the Bible as a part of English heritage and culture, and one constructed as subservient to State power, remains buoyant and, as we will later see, would be taken up in new directions by a new generation of political leaders. And his challenge to liberal-left Anglicanism and 'faith in action' was one which became integral to the battles of his great admirer and arguably his most potent legacy: Margaret Thatcher.

84. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, p. xxviii.

85. Powell, *Evolution of the Gospel*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

86. Powell, 'Genesis of the Gospel', p. 15.