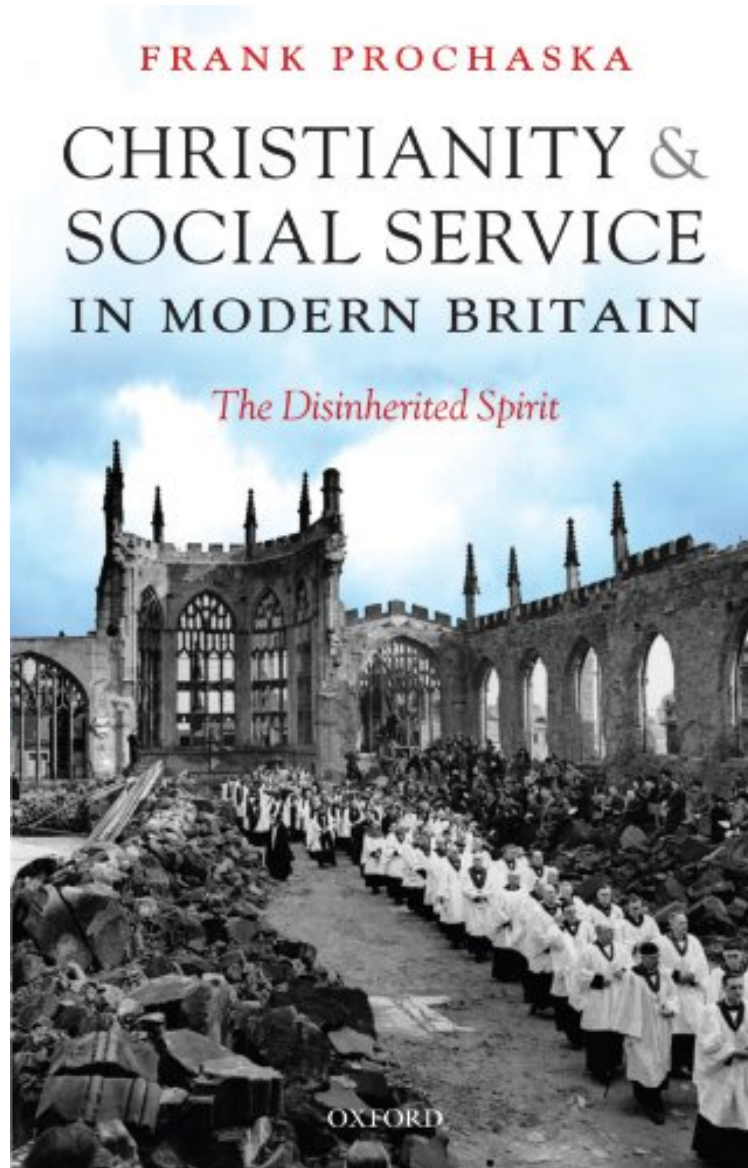


[Free download] Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit

# Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit

Frank Prochaska

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**Frank Prochaska : Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. almost heartbreaking  
By Dr. Michael T. Pearse  
This book gives a detailed account of the pre-eminent role played by Christianity and the churches in meeting a sweeping array of social needs, from nursing to education, from poor relief to mothers' meetings, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prochaska's argument, in brief, is that the arrogation of those roles by the state through the taxation system did more to secularise Britain than anything else. Prochaska makes it plain from the start that he is not a religious believer, and has no personal axe to grind on this matter. But I am, and I do. And the story he tells is almost heartbreaking. As taxes and 'state provision' rose, so the charitable instincts of the populace were progressively strangled. As the meeting of needs was depersonalised and bureaucratised, so individuals became the clients of the state -- and less self-reliant, more self-assertive, and less pious into the bargain. Prochaska also shows that the state takeover meant, among other things, a male takeover of social services; most of the Christian volunteers had been women; most of the government bureaucrats, men. The central argument of the statist was that government intervention would mean greater uniformity of service, and would be less hit-and-miss; services would be doled out on the basis of need, without the making of moral judgments. By now it has long since become clear that the making of such judgments is precisely what is needed, and that benefits subsidise fecklessness as often as they meet real needs. And, what is just as much to the point, convey no sense of obligation nor imply any need for gratitude in the recipient: the benefits are a 'right'. So who needs God?  
This book is an insightful guide to what has happened in Britain -- and a cautionary tale about the fate of America, if the statist road is travelled too far. Superb stuff.

Few subjects bring out so well the differences between ourselves and our ancestors as the history of Christian charity. In an increasingly mobile and materialist world, in which culture has grown more national, indeed global, we no longer relate to the lost world of nineteenth-century parish life. Today, we can hardly imagine a voluntary society that boasted millions of religious associations providing essential services, in which the public rarely saw a government official apart from the post office clerk. Against the background of the welfare state and the collapse of church membership, the very idea of Christian social reform has a quaint, Victorian air about it. In this elegantly written study of shifting British values, Frank Prochaska examines the importance of Christianity as an inspiration for political and social behavior in the nineteenth century and the forces that undermined both religion and philanthropy in the twentieth. The waning of religion and the growth of government responsibility for social provision were closely intertwined. Prochaska shows how the creation of the modern British state undermined religious belief and customs of associational citizenship. In unraveling some of the complexities in the evolving relationship between voluntarism and the state, the book presents a challenging new interpretation of Christian decline and democratic traditions in Britain.

` from previous edition A thoroughly enjoyable book: a highly informative history and a refreshing polemic.' Terry Philpot, *The Tablet* `This is a well written book. Any future studies on the decline of Christianity in modern Britain should include Prochaska's argument.' Andreas Whittam Smith, *The Church Times* `The issues raised here could not be more important to the future of British democracy ... Each part of this thrilling analysis should disturb the dreary complacency now engulfing the debate on the future of British democracy.' Frank Field, *The Spectator* `...A very welcome interpretive study...' Jeremy Black, *The Social Affairs Unit*  
About the Author Frank Prochaska is Senior Research Scientist and Lecturer at Yale University.