



Revd. Reginald Heber Moss with family, pupils, & staff, c1905.

Moss had taught at Bilton Grange and Cheltenham, before becoming Rector of Bletsoe in 1899 and starting a 'crammer' here. This group includes: Mrs Ruth Moss and daughter Helen, and (back row right) Edith Jane Armstrong (1889-1973), later Tom Solesbury's mother); next to her is head gardener William Curtis (1876-1961). Ruth Moss was godmother to William Curtis's son, Stanley. The group also includes (front row, left) Christopher Henry Dawson (1889-1970), and (front row, right) Edward Ingram Watkin (1888-1981). Dawson may first have come into contact with Moss at Bilton Grange.

Dawson & Watkin both arrived in Bletsoe in the summer of 1905 and spent three years here, becoming lifelong friends. Later, at Oxford, they both converted to Rome. Dawson subsequently became a prominent Catholic, European historiographer, and Professor of Catholic Studies at Harvard. "In his field," wrote Prof. David Knowles, "Christopher Dawson was the most distinguished Catholic thinker of the century". Watkin became prominent, particularly amongst Catholic intellectuals, as a writer on philosophy and mysticism.

Dawson claimed that he had learnt more in his three years in Bletsoe than in all the time he was at Winchester or Oxford. Dawson and Watkin both cherished memories of their time at Bletsoe, and while there both had read widely, including 'Marius the Epicurean', a philosophical romance by Walter Pater.

Edward Watkin, writing about their time at Bletsoe, wrote 'From Pater I learnt with Dawson to seek and seize passages of beauty, such as that of describing the poplars distinctive music, 'a certain fresh way its leaves have of dealing with the wind, making its sound in never so slight a stirring of the air, like running water,' I remember one day we visited a group of poplars by the riverside to enjoy their rich autumnal gold.' Dawson in one of his early letters wrote: 'I often think of our time at Bletsoe, of 'Marius the Epicurean', and the Bedfordshire poplars'.



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Front row, left: Richard Astry Bourne Orlebar of Hinwick. Back row, 2nd left: Edith Armstrong (1889-1973), later Tom Solesbury's mother. Back row, 3rd left, William Curtis (1876-1961).



Rev Reginald Heber Moss with family, 1900s