

God's Empire

*Religion and Colonialism in the
British World, c. 1801–1908*

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2 Protestant nation to Christian empire, 1801–1908

The history of the planting of Christianity forms an essential part of the history of European empires.¹ Latourette, one of the few historians who has dared to write a complete, scholarly history of Christianity in all its branches, considered that it was not until 1944 (the year he completed his magisterial seven-volume survey) that Christianity began to be a world religion, rather than what he called a ‘colonial or imperial extension, ecclesiastically speaking, of an Occidental faith’.² Nevertheless, the imperial phase of the planting of Christianity in the settler colonies of the British empire has tended to be forgotten in recent times. There are nationalist and post-colonial reasons for this. Where British settlers remained a majority force in the population, including Australia, British North America and New Zealand, the churches responded by generating national histories which emphasised autonomous developments and indigenous contributions to post-colonial churches; in regions where the settler population declined or disappeared in sites such as the British Raj, the plantation economies of the West Indies or the mobile occupying force of the British army in India, then the history of the settler churches has more or less been forgotten. However, the churches did not grow spontaneously in the native soil but were transported there with considerable deliberation and intent. This chapter provides a compressed narrative history of British religious settlement throughout the empire in order to provide a background to the particular studies of Christian emigration and the colonial missionary societies of Greater

¹ The fullest history of European settler Christianity remains that of K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (London, 1938–45). For the territories considered in this book, Latourette may now be supplemented by the separate volumes of the *Oxford History of the Christian Church*, including I. Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford, 2001); R. E. Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford, 2008); and A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450–1950* (Oxford, 1994). See also S. Gilley and B. Stanley, eds., *World Christianities, c.1815–1914* (Cambridge, 2006).

² Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 7, p. 411.

Britain which follow. In the course of 200 years, it traces the revolution in religious aspirations for the British state, from Protestant nation to a free, moral and Christian settler empire.

Protestant nation, 1801

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most European states – with the notable exception of post-revolutionary France – were locked into mutually hostile religious power blocs, the endgame which was the result of centuries of religiously fuelled ethno-political conflict. Following the Peace of Augsburg (1555), a kind of equilibrium had been achieved by bestowing constitutional endorsement on Catholicism or Protestantism depending on the religious persuasion of the reigning monarch according to the principle *cuius regno eius religio* ('whose realm, his religion'). While in practice few countries were able to secure a monopoly over people's private religious beliefs, it was widely accepted that a confessional state was essential on the grounds of national security, public morality and good order.

This was the religious background to the legal formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Prompted by the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the Act of Union (1801) united the historic realms of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales and Britain's overseas territories into a single state, ruled by a Protestant monarch, endowed with two established churches – the United Church of England and Ireland and the Church of Scotland – and governed by a single parliament in Westminster.³ Britain's empire had been much reduced by the loss of most of her colonies in the American War of Independence, but in 1801 it incorporated islands in the West Indies such as St Kitts and Nevis (1625), Barbados (1662) and Jamaica (1655); chilly wilderness regions in North America including Newfoundland (1623) and the complex of territories which were divided into English-speaking Upper Canada and French-speaking Lower Canada (1791); the convict colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land in Australia (1788); inhospitable regions of eastern Africa; and military bases such as Gibraltar (1713).⁴ Although it was occupied by the British in 1795, Cape Colony did not become a British colony until 1806.

³ For the religious significance of the Acts of Union, see J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Régime*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2000); J. Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom, 1660–1800: State, Religion and Identity in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2001).

⁴ Dates refer to the establishment of the colonies. See Maps 1.1 and 1.2.

Throughout these widely scattered domains there were significant religious divisions which the government generally regarded as a threat to national and imperial unity. In an attempt to subdue the voice of dissent, establishment Protestantism was therefore protected legally and endowed financially. Only those who swore allegiance to the Protestant monarch and publicly confessed to the Thirty-Nine Articles (the sixteenth-century formulation of the doctrines of the Church of England) were eligible to serve the British crown. Most of the professions – not just the Anglican and Presbyterian ministry, but the judiciary, the universities, parliament, the colonies and commissioned ranks in the army and navy – were closed to all but establishment Protestants. Among those excluded were Nonconformists,⁵ such as the old Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists and Unitarians, and the new Wesleyan Methodists, as well as Catholics, Jews and adherents of all other religious faiths. Yet, whatever their religious convictions, everyone was subject to church taxes that contributed to the support of the two established churches which were also richly supported from their historical endowments. In Ireland, this meant that 3,150,000 Catholics and 900,000 Presbyterians paid tithes in aid of 450,000 adherents of the established Church of Ireland.⁶ Like Irish Catholics, Welsh Nonconformists, who formed a majority in much of the principality, were excluded from a say in the governance of their own country. Laws that required them to pay taxes to support a national Church to which they did not adhere also distressed a significant number of Episcopalians in Scotland and Presbyterians in England. Beyond British shores, the same inequitable system applied. In Upper Canada, religious endowments were monopolised by an Anglican and, from 1824, a Presbyterian minority. Religion was less of an issue in colonies with a majority non-Christian population where the regimes of the various charter companies kept missionaries – and other perceived impediments to trade – firmly at bay.

Collectively, these constitutional arrangements ensured that state-supported Protestantism was neither an accidental nor a marginal characteristic of either the United Kingdom or her overseas colonies. Indeed, as Linda Colley has argued in an influential thesis, it was vital

⁵ 'Nonconformity' refers throughout this book to non-Anglican Protestantism. In the nineteenth century, it incorporated the Unitarians, Congregationalists (or Puritans), Baptists and Quakers, who had opposed the Act of Uniformity (1662), and newer groups such as the Methodists, the Plymouth Brethren and the Salvation Army. The Act of Toleration (1689) allowed Nonconformists to avoid penalties for non-attendance at Anglican church services, but it was not until the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1828) and subsequent reforms that first Nonconformists, then Catholics (1829) and Jews (1890), achieved full emancipation.

⁶ C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *British Historical Facts 1760–1830* (London, 1980), p. 175.

in bringing together the various heterogeneous ethnic and religious components of the British nation.⁷ Prior to the American Revolution, Protestantism had helped to define and shape the ‘Atlantic World’, a region of English-speaking cultural and economic dominion which stretched from the British Isles to the Americas, included the Caribbean, and followed the slave and sugar trades to Africa.⁸ In the wake of the voyages of James Cook, the British Protestant state, with its enlightenment values, missionary enthusiasm and evangelical hopes, was also extended to the Pacific.⁹ By 1851, the American writer Robert Baird celebrated the Christian advances of the Protestant powers of Holland, England and the United States in the following terms: ‘Their colonies are numerous and important. England and Holland have all the great islands in the Indian and Pacific oceans. England, especially, is extending her influence and her Protestantism immensely, by means of her vast Colonial Possessions in the Old and New Worlds.’¹⁰

Other than the English Bible, the one thing British Protestants tended to have in common was opposition to Catholics – a not inconsiderable ideological force. As subjects of a Protestant monarch, most British citizens were ready and eager to defend and extend the faith of the realm both at home and abroad. Anti-Catholicism formed part of a nationalist discourse that decried Roman Catholicism as morally and politically tyrannical and celebrated Protestantism as the font of British liberty.¹¹ Nevertheless, the nationalist assertion of Protestant Britain smoothed over significant divisions between different kinds of British Protestantism, especially that which separated Nonconformity

⁷ Colley, *Britons*. See also T. Claydon and I. McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650–c.1850* (Cambridge, 1998). J. Black, ‘Confessional State or Elect Nation?’, in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650–c.1850*, ed. T. Claydon and I. McBride (Cambridge, 1998). For the defence of the Anglican church-state by William Blackstone, see Clark, *English Society*, pp. 245–47.

⁸ As argued by C. G. Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2009).

⁹ K. Wilson, ‘The Island Race: Captain Cook, Protestant Evangelicalism and the Construction of English National Identity, 1760–1800’, in *Protestantism and National Identity*, ed. Claydon and McBride, pp. 265–90.

¹⁰ R. Baird, *The Christian Retrospect and Register: A Summary of the Scientific, Moral and Religious Progress of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1851), p. 199.

¹¹ J. Wolfe, ‘Anti-Catholicism’, in *Empires of Religion*, ed. H. M. Carey (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 43–63. E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968); J. Wolfe, ‘Anti-Catholicism and Evangelical Identity in Britain and the United States, 1830–1860’, in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Christianity in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990*, ed. M. A. Noll, D. W. Bebbington and G. A. Rawlyk (New York, 1994), pp. 179–97.

and the two established churches of England and Scotland. Indeed, 'Protestant' should probably be seen as just as much of a flag of convenience as 'British', though none the less meaningful for all that. At the beginning of the century, when Catholics throughout Great Britain and Ireland began to press successfully for reform, they therefore faced strong opposition from all classes of society. Attempts by Westminster to ameliorate the worst of the disabilities affecting Catholics unleashed anti-Catholic riots in Edinburgh in 1779 and in London the following year when a Scottish peer, Lord George Gordon, incited the mob. Conservative Protestants never abandoned the aspiration to complete the Reformation by eradicating Catholicism from Britain entirely. For their part, Catholics defined England, Scotland and Ireland as mission fields and looked forward to the time when they would be restored to the one true Catholic and apostolic faith in communion with Rome.

The privileges of the established Church were supported by local colonial as well as imperial legislation. In the West Indies and in the Cape Colony, missionaries and other Nonconformist clergy were seen as a nuisance, and laws relating to their licence to preach were closely policed. In 1802, the Jamaican Assembly passed a law which gave magistrates the power to withdraw the licence to preach from anyone considered likely to incite the slave population to acts of rebellion: Baptists and Methodists were particularly suspect, and at least one licensed Methodist missionary was sent to jail for illegal preaching.¹² In New South Wales, Catholic priests associated with the convict uprising at Castle Hill in 1798, not long after the Irish Rebellion, had their permission to celebrate Catholic services removed. It is necessary to emphasise the legal nicety of all these arrangements. Public prayer and religious meetings could be – and occasionally were – regarded as seditious activities that attracted government sanction or proscription. Only members of the established Church or, after the abolition of the Test Acts, licensed dissenting ministers were able to pray in public – and even then only in properly established places of worship. Even where religious toleration was practised, the assumption of privilege by the Church of England and the subsidies provided to their clergy continued to be a major annoyance to colonists of other religious persuasion, or none.

While popular support for the established Church is difficult to judge and should not be underestimated,¹³ the sectarianism that defined and divided the British Protestant nation in 1801 helped prop up an

¹² P. Wright, ed., *Knibb 'the Notorious': Slaves' Missionary, 1803–1845* (London, 1973), p. 25.

¹³ R. Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700–1850* (London, 1991), p. 127.

unequal social and political order. The old religion sustained the power of the old regime, entrenching the advantages of a ruling elite that was defined narrowly by class, religion, gender and ethnicity. Aristocratic privilege, which was linked to the power of the established Church, was curtailed by the constitutional revolution, which ended what Brown calls the ‘spiritual monopoly’ of the Church of England.¹⁴ Meanwhile, it fell as a particular burden on the lower orders, including the clergy of many churches who were constrained economically, socially and spiritually by conditions in Britain. Fortunately, one outlet for these poor, but rising and often highly ambitious and idealistic men, was provided by the colonies where there were opportunities to serve as chaplains or as agents of the missionary societies.

Chaplains

Chaplaincy was the system that evolved historically in the Church of England to provide religious services in free chapels, independent from the ordinary jurisdiction of the parish priest.¹⁵ Traditionally, chaplains were appointed to royal and judicial courts, to wealthy private households or to dependencies of large ecclesiastical institutions. By the nineteenth century, chaplains had evolved into the mobile frontiersmen of the clerical profession. They could be found overseas in hardship posts or coping at home with the new social and political conditions sparked by the industrial revolution and the explosive growth of cities. From 1825, Church affairs in British colonies were regulated by an act of parliament.¹⁶ This allowed British consuls to appoint chaplains ‘at any foreign port or place’, so long as they received a licence from the bishop of London, and government outlay was met with matching funds raised by local subscription. Since this was a relatively informal system – and the bishop of London was generally a long way away – complaints might arise if rival chaplains wished to serve the same community.¹⁷

Originally, as servants of the crown, chaplains were always ordained ministers of the two established churches. However, following the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203. See p. 11 above.

¹⁵ T. Moore, *Dictionary of the English Church, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1881), pp. 98–102.

¹⁶ Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Instructions to Her Majesty’s Consuls Respecting Grants to British Church Establishments Abroad under the Act of Parliament 6 George IV, c. 87* (London, 1874).

¹⁷ For an instance of this in Madeira, see R. T. Lowe, *Protest against the Ministrations in Madeira of the Reverend T. K. Brown in Opposition to Episcopal Authority by the Reverend R. T. Lowe, the Chaplain Licensed by the Lord Bishop of London* (Funchal, 1848).

abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic emancipation, Nonconformist and Catholic chaplains were given appointments, especially to jails, convict settlements and military settlements. Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic chaplains were also employed by the East India Company to provide religious comforts to their troops in India and reform what they regarded as inhumane cultural practices. Charles Grant, Chairman of the East India Company, sponsored chaplains such as the Scottish theologian, Claudius Buchanan (1766–1815), in India, later an important advocate of the erection of a colonial Church establishment.¹⁸

Another group of clergy who served the British overseas were military and naval chaplains.¹⁹ Both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland had been appointing military chaplains to regiments in the British Army since the sixteenth century. From 1796, army chaplains were coordinated under the Chaplain-General, who enjoyed a rank equivalent to that of a major general. There was also a long history of chaplains serving in the Royal Navy.²⁰ In 1812, the Lords Commissioner of the Admiralty put the organisation of naval chaplains on a much more formal basis and appointed a Chaplain-General to the Fleet. Naval chaplains received annual pay of £150, had their own servant and a pension, and in some places they took on surrogate duties as moral guardians and schoolmasters. Purchasing a commission to serve as a naval or regimental chaplain could be used as an easy way to earn a living since it was not difficult to pay someone else to take the services involved, though there were attempts to curb this vice.²¹ As serving officers, army chaplains were expected to remain with their regiments when serving overseas and this seems to have been the beginning of an official religious presence, funded by the British government, in territories overseas. Chaplains might also be appointed to any expedition of an official character with the general idea that they represented the 'Defender of the Faith' and helped to elevate the tone. As Snape has shown, soldiers, sailors and their officers were often strongly religious and the army and navy served to promote British religious institutions

¹⁸ For Buchanan, see p. 50 below.

¹⁹ W. E. L. Smith, *The Navy and Its Chaplains in the Days of Sail* (Toronto, 1961); G. C. Taylor, *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy* (Oxford, 1978). For the Church of Scotland, see I. C. Barclay, 'Chaplaincies, Military', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. N. M. D. S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 162–63. and C. S. Dow, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland: A History of the Military Chaplains of Scotland Prior to the War in the Crimea* (Edinburgh and London, 1962). See now M. F. Snape, *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department, 1796–1953: Clergy under Fire* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2007).

²⁰ Taylor, *Sea Chaplains*. ²¹ Dow, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland*, pp. 227–8.

in many remote places.²² In Newfoundland, pious naval officers were among those who agitated for more regular religious services than those provided by the SPG and initiated subscriptions to repair its dilapidated churches.²³ If we look carefully, it is evident that the religious pluralism and toleration, which came eventually to be seen as characteristic of the British empire, was pioneered in the armed services from where it set the pace for later changes in religious arrangements in all British colonies.

Colonial chaplaincies were a natural extension of the provision of chaplains to military establishments, and first occur a little after the earliest military chaplains. We can see the blurring of the division between military and prison chaplains and the colonial clergy in relation to the chaplains appointed in the Australian colonies. Were men such as Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden in New South Wales, or John Youl in Van Diemen's Land,²⁴ prison chaplains, or were they chaplains appointed as part of the colonial establishments? Johnson has been claimed as both a prison or convict chaplain and a colonial chaplain by historians, reflecting the dual nature of his role. The records of the SPCK show that, on 14 November 1786, before the First Fleet had left London, reference was made to the need to provide Johnson, 'who is going to Botany Bay as chaplain to the convicts, with some Bibles and other religious books for the use of this charge'.²⁵ While the SPCK seems to have considered Johnson to be a convict chaplain, his actual commission is more general, naming him 'Chaplain to the settlement within our territory called New South Wales'. It went on to state his duties in rather vague terms:

You are, therefore, carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of chaplain, by doing and performing all and all manner of things thereunto belonging; and you are to observe and follow such orders and directions, from time to time as you shall receive from our Governor of our said territory for the time being or any other your superior officers, according to the rules and discipline of war.²⁶

Chaplains remained subject to such strict military rule until 1804, after which they were placed under the control of the 'principal

²² M. F. Snape, *The Redcoat and Religion: The Forgotten History of the British Soldier from the Age of Marlborough to the Eve of the First World War* (London, 2005).

²³ Smith, *Navy and Its Chaplains*, pp. 184–7.

²⁴ P. C. Blake, *John Youl, the Forgotten Chaplain: A Biography of the Reverend John Youl (1773–1827) First Chaplain to Northern Tasmania* (Launceston, 1999).

²⁵ Minutes of the SPCK, 14 November 1786, cited by F. T. Whittington, *William Grant Broughton Bishop of Australia with Some Account of the Earliest Australian Clergy* (Sydney, 1936), pp. 3–4.

²⁶ Commission to Reverend Richard Johnson, 24 October 1786, cited by Whittington, *William Grant Broughton*, p. 5.

chaplain'. The state continued to interfere in the activities of chaplains in a way which was highly exacerbating, especially to colonial bishops, but was the logical result of their employment by the state.²⁷

But apart from the appointment of chaplains, the British government really did little to promote religion in the colonies. In his monumental three-volume history of the Church of England in the colonies, James S. M. Anderson argued that there had never been a time in which England did not show an interest in the spiritual welfare of her foreign possessions.²⁸ However, even Anderson admitted that the main way in which this concern was expressed was through the provision of a thin stream of colonial chaplains under the auspices of the SPG.²⁹ What is more, colonial chaplains had a reputation for being second-raters who would not have been able to secure ordination in the ordinary way. This may just be the result of snobbishness, but it also reflected the conditions of their employment as lowly servants of what were often unpopular and distant colonial administrations. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, a low view of both the colonial chaplain as an institution, and the Anglican clergy in particular, is reflected by the English satirist William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63) in the novel, *The Virginians* (serialised 1857–9). Virginia, he states, was an Anglican colony where the clergy were supported by the state. Without bishops of their own, they were brought over to America from Britain:

Such as came were not, naturally, of the best or most eloquent kind of pastors. Noblemen's hangers-on, insolvent parsons who had quarrelled with justice or the bailiff, brought their stained cassocks into the colony in hopes of finding a living there.³⁰

Thackeray, who was born in Calcutta, may be reflecting here the common view of the day that a guaranteed income was a factor in the low moral and intellectual standing of clergy in colonies such as the West Indies. But his view of the low standards of the chaplains provided to British colonies was also common among American writers. According to Frank Samuel Child, writing in about 1896, the colonial parson of New England was 'no better than he should be',³¹ and compared unfavourably with the eager Nonconformist Protestant clergy who dominated the American religious landscape. A commitment to raising the training and standing of chaplains appointed to the colonies

²⁷ The imperial grant for police, magistrates and chaplains to Western Australia ended in 1888.

²⁸ J. S. M. Anderson, *The History of the Church of England in the Colonies and Foreign Dependencies of the British Empire* 2nd edn, 3 vols. (London, 1856).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 408–11 and 550–78.

³⁰ W. M. Thackeray, *The Virginians: A Tale of the Last Century* (New York, 1904), p. 59.

³¹ F. S. Child, *The Colonial Parson of New England* (New York, 1896), p. 42.

was one consequence of the religious revival at the end of the eighteenth century. Through the activism of William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and the group of serious-minded Anglican Evangelicals known as the Clapham Sect, a number of poor men, many of them from Yorkshire, were supported through their studies at university and were then helped to colonial appointments.

From their posts in frontier settlements, colonial chaplains were sometimes lonely and isolated, both physically and culturally. From the convict colony in Botany Bay, Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden wrote letters that are full of complaints about the trial of the voyage, the iniquity of their convict charges and, in Johnson's case, his long battle to recover from the authorities the cost of a temporary church which, after a wait of five years, he erected at his own expense.³² Johnson was the only officer of the First Fleet who brought his family with him. When Marsden joined him some years later he also complained of the impact of his tour of duty on his wife. The Marsdens were six months at sea during which time Ann Marsden had her first child, completely unassisted except for her husband. According to Marsden, the only other woman on board was monopolised by the ship's captain as his mistress. Nevertheless, whereas Johnson begged to come home, Marsden flourished both physically and financially in the colony, informing bishop Moore that he had never once regretted accepting his appointment.³³ Johnson prayed God would open a way for him to return home: 'for at present my situation is truly uncomfortable, without any reasonable or apparent hope or Prospect of getting good to myself or doing good to others'.³⁴ Other chaplains, corresponding with Moore from their posts in other mission fields in India and North America, were also more cheerful than Johnson.³⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was widely recognised that these arrangements were inadequate to the needs of the settler colonies and reform was essential.³⁶ Nevertheless, bishops and ecclesiastical

³² Johnson to Moore, 8 May 1793, Lambeth Palace Library, Moore Papers.

³³ Marsden to Moore, 4 May 1794; Johnson to Moore, 8 May 1793, Lambeth Palace Library, Moore Papers.

³⁴ Johnson Journal, 16 April 1794, fol. 29, Lambeth Palace Library, Moore Papers. Johnson addressed this volume of letters and reminiscences to William Wilberforce.

³⁵ See, for example, the cheerful letter by Mr Wilkinon from the island of St Helena where he had been appointed chaplain prior to taking up a post with the East India Company. Lambeth Palace Library, Moore Papers.

³⁶ R. Strong, 'A Vision of an Anglican Imperialism: The Annual Sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701–1714', *Journal of Religious History*, 30 (2006), pp. 175–98; Strong, *Anglicanism and Empire*. For earlier studies, see E. Chilman, 'Bishops in the British Colonies: The Story of the Oversea

establishments were slow to appear in the colonies and initially their appointments arose in response to political crises into which a bishop was introduced as a pacifying gesture. The first Anglican colonial diocese to be erected was Nova Scotia (1787), the second was Quebec (1793), and, in 1836, the first outside the Americas was created for bishop Broughton of Australia.³⁷ In India, the Scottish theologian and educator, Claudius Buchanan (1766–1815) – described by Porter as an ‘establishment propagandist’³⁸ – argued that Britain’s geographical empire should correspond with its spiritual empire. At the invitation of Josiah Pratt, the Secretary of the CMS, Buchanan provided a rationale for the replacement of missionary and chaplaincy arrangements with an imperial Church establishment.³⁹ For Buchanan, the argument was simple: the ‘law of God’ was recognised by the British legislature. Just as Rome had for many years recognised a duty to extend Christianity throughout her empire, so, in the present age, that responsibility fell to Great Britain.⁴⁰ However, for this purpose, Buchanan felt the existing Church instruments, namely, the three missionary societies (the SPG, SPCK and CMS), were inadequate. He therefore proposed the creation of what he called a ‘General Colonial Ecclesiastical Establishment for Great Britain’, which would include at least seven dioceses: the West Indies, Bengal or North Hindostan, Madras or South and East Hindostan, Bombay or West Hindostan, Ceylon, South Africa and New South Wales, each with a bishop and clergy on the scale of the regular English dioceses.⁴¹ While there were many reasons why in 1813 this proposal for the whole empire failed, it had the effect of keeping the cause of the English church and missions to India before the public eye, and securing funding from the East India Company for a bishopric and Anglican ecclesiastical establishments in India.

While some Anglicans called for an imperial expansion of the Church of England, religious reforms to the constitutional standing of Nonconformists and Catholics were soon reflected throughout the empire in many different ways. Anglicanism continued to enjoy priority, but, by the 1830s, religious provisions varied widely from colony to colony. As Blackstone had commented in the late eighteenth century,

Episcopate and the Colonial Bishopsrics’ Fund’, *Crown Colonist*, 11 (1941), pp. 486–7; W. F. France, *The Oversea Episcopate: Centenary History of the Colonial Bishopsrics’ Fund, 1841–1941* (London, 1941).

³⁷ See Table 3.3, Anglican colonial and missionary bishoprics, 1900.

³⁸ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, p. 71.

³⁹ C. Buchanan, *Colonial Ecclesiastical Establishment: Being a Brief View of the State of the Colonies of Great Britain, and of Her Asiatic Empire in Respect to Religious Instruction* (London, 1813).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

there was no automatic transmission of Church establishment to British colonies.⁴² However, in some places, including Barbados and Upper Canada, ecclesiastical establishments were created by special colonial legislation, as they had been in many (but not all) American colonies. In such places, the bishop could exert considerable political power. This was sometimes seen as aggressive imperial intrusion on the part of the Church of England and the SPG, especially by other Protestants.⁴³ In the absence of a presiding colonial bishop, the appointment of colonial clergy was carefully regulated by the bishop of London.⁴⁴ Before ordination, each candidate for colonial service was required to show testimonials from three or more clergymen, a certificate of birth or baptism, a document showing that their intention to seek ordination had been announced in their parish for three successive Sundays, a certificate of education as well as a ‘firm promise’ of an ecclesiastical appointment. The responsibilities of the bishop of London for colonial clergy ended with the appointment of colonial bishops, beginning with Nova Scotia in 1787. However, the licences of Anglican colonial clergy to practice in Britain continued to be controlled tightly under the Colonial Clergy Acts.⁴⁵

Attempts to regulate the colonial churches by imperial legislation had mixed success but reveal a trend towards increasing religious toleration. Between 1634 and 1853, there were just eight orders-in-council and seven acts of parliament that related to the colonial Church.⁴⁶ These included arrangements for giving the bishop of London jurisdiction over plantations in the West Indies (1726), suppressing the number of Roman Catholic festivals in Trinidad (1822), ordaining clergy especially for the colonies (1819) and disposing of the clergy reserves in Canada (1827, 1840 and 1853). At a time of critical change in the constitutional position of the Church of England, W. E. Gladstone published *The State in Its Relations to the Church* (1838), which provided a comprehensive analysis of religious provisions for the military and the British colonies.⁴⁷ While personally supporting the ideal of a universal, or ‘national

⁴² See W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England [1765–1769]*, facsimile edn, 4 vols. (Chicago, 1979), vol. 4, pp. 106–8.

⁴³ B. S. Schlenther, ‘Religious Faith and Commercial Empire’, in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford, 1998), p. 132.

⁴⁴ For the Ordination Papers of Colonial Clergy, 1748–c.1824, see Fulham Papers (vols. XXI–XXXII), Lambeth Palace Library. See G. Yeo, ‘A Case without Parallel: The Bishops of London and the Anglican Church Overseas, 1660–1748’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44 (1993), pp. 450–75.

⁴⁵ See the introduction to Part III below.

⁴⁶ A. Mills, *Colonial Constitutions: An Outline of the Constitutional History and Existing Government of the British Dependencies* (London, 1856), pp. 393–4.

⁴⁷ W. E. Gladstone, *The State in Its Relations with the Church* (London, 1838). A fourth edition, expanded to two volumes, appeared in 1841.

Church', Gladstone stressed that the Church of England had no automatic rights flowing from its establishment in England, even with serving members of the military. He noted that after Catholic emancipation Roman Catholic soldiers were exempted from attending 'Church' services, but that in Ireland their officers were obliged to attend Catholic religious services with them 'in order to prevent their being tampered with by political harangues' (a precaution which was subverted since the sermons were often given in Irish).⁴⁸ Nonconformists (referred to by Gladstone as Dissenters) were not exempted, but in every military station divine service was provided by local clergymen of the established churches of England and Scotland. For Gladstone, this demonstrated that full toleration was accorded to Catholics, recognition was given to the Church of Scotland in Scotland, and the Church of England was supported everywhere else.⁴⁹

Indeed, for a brief period in the 1830s, the empire was a place of multiple establishments, or at least multiple churches, missions and chaplaincies supported by the imperial and colonial governments. The empire, it would seem, was Protestant and Anglican no longer. However, this new toleration came at a very significant financial cost. In 1839, James Stephen (1789–1859), British under-secretary for the colonies, prepared a return of the cost of colonial Church establishments for the House of Commons.⁵⁰ This revealed that this had risen to an impressive £168,242 per annum divided between the Church of England, which received £134,450 (80 per cent), the Church of Scotland £9,967 (5.9 per cent), the Dutch Reformed Church £6,886 (4.1 per cent), mostly in Cape of Good Hope, and the Roman Catholic Church (8.7 per cent), especially in Mauritius, Lower Canada, Trinidad, and New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. The Wesleyan minister at the Cape of Good Hope received £75, and in Jamaica there was £500 for a Wesleyan chapel, £600 for a Baptist chapel, and £1,000 for a Jewish synagogue. While thirty-nine colonies benefited from this bounty, by far the largest sums were expended in maintaining Anglican ecclesiastical establishments in British North America and the West Indies, where the bishop of Jamaica and the bishop of Barbados both enjoyed salaries of £4,000. These were not large episcopal salaries by British standards, and were comparable to those of most bishops in Ireland.⁵¹ Other

⁴⁸ W. E. Gladstone, *The State in Its Relations with the Church*, 2nd edn (London, 1839), p. 247.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵⁰ 'Church Establishment (Colonies). Return of the Number of Persons on the Establishment of the Church of England, and other Religious Denominations, Maintained by Grant of Public Money, in Each of the Colonies', *House of Commons, British Parliamentary Papers*, 55 (1839).

⁵¹ R. B. McDowell, *The Church of Ireland, 1869–1969* (London, 1975), p. 7.

colonial bishops received much less, particularly if they were dependent on the Colonial Bishops' Fund. Nevertheless, these expensive arrangements were vulnerable to parliamentary economy drives, particularly under Whig reforming governments.⁵² Always unpopular with non-Anglicans, subsidies for ecclesiastical establishments, schools and clergy in the colonies disappeared completely by the 1860s.

At about this time, Gladstone made repeated efforts to introduce uniform imperial legislation that would create a more democratic and independent form of synodal governance for the Church of England across the empire, but was forced in the end to abandon the attempt.⁵³ Following the Colenso case (1860), it was determined by the Privy Council that the imperial government did not have the power to create territorial bishoprics in colonies with their own legislatures.⁵⁴ After this date, the independent colonies, which had responsibility for most other aspects of their own affairs, were given sole charge of what remained of their ecclesiastical establishments. In some cases, for example in Barbados, the colonial legislature re-established the Church of England and continued to give grants to other churches.⁵⁵ However, most governments embraced secularism and dispensed with the financial and political burden of supporting religious institutions. In the ensuing funding vacuum, church planting was taken over by the colonial missionary societies or, where they could afford it, the colonial churches.

Religious arrangements for settlers and travellers in the British empire can thus be seen to have passed through a number of phases. In the first place, chaplaincy services were supplied to military bases, hospitals and penal establishments, and these were extended to colonial settlements that served the same purposes. In the case of colonies, religious provisions varied according to the nature of the colony and whether it was one intended predominately for British settlement or if missions to the native population were also required; these were managed through

⁵² Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, p. 158. In the 1860s, the archbishop of Armagh earned £10,000 per annum while the nine less senior bishops earned on average £3,850 per annum.

⁵³ H. M. Carey, 'Gladstone, the Colonial Church and Imperial State', in *Church and State in Old and New Worlds*, ed. H. M. Carey and J. Gascoigne (Leiden, in press).

⁵⁴ P. Hinchliff, 'John William Colenso: A Fresh Appraisal', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 13 (1962); P. Hinchliff, 'Colonial Church Establishment in the Aftermath of the Colenso Controversy', in *Religious Change in Europe, 1650–1914: Essays for John McManners*, ed. N. Aston (Oxford, 1997), pp. 345–63.

⁵⁵ K. Hunte, 'Christianity and Slavery in the British Caribbean', in *Christianity in the Caribbean: Essays on Church History*, ed. A. Lampe (Barbados, 2001), p. 117. The grant to Anglican dioceses in the British West Indies ceased in 1868, and the Anglican Church in the West Indies was disestablished in 1869.

the missionary societies. It was not until the 1840s that new arrangements, which asserted the central importance of resident, territorial bishops throughout the empire supplanted the old system of chaplains, societies and subsidies. Anglican colonial bishops were initially supported by government and later through the Colonial Bishops' Fund. Paradoxically, the arrival of these Anglican bishops occurred more or less at the same time as the collapse of state support for religious establishments anywhere except in Britain itself, and in some cases, not even there. At all times, it is important not to exaggerate the extent of state-supported religion in the British empire. Apart from the appointment of chaplains and ecclesiastical establishments in certain colonies, the government did little to promote the advancement of religion beyond Britain's shores. Even while Britons enthusiastically embraced its traditional identity as a Protestant kingdom, imperial religious provision was in reality left substantially in the hands of various voluntary societies.

Missions and societies

In contrast with the weak pulse of official religion, the voluntary missionary societies were quick to embrace the religious opportunities opened up by imperial expansion. Voluntarism was a broad ethos that embraced not only the older Anglican societies such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), but also the new missionary and benevolent societies.⁵⁶ While the larger societies soon extended their interests worldwide, there was an unspoken attempt to avoid too much duplication of Christian effort. The SPG retained responsibility for British colonists; the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) was first in India, though soon the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) also had major missions there; the LMS had the Pacific; the CMS took on west Africa and the WMMS had a foothold in southern Africa. The importance of the voluntary principle to all these organisations does not mean they were entirely independent of either the government or the churches. Most were closely aligned with one or other of the churches

⁵⁶ The dates of the foundation of the major missionary societies is as follows: SPCK, 1698; SPG, 1701; SSPCK, 1709; Baptist Missionary Society, 1793; London Missionary Society, 1795; Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, 1799; Sunday School Union, 1799; Religious Tract Society, 1799; Abolition of Slave Trade, 1807; British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804; and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1813.

and, while they did not have an official character, they all accepted land grants and other government assistance to aid their work. One feature of the voluntary missionary societies was soon also to be reflected in the makeup of the colonial clergy, namely, the importance of personnel drawn, not just from outside the established Church but also from outside England, including Scottish, German, Danish, Dutch, Irish, Swiss and other trained missionaries from pietist societies and agencies in Europe.⁵⁷ For missionary work, the Catholic Church drew in the same way on its religious orders, which tended to field recruits from throughout the Catholic world where missionary feeling, and an excess of clergy to available opportunities for employment, ran high. These 'foreign' personnel helped to dispel the perception that the missionary societies acted as surrogates for British national interests.

Voluntary societies were also essential for the provision of religious literature and education, which was almost entirely a church-led operation. All the churches used schools as a means of supplying Christian education, which on some occasions meant students were supplied with religious indoctrination along with literacy and bible reading. In the colonies, the SPG supplied funds and trained staff for both churches and schools. The colonial mission of the SPG is discussed more fully in Chapter 3 and the SSPCK, its Scottish counterpart, in Chapter 7. The oldest of the religious publication societies was the SPCK, which was founded by Thomas Bray in 1698 and established with its own act of parliament in 1701. Bray's initiative was intended to provide pious reading matter for the poor and encourage the formation of parish libraries. Its publications were also the stock-in-trade of the itinerant preacher.⁵⁸ The objects of the SPCK included not only the publication and distribution of bibles and religious tracts, but the erection of charity schools in all parts of England and Wales. The extension of this work to British colonies was also encompassed by the final general object which was the promotion of Christian knowledge, both at home and 'in other parts of the world' by the best available means. This ensured that the publications of the SPCK, conveniently transportable to new worlds, were distributed rapidly throughout the British colonies.

⁵⁷ A. F. Walls, 'The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context', in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. B. Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001), pp. 35–6.

⁵⁸ G. Best, 'Libraries in the Parish', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 2, 1640–1850, ed. G. Mandelbrote and K. A. Manley (Cambridge, 2006), p. 324.

In the course of the eighteenth century, the SPCK was joined in its work of establishing primary schools and publishing and distributing Christian reading material throughout the empire by societies whose members were affiliated with other churches and church parties. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge among the Poor (1750) was non-denominational and was intended to provide 'bibles, testaments and other good books' to those who could read, but could not afford their own books.⁵⁹ Two Scottish societies with the same purpose were formed in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1756. However, the impetus for the establishment of an Anglican Evangelical rival to the SPCK was not effectively galvanised until after the French Revolution. The Religious Tract Society (1799) provided a vehicle to include the non-churched within the moral circle of a church increasingly anxious at the extent of working-class alienation from religion and susceptibility to a variety of evils ranging from Jacobism to Romanism. The philanthropist and writer Hannah More (1745–1833) was one of those who believed that the publication of pious tracts distributed to the poor would provide them with religious comforts, direct their attention to the coming kingdom of Christ, and incidentally dissuade them from revolution. At the very least she hoped, like her character Coelebs, to show how religion 'may be brought to mix with the concerns of ordinary life, without impairing its activity, lessening its cheerfulness, or diminishing its usefulness'.⁶⁰ On this principle, it was axiomatic that tracts would be distributed in enormous numbers to emigrants and colonists abroad as well as to the poor and disenfranchised at home. Other societies, especially the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), the British and Foreign Schools Society (1807) and the societies which merged in 1851 to form what became the Colonial and Continental Church Society, were organised with the needs of the wider world opened up by the voyages of exploration of James Cook, and the advancing colonial settlements of the second British empire in Australia, southern Africa and the South Seas, specifically in mind.

The work of all the tract societies overseas was intended to provide a bridge between the well-resourced religious provision of the home society and the religious frontier.⁶¹ At home, they supplied books to form pious libraries in parishes and Sunday schools and places without

⁵⁹ *An Account of the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor Begun 1750* (London, 1879), p. 5.

⁶⁰ H. More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals*, 6th edn, 2 vols. (London, 1809), p. xi.

⁶¹ P. Fleming and Y. Lamonde, eds., *History of the Book in Canada*, 3 vols. (Toronto, 2004), p. 139.

other cultural resources. Abroad, there were grants to emigrant and convict vessels, workhouses, coastguard stations, poorhouses, Sunday schools, missionary family libraries, as well individual clergymen and schoolmasters – to anywhere and anyone, in short, who could find a use for them. In relation to British colonies in North America, the historian of the Religious Tract Society, William Jones, invokes the pity that was due to the poor emigrant and his lonely condition: ‘the colonist of the interior, the fisherman in his lonely cabin by the wild shore, the settler who has raised his rude hovel on the borders of the primeval forest, or in the midst of some vast plain’, who were all deprived of the means of grace.⁶² There was considerable sympathy for these isolated settlers, and grants to colonists and missionary families were among the most financially significant of those made by the Society. By 1850, these amounted to £3,000, compared with £2,657 for Sunday and day schools.⁶³ Convicts were also the subject of popular appeal. In New South Wales, the Evangelical layman and former Arctic explorer, Sir W. Edward Parry (1790–1855), who took charge of the Australian Agricultural Company’s operations at Port Stephens, received 3,000 tracts in 1831 and reported on the remarkable transformation of convict morals which resulted from access to good reading material.⁶⁴ According to Parry, conversion was the result of Christian contemplation of the exile’s condition, a highly meritorious outcome. The Society’s supporters were encouraged to see their activities as both a moral and patriotic duty. One correspondent wrote:

Will English Christians stand unconcerned, and see their exiled countrymen perishing in the dense woods and forests of these far-distant lands? Many of them deeply sigh for their home, their native land; their wives and blooming children, from whom, in the moment of folly they have banished themselves by their crimes.⁶⁵

By 1849, when the Society commemorated its Jubilee by publishing a substantial history of its work to that date, its work was already being conceived in imperial terms, as the duty of the British people to evangelise the empire. For the supporters of the Religious Tract Society, such a role flowed naturally from the pre-eminence of Britain among the nations of the world and the acquisition of colonies, which could only be part of a divine plan:

Colonies established by other powers are now, by the providence of God, the dependants of our sea-girt island, and within the reach of our influence.

⁶² W. Jones, *The Jubilee Memorial of the Religious Tract Society* (London, 1850), p. 572.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 194. ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 530. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 539–40.

Our language and our religious literature will continue to follow our national course, and will become identified with a large portion of the world's population. Our commanding position, therefore, calls loudly on the churches of our country, by every practicable means, to 'hold forth the word of life' to all nations.⁶⁶

These kinds of sentiments, in which there was a fusion of piety, nationalism and missionary commitment, were characteristic of the colonial missionary movement which flourished in all the major churches from the 1850s. In general, we will see that societies such as, in this case, the SPCK, which worked with emigrants – including convicts – was one of the first organisations to use this language in representations of emigration, convict exile and colonial settlement.

Through a combination of these forces – chaplains for colonists, missionaries for native people, school and publication societies to encourage Christian morality and education – the empire was well provided with religious services. However, there were some places they could not reach. The East India Company, the Africa Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, which were the trading companies that managed to survive into the post-Napoleonic era, generally opposed religious interference in their fields of operation. Nevertheless, the days of their exclusive control over their territories were numbered. The movement for reform came from within and without. Within, individuals such as Charles Grant (1746–1823), who was Chairman of the East India Company and a member of the Clapham Sect, advocated that the Company allow missionaries and chaplains to serve in India and improve the moral conditions of its people. Grant's efforts were just part of a great call for reform from all over the British world.

Reform and revival

There were a number of religious, political and social factors at work to bring about change to the religious condition of British people both at home and overseas. For all the British churches, the nineteenth century was a time of constitutional reform and religious enthusiasm. This encompassed the continuing impact of the evangelical revival, which had begun in the eighteenth century, the Oxford movement for the Church of England, and what Emmet Larkin called the Catholic 'devotional revolution'.⁶⁷ Evangelicalism also had a profound influence on

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

⁶⁷ E. Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–75', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), pp. 625–52.

the Church of Scotland where it gave rise to the Free Church movement. In Ireland, Evangelicals also prospered in greater numbers in the former Church of Ireland than they did in the former Church of England; both churches were of course merged by the Act of Union to form the United Church of England and Ireland.

Evangelicalism was an international movement that extended to the Americas and across Europe. In the American colonies, it was associated with the preaching of George Whitefield; in Europe, the Moravian Brethren sparked a renewed enthusiasm for foreign missions, and in Britain, the revival began in Wales where chapel culture would eventually supplant Anglicanism for most of the population. In whatever denominational context they arose, religious revivals ensured that thousands of pious men and women who went out into the colonies burned with the wish to reform the world for Christ under the commodious rule of the British empire. Some chose to evangelise native people, others to work among the poor and marginalised in cities, others to bring Jews, or Roman Catholics in Ireland, Scotland and Europe, to Christ in the belief that the final days were coming. Many saw the colonies as sites to reforge their home churches and convert the whole British people to a more perfect, Christian way of life.

The evangelical movement led to the creation of a number of new religious bodies, of which the most important for emigrants and settlers was that founded by John Wesley (1703–91) and his brother Charles (1707–88). Coming into being at much the same time as the rise in emigration, Methodism was forged and tempered by the experience and opportunities of British colonialism in America and the other settler colonies. Between 1801 and 1836, the total Methodist membership rose from only 1.65 per cent to a modest 4 per cent of the adult population of England,⁶⁸ but its growth in the new world was more vigorous. Before the arrival of the Methodists, church planting in British North America had been strongly influenced by the founding churches of the United States especially the Congregationalists (or Independents), Presbyterians and Baptists. The latter churches played the leading role in the American home missionary movement, which planted churches in the south and west where the population was expanding throughout the nineteenth century.

With its flexible circuit structure, Methodism proved to be ideally suited to the conditions on the frontier. Latourette called it ‘an agency for expanding Christianity’.⁶⁹ Wesleyans, as Koss has argued in the case

⁶⁸ Cook and Stevenson, *British Historical Facts 1760–1830*, p. 163.

⁶⁹ Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 4, p. 190.

of the Reverend Hugh Price Hughes (1847–1902), the founder of the *Methodist Times*, were conservative politically and saw the empire as a legitimate field for their aspirations to become a world church for the English-speaking peoples.⁷⁰ By the beginning of the next century, both Methodism and Presbyterianism would come to outstrip Anglicanism as the leading Protestant churches in British North America. In contrast, the balance of the churches in Australia and New Zealand was rather closer to that of the home society with Anglicanism making a strong showing in all colonies. However, even in the antipodes, Methodism was, by the end of the nineteenth century, the second largest Protestant denomination.⁷¹ The evangelical revival also had a strong impact among a large number of serious Christians who chose to work for moral and spiritual reform within the Church of England, while forming a distinct 'low church' party within it.⁷² Throughout this book, they are called Evangelicals (with a capital E) and, like the Methodists, they were one of the big success stories of colonial Christianity.

The colonies were important sites for religious reform because they were generally places of economic opportunity where social and cultural habits were more malleable than at home. In Britain itself, reform was initially more difficult to sustain. However, war with France, which continued until 1815, insurrection in Ireland and the colonies, and bouts of revolution in Europe, eroded traditional views of the relationship between Church and state. Rebellions in Canada (1837 and 1838) and the subsequent Durham Report sped up reforms to the system of Canadian clergy reserves and placed limits on the privileges of the Anglican minority.

Social changes were also important, especially the dramatic rise in emigration that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815). After 1815, emigration from England rose from an average of more than 20–30,000 every five years until it reached more than 120,000 in the five years from 1851 to 1855, remaining at similarly high levels throughout the 1860s.⁷³ The flow from Ireland was astonishing.⁷⁴ Before the Great Famine (1845–9), up to 1 million people had already

⁷⁰ S. E. Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', *Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), p. 110, citing *Methodist Times*, 6 January 1898.

⁷¹ See Tables 1.1–1.6 for statistics on colonial denominational adherence.

⁷² R. W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Toronto, 2003), p. 8, argues that 'Low Church' was used as a term of abuse by high churchmen against Anglican Evangelicals in British North America and that the two traditions were quite distinct.

⁷³ Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, p. 76. Mitchell notes that the real figure is likely to exceed these estimates.

⁷⁴ Estimates from D. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801–1921* (Dublin, 1984) pp. 1 *et seq.*

left Ireland for British North America, while about half that number had made the shorter trip to England, Scotland and Wales. After the famine, the flow became a flood with the most popular destinations being the United States and Great Britain. Irish emigrants of all denominations also made a substantial impact in the Australian colonies. Internal and external flows of emigrants from rural England and Scotland to overseas colonies were also very significant. Between 1815 and the First World War, it is estimated that more than 16 million people left the United Kingdom, up to half of them from Ireland.⁷⁵ As emigration rose, the churches responded by forming colonial missionary societies or colonial committees who managed the stream of applications for money and personnel for churches, missions and schools. From the 1880s, the churches also created emigration societies and committees which gave direct support for the emigration of socially deprived people, including children, to the colonies.

The colonial missionary movement was to the British empire what the home missionary movement was for the American West: a rapidly mobilised workforce deployed along a moving frontier for the planting of clergy, churches, schools and other religious institutions. In the United States, the ‘home’ missionary movement, which was restricted to the American continent, was dominated by women for whom it became an extension of the social gospel. According to one estimate of the Protestant home missionary movement in America, in the course of the nineteenth century over US\$150 million was spent on planting churches. The estimate increases to US\$360 million if the amounts spent on Sunday schools, Bible and tract printing, and Christian colleges are also taken into account.⁷⁶

In contrast, the colonial missionary movement to Britain’s overseas settler colonies was conducted on a more human, if still impressive, scale (though I do not know of any meaningful way to calculate the cost of it, since the work was divided between so many different organisations and places). Women participated in the British movement largely through the Catholic and Anglican female religious orders, most of whom worked as schoolteachers.⁷⁷ Otherwise, colonial missions were

⁷⁵ N. H. Carrier and J. R. Jeffery, *External Migration, a Study of the Available Statistics 1815–1950* (London, 1953), pp. 90–1, based on outward passenger figures from UK. The calculation of Irish emigration is complicated by high levels of internal migration to Great Britain prior, or in addition, to overseas.

⁷⁶ J. B. Clark, ‘Home Missions’, in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. S. M. Jackson (New York and London, 1909), p. 345.

⁷⁷ On Irish Catholic nuns and education, see D. Murphy, *A History of Irish Emigrant and Missionary Education* (Dublin, 2000); C. Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1987); R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia, 1806–1950*, vol. 2,

led and organised almost entirely by men in work that was conceived as much in terms of empire building as the development of religious and social infrastructure. The outcome was that, by the end of the century, the number of clergy and churches in relation to the population of the settler colonies was close to that in Britain. The story of this movement is told in Chapters 3 to 7.

The empire of morality

Evangelicals from across the Protestant churches found that there were many issues on which they could agree. Together they formed a powerful lobby group whose reach extended well into the colonies ensuring that the 'call to seriousness', as it has been called by Ian Bradley,⁷⁸ had both an imperial as well as a domestic character. Of the many moral campaigns fought by the informal coalition of Anglican Evangelicals, Presbyterians and Nonconformists, the earliest and most successful was the movement to end the Atlantic slave trade and eliminate slavery throughout the empire. Since this was essentially an evil that had been created within Britain's settler colonies in the Americas, it can be seen as the first salvo in a campaign to moralise and cleanse the empire. In the late eighteenth century, agitation against the slave trade was initiated by Quakers who were instrumental in the founding of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787). In the same year, the impeachment of Warren Hastings (1732–1818), the first Governor-General of Bengal, brought to light what many felt were moral lapses in British rule in India, particularly the policy of leaving the work of colonisation entirely in the hands of commercial enterprises, such as the British East India Company. In his speeches against Hastings, Edmund Burke (1729–97) excoriated those 'who consider laws, religion, morality, and the principles of state policy of empires as mere questions of profit and loss'.⁷⁹ Although Hastings was acquitted in 1795, after the trial more consideration was given to the humane and religious administration of colonies. This need not imply that the later 'moral' British empire was any less destructive in its impact on native people than its earlier, more purely commercial, manifestation. Indeed, it may well have become more so, since missionaries generally assumed the right

Catholic Education under the Religious Orders, 2 vols. (Melbourne, 1959). For Protestant Home Missionaries in Australia, see A. P. O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia* (Sydney, 2005) pp. 97–119.

⁷⁸ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976).

⁷⁹ E. Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol. VIII, *Speeches on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1857), p. 50.

to make cultural demands, including conversion to Christianity, that were not expected by traders and planters.

Evangelicals also led the way in insisting that the commercial operations of Charter companies such as the East India Company, or the Hudson's Bay Company in Upper Canada, should acquire a moral character. The commercial nature of rule in India had not precluded all religious services, especially to other Europeans. Under its revised Charter (1698), the East India Company and other trading companies who conducted commercial enterprises in east Asia, Australia and America were required to appoint Anglican and Presbyterian chaplains whose teaching would reflect the orthodoxy of the established churches at home. Toleration of the religious representatives of other European colonial powers, such as the Catholic missionaries of formerly Portuguese Bombay, was also required as a consequence of the 1689 Toleration Act.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the Charter gave the East India Company power to exclude disturbing influences, including missionaries, from territory under their control.⁸¹ With the effective implementation of direct government rule of India by the India Office, the number of British administrators and their families resident in India expanded considerably. The passage of the Charter Renewing Act of 1813 marked the formal end to the policy that placed heavy restrictions on the activities of Christian missionaries. After 1814, the East India Company provided Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic chaplains to those serving in its military garrisons.⁸²

The high water mark for the political influence of evangelicals was probably reached sometime before 1830 and declined thereafter. In contrast with their earlier triumphs in routing moral lapses in the West Indies (slavery) and India (Warren Hastings), humanitarians were unable to persuade the Colonial Office to support the findings of the 1835–6 Parliamentary Select Committee on Aborigines, which brought down a report which condemned settler brutality in Canada, southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Instead, the government moved to permit colonisation of New Zealand. Missionary influence over the New Zealand Treaty of Waitangi (1840) was supposed to lead to the moral management of the acquisition of land, but enraged the

⁸⁰ P. Carson, 'The British Raj and the Awakening of the Evangelical Conscience: The Ambiguities of Religious Establishment and Toleration, 1698–1833', in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. B. Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001), pp. 45–70, citing K. Ballhatchet, 'The East India Company and Roman Catholic Missionaries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1993), pp. 273–88.

⁸¹ Carson, 'The British Raj and the Awakening of the Evangelical Conscience', p. 47.

⁸² D. F. Wright, 'Chaplaincies, Colonial', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. N. M. D. S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 163.

pro-colonial lobby, led by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who gave as his opinion that 'the origin of all the misery which has occurred in Tahiti and New Zealand is the missionaries not being confined to their calling'.⁸³ In fact, the Treaty failed to pacify the Maori who erupted in rebellion against British rule, following numerous local agendas, in the New Zealand Wars (1845–72).⁸⁴ At about the same time, the Jamaican Rebellion (1865) also discredited those who had predicted that the liberated slaves would evolve into grateful and passive British subjects – despite their exclusion from economic and political power in the West Indies. The *Anti-Slavery Reporter* might argue that the rebellion had its origin in the white community 'who seem actually to have driven the slaves into insubordination and resistance'.⁸⁵ Others were supportive of the settlers and, like Wakefield, regarded the Baptist and Methodist missionaries as fomenters of violence and native unrest.

Colonial churches

The planting of churches, rather than colonial chaplaincies and missions, began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. At first, the most vigorous colonial churches tended to be those of people who had benefited from earlier political and religious reforms, including Catholics, Nonconformists, and evangelicals in both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. While they were still subject to condescension by the established Church, there was considerable optimism that the free churches would liberate patterns of belief and worship, just as reform was liberating the legislature and widening the franchise.⁸⁶ In speaking in favour of the emancipation of Catholics, Thomas Chalmers, who would later become the leader of the Free Church of Scotland, argued that free religion would lead inevitably to the triumph of reformed Protestantism:

[G]ive the Catholics of Ireland their emancipation ... and give me the circulation of the bible, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the tyranny of Antichrist, and establish the fair and original form of Christianity on its ruins.⁸⁷

⁸³ E. G. Wakefield to Sir Robert Peel, 19 August 1844, British Library, Additional MS 40550, fols. 141–4.

⁸⁴ J. Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland, 1986).

⁸⁵ British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 'Rebellion in Jamaica', *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 5 (1833), p. 242.

⁸⁶ H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 110.

⁸⁷ Hanna, *Memoirs*, vol. III, pp. 235–42, cited by R. F. G. Holmes, *Thomas Chalmers and Ireland. Lecture Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland* (Belfast, 1979), p. 11.

Colonies and missions were seen as ideal workshops for this great spiritual experiment.

Surprisingly, the orthodox mainstream of the Church of England takes longer to move out to the colonies than Nonconformists or Evangelical Anglicans. In part, this was because the two oldest Anglican missionary organisations, the SPG and the SPCK, received some government funding for this purpose. In the 1830s, the reforming mood is reflected in a new, more vigorous spirit within the SPG under the leadership of Ernest Hawkins (1802–68), which is discussed in Chapter 3. At about the same time – and largely because of increased pressure on the existing mechanism of support for colonial churches provided by the diocese of London – Bishop Blomfield began agitating successfully for the creation of more colonial bishops. In relatively quick succession, moderate Anglicans consolidated their forces to launch the Colonial Bishops' Fund (1841), the colonial missionary college of St Augustine at Canterbury (1848), the Emigrants' Spiritual Aid Fund (1849) and the Anglican group settlement scheme for Canterbury in New Zealand (1850). These were promoted as works of the whole Church.

Anglican expansion was complicated by the divisions between different church parties which were redefined as a result of Tractarian controversies in the 1840s.⁸⁸ In places where high churchmen secured colonial dioceses, moderate Anglicans rallied behind the projects they created such as the Melanesian Mission, founded by bishop Selwyn of New Zealand.⁸⁹ Evangelicals continued to support the CMS; Anglo-Catholics preferred to channel funds towards their own missions such as the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, the Cambridge Mission to Delhi and the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, where missionaries would be free to establish what they saw as a more perfect form of the English church with full Catholic teaching and ritual, free from state intrusion.⁹⁰

The creation of colonial bishoprics led in some instances to tense standoffs between different church parties in a number of Anglican dioceses. A comprehensive and unpopular attempt to install Anglican Christianity as part of the imperial occupation of India came with the consecration of Thomas Fanshaw Middleton (1769–1822) as bishop of

⁸⁸ P. B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 33.

⁸⁹ D. Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849–1942* (Brisbane, 1978).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 233; S. S. Maughan, 'Imperial Christianity? Bishop Montgomery and the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1895–1915', in *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914*, ed. A. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), p. 36.

Calcutta. His diocese embraced Ceylon, Malaya and New South Wales and attempted to impose a much stronger and more exclusive control over both missionaries and settlers in British India. This more imperial vision of Anglicanism was not successful and aroused the same kinds of resistance that had been common in the former American colonies. As the number of missionaries in India expanded dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century, missionaries from other societies soon outnumbered those from the British societies.⁹¹ High church ambitions to create an Anglican ascendancy in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were also rebuffed.

The expansion of Catholicism in the British empire happened in two ways.⁹² In the first place, Britain secured new territories through conquest and economic expansion in the nineteenth century, which for the first time included significant Catholic populations. The largest of these was in the former colony of New France or Quebec with its majority French population whose religious rights were protected under the Treaty of Paris (1763), the Quebec Act (1774) and the Constitutional Act of 1791, which created the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. After the war of 1812, during which the Catholic bishop of Quebec supported the British against the United States, the loyal status of French Catholics was no longer questioned and other Catholic disabilities were lifted.⁹³ By removing the privileges of the Church of England in Canada, the Act of Union (1840) effectively disestablished the Anglican Church and secured further gains for Catholics and other religious denominations in the new colony. More Catholics came under British rule with the absorption of Newfoundland, with a population that included large numbers of French and Irish Catholics, and even more with the capitulation of Mauritius, the former French colony of Île de France, on 3 December 1810. In India and Malaya, the British also encountered ecclesiastical arrangements inherited from former Catholic powers that included French, Portuguese and Italian bishops and missionaries as well as native Catholics whose faith had been planted centuries earlier.⁹⁴ Indeed, the Thomas Catholics in India claimed spiritual descent from the apostle Thomas in the earliest missionary days of the Church. In such cases, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith

⁹¹ Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, p. 265.

⁹² W. T. Southerwood, *Catholics in British Colonies: Planting a Faith Where No Sun Sets – Islands and Dependencies of Britain Till 1900* (London, 1998).

⁹³ K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. V, *The Great Century in the Americas, Australasia, and Africa AD 1800–AD 1914*, 7 vols. (London, 1943), pp. 10–11.

⁹⁴ The most ancient Catholic diocese on the subcontinent was Portuguese Goa, erected in 1533.

(Propaganda), the papal bureaucracy in charge of foreign missions, appointed vicars apostolic who were generally English Benedictines, or Irish or English Jesuits, who would be acceptable to the English government. The process of creating new missionary dioceses accelerated during the pontificates of Pius VII (1800–23) and Gregory XVI (1831–46), who had been prefect of Propaganda before his election. During the reigns of these two popes, twenty-nine vicariates and dioceses were established in British colonies in Australia, Canada, Oceania, Southern Africa, India, the West Indies and Madagascar.⁹⁵

In the second place, there were Catholic emigrants from Britain to the colonies, which, even before Catholic emancipation in 1829, were provided with their own chaplains and bishops. Initially, poverty and cultural inhibitions ensured that Catholics made up a relatively small proportion of Britons overseas. However, from about 1850, the aftermath of famine in Ireland unleashed a flood of refugees and economic migrants who fled to England, Scotland, America and the British colonies. Between 1800 and 1880, the Catholic population in the United Kingdom rose from 90,000 to 1,300,000 in England and from 30,000 to 320,000 in Scotland, most of whom were concentrated in industrial cities such as Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool. Millions more emigrated to the United States, British North America, Australia and New Zealand. These new Catholic populations were predominately Irish and they gave their allegiance and affection to Irish clergy and bishops. With the ascendancy of Paul Cullen (1803–78) as archbishop of Dublin, Propaganda increasingly bypassed both London and the English-born Catholics who had gone out to bishoprics in the colony of New South Wales and elsewhere and gave the nod to Hiberno-Romans selected by Cullen. As we will see in Chapter 4, below the bishops there was a clerical proletariat of parish priests and religious sisters and brothers, many of them belonging to religious orders in Ireland, who were sent in their thousands to Catholic dioceses throughout the empire.

Presbyterians also found opportunities in the empire, although, like mainstream Anglicans, they were not so quick to extend Reformed Protestantism overseas as those in other churches. In Scotland, the Episcopal Church had been disestablished since 1690 and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland given full benefit of establishment under the Act of Union (1707). Tensions continued between orthodox and evangelical Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, and between Protestants and minority Catholics in the Highlands and

⁹⁵ For a chronological list of the growth of the Catholic hierarchy in Britain and her colonies, see Table 4.2.

Islands. These long-running divisions may have contributed to the slow growth of interest by the Church of Scotland in the work of missions and colonial church extension. The Highland Clearances, which began in the 1760s, were responsible for the first significant departures to the colonies, with small groups heading for Nova Scotia and the Maritime Provinces, often accompanied by their own Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian and Catholic clergy. After the Peace of 1802 (which was supposed to secure peace between Britain and France), Scottish soldiers also turned settler in Upper Canada (Ontario). Alexander MacDonnell, who had led the Glengarry Fencibles to the region, went on to become its first Roman Catholic bishop (1826).⁹⁶ The Glasgow Colonial Society, discussed in Chapter 7, later incorporated into the Colonial Scheme of the Free Church of Scotland, supported Presbyterian Church extension in British North America. In New South Wales, the Presbyterian minister and emigration advocate, John Dunmore Lang (1799–1878), encouraged Scottish settlers to emigrate to Australia. Irish Presbyterians were critical to the expansion of the colonial church in British North America.

The imperial and global network of Presbyterianism was articulated not only through Scottish and Irish emigration throughout the British empire, but also through Presbyterian connections with other European reformed Protestants and their colonial empires and missionary movements. Hence, in southern Africa, Presbyterians forged bonds with the Calvinist adherents of the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK). Scottish and Irish Presbyterians were active in the non-denominational foreign and colonial missionary societies supported by the Congregationalists – the London Missionary Society and the Colonial Missionary Society. Finally, the Disruption of the Church of Scotland (1843) fired a much greater enthusiasm for all branches of mission, including foreign and colonial missions and missions to Jews, which were conducted by both the free and established Church of Scotland. British North America, Victoria in Australia and New Zealand attracted a particularly high proportion of Scottish settlers, many of them with Free Church affiliations. The most concrete example of Presbyterian aspirations in the colonies was the Free Church of Scotland's support for the colonisation of the province of Otago on the South Island of New Zealand, discussed in Chapter 11.

This little sketch, which covers just the major churches considered in this book, only scratches the surface of the dense imperial religious networks created by British churches and missionary societies in the

⁹⁶ Carrington, *British Overseas*, p. 131.

course of the nineteenth century. Almost every church – and every sect and church party within each church – attempted to negotiate a response to the British colonial empire in some way.⁹⁷ At the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the emergence of the Faith Mission movement, including the Scottish Faith Mission of John George Govan (1861–1927), was quickly extended to Canada and South Africa; Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, founded in 1865, was the model in Australia for the Aborigines Inland Mission founded by Retta Jane Long in 1905. Through groups such as Christian Missions in Many Lands, the Plymouth Brethren evangelised along the routes opened up by the British railway in Argentina. Pentecostalism, which began in 1906, spread like wildfire along imperial pathways. Because of the prestige attached to direct evangelism with non-Europeans, many societies chose to downplay the church planting and colonial institution building that underpinned foreign missionary efforts. Indeed, both the Faith Missions and Pentecostals tended to denounce earlier missionary efforts for their institutional encumbrances. They were too much concerned with God's Greater Britain, a political as well as a religious ideal, and not enough with the spiritual realm of God's empire. Nevertheless, in writing the history of the colonial missionary movement, a line must be drawn somewhere, and these themes will need to be pursued in other studies.

Conclusion

For the founding churches of the British empire, the nineteenth century ushered in a remarkable series of ecclesiastical changes both at home and in the colonies. The institutional and financial privileges of the Church of England and Ireland, which had been the base for most colonial missionary efforts in an earlier era, were dismantled in the colonies, as they would be later in Ireland (1871) and Wales (1920). This was only the precursor to the constitutional revolution which removed disabilities restraining Nonconformists and Catholics at home. While this was denounced by some religious conservatives, it led not to the collapse of religion but to a wave of reforming, colonising and missionary efforts in the empire at large. For reformed Protestants, missionary expansion was about the establishment of Christ's kingdom throughout the world. Initially, missionaries were successful in their proposal that

⁹⁷ For the examples which follow, see the notes in G. H. Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999). For an authoritative survey of the British foreign missionary movement, see Cox, *British Missionary Enterprise*.

colonists should be restrained from occupying the lands of tribal peoples such as those who circled the Pacific world made known through the voyages of James Cook. However, by the 1860s, advocates of British colonial settlements rejected the idea that the colonies should be preserved for their original inhabitants and Christian missionaries.

This was a popular movement. However, Dilke spoke for colonists and settlers when he included the settler churches within the British cultural commonwealth that he promoted under the name of 'Greater Britain'. In the countries he traversed – British North America, Australia and New Zealand, southern Africa and other sites of significant white emigration and occupation throughout the empire such as the West Indies, India and South America – the colonising churches were moulded by the particular political and cultural settings of the settler states. This encompassed relationships with rival imperial powers and their churches: French Catholics and Protestant churches from the United States in the case of Canada, the Dutch Reformed Church in southern Africa, whereas the various British churches were virtually unencumbered by Christian rivals in their occupation of Australia and New Zealand apart from a small group of French Catholics. It also included encounters with native peoples, slaves and indentured labourers, who were imported to provide labour in the settler economies. In a wide range of debates – about slavery, convict transportation and the impact of colonisation on aborigines or tribal peoples in southern Africa, Australia, New Zealand and British North America – the settler churches were at the forefront of discussions about the morality of the empire. As the frontier passed westward and northward in both Australia and Canada, these moral anxieties receded. They would never really go away in both New Zealand and southern Africa. War in south Africa would demonstrate how fragile the consensus endorsing British cultural hegemony was, even in colonies of majority white settlement.

Over the course of a hundred years, what is perhaps the most distinctive change to the religious character of the empire was the loss of the dominant position enjoyed by the Church of England. This was accompanied by the disarticulation of the nexus between church and state that had given the first British empire – that which encompassed the Atlantic world – its Protestant identity. In the second English-speaking British empire, that of Greater Britain, the empire retained its Christian aspirations in informal ways. However, this was a voluntary movement made up of 'free' churches, which competed for resources from the state, rather than claiming them as a right.

The British empire was not planned as a Christian commonwealth. However, in the way of empires, the network of communication,

affection and interest that bound peripheries to the metropole ensured that the drama of religious events in London, Dublin and Edinburgh was played out in the colonies. Despite their differing theological, ethnic and social origins, what the churches of Great Britain and Ireland had in common was the wish to extend their range and influence over the settler population and make the British a better, more Christian, people. In the next part of the book, we will look at the idea of ‘colonial mission’ and at the separate histories of the colonial missions of the major British churches, whose aim was to make God’s empire contiguous with the British empire.

Before we go there, I should, perhaps, emphasise once again that this is not a history of religion in the British empire, nor even of all branches of Christianity in the British world, however defined. It merely concerns those Christian churches with the resources to create organisations which planted Christian seedlings in the majority settler colonies. Of course, this constitutes a good deal less than the total religious landscape of the empire. However, as Tables 1.1 to 1.6 demonstrate, by 1901 it includes religious adherents, as enumerated in the census, who made up over 95 per cent of the settler populations of Canada, Australia, Cape Colony and New Zealand, with smaller aggregations elsewhere. Together they formed an overseas British Christian world of around 10 million people. As we will see, this is more than enough for one book.