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978-0-521-12122-4 - Rival Jerusalem: The Geography of Victorian Religion

K. D. M. Snell and Paul S. Ell

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Rival Jerusalem

This pioneering book results from a major project funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the ESRC. It is based upon very extensive analysis of the famous 1851 *Census of Religious Worship* and earlier sources such as the 1676 Compton Census. Its scope and modern analytical methods eclipse all previous British work on its subject, and it is a major step forward in the study of religious history.

The book stresses contextual and regional understanding of religion. Among the subjects covered for all of England and Wales are the geography of the Church of England, Roman Catholicism, the old and new dissenting denominations, the spatial complementarity of denominations, and their importance for political history. A range of further questions are then analysed in even greater detail, using massive parish datasets of religious, socio-economic and demographic data for 2,443 English and Welsh parishes. Among the issues treated are regional continuities in religion, the growth of religious pluralism, Sunday schools and child labour during industrialisation, free and appropriated church sittings, landownership and religion, and urbanisation and regional 'secularisation'. Regional contrasts between denominations, and between Wales and England, are persistent themes. The long-term importance of the geography of religion is stressed, for it bears on many crucial modern questions of regional cultures and national identities.

This book's advanced methods and findings will have far-reaching influence within the disciplines of history, historical and cultural geography, religious sociology, religious studies, and in the social science community in general.

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accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
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Scarcely anything, indeed, is more curious or puzzling, than the attempt to trace the causes why particular doctrines or religious parties should find one soil favourable and another adverse to their propagation and success. But, at all events, as far as facts are concerned, England furnishes a striking picture of sects and creeds almost supreme in one part and absolutely unknown in another.

HORACE MANN, 'On the statistical position of religious bodies in England and Wales', *Journal of the Statistical Society*, 18 (1855), p. 155.

Even people whose lives have been made various by learning, sometimes find it hard to keep a fast hold on their habitual views of life, on their faith in the Invisible . . . when they are suddenly transported to a new land, where the beings around them know nothing of their history, and share none of their ideas . . . in which the past becomes dreamy because its symbols have all vanished, and the present too is dreamy because it is linked with no memories. But even *their* experience may hardly enable them thoroughly to imagine what was the effect on a simple weaver like Silas Marner, when he left his own country and people and came to settle in Raveloe. Nothing could be more unlike his native town, set within sight of the widespread hillsides, than this low, wooded region, where he felt hidden even from the heavens by the screening trees and hedgerows. There was nothing here, when he rose in the deep morning quiet and looked out on the dewy brambles and rank tufted grass, that seemed to have any relation with that life centring in Lantern Yard, which had once been to him the altar-place of high dispensations. The white-washed walls; the little pews where well-known figures entered with a subdued rustling, and where first one well-known voice and then another, pitched in a peculiar key of petition, uttered phrases at once occult and familiar, like the amulet worn on the heart; the pulpit where the minister delivered unquestioned doctrine, and swayed to and fro, and handled the book in a long-accustomed manner; the very pauses between the couplets of the hymn, as it was given out, and the recurrent swell of voices in song: these things had been the channel of divine influences to Marner – they were the fostering home of his religious emotions – they were Christianity and God's kingdom upon earth . . .

And what could be more unlike that Lantern Yard world than the world in Raveloe? – orchards looking lazy with neglected plenty; the large church in the wide churchyard, which men gazed at lounging at their own doors in service-time . . . There were no lips in Raveloe from which a word could fall that would stir Silas Marner's benumbed faith to a sense of pain. In the early ages of the world, we know, it was believed that each territory was inhabited and ruled by its own divinities, so that a man could cross the bordering heights and be out of the reach of his native gods, whose presence was confined to the streams and the groves and the hills among which he had lived from his birth. And poor Silas was vaguely conscious of something not unlike the feeling of primitive men, when they fled thus, in fear or in sullenness, from the face of an unpropitious deity. It seemed to him that the Power he had vainly trusted in among the streets and at the prayer-meetings, was very far away from this land in which he had taken refuge, where men lived in careless abundance, knowing and needing nothing of that trust, which, for him, had been turned to bitterness. The little light he possessed spread its beams so narrowly, that frustrated belief was a curtain broad enough to create for him the blackness of night.

GEORGE ELIOT, *Silas Marner* (1861, Harmondsworth, 1969 edn), ch. 2, pp. 62–4.

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Preface and acknowledgements

This project started in the mid-1980s, as part of a study of the cultural regions of the British Isles (which extended also to the regional novel). It grew out of concern over political centralisation and a widely felt need to know more about the history and persistence of British regional cultures. Religion, like the regional novel, is only one of many cultural elements – but it is essential to an historical understanding of regional cultures.

The necessary religious data collection, reading, collaboration and related work meant that this book has been a long time coming to fulfilment. After initial research, the project gained a two-year grant from the Leverhulme Trust (1992–4) which funded Paul Ell as a Research Associate. It was then awarded a three-year grant from the ESRC (1994–7) which funded Alasdair Crockett as a Research Associate. The grants were directed by K. D. M. Snell in the Department of English Local History, University of Leicester. We are particularly grateful to the Leverhulme Trust and the ESRC for their valuable support. K. D. M. Snell is grateful also to the Research Board of the University of Leicester for financial assistance, and to the University of Leicester for generous provision of computing equipment.

This book comprises something over half of this research on religious history, and it is due to be followed by a second work on ‘Secularisation’ by Alasdair Crockett. That study is now being pursued at Nuffield College Oxford, and will be published in the near future. For much of the project, it was planned to publish all the research as one very large book, by three authors, but limitations on book length made it impossible to pursue this. Alasdair’s contribution to this book has been considerable, including the co-authorship of chapter 8, and we owe him a large debt of gratitude.

Responsibility for the chapters and appendices of this book is as follows. The introduction, chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and appendices

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Computerised analysis of the registration-district data used Minitab and SPSS, and for the parish-level data we used mainframe and Windows versions of SPSS. Geographical analysis and computerised cartography were conducted with GIMMS, Arc/Info and Arc/View. The registration-district and parish-level data that this research project created and analysed are being deposited with the ESRC Data Archive at Essex University.

We would like to thank Louise Blodwell, Tony Cooper, Jillian Draper, Sean Hendy, Ralph Weedon and Simon Wilson for their help in data collection and computerisation. Margery Tranter of the Department of English Local History kindly provided the religious data for Derbyshire, and her knowledge of the local history of religion has been of considerable value. The staff of the Public Record Office, the Leicestershire County Record Office, and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth have been most helpful. In addition, for their advice on different aspects of this work, we express gratitude to Rod Ambler, John Beckett of the University of Leicester Computer Centre, Alan Everitt, Clive Field, Harold Fox, Robin Gill, Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, Kevin Lee, Gareth Lewis, Jo North, David Parsons, Charles Phythian-Adams, David Postles, Mohammed Quraishi, Revd Frank Rinaldi, Paul Ryan, Terry Slater, Margaret Spufford and Anne Whiteman.

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