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Introduction

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Historians of modern Christianity in western Europe, writing amid the chill winds of secularism at the beginning of the twenty-first century, may be tempted to apologise for their subject. Why write about something of diminishing importance, which has been in decline since the French Revolution? No student of the medieval or early modern eras doubts the central role of religion, but modern historiography can get along without it. In fact, the historian of nineteenth-century Christianity need not be defensive about his or her theme, which still entered into the very fabric of the social and political conflicts of the era, and just as the creation of a united Italy was on one level a defeat of Catholicism, and the creation of the German Empire a victory for Protestantism, so the attack upon the churches, in what some have seen as the beginning of secularisation, makes a fascinating story which, at least in the immediate term, led not only to religious decline but also to renewal and revival.

Western Europe might, however, be considered something of an anomaly even in the present, in which Christianity continues to grow and expand elsewhere, in the Third World, in the United States and, with the collapse of atheistic communism, in eastern Europe. This must be one reason for the somewhat unconventional appearance of this volume by the standards of other histories of the nineteenth-century Christian faith, as here at least a third of the space is given to the new Christian churches outside Europe. Catholic Christianity became a global religion through the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the sixteenth century and French missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth. There are chapters here reflecting the legacy of this earlier era. These include Latin America, where the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century displayed a whole range of splendours and miseries, from post-colonial anticlerical attack and with too few priests; the Philippines, where Catholicism set down deep roots in native culture and with a native clergy, sometimes resistant to Spanish rule; and India, where the Portuguese had

both persecuted and tried to convert the ancient Christian communities of Mar-Thomas in founding their own. Other old Catholic mission fields were Indochina, acquired in the nineteenth century by France; Canada, where the Quebecois renewed an older model of an integrally Catholic society; China, where Catholicism remained despite savage attempts to suppress it; and most remarkably Japan, where in 1865 a small Catholic Church was found to have survived the closure of the country in the seventeenth century to foreigners and the execution or exile of its clergy. The cruel martyrdom of Catholics in China, Indochina, Japan and Korea, another heroic missionary country, was connected to local fears of European invasion and conquest, which in some cases were not unjustified.

The emergence of the American colonies, and the rise of the British Empire and of the new international evangelical Protestant missionary movement of the eighteenth century, created by the leader of the Moravians, Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, and the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, also made Protestantism a global religion, through a complicated combination of mission and settlement. Its enormous expansion came in the nineteenth century, especially through voluntary bodies outside the established churches in the Protestant countries, spectacularly enough in Great Britain, among several varieties of Methodist, Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, as well as many minor or purely local bodies, and within the new Britain in Canada, but most dramatically in the United States, with hundreds of denominations, most of them of British origin, but some from the continent or home-grown. Indeed in spite of failures over slavery and of missions to Native Americans, and interdenominational rivalries and divisions, the new nation was dominated during the first half of this period by evangelical revivalism, although this was disturbed after 1860 by the arrival of still greater numbers of Roman Catholics and, in lesser measure, of Jews and Eastern Orthodox.

A burgeoning missionary Protestantism from Britain, northern Europe and the United States itself, sometimes fed by the premillennial expectation of Christ's Second Coming which was also rooted in revivalism, created new churches in many places in which Christians remain numerous to this day, though as small minorities of the general population. Amid the extraordinary babel of cultures and languages in India, Protestant missionary effort appealed to some of the educated as well as to marginal castes and ethnic groups. In China, Protestant institutions provided an educated minority with a western education, where, as elsewhere, Catholics sought to create wholly Catholic communities in the countryside. In both countries there was alarm among local elites at an alien western threat to their authority and culture, as well as a

European reluctance to adapt Christianity to wholly different ancient civilisations. One area of general missionary failure was the Middle East, where the recovery of the Holy Land had an important place in Protestant ambitions. Neither Catholic nor Protestant missionaries managed to convert many Muslims or Jews. While Catholics strengthened their own eastern Uniate churches, in the hope of reconciling the Orthodox churches to them, Protestants did not succeed in 'reforming' the Eastern Orthodox along their own lines, and ended by setting up numerous small Christian congregations, with a superior educational provision which was often an important part of a more general modernising mission.

Missionary Christianity often had a difficult and ambiguous relationship to the spread of the colonial empires, which had quite separate agendas: sometimes, as in India and the Sudan, in opposition to missions. Despite its idealism of purpose, however, missionary enterprise could not but be influenced by the nineteenth-century assumptions of racial and cultural superiority arising in part from greater European wealth and power, especially towards Africans. That raised difficult issues about whether to make independent native churches or churches controlled by Europeans, in a retreat from the optimism common early in the century about the innate Christian capacities of native peoples. Imperial white attitudes also produced by reaction 'Ethiopianism' as the hope for an intrinsically African form of Christianity, which would restore the black Christian's sense of dignity and worth. This led to the emergence of indigenous black African churches sometimes inspired by the flourishing black Protestant churches in the United States, themselves the outcome of Protestant missionary activity, but in reaction against the prejudice of other churches, with a faith deeply founded in their historic experience of servitude and oppression.

This growth of Christianity abroad was not always paralleled in Europe. Some of the challenges to the faith were intellectual, leading to the attempt of German and English Protestant thinkers to answer the problems posed by the spirit of the age in terms sympathetic to it, as by Hegel and Coleridge. The Romantic movement was in revolt against eighteenth-century rationalism and brought with it a renewed sense of the value of awe and mystery and wonder. Romanticism was, therefore, strongly inclined to Christianity, in both its Protestant and Catholic forms, and had a major influence upon the Christian dimension of nineteenth-century literature, especially in English-speaking countries, the subject of a separate chapter here. The Romantic insistence upon social cohesion appears in Chateaubriand's apologetic for Catholic civilisation, in the opposing conservative and liberal Catholic Ultramontane theories of

de Maistre and the young Lamennais, within the Catholic Tübingen School in Germany, and in the Oxford Movement in England. The debt of Romanticism to Plato, Spinoza and even Unitarianism, however, sometimes inclined it to a one-sided immanentism as well as to orthodoxy, as in identifying Christianity with the Prussian *Zeitgeist* in Hegel, while the counter-cultural view of Christianity in Schelling and Kierkegaard insisted upon its autonomy, anticipating Barth, and the atheist possibilities of the tradition were made explicit in the writings of Feuerbach and Nietzsche.

Meanwhile a new historicism brought about a revolution in biblical criticism among Protestants, though this took a number of different positions according to the degree of radicalism of the scholar. Here German theology and philosophy, especially Hegel's, had a major influence upon scholarship. Regardless of such assumptions, it became more intellectually difficult if by no means impossible, for the educated at least, to adopt the literal view of Scripture which emerged from the premillennial movement of the 1820s. At a more popular level, traditional attitudes to hell fire and predestination were weakened, and some Protestant bodies were deeply influenced by a post-Enlightenment optimism and progressivism which harmonised with political liberalism. The new evolutionary biological science of Darwinism, seeming to require a view of the creation and of man very different from the one set forth in the Book of Genesis, posed particular problems for a literal Bible-based religion, although here the Christian reaction was a great deal more nuanced and complicated than is sometimes understood. Among Catholics, there were smaller liberal Catholic and later modernist movements to meet the criticism of the age.

This in turn, with the wider attacks upon the churches, also produced a reaction. Both Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism proved resistant to the new liberalism. Yet even in its rural heartland, Christianity was sometimes weakened by social and political change, and there were major regional variations in churchgoing which had little reference to the new intellectual scepticism, and far more to do with politics and economics. In Spain, Portugal and Italy, a thoroughly Christianised north of small peasant farmers stood in contrast to the latifundia of the partly dechristianised south. But urbanisation and industrialisation created the new problem of an irreligious working class, though here again there were common devout exceptions to the rule, as among British miners and fishermen. The shock of industrialism was first felt in Great Britain, and in both England and Scotland the delay in the provision of new places of worship, especially by the established Anglican and Presbyterian churches, left many people unchurched. The strains of adaptation to

the population explosion, which the fast-expanding non-established Nonconformist churches were at first better able to provide, led to the secession after 1800 of most of the population of Wales to various forms of voluntarist Nonconformist evangelicalism, and contributed to the disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, with the formation of a new Free Church which was voluntarist in practice though not in principle. The great British church-building boom after 1830, partly sustained by denominational rivalry, did not in itself win back the slums for religion, as popular alienation from formal religious practice, if not from faith itself, had more complicated causes, which partly lay in the middle-class character of so much British Christianity. On the continent, the urban working classes were influenced by anticlerical socialism and, at the extremes, communism, though again with powerful differences from one place to another. In both Europe and North America, Protestant pastoral outreach, social Christianity and Christian Socialism attempted to address this, as did the social teaching of the Catholic Church enunciated by Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and the great growth of Catholic self-help organisations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There is much here for the secular humanitarian to commend, as in the evangelical crusade against the slave trade and the condemnation of slavery by the papacy, the great many voluntary associations which tried to assist the poor and provided a framework for vast numbers of ordered and sober lives, and the churches' massive contributions to family welfare, medicine and education.

Certain kinds of response to secularisation and liberalism cut across denominational boundaries. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and later in the nineteenth century, with the advent of secular socialism, religious practice was weakened among men rather than women, and, especially in Roman Catholicism, there was a feminisation of religion in many places, contributing to the huge growth in the numbers of new female religious orders active in education and social work, especially in France. Women also played a vital part in the multi-form vitality of British Nonconformity, where leadership and congregations, as distinct from actual membership, were often predominantly male. Female preaching and full equality of ministry tended to be confined to unsacramental charismatic bodies like the Salvation Army or liberal ones like the Unitarians. Women made a major contribution to the new Protestant missions, going where men could not, although this had partly to do with perceptions of the inferiority of the heathen.

Growth meant competition, and one consequence of the competition between churches in some countries was the reinforcement of denominational differences. These became parts of wider political conflicts as between

Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, in the war between the Catholic and Protestant cantons in Switzerland, and in the *Kulturkampf* in Protestant Prussia, which attempted and failed to place Catholicism under strict regulation by the state. The most extraordinary expression of such conflict was the 'pillarisation' of nineteenth-century Dutch society, in which Calvinists, both moderate and conservative, Catholics and secular socialists could live entirely separate lives in institutions which only met at the leadership level for negotiation with one another.

A tendency accompanying conflict and competition among the churches in old Europe, even in some Protestant countries, was the development of a higher doctrine of church, ministry and sacrament, partly in a strengthening of clerical elites against the tendency by governments to invade the traditional province of established churches in family matters and education. The reaction was strongest in the Catholic Church, where the expropriation of ecclesiastical property began in the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773 and the reforms of the Emperor Joseph II, and resulted in the nationalisation of all French religious property in 1790, the suppression of the ecclesiastical principalities of the Holy Roman Empire and, for a time, Napoleon's seizure of the Papal States themselves. The papal reaction to the whole revolutionary tradition and to the subsequent *Risorgimento* to create a united Italy which annexed the States of the Church inspired the new or neo-Ultramontane movement to elevate the claims of the pope to govern the whole church, leading to the definition of papal infallibility in matters of faith and morals at the First Vatican Council of 1869–70. Neo-Ultramontanism prevailed in the Catholic churches of the Mediterranean and Latin America, in opposition to liberal anticlericalism, as the hierarchies and clergy of Italy, Iberia, Latin America and even Gallican France increasingly looked to Rome for inspiration and salvation from an anti-Christian state. Again, part of the reaction lay in a powerful revival of traditional devotions partly sustained by new apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to children and female visionaries, as the church reaffirmed the power of the miraculous and the supernatural to men who did not believe. This devotional movement was far more than the response of authority to political challenge, as spirituality has its own energies and reflected more immediate and domestic concerns as well as feminisation, but Pope Pius IX himself saw an intimate connection between his definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the Syllabus of Errors in which he condemned 'progress, liberalism and modern civilisation', again on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, exactly ten years later to the day. A striking example of this new stress upon clerical authority and the new ardour of devotion occurred in the Church of England in

the Oxford Movement, which arose in the University of Oxford in 1833 among Anglican High Churchmen who resented the weakening of the established character of the Church of England and sought ways of resisting a Whig government's reform of the church, then united to the even more Protestant Church of Ireland. The Oxford Movement's appeal, not to the official and national character of the church as by law established, but to the God-given authority of the threefold Catholic ministerial order of bishop, priest and deacon, and to the tradition of the early church as well as to Scripture, led to the secession of some of the movement's leaders, like John Henry Newman, to Roman Catholicism, while others, inspired by Edward Bouverie Pusey and John Keble, continued to press the Church of England's claim to be a part of the wider Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The outcome was that one whole section of a traditionally Protestant church disowned its Protestant inheritance, adopting a more Catholic theology and pastoral practice, with daily services, auricular confession, the worship of the Blessed Sacrament and prayer to the Virgin and saints, while Anglican ritual moved in a more Catholic direction, and the clergy assumed a more ecclesiastical character and dress which, after an initial reaction, reinforced an existing trend to clericalism among the British Nonconformist clergy.

Given the pre-existing renaissance of the British Protestant traditions between 1790 and 1830, especially in the form of evangelicalism, the rise of a counter-catholicising movement created bitter tensions within the Church of England with Protestants and liberals, as well as exacerbating conflict with the Protestant Nonconformist churches. Chapter 7 on church architecture and art shows some of the consequences in stone and paint of this kind of catholicising church revival, especially in the increasing popularity in the Protestant world of medieval neo-Gothic for churches and educational institutions, in a widespread, though far from universal, rejection of classicism as reflecting a secular pagan spirit. The resort to Gothic in such modern buildings as town halls and railway stations was a more general aspect of the Romantic liking for a medieval Catholic style. There was also an impressive Christian musical achievement, in both formal Catholic and Lutheran liturgical music as well as in hymnody and sacred song, though this was beset by diminished resources among Catholics and attended by controversy, which the papacy tried to control, over traditional plainchant and polyphony and the influence of opera, in the quest for a properly ecclesiastical style.

The neo-medievalism so powerful in art and architecture often went hand in hand with a new romantic nationalism, and if Rome opposed such nationalism in Italy, it found itself strengthened by the new intensity of nationalist

Catholic resistance to the multi-national empires of Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria in Ireland, Poland and Hungary, as well as among the diasporas of emigrants from those countries. Faith flourished among regional groups like the Bretons, resistant to the centre, and more could be said here about smaller nationalities which achieved a greater self-consciousness in the nineteenth century, like the Croats, Slovenes and Czechs. Religion, however, also acted as a spur to European imperialism, and Protestantism could be described as the ideology of the global British empire, and as part of the manifest destiny of the expanding United States. In the new French empire, anticlericalism was not for export, until the advent of the administration of Emile Combes, as in spite of tensions the church was seen as an instrument of France's civilising mission. In some new British colonies like New Zealand, the French missionaries found the Protestant churches and settlers already in possession, and British Protestant and French Catholic rivalry in evangelism spurred their competing wills to empire across the Pacific and through Africa. Religion was intimately bound up with national culture and character: British Australia was predominantly Protestant, and reproduced the denominational divisions of Victorian Britain with fervently Catholic and Nonconformist minorities, though after 1840 without an established church. Yet it wore its Protestantism with a difference – some might say with an indifference – combining generally Christian convictions with strong culture-based reservations in the national psyche about the institutional churches.

One purpose of this work is simply to supply the necessary information for understanding a subject and its latest literature. There is one wholly regrettable omission from this volume, in its aspiration to give the whole of Christianity a fair coverage, and that is of the Eastern Orthodox, which leaves the work with an unhappy appearance of incompletion. They are to be covered in a volume of their own; this was not by a decision of the editors. The Eastern rite Christians sometimes called Greek Catholics or Uniates in communion with the pope, who were awkwardly poised between the Orthodox and overregulation from Rome, have their own chapter, and references to them occur in others.

In a volume of this kind, there is bound to be some variety of method and approach, in the use of narrative and the balance between breadth and depth of analysis, though all contributors claim the kind of unity of subject indicated in their titles. As the chapters are intended to be read as self-sufficient entities, there is also an overlap of subject matter, as in the various discussions of social patterns of religious practice; in the two accounts of the Scottish Disruption, seen from different angles; in the chapters on the papacy and the *Risorgimento*; and in the matter of the Irish Catholic diaspora, which has its own chapter and

is treated separately and more briefly in the various countries across the world in which it found a home. There has been no attempt by the editors to impose their own views upon contributors. Contrary opinions will be found in the two discussions of the separation of church and state in France. The editors have not interfered simply because they have considered a matter of interpretation to be mistaken. Clio, the muse of history, is seldom definitive, for historical judgement as to the wisdom or desirability of a course or movement will vary with the general convictions of the historian.

There is a great deal about religious belief which lies in the human heart beyond historical observation and generalisation, and a summary is not easy. There is sympathy here, but also criticism. Like most periods of Christian history, seen from different angles, it was the best of times and the worst of times. It is difficult to define a criterion for the success of religious faith; how many Christians got to heaven is known to God alone. But if sheer influence and level of commitment count for anything, this was possibly a more successful period for Christianity than most.

PART I

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CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNITY