

Christianity in Britain Part II— from 1689 to 1900

Last time, we left Britain in a fairly good place in 1689.

But not all was good. Back up a bit before William and Mary

<p>Then Willie sailed across the sea and settled things for good. A <i>Bill of Rights</i> said, ‘Prots are in’ and that’s how things now stood.</p>	<p>William III & Mary (1689–1702). Both Protestant. Invited from Holland. Mary was James’ daughter! James fled into exile. 1689 The <i>Bill of Rights</i> established a Protestant monarchy and independent parliament.</p>
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The Puritans during the 17th century

During the brief reign of Mary Tudor (1553–1558), almost 300 who held evangelical beliefs were martyred and many fled to the ‘Reformed’ city of Geneva. John Calvin here from 1536–1564.

‘**Reformed**’ referred to the theology of John Calvin with its emphasis on the sovereignty of God (in providence and election), the authority and inerrancy of the Bible and Justification by faith alone through Christ alone by grace alone. Much more. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (pub.1536).

‘**Protestant**’ became a word to describe those who protested at the imposition of Roman Catholicism on the church in England.

‘**Evangelical**’ was used by Tertullian in the second century to describe biblical truth. By early 16th century it was used by both friend and foe of those who held biblical doctrines of salvation and authority as opposed to Roman Catholic theology.

Elizabeth I (1558–1603) encouraged a steady increase in ‘evangelical’ life and theology across the country. However, by the Act of Supremacy (1559) Elizabeth wanted conformity in all things religious as well as secular. This meant conformity to the 39 Articles and government of the Church of England.

The ‘**Puritans**’ were not a denomination but a movement impatient with the slow progress of reform in the state church. They were known for loyalty to the authority of the Bible, warm pastoral care, pure Christian lives, and lengthy biblical sermons. The negative use of the word is largely unjust. Full respect for family life. From the 1620s on, many emigrated to ‘New England’ (North America) to begin a new colony and church based upon the Bible. *Mayflower and Pilgrim Fathers*.

The English Civil War from 1642, between parliament and Charles I led to the execution of the King in January 1649. Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector in 1653 until his death in 1658. Many in the Parliamentary army were Puritans. Some Puritan names: Richard Baxter, John Owen, Charles Simeon, Richard Sibbes, John Flavel, John Bunyan (Baptist).

Then followed restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660. A moral slide followed. Act of Uniformity (to CofE) 1662. 2,000 Puritans deprived of their churches. The Great Ejection.

James II and William were followed by **Queen Anne 1702**.

England in the 18th century

Luxurious extravagance and appalling poverty. Corruption in politics, law and business. Violent crime and social injustice. The Industrial Revolution began with the first mill in Yorkshire in 1769.

The Church of England was riddled with Deism (a disinterested God) and careless clergy. Religion without the Bible. Sir William Blackstone (lawyer) visited every church in London and claimed that he did not hear 'A single discourse that would have been possible to discover whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, Mohammed or Christ.'

The slave trade was at its height. John Newton: 'A commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive.' From 1783–1793 estimated that over 800,000 slaves were transported, and mostly in British ships. More than 162,000 convicts sent to Australia in white 'slave' ships 1788–1868.

Growing (godless) pride in the power of Britannia

The British Empire, and Britain as a world power was emerging (Canada, India, much of Africa, Gibraltar). America was rebelling 1775–83. War enhanced Britain's sea power. Four main conflicts in this century. War of the Spanish Succession (1702–14); Jacobite rebellion (1741–45); Seven Years War (1756–63); Anglo-Dutch war (1780–83) and many more.

Adopting the Gregorian calendar (2 September 1752) was England's only concession to Europe!

'Rule Britannia' by James Thomson in 1740. The National Anthem, first sung in 1745 (year of Preston Pans), contained the second verse:

*When Britain first at heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung this strain:
'Rule Britannia, rule the waves,
Britons never will be slaves'.*

*O Lord our God arise,
Scatter his enemies
And make them fall:
Confound their politicks,
Frustrate their knavish tricks.
On him our hopes we fix
O save us all.*

1707 The Act of Union: Scotland and England under one government.

The *knavish tricks* was Bonnie Prince Charlie. The *his* and *him* was George II. 1746 Culloden Moor!!

Then God stepped in with Revival—the 'Great Awakening'

January 1739 at Fetter Lane in London. The beginning of open-air preaching. Parish churches closed to 'evangelicals'. All parts of Britain touched by revival and thousands added to the churches. By John Wesley's death in 1791 there were 80,000 Methodists in the societies.

The value of the revival?

- The true gospel and theology came to the front. Many Evangelicals in CofE. (Thos. Scott by JN.)
- The nation was spared the revolution of France (1789-92). No British Bastille. Martello Towers!
- Movement for abolition of slavery (William Wilberforce. 1807 & 1833); prison reform (John Howard) and Social concern.
- A revival of hymn singing: Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, the Wesleys, John Newton and William Cowper et al.
- A strong impetus for missionary work: 1792 The Baptist Missionary Society.

The world of Victoria in the 19th century (Queen Victoria 1837–1901) Change!

Age of steam, electricity, railways etc. The Industrial revolution led to massive growth of cities: During first 50 years population of Manchester grew from 84,000 to 303,000 (1/10 from Ireland). Appalling work conditions and hours, especially for women and children—Social unrest and social care. Evangelicals at the forefront of care. Three quarters of all philanthropic work in London was carried out by evangelicals: Sunday Schools, Ragged Schools, soup kitchens, maternity parcels, Care home for the Elderly (APFS 1807), medical missions, Police Court Missionaries. Street children (Barnardo, Müller, Spurgeon). Prison and Asylum reform (John Howard). The Evangelicals. Wilberforce and Shaftesbury at the forefront of labour reform, Ten Hours Act, and abolition of slavery 1807 (Wilberforce) and slaves freed in 1833 (Shaftesbury).

The 'non-conformist conscience' had significant influence upon the government.

Politics. Generally evangelicals were not involved in politics. The Christian Socialism movement was liberal. The Kingdom of Christ on earth 'The Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations'.

A fear of democracy and communism. The Labour Church Movement (James Keir Hardie) in 1891. Began as a 'Christian' political movement but by 1912 all reference to God had been dropped. 1885 John Wilson, Methodist lay preacher, became one of first Labour MPs.

The challenge to Christianity

Philosophy that destroyed God and all authority. From the age of Reason (David Hume) to a denial of the supernatural (Kant and Ritschl) and all claims of authority (Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard) **Rationalism** (David Hume 1711–1776). **Existentialism** (Søren Kierkegaard 1813–1855).

Pragmatism (William James 1842–1910). **Communism** (Karl Marx 1818–1883). **Darwinism** (Charles Darwin 1809–1882). **Agnosticism** (Herbert Spencer 1820–1883). **Nihilism** (Friedrich Nietzsche 1844–1900).

Archaeology. 'Libraries were ransacked for hidden documents and the earth itself for the remnants of lost civilizations.'

1865 Palestine Exploration Fund. 1880 The Egyptian Exploration Society.

1876 George Adam Smith published Babylonian and Assyrian accounts of Creation and a Flood.

1894 *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. Scored of texts from the Ancient Near East.

By 1880, 'No periodical is complete without an article in which Christianity is defended or attacked'

Science and theology. Charles Lyell *Principles of Geology* (1833) and *Evidence of the Antiquity of Man* (1863) introduced vast ages of time. Charles Darwin: *The Origin of the Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) introduced evolution and racial superiority.

Biblical criticism. German critics: Wellhausen (OT) and Bauer (NT). Rubbished history in Bible and applied word 'myth' for the Gospels. This was the birth of Higher Criticism. Opposed by Hengstenburg (Berlin) and later Robert D Wilson (USA). Liberal theology weakened the churches.

By early 19th century Methodism became respectable and lost its thrust, so the Primitive Methodists were formed. Billy Clowes 1811. By 1851 over 100,000. Sadly, in 1898 Arthur Peake, an Oxford scholar, became principal of PMs Manchester Training College. A liberal in theology. By 1932 PMs lost their way and united with mainstream Methodism!

Anglo-Catholic revival from 1845. The Oxford Movement (Tractarians 1844 'Tracts for the Times'). A protest against liberalism in politics and religion. Evangelicals in C of E around one eighth.

Growth of the Non-conformists, especially after the 1859 revival. The 'non-conformist conscience'.

The rise of 'Christian' cults—all but the last in this list began in N America.

All deny the deity of Christ, the true atonement and eternal punishment. Most offered a date for the return of Christ.

Church of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)—Joseph Smith 1830.

Seventh Day Adventists—William Miller 1844 then Ellen G White 1888.

Spiritism—The Fox sisters 1847. Formed 1863.

Watchtower Movement (JW)—Charles Taze Russell 1884.

Christian Science—Mary Baker-Eddy 1870s

Christadelphians—John Thomas 1870s.

The struggle for religious equality

1836 'Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act'. Until then, dissenters could not prove their age. 1836 'Solemnization of Marriages Acts'. No civil marriage before this. Until middle of century, no burial ground provided for Dissenters. This building had its own graveyard in 1847.

1870 Universities Test Bill. Opened the way for non-conformists to attend universities. Not until the end of the century were all degrees in all universities open to Dissenters.

1870 Education Act. Compulsory education for all.

Parliament. Nearly 100 MPs were Dissenters (incl. RC). Under Gladstone (1865–74) John Bright was first Dissenter to hold Cabinet post.

Census of 1851 bombshell results! Just under half population of 18m attended. Almost equal between CofE and non-conformists (incl RC).

Campaign to disestablish the C of E.

The empire, revival and the missionary movement

1800 1/3 of globe undiscovered, by 1900 almost every country was discovered and open to missionaries. Steamships, railways, telegraph and post.

British Empire, 'on which the sun never sets', covered one quarter of planet earth and almost one quarter of world population (412m out of almost 2 billion). The largest empire in history.

Revival in USA from 1857–1860 Spread to Britain by 1859 and by 1866 200,000 added to the Methodist Church and 100,000 to Baptists. Possible 1m. in all.

By end of the century there were 14,000 Protestant missionaries, mostly evangelical. The missionary did not always follow the flag, often the flag followed the missionary (Livingstone).

1865 Foundation of China Inland Mission. London Missionary Society founded and sent workers to South Pacific, India, China, Africa, Madagascar and West Indies. Robert Morrison, David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, CT Studd and the Moffat brothers were all products of revival.

1895 2/3 of Protestant Missionaries came from Britain. By 1914 half were from USA.

Weaknesses of the missionary enterprise

Association with Colonialism.

Exporting Western traditions and culture necessarily biblical, including denominations.

Failure to grow indigenous churches and national leadership.

Some missions were purely evangelistic and others purely welfare.

The growth of denominations

The Independents (Dissenters)

There had been many faithful men, including Watts and Doddridge (18th c), known as 'Dissenters', 'Independents' and 'non-conformists' because they remained outside the Church of England. The two universities were closed to them so they began their own Academies—places of excellence.

The Countess of Huntingdon, Lady Selina, established scores of chapels (the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion). At the middle of the century the population of England and Wales was around 7 million, of whom probably half a million were Dissenters.

Baptists. The early 'Baptists' were called 'anabaptists' meaning 'rebaptised'. In Holland, Menno Simons (1496–1561) became the leader of the Baptist movement. Thomas Helwys (1550?–1616?) became a Baptist in Holland and established the first congregation of Baptists in England at Spitalfields in 1611. At first, most were Arminian (free-will) in theology having studied under Jacobus Arminius in Holland. Helwys published a number of books, in particular *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1612) a treatise against persecution—possibly the first essay on the right of private judgement in matters of religion.

The Baptists were (and are) independent congregations. Later they divided into their own factions: General Baptists. The Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1813. Theologically mixed. Spurgeon resigned 1887. Over 1800 congregations.

Grace Baptists (Strict and Particular Baptist). The Strict Baptist Mission 1861. Association of Grace Baptist Churches 1871. Reformed and (mostly) a closed Lord's Table.

Gospel Standard Baptists from Strict and Particular (1835/1860). William Gadsby (1773–1844).

A very traditional, hyper-Calvinistic and closed group c.100 congregations. No evangelism.

Plymouth Brethren. 1820s Dublin. 1831 Movement began in Plymouth. Independent chapels, No paid ministers, emphasis on prophetic teaching. JN Darby. Split in 1848: Exclusives and Open. Many have become Independent Evangelical Churches and joined FIEC.

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) 1922. 650 congregations today mainly Baptist and Reformed.

Congregationalists (Independents) held to infant baptism. Henry Jacob established the first Congregational Church in Southwark in 1616.

United Reformed Church. In 1972 the Congregational Church in England and Wales united with the Presbyterian Church of England. Mostly theologically liberal.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC Evangelical and generally Reformed). In 1967 120 congregations left the Congregational Union before the URC amalgamation..

Methodists. These began as members of the C of E (often ordained men like the Wesleys and Whitefield) who only preached in the open air and formed the new 'Societies' when the pulpits of the Church of England were closed to them. The titles 'enthusiasts' and 'methodists' were originally derogatory. They were Arminian (John Wesley) or Calvinistic (Whitefield).

Evangelical Anglicans. Many of the well-known men of the revival remained within the Church of England and strongly defended their reasons for doing so. Among them: William Romaine arrived in Blackfriars in 1748 as the only evangelical Anglican clergyman in London and remained in London until his death in 1795. Newton arrived from Olney in 1780. Samuel Walker in Truro, Henry Venn in Huddersfield, William Grimshaw in Haworth, John Berridge in Everton etc.

Victoria died in 1901

19th century philosophy that impacted Christianity

<p>Rationalism (David Hume 1711–1776) 'What is man?' asked David Hume: a bundle of ideas that's grown. So, use the mighty mind of man — though nothing can be surely known.</p>
<p>Existentialism (Søren Kierkegaard 1813–1855) Experience boundless possibilities; man is the master of his soul. Kierkegaard ruled out laws and creeds, and Sartre saw no God at all.</p>
<p>Pragmatism (William James 1842–1910) When William James thought hard and long he thought he had the truth in sight: we only need one simple rule— 'If it works, it must be right'.</p>
<p>Communism (Karl Marx 1818–1883) Karl Marx had greater plans than all: a revolution lay ahead. To transform politics and class we must establish God is dead.</p>
<p>Darwinism (Charles Darwin 1809–1882) Darwin viewed a savage race as those we would eliminate. The outcome of this twisted view inspired a cruel regime of hate.</p>
<p>Agnosticism (Herbert Spencer 1820–1903) Spencer said we can't be sure; if God is there he'll never show. Then Huxley found a word to fit: 'agnostic' means, 'I just don't know'.</p>
<p>Nihilism (Friedrich Nietzsche 1844–1900) So, if you throw out all that's good and debunk truth and love and law, and follow Nietzsche's 'super race', you'll have a long and bitter war.</p>
<p>Conclusion So, from our great philosophers we learn two simple facts: with all his brains, man doesn't know, but as he thinks—he acts!</p>
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