

Exposure to the eyes of God: monitorial schools and Evangelicals in early nineteenth-century England

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Through a close analysis of the links between nineteenth-century Protestant missionary thought and the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) this article suggests that to distinguish Enlightenment educational and social reform from evangelism is mistaken. Emblematic of the social reform projects which emerged in England as responses to the challenges of the French Revolution and rapid urbanisation, the BFSS was the outgrowth of Joseph Lancaster's efforts at spreading the method of education he pioneered, the monitorial system, throughout the British Isles and, ultimately, the world. Despite the strong association between the BFSS and various utilitarian thinkers, evangelicals of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century England came to view the Society and the monitorial system as means by which to integrate all the peoples of the world into the Lord's dominion. Becoming part of that dominion entailed subjecting oneself to constant moral scrutiny, and monitorial schools were regarded as a means by which to ensure such self-examination. In short, missionaries seized upon monitorial schools because their aims were parallel to those of educational reformers in the metropole. Where home reformers aimed at the normalisation of the body of English political subjects, the development of the English social body, missionary reformers aimed at the normalisation of the body of God's children.

Keywords: Monitorialism; missionaries; British and Foreign School Society; Joseph Lancaster

Although historians of Protestant missionary activity have paid a great deal of attention to the role of disciplinary and educational institutions in evangelism, intellectual and cultural historians have often neglected the distinctly evangelical origins of the modern prison and school.¹ This article suggests that to separate nineteenth-century educational and social reform from evangelism is mistaken – that is to say, English educational and social reform projects of the nineteenth century were, for the most part, driven by an evangelical agenda. If one is to step beyond the realm of the Enlightenment theorist into that of the actual practitioner of educational reform, one must come to terms with the role of faith in reform – because the practitioners were,

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¹For instance, in his recent sourcebook and reader on the Enlightenment, Paul Hyland selects passages from the works of David Hume, the Marchese di Beccaria, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, and the Marquis de Sade as emblematic of Enlightenment thought on “moral principles and punishments.” Refer to Paul Hyland (ed.), *The Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2003), 209–32.

in the vast majority of cases, ardent believers, whose entire purpose in implementing reform was to advance the cause of the faith, as they understood that faith.

My point of departure in the article is the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS). The BFSS was the outgrowth of Joseph Lancaster's efforts at spreading the method of education he pioneered, the monitorial system, throughout the British Isles and, ultimately, the world.² The BFSS is emblematic of the social reform projects which emerged in England as responses to the challenges of the French Revolution and rapid urbanisation. Across the political spectrum in the English elite, "improving" the morals of the lower orders of English society was thought critical to preserving political and social stability.

In particular, evangelicals of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century England came to view the BFSS and the monitorial system as means by which to spread the values of industry, discipline, and order. The aim of the evangelical missionary enterprise was to integrate all the peoples of the world into the Lord's dominion, and becoming part of that dominion entailed subjecting oneself to constant moral scrutiny. Monitorial schools were a means by which to ensure such self-examination. Missionaries seized upon monitorial schools because their aims were parallel to those of educational reformers in the metropole. Where home reformers aimed at the normalisation of the body of English political subjects, the development of the English "social body", missionary reformers aimed at the normalisation of the body of God's children.

Comparative work of this sort is urgent, given the tendency of historians, both of education and of mission, to focus upon particular contexts in isolation. One important exception to this rule is Jana Tschurennev's recent article, 'Diffusing useful knowledge: the monitorial system of education in Madras, London and Bengal, 1789–1840'.³ Tschurennev demonstrates, with specific reference to BFSS methods, that missionaries constituted a transnational knowledge network in the nineteenth century. The study of both educationalist and missionary publications as a sort of "clearing house" for pedagogical ideas from all over the world would greatly extend current understandings of the impact of mission in the nineteenth century, and it is this purpose that the present article is intended to serve.

Malingering servants

In speaking of conformity to the will of God, we must not omit to mark the duty of HOLY RESIGNATION. Acquiescence in God's appointments, and submission to his

²The most important interventions in the history of education literature on this topic are David Hogan, "The Market Revolution and Disciplinary Power: Joseph Lancaster and the Psychology of the Early Classroom System," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 381–417; and Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Pluralizing Meanings: The Monitorial System of Education in Latin America in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no. 6 (2005): 645–54. On the BFSS, the author would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance provided by the staff of the British and Foreign School Society Archives Centre, Brunel University, Osterley Campus, Isleworth, Middlesex, United Kingdom, and specifically by the head of the Archives Centre, Dr Brian York.

³Jana Tschurennev, "Diffusing Useful Knowledge: the Monitorial System of Education in Madras, London and Bengal, 1789–1840," *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 44, no. 3 (2008): 245.

afflictive dispensations, constitute a considerable part of evangelical obedience. When we suffer in a right spirit, we serve. It is indeed passive obedience: but if it be from the heart, it is not less acceptable than active exertion. In truth, this obedience of submission implies a very high degree of active grace within; keeping down the spirit of rebellion, discontent, and dissatisfaction; silencing every murmur, every sigh, and every wish, that is at variance with the good and wise and holy will of our Heavenly Father.

— William Jowett⁴

In 1787, Mrs Sarah Trimmer, founder of a Sunday School at Brentford, published *The Economy of Charity*, subtitled *An Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday-Schools*. A concern with the insubordination of servants was becoming pervasive among the upper strata of English society in the late eighteenth century, and Trimmer was convinced that a lack of proper education was responsible for the lamentable state of affairs. She noted:

It is a general complaint that domestic servants are not attached to their masters and mistresses, but act towards them from selfish and mercenary motives; and that no confidence is to be placed in the lower kinds of labourers and workmen.⁵

Further, according to Trimmer, the utter vulgarity of the lower ranks of society literally erected a communication barrier between servants and their employers: The language of the former was all but unintelligible to the latter. In his autobiography, Francis Place, a prominent advocate of monitorialism, captures the sense of revulsion of the upper strata at the state of the capital.⁶ Of the stretch between the statue at Charing Cross and the head of Parliament Street, Place remarks, “The manner in which many of the drunken filthy young prostitutes behaved is not describable nor would it be believed if it were described”.⁷ Particularly offensive to Place was the fact that “children were permitted to run about their filthy streets, to hear all sorts of bad language and to mix with whomsoever they pleased”.⁸

Perhaps of greater importance, however, was the lack of understanding on the part of lower ranks as to their proper duties and station in life. In a subsequent edition of *The Economy of Charity*, Trimmer explained:

In appointing different ranks among mankind, our all-wise and beneficent Creator undoubtedly intended the good of the whole; rich and poor, high and low are the work of his hand; they are equally the objects of his providential care, and he had made their happiness and welfare to depend in a great measure on a mutual interchange of good offices, by appointing to each condition in life appropriate and relative duties; – to all in

⁴William Jowett, *Helps to Pastoral Visitation: In Three Parts, Illustrating the Spiritual Intercourse of a Minister With His Flock* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1844), 50–1.

⁵Mrs Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; or, An Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday-Schools; the Establishment of Schools of Industry under Female Inspection; and the Distribution of Voluntary Benefactions* (London: T. Bensley, 1787), 26–7.

⁶For the contours of urbanisation, refer to Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁷Francis Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771–1854)*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 228.

⁸*Ibid.*, 57.

superior stations justice, humanity, condescension, and charity; to the poor, honesty, sobriety, diligence, humility and gratitude.⁹

This 1801 edition of her work was quite specific as to the dangers inherent in the lack of education for the poor: Nothing less than public safety depended upon wresting poor children away from morally corrupt parents. One can scarcely overstate the importance of home and family in the evangelical worldview: Parents were held responsible for the behaviour of their children, and evangelical parents frequently carried their sense of such responsibility to extremes. Doreen Rosman notes that evangelicals “justified their excessive watchfulness in terms of their evangelistic mission, in fulfillment of which they adopted a priestly role towards their children, regarding themselves as divinely appointed spiritual supervisors”.¹⁰

As yet, Trimmer had no grand plan for dealing with the masses of children without proper “spiritual supervisors”, and limited her prescriptions to young people in service. For instance, employers had an obligation, according to Trimmer, to ensure that their domestic servants attended church services with them, and spent Sundays in the employer’s home without visitors.

Trimmer sought to illustrate the dangers of malingering servants in a tract entitled *The Servant’s Friend, an Exemplary Tale*, that by 1787 had already emerged in a third edition. The protagonist of Trimmer’s tale is Thomas Simpkins, a model servant, whose principal virtues are his avoidance of idleness, his refusal to lie or to steal, and his insistence upon learning to read the Bible. Trimmer depicts such virtues as nothing less than divine ordinances:

God alone knows whether what we pray for is best for us or not: many things may appear to us desirable, which, if they are granted, would be very hurtful to us; and therefore, if we pray for particular blessings, we must always pray that God will grant them if they appear good to his infinite wisdom, or else make us contented without them.¹¹

God alone knows what is best for the individual, but the individual must nonetheless strive to behave according to God’s will – hence the importance of reading the

⁹Mrs Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England: With a Particular View to the Cultivation of Religious Principles, Among the Lower Orders of People*, Volume I (London: J. Johnson, 1801), 6–7.

¹⁰Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croon Helm, 1984), 99. For further discussion of mid-nineteenth-century cultures of evangelicalism, refer to D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Mark A. Noll, “Revolution and the Rise of Evangelical Social Influence in North Atlantic Societies,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Robert Ross, “Missions, Respectability and Civil Rights: the Cape Colony, 1828–1854,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 3 (September 1999): 333–45.

¹¹Mrs Sarah Trimmer, *The Servant’s Friend, an Exemplary Tale; Designed to Enforce the Religious Instructions Given at Sunday and Other Charity Schools, by Pointing Out the Practical Application of Them in a State of Service*, 3rd ed. (London: T. Longman, 1787), 9.

Bible. Indeed, Simpkins not only reads, but pores over the Bible in an effort to determine his proper role in the world:

both before and after church, on Sunday, he employed himself in searching for the texts that related to the duty of a servant, and wrote them down in a little book, which he made for the purpose, that he might read them over often, and remember.¹²

Which passages strike Simpkins as most applicable to his role? There are two, above all, to which attention is enjoined:

Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.¹³

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all *things*; not answering again;

Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.¹⁴

Mr. Brown, master to Thomas Simpkins, makes no secret of the consequences that will befall the young man should he not heed such injunctions:

you will have opportunities of wasting my property very much; but depend on it, if you do so, God will, at the great day of judgment, call you to account for it; for he will view all your actions when they are hidden from the eyes of the whole world.¹⁵

What greater menace could possibly loom over the young servant than that God would have His eyes upon Simpkins, whatever the occasion?

Exposure to the eyes of God

Your souls, my dear hearers, are infinitely valuable; and it is possible that many of you may perish, notwithstanding you are favoured with the Holy Scriptures, and frequently hear their meaning explained, and their truths enforced by faithful ministers of the Lord

¹²Ibid., 42.

¹³Ephesians vi. 5–8.

¹⁴Titus ii. 9–12.

¹⁵Trimmer, *Servant's Friend*, 44.

Jesus. In the name of my glorious Master, I ask you – Has the word of God penetrated your hearts? Has it produced a revolution in your minds? Do your tempers – your pursuits – your conversation – and your character, comport with the spirit and principles of genuine Christianity? We are glad to see you under the word – we are thankful for your pecuniary assistance in the cause of missions – but we are anxious to know that you are essentially benefited by the truth you hear. Beware that you do not trifle with everlasting things: the gospel must be a savour of life unto life; or, it will be a savour of death unto death to your souls.

— Reverend John Hyatt, 11 May 1815¹⁶

The challenge with which pedagogues like Trimmer were faced was to make servants, and the lower ranks of society generally, *feel* the eyes of God upon them.¹⁷ In *The Christian School-Master: or, The Duty of Those Who Are Employed in the Public Instruction of Children*, James Talbott explains that, where students are concerned, masters:

must frequently remind them that this Almighty God, who made all Things, fills all Things with his Presence; that he is always in all Places; that he hears all they say, and sees all they do, (how secretly soever) as plainly as they can hear or see what is said or done most openly.¹⁸

The question then became, how, in practice, to make the student *feel* the presence of God, everywhere, at all times. For his part, Talbott acknowledges that, for masters, the rod is perhaps the easiest tool with which to enforce God's injunctions – but hardly the most effectual. Indeed, one must chastise not only the body, but further, the mind.

In 1797, the Reverend Dr Andrew Bell published *An Experiment in Education, Made at the Male Asylum of Madras, Suggesting a System by Which a School or Family May Teach itself Under the Superintendence of the Master or Parent*. Bell was a Scot by birth, son of a barber, who had received his university education in his hometown of St. Andrew's. After employment as a tutor in Virginia, he had decided to pursue a clerical vocation. In 1787, he ventured to India, and two years later, assumed responsibility for the Madras Male Orphan Asylum. The Asylum was home to orphaned and distressed sons of European military men. Bell is said to have finally

¹⁶“Encouragement to Perseverance in Missionary Exertions,” *Four Sermons, Preached in London, at the Twenty-First General Meeting of the Missionary Society, May 10, 11, 12, 1815* (London: J. Dennett, 1815), 49.

¹⁷Consider Foucault's extraordinary observation at page 60 of *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): “One has to be completely taken in by this internal ruse of confession in order to attribute a fundamental role to censorship, to taboos regarding speaking and thinking. One has to have an inverted image of power in order to believe that all these voices which have spoken so long in our civilisation – repeating the formidable injunction to tell what one is and what one does, what one recollects and what one has forgotten, what one is thinking and what one thinks he is not thinking – are speaking to us of freedom. An immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce – while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital – men's subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word”.

¹⁸James Talbott, *The Christian School-Master: or, The Duty of Those Who Are Employed in the Public Instruction of Children* (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1817), 24. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who clarified that this work was first published in 1707. Talbott died in 1708.

resorted to monitorialism given the resistance of his staff to teaching innovations intended to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Upon returning to England in 1796, after giving up the various army chaplaincies he held in India, Bell put pen to paper to describe the methods he had employed in educating the Asylum boys.¹⁹ In Bell's *Experiment*, Mrs Trimmer found a means by which to make children *feel* the eyes of God – a means, in Talbott's terms, to chastise not merely the body, but the mind as well. Monitorialism was embraced at the Protestant Charity Schools, St. Botolph's, Aldgate in 1798, and at the Kendal Industrial Schools in 1799.²⁰ With disturbing political developments both at home and across the English Channel, the impulse to "educate" the poor as to their "proper" station became urgent.²¹ By 1801, Trimmer was compelled to remark:

surely there is at this time a powerful call upon every one who is invested with authority of any kind to exert it for the purpose of counteracting the evil designs of those who would destroy all social order, and who have unhappily been too successful in their attempts to infect the minds of the lower classes with their leveling principles.²²

According to Bell, if masters limited themselves to chastisement of the body, implementing what he derisively termed a "system of terror" in the classroom, they would never succeed in eliminating improper thoughts or behaviour. The master's eye cannot rest upon all the children, everywhere, at all times. In light of this, the student remains perpetually aware of openings to transgression. Bell sought to eliminate such openings altogether – to prevent, rather than simply punish, transgression. For Bell, the key to prevention was *exposure* – or, at least, a *perception* of exposure. As long as students felt exposed to a withering gaze, everywhere, at all times, then they would shun transgression. The question became, how to cultivate this perception of exposure. The answer was to make every student a master – to make every pair of eyes in the classroom analogous to God's eyes. In short, students would monitor their peers.

Monitorialism was thought not only to prevent poor behaviour, but further, to serve as an economical, efficient, effective means by which to educate. Students were strictly regimented according to ability, and would learn skills from fellow students in superior classes, who had recently learned the given skills themselves. With an elder student undertaking the instruction, rather than a master far removed in age, the younger student would, according to this logic, grasp the skill with greater speed, because two students communicate with greater ease than student and master. Further, entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the educational process, the elder students serving as monitors would take pride in their position, and remain eager to support the efforts of the master. Students who were thought to represent a potential problem, particularly vivacious or garrulous children, were often appointed monitors for, according to this logic, they would put their excess energy into the exercise of duty rather than the promotion of transgression.

¹⁹Richard Aldrich and Peter Gordon (eds.), *Dictionary of British Educationalists* (London: Woburn Press, 1989), 22.

²⁰Henry Bryan Binns, *A Century of Education Being the Centenary History of the British and Foreign School Society 1808–1908* (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1908), 12.

²¹For details of such developments, one might begin with E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963) and Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

²²Trimmer, *Oeconomy of Charity*, Volume II (1801), 12.

With his *Experiment*, Bell became the inaugural champion of monitorialism. Nevertheless, Joseph Lancaster would swiftly supersede him as the system's most articulate and passionate champion. Lancaster was a much younger man than Bell, and had grown up in a starkly different social environment.²³ Southwark was his home – a densely populated district of London with poor infrastructure. Lancaster's father, Richard, had served as a soldier of the British army on the continent, but ultimately came to ply his trade in the Borough, as Southwark was widely known, as a cane sieve maker. After entertaining the notion of joining the Royal Navy, Joseph found an opening as a teacher's assistant – and thus began his career as educator and educationalist.

When examining the inspiration behind Lancaster's monitorialism, Mora Dickson, Lancaster's principal biographer, looks to Joseph's own education, which was handled, for a time, by a former military man. The teacher apparently insisted upon strict military discipline in his school: "he gave commands in a stentorian voice which he expected to be instantly obeyed, and he had worked out complicated evolutions to be gone through when school was dismissed".²⁴ Whatever his inspiration, as early as 1801, Lancaster could claim subscribers to his educational project as illustrious as Zachary Macaulay, then of the Sierra Leone Company, and William Wilberforce. Wilberforce was the influential evangelical public figure who had, in 1787, founded the Society for the Reformation of Manners.²⁵ In 1804, Lancaster's monitorial experiment in Southwark had attracted the attention of King George III himself, and a meeting took place in November of that year. Within a year, the King had joined the list of subscribers, contributing one hundred pounds towards Lancaster's efforts.

One could sum up Lancaster's philosophy with the following line from the 1803 edition of his *Improvements in Education*: "Coercion of any kind, which grates upon our very hearing it, is the most disgusting, uncouth word in the British vocabulary".²⁶ If not through the rod, how would the master maintain classroom order? Lancaster's 1812 manual of the "British system" offers the most succinct reply:

In society at large, few crimes are ever committed openly; because immediate detection and apprehension of the offender would follow. On the contrary, many are committed in privacy and silence. It is the same in performing the simple duties of monitors in my institution: their performances are so visible, that they dare not neglect them; and, consequently, they attain the habit of performing the task easily and well. This effect is

²³The following biographical details are drawn, for the most part, from Mora Dickson's biography of Lancaster, *Teacher Extraordinary: Joseph Lancaster 1778–1838* (Sussex, United Kingdom: Book Guild, 1986). Joyce Taylor has penned a much shorter – and entirely uncritical – biography, entitled *Joseph Lancaster, the Poor Child's Friend: Educating the Poor in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Kent, England: The Campanile Press, 1996).

²⁴Dickson, *Teacher Extraordinary*, 4.

²⁵For details as to William Wilberforce's worldview, refer to his *Practical View of Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians: Contrasted With Real Christianity* (London: Davis, 1834).

²⁶Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education, As It Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community: Containing, A Short Account of Its Present State, Hints Towards Its Improvement, and a Detail of Some Practical Experiments Conducive to That End* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1803), 23. Just as evocative is his remark in *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised by Joseph Lancaster* (Georgetown: Joseph Milligan, 1812), 77: "The guillotine in France, during the reign of terror, and the rod in the hands of the advocates of ignorance, are alike."

produced from one cause: that every thing they do is brought to account, or rendered visible in some conspicuous way and manner.²⁷

To eliminate privacy, to render students and their acts visible and conspicuous – just as in Bell’s *Experiment*, the notion of exposure is critical in Lancaster’s *Improvements*. To this end, Lancaster had monitors assigned for all imaginable purposes. There were “general monitors” of order, of reading, and of arithmetic. Further, there were “subordinate monitors” of classes, of drafts, and of inspection. The general monitor of order had the most considerable duties – to enter the classroom well before the arrival of the students to ensure the proper order of learning materials, to give commands to students as to when to begin their writing exercises or dictation, and to record the names of students worthy of recognition or punishment. James Bonwick, a student at Lancaster’s Borough Road School in Southwark from 1823, recalls in his memoirs:

Lancaster had such implicit faith in his Monitors, that he thought little of adult service. He instituted, therefore, House lads, from whom he selected his future Masters of Schools. They were boarded, lodged, and prepared to be sent forth to work.²⁸

Lancaster’s obsession with exposure extended still further, to the design of the schoolroom. He wrote a treatise on this subject alone, entitled *Hints and Directions for Building, Fitting Up, and Arranging School Rooms on the British System of Education*. In the work, he insists upon classroom doors contiguous to the master’s desk: “This will render the boys conscious of the inspection of their conduct by the superior coming in, and going out of school, and make that inspection easy to him”.²⁹ Equally remarkable is Lancaster’s admonition that classroom floors incline towards the back, such that the master, positioned upon a platform at the head of the room, can view all the scholars in unobstructed fashion: Specifically, he suggested a gradation of three feet over the length of a sixty-foot classroom.³⁰ Further, Bonwick notes, “A clock was fixed over the platform, and a large bell stood on the Master’s desk. Yet that was seldom used, as the sharp call “Halt!” for order, was distinctly heard over the room”.³¹

The monitorial machine

Littered throughout the texts of both Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster is the machinery metaphor. In an 1807 sermon, Bell spoke to the tenor of the times:

Machinery has been contrived for spinning twenty skeins of silk, and twenty hanks of cotton, where one was spun before; but no contrivance has been sought for, or devised, that twenty children may be educated in moral and religious principles, with the same facility and expense, as one was taught before.³²

²⁷Lancaster, *British System of Education* (1812), 30–1.

²⁸James Bonwick, *An Octogenarian’s Reminiscences* (London: James Nichols, 1902), 29.

²⁹Joseph Lancaster, *Hints and Directions for Building, Fitting Up, and Arranging School Rooms on the British System of Education* (London: Free School, 1809), 15.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 22–3.

³¹Bonwick, *Reminiscences*, 5.

³²Andrew Bell, *Extract of a Sermon on the Education of the Poor, Under an Appropriate System: Preached at St. Mary’s, Lambeth, 28 June 1807: for the Benefit of the Boys’ Charity-School at Lambeth*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 17.

Like a machine, monitorialism was both self-contained and automatic: Each part of the system had a role to play to ensure the proper functioning of the whole. Perhaps the best illustration of this “automatizing aspiration” was that, according to Lancaster’s blueprint, not even the detection of misbehaviour would interrupt the classroom routine. Monitors were expected to lodge accusations against their peers in silence, for which purpose they were given “a number of printed cards with different charges: as, “I have seen this boy idle”, “I have seen this boy talking”, &c. &c”.³³

The machinery metaphor was no haphazard choice on the part of Bell and Lancaster: A monitorialism that was self-contained and automatic would be perceived, by students, not as dependent upon the whims of fellow students or the master, but rather, as impersonal and impartial, as above the interests of individuals, as all but divinely ordained. Indeed, Bell was convinced that monitorialism had to become the watchword not merely for the classroom, but for society as a whole:

it may be permitted humbly to remark, that the general principle and practice of the Madras System of moral Government, which are inseparably linked together, bear an intimate analogy to the branch of legislation now on the tapis. Indeed, the laws of nature and of God are universally true and universally applicable. What men have to do, is to apply them to their legitimate objects. If the Government of the State be conducted on principles and laws analogous to those of the new System of Education, its subjects will undergo a similar amelioration to that of the members of a school.³⁴

Rather less humbly, in May 1819, Bell ventured so far as to compare the principle of monitorialism to the principle of gravitation: Just as the universe was regulated by the “Almighty Governor” through gravitation, the classroom was regulated in a comparably harmonious fashion through monitorialism.³⁵ For his part, Lancaster took the rhetoric of “automation” to remarkable levels of hyperbole, suggesting in his 1810 manual that “when the pupils, as well as the school-master, understand how to act and learn on this system, the system, not the master’s vague, discretionary, uncertain judgment, will be in practice”.³⁶ Such a claim seems particularly ironic in light of traveller Louis Simond’s description of an 1811 visit to Lancaster’s school:

Seven or eight hundred boys, from six to twelve years old, filled these benches. They were all talking together and making a great noise. They seemed divided into classes or sections, distinguished by small flags; some of the classes writing on sand, others on

³³Lancaster, *British System of Education* (1812), 67.

³⁴Andrew Bell, *The Wrongs of Children; or, a Practical Vindication of Children from the Injustice Done Them in Early Nurture and Education* (London: Rivingtons, 1819), 14.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 41–2.

³⁶Joseph Lancaster, *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised at the Royal Free Schools, Borough-Road, Southwark* (London: Royal Free School, 1810), 45.

slates, that is to say had written, or might have written, for none were doing any thing but playing.³⁷

In January 1808, Lancaster came together with Joseph Fox and William Corston to form the organization that would become known as the British and Foreign School Society, or BFSS. The aim of the Society would prove no less ambitious than Lancaster's was – the spread of the Lancastrian system throughout the world – but Fox, a surgeon dentist, and Corston, a straw plait manufacturer, insisted that pursuit of that aim had to remain guided by good financial sense.

Monitorialism, mission, and modernity

Valuable as the Bible is, it can be of no use to untutored nations, unless its truths are published, explained, and inculcated by proper teachers employed in this important work. It is by the labours, or under the superintendence of these teachers, that the inspired volume is to be translated into the languages of the heathen, and that those who are ignorant of letters are to be instructed so as to be able to peruse it.

— Reverend Angus McIntosh, 10 May 1815³⁸

One might label the BFSS enterprise a utilitarian–evangelical partnership, for in the annual reports of the Society, one finds the names of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill alongside those of Wilberforce and a host of evangelicals.³⁹ Yet, the evangelicals shouldered the burden of actually implementing the system. This was most emphatically the case beyond Britain's shores, where representatives of all the great nineteenth-century missionary societies put Lancaster's scheme for disciplinary education into practice and, in a number of cases, actually laid the foundations for subsequent systems of public instruction through networks of state schools. Where such foundations were swept away by political currents, the logic of disciplinary education often found expression, ultimately, through elite reformers who had, as

³⁷Louis Simond, *An American in Regency England: The Journal of a Tour in 1810–1811*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London: Robert Maxwell, 1968), 130–2. Simond made these observations on a day Lancaster was absent from the school. Such days became increasingly common as the educationalist devoted himself to spreading his technique throughout the British Isles and beyond. Lancaster claimed in the 1810 edition of *The British System of Education*, vi: “as a plain man speaking plain things, detailing matters of fact, developed in their native language, he has had the honor of being attentively heard, by above 100,000 of the King's most loyal subjects.” Such travels were forced upon Lancaster, given the public commotion confrontations with Bell about the origins and conduct of the system generated. At Sarah Trimmer's urging, Bell would become head of a National Society devoted to the spread of his brand of monitorialism. Bell deployed monitorialism to communicate specifically Anglican doctrines, whereas Lancaster, as a Quaker, refused all sectarian attachments, focusing in his own scheme upon the study of the Bible alone. Each cause became associated with a particular journal – Bell's with the *Quarterly Review*, and Lancaster's with the *Edinburgh Review*.

³⁸Reverend Angus McIntosh, “The Importance of Christian Knowledge,” *Four Sermons, Preached in London, at the Twenty-First General Meeting of the Missionary Society, May 10, 11, 12, 1815* (London: J. Dennett, 1815), 12.

³⁹For further details of Bentham's links to the BFSS, refer to George F. Bartle, “Benthamites and Lancasterians – The Relationship Between the Followers of Bentham and the British and Foreign School Society During the Early Years of Popular Education,” *Utilitas* 3, no. 2 (November 1991): 275–88.

children, received training in mission institutions. I would venture so far as to suggest that evangelical missionaries were the pioneer purveyors of Michel Foucault's and Timothy Mitchell's modern technologies of power, throughout the colonial world.⁴⁰

Monitorialism was thought particularly fitting for missionary schools, for the explicit aim of monitorial education, like that of evangelical missionaries of the time, was to nurture adherence to such values as industry, discipline, and order. Mission and monitorialism alike were, in that early-nineteenth-century context, rooted in the notion that conversion to "serious Christianity" was a matter not of merely professing such, but of conforming to a "Scriptural order". In the Church Missionary Society's fifth anniversary sermon, delivered in 1805, the Reverend John Venn put the matter this way:

the Gospel, by elevating the mind, by inspiring it with the noblest hopes and the grandest views, by working on the most generous and powerful affections, puts in motion a force of the greatest efficacy; but, at the same time, it gives a right direction to that force, by the most precise and authoritative declarations, respecting the necessity and nature of righteousness.⁴¹

What exactly was the "direction to righteousness", as specified precisely and authoritatively by the Gospel? The inaugural volume of CMS proceedings had explained that, under the influence of the Gospel, "Rulers become the fathers of their people, and subjects cheerfully yield obedience". In short, the "spiritual" and "cultural" dimensions of conversion were considered inseparable: Christianity *was* industry, discipline, and order. Venn was quite specific:

So far as improvement in man bears a relation to himself, he ought not only to be sober, temperate, chaste, modest, and humble, but he should be ready to exercise self-denial, he should be regular and uniform in his general habits of life, and able to subdue his passions, to moderate his desires, and to keep every temper in a state of subordination to reason.⁴²

In line with such thinking, the manuals the BFSS published through the first half of the nineteenth century proclaim one message most consistently – that the principal aim of the monitorial school was not to transmit knowledge, but rather, to mold the

⁴⁰Wayne Fife pursues this connection explicitly, using a London Missionary Society case study, in his brilliant "Creating the Moral Body: Missionaries and the Technology of Power in Early Papua New Guinea," *Ethnology* (Summer 2001): 251–69. At page 259, he explains, "By the turn of the [twentieth] century, L.M.S. missionaries were increasingly writing about the individual body as the most important location for disciplining, or as they often put it, civilizing the primitive Papuan villager. Also increasing were reports of individual villagers assuming new moral identities and 'spontaneously' urging similar transformation on others." For missionary-state connections generally, refer to Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (eds.), *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002). For the current article, beyond the secondary sources cited, the author has drawn upon extensive work with primary sources in both the Archives of the Church Missionary Society, Special Collections, University of Birmingham Library, United Kingdom, and the Archives of the London Missionary Society, Council for World Mission Collections, Archives, Manuscripts, and Rare Books Division, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, United Kingdom.

⁴¹"Sermon Preached 4 June 1805 for Fifth Anniversary by Rev. John Venn," *Proceedings of the CMS*, Volume I (London: L.B. Seeley, 1801–1805), 419.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 397.

character in line with the Scriptures.⁴³ When Lancaster explained his opposition to the teaching of specifically Anglican doctrines in his schools, he was quite clear as to his vision of the broader Christian morality he aimed to transmit:

a reverence for the sacred name of God and the Scriptures of Truth, a detestation of vice, a love of veracity, a due attention to duties to parents, relations, and to society; carefulness to avoid bad company, civility without flattery, and a peaceable demeanor, may be inculcated in every seminary for youth, without violating the sanctuary of private religious opinion in any mind.⁴⁴

Indeed, all the lessons of BFSS schools, whether in reading and writing, geography, or indeed arithmetic, were geared towards not merely conveying a skill, but further, a frame of mind. Consider, for instance, the 1831 manual's admonition regarding reading the Bible:

it becomes an object of the highest importance that the pupil should not only understand the meaning of what is read, but be so far interested in its communications as to regard them with reverence, and habitually to apply them to his own conduct and conscience.⁴⁵

How would monitors and masters ensure that students had grasped the message of a given passage? An elaborate system of interrogation was devised to test students as to their understanding of the Bible's "proper" message. In 1831, Henry Althans recorded the following exchange:

Master: What meat are we not to labor for?
Scholars: 'That which perisheth.'
Master: Give me some passages which teach us that we ought to labor?
Scholar One: 'We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.'
Scholar Two: 'Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good.'
Scholar Three: 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'⁴⁶

Such an exchange likely took place between the master and several of the school's elder students – but this concern with improving manners was not limited to scholars

⁴³Beyond the manuals, there are the comments of Lancaster's supporters, like Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood in *A Sermon, Preached in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, on Friday, 21st February 1812, for the Benefit of the Lancastrian School Established in That City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Lancastrian School, 1812), 1–2: "Every portion of the Gospel is full of practical instruction. Our Lord's discourses, transmitted to us, uniformly come home to the situations and the business of common life. He incorporates, on almost every subject, the doctrines of immortality and salvation, with the essential duties and relations of the present world. He seizes on the occasions or incidents, which naturally occur in his intercourse with his disciples or with the multitude, and builds on them the instruction which he intended for every age and condition of mankind."

⁴⁴Lancaster, *Improvements* (1803), iv–v.

⁴⁵British Foreign School Society, *Manual of the System of Primary Instruction, Pursued in the Model Schools of the British and Foreign School Society* (London: Longman and Company, 1831), 25.

⁴⁶Henry Althans, "A Compendious Report of the Order of Proceedings and Actual Operations in the Central School of the British and Foreign School Society, Borough-Road," *Sunday School Teachers' Magazine and Journal of Education*, 1831: 10.

familiar with the Scriptures. Indeed, Lancaster consistently voiced his opposition to the mere memorisation of Biblical passages:

I do not approve of boys being required to learn whole chapters, or long portions of Scripture by rote, unless united with emulation; and then they should be concise, and connected with some subject that has been recently, or is intended to be introduced particularly to their notice.⁴⁷

A second exchange recorded by Althans reveals how the most mundane vocabulary lessons were geared towards modifying behaviour:

Master: What is a habitation?
Scholars: A dwelling.
Master: What are those persons called who live in it?
Scholars: Inhabitants.
Master: What part of speech is that word?
Scholars: A noun.
Master: Give me the verb?
Scholars: To inhabit.
Master: What is that derived from?
Scholars: From *habeo*, I hold or possess.
Master: Mention some other words that are derived from *habeo*.
Scholars: Habit, a cloak; habitable, fit to live in.
Master: What is a habit?
Scholars: A cloak or covering.
Master: In how many senses is the word used?
Scholars: In two – 1st, a covering for the body – 2nd, a covering for the mind.
Master: What characters do you give to the habits of the mind?
Scholars: Good and bad.
Master: Mention a bad habit of the mind?
Scholars: Laziness.
Master: Why is laziness called a habit?
Scholars: Because it is difficult to cast off.
Master: If so difficult to be cast off, what should that teach us.
Scholars: That we should be very careful to strive against it.⁴⁸

Of still greater importance in grasping the affinity that existed between mission and monitorialism in the early nineteenth century, is the fact that both were considered, by their practitioners, as *universal* and *universalising*. Scholars of the evangelical missionary enterprise in the nineteenth century must reckon with an almost unspeakably vast network of agents throughout the world, in constant communication as to method. Equally daunting to conceptualise is the vast ambition of that

⁴⁷Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education As It Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community*, 3rd ed. (London, 1805), as excerpted in Carl F. Kaestle (ed.), *Joseph Lancaster and the Monitorial School Movement: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973), 85.

⁴⁸Althans, "Compendious Report," 7. David Savage expands upon the point discussed here in his "Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology of Female Education in India," *Gender and History* 9, no. 2 (August 1997): 201–21. At page 209, he explains, "The aim of all missionary education became the reformation of character: not simply the formation of character in succeeding generations of the young, as was possible to contemplate in the imagined homogeneous culture of England, but its re-formation, its rescue from the influences of Hindu culture and transformation into a new personality with new habits agreeable to the sensibilities of the English schoolmaster."

network – to realise the universal empire of Christ on earth. On this point, one need only quote the Reverend Thomas Biddulph. His 1804 CMS anniversary sermon is, to my mind, no less than a manifesto for missionary colonialism:

The comprehensive rule of duty, which is now under our consideration, comprises within its wide embrace every individual of the human species. Its objects, expressed by the plural pronoun others, are all mankind. Of the Divine Law in general, as well as of the glorious Gospel, and particularly of this epitome of moral duty, we may with propriety observe, that, like the light of the natural sun, its going forth is from the end of heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.⁴⁹

For Biddulph, as for the evangelical missionaries of his time, the sun never set upon Christ's empire. Therein rested the challenge – and the challenge perceived by Lancaster and his followers was scarcely less momentous. The Reverend Robert Jones, speaking in September 1813 at the inauguration of the Free School on Long Street in Cape Town, remarked that observers should not wonder at the nearly concurrent development of monitorialism and vaccine inoculation:

As the one prevents the infection of perhaps the most loathsome and deadly disease to which our frame is exposed, the other acts as a preventive against the no less fatal ravages of vice and ignorance. The New System of Education is mental vaccination.⁵⁰

The BFSS Annual Report of 1815 proclaimed:

Surely we may hope that the day is not far distant, when Statesmen and Legislators of all countries will open their eyes to the awfully important truth, and, beholding in a sound and moral education, the grand secret of national strength, will co-operate for the prevention rather than the punishment of crime.⁵¹

No doubt the Annual Report of 1833 captured the point most emphatically:

Of no other institution for the promotion of public education can it be said, 'It is a messenger of good tidings to all lands', – 'Its line is gone out through all the earth, and its word to the end of the world'. – The companion of the Missionary, and the forerunner of the Bible and Tract Distributor, it yet stands alone, – the only society which proposes, by means at once simple, economical, and effective, to unclasp the sacred volume everywhere, and to confer the inestimable benefits of a Scriptural education on the whole human race. To effect this sublime purpose, it simply asks with the blessing of God, THE UNION OF GOOD MEN OF ALL NATIONS, the cordial and active co-operation of the different members of that large and scattered family, who, 'being many, are yet one body in Christ'. If 'love and unity' be the motto and the pervading principle of this great 'household', – the whole earth, which already groaneth and travaileth, sighing to be redeemed from the darkness of ancient errors, and the bondage of degrading and decrepit superstitions, will soon rejoice not only in the light of moral and intellectual truth, but over the 'glad tidings of great joy' which belong 'to all people'. 'Then shall the earth

⁴⁹“Sermon Preached 22 May 1804 at Fourth Anniversary by Rev. Thomas T. Biddulph,” *Proceedings of the CMS*, Volume I (London: L.B. Seeley, 1801–1805), 279.

⁵⁰British and Foreign School Society, *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, 1814* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1814), 43–44.

⁵¹British and Foreign School Society, *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, to the General Meeting, November 1815* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1815), 3.

yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us: God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him'.⁵²

Grappling with the language here is vitally important: Note the references to “all lands”, “all the earth”, “the whole human race”, “the union of good men of all nations”, and “this great household”. The kinship between mission and monitorialism is unmistakable, for both had hegemony as their aim. Indeed, in the monitorial school, missionaries saw their ideal world in microcosm, a world in which all people, and all peoples, understood the fact of their exposure to the eyes of God – that is to say, understood the fact of their common, Christian subordination.

The BFSS claimed to have incontrovertible evidence of the universal applicability of monitorialism. Indeed, the Society pointed to the example of students drawn from all parts of the world who had passed through the halls of the Borough Road School and, ultimately, taken monitorial methods back to their homelands. Such students, irrespective of faith or race, had reacted to monitorial methods as well as English students had, insisted Lancaster and his peers in forum after forum. Brian Stanley captures the general point: “Missionary support in the nineteenth century thrived on lurid tales of “heathen” blindness and the savage cruelties of idolatry, but these tales would have been pointless if the blindness and savagery were innate” and “The position that a particular people occupied on the scale between savagery and civilization was not fixed”.⁵³

Perhaps most noteworthy in this regard is the testimony of John Pickton before the House of Commons Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis. Pickton was schoolmaster at Borough Road when he delivered his testimony to the Committee in 1816. Much of that testimony concerns the aptitude of the Africans under his instruction. At the time, there were four Africans training as masters at the School. When asked about the progress of these students, he replied, “their abilities are quite on a par with Europeans, and the lad who made the greatest progress in learning in a given time, was an African”. Of this particular 13-year-old from Sierra Leone, Pickton reported, “he was totally ignorant of his letters, and at the expiration of sixteen months could read the Bible well, could write an excellent hand”.⁵⁴ The questioner, apparently doubtful as to Pickton’s sanguine assessment of the Africans, proceeded to ask quite specifically whether such students were “promising, at least as likely to give satisfaction, as the Europeans which you commonly select from other schools, and educate for the same purpose?” Pickton was steadfast in his response: “If I may judge from their dispositions and manners, and from the progress they have made in their education, I would say equally so”. Further, he proceeded to emphasise that the Africans were “constantly with the Europeans; they board at the same table, and sleep in the same apartments”.⁵⁵

⁵²British and Foreign School Society, *Twenty-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign School Society* (London: S. Bagster, 1833).

⁵³Brian Stanley, “Christianity and Civilization in English Evangelical Mission Thought, 1792–1857,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 169 and 173.

⁵⁴John Pickton, *Report from Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis* (London: House of Commons, 1816), 181.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 184.

Pickton's testimony would appear to accord with the conclusion Michael Adas reaches in his *Machines as the Measure of Man*, namely:

Though most Europeans clearly considered themselves superior to African or Asian peoples, until the last decades of the [nineteenth] century their conviction of superiority at the level of ideas, as distinct from that of social interaction, was based primarily on cultural attainments rather than physical differences.⁵⁶

That is, in the early and, perhaps, mid-nineteenth century, race was not yet viewed by European educationalists as an immutable category determining intellectual potential. Of course, European educationalists were dismissive and condescending of Africans and Asians, but these were attitudes rooted in the notion that such peoples had not fulfilled their intellectual potential – not that they lacked such potential altogether. Indeed, the educational experiments that formed such a critical part of the missionary enterprise in the early and mid-nineteenth century would have seemed without purpose, had there not existed a firm conviction among missionaries – and, indeed, their benefactors in the British public – that Africans and Asians were available, intellectually, to the redemptive force of their message.

Conclusion

When exploring Enlightenment discourses of educational and social reform, intellectual and cultural historians have often privileged consideration of utilitarian reformers of secular mind, over that of their evangelical counterparts.⁵⁷ By way of redress, I have endeavoured to demonstrate here that evangelical missionaries of the early nineteenth century were “colonisers” in a quite specific sense.⁵⁸ My view of “missionary colonialism” is akin to that developed by Brett Christophers in his analysis of Anglican missionary activity in nineteenth-century British Columbia. As Christophers explains, “Indigenous peoples were not consigned to a prehistory equated with

⁵⁶Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 273–4.

⁵⁷As Dorinda Outram has suggested, perhaps the principal culprit on this score is Peter Gay, “who significantly subtitled one volume of his synthetic study of the Enlightenment as the ‘rise of modern paganism.’” Refer to Outram’s *Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31. An important recent exception to this trend is Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁵⁸For comparative purposes, refer to such recent scholarship as Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632–1650* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000); C.L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820–1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); Sue Peabody, “‘A Dangerous Zeal’: Catholic Missions to Slaves in the French Antilles, 1635–1800,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 53–90; J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Philipp Prein, “Mission to Arcadia: The Moravian Invention of an African Missionary Object as an Example of the Culture of German Nationalism and Colonialism,” *German History* 16, no. 3 (1998): 328–57; Sara H. Sohmer, “Christianity Without Civilization: Anglican Sources for an Alternative Nineteenth-Century Mission Methodology,” *Journal of Religious History* 18, no. 2 (December 1994): 174–97; and Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823–1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999).

savagery. Instead, Anglican missionaries invoked a single history that bound God's children together".⁵⁹ He continues:

If the mission enterprise was successful, Christianity would dominate and assimilate the heathen world it deemed other. This otherness, identified as savagery, legitimated empire but would not survive its fruition. The Other was a temporary break in the Same, a moment in its imperial history.⁶⁰

To employ Christophers' terms, the point was to eliminate the temporary break in that single history that bound God's children together.⁶¹ Missionary colonialism, in contrast to, say, the colonialism of the settler or the administrator, aimed at incorporation of the heathen through domestication, rather than separation.

This domestication was not possible without education. Evangelical rhetoric emphasised as vital the freedom to read the Scriptures and the right of private judgment. Brian Stanley captures the point succinctly:

Evangelical Christians saw conversion as an intense drama culminating in conviction of sin and a free and conscious choice by the individual (albeit under the persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit) to yield his or her sphere of individual sovereignty to the lordship of Christ.⁶²

Christians had to think for themselves; the mediation of Scriptural truth by a corrupt clergy, for instance, was an abomination.

However, evangelicals would not forsake all such mediation. Consider for instance the words of William Jowett, in his *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, the blueprint for the Church Missionary Society's Mediterranean Mission. There he explained: "The circulation of the Holy Scriptures, to the greatest possible extent, is perhaps the most efficient measure which can be adopted, in the present circumstances of the Mediterranean Churches, for the promotion of the Society's objects".⁶³ Yet, Jowett acknowledged that there existed limits to the purported right: "Liberty of private judgment must be had, as the only proper foundation of sincere piety; and it must be accompanied by a spirit of subjection to Authorities, divine and human, as the proper fruit of piety".⁶⁴

⁵⁹Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 32–3.

⁶⁰Ibid., 30–1.

⁶¹Robert Hefner captures the notion succinctly in his "Introduction: World Building and the Rationality of Conversion," in *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). At page 30, he explains, "The hallmark of the world religions – or, again, of their most successfully institutionalized core variants – is their subordination of local spirits, dialects, customs, and territory to a higher spiritual cosmology. They declare the superiority of God or gods over low spirits, scriptural Word over local babble, transregional clerics over local curers, and a Holy Land or lands over local territory. Their world rejection, then, is of worldly consequence. It relativizes everyday reality by proclaiming that the new religion stands above local custom or community."

⁶²Brian Stanley, "Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: A Reevaluation," in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 14.

⁶³William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 293.

⁶⁴Ibid., 295.

The dilemma that evangelical missionaries faced was, how to inculcate that spirit of subjection and to establish their authority. Education was an essential component of this effort to establish missionary authority – if not, indeed, *the* essential component. As Jana Tschurennev has argued elsewhere, these missionaries were not at all averse to appropriating the pedagogical ideas of an organisation, much of the support for which derived from utilitarian reformers of secular mind.⁶⁵ The aspirations of the British and Foreign School Society were determinedly universal, cutting across perceived barriers of race, just as they cut across perceived barriers of class at home. In bringing the “light of the Gospel” to the “heathen shrouded in darkness”, Christian missionaries found the educational methods of the BFSS highly expedient.

Notes on contributor

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⁶⁵Tschurennev, “Diffusing useful Knowledge,” 245.