

A new role for Irish Anglicans in the later nineteenth century: the HCMS and imperial opportunity

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I would like to open a line of inquiry that is part of a wider series of questions designed to assess the impact that the British Empire had on Irish identities during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Between the 1870s and the 1910s, an under-appreciated conjuncture shaped the future of the United Kingdom and Irish states. I am speaking about the connection between what is often referred to as the age of new imperialism – that period when Europeans scrambled for Africa and Asia, extending their grasp for control in the wider world, and the age of Home Rule – when Irish nationalists of various stripes cooperated uneasily to press for a reworking or revocation of the Act of Union. Often this latter issue is still treated as an Irish or, at best, a United Kingdom domestic concern, though one need only pay attention to the rhetoric of British Tories and Irish unionists to recognize that the spectre of ‘the breakup of the empire’ loomed large in their imaginations as they opposed Home Rule.

And yet, the imperial enterprise *is* a burgeoning topic of research in Irish studies. It has become rather modish, for instance, to speak of the people of Ireland as imperial hybrids – simultaneously colonized and colonizing.² In particular, a great deal of basic research has laid out the prominent part that Irish men and women played in the armies, administrations and missionary enterprises of the British Empire. The involvement of colonized peoples alongside colonizers in the imperial enterprise was,

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of course, not a uniquely Irish phenomenon. One can point to numerous examples of indigenous peoples who played key roles in educating their children according to imperial norms, in aiding in the administrations of the colonies, and in policing their home territories or, in the case of the Gurkhas, other regions as needed. But the Irish *are* a singular case, I contend, for three reasons: first, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were home subjects, that is, they were subjects within the United Kingdom state whether they wanted to be or not; second, they were Europeans, which meant that they carried much of the same racial and cultural baggage into the wider world that other Europeans did; and third – stemming from the first two points – they debated the imperial enterprise among themselves and with the wider Union audience.³ Further, those debates were informed, as Barry Crosbie has persuasively argued in his path-breaking book, on the networks established as part of the imperial enterprise served ‘as mechanisms for the exchange of whole sets of ideas, practices and goods’.⁴ Understanding the place of Ireland within the imperial enterprise is, therefore, critical to appreciating the development both of the empire and of competing identities within Ireland. Just as the settler-Irish of Manchester turned inwards for social mobility in England and gentrified travellers viewed the Continent through their own cultural lens, so too did the imperial Irish carry both literal and cultural baggage with them when they left home.

Part of that understanding, however, involves appreciating that there were already multiple identity groupings in Ireland by the age of new imperialism. Thus, while it is legitimate from the standpoint of understanding nationalist politics to speak of a national identity that was largely Catholic and increasingly Gaelicized by the early 1900s,⁵ it is equally important not to omit non-Catholic Irish men and women from the discussion of identity, particularly when they labelled themselves as Irish while abroad and when they were labelled as such by people from outside Ireland. Their understandings must be accounted for when studying Irishness, especially within a United Kingdom context and particularly in the period when Catholic-nationalist Irish people seemed to be in the ascendant.

³ I recognize that the Irish were not the only imperial subjects resident in the United Kingdom, and numerous scholars have explored the impact of subjects resident in Britain recently. For example, see Antoinette M. Burton, *At the heart of the empire: Indians and the colonial encounter in late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 1998); Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian encounters, race and identity, 1880–1930* (London, 2000); A. Martin Wainwright, *‘The better class’ of Indians: social rank, imperial identity and south Asians in Britain, 1858–1914* (Manchester, 2008). For the Irish case, see Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre, *Cosmopolitan nationalism in the Victorian empire: Ireland, India and the politics of Alfred Webb* (Basingstoke, 2009). ⁴ Barry Crosbie, *Irish imperial networks: migration, social communication and exchange in nineteenth-century India* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 23. Interestingly, Crosbie has little to say about the CMS in India, save that the East India Company in the early nineteenth century was wary about proselytizing by CMS missionaries in the 1820s. See Crosbie, *Irish imperial networks*, pp 137–8. I am grateful to Ciaran O’Neill for bringing Crosbie’s work to my attention. ⁵ See Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand opportunity: the Gaelic revival and Irish society, 1893–1910* (Syracuse, 2008).



I want to explore this last point – that is, competing identities within Ireland – by looking at the work of a missionary organization, the Hibernian Church Missionary Society (hereafter the HCMS) and how its growing dynamism in the late nineteenth century reflected multiple redefinitions of elite status for the Anglican community, both within its ranks and in relation to the wider Irish and United Kingdom communities. It would, of course, be ahistorical to speak of Irish Anglicans as if they were a singular entity: members of the Church of Ireland came from different social classes and status groupings. One need only consider that Protestant tenant farmers, led by T.W. Russell, were among the most vocal advocates for reform of land ownership at the end of the century – a prospect that was inimical to landlords, many of whom were themselves Anglicans – to recognize their varied economic interests.⁶ Irish Anglicans also debated – sometimes hotly – theological questions throughout the period under review. One such division was between those espousing a more High Church theological approach and those espousing an evangelical approach.⁷ That division constrained the HCMS in its earliest days, but as we will see, the emergence of evangelical Anglicans as prominent church leaders after 1850 lent a prominence to the society that it had lacked initially. More important, the society achieved wider public recognition toward the end of the century because it mollified Anglican fears of social and political decline in the decades after disestablishment. Utilizing the emerging techniques of marketing, particularly through exhibitions designed to broaden interest in the wider world, the HCMS provided a vision of outsiders and their relationship to the people of Ireland that gave Irish Anglicans a special sense of purpose in the empire.

Established in 1814, the HCMS was an auxiliary body to the better known and much larger Church Missionary Society (CMS), which had been founded in 1799 by British Evangelicals hoping to spread the Christian gospel message to ‘Africa and the East’.⁸ Although these organizations came out of a period when evangelicalism encouraged ecumenical activity, the CMS and the HCMS were exclusively Anglican bodies.

Still, the state church initially looked askance at them. In fact, when the HCMS held its inaugural meeting, laymen outnumbered clergy, and those clergy in attendance were not senior clerics; thus, from its foundation, lay participation was an essential component to the organization’s existence.⁹ Clerical reluctance, it seems,

⁶ On Russell’s career and its impact on nationalist politics, see Patrick Maume, *The long gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891–1918* (New York, 1999), pp 40–2. ⁷ On the interrelationship of these groupings, see Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691–1996* (Dublin, 1997), pp 124–37, 148–64. For an account of the so-called Second Reformation, see Irene Whelan, *The Bible war in Ireland: the ‘Second Reformation’ and the polarization of Protestant–Catholic relations, 1800–1840* (Madison, WI, 2005). ⁸ The formal name for the organization was the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. ⁹ On the CMS in general, see Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds), *The Church Mission Society and world Christianity, 1799–1999* (Cambridge, 2000). On the importance of lay participation in the HCMS, see Acheson, *History of the Church of Ireland*, p. 125.



had to do with the theological tensions within the Anglican Communion in the 1810s (alluded to earlier), especially in the wake of the still-recent breakaway of the Wesleyans. Indeed, when the Revd Josiah Pratt led a three-man delegation from London to launch the Hibernian auxiliary in 1814, the archbishop of Dublin, Euseby Cleaver, discouraged his clergy from participating, as the society was 'accused of being enthusiastic in the sense of leaning towards Methodism'.¹⁰ Lest Pratt lose heart, however, he received substantial support from Lady Lifford, wife of the dean of Armagh, who established a Ladies Association to support the mission work prior to the founding of the HCMS. She then pressed her husband to encourage clergy in his archdiocese to take a more favourable attitude toward the London society, enabling the Hibernian auxiliary to launch successfully.¹¹

Indeed, these lay people were not just any members of the Church of Ireland. They had always included members of elite Anglican families. In the early days, for instance, they included a number of aristocrats and prominent gentry, such as the earl of Enniskillen; the brewing magnate Arthur Guinness; Lady Florence Balfour, mother of Francis Townley Balfour, who would become the first bishop consecrated in what is today Lesotho; and Lady Charlotte O'Brien of Dromoland Castle, a leading sponsor of evangelical causes and the mother of the future Young Irelander William Smith O'Brien.¹² Individuals – male and female – from these strata continued to be the financial backbone of the organization into the early twentieth century, as recorded in the address book of the society's Life Governors and Life Members. These 275 men and women gave literally tens of thousands of pounds to the HCMS.¹³

I must at least acknowledge that the organization raised funds through individual memberships and parish collections from all ranks of Irish Anglicans. In 1878, such collections and individual donations totalled more than £6,540.¹⁴ While income would fluctuate – with the Land War period being particularly lean – recorded donations were impressive. The general trend was for annual donations to increase. In the decennial period from 1889 to 1899, the society collected no less than £130,000 – an average of £13,000 per annum, while in fiscal year 1913, donations totalled more than £23,000. Altogether, between 1870 and 1930, the total income of the HCMS 'was in excess of £1 million'.¹⁵

10 Jack Hodgins, *Sister island: a history of the CMS in Ireland, 1814–1994* (Dunmurry, 1994), p. 4. **11** *Ibid.*, pp 4–5. **12** Patrick Comerford, 'An innovative people: the Church of Ireland laity, 1780–1830' in Raymond Gillespie and W.G. Neely (eds), *The laity and the Church of Ireland, 1000–2000: all sorts and conditions* (Dublin, 2002), p. 192; Acheson, *History of the Church of Ireland*, p. 134. **13** RCBL MS. 313/5/4, *Address book of life governors and life members*, n.d. **14** *Sixty-fifth report of the Hibernian District of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, for the year 1878, adopted at the annual meeting of the society, held in the antient concert rooms, Dublin, Friday 25 April 1879, with a statement of income and expenditures* (Dublin, 1879), p. 1. Page number indicates beginning of the statement of income and expenditures, which actually appears at the end of the annual report. **15** Hibernian Church Missionary Society, *CMS centenary and anniversary of the Hibernian CMS, programme of meetings* (Belfast, 1899), p.



Two things are especially important to note here. First, just as women had played a critical role in launching the HCMS, they remained key players throughout the organization's history, in terms both of organizing local committees and of raising money. If we go into the receipts of the HCMS, for example, we find that full 45.1 per cent of the Life Governors and Life Members were women.¹⁶ At a more prosaic level, women's contributions were essential to perpetuating the society's efforts. For example, according to the printed annual report of the HCMS for 1878, nearly £500 of income came from the annual subscriptions and donations provided by 197 individuals, nearly 43 per cent of whom were women.¹⁷

Second, the HCMS certainly was not the only organization encouraging missions of various types among Irish Anglicans. Indeed, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) had fully a century more experience than had the HCMS in supporting overseas missions. Typically, the SPG focused on ministries to Anglicans who had moved into the empire, while the CMS and its Irish auxiliary supported efforts to convert or minister to non-Christians. True to its roots among Evangelicals, the CMS sought to bring people unfamiliar with the gospel message into the Christian fold. They did so in part because they viewed it as an imperative at all times to convert individuals to accept that salvation came alone through faith in Jesus, and in part because 'there were strong feelings of millenarian expectancy', with many sensing that missionary work would 'usher in the 1,000-year period of bliss on earth, as foretold in the Apocalypse of St John'.¹⁸

Still, it would be incorrect to suggest that there was a clear distinction that separated CMS and SPG activities in the field. Thus, in 1900 the Revd H.M.M. Hackett – a long-time activist with the HCMS – became for a time principal of the Montreal Theological Seminar, which educated clergy for the diocese of Montreal (and, according to the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 'for the wider field of the whole Dominion and in some degree also for the boundless field beyond – the harvest field of the world'.¹⁹) Later that same year, in an address at Armagh, the Anglican primate praised both organizations equally before an audience, saying that

2; *Ninety-ninth report of the Hibernian District of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, for the years 1912–13, adopted at the annual meeting of the society, held in the antient concert rooms, Dublin, Friday April 18th 1913, with a statement of income and expenditures* (Dublin, 1913), xvi. See also John Crawford, *The Church of Ireland in Victorian Dublin* (Dublin, 2005), pp 119–20. **16** RCBL MS 315/5/4, life governors and life members, n.d. Calculation is based on 124 of the 275 governors and members listed. **17** *Sixty-fifth report of the Hibernian District of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, for the year 1878, adopted at the annual meeting of the society, held in the antient concert rooms, Dublin, on Friday 25 April 1879, with a statement of income and expenditure etc. etc.* (Dublin, 1879), pp 2–3 of the statement of income and expenditure. The exact total was £498 16s. 6d. The average gift was approximately £2 10s. 8d. The overall total from women donors was £216 13s. The women's average gift was approximately £2 11s. 7d. **18** Nigel Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a revolutionary age, 1789–1901* (Carlisle, Cumbria, 2004), ch. 12, quotation at p. 288. See also Lawrence Nemer, *Anglican and Roman Catholic attitudes on missions: an historical study of two English missionary societies in the late nineteenth century, 1865–1885* (St Augustin, Germany, 1981); and S.J. Brown, *Providence and empire, 1815–1914* (Harlow, 2008). **19** 'Colonial and American church news',



the spread of the missionary spirit is one of the healthiest signs in the life of the Church, and it is gratifying to notice that the more the difficulties and dangers of missionary work are realized the more eager are the best men in the Church to devote themselves to this field.²⁰

Along with domestic missions (such as the Church Mission to the Jews), such efforts received considerable interest from Irish Church members. Of these many organizations, however, the HCMS was the largest, in part, because of the efficiency of its organization. Hence, as Acheson has pointed out, 'in 1873, [the] HCMS was supported by 555 parishes, SPG by 318, and both societies by 123 parishes; by 1897 the parishes which gave no such support had fallen from 461 to 156'.²¹

As these gross numbers suggest, the impact of the HCMS was felt more broadly throughout the island in the latter years of the nineteenth century. In fact, in the years after 1890, the HCMS embarked on an ambitious promotional campaign known as the Three Years' Enterprise (or TYE) that catalyzed these trends. A special subcommittee of the HCMS central committee led the effort, coordinating communications with outside bodies such as the YWCA, as well as with existing HCMS entities, such as the Gleaners' Union and county associations.²² Most importantly, it sponsored what were known as 'missionary missions', or week-long series of events featuring sermons, lectures and exhibitions designed to raise awareness of the need for foreign missions. In essence, they hoped that their own zealotry would prove contagious.

Shortly after its formation, the TYE subcommittee circularized the Dublin clergy to encourage them to hold a preliminary mission week after the celebration of the epiphany in January 1897. In its letter, the subcommittee stated its goal as 'bringing before the members of our Church the claims of Christ for the Evangelization of the World'.²³ In words that would have heartened those zealous founders of the Irish auxiliary, the committee proclaimed that 'the chief object of this effort is not to raise money, but to give information, to awaken a *heartfelt* interest in the heathen, and first, above all, to bring followers of our Lord and Saviour face to face with his command, and to impress upon them their *personal* responsibility in obeying that command'.²⁴ Thus, the campaign had a dual nature, entirely in keeping with the earliest soteriological vision of the HCMS – awakening the unenlightened abroad to the Christian message *and* awakening the home audience to the essential part they played in making the missions possible. In spite of the late date – the circular was sent out near the end of November – some thirty-four parishes in the diocese participated.

One essential reason for this quick response was that the society had been

Church of Ireland Gazette, 29 June 1900. In this context, it is important to note that the *Church of Ireland Gazette* reported Hackett's position as colonial church news (meaning efforts to create and staff Anglican dioceses whose primary constituents were United Kingdom settlers or their descendants). ²⁰ 'The primate of missionary enterprise', *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 26 Oct. 1900. ²¹ Acheson, *History of the Church of Ireland*, p. 221. ²² RCBL MS 315/1/7, TYE missionary campaign sub-committee minute book, entry for 19 Nov. 1896. ²³ *Ibid.* ²⁴ *Ibid.* Italics in original.



embraced by mainstream church authorities. In part, this was due to the wider acceptance of evangelicals among leading Irish churchmen. Acheson has contended that the fifty years on either side of disestablishment (1845–95) marked the high water mark of evangelicals in the Church of Ireland, as families associated with the evangelical vanguard achieved eminence within the Church.²⁵ Among the most important for our purposes was William Conyngham, Baron Plunket, who served as archbishop of Dublin from 1884 until 1897. In the 1850s, while working in the west of Ireland, where his uncle Thomas was the bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, Plunket had befriended the missionary Alexander Dallas and became a convinced evangelical.²⁶ During the early 1890s, he was one of the most zealous proponents of the HCMS, though he died on the eve of the TYE campaign.²⁷

In spite of his loss, the campaign still received active participation from leading clerics, including the bishop of Ossory and future archbishop of Armagh John Baptist Crozier and Plunket's successor as archbishop of Dublin, Joseph F. Peacocke – himself an evangelical who had spent four years (1861–5) as secretary of the HCMS.²⁸ With their encouragement, the subcommittee planned another 'missionary mission' for late October through early November 1897 to expand upon the January success. The CMS in London provided further aid, including seven clergy and a set of magic lantern slides of mission sites around the world. Among the fixtures were special services in St Patrick's Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral on 31 October and 8 November and a mass meeting for children on 6 November in Dublin's Metropolitan Hall, at which the slides were presented.²⁹ To promote these activities, the committee distributed some 6,000 pamphlets and 15,000 handbills and organized weekly planning meetings to train parish volunteers.³⁰ So successful was this 1897 effort that the Hibernian society continued to hold periodic missionary missions, even after the Three Years' Enterprise had run its course.

The most impressive series of mission meetings in the 1890s – and the culmination of the TYE – was the centenary celebration between 9 and 18 April. Indeed, the sequence of meetings held that week serves as a measure of how successful the HCMS had been at insinuating itself into the fabric of the Church of Ireland. Among the featured events of the nine days were the centenary meeting itself, held on Wednesday 12 April and addressed by the primate of Ireland the archbishop of Armagh, the bishop of Meath, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society from London, and the Revd E. Guilford, formerly a resident missionary in the Punjab, and

²⁵ Acheson, *History of the Church of Ireland*, p. 182. ²⁶ Georgina Clinton and Sinéad Sturgeon, 'Plunket, William Conyngham' in *Dictionary of Irish biography from the earliest times to the year 2002: vol. 8*, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge, 2009), pp 169–70.

²⁷ Plunket's comments on the importance of mission work at the valedictory meeting, at which HCMS missionaries were feted prior to their leaving Ireland, are instructive: see *Irish Times*, 17 Sept. 1896. ²⁸ RCBL MS 315/1/7, TYE missionary campaign sub-committee minute book, entries for 19 Nov. 1896, 7 July 1897, 23 July 1897, 15 Mar. 1898. On Peacocke, see Georgina Clinton and Bridget Hourican, 'Peacocke, Joseph Ferguson' in *DIB*. ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 Mar. 1897. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 July 1897, 16 Sept. 1897.



a public prayer meeting led by the Archdeacon of Glendalough and addressed by the rector of Holyrood parish in Co. Down. Two days later, the HCMS held its annual meeting and a special meeting for ladies interested in missionary work, the latter of which was addressed by a woman named McClellan, who had been stationed as a missionary in Fuh-Kien, China. (The Fuh-Kien mission, which would prefigure the Far East mission usually associated with Trinity College, was in fact an offshoot of the CMS enterprise.) Secondary events included a children's meeting on the evening of 16 April and a social for members of the Gleaners Union two days later. Central to the celebration were special sermons delivered at thirty-five parishes around the Dublin archdiocese on 9 and 16 April, including sermons delivered by the bishops of Ossory, Meath, Cork and Down, and the archbishop of Dublin, as well as by former mission workers from the Punjab and the North Pacific.³¹

Such activity paid dividends not only in terms of burgeoning donations, but in terms of what these monies allowed the HCMS to undertake. For instance, not only did the Irish body continue to make payments to its London-based parent, but it also sponsored exhibitions to promote greater knowledge of the outside world in Ireland. These events ranged from simple lantern lectures and kinematograph presentations by returned missionaries to weeklong bazaars. For instance, in October 1904, the Revd A.B. Fisher, one of the first Christian missionaries into Uganda in 1882, delivered a lecture in the Metropolitan Hall at which Lord Longford presided. Fisher displayed photographs he had taken himself and described how, under his watch, the Anglican community in Uganda had grown from one church with some 300 converts to more than 400 churches with more than 50,000.³²

Most important, the HCMS began to underwrite the incomes and expenses of missionaries sent out from Ireland to Africa and Asia. Over time, nearly 400 lay and clerical missionaries went out under the sponsorship of the HCMS.³³ Their efforts were directly connected to the church at home rhetorically and practically. Rhetorically, senior clergy spoke at annual valedictory meetings designed to encourage outgoing missionaries and to link their work to the support of ordinary Anglicans in Ireland. Thus, in the same month that Fisher had described his days in Uganda, the Revd Hackett, having returned from Montreal, told those in attendance at one such valedictory meeting not only that their focus should be on those abroad, but that 'it should not be forgotten there was a duty to be done at home, which was just as important. Every assistance possible should be given to those who devoted their lives to the carrying of the Gospel to the heathen.'³⁴ In the context of the present discussion, it should be noted that, while Hackett was the dean of Waterford in 1904, he had been general secretary of the HCMS in the 1890s and one of the leaders of the Three Years' Enterprise.³⁵

31 HCMS, *CMS centenary and anniversary of the Hibernian CMS* (Belfast, 1899), pp 4–15. Pamphlet attached to RCBL MS 315/1/7, TYE missionary campaign sub-committee minute book. **32** *Irish Times*, 4 Oct. 1904. **33** Kenneth Milne, *A short history of the Church of Ireland* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 2003 ed.), p. 62. **34** *Irish Times*, 21 Oct. 1904. **35** For example, Hackett had authored and co-signed the original circulars for the TYE campaign.



The assistance to which he alluded was made all the more relevant through clever marketing via a programme known as ‘Our Own Missionary’, through which parishes ‘adopted’ a single missionary.³⁶ As Martin Maguire described it, ‘letters and visits from these missionaries provided news from exotic corners of the British Empire and constant reassurance of the good that was being done by their missionary efforts in combating witch-doctors in Africa or heathens in India’.³⁷ But the connection between missionary and sponsor-parish was not a one-way link. Home parishes held annual ‘sales’ and bazaars to raise much-needed funds that went directly to benefit ‘their’ missionary.³⁸

Such activities were not, of course, unique to Irish Anglicans, as Presbyterians, Methodists, and, yes, Catholics – were engaged in financing and sending out missionary workers. Nor, as noted above, were the efforts of the HCMS the only ones engaged in by members of the Church of Ireland. And yet the HCMS was not only the largest of the Anglican bodies at the turn of the twentieth century, but its efforts were becoming more activist and had greater success from the time of the Three Years’ Enterprise forward. The question remains, why?

While one should not overlook the part played by the TYE and associated campaigns in energizing support, I believe that there are at least three other factors inspiring this dynamism.

The first relates specifically to the psychological perils involved in the imperial enterprise. It goes without saying that Europeans generally and Irish and British people specifically were in more frequent, direct, and occasionally ominous contact with Africans and Asians. In the parlance of the time, it was a clash of races, implying both cultural and biological struggles, and missionaries periodically paid the ultimate price for carrying their notions of civilization abroad. Accounts of attacks on missionaries were frequent in the Irish newspapers, as witnessed by the extensive coverage given to such events as the Boxer Rebellion in China.³⁹ To counter such violence – which even the nationalist newspaper the *Freeman’s Journal* called ‘the greatest blow Western Civilization has sustained in modern times’ – required the kind of zeal reflected in the HCMS’ activities.⁴⁰

Second, within the Irish Anglican community, a particular constituency found mission work particularly attractive and useful in the wake of Disestablishment. These were Anglican women. Within the Church of Ireland, they were not only not allowed to be members of the clergy, but since the General Convention of 1870 – which set up policy within the disestablished Church – they were officially excluded

See RCBL MS 315/1/7, TYE missionary campaign sub-committee minute book, entry for 19 Nov. 1896. ³⁶ Martin Maguire, ‘“Our people”: the Church of Ireland and the culture of community in Dublin since disestablishment’ in Gillespie and Neely, *The laity and the Church of Ireland*, p. 286. ³⁷ *Ibid.* ³⁸ For examples of such events in Rathfarnham and Harold’s Cross, see respectively *Irish Times*, 8 Oct. 1904 and 29 Oct. 1908. ³⁹ See Timothy G. McMahon, ‘Dash and daring: imperial violence and Irish ambiguity’ in Sean Farrell and Danine Farquaharson, *Shadow of the gunman: violence and culture in modern Ireland* (Cork, 2008), pp 79–89 at pp 86–8. ⁴⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 17 July 1900.



from participation in the convention or even in general vestries, a status they had held prior to Disestablishment. As we have already seen, women were integral to the formation and financial maintenance of the HCMS. Like their English counterparts in religiously motivated voluntarist causes, these women built on the evangelical assumption that the “women’s mission” was to export the moral education she [sic] provided in the home but not beyond the point at which she herself started to become contaminated by the activity.⁴¹ Having played essentially secondary parts in the early decades of the century, women late in the century assumed a more public and acceptable role in the Church, through philanthropic work, such as planning the events and bazaars that paid for the ‘Our Own Missionary’ appeals. These events involved weeks of organizing and put an activist spin to the traditional concept of an all-parish festival, and even though the speakers at such events tended to be church MEN, it was church WOMEN who brought them off.⁴² Such activity clearly paralleled, and potentially augmented, the social activism documented by Luddy and Walsh, among others.⁴³ Equally important, women increasingly took on the most prominent role in the HCMS, as missionaries in the widening vistas of the empire. Looking at the published report of missionaries sent out only by the society prior to 1901, thirty-seven of them were women, and they went to every part of the world where the parent organization had set up outposts, including nine going to parts of Africa, five to Japan, eleven to China (including seven to regions outside of Fukien), five to Ceylon, and two to Persia.⁴⁴ That total of thirty-seven represents 42 per cent of the missionaries sent out by the HCMS in this period.

Finally, a majority of people in Ireland were expressing their desire to break free from the union, if not from the empire, in a channelled fashion. Of course, that majority was generally not representative of the Church of Ireland community, whose primary allegiance was to the state and the culture of the United Kingdom. Even so, as an entity, the Church was still recovering its bearings from the shock of church Disestablishment in 1869 and the realization that significant numbers of

41 M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English morals: voluntary association and moral reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 129. 42 For examples of such events in Rathfarnham and Harold’s Cross, see respectively *Irish Times*, 8 Oct. 1904 and 29 Oct. 1908. 43 Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), especially ch. 2, which highlights the role of religious motivations behind much philanthropic work; idem., ‘Religion, philanthropy and the state in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (eds), *Charity, philanthropy and reform from the 1690s to 1850* (New York, 1998); idem., ‘Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Kathleen D. McCarthy (ed.), *Women, philanthropy and civil society* (Bloomington, IN, 2001); Oonagh Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin: philanthropy, politics and education in the early twentieth century* (Dublin, 2005). Cf. Roberts, *Making English morals*, p. 130. 44 87th Annual Report of the Hibernian Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, for the year 1900, Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Society, Held in the Metropolitan Hall, on Dublin Friday, April 19th, 1901 with A Statement of Income and Expenditure, &c. &c. (Dublin, 1901), ‘List of Irish Missionaries at present working in connection with the Church Missionary Society’, pp 140–41. See also Oonagh Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, ch. 4.



people in the Church of England ‘did not care much about the Irish Church’.⁴⁵ At the same time, many of its prominent members were facing declining rent rolls and the political onslaught of land legislation.⁴⁶ Taken together, these factors challenged fundamentally the perception that Irish Anglicans had as political and social elites not only on their island but within the wider state. Mission work, whether in the field or vicariously through supporting the work of those abroad, helped them to find a place again. While missionaries throughout the empire could speak about Britain’s ‘divine mission’ as an imperial power,⁴⁷ Irish churchmen at valedictory meetings frequently argued that their church had a special place within the wider Anglican Communion because they could draw on Irish Christianity’s distinctive missionary heritage.⁴⁸ That heritage, which was highlighted by an Irish speaker at a CMS convention as early as 1829, came in direct succession from St Patrick himself.⁴⁹ With such a legacy, they could play a unique part in creating a new calling for the United Kingdom. To quote the dean of St Patrick’s Cathedral from a mission bazaar in 1908,

As the growth of the imperial idea of statesmanship began with the first efforts of the state at colonization, so too the efforts of churchmen to carry the Gospel to lands beyond the sea were leading the way to a larger and more imperial – a more catholic, and therefore more evangelical – conception of the Church . . . Our colonies have saved the United Kingdom from much of the narrowness and self-sufficiency and intolerance of other races, to which communities insulated by their geographical position, and in some measure shut off from the life of the European Continent, were peculiarly susceptible. The colonies had inspired them with a larger idea of freedom and a more generous idea of human society.⁵⁰

That idea could only be fully realized in a United Kingdom context. Thus, in placing before their audiences this noble vision of the empire as a missionary beacon of freedom, the HCMS sought not only to undercut the value of Irish nationalist arguments on behalf of Home Rule, but also to assert anew the place of Irish Anglicans as elites with a critical niche in that imperial enterprise.

⁴⁵ G.A. Denison quoted in Brown, *Providence and empire*, p. 257. ⁴⁶ Maguire, “‘Our people’”, pp 277–8. ⁴⁷ Brown, *Providence and empire*, p. 435. ⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1901. ⁴⁹ Acheson, *History of the Church of Ireland*, p. 135. ⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 29 Oct. 1908.