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Middle Class Piety in the Royal Navy

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*Before the Church of England departed from the Catholic Church on religious grounds, it was only politically separated from the church in Rome under Henry VIII. The religious undercurrents in England that followed the Protestant Reformation inspired further inquiry into spiritual matters that extended beyond the program of the national church. Before the Evangelical reforms in the late eighteenth century, the Church of England sought to instill morality, discipline, and loyalty to the faith through rigid, top-down structures and practices, and nowhere is this fact more prominent than in the lives of sailors and officers of the Royal Navy. The rules and standards approved of by the Crown and disseminated through the Navy administration came largely from the Articles of War, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Regulations and Instructions. Other publications like Josiah Woodward's *The Seaman's Monitor*, in conjunction with crown-approved literature, hoped to instill Christian values and loyalty to the nation. Until the Evangelical reforms, ship captains either embraced religious skepticism and or deism inspired by the Enlightenment, while those who enjoyed religious life hailed from the upper aristocratic classes and the landed elite. These conditions left the spiritual wellbeing of many under-class sailors' in the hands of individual captains, whose plight moved Christian reformers to action. Contrasting the religious expressions of captains Lord Horatio Nelson from Baron James Gambier, for example, highlight those with a more traditional or aristocratic faith when compared to those influenced by the Evangelical reforms. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Bible and tract societies, parliament, and the Evangelical movement infiltrated the navy and created a lasting impact on both naval policy, as well as a positive transformation in the relationships between officers and ordinary seaman.*

Middle Class Piety in the Royal Navy

The Reformation transformed English society from a Catholic to an Anglican regime and the emphasis on sacraments and works were replaced with the written word and faith-alone as the means to attain salvation. The religious and political reforms directly impacted the English navy and the role of religion at sea. As an island nation, the Crown faced little choice than to develop a robust naval program in order to defend themselves against their Catholic enemies and to protect important trade routes and imports from abroad.

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During the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’ (1685-1815) the Protestant Reformation’s cultivated an atmosphere of liberty, toleration, and freethinking that inspired the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment, an element of society that impacted and competed with religion in life at sea, challenging the Crown’s Christian initiative (Blake, 2008).

Throughout the end of the seventeenth and for much of the eighteenth century, English aristocracy remade Christianity in their image, forging a top-down religiosity administered by national church authorities, and approved by the Crown. Ultimately, their efforts failed to provide the spiritual nourishment for the nation’s sailors, in contrast to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Evangelical reforms. The nature of top-down religiosity coupled with the period’s rising skepticism towards faith and its embrace of natural law and reason combined to the disadvantage of many sailors’ spiritual lives for much of the eighteenth century. In response, a multifaceted initiative of Bible societies, pious captains, the ‘Blue Lights,’ and popular publications fostered the attainment of piety for sailors and officers alike, and improved discipline and morale. In addition, the Royal Navy became the ocean’s policemen, helped to end the slave trade, and provided opportunities for working class seamen to advance in society with the introduction of a new middle class, just as Britain gained command of the ocean and became the strongest empire of the period.

Limitations of the Anglican Program

The governing classes in England during the mid to late seventeenth century, loyal to the Anglican cause, utilized religion as a means to encourage sailor and officer solidarity and mission-focus in the nation’s navy expansion in hopes to frustrate any plans across the English Channel from the Popish menace. As the Royal Navy strengthened, a simultaneous intellectual movement, the Enlightenment, flourished and inspired new questions as to the involvement of God in the everyday affairs of men. Religious skepticism lessened the previous emphasis that religion held on the navy and left much of the religious devotion at sea to the responsibility of individual captains (Rodger, 2005).

The nature of the Crown’s rigid attempts at religious discipline and instruction deprived sailors of the spiritual connection they once enjoyed under Catholic rule regime. Under Catholic rule, the role of religion in the English navy provided sailors with a safety net at home, spiritual needs were met at sea in the form of sacraments, ships were named after their saints, and the clergy rang church bells in foggy weather as warnings to ships near the shore. Early Protestantism’s focus on faith over works and the written word’s importance over symbolism were missing a crucial element for the wellbeing of fleet – a genuine acceptance of piety of the Crown’s subjects and servants. By the early nineteenth century Evangelicals managed to resurrect religious life English sailors once enjoyed before the Reformation. The nature of ocean life often removed men at very young ages from church going and encouraged vice, the company of women, and the abuse of alcohol while in port. After the ‘long eighteenth century’ and following the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, religious reform swept across England and instilled many with the means to achieve a genuine conversion (Blake, 2008).

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the size of both navy ships and the

numbers of sailors grew exponentially and placed a strain on discipline. Enduring a minimal number of available chaplains, and a general concern for survival and secular comforts, sailors nevertheless managed to maintain a moral code based on cooperation that survival necessitated. Disseminated from the top, or the Crown, religious life persisted with limited influence in contrast to the yet to be seen bottom-up reform of the Evangelical movement. Mid seventeenth century captains displayed the rigidity of top-down religiosity through the suppression blasphemy and cursing with harsh punishments. If persuasion did not convince change in behavior, more extreme behavior resulted in capital punishment. The use of persuasion, characteristic of the Evangelicals approach, highlighted a point of departure from the Crown's appointed rules and regulations (Rodger, 2005).

Chaplains rarely served aboard and received low wages. In some cases chaplains served as both a spiritual leader and as a gunner (Rodger, 2005). In all practicality, the naval administration was concerned only with manning essential personal. During the period's intense scientific inquiry and the emphasis on one's individual salvation, any chance for a chaplain to make a career at sea largely depended on the individual captains' piety and their personal requests for services aboard their ships. Others with ecclesiastical training traded in their religious mission for other forms of employment, for the sake of adventure at sea or purely for the intent to survive. Additionally, chaplains also succumbed to the temptations and bad habits that often stereotype sailors (Mayo, 1922). Eighteenth century chaplains suffered from accusations of hypocrisy, while others served with devotion and spoke against the impressment of the poor. Chief among their complaints on behalf of the poor were neglect of the family back home, the diet at sea, and the delay of compensation. Even by the time of the American War, chaplains at sea were few in number. Despite minimal offerings available to sailors to engage in spiritual life, some captains offered music and bands in order to boost morale. A negative response to the low levels of religious involvement, and consequent disunity or distinctive worldview between officers and their subordinates, poor social relations resulted in off-duty tension while in port, sometimes escalating to physical assault (Rodger, 2005). Where chaplains lacked, captains received assistance from the government through various rules and regulations in hopes of maintaining order.

Parliament's contribution to the navy's religious well being came in the form of official Church of England publications and top-down rigidity, rules, and regulations for discipline. Legally, though not always obeyed or employed regularly, captains were given the responsibility for disseminating the English Book of Common Prayer and reading from the *Articles of War*. The latter initially intended to remind crews that the navy was the sword of God and that their loyalty to the faith would buffer the influence of their Catholic foes. However, as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rolled on, the readings of the *Articles of War* meant less about spiritual uplift and was used more so as a tool officers leaned on for discipline (Blake, 2008).

The *Articles of War*, meant as an auxiliary to religious instruction was quickly secularized, and its aim intended to instill fear and respect to the Crown, Royal Family, and to inform leadership at sea. Traitorous or disrespectful language prompted a court marshal and punishment. Likewise, any hurtful or disrespectful language meant similar repercussions. Capital punishment fell upon those who incited mutiny or sedition including both the offenders and those, with the means to suppress the misconduct, which

failed to do so. Any violent threats or actions also carried with it the penalty of death (Great Britain. War Office, 1775). The secular application of the *Articles of War* occurred, perhaps, due to the lessened religious fervor brought on by secular reasoning encouraged by the Enlightenment's demand for empirical truth. Deism, doubt, and technology became trendy and replaced the religious culture among many captains (Blake, 2008).

One example of the Enlightenment's influence on the minds of young officers in the early eighteenth century, who prepared to apprentice under ship captains, received their education at Christ's Hospital Mathematical School and learned the art of navigation. The rise in diverse worldly professions encouraged secular thinking captains indifference to religion, and the consequences fell upon their subordinates who received minimal access to spiritual nourishment (Stewart, 1986).

In essence, the religious fervor of the mid seventeenth century became nearly extinguished or unrecognizable by the early eighteenth century. Blue Lights took up the sailors' cause, discerning the human suffering at sea and the defective support that came from the church. Clergy, more often found aboard during war from the 1650s until the early nineteenth century, disappeared in peacetime, contributing to the irreligious life of sailors. Recognizing the rigid nature of the top-down approach, sailors complained against mechanical repetition; their needs consisted of real ministers and teachings (Blake, 2008).

The *Regulations and Instructions*, also represented a top-down mechanism, issued by the admiralty to condition and discipline men at sea, commanded officers to initiate divine services twice a day, a Sunday service, and the punishment of unruliness, cursing, or disrespect. This program failed to usher in a revolution in religious life among sailors (Blake, 2008). Bureaucratic, top-down efforts of reform lacked crucial elements that required a reform in religious life in general, characterized by active proselyting, personal rebirth, and access to and literacy of the word of God. The navy, during the eighteenth century, failed to excite their servicemen to a sense of duty and that began to show through at century's end. Those who failed to enlist often fell victim to impressment. Among some of the positive changes that reflected the awakening culture, the Quota Acts called for recruitment without compulsion. The naval administration also passed the Navy Act to combat the difficulty of drawing experienced volunteers when previously they managed to recruit a mere three-quarters of the numbers required to outfit and fill all the commissioned ships. The mid eighteenth-century's manning problems, which resulted in the inactivity of many ships lying in port, was a consequence of government coercion. These results contrasted to the increase in volunteers that emerged for duty after the religious reforms of the early nineteenth century. Religion alone did not improve navy life. It was the merchant marine, as an example of efficiency, the Navy Act looked to improve these conditions (Grandish, 1978).

The Navy Act also allowed seamen to allot portions of their compensation to be drawn monthly by a loved one so that families were not left deprived of the necessities of life. After the 1797 mutinies, attitudes between officers and sailors improved and skilled professionals exerted their importance and demanded respect based upon merit and ability. These improvements came in part from the influences of grassroots religious zeal and the development of literacy societies. The piety of individual captains and parliamentary acts also worked together for the spiritual well being of sailors (Rodger,

2005).

Unlike the early nineteenth-century zeal unleashed by the Evangelical reform, for most of the eighteenth century, English in the lower and working classes gravitated towards an indifference to religion, a symptom of a growing skepticism towards the faith in general. However, religion in the life of nobility and the landed elite persisted. The Evangelical movement within the Church of England expressed dissent from the top-down structure, and was allowed so long as it remained on the periphery. The Evangelicals viewed the neglected lower, mercantile, and professional classes as prospects to bring into the fold. Inevitably, proselyting to these groups positively impacted naval culture by providing sailors, officers, and captains with a shared worldview of duty to God, country, and family (Blake, 2008).

Collapse of the Old Order

While the marriage between church and state seemed threatened by the Enlightenment, religious influence through the efforts of zealous Evangelical laymen, who sought a personal relationship with God, transformed or reinvigorated the idea that England was God's country with the responsibility to spread the Gospel to all the earth. Evangelicals sought not only private reconciliation with God, but reconciliation of society with God's law, and asserted their influence in the public sphere. They took duty to God very personally and were determined to reform societal ills through parliamentary reform and through education and literacy. Beforehand, and since the days of William III, the government issued proclamations against vices and hoped to promote national values. Government decrees paled in comparison to the influence of persuasion and personal conversion (Blake, 2008).

The Proclamation Society, a top-down program from the king, aspired to initiate rules for both personal and national behavior through use of the legal process. The Society sought to enforce morality, a mode of conversion not accepted well by sailors and began to weaken and yield to the Evangelical efforts (Blake, 2008). Associated with the breakdown of the old religious order came a collapse of the old 'gentility,' based on nobility, heredity, and landed privilege. The rise in occupational wealth coupled with a personal relationship to God fashioned a new middle class that rose in the nineteenth century (Cavell, 2012).

Known as 'Blue Lights,' or Evangelical members of the Church of England, these missionaries demonstrated their faith publically in hopes that, through their examples, others might come to Christ. Those, whose piety resembled a more reserved manner, typical of the eighteenth century and perhaps demonstrated by one such as Lord Horatio Nelson, were not considered to be "Blue Lights" (Blake, 2008). Nelson expressed the faith of one still stuck in the aristocratic religiosity, but provided Bibles to his crew and wrote often in his journal about his personal submission to the will to God. Biographer, Alfred Thayer Mahan excused Nelson's liaison with his mistress Emma Hamilton, and Alexander Scott's description of the clergyman's son as one who undoubtedly knelt daily in prayer. Chaplains did not always serve aboard Nelson's ship, although his brother William served in the 1780s and Reverend Stephen Comyn joined Nelson on the *Vanguard* in 1798 (Knight, 2005). The importance of Nelson's faith cannot be understated, but it can be used to distinguish the type of faith demonstrated by a

clergyman's son from the mid eighteenth century and the zeal of his peer captain such as Vice Admiral Cuthbert Baron Collingwood or Baron James Gambier. In order not to diminish the faith of Lord Nelson, the death of England's iconic naval commander inspired sermons and remembrances that likened his sacrifice to the death of a hero who would lay down his life for his friends, analogous to the Savior of mankind (Blake, 2008).

Historian Sam Willis, unclear whether or not to label Collingwood as a 'Blue Light,' concluded that while no surviving evidence is conclusive, what remained from Collingwood's papers suggest a high possibility. The captain's behavior towards his crew resembled one with an Evangelical background, as it conflicted with the norms of punishment, and his reputation for being easy on his crew were well known. Distinct from Nelson, Collingwood similarly held thanksgivings toward God after a victory, but included a "day of general humiliation before," what historian Sam Willis described as a call to repentance on public display (Willis, 2014, p. 263). Collingwood's post-Trafalgar thanksgiving service encouraged his men to seek forgiveness from God and appeared strikingly agreeable to the Blue Light cause (Blake, 2008).

One of the most well known Blue Lights, Captain Gambier, regarded his midshipmen's spiritual welfare as so important that services aboard his ship normally missed only one Sunday a month, and usually for reasons to do with weather or battle. Further, Gambier's piety reflected on some of the rules and regulations he placed on his company. Rum was watered down compared to that enjoyed by other fleets. Single women were not allowed and cursing was punishable. These restrictions made Gambier's crew feel uneasy about his leadership at sea. Under the official *Regulations*, Gambier utilized one of the rules until it convinced him that the top-down codes needed either revision or to be completely done away with. As a penalty for cursing, the *Regulations* instructed captains to place a collar on the culprit with a 32-pound shot. After one sailor collapsed, Gambier came to the realization that this form of punishment belonged with a faith that relied on compulsion, not conversion, testifying of his Evangelical convictions. While captains from the aristocratic side, like Gambier, converted to the new movement, young men born into the labor and mercantile classes soon expressed themselves through personal merit, hard work, and individual rebirth in Christ, and found opportunities to advance in society as the aristocracy deteriorated (Blake, 2008).

Fruits of the Evangelical Reform

Another captain, whose navy career began with impressment into service while he strolled the streets of London. Jonathan Martin, before being accosted, stood before a monument imagined himself traveling abroad traveling to foreign nations and experiencing adventure. The man who would be his impressment agent initially convinced the Martin that an acquaintance of his needed a man that fit Martin's description to help out aboard his frigate. Martin soon found himself aboard the *Enterprise* and with orders that assigned him to the *Hercules*. Martin took it upon himself to use this experience to his advantage and to learn the ropes of seamanship. Eighteen ships of the line, including the *Hercules*, set sail for the Battle of Copenhagen (Martin, 1815).

Martin feared that his soul was not quite ready to enter war. After the battle and

back home on the Lord's Day, the captain and other men danced merrily as they celebrated their victory, and Martin was astonished at this 'sin.' Soon, a gale blew in and disrupted the festivity and frightened the crew, yet, Martin recalled that it was God's good grace that spared them. Not long after the Lord Horatio Nelson captured a Spanish ship in Lisbon, Martin became the captain of one of his prizes. Martin then recalled the story of a member of the gunner crew at the Battle of Cadiz, a yeoman, who shot himself and sparked a small fire in a room filled with gunpowder. Panic ensued and Martin bravely approached the scene and extinguished the flame. Martin praised God for putting the risk into his heart that saved the lives of hundreds onboard. Before his time as a captain, the uncertain seaman yearned to return home and to his parents, viewed the wretchedness of his own soul, and hoped to be back with the people of God (Martin, 1815).

Martin and some of his associates planned and aided his desertion. He found refuge ashore in Egypt until he caught a transport. As another demonstration of Martin's faith that God was involved in every detail of his life, a repetitive theme in his conversion narrative, Martin nearly met his fate at the hands of a group of Turks. Mercifully, the Turks left Martin to his business when they scuffled with other men over a spyglass at a watering or rest area for their camels; Martin credited the God of Abraham for his deliverance. In another example where Martin and a comrade planned to desert their naval duties, they became drunk and in port at Lisbon and stumbled back upon their ship. Perplexed that their journey led them back to what they hoped to leave behind, they decided to return aboard but also feared being hanged for desertion. Martin convinced his partner that Providence had brought them back from their dangerous and wayward journey back into safety and that a simple explanation to the captain of their folly in drunkenness would excuse them (Martin, 1815).

Jonathan Martin accounted for dreams and visions of damnation, and of his demonstration of a man who read his Bible, citing the parable of the Barren Fig Tree. Such pious captains as Collingwood, Gambier, and Martin, who offered daily prayer and Sunday services to their crew often shared their experiences with the divine. Still, further assistance to reform the navy came through a variety of Bible and literacy societies to supply men with their own personal access to the word of God (Martin, 1815).

In 1812, the Naval and Military Bible Society sent Bibles to the sick and wounded at the hospital in Cadiz following the Battle of Barrosa. Learning that many other officers were not aware of the society and its efforts, the society pushed for publicity and to ascertain the numbers of Bibles currently in possession of soldiers and sailors and what the future demand might hold. They received 26,327 applications for Bibles from soldiers and sailors. Officers relayed to the society that each application was filled out by an individual. One selling point to support the cause played on the brave sacrifice in defense of the nation, and that it was one's duty to see to it that servicemen received personal access to the word of God. Due to inadequate resources to meet all the applicants, the committee decided to focus on ships that possessed no Bibles at all. The society petitioned communities and congregations to assist in the effort to supply the military with Bibles. A day of fast was issued from the pulpits, and 2,000 copies of the general address spread throughout English congregations. The reaction supplied the society with funds beyond their expectation, yet the society was not able to meet the demands for all the applicants in due time (Methodist Magazine, 1812).

The society continued to press clergy and the public that no greater duty fell upon them

than to provide Bibles for those sailors who desire to have God's word. The quality of the Bibles printed and produced by the society suited the needs of navy life in a pocket-size format and with improvements in bindings with clasps for protection from the elements. Since the society's founding in 1780, 50,000 Bibles had been dispensed to military members. Sailors testified of their gratitude to the society's efforts and officers observed the development of good moral character of those under their command. Regimental schools established by the society assured sailors that their children received a good Christian education, and the committee requested legislation to lawfully grant them authority to provide scriptures to regimental schools (Methodist Magazine, 1812). The Bible Society committee often came in question as to the merit of their purpose and influence. The society merely had to respond with the aforementioned officer testimonies of the impact the Bibles had on morale and the well-being of those who received them. In further defense, the society appealed to the conditions of military men and the honor they bring to the nation. 560,000 military men served and any assistance and thoughts from back home demonstrated much-needed encouragement from their fellow countrymen. Appealing to the public with the likelihood of any sailors paying the ultimate sacrifice, the society admonished civilians that they owed these men the ability and the means to save their soul by coming to know their Savior and God, and that was possible only through the scriptures (Methodist Magazine, 1812).

Sermons from groups like the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and religious tracts such as Josiah Woodward's *The Seaman's Monitors* sought to Christianize men at sea. Both the SPCK and Woodward's publication originated in the early part of the eighteenth century, a time long before the Evangelical movement. By 1792, a sermon by Alexander Gerard, a professor of divinity at King's College in Aberdeen demonstrated a well-reasoned critique of the corruption of early Christianity and how it affected the truth and the existence of various manmade religions. His sermon was published as part of the SPCK. The first purpose of this sermon served to combat the skepticism of the philosophers and to provide a reasoned explanation of a history of religion, even with its apparent flaws. A secondary purpose fulfilled the original hopes of the regime to combat their Catholic enemies and illustrated points of truth that separated them intellectually from Catholic doctrine and encouraged true religion (Gerard, 1792). Particularly, Gerard pointed to the prophesied "grand apostasy" from original truth and that the "cruelty of the papal church" fulfilled the understanding of those who first published the gospels (Gerard, 1792, p. 3). The professor pressed his point by giving several examples of such apostasies or interruptions in pure religion with the story of Abraham, who before God called him to service, true religion had ceased to exist in the earth, though it had existed before with Adam and Noah. Specifically, he described a pattern of true and false religion, and that the former had always been corrupted over time. After spending time discussing the history of paganism and polytheism, the professor revealed that the true religions of the Hebrews and Christians became corrupted as men mixed revealed truth with the idolatry of man. Though Christianity became corrupted, Jews and believers in natural religion must admit that their systems also corrupted. The object of the SPCK intended to bring men to the knowledge of the true gospel, who would otherwise live without it and perish in the after-life. Such sermons sought to inspire intellect and truth, especially in a post-Enlightenment era (Gerard, 1792).

In the preface to Josiah Woodward's *The Seaman's Monitor*, 'His Majesty's Proclamation,' originally published in 1714, expressed hope that the publication might end vice and debauchery and to train all seamen to be good Christians representatives of the nation, to be blessed in the eyes of God, and to gain confidence from foreigners. Contrasted with Gerard's sermon, this approach approved by the Crown, represented the top-down approach to religious conversion. Symptoms of immorality that the Crown hoped to check included seaman stealing ships, joining the company of pirates, and killing their commanders. The emphasis and dissemination Woodward's publication and the reliance on other literature like the *Regulations and Instructions*, the Book of Common Prayer, and *The Articles of War* as the vehicles of change coupled with officers implementing the harsh punishment for sin, contrast with the success and appeal of the Evangelicals' (Woodward, 1735).

From the top down, the Crown viewed religion as the only hope for a world to be habitable. Since seaman often associated with the heathen, the Turks, or the infidels, the *Seaman's Monitor* instructed man to honor God's commandments in order to bless the nation and uphold a positive reputation. Woodward structured his advice to sailors for before, during, and after voyages. Before voyages, the author instructed seaman to wrap up their affairs at home and make sure their family was well cared for, and not doing so indicated a soul unworthy of God. In the chance a fellow sailor died in the line of duty, Woodward demanded that the Christian conduct of comrades meant seeing to it that any goods or earnings entrusted to a friend ought to be given to the family of the fallen and not confiscated out of greed. Ideally, as shipmates read the *Seaman's Monitor*, an atmosphere of peace would permeate their lives, a more humane treatment from officers towards subordinates would ensue, and cheerful sailors would work away at their tasks without complaint. Ideally, the written word hoped to create an obedient service, but the intent seemed more political and representative of a top-down approach that relied social control more than sincere concern for each and every seaman's personal relationship with Christ (Woodward, 1735).

The much later and more popular gospel tracts, by Hannah More, spread widely throughout England and in the navy. The stories conveyed religious wisdom through simple stories that encouraged the reader to engage in acts of faith easily relatable to their own life (Blake, 2008). In one of More's short stories, *The Apprentice Turned Master*, is a story about a shoemaker who suddenly died and left his business to his apprentice, James Stock. Stock's tale demonstrated to readers that the qualities of Christ-like attributes, when personified in one's life, blessed the believer to have success with one's customers, peers, and subordinates. Unlike the natural tendency to allow pride to swell with his newfound wealth and status, Stock recalled his poverty and allowed that to guide him along with his faith. His honesty won over customers and increased his prosperity. He honored the Sabbath Day and closed shop for one a day week without losing out on any business, all while earning the respect of his customers. The shoe-making business went so well that Stock hired apprentices, never swore in front of them, and lived as an example to them, even when error occurred that might otherwise cause tension and conflict. Stock earned the love and respect of those who worked for him (More, 1796). The principles in More's tracts intended to inspire the read to allow Christ in their lives and to likewise employ the same characteristics in their duties and relations with their superiors. While difficult to measure the impact the tracts had on the overall acceptance

of piety over vice for the working class, her real success influenced the upper classes to support moral reform. Paradoxically, while the wide circulation of her writings demonstrated the fervor of spiritual renewal in the form of pop culture, in the streets of London the pendulum swung back to the very topics piety hoped to stamp out, namely, interests in sex, crime, and stories of the royal family (Pedersen, 1986).

Evangelism Abroad

The combined efforts of pious captains, parliament, societies and authors who produced much-needed literature to sailors, exemplified an outgrowth of a much larger movement reforming England at home. Soon the world empire joined the fight to abolish slavery and to continue the spread of the gospel to its far-flung colonies. Penelope Carson, a scholar from King's College in London asked the question of whether or not religion in England meant to improve the sailor or the world? Trade and mercantilism were the focus in India while the Crown's diverse religious subjects on the Indian subcontinent meant being flexible and allowing the freedom of religion in order not to disturb trade (Carson, 2012). Dissenting voices demanded otherwise, and the Evangelical zeal that permeated into naval culture also influenced foreign policy views. In the words of early nineteenth century British ministers, the Navy remained the hand of God, the fall of Napoleon reflected Providence's hand, and the spread of eternal salvation to foreign parts relied on the missionaries to prepare the world for the coming of God (Clark, 2003).

Due to the various interests at stake in the English-held colonies of India, in 1810, the British Evangelical missionary societies desired access to proselyte to the indigenous population of India and were challenged by the East India Company. Evangelicals at home and missionaries abroad worked together and pressured Parliament to side with them and to revise the Company's policy on the side of Christian's efforts. Half a million signatures later from religious supporters, and just at the time when the Company's charter required renewal, Parliament considered whether it was its duty to promote the faith. The question of what type of Christianity the Empire was to protect and promote, whether it would be restricted to the official Church of England or for the allowance of all Protestant sects, the debate centered on toleration, liberty, and equality (Carson, 2012).

Meanwhile, in Africa, abolitionists blamed the supposed inferiority and barbarity of the African people on the slave trade itself. If freed, they argued, the possibilities for a Britain and African trade alliance centered on the industry of free African producers would benefit both groups and bring honor to Britons. The interest in Africa, particularly the push to abolish the slave trade peaked after the 1780s due in part to the Evangelical reforms. Further, the argument against slavery held that a good education and training in Christian morals would raise their African brothers to a state of mind of capability that threatened the slave trade (Turner, 1997).

The Royal Navy increasingly played a role in ending the slave trade. English support for the abolition movement, particularly inspired by the American writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe, book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, impacted navy policy. By this time, the navy acted as the world's policeman, patrolling the seas for ships carrying the enslaved. It appeared the Evangelical movement created, or at least influenced, one aspect of the policies of the anti-slavery global superpower. Lord Shaftesbury prepared a petition

known as the “affectionate address,” and garnered a half a million signatures with females playing an important role in the dissemination of the address. This cultural vigor translated into political strength and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* even inspired the mining and labor classes of British society. Support from all classes of people demonstrated a strain of religion that resonated with women, working people, and abolitionists (Huzzey, 2012).

Conclusion

In England, during the Enlightenment era, religious influence was stuck in the top-down structure of the Church of England, which created and disseminated its rules and expectations through publications, such as the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Articles of War*, and the *Regulations and Instructions*. The landed elite and nobilities’ expression of religion failed to reach the mercantile and professional classes, who largely relied on their trade and perhaps the ideas of philosophers, deism, or science. The zeal of Evangelism at the turn of the century spread into all classes of seamen and benefited those from the poorest ranks of society, and allowed merit, skill, and hard work to steadily weaken the old gentility that relied on heredity and nobility.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, while a once strong aristocratic composition of the episcopate enjoyed mostly university positions, the rise of the middle classes turned out a high number of those interested in ecclesiastical careers. This led to first time appointees taking positions in local parishes, chaplaincies, and or cathedral posts. The new birth movement, exemplified by the ‘Blue Lights,’ pious captains, the literacy societies, and parliament, reined in the un-churched classes and forever changed the navy’s officer and sailor relations. The history of the Royal Navy and the religious reforms that permeated English culture with a religious zeal, zeal similarly experienced in the United States, consisted of more people viewing the scriptures and rejecting their inherited traditions for a different religious experience. The role of religion, though threatened at times by the rise in secularism, found new life in the affairs of the Royal Navy after the Napoleonic Wars, and influenced policy that gave new purpose to the navy as the policeman of the oceans and with the great task to end the slave trade (Gibson, 1991).

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