Introduction

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This book will explore how biblical themes, ideas and metaphors shaped narratives of racial, national and imperial identity in the long nineteenth century. It will argue that, far from being a mere relic of a supposed earlier 'age of belief', the Bible supplied languages and frameworks for both interpreting and challenging imperial modernity. In one sense this is a simple claim that rests on the physical ubiquity of Bibles as objects. 'The Bible itself', as the late Christopher Bayly pointed out, 'was, of course, the single most published book in all the Protestant countries of Europe and North America.'[1] But the Bible and the biblical were also omnipresent in subtler, more pervasive ways. Even amid spreading secularism and the development of professionalised science, scriptural notions of lineage, descent and inheritance continued to inform not just popular understandings of race, nation and character but the conceptual scaffolding surrounding them.[2] Although new scientific ideas challenged the historicity of the Bible, high priests of the new discipline often chose to explain their complex and radical ideas through biblical analogy: the emerging 'science of race', for instance, recycled the vocabulary of Genesis.[3] Denizens of the seething industrial cities of America and Europe championed or criticised them as New Jerusalems and Modern Babylons, while modern nation states were contrasted with or likened to Egypt, Greece and of course Israel.[4] Imperial expansion, too, prompted people to draw scriptural parallels. In the self-consciously expanding 'Angloworld', European settler movements portrayed new territories across the seas as lands of Canaan, invoking as they did so the divine injunction to Adam and Eve: 'be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it' (Genesis 1:28).[5]

Yet such language did not just travel in one direction, from centre to periphery; nor did its significance remain the same in new cultural and social contexts. Settlers abroad continually faced the challenge of

singing the Lord's song in a strange land, and if many colonised and conquered peoples resisted the imposition of biblical narratives, they also appropriated biblical tropes to their own ends. Across America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, scriptural stories, scenes and phrases provided ideological ammunition for liberation and nationalist movements; and by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they also fuelled scholarly accounts that challenged the superiority and exceptionalism of Europe and the West, both by advancing alternative understandings of the Bible and by putting forward alternatives to it. If Adam, or Noah, or Jesus were black, what were the implications for white supremacy? And if Indian or Chinese holy books could be seen as alternative Scriptures – Scriptures, moreover, that might boast better-attested claims to antiquity and longer pedigrees than the Judaeo-Christian Bible – how did this in turn affect the authority of Christianity? The answers to these questions, and the tensions that they generated, continue to resonate today. This is reflected in our occasional use of a very long nineteenth century indeed: recognition that 'nineteenth-century' ideas had their roots in earlier thought; and that the theologies, ideas and images we examine did not die out in 1900.

This book, then, starts from the contention that it is impossible to understand empire, nationalism and race in our period without considering the Bible, both as an established source of images, metaphors and political ideas, and as a quarry in which scholars and ordinary readers alike could turn up new and potentially unsettling finds. This is an argument that needs to be made. Classic studies by Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Tom Nairn, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and John Breuilly continue to propagate the view that nationalism was an offshoot of a secular-minded Enlightenment, meaning that religion has often been dismissed as a 'residual category' in an anti-clerical modernity.[6] Critical theorists of empire and imperialism, from J. A. Hobson to Homi Bhabha, have dismissed the expansion of Christianity as largely a by-product of imperial strategy, seeing the Bible as a weapon deployed in the name of larger political, military or economic ends.[7] While historians of the European missionary project, on the other hand, have added much-needed nuance to such accounts, rightly pointing out the often strained relationship between 'the Bible and the Flag', they have also tended to downplay the extent to which theological justifications were invoked at almost every phase of imperial expansion.[8] And notwithstanding recent work by R. S. Sugirtharajah, Susannah Heschel, Colin Kidd and others, scholars of racial, national and imperial identity in the nineteenth century continue to overlook the prevalence and relevance of Scripture and scriptural language even in secular contexts.[9]

In one recent collection, the Bible did not even make it into the top ten books 'that shaped the British Empire'.[10] Our book insists that biblical narratives and ideas were ubiquitous, albeit in nuanced and problematised forms, and in engagement with other intellectual and cultural currents. Ideas about racial purity, chosenness and sacred genealogy were forged through a ramifying global conversation in which the foundational traditions of Christianity and Judaism developed in dialogue with different cultural traditions, new textual and archaeological discoveries, linguistic study and translation. Taking our lead from wide-ranging studies such as Colin Kidd's pathbreaking *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (2006), and from James Turner's *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (2014), this book emphasises the continuing importance of the Bible in a self-consciously 'modern' epoch.

In doing so, though, it underlines in exciting ways the provisional and shifting nature of its significance. Modern scholars have tended to follow either Benedict Anderson in conceiving of 'identity' in national terms as something coeval with the nation state, or Frantz Fanon and others in emphasising a hardening of racial categories with the rise of European overseas empires. We argue decisively that the Bible could at once bolster nationalist and imperial causes and at the same time confront them with uncomfortable counter-narratives. Slaves and their owners, abolitionists and anti-abolitionists alike all returned repeatedly to the proof-texts that justified their views.[11] Bibles shorn of problematic sections were specially produced for distribution in the British West Indies.[12] In Chapter 1 of this volume John Coffey shows how controverted passages from the Book of Joshua and slave congregations' understandings of them were probed in court in the famous trial of their pastor, the Congregationalist missionary John Smith. Biblical stories thus shaped and were in turn shaped by identities and power dynamics. Building on the burgeoning but often disparate scholarships of print culture, translation, biblical scholarship and the institutions that nurtured it, the postcolonial Bible and global religious movements, this book makes an ambitious contribution to a rapidly developing field.

The remainder of this introduction opens up in more detail the main themes of the book. The first section considers how and why missionary organisations and their supporters came to place such weight on the power of the Bible. It shows how a new stress on the agency of an unmediated vernacular text reshaped the metropolitan religious world, creating powerful voluntary agencies whose financial power and cultural reach was founded on the funds they could raise and the supporters they could mobilise through print publicity, lobbying and

mass subscriptions. Impelled by millenarian expectation, they deployed the latest technology and organisational innovation to translate and distribute as many Bibles as possible around the globe. The following section examines the myriad ways in which scriptural translation was implicated in processes of European imperial expansion. Briefly touching on what translation meant for the missionary societies, it explicates how translated texts were invoked in justifications of empire as well as the movements and ideologies that resisted it. The final section explores some key developments that shaped understandings of 'race' in the nineteenth century. While acknowledging a shift from paternalistic universalism in the early century to a more rigidly differentiating 'scientific racism' in the second half of the century, it also notes the persistence of the Bible in discussions of ethnic difference during this key period of European imperial expansion.

The power of the word

In the nineteenth century the Bible became for the first time a genuinely global phenomenon. Organised missionary effort was nothing new. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Catholics led the way, largely in Spanish and Portuguese South America but also in India and China.[13] Protestants had universal aspirations, but these were as yet pipe dreams. For all their success in forging Calvinist or Lutheran 'internationals' based on migration, correspondence and print, these were geared more towards connecting the faithful in the Protestant European heartlands and across the North Atlantic world than to preaching the gospel to the 'heathen'.[14] To be sure, there were attempts to evangelise Caribbean slaves and Native Americans, as well as efforts to proselytise in colonial possessions further afield.[15] But these were sporadic and often resource-starved, depending as they did on over-extended voluntary societies operating within parochially minded early modern state churches.[16] From the late eighteenth century, though, this began to change. In part, as recent revisionism has emphasised, this was an institutional story: of how those churches adapted, creakily at first but with growing success, to territorial expansion, emigration and colonial settlement.[17] But it was also a story of extra-ecclesiastical innovation, as a new generation of evangelical-led missionary societies radically altered the landscape. Prompted in large part by the exploratory voyages of Captain Cook, their ambitious plans bespoke the urgency of their projectors. The Baptist Missionary Society (1792) led the way, being followed by the London Missionary Society (1795), Church Missionary Society (1799), American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

(1810) and, linked to these, the Basel *Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft* (1815).[18] One result was a change in the centre of gravity. Whereas in the eighteenth century globetrotting Danish or German Lutherans trained at the Halle *Frankesche Stiftungen* were employed even by Anglican societies to fill manpower shortages, by the mid-nineteenth century the Protestant world was entrepreneurial, Anglo-American and centred on London as imperial metropolis. Linked to this was theological and organisational change, as predestinarian caution gave way to a more expansive embrace of the 'means' that would translate aspirations into actions.

Undoubtedly the most significant institution in these shifts was the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), founded in 1804.[19] Central to its success was its harnessing of older ideas about Protestant patriotism: the early modern paradigm of the Christian nation as a 'new Israel' remained a powerful one, as Gareth Atkins shows in this volume, and not just in Britain.[20] Yet the rise of the BFBS was also context-specific: amid plunging French fortunes, its skyrocketing receipts in the 1810s were hailed by evangelicals as a divine dividend for Britain's investment in slave-trade abolition and, of course, the Bible Society itself.[21] It thus had immense political and cultural clout. Its leaders hobnobbed with Tsar Alexander, corresponded with Orthodox patriarchs and entertained visiting Persian dignitaries. Infusing its operations was a heady rhetoric that blended together Enlightenment practicality with eschatological triumphalism and a romantic desire to unify the human race. For the objective of the BFBS was at once simple and breathtakingly ambitious. It called on Christians of all denominations to unite in order to provide every inhabitant of the world with a Bible, without note or comment, in his or her language. 'As the influence of the Bible reached every home and heart, it would convert the world's population to a pure, scriptural Christianity, uniting all peoples in a common faith and bringing an end to war, oppression and injustice.'[22] Who, asked its supporters, could baulk at such a prescription? At home, results rapidly surpassed even the most optimistic projections. In war-ravaged Europe, the success of the new endeavour was still more striking. A German Bible Society auxiliary was founded at Nuremburg in 1804; a Prussian Bible Society at Berlin in 1805; Scandinavian societies from 1807. The nationalism that fuelled struggles against French occupation took on a strongly patriotic-religious tone, being actively promoted by rulers such as Frederick William III of Prussia, Francis I of Austria and Tsar Alexander. The latter's foundation of a Russian Bible Society in 1813, influenced by the millenarianism of prominent Pietist mystics in his court, was closely linked to his self-image as leader of what

was subsequently to become known as the Holy Alliance.[23] Further afield, Bible Society branches mushroomed across the burgeoning British colonies: the Calcutta auxiliary was founded in 1811 and the Sydney one in 1817.

If the providentialism of the early nineteenth century was fuelled by geopolitical events, it was turbocharged by technology. Evangelicals in particular bought enthusiastically into industrial modernity in this period, believing that the divinely appointed means for bringing about the spread of the gospel across the globe had at last been laid bare.[24] Subscription guineas and steam-powered print seemed to be preparing the world for Christ's second coming. Hence pious publicists boasted of printing more Bibles in more languages at lower costs than ever before, driving a cycle in which technological advances and eschatological expectation reinforced one another.[25] At the Great Exhibition of 1851 the BFBS stand contained 170 versions of the Scriptures in 127 languages, handsomely bound in red morocco: a greater treasure, some pious visitors averred, than the great Koh-i-Noor diamond.[26] Nor did the flow of Bibles slacken off as the century went on: far from it. Even and perhaps especially in the era of higher biblical criticism, there remained a conviction among evangelicals across continental Europe, Britain and North America that the Bible was a stable, reliable set of texts that had not been – and could never be – challenged by textual or archaeological scholarship. Statistics continued to be invoked as evidence of success. Between its foundation in 1816 and 1880 the American Bible Society sold or distributed some 32 million Scriptures, while the price of a standard Bible dropped from 64 cents in 1819 to 2 cents in 1897.[27] The BFBS could boast still more impressive figures, having produced 186,680,101 copies by 1904 in 378 languages.[28]

Underpinning all this was herculean voluntary effort. To dip into local and national publicity literature is to find exhaustive reports of books distributed, subscriptions collected and funds raised, down to the last farthing: the minute ledger-book record of one immense imagined community bent on a common aim. Where the BFBS led, other organisations followed: individual voluntary endeavour along similar lines was the motor for an extraordinary boom in philanthropic receipts. Small wonder that this was hailed as a new Pentecost that would unite not only denominations but races, languages and sexes. One of the features of Bible and missionary endeavours was their involvement of every member as an activist. 'The Hon. Mrs _____', stands for the many women involved in the cause: in 1810–11 she despatched 'to convicts, prisoners of war, cartels, soldiers, and sailors, &c. &c' some '3053 copies of the English Scriptures, 458 of the Spanish, 810 of the Portuguese, 393 of the German, 3118 of the French, 305 of the Italian, 188 of the

Dutch, 92 of the Danish, 25 of the Welsh, and 59 of the Gaelic Scriptures … [I]n all, 8396 copies.'[29]

Such labour was useful because the Bible was believed to have agency. Sometimes this was conceived in pragmatic terms: texts might travel cheaply and safely into places where missionaries could not – into malarial regions, for instance, or among closeted women in patriarchal cultures – and proselytise in print where preaching for conversion was banned, such as in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, behind evangelical efforts to saturate the world with Scripture lay a deep-seated assumption that salvation came through reading and hearing an unmediated, unadorned text. Hence the division of imperial cities into districts which would then be traversed by distributors and collectors: another widely copied BFBS innovation that was as applicable in Bombay or Cape Town or Toronto as it was in darkest Birmingham. Hence also the establishment of Scripture depots and presses in Malta, Serampore and elsewhere, the spiritual equivalent of the coaling stations that dotted imperial possessions in the age of steam.[30] And hence the often forgotten fact that one of the main foci for Bible organisations was non-Protestant churches. One obvious if well-armoured target was the old enemy, Roman Catholicism. Increasingly, however, mass-produced Bibles were envisaged as a necessary transfusion of gospel life to ailing communions such as the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches or the multifarious ancient sects of the Middle East, whose moribund state and perceived intellectual backwardness were ascribed to their neglect of the Scriptures.[31]

Yet although the rhetoric was grandiloquent and the statistics impressive, the vernacular Bible project did not always have the desired effect. Dealings with existing churches are a case in point. Despite promising starts in Russia and among the Orthodox ('Greek') church of the Ottoman Empire, relations soured owing to condescension, miscommunication, ignorance regarding ecclesiastical structures and the naïve insistence of the BFBS and ABCFM on using vernacular rather than traditional translations.[32] Testimony to the reach of British and German societies but not to the converting power of their wares were the copies of the Scriptures found everywhere in European Jewish households. Even among Protestant Christians, the ardent conversionism of the Bible Society blurred into broader ideas of what the Bible was and the benefits that it could bring. It should come as little surprise to find cash-strapped colonial authorities taking advantage of the manpower and money that the 'religious public' could mobilise to co-sponsor missionary-led schools, colleges and translation projects.[33] While it would be a mistake to see this as a cynical exercise in every case, teaching people to read using the Bible was undoubtedly part of the inculcation of 'civilisation', loyalty

and 'British values' among local elites. White settler movements provide further evidence of a Bible whose importance was as much cultural as it was spiritual. The Bibles that travelled with them were umbilicals linking colonial New Worlds with homelands and histories, being often literally inscribed with family lineages and memories of denominational disagreement in the Old World. It was significant that the English version the BFBS chose to distribute was the King James because, unlike the Geneva or Luther or Douai Bibles favoured by some, it was now widely regarded as transcending denominational strife.[34] Such texts remained prominent even as the frameworks of interpretation and belief that surrounded them crumbled, being celebrated not just by conservative Christians but by liberals and agnostics too as centrepieces in national literary canons.[35]

The progenitors of the nineteenth-century Bible project did not, then, simply sow the Word and then reap the crop, as they hoped. But they did succeed in flooding much of the world with cheap copies of a text made ever more accessible by vernacular translation. That accessibility democratised the Bible but it also decentred its authority. Whether or not one welcomed that development – many did not – it was impossible to ignore the fact that an unmediated text imbued its readers with power. The black American loyalists of the 1780s and 1790s, most of them freed slaves, regarded their journey out of the thirteen colonies as a re-enactment of the Book of Exodus. When they arrived in Sierra Leone, the vaunted 'Province of Freedom', they came to realise that what had been billed as Canaan was in fact a return to Egypt. They flouted the political authority of the English governor ('Pharaoh') in favour of the Moses- and Joshua-like figures who had led them across the Atlantic, worshipping separately in black Methodist congregations, while colonial officials in turn condemned their emotional 'visions' and 'revelations' as unscriptural and presumptuous.[36] A similar story of the Bible as contested cultural and political resource is told by Jared McDonald in this volume. Paradoxically, the power of the Bible was also realised in movements for Hindu and Buddhist reform, many of which stressed the vernacularisation of holy writings and the importance of printed codifications of belief in ways that deliberately emulated those of Protestant missions.[37] Still more unsettling for ecclesiastical authorities was how the vernacular Bible provided raw material for individualistic expressions of belief, ranging from its apotropaic inscription on amulets to its defining role in the thinking of new sects, such as the Mormons or the South African Nazaretha Church.[38] For if the Bible became ubiquitous in our period, both as a text and as a symbol, this ensured that its meaning and significance would become ever more plural.

Translation and the imperial Bible

The great nineteenth-century 'crop of new translations' thus engendered intended and unintended meanings for the Bible.[39] This was because of the many ways in which missionary translation became entangled with the ideologies, practices and institutions associated with European imperial expansion. Since the 1990s, a number of scholars have explored the translation of the Bible and its usefulness to the spread of Christianity. This historiography often shares missionary convictions regarding the translatability of the Word and its universally positive and enabling effects on recipient languages and cultures. Such writers uphold the view that the Bible was translated successfully and seamlessly into the languages of the world, resulting in 'renewing',[40] 'reawakening'[41] and the 'unification'[42] of diverse cultures and languages.[43] Indeed, the rhetoric of 'reawakening' and 'revitalisation' has been invoked recurrently by scholars such as Lamin Sanneh, who have been insistent on the transformative power of the Bible.[44] Rather than missionary imposition, he sees native agency and autonomy as features of the translation movement, suggesting that Africans came to possess their translated Scriptures 'like the ancient Israelites the promised land'.[45] Bible translation, it is held, enabled local cultures around the world to read a universal text and be part of a global community of believers.

Newer research, however, suggests that the process of translation and reading of the Scriptures cannot be studied in isolation from imperial networks. The works of Hilary Carey, Hephzibah Israel, Isabel Hofmeyr, Heather Sharkey, Stephen Batalden, R. S. Sugirtharajah and others, some of them contributors to this book, have opened up important conversations about the reception of the Bible in imperial (and mostly non-western) contexts.[46] In Chapter 6 of this volume, Batalden shows how the Bible Society's presence destabilised the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Russian Empire, with the translation of the Bible into modern Russian, rather than the traditional Slavonic, becoming a sparkpoint. Here and elsewhere, Protestant insistence on the translatability and accessibility of the Bible collided with the idea that some languages might be more sacred than others; that the language of the everyday was insufficient or inappropriate for the expression of transcendent ideas; and that placing a holy book into the hands of everyone was foolish or even downright dangerous. Such linguistic politics were not unique to Russia. The choice of languages considered as fit vehicles of biblical translations was a contentious issue elsewhere, too. At the heart of the problem was what has been identified by modern translation theorists as the notion of 'equivalence': the presence (or absence) of a corresponding word or idea from the

original language in the translated languages.[47] In late nineteenth-century India, for instance, missionary and educationist James Ballantyne of the Banaras Sanskrit College endorsed the use of Sanskrit as the most appropriate medium of scriptural translation while cautioning that Sanskrit terminologies came 'loaded with layers upon layers of meaning by virtue of the use of specific terms within varying pre-existing, self-referential, Hindu philosophical systems'.[48] Ballantyne also promoted translation of 'western useful knowledge' in Sanskrit, an effort that gained the support of the English Lieutenant Governor James Thomason, despite being in contrast to the official pedagogical policy of promoting Anglicism.[49]

Missionary scholarship, through acts of representation and classification of the languages and religions of the world, contributed to the discursive formation of the colonised 'other'.[50] Yet, as Jane Samson has shown, Christian notions of the unity of humanity and the universality of the Gospel meant that the missionary encounter usually involved processes of both 'othering and brothering'.[51] Scholars of missionary science, linguistics and anthropology have argued that many evangelists were torn between their missionary duties and their desire to document and understand host communities.[52] But even if missionaries were not always conscious agents of empire, and sometimes opposed it, the presence of colonial powers often proved indispensable to the safety and smooth functioning of missionary organisations. Heather Sharkey illustrates how the growing presence of British and French colonial powers in the Middle East contributed towards loosening centuries-old Islamic-state restrictions on Christian conversion. The widespread evangelisation of Christians, Muslims and Jews only began in the late nineteenth century once the colonial powers were firmly entrenched in the region. Others have pointed towards the myriad ways in which missionary linguistics was caught up in how imperial authorities 'ranked' languages into hierarchies.[53] Hofmeyr in particular shows how both missionary and imperial efforts to own, classify and codify African languages initiated a complex language politics within which African Christians had to position themselves.[54]

The numerous unnamed indigenous collaborators who aided the missionaries in their language training and translation also indicate the profound power imbalance inherent in acts of translation. It remained customary for translated Bibles to merely mention the role of 'native assistants' in passing.[55] Aside from Pundit Ramram Basu, an employee of the East India Company's Fort William College who assisted William Carey in his Bible translations, very few native collaborators feature in accounts of the extensive Baptist translation activities in India, for instance.[56] Basu's proximity to Fort William College and the Baptist

missionaries, who were theoretically independent of government, reveal how missionary and imperial networks tended to mesh in practice. The journey of the Australian missionary John Fraser's Australian Awabakal Bible to the World Columbian Exposition of 1893, as shown by Hilary Carey, further illustrates that colonialism often fostered conditions not merely for the translation of Scriptures but also their circulation, preservation and eventual display.[57] Hence, more recently, scholars have been inclined to talk in terms of 'colonial Bibles' or 'imperial bibles' produced through processes of 'political translation'.[58]

It is, however, worth making clear that this volume is methodologically distinct from the strand of literature that labels itself as 'postcolonial biblical criticism'. Led by theologians and deeply steeped in textual studies of the Bible, postcolonial biblical scholarship has recently begun to pose questions of race, ethnicity, empire and liberation of received understandings of the ancient world of the Bible.[59] By contrast, we remain firmly committed to examining the Bible in the context of nineteenth-century empires.

The Bible was frequently invoked in crucial moments of imperial and national crisis. In response to the Indian Mutiny of 1857, British clerics, from London to Calcutta, drew on biblical metaphors to explain the rebellion as an act of divine punishment.[60] When Queen Victoria declared a nationwide 'Day of Humiliation' on 7 October 1857, Anglican and nonconformist sermons invoked Old Testament texts to explain the Mutiny as God's judgement on a sinful British nation. But as Brian Stanley has shown, many of these same preachers derided the East India Company's tolerance of 'Hindu idolatry' and argued that 'mutiny could have been averted if Britain had done more to evangelise India'.[61] Victorian homilies often became a site for articulating British national identity in terms of God's people waging war against God's adversaries. On a more provocative note, a group of theologians including Michael Prior and Mark Brett have claimed that parts of the Bible were invoked in direct justification for settler colonialism.[62] They argue that ideas surrounding the discourse in which a covenanted people receive entitlement to land provided effective justification for settler colonialism and the displacement of indigenous peoples in Latin America, South Africa and Palestine as well as Australia and Ireland.[63] It has been pointed out that specific verses from the Old Testament such as Genesis 1.28 ('subdue the earth') were frequently cited, from the seventeenth century onwards, both as a reason for imperial expansion and as a warrant for linking the cultivation of land to property rights.[64]

Meanwhile, scholars are beginning to appreciate more keenly than ever before how the Bible was appropriated by those on the other side of the colonial divide. For although evangelicals in particular and

Protestants more generally operated with the belief that language was an inert and transparent medium through which God's words could shine, there remained inevitable gaps between mission translations and their reception. Even when they sought to propagate a 'transnationally translatable monoculture', the messages Bibles bore were considerably re-scripted by the recipients.[65] In his study of language and Catholic conversion among the Tagalogs in the Spanish Philippines, Vicent Rafael was one of the earliest scholars to point out that the translated texts opened up spaces for Tagalog resistance to Spanish rule.[66] In the nineteenth century, too, biblical narratives of liberation and exodus were often crucial to anti-imperial resistance. Hence an account of the global Bible in the nineteenth century remains incomplete without understanding the 'intellectual brokerage' that enabled the receiving cultures to associate the Bible with their own aspirations. It is, therefore, imperative to study, as several of our contributors do, how missionaries collaborated and interacted with native people in different contexts. Existing literature offers tantalising hints as to how the Bible may have inspired important anti-colonial movements. Mark Brett mentions the example of Bildad Kaggia, a Gikuyu-speaking trade union leader whose translations of the Bible helped to form the intellectual roots of the Mau Mau rebellion against the British.[67] Mahatma Gandhi found the Sermon on the Mount to be a significant resource, much like the Hindu Gita, in thinking about modes of non-violent agitation. The sermon went 'straight to his heart' and taught him the importance of renunciation.[68] These details call for further exploration of the Bible's role in articulating political identities, movements and self-perceptions in non-Western societies in the long nineteenth century. Indeed, one of the central issues pursued in the volume is to examine the Bible as harbinger of national communities around texts and languages. Whereas Heather Sharkey notes the fault lines created in Arabic nationalism around the publication of an Arabic colloquial Bible, Batalden illustrates the role of the Jewish Bible in strengthening Jewish communities in Russia. Nineteenth-century racial theories of biblical origin continue to cast their long shadow in postcolonial societies. Hilary Carey reminds us that ethnographic and linguistic theories that construed Fijians as descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel are still relevant in shaping Fijian identity today. These notions resurfaced as recently as the 1987 coup, when claims for biblical ancestry were used to support arguments by Fijian leaders for political and racial ascendancy over Indian and other ethnic emigrants.

Despite significant overlap, then, we should not conflate histories of the Bible's translation and reception entirely with histories of empire.

A number of recent works have been careful in foregrounding contextual factors that shaped particular forms and meanings that the Bible acquired in distinct contexts. In Chapter 5, Heather Sharkey shows how on-the-ground competition between British and Foreign and American Bible societies, coupled with variable levels of language expertise, funding constraints, time and contingent events shaped the circumstances around the publication of Arabic colloquial Bibles. In her work on the Roehl Bible and Swahili language in Tanzania, Emma Hunter too has urged us to go beyond binary understandings of nation and empire.[69] While acknowledging a close relationship between missionary linguistics and the German colonial and postcolonial experience, she emphasises the need to view the missionary Karl Roehl and his collaborators and detractors, both African and European, as constituting a node within wider overlapping networks of Bible translation and the standardisation of Swahili as a written language. Our volume, likewise, pays close attention to the wider transnational and trans-imperial networks that facilitated the global circulation and reading of the Bible. In uncovering the nuances of 'imperial Bible', the chapters together explore the newer layers of meanings acquired by the Bible in course of its extensive transnational travels.

The Bible and race

We cannot understand how the Bible functioned as an imperial (or anti-imperial) text in this period without paying serious attention to the question of 'race'. In the postcolonial era, accounts of nineteenth-century racial thought have tended to trace the emergence of these discourses from the power structures of empire and the slave trade. Postcolonial historians and literary critics have also demonstrated how racist thinkers appropriated the language of science and received sanction from pioneering scholars working in the fields of linguistics, philology, archaeology and history. Recently however, Colin Kidd has suggested that race was also 'a theological construct' and, more provocatively, that 'scripture has been for much of the early modern and modern eras the primary cultural influence on the forging of races'.[70] As Kidd notes, the Bible became a quarry of racial thinking, despite the apparent indifference of biblical authors to questions of ethnicity and skin colour. How could a text that has so little to say about race give rise to so many explicitly racial interpretations? Yet while it would be inaccurate and anachronistic to project a politics of racial difference on to the Bible, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are preoccupied with questions of genealogy, exile, migration, conquest, empire and

'nation'. As 'a source book of evidence for the dispersion of races and the beginnings of racial divisions and patterns', the Bible's silence on the physiological manifestations of ethnicity was an opportunity rather than an obstacle for exegetical ideologues.[71] As Kidd suggests, it is 'this very incongruity between the Bible's significance for an understanding of ethnicity and its silence on matters of race that has tempted theologians and other readers of scripture … to import racial meanings and categories into the Bible'.[72]

Ethnological accounts of the past could also destabilise biblical chronology. At least one popular strand of scientific racism, polygenesis, was openly heretical in its suggestion that different races did not share a common human ancestor. The most extreme polygenesists denied the Christian principle of the unity of mankind and even regarded some non-white races as separate – usually inferior – species. Like Kidd, David Livingstone sees the origins of the nineteenth-century 'science' of race in the early modern period. While early modern scholars wrestled with newly discovered Egyptian and Chinese chronologies, the 'encounter with the New World threw into yet sharper relief the growing tensions between world geography and the Mosaic record'.[73] In *Adam's Ancestors*, Livingstone explores the long history of the 'Pre-Adamite' thesis: the notion that some form of humanity existed before the arrival of the biblical Adam. As Livingstone demonstrates, in the nineteenth century, the proponents of the pre-Adamite thesis included both monogenesists and polygenesists, Darwinists and religious conservatives.[74] Some even saw Pre-Adamitism as a way to juggle Darwin and Genesis. The Methodist geologist Alexander Winchell admitted that the first men were 'probably black' and originated in Africa. But he was also convinced that the divinely favoured Adam could only have made his appearance once 'under the law of progressive development, a grade had been reached nearly on a level with that of modern civilised man'.[75] Winchell's evolutionary and theological contortions were underpinned by his conviction that 'the black races, which he set out to establish as physically, psychically and socially inferior to whites, were not descended from the biblical Adam but predated him'.[76]

Many of the foremost proponents of scientific racism, particularly in its polygenesist form, attempted to extricate themselves entirely from residual trappings of religion. The Scottish surgeon Robert Knox began his notorious series of lectures on *The Races of Men* with the bald assertion that 'we know nothing correctly' of the origin of man. In an intellectual atmosphere in which 'the present organic world … can be shown to have an antiquity agreeing ill with human chronologies', Knox would instead excavate the 'zoological history' of man.[77] Convinced that the Christian notion of universal brotherhood was a utopian

delusion, Knox cited the history of sectarian conflict as evidence that racial differences could not be glossed over by religion. Modern Christianity itself exhibited 'a variety of forms essentially distinct: with each race its character is altered; Celtic, Saxon, Sarmatian, express in so many words, the Greek, Roman, Lutheran forms of worship'.[78]

The methodological flexibility of racist thinkers who read the Bible through the lens of ethnology was frequently mirrored by their opponents. When the abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass was invited to deliver a commencement address to the students of Western Reserve College, Ohio, in 1854, he took the opportunity to refute those who deployed polygenesis in 'denial of the negro's manhood'.[79] In a lecture on 'The Claims of the Negro, Ethnologically Considered', Douglass suggested that polygenesis represented not just an attack on black Americans but a heretical assault on the Gospel's promise of universal salvation and 'the whole account of creation given in early scripture'.[80] Douglass vigorously condemned the 'repeated attempts on the part of Southern pretenders to science, to cast doubt over the Scriptural account of the origin of mankind'. But his own lecture moved fluently from anthropological and geographical evidence to speculations on the complexion of Adam and the Ancient Egyptians, before concluding with a secular appeal to his audience's 'instinctive consciousness of the common brotherhood of man'.[81]

Douglass's speech testifies to the political stakes of racially inflected exegesis in nineteenth-century America. A racialised interpretation of the curses bestowed on Cain and Ham was a standard feature of pro-slavery discourse. In his comprehensive account of the 'perennial American tendency to apply stories from the postdiluvian chapters of Genesis to the problem of "race" relations', Stephen Haynes notes that by the 1830s 'Noah's curse had become a stock weapon in the arsenal of slavery's apologists.'[82] Indeed, as Haynes demonstrates in Chapter 9, these exegetical traditions continued to resonate into the twentieth century. The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith was another enthusiastic supporter of racial interpretations of Genesis. He and his successor Brigham Young put restrictions in place that would prohibit blacks from the lay priesthood until 1978. Smith's own 'translation' of the Bible, begun shortly after the completion of the Book of Mormon in the 1830s, inscribed racist exegesis back onto the text itself and offered 'a providential history in which the God of Genesis took an active interest in dark skin colour as a mark of divinely instituted curses'.[83]

Yet even in the dehumanising context of slavery, the Bible could also provide a site for resistance. If Genesis could be cited in defence of slavery and white supremacy, Exodus simultaneously provided a platform for liberation. As Eddie Glaude has shown, Exodus offered

African Americans a 'model for resistance' and 'a metaphorical framework for understanding the middle passage, enslavement, and quests for emancipation'. 'As time and distance folded in on each other', enslaved Bible readers 'became the children of Israel and the chosen people of God' and 'the sacred history of God's deliverance of his chosen people was transformed into an account of black liberation'.[84]

As many recent commentators have noted, emergent disciplines like ethnography and anthropology played an important role in mapping 'temporal' difference onto geographical distance. Non-European peoples in distant or 'isolated' regions offered potential glimpses of the primitive or savage past.[85] A parallel project subjected the early civilisations recorded in Scripture and ancient history to a distancing anthropological gaze. Suddenly, the rituals and rites described in the Hebrew Bible became grist to the mill of a synthesising anthropological imagination, as thinkers as diverse as J. G. Frazer and Sigmund Freud interrogated the Bible as the product of 'primitive culture'.[86] In his account of 'the impact of racialist analysis on biblical scholarship', Kidd notes a decisive anthropological turn in nineteenth-century biblical criticism: 'ethnology was added to the subjects on which a thorough biblical scholar needed to be expert' and the Holy Land 'became a scene of racialist anthropology'.[87] In works such as *The Races of the Old Testament* (1891), for example, the Anglican cleric and Assyriologist Archibald Sayce promoted the study of modern populations alongside archaeological and literary remains as part of a new discipline of 'biblical ethnology'.[88] At the same time, anthropologically minded missionaries were also keen to find traces of biblical peoples and traditions in the less familiar cultures of Africa, Australasia and the Pacific. In the present volume, for example, Hilary Carey demonstrates how John Fraser drew on a blend of missionary linguistics, ethnography and Darwinian science to argue that Australian aborigines were descended from the biblical Ham.[89]

Even more profound in its impact on the understanding of 'race' was the discovery of Aryan or Indo-European linguistics and consequent readings of the Bible as a product of a 'Semitic race'. As Maurice Olender has argued, although modern philologists and critics 'borrowed the techniques of positivist scholarship … they continued to be influenced by the biblical presuppositions that defined the ultimate meaning of their work'.[90] In the present volume, Dorothy Figueira suggests that the emergence of the Indo-European thesis offered the possibility of 'a new Eden' for scientific scholars of language – with the Sanskrit Vedas adopted as an 'Aryan Bible'. Tuska Benes likewise argues that 'comparative philology epitomised the nineteenth-century quest for origins … Philologists ordered languages and ethnic groups based on

the model of branching genealogy from a single point of origin.'[91] The persistence of terms like 'Semitic' and 'Japhetic' (a common synonym for Indo-European in the period) indicates the extent to which the Semitic/Aryan opposition relied on a conceptual scaffolding drawn from the Bible.[92]

Olender and Benes also note the important political context. The 'national awakening' across Europe in mid-century intensified 'local rivalries between supposed primordial tongues'.[93] While the search for Aryan origins presented an opportunity to break away from Eurocentric concepts of civilisation, such scholarship always mingled notes of traditional patriotic chauvinism with newer forms of primitivism. As Olender notes, within 'the Aryan universe, the energy and abstract intellectual gifts of the Greeks prefigured the progress of the Indo-European world, while the Vedic pole represented the power of the primitive'.[94] Influential figures like the French philologist and biblical critic Ernest Renan elaborated the Aryan and Semite distinction into a grand set of fixed racial oppositions. Edward Said has famously argued that this manoeuvre was central to the construction of European modernity in opposition to an essentialised Oriental 'Other'.[95] Historians of anti-semitism, such as Léon Poliakov and George Mosse, have even claimed that the genocidal racism of the Nazis had its intellectual roots in the philological distinction between the Semitic and Indo-European tongues.[96]

Some recent scholars, however, have claimed that the historiography of nineteenth-century racism has laid too much emphasis on 'biologically determined racism'. In his study of the English 'national character', for example, Peter Mandler argues that race was relatively insignificant to the definition of Victorian Englishness as a cultural category and performed identity. The Anglo-Saxon 'race', concludes Mandler, was 'one you could join, as well as be born into'.[97] It is important to acknowledge the slippery nature of a category like 'race' in this period. As Robert Priest has shown, while Ernest Renan was committed to the idea that 'the linguistic divergences uncovered by modern philology must simultaneously reflect and shape fundamental ethnic differences between human groups', he was also 'keen to resist any biological explanation of these differences'.[98] Susannah Heschel is, however, more wary. In her study of the Nazi construction of an 'Aryan Jesus', she argues that narrow definitions of racism (as only concerned with immutable biological imperatives) obscure the 'linguistic and cultural genesis' of many forms of modern racism.[99] In a similar vein, Tzvetan Todorov warns that 'linguistic races' can be just as violently exclusionary as their biological equivalents, and that figures like Renan were guilty

of 'a cultural determinism at least as rigid' as contemporary scientific racists.[100]

In the nineteenth century, Western European peoples also became increasingly interested in their own ethnicity. Robert Young suggests that the English, for example, were 'far more preoccupied with a complex elaboration of European racial differences and alliances than with what they perceived to be the relatively straightforward task of distinguishing between European and non-European races'.[101] In *The Races of Men*, Robert Knox claimed 'that in human history race is everything', but if race trumped all, then what were imperial nations like Britain, France and Germany to do with the comparatively marginal role afforded to their ancestors in the annals of the classical and biblical past?[102] Why did God lavish so much attention on the Middle East and the Mediterranean while the vigorous Celts, Saxons, Gauls and Teutons – the future inheritors of the Earth – were left to make their way in darkness? In Chapter 4, Brian Murray discusses the eccentric 'British Israel' movement which gained ground in the late nineteenth century. 'British Israelites' explained their nation's imperial triumphs in comfortingly literal terms: the Anglo-Saxons *were* the Chosen People, and the success of the Empire fulfilled the predictions of the Hebrew prophets. A subtler strand of thinking approached this problem through analogies that were nonetheless coloured by the language of race. In late nineteenth-century Britain, the most influential imperial thinkers, including Charles Dilke, J. R. Seeley and Rudyard Kipling, rejected the narrow category of the English Nation in favour of a more expansive 'Greater Britain' peopled by the 'English-speaking peoples' and the 'Anglo-Saxon race'.[103] Imperialist thinkers could point to the facts of recent history to claim that the English had undoubtedly inherited the mantle of both the itinerant Chosen Peoples of Exodus (witness the 'Settler Revolution') and the legacies of the great empires of antiquity.[104] As Gareth Atkins explains in this volume, while these metaphorical arguments did not depend on tracing a bloodline from Surrey to Sinai, they nonetheless supported the idea that Britannia's rule of the waves endorsed its status as a 'chosen' race. The idea of providential chosen-ness (and its attendant responsibilities) was eloquently evoked by Rudyard Kipling in his 'Recessional', composed for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897.

> God of our fathers, known of old,
>   Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
> Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
>   Dominion over palm and pine –

Of course, such analogues also suggested the inevitability of imperial decline and fall. In Kipling's poem, triumphalism soon gives way to

gloomy Jeremiad: Britain's 'navies melt away' and 'all our pomp of yesterday / Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!' The European nations who elevated themselves to the status of new Chosen Peoples exemplified complacent imperial arrogance. But many of the literary and artistic responses to this notion conclude with melancholic images of the imperial metropolis in ruins, echoing biblical condemnation of Israel's ungodly and decadent tormentors.[105] In this sense, even the hubristic notion of imperial providence anticipates the resistance and revolution of fortunes to follow.

The structure of the book

What follows is organised around two interrelated themes. Part I, 'Peoples and lands', explores biblical ideas of exile, exodus, sacred lands and belonging, all of which informed identities in the modern world. Focusing on travel, geography and racial genealogies, the chapters in this section engage with recent work on encounters and expansion, considering how the Bible infused missionary and nationalist thinking in a variety of contexts. They unravel the specific meanings behind key biblical locations – Israel, Babylon and Tarshish – in the process of examining why Scottish missionaries based in Australia drew the biblical lineages of Aborigines, what missionary preaching signified for colonial authorities facing rebellion in the sugar colony of Demerara, how British maritime empire was slotted into biblical prophecy and how Irish claims to connections with the Old Testament played into the arguments of Anglo-Saxonist racial theorists.

The second group of chapters ('The Bible in transit and translation') engages with questions about language, translation and textual transmission of the Word. It is especially interested in the production of 'cultural Bibles', investigating the local politics of translation and reception against a background of mass global circulation of texts, ideas and people in the nineteenth century. Central to this section is the idea of textual and scholarly encounter, as the Bible was contrasted with Hindu and Islamic religio-linguistic traditions by missionaries but also placed alongside them by comparative scholars; or as mutual ignorance and misunderstanding coloured encounters between Western and Orthodox Christian traditions in Russia. Individual chapters consider the production history of modern Arabic and Russian Bibles, enlightened scholarship and the development of 'segregationist folk theology' to legitimise racial differentiation in America. This last chapter serves also as a reminder that 'nineteenth-century' ideas continued to have purchase well into the twentieth century; and indeed that in some quarters they still do today.

Notes

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97 Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 59–60; Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 4–5.

98 Robert D. Priest, 'Ernest Renan's Race Problem', *Historical Journal*, 58 (2015), 312. Halvor Moxnes also claims that while Renan's portrait of Jesus was deeply coloured by his own prejudices, the critic frequently draws back from speculating on race in biological terms. Halvor Moxnes, *Jesus and the Rise of Nationalism: A New Quest for the Nineteenth Century Historical Jesus* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 138.

99 Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*, p. 29. In an earlier work on the Jewish critic Abraham Geiger, Heschel argues that Geiger's characterisation of 'Jesus as a Pharisee and early Christianity as a paganization and ultimate betrayal of Jesus' Jewish message' constitutes 'one of the earliest examples of postcolonialist writing'. Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), pp. 2–3.

100 Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 147.

101 Robert J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 13.

102 Knox, *Races of Men*, p. 2.

103 Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

104 Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

105 The most famous example in the British context is T. B. Macaulay's image of 'some traveller from New Zealand' standing 'on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's'. T. B. Macaulay, 'Von Ranke', *Edinburgh Review*, 72 (October 1840), 258. See also Julia Hell, 'Imperial Ruin Gazing, or Why did Scipio Weep?', in Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds, *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 169–92 and Rachel Bryant Davies, *Troy, Carthage and the Victorians: The Drama of Classical Ruins in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 271–338.