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The Other British Colonies

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During the eighteenth century, Britain, even more than other European seaborne empires, built a vast and increasingly integrated overseas empire, largely located in the Americas. The Seven Years' War established the British Empire as global and highly successful, meaning that the pre-Seven Years' War conception of a commercial empire whose benefit to Britain was trade and a place of settlement for Britain's excess population was altered to consider Britain's enhanced geopolitical position as a major world power. In 1763, the future looked rosy, and Britain embarked upon policies of establishing an imperial system which would place colonial possessions more firmly than before under metropolitan control. That effort at systematic rationalization of colonial governance proved, as we know, disastrous, resulting in the American Revolution and a permanent division from 1783 in the British American empire, with thirteen of Britain's twenty-seven colonies in the Americas declaring independence. A slight majority of Britain's colonies extant in 1776 remained within the British Empire, including some of Britain's wealthiest and most promising colonies. In the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, Britain added to these possessions through major acquisitions of territory in the Caribbean and by establishing new colonies in regions of the world as different as Africa and Australasia. The end of the American Revolution signaled a new period in the history of the British Empire, but it was far from a period in which the empire's geographic center moved decisively to the East from the West. The British colonies in the Atlantic world that either remained or were acquired during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions were vital parts of a changing geopolitical and economic order in which Britain solidified its global dominance in the period economic historians have termed the Great Divergence (when the West overtook the East in economic power). The Atlantic colonies that Britain retained during the Age of Revolutions helped to undergird these

global transformations, by providing wealth and power to Britain in a period when the Industrial Revolution was making it unprecedently rich.[1]

The title of this chapter, however, betrays a lingering notion that somehow the British colonies in the Americas which remained in the empire following the Treaty of Paris in 1783 were diminished parts of a less dominant British empire and that they were side players to the main events. These events were the drama of an American Revolution and the creation of a powerful new nation, the United States of America, and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, which were mainly focused on conflicts over control of Europe with secondary battles over dominance by European empires in India. This chapter challenges this notion that somehow the "other" British colonies were of secondary importance in the Atlantic revolutions. It will argue that the British West Indies and Canada were central to the Atlantic revolutions from the period of the Seven Years' War until the end of slavery in the British West Indies in 1834. It will explore the dynamism of these colonies in the mid-eighteenth century and argue that economically most colonies survived the American Revolution largely intact and with the promise of a considerable future ahead of them. Expansion in the British Atlantic after 1783 showed how valuable West Indian colonies continued to be to British geopolitical and economic policies, and how Canada was rapidly becoming a set of colonies that were developing into vibrant settler societies. Yet for the former set of colonies, the future was compromised by the fact that their social structure and economic profitability was based almost entirely on the continuation of both the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. These institutions, however, were increasingly problematic in the age of the Atlantic revolutions as ideological conflicts over human rights and democratic principles led many Britons to question the morality of having an empire founded largely upon slavery. The sudden explosion of abolitionist sympathy from 1788 made the "other" British colonies the object of fierce debate, in which the themes and ideologies of the Atlantic revolutions were played out in dramatic fashion. The "other" British colonies were not incidental to the Atlantic revolutions. They were fundamental to understanding the character and the achievement of social, political, and economic change in the Atlantic world from 1763 to 1834.

[1] For how a new kind of British empire emerged during the Age of Revolution which continued into the nineteenth century, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

From the Seven Years' War to the American Revolution

As the Age of Atlantic Revolutions dawned during the reshaping of European empires that occurred during the Seven Years' War, few people involved with the expansion of imperial Britain would have considered their possessions in the Caribbean, Ireland, Canada, and India as "other" and as somewhat inferior and unimportant compared with the Thirteen Colonies that later became the United States of America in 1788. Indeed, it was more the opposite case – one reason why the British governments in the 1760s and 1770s made such catastrophic policy mistakes in relation to British North America is that they were paying more attention to other parts of the empire rather than to the Thirteen Colonies, which had been allowed to have a considerable amount of local autonomy and largely left alone. Before the Seven Years' War, the empire was not especially centralized, if compared, say, with the Spanish empire. As Patrick Griffin argues, "the empire resembled a rabbit warren of differing arrangements passed under different monarchs all for different reasons to address different problems."[2]

The two most important parts of empire c. 1760 were Ireland – which was both a kingdom and a colony and which is not part of this chapter – and the West Indies. The British Caribbean was central to the dominant British visions of empire in the protean period between the end of the Glorious Revolution and the start of the Seven Years' War. British statesmen in the age of Robert Walpole thought that maximizing labor productivity, as with slavery, and producing goods, such as sugar, at the lowest possible cost for the benefit of a growing consumer class was central to any imperial policy. Thus, the British West Indies occupied more attention and received more favorable treatment than did the northern colonies, while advancing the Atlantic slave trade was a key commercial aim. The plantation system was at the center of imperial thought and practice, and until the 1760s virtually no one doubted its utility to the British nation. British statesmen listened to absentee planters from the Caribbean, such as the fabulously wealthy William Beckford, William Pitt's close friend and a radical lord mayor of London as well as the greatest slaveowner in the empire, in ways that they

[2] Patrick Griffin, *The Townshend Moment: The Making of Empire and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 25.

never did to the relatively parvenu representatives of colonies in British North America.[3]

If we take a less American-centric view of the American Revolution than is normal, then we can see the age of the Atlantic revolutions in the British empire as starting outside the Thirteen Colonies, in the years of imperial triumph between 1759 and 1762, rather than the customary date of 1763. In these years, Britain acquired a global empire that seemed to betoken lasting geopolitical and economic dominance for the small European island. The major events of this period happened outside the Thirteen Colonies, and the great imperial heroes, like General James Wolfe and Robert Clive of India, made their reputation in this new empire. Britain acquired Quebec, meaning that it now had massive holdings north and west of its existing American possessions. It also achieved a dominance it had never had in Bengal with the acquisition of the *Diwani*, or rights to tribute in that rich province. Indeed, James Vaughn argues that the second British empire began on 12 August 1765 when the extractive riches of India fell into Britain's grip.[4] And perhaps the most remarkable triumph of the Seven Years' War came in the Caribbean in 1762 when imperial and American troops besieged and took the seemingly impregnable citadel of Havana in Cuba, creating unprecedented tremors throughout the Spanish empire, as the Spanish realized that their American possessions were suddenly vulnerable.[5] It was in the "other colonies" where the empire that was to come in the nineteenth century evolved – one divided between settler societies, like Australia and Canada and to an extent Ireland and South Africa, and extractive societies, such as the new colonies of the British West Indies in the southern Caribbean taken in the first years of the nineteenth century as well as the colonies in Asia and Africa.[6]

Another, more ominous event, at least for white settlers, occurred in May 1760 in Jamaica, which signaled a different start to the Age of Revolution than what we customarily associate with settler protests about taxation without representation beginning around 1765. Enslaved men, probably

[3] Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister off the London Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

[4] James Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain's Imperial State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1.

[5] Elena Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Williamsburg, VA and Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

[6] C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

under the leadership of Wager or Apongo, a military chieftain from Dahomey who had become enslaved in western Jamaica, cultivated in secret an island-wide conspiracy to overthrow settler government and institute an African-style system of rule, similar, probably, to that practiced by Maroon communities in the Jamaican interior. The conspiracy exploded into rebellion by accident when Tacky, more than likely a lieutenant of Wager in northern Jamaica, started a rebellion earlier than Wager intended. One result of this premature start to rebellion was that we have always named the revolt after Tacky, rather than Apongo. The rebellion soon became a massive island-wide war, which in its seriousness as a challenge to white rule was unprecedented in the British empire before the Sepoy rebellion in India in 1857. The enslaved rebels were overcome through the determined actions of a skilled governor, Sir Henry Moore; the fortuitous presence of many regular sailors and soldiers in Jamaica serving during the Seven Years' War; and the help given to the white military by Maroons, who fulfilled in 1760 their part of a bargain they had entered into in 1739 to support white rule in return for the imperial government's recognition of their autonomy.[7]

Tackey's Revolt showed in a startling manner that enslaved people were dangerous opponents who would fight for their freedom if given the chance. The revolt was thus an important foreshadowing of the much greater Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, even to the extent of being a rebellion happening in wartime when white society was under stress from the threat of foreign invasion. The lessons that Jamaicans, and planters throughout the West Indies, learned from Tacky's Revolt, however, were very different from the lessons of the Haitian Revolution, mainly because the revolt was put down, albeit with difficulty, rather than being successful. What slaveowners learned from Tacky was that a slave revolt could be overcome if Whites were ever vigilant about policing enslaved behavior; if Whites were united around notions of white supremacy, in which all Blacks, both free and enslaved, were put in inferior positions to Whites; and, most importantly, that any sign of rebellion from enslaved people was dealt with through maximum force and gruesome acts of retribution. If enslaved people were rigorously controlled and kept in a state of perpetual fear, then the highly profitable system of the British West Indies – then entering a period of peak prosperity until 1776 through which planters became easily the richest group

[7] Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

within the British empire – could be preserved from any further shock like the slave war of 1760.[8]

If race was one dividing line within the "other colonies" of British America in the years between the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution, then religion was another. The new acquisitions taken from France in the settlement of 1763 were religiously diverse with large populations of Catholics in Quebec and Grenada complicating an empire in the Atlantic which was previously almost completely Protestant, except in Ireland. The terms on which the new Atlantic colonies were to be established were strongly assimilationist in tone. Catholics were promised freedom of worship, but it was also made clear that the influence of the papacy was not welcome. Where there were Protestant settlers involved, as in Grenada, opposition to any encouragement of Catholics was fierce. They argued that the very survival of the colony depended on "the support of the Protestant religion, and the driving from the councils and offices of the nation, all enemies of that persuasion." Protestant planters withheld taxes, resulting in a virtual paralysis of government, a paralysis that won widespread sympathy in Britain and North America.[9] In Quebec, assimilation proceeded more slowly, mainly because British settlement in the colony was limited before the nineteenth century. But some accommodation had to be made with the huge French Catholic majority. By 1774, the British government was convinced that this mainly French colony could not stay within the empire if the mass of its population felt their religion and the legal basis of their society were under threat. The result was the Quebec Act of 1774, in which the right of French colonists to practice their Catholic religion was recognized while the colony was denied its own assembly for the moment. The Act aroused great opposition in both the Thirteen Colonies and in Britain, suggesting that popery and despotism were taking root in the empire.[10] But the larger significance of the Quebec Act was to show that Britain could create viable imperial policies that satisfied settler populations even while it was alienating its largest settler population, in the Thirteen Colonies.

[8] Trevor Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

[9] Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 124–6; Hannah Weiss Muller, *Subjects and Sovereign: Bonds of Belonging in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[10] Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill and Queens University Press, 1990).

As Andrew O'Shaughnessy has argued in a penetrating essay on British imperial policy and the American Revolution, British policy in the empire was not, as Americans sometime imagined, *sui generis* in relation to North America. Rather, Britain embarked upon a series of parallel initiatives throughout the British empire in the 1760s which were intended to solidify support for the empire. The only place where their policies did not work was in the Thirteen Colonies. In the "other colonies," empire was strengthened among settler populations in this period and loyalty to Britain was enhanced, even in Ireland, where Catholic unrest was moderated by Protestant enthusiasm for greater imperial participation, including service in the armed forces. O'Shaughnessy notes that the common themes in imperial policy included concerted attempts "to reform the empire, increase revenues, regulate trade, improve defenses, and strengthen metropolitan control," all reflected in a rising number of imperial officials. He notes that Britain was hardly alone in wanting to reform the empire – France and Spain did so at the same time.[11] Between the 1720s and the 1760s, the growing power of the British state and its fiscal–military system created an ever more tightly integrated empire in terms of migration; the imperial economy, social, religious and political cultures; and Anglicization. Thus, as John Murrin argues, the American Revolution was a countercyclical event – a crisis of imperial *integration* that the British state could not handle.[12] Or, more precisely, they could not handle it in respect to the Thirteen Colonies. Everywhere else in the empire, integration proceeded quite well. Thus, it is misleading to see the period before the American Revolution as a crisis. For everywhere except the Thirteen Colonies, imperial policies in the 1760s proved to be an opportunity for imperial growth and economic prosperity. Considering the "other colonies" in this period encourages us to realize that, as O'Shaughnessy comments, "those who argue today that the best policy would have been to continue past practices and maintain the status quo ignore the extent to which the problems posed by the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, required solutions that could only be effectively coordinated by a central government," including securing Caribbean islands from enslaved revolt, managing religion in Canada, overseeing the treatment of Indigenes in

[11] Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, "British Imperial Policy and the American Revolution," in Elaine Chalus and Perry Gauci, eds., *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 191–2.

[12] John M. Murrin, *Rethinking America: From Empire to Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 162–3.

North America and India, and ensuring that the costs of empire did not outmatch the resources of the home country.[13]

The War of American Independence

In general, British settlers outside the Thirteen Colonies, including Protestants in Ireland, were relatively happy with the direction of imperial politics in the years immediately before American independence. American revolutionaries had some support in Canada, Ireland, and in the British West Indies, but not enough to lead anyone in these colonies to seriously contemplate joining in rebellion. Advocates of rebellion in the Thirteen Colonies never tried to include West Indians in their plans – West Indians were not invited, for example, to participate in the Continental Congress and thus did not join in the radicalizing process that happened when politicians from different colonies came together for the first time. Americans often had a very low opinion of West Indians whom they thought had undue influence in Britain and whose preening power they resented. James Otis, for example, the John the Baptist of the Boston revolutionary movement, fulminated in 1764 that the Caribbean colonies were a "compound mongrel mixture of *English*, *Indian* and *Negro*," as opposed to New Englanders who were "free-born *British white* subjects, whose loyalty has never yet been suspected." Otis believed, in arguments that foreshadowed those of the early abolitionist, Granville Sharp, a few years later, that West Indian planters, accustomed to being slaveowners, would, "for a little present gain," make other Americans "worse than enslaved people if possible," worse than the Africans whose treatment Otis deplored.[14]

In 1774, the Jamaica Assembly sent a message of support to the Continental Congress. It lamented, using the customary rhetoric of political helplessness that it had used in petitions to the crown since the 1720s, that their colony was so "weak and feeble" that they could not "now intend, or ever could have intended, resistance to Great Britain." In other words, they offered Americans only moral rather than actual support. The Continental Congress replied with withering scorn. They sent a message to Jamaica that gave them "the warmest gratitude for your pathetic mediation on our behalf with the Crown." American Patriots never made any attempt to either

[13] O'Shaughnessy, "British Imperial Policy," 205.
[14] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, 204–5, 207.

recruit West Indians to their cause or left it open, as they did with Canada, for West Indians to join with them in rebellion, or to become additional states in the United States after independence. By the early 1770s, a gap had opened between the Thirteen Colonies and the West Indies that never closed. White settlers in the British Caribbean were instinctively Loyalist, believing that they could defend their most critical imperial interests through the representations of well-connected West Indians living in Britain. Moreover, Britain tended to reward the West Indies because they were convinced that the islands were central to imperial geopolitics and because their economic contributions to Britain were too great to ignore.

The one event that might have led West Indians to throw in their lot with American revolutionaries was the decision by Lord Mansfield in the *Somerset* case of 1772 to stop a Virginia planter resident in Britain from sending his enslaved man to Jamaica. *Somerset* was a galvanizing event that convinced southern and West Indian slaveowners that Britain was prepared to compromise colonial liberties. Alan Taylor has noted that it created a storm of controversy in Virginia, intensifying opposition to British taxation policies in the colony at a moment when, unlike much of the British Caribbean, Virginia was in the economic doldrums.[15] *Somerset* was an event that convinced southerners and West Indian planters that Britain was prepared to compromise colonial liberties, one of the most important of such liberties being the right to absolute control over property, included property in humans. But the outrage over *Somerset* was not enough to unite Virginians, South Carolinians, Georgians, and West Indians together, and it did not transform the conflict with Britain in the 1770s from an arcane battle over taxation and representation to one over the more substantial issues of the preservation of slavery in plantation societies. One reason why *Somerset* did not unite the plantation colonies as one against perceived British tyranny was that Lord Mansfield had been very careful to circumscribe his decision so that its implications were never realized until the 1780s with the birth of a popular abolitionist movement in Britain. Thus, *Somerset* was an abstraction rather than a practical issue in British American plantation societies. It was not followed by any legislation that curtailed planters' rights. All it did was limit the power of slaveowners in Britain to sell their enslaved property. And it was decided at a period of peak

[15] Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772–1832* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 3–4.

prosperity in the Caribbean, and not long before Britain had decided, in *Campbell* v. *Hall*, to settle the constitutional issue that most vexed West Indian settlers, which was the extent to which the king's prerogative prevailed over planter pretensions to local autonomy

Americans were more interested in provoking rebellion in Canada. They thought that Anglo-Canadians were as disposed to rebellion as they were, having heard that their northern compatriots were as offended by British authoritarianism and as susceptible to republicanism as themselves. There was some incipient support for American rebels. After the battles of Concord and Lexington in 1775, Anglo-Canadian Patriots in Montreal poured black paint over a bust of George III, topped it with a bishop's miter, and hung a sign on it calling George III "the Pope of Canada or the English Fool." It encouraged the Continental Army to invade Canada under the command of Benedict Arnold and Richard Montgomery. It was a disastrous failure, with the Americans soon beaten back to their colonies in disgrace – in ways like the more concerted campaign to conquer Canada in the war of 1812 . Quebec's defenders, unlike 1759, had won against outside attackers, securing the province in the British empire, with General Guy Carleton the hero. Carleton then launched a counter-offensive in New York in 1776, inflicting a major defeat on Patriots at Lake Champlain before retreating to Canada in winter. This retreat when he had Americans at his mercy was severely criticized in Britain, temporarily derailing Carleton's previously stellar career, although he returned to favor in 1783 as commander-in-chief of British forces in North America. Conceivably, if Carleton had continued his attacks on American troops, parts of New York – a center of Loyalism – might have become incorporated into Canada.

Loyalism

Revolutionary enthusiasm throughout the British empire as war started was more muted than is commonly believed – we need to include as Loyalists most Whites in the British West Indies and Canada, as well as Irish Protestants and probably a large majority of Britons. And while enslaved people and Native Americans tended to see the American Revolution as a battle between two equally disliked groups, more of them helped the British than assisted American revolutionaries . Even in the Thirteen Colonies, the number of Loyalists was large, especially if we add to the relatively few people who actively espoused Loyalist ideas the majority of the population who wanted to stay neutral in the conflict and who tended to continue to

have sympathies for the king and empire well after 1776.[16] There were many people who were outraged by the American revolt and believed it should be suppressed and the political doctrines of the American Patriots should be revealed to be pernicious. Support for the revolution fell dramatically throughout the "other colonies" after France and Spain entered the war on the American side after 1778. As Stephen Conway argues, American Patriots came to be seen in Britain after the American Revolution became a global war less as fellow-countrymen, fighting erroneously against their mother country, than as foreigners, determined to undermine British liberty and authority.[17]

P. J. Marshall describes very well the Loyalist position, which was held not just in the Thirteen Colonies, where active Loyalists were relatively numerous, especially in highly divided and politically polarized colonies such as New York and North Carolina, but in the "other colonies" where the default position was Loyalism. He notes that "loyalists rejected American independence since they did not believe that Americans were a separate people," but were "communities within the empire with rights and privileges of their own derived from the British constitution." They accepted the right of the British parliament to tax the colonies and believed that what Bostonians had done in the 1773 Tea Party had gone beyond the boundaries of legitimate dissent into outright and disloyal rebellion. Many Loyalists, especially those of higher social status, feared that the wild ideas of liberty thrown about by revolutionaries would have a levelling tendency and by promoting lawless anarchy were harming an empire that they saw as the entity assuring Britons abroad of the benefits of the peerless British constitution.[18]

Simon Taylor of Jamaica (1740–1813) is an example of a man of loyalist principles. A fabulously wealthy planter, who died a millionaire, he was a fervent patriot and loyal subject who could see nothing positive in the coming of the American Revolution. He saw it as "truly alarming," and highly threatening to his own and Jamaican prosperity. Initially, he had some sympathy for the American cause. Conflict between Britain and America, he thought, might have some beneficial results, lancing a boil between two recalcitrant sides, so that "good might come out of evil." Events in Boston in

[16] Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).
[17] Stephen Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans Circa 1739–1783," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 59 (2002), 65–100.
[18] P. J. Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic: The United States and the British Empire after American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68–9.

1774 turned him firmly against American Patriots. He wrote to a friend in that year that he supported the Coercive Acts because "after what the Americans have done Britain cannot give up the point [as] it would only be making them more arrogant than they are at present and I look upon them as dogs that will bark but dare not stand when opposed [and are] loud in mouth but slow to action."

Taylor remained loyal to Britain throughout the war, as abolition transformed the Jamaican political landscape after 1788 and as the Haitian Revolution exploded in the 1790s. All three events, especially the latter two, disturbed him greatly. Jamaica's plight in the early 1780s, when hurricanes struck the island; when French invasion seemed imminent as Jamaica was dragged into the maelstrom of the American conflict; and when plantation profits plummeted and enslaved people faced starvation as a result of supplies from North America drying up; made him grumble that he might leave Jamaica "to go to some other Government where we might be able to make a shift to live, and not be held in Egyptian bondage." Abolitionism he thought to be lunacy, led by "that Madman Wilberforce," whose power to influence Britons toward an animosity to the slave interest which Taylor thought a bulwark of the national interest amazed him. The arrival of the French Revolution and what he saw as the ultimate disaster of slave revolt in Saint-Domingue made him fear for the future. His self-image as a fervent and conservative British patriot contributing to British wealth and influence through his activities as a wealthy planter and colonial politician made him not only opposed to the excesses, as he saw them, of the French Revolution in the 1790s, but to the dreadful republicanism of the newly established United States. What he saw in the United States was the "cant of philosophy, liberty and equality," ideas he considered "the most pernicious vermin that were ever created." American ideology was intended "to overcome all established government and in order to establish in their room murder, anarchy and confusion."[19]

For men such as Taylor, and for many other conservatives in the "other colonies," bewildered at the changes initiated during the Age of Revolution, all of which seemed to undermine hierarchy and support insubordination and alarming doctrines such as republicanism and even black equality, there seemed no safe space to go to. Abolitionist Britain had betrayed him and fellow patriotic slaveowners. He could not go to the United States as that

[19] Christer Petley, *White Fury: A Jamaican Slaveholder and the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

would mean that he would have "to learn the new philosophy of rights of Men." He was protected from any real harm by his massive wealth, but in the latter half of his life he saw personal fulfilment matched by dismay at the public events unfolding around him. His money could not protect him, he believed, from the ravages of a revolutionary world and from the betrayal of his reflexive loyalty to monarch, Church, the Tory Party, and to a hierarchical order in which slavery sustained an agreeable culture of deference.[20]

Loyalists in the Thirteen Colonies who shared Taylor's opinions were unable to fulminate in private, but were forced to move as a result of American independence. The Loyalist diaspora was large – about 80,000 people, including not just Loyalists but also thousands of their slaves – was dispersed around the British empire, including Britain itself. About 8,000 Whites and 5,000 Blacks went to Britain, where they found themselves ignored and shunned as embarrassing reminders of Britain's loss in America. Most Loyalists stayed within the empire, taking up incentives of land and supplies. Over half went to Canada, while about 6,000 from the American South went to Jamaica and the Bahamas, taking their enslaved property with them. As Maya Jasanoff contends, "loyalists landed in every corner of the British Empire" so that by the time of the French Revolution, "the map of the loyalist diaspora looked much like the map of the empire as a whole."[21]

One special group of Loyalists was African Americans. They were people who saw the American Revolutionary War as a way to gain their freedom – they were far from being the conservative defenders of the old order, such as Simon Taylor. Thousands fled plantations to join the British Army, which in response was forced to adopt a liberationist role being the de facto guarantor of escaped Blacks' freedom. David George was one of the 20,000 Blacks who soldiered for the British, escaping slavery on 30 January 1779 to serve in the British Army, where he was also an active and much-beloved preacher to black communities and soldiers, He and his family were among 1,500 free Blacks who were evacuated from Charleston in November 1782, headed for Nova Scotia. He established a Baptist congregation in Shelburne, living in a "smart hut" with a quarter acre of land attached. Shelburne, however, was no paradise. George discovered "the White people were against me." The pressure of living as a free Black in British North America proved to be

[20] Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, 194–8.
[21] Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 10.

intolerable by the 1790s, so he moved with hundreds of other free Blacks from Nova Scotia and 300 or so destitute Blacks in Britain to Sierra Leone. He died in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1810, after years of preaching to a loyal flock.[22]

Where Loyalists were most important was in British North America, in the five provinces that came to make up Canada in the nineteenth century. The loss of the Thirteen Colonies made areas on the northern fringe of empire important places for the Loyalist diaspora of the 1780s. Canada received a sudden influx of new inhabitants from the United States – the great majority of the 80,000 Loyalists who left the United States, including more ordinary people than the Whites who went to Britain and fewer slaveowners than went to the West Indies and the Bahamas. Many left because they rightfully feared discrimination in the new republic due to their enthusiasm for the unwritten British constitution, British concepts of liberty, and the benefits of being White people in a British empire that was favorable to settler values and interests. But in most respects, the Loyalists heading to Canada were not dissimilar to the Americans who remained in the United States. They harbored republican ideas and were as keen on political autonomy as were colonial Americans. It appears that few Loyalists carried much ideological baggage with them into exile. Many were attracted by what seemed to be Canadian largesse. Taxes (ironically, given the causes of the American Revolution) were lower than in the United States. Merchants could trade with places like the British West Indies from which Americans were nominally and sometimes practically excluded in the 1780s. Most Loyalists remained instinctively Americans and their societies were more American than British in the late eighteenth century, despite fervent efforts by ruling elites to make Canada anglicized and thus different from both French Canada and the United States. The ruling elite did have the state-supported Church of England in the non-French parts of the colony as a bulwark of society, but Canada, in its ethnic diversity, religious pluralism, and determination for self-government, stayed part of a wider British Atlantic world in which the United States was central, even if not politically part of the British empire. It was probably not until the war of 1812 that American identity was replaced firmly by an attachment to Britain in Canada. As Alan Taylor notes, that Anglo-American war – a final manifestation of the revolutionary struggles of the 1770s but with a different result than in the

[22] David's career can be traced in Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*.

1780s – was "a civil war between kindred peoples, recently and incompletely separated by the American Revolution."[23]

The Caribbean and the French Revolution

The American Revolutionary War was a significant event in the changing relationship between West Indian planters and the metropole, as Eric Williams stressed long ago.[24] But the French Revolution and its transatlantic consequences were more significant than what followed the American Revolution. Until the 1790s, planters and merchants in the British West Indies were reasonably in control of the political process in their islands – they ran the colonial state so that it complemented the imperial state in ways that made their interests, and especially their concerns over security, of paramount importance. At the beginning of the 1790s, the future looked rosy for White West Indians. They had overcome the economic dip of the early 1780s, when French invasion threatened, supplies from America had dried up, and the Atlantic slave trade was in trouble. By the late 1780s, plantation productivity was at or above the level it had been in the early 1770s. Planters prospered. They were confident that they could overcome the sudden challenge of abolitionism, which, as they saw it, had exploded out of nowhere in the late 1780s and which they considered was a phenomenon that would be soon put down.

The start of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 as a by-product of the French revolutions, which quickly transformed debates over liberty and equality into a war over slavery, and the advent of world war in the Caribbean, as French, Spanish and British troops competed for dominance in a sector of the world now seen as very valuable, changed irrevocably West Indian planters' feelings that they were in control of events. What comes out extremely clearly in writings of the period from prominent planters like Simon Taylor is that they felt bewildered and confused by the rapid changes to the old order that came about as revolution swamped the Caribbean in the 1790s. The Haitian Revolution, it is true, did lead to a short-term financial bonanza as the Saint-Domingue economy imploded and the British West Indies made bumper profits. Simon Taylor made the extraordinary sum of £56,000 in the

[23] Alan Taylor, "The Wart of 1812 and the Struggle for a Continent," in Andrew Shankman, ed., *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic: Land, Labor, and the Conflict for a Continent* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 259.

[24] Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

out of the ordinary year of 1792. But revolution and war forced West Indian planters to embrace the principles of loyal and patriotic counter-revolution and necessitated compromising on their previously strong demands for colonial autonomy on the North American model. White West Indians were forced, as Christer Petley argues, "to accept their deepening military dependence on Britain while trying to defend a slave system that appeared to be increasingly prone to revolutionary upheaval." It meant that "by 1807, these planters were left with little choice other than to accept a resounding political defeat, when Parliament abolished the slave trade."[25]

Warning signs were developing for West Indian planters before the challenge of the French Revolution. The image of the planter deteriorated after the American Revolution. Planters were increasingly excoriated in Britain's popular press as cruel despots, addicted to "venery" with black women and demonstrating in their "orientalist" behavior similar to that of nabobs in the East India Company disturbing signs that they had deviated appreciably from proper British decorum.[26] But their power over running things in the colonies was still strong before the mid-1790s. White West Indians had a long tradition of colonial rebelliousness and their threats to resist metropolitan demands still had some force in the early 1790s. If Britain had ended the slave trade in this period, it may have encountered violent and potentially successful opposition from West Indian planters.

This possibility of successful violent resistance to imperial decrees ended just a few years later. On the face of it, the British West Indies prospered and expanded during the transatlantic French revolutionary period. Not only did it get an economic windfall by replacing Saint-Domingue as the principal provider of sugar to Europe, the seemingly inexorable march of abolitionism as seen in 1788 was halted due to parliamentary fears that allowing any reform movements to develop would expose Britain to the revolutionary impulses that were tearing apart France. Moreover, Britain fought the French in the Caribbean, and while it failed to take over Saint-Domingue/Haiti from enslaved rebels, it successfully conquered other islands and part of Guiana, establishing a new beachhead for plantation agriculture in the southern Caribbean. In addition, British merchants, including slave traders, penetrated Spanish American markets more effectively than ever before.

[25] Christer Petley, "Slaveholders and Revolution: The Jamaican Planter Class, British Imperial Politics, and the Ending of the Slave Trade, 1775–1807," *Slavery & Abolition* 39 (2018), 53–79: 55.

[26] Trevor Burnard, "Powerless Masters: The Curious Decline of Jamaican Sugar Planters in the Foundational Period of British Abolition," *Slavery & Abolition* 32 (2011), 185–98.

But the short-term gains planters and merchants achieved in the early 1790s were more than outweighed by the long-term consequences of the radicalization of the French Revolution as manifested in Saint-Domingue and the outbreak of war between Britain and France. These wars were enormously expensive, costing £20 million between 1793 and 1798, and led to the deaths of over 40,000 British servicemen, mostly from tropical disease. As Petley argues, "this augmented the abolitionist image of the West Indies as a place of cruelty with revivified visions of a torrid war zone, characterized by pestilence and death."[27] And, while abolitionism was seemingly halted in the 1790s, it really was a reform movement gathering storm, as was to be proven in the following decade. It attracted attention not just from the public but from statesmen such as the prime minister, William Pitt, who feared that slave unrest was inevitable if the West Indies continued to import large numbers of "unacculturated" Africans to work on plantations. West Indian planters to an extent countered these fears by lobbying successfully Parliament and local legislatures to adopt policies of amelioration, in which the conditions of slavery would be made supposedly less harsh while the institution was continued and strengthened.

Planters' hoped that through amelioration emancipation could be endlessly delayed. But the adoption of amelioration as a slave-owning strategy showed planter weakness insofar as they had admitted for the first time that they needed to be responsive to metropolitan criticisms of slavery and could not treat their enslaved property as they pleased. Evidence presented to Parliament about the horrors of the slave trade and about the brutality of slavery in the Caribbean was widely distributed within abolitionist networks and highlighted to a hostile British public just how vicious and deadly was the system of West Indian plantation agriculture. It seemed a system that was bound to result in disaster and slave rebellion, just as was the case in Saint-Domingue. As Claudius Fergus argues, "by the turn of the century, the Haitian Revolution and its sister revolts in the eastern Caribbean had opened the eyes of architects of imperialism to the real cost of racial slavery and brought to a head the debate on prosperity versus security."[28] William Wilberforce, the leading representative of the abolitionist movement in the British Parliament, made the link between abolition and security clear. He

[27] Petley, "Slaveholders and Revolution," 68.
[28] Claudius Fergus, "'Dread of Insurrection': Abolitionism, Security, and Labor in Britain's West Indian Colonies, 1760–1823," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 66 (2009), 757–80: 764.

took the arguments that were made by pro-slavery writers who advocated for amelioration rather than emancipation and turned them on their head. Wilberforce argued that an imperial policy that continued to import Africans through the slave trade imperiled the safety of the islands as it ensured that slave revolts would inevitably occur, meaning that "rivers of blood would flow." If people wanted to keep their property in the West Indies safe, then parliament "should abolish the importation of slaves, as the first step towards the salvation of these islands."

Britain expanded its possessions in the British West Indies during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, taking territory from France, Spain, and the Netherlands. This imperial expansion means that we cannot say that the end of the American Revolution saw a diminishment of Britain's interests in the Atlantic world. But it was a different Atlantic world from that which had existed in the first half of the eighteenth century, where power had to be negotiated carefully between a relatively weak imperial state and powerful local elites. By the end of the eighteenth century, the imperial state, greatly expanded through a decade of constant global warfare, was much stronger than before and the power of colonial elites, especially in the Caribbean, was much weaker. Britain demanded – and got – more say in how the new British colonies created through imperial expansion were to be run than they had done in the past and more than in Canada, where settlers demanded that they retained a certain degree of autonomy and where they were not constrained in such demands by living among enslaved people. No newly conquered territory, for example, was granted a legislative assembly and the economic ambitions of white settlers were frustrated by legislation that limited their access to land and labor.

The greater control Britain exercised over its Caribbean colonies made it easier to implement the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. Local politicians failed to produce the sustained and effective opposition to metropolitan interference in their affairs. Petley concludes that it was the French and Haitian revolutions "that provided the political context in which abolitionists could outmaneuver these slaveholders."[29] Abolitionists had successfully convinced British leaders that it was abolition, and not the slaveholders, that could better uphold British liberty and keep these colonies secure.

Abolitionists were helped in their campaigns for the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and the abolition of slavery (1833) by the actions of enslaved

[29] Petley, "Slaveholders and Revolution," 71.

people. From the 1790s onwards, enslaved people showed that they were unhappy with their condition and that they wanted freedom immediately through a series of revolts which, though not successful, destabilized the plantation system and illustrated to a metropolitan public how far slave-owners were from being the humane masters they pretended to be. The year 1795 was crucial, with a war against the Maroons in Jamaica, insurgency by so-called "Black Caribs" in St. Vincent and, most dangerously for British imperialists, an enormous servile revolt in Grenada that involved free Blacks and enslaved people. This rebellion was, like the war in Haiti, very complex, with enslaved people being both rebels and serving as soldiers in the British Army. The rebellion lasted for eighteenth months and cost the lives of 7,000 enslaved people as well as causing perhaps £5 million in damages to the previously thriving Grenadian plantation system. Indeed, the 1795–1796 slave rebellion in Grenada led by Julian Fedon, a free man of colour, was far more destructive for slaveholders than the better-known slave revolts in Barbados in 1816 and in Demerara in 1823. It was far more costly in terms of lives lost than the much more famous Jamaican Baptist War of 1831 – a revolt customarily thought to have accelerated the movement toward immediate emancipation. It is also the revolt that was closest in time to the Haitian Revolution and the one most heavily influenced in ideology and by the extent of violence in that revolution and the French Revolution.

A Settler Society in the North

The result of the American Revolution was ambivalent for Canada. For many Britons, the imperial crisis had produced a growing sense that the Hanoverian regime had allowed its subjects too much political liberty. The lesson they learned from their defeat was that firmer control over colonial places was necessary. This authoritarianism was pronounced in Upper Canada, Bengal, and Ireland, where an imperial revolution of government was promoted in which popular sovereignty was disdained, where there was a renewed emphasis on subordination and civil obedience, and a marked reluctance to tamper with any aspect of Britain's constitution.[30]

The most important consequence of the American Revolution in Canada was a rapid increase in population. Both the French and British populations grew appreciably from the late eighteenth century, the former by natural

[30] Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 182.

increase and the latter by both natural increase and extensive migration from Britain. In 1775, there were 125,000 Europeans in Canada, 90,000 of whom were French Catholics in Quebec. By 1806, there were 460,000 Europeans in Canada, of whom 250,000 were mostly French Catholics in Lower Canada, while 70,000 were Protestant Britons and Americans in Upper Canada, with a further 65,000 mostly Protestants (including thousands of free Blacks in Nova Scotia) in the three maritime provinces on the Atlantic Ocean. Population increase exploded after 1815. In the next thirty years, 730,000 British migrants arrived in Canada, of whom two-thirds came after 1830. It was a population heavily weighted toward the Celtic areas of Britain. Over half of migrants after 1830 came from Ireland, especially from Ulster, and a disproportionate number of migrants came from Scotland. The diverse nature of the British diaspora into Canada made it clear that nineteenth-century British North America was not simply a primitive and colder reproduction of England. The population was British in its attachments, but tended to reject the deferential social practices of Britain and the authoritarian preferences of imperial rulers in favor of informality and democracy.

In 1837, a rebellion occurred in Lower Canada. The province was suffering from a severe economic downturn and French *habitants* became agitated. In November of that year, a few thousand French *patriotes* rose in revolt in the countryside near Montreal. The revolt was quickly crushed by British troops, with twelve rebels executed and fifty-eight transported to Australia. The result of the rebellion, however, was a rethinking of the relationship between Upper and Lower Canada (established in the 1791 Constitution Act and united together in 1841) in which Britain and the Canadas were pushed toward a new imperial structure that resembled a partnership of separate states.[31] What the development of Canada into a largely self-governing federation by 1867 shows is that, as P. J. Marshall suggests, "the pre-revolutionary British Atlantic world was able to survive the upheavals of war and American independence." The worlds of the United States and that of Canada were connected together in numerous social and economic ways and "where political developments had put obstacles in the way of continuing communication, they were being circumvented."[32]

Canada and the United States formed an Atlantic version of an Anglophone world, even if there were many people, including French Americans and Native

[31] Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776–1838* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
[32] Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic*, 313.

Americans (who are treated elsewhere in these volumes), who resisted incorporation into Canada and assimilation into the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture. Canada was an important node in what James Belich has depicted as a "settler revolution" in which people in the "Anglo-world" shared common attitudes to things and thoughts. Some of these thoughts included a belief in white supremacy, the superiority of British values over all other values, a commitment to egalitarian politics and social customs, and an exclusionary approach to the place of nonwhite races within the Canadian polity. As Belich argues, although the "Anglophones were never again to share a single state," they remained "a transcontinental, transnational entity" in which transfers between the United States and Canada were constant and significant.[33] As Marshall concludes, "common transatlantic values survived the sundering of imperial links," including, importantly, a devotion to the common law and to Protestant principles.[34]

Conclusion: The Centrality of Empire

The trajectories of the West Indian and the Canadian colonies of Britain veered in separate directions in the nineteenth century. The white settlers of the West Indies had a diminished role within empire compared with their dominant role in the mid-eighteenth century, and while free people of color became participants in the political process and the formerly enslaved benefited from freedom, meaning that the social and political structures in the Caribbean became more complex, the societies in which these groups competed were diminished ones that were increasingly seen as imperial "problems" rather than as beneficial to Britain's wealth and power. In Canada, by contrast, white settler populations prospered, making British North America a stunning imperial success story, as important to the British empire as India and more important than any other settler society established after the end of the American Revolution.

What unites the histories of the "other colonies" during the Age of Revolutions is that they stayed within and helped indisputably to shape the growth and development of the British empire in the nineteenth century. The loss of the Thirteen Colonies did not stop, though it did divert into new directions, Britain's surge to unprecedented imperial expansion after 1783. The Age of Revolution remained the age of empire with imperialism at least as important as revolutionary ideology in shaping the zeitgeist and the global geopolitical reality of the period.

[33] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 49, 56. [34] Marshall, *Remaking the Atlantic*, 314.