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"A Colony to Themselves": Scottish Highland Settler Colonialism in British North America, 1770–1804

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Abstract

This article explores the links between anti-Catholicism in the United Kingdom and the acceleration of settler colonialism in British North America, and it does so by considering two group migrations from Catholic districts in the North West Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Occurring over 30 years apart, the Glenaladale settlement (1772) in Prince Edward Island and the Glengarry settlement (1803) in Upper Canada offer instructive insight into how anti-Catholicism activated Highland Catholic colonial agency. Not only did significant numbers of Highland Catholics choose to quit Scotland forever, but their settlement in places like Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada accelerated the process of settler colonialism and the establishment of the Catholic Church. The colonies at Glengarry and Glenaladale were peopled by settlers who were doubly motivated to settle in the empire. They stood to prosper economically—certainly—and they also stood to gain the freedom to practice their faith free of obvious interference. To the Indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands they settled, the consequences were not softened by this pretext for settler colonization, and too often the history of anti-Catholic discrimination in the four nations elide the fact that Catholics were enthusiastic colonizers elsewhere, and that the two processes were often related.

The Reformation of 1560 set in motion a program of socio-religious exclusion that almost succeeded in wiping Catholicism off the faith map of Scotland. While most people transferred their allegiance to an emerging Presbyterian faith, there were some who clung to the "old faith," existing in pockets in the Southwest and Northeast as well as in the Northwest Highlands and Islands. In the latter district, Catholics were in fact the majority in much of Knoydart, Arisaig, Morar, and Moidart on the mainland and on the islands of South Uist, Barra, Benbecula, Canna, and Eigg—areas that would emerge, in the early eighteenth century, as Catholic Jacobite strongholds.[1] While the regal union of 1603 introduced a new era of consolidated power, it was the parliamentary union of 1707 that gave Scotland and its people formal and official access to a growing empire that propelled social, economic, and cultural change at home while also advancing an aggressive process of colonization abroad.[2] No one and no region were unaffected, and Highland Catholics went on to play major roles in Britain's imperial program as settler colonists despite enduring systemic

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[1] Fiona A. MacDonald, *Missions to the Gaels: Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Ulster and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland 1560–1760* (Edinburgh, 2006).

[2] This is outlined in Article IV of the Act Ratifying and Approving the Treaty of Union of the Two Kingdoms of Scotland and England (1707), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1707/7.

and widespread discrimination over the course of the eighteenth century. Religious perse-cution was not unusual in early modern Europe, nor was the conflation of disloyalty with religious preference. Catholics at all levels of Highland society were perceived as disloyal subjects and so struggled in an environment that was deeply hostile to their existence. The colonies, particularly those in what became British North America following the American Revolution, offered a critical respite to this minority as well as access to large plots of land made available by the systematic dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The col-onies were attractive to these settlers precisely because they offered something unavailable to them in the domestic context from which they emerged: land they could exploit for their own gain and with no compromise to the retention of their faith.[3]

This article argues that there were strong links between anti-Catholicism in the United Kingdom and the acceleration of settler colonialism in British North America, and presents two group migrations from Catholic districts in the Northwest Highlands and Islands as examples.[4] Occurring over 30 years apart, the 1772 Glenaladale settlement in Prince Edward Island and the 1804 Glengarry migration to Upper Canada shed light on how anti-Catholicism activated Highland Catholic colonial agency. The Glenaladale settlement, named after John MacDonald, eighth of Glenaladale, a disillusioned tacksman and chief architect of the emigration scheme, was undertaken in 1772 with 214 people from the Arisaig area on the mainland and South Uist, one of the Outer Hebrides, after a landlord on the latter, Colin MacDonald of Boisdale, attempted to force his Catholic tenants to convert to Presbyterianism. Tacksmen were figures of high social standing who held large tracts of land on behalf of a chief and then leased portions out to various tenants. The group MacDonald brought together represented the first organized migration cluster of Scottish Catholics to what would soon become British North America. The 1804 Glengarry migrants, conversely, joined a pre-existing settlement in Upper Canada that had been established by earlier waves of migrants from the Glengarry estate in Knoydart. These later migrants were mostly Highland Catholic soldiers from the disbanded Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and were led by their chaplain, Alexander Macdonell. The reason they went to Upper Canada and not the newly acquired Caribbean territory of Trinidad was because their initial invitation to settle in the latter had come to nothing. Perceptions of Highland Catholics as possessing pro-French sympathies probably played a role in this, given the intense anxiety that had been generated by the Franco-American Alliance of 1778 and the dominance of French Catholics on Trinidad by the turn of the nineteenth cen-tury.[5] The deep opposition of Britain's leading abolitionists, such as William Wilberforce, to Trinidad's settlement for fear that it would lead to an expansion of enslavement was another influential factor. Added to this was Wilberforce's well-known anti-Catholic prejudice—a

position that shaped his perceptions of the island and how much influence the Catholic Church should have there for decades.[6]

The eighteenth-century British state that all Highlanders navigated was inherently complex, deeply hostile, and filled with countless stereotypes. Loathed in government circles, their ways of life and living were characterized as inimical to its progress.[7] A case in point was General George Wade's report on the Highlands and its people in 1724 wherein he highlighted their "extensive adherence to one another as Highlanders in opposition to the People who Inhabit the Low Countries whom they hold in the utmost contempt" as deeply problematic.[8] Yet, it was the Catholics among them who, belonging as they did to a proscribed faith, bore the brunt of the discrimination. Penal legislation, which outlawed activities such as mass attendance and the sacraments, the inheritance of property, the guardianship of children, and Catholic education, was coupled with aggressive Protestant conversion efforts undertaken by organizations such as the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.[9] It was made clear that while they might be subjects, they were not equals.

As the pioneering work of James Hunter, J. M. Bumsted, Marianne McLean, and Eric Richards has shown, an established pattern of outward migration emerged across the Highlands and Islands as the impact of the legislative attacks on various aspects of their culture became clear. The sweeping changes that were introduced by landlords in the second half of the eighteenth century dramatically altered the structure of the Highlands and Islands economy, and ushered in a protracted era of clearance. The observations that Glengarry's "estate levying disrupted the traditional tenurial hierarchies" rang true across the region.[10] We argue that despondency was coupled with displacement—people were priced out by high rents and replaced by livestock or dispersed to new locations to service emerging yet precarious industries such as kelp.[11] For the region's Catholics, these changes sat alongside legal exclusions and deep-rooted societal bigotry. The prospect of religious freedom, the ability to identify openly as Catholic, and opportunities for land acquisition encouraged their departure. Whether by proxy or design, these circumstances accelerated the process of Catholic migration to and settler colonialism in British North America, the primary destination of Highlanders before 1815. The fact that many would deliberately and aggressively displace local Indigenous peoples, such as the Mi'kmaq, Wulstukwiuk, Mohawk, and Algonquin, and disrupt other settling groups, namely the Acadians and Québécois, mattered little to them.[12] Across Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton Island,

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[6] Wm. Wilberforce, *An appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies* (London, 1823), 9; Parliamentary Debates, new series, vol. 2, 30 March 1824–5 June 1824, c. 1408.

[7] Allan Douglas Kennedy, "Reducing that Barbarous Country: Centre, Periphery, and Highland Policy in Restoration Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 3 (2013): 597–614.

[8] General Wade, "Report & c. Relating to the State of the Highlands, 1724," *Historical Papers relating to the Jacobite Period, 1699–1715*, ed. James Allardyce (Aberdeen, 1895), I: 132–33 (hereafter *Historical Papers*).

[9] MacDonald, *Missions to the Gaels*, 10. See also Annette Smith, "The Forfeited Estate Papers, 1745: A Study of the Work of the Commissioners of Forfeited Annexed Estates, 1755–1784, With Particular Reference to the Development of Communications in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century," (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 1975), 103–06 and 113–14; Clotilde Prunier, "Representations of the 'State of Popery' in Scotland in the 1720s and 1730s," *Innes Review* 64, no. 2 (2013): 120–226.

[10] Andrew Mackillop, *More Fruitful than the Soil: Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000), 164.

[11] Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745–1820* (Montreal, 1993); J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770–1815* (Edinburgh, 1982); Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2008); James Hunter, *The Making of a Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976); and James Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World: The Sutherland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2015).

[12] John G. Reid, "Scots, Settler Colonization, and Indigenous Displacement: Mi'kma'ki, 1770–1820 in Comparative Context," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (2018): 178–96; Rusty Bitterman, "Mi'kmaq Land Claims and the Escheat Movement in Prince Edward Island," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 22 (2006): 172–76; W. C. Wicken,

Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Upper Canada, Catholic Highlanders established themselves in significant numbers because as Britons, an identity they could claim in the colonial world, they were able to acquire and exercise significant privilege. This was an advantage that only came after they were abroad and the need for "loyal" settler subjects was desperate enough to facilitate their inclusion.

Intense anti-Catholicism was a fact of eighteenth-century Scottish life, and although it influenced each group's decision to leave Scotland and settle in British North America, it was experienced in different ways and with varying degrees of visibility. The Glenaladale emigration of 1772 was the result of several factors, including the decline of the tacksman class, but principal among them was the overt antagonism expressed by a Presbyterian landlord toward his Catholic tenants and his efforts to force them to convert. The 1804 Glengarry migrants, conversely, had redirected their attention from Trinidad to Upper Canada after the Colonial Office's initial enthusiasm dissipated in response to the concerns of the anti-slavery lobby and the anxieties associated with the governance of a newly acquired, Catholic-majority territory. What these groups had in common was the fact that their "home" districts had been deeply affected by the process of "improvement" that had introduced a more commercial culture of landownership. Despite being reorganized to focus on having different economies—Clanranald, wherein Glenaladale sat, became heavily dependent upon kelp whereas Glengarry's concentration was on black-faced sheep—the tenants of these districts faced poor long-term prospects.[13] Additionally, these districts were problematized as being both Catholic and Jacobite strongholds—the phenomenon Murray Pittock calls the "propagandistic identification of Jacobitism with Catholicism."[14] Although attacks on Highlandism had been underway since the early seventeenth century, the legislative interventions and proscriptions that were introduced in the eighteenth century systematically dismantled the communal structures of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd.[15] The period between 1715, when the first Jacobite rising occurred, and 1784, when the forfeited estates were "restored" to the "original possessors upon reasonable conditions," was particularly difficult, but the effects were long-term and irreversible.[16] Both groups of settlers experienced deep loss as their sense of place and communities fell apart.

Placing Highland Catholics within the context of settler colonialism has been complicated by the oppression they experienced before their departure. Catholic migrants from the Scottish Highlands and Islands, but also from Ireland, are sometimes compared with other diasporas similarly affected by trauma, such as the Armenian, greater African, and even Palestinian expatriate communities. The justification for this is often that they were

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The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794–1928: The King v. Gabriel Silliboy (Toronto, 2012); Colin G. Calloway, White People, Indians, and Highlanders: Tribal Peoples and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America (Oxford, 2008), esp. 201–29.

[13] Clanranald's tacksmen, led by Alexander Macdonald, 1st of Boisdale, and his son, Colin Macdonald, 2nd of Boisdale, in South Uist, were notorious for their deep investment in kelping. The fact that Clanranald territory was never forfeited, unlike most Jacobite estates, meant its natural resources were exploited more ruthlessly to "maintain the dignity of the chiefly family." Kelp was in demand during the Napoleonic wars when demand for alkali, which was used in glass and soap production, spiked. Denis Rixson, Arisaig and Morar (Edinburgh, 2011), 105; Roderick MacDonald, "The Highland District in 1764," Innes Review 15, no. 2 (1964): 147–49; Denis Rixson, Knoydart: A History, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh; Birlinn, 2011), 98; Sir John Sinclair, "Glenelg, County of Inverness," The Statistical Account of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1795), 16: 269, https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk:443/link/osa-vol16-p265-parish-inverness-glenelg.

[14] Murray Pittock quoted in Clotilde Prunier, "'They Must Have Their Children Educated Some Way': The Education of Catholics in Eighteenth-century Scotland," Innes Review 60, no. 1 (2009): 22–40.

[15] Matthew P. Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash of ye Law': The State and the Law in Post-Culloden Scottish Highlands," Journal of British Studies 60, no. 3 (2021): 609–31; Alison Cathcart, "The Statutes of Iona: The Archipelagic Context," Journal of British Studies 49, no. 1 (2010): 4–27.

[16] A. H. Millar, ed., Selection of Scottish Forfeited Estate Papers. 1715–1745 (Edinburgh, 1909), 57: xii. Forfeited estates were seized from Jacobites following the risings of 1715 and 1745–46. For an overview, see the National Records of Scotland: https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=E738.

propelled in vast numbers from their homeland by a single cataclysmic event—the Famine for the Irish and the Clearances for the Highlanders (despite the fact that the Clearances occurred over decades from the 1770s through the 1850s).[17] Both the Irish and Highland Protestants had established migratory patterns before these events, but since the Highland Catholics had struggled to access the empire in large groups before the early 1770s on account of the need to keep their heads down, their contribution to the settler colonial project came later and was concentrated in the colonies that were less desirable. Thus, while it is possible to frame those Highland Catholics affected by the Clearances in this way, their subsequent behavior as colonists complicates such narratives. Furthermore, when it comes to Highland–Indigenous interactions in British North America, it is essential to see the Highlands and Islands as a deeply complex place and attempts to draw comparisons between the experiences of Highlanders and Indigenous peoples as inappropriate.[18]

Anti-Catholicism and settler colonialism both have considerable literature, but few connect these phenomena and on the rare occasion where they do intersect, the focus has been on the twentieth century.[19] While work on the Scottish Highland context has not been integrative, there have been some important contributions that explore either anti-Catholicism as a factor motivating emigration or highlight aspects of Catholic settlement. The work of Clotilde Prunier and Kathleen Toomey, for example, has added significant depth to understandings of how anti-Catholicism affected Catholic prospects, with Toomey in particular making links with emigration.[20] Similarly, the works of J. M. Bumsted and Marianne MacLean have offered invaluable and pioneering insight into how settlements took shape in Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada.[21] These works, coming as they did before serious consideration was given to Scots as pragmatic participants in the British colonizing process, did not link anti-Catholicism and settler colonialism. This is now changing. Kehoe's work on Highland Catholic complicity with the displacement of Indigenous peoples and land theft in the Maritime colonies is shedding new light on how Highlanders accessed and exercised colonial privilege.[22] Similarly, in his work on Highland soldiering Matthew Dziennik has also made an effort to consider Catholic Highlanders as part of the whole and, as a result, is illuminating this group's pragmatic approach to imperial engagement.[23] In this article, we follow the example of John Wolffe in considering Highland Catholics within a four-nations perspective, but extend his analysis of nineteenth-century patterns

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[17] Perhaps the most influential text to explore this is Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London, 2008), ch. 3. See Enda Delaney, Kevin Kenny, and Donald MacRaild, "The Irish Diaspora," *Irish Economic and Social History* 23 (2006): 35–58. For the Highland Scots, see Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson, and Graeme Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh, 2013), 30–32.

[18] See Alex Murdoch's critique of Calloway wherein he notes that they were "not united by their cultural similarities in relation to what was represented by British imperialism but divided by their relationship to it." Alex Murdoch, "Book Review: *White People, Indians, and Highlanders: Tribal People and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America*," *Scottish Historical Review* 89, no. 227 (2010): 124–25.

[19] See, for example, Katherine D. Moran, *The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 2020); Kevin P. Anderson, *Not Quite Us: Anti-Catholic Thought in English Canada Since 1900* (Montreal; Kingston, 2019); Christian P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964–68* (Montreal; Kingston, 2010).

[20] Prunier, "Representations"; Prunier, "'They Must Have Their Children Educated'," 22–40; Kathleen Toomey, "Emigration from the Scottish Catholic Bounds, 1770–1810 and the Role of the Clergy," (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1991).

[21] Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745–1820* (Montreal, 1993); J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770–1815* (Edinburgh, 1982); J. M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island* (Montreal, 1987).

[22] S. Karly Kehoe, "Tripped Up by Tartan: Settler Colonialism and the Highlands Scots on Cape Breton Island," *Scottish Highlands and the Atlantic World: Social Networks and Identities*, ed. S. Karly Kehoe, Annie Tindley, and Chris Dalglish (Edinburgh, 2023), 31–43; S. Karly Kehoe, "Catholic Highland Scots and the Colonization of Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Island, 1772–1830," *Reappraisals of British Colonization in Atlantic Canada, 1700–1900*, ed. S. Karly Kehoe and Michael E. Vance (Edinburgh, 2020), 77–92.

[23] Matthew Dziennik, *The Fatal Land: War, Empire and the Highland Soldier in British America* (New Haven, 2015).

much further back into the previous century in order to think about the motivations of ear-lier Catholic settlers in Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada.[24] We likewise draw on insights from an impressive literature on anti-Catholicism "at home" in the United Kingdom, and religious intolerance in early modern America.[25]

Catholic settler colonialism has a long history in the Americas, arguably beginning with the papal bull issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1452. This bull, taken together with Pope Alexander VI's 1493 bull directed at the Portuguese and the Spanish, is often referred to as the Doctrine of Discovery and provided the mechanisms through which land and property could be expropriated in the name of God. This Doctrine of Discovery was soon embedded in English common law and can thus be said to have influenced the very foundations of the British Empire; the royal charter of 1621 for Nova Scotia is one example.[26] Settler colo-nialism is distinct from other forms of domination in that it does not necessarily depend on the subjugation of an Indigenous majority, or their exploitation as a labor force. Rather, it requires their absence to facilitate the ultimate colonial fantasy: empty or "virgin land" yet to be exploited by "free labor," and justifiable because of an intense belief in European and Christian supremacy.[27] It was a version of this "promise" that motivated the Scottish Highland settlers to select Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada. The colonies held out the promise of what the Highlanders could not have in their ancestral home: the possibility to practice their religion without prejudice, and the (incorrect) idea of "empty," "uncon-tested" land that could be enhanced and exploited.[28] In their case the fantasy was premised on British ideas of supremacy derived from the Doctrine of Discovery, itself arguably a "Catholic" creation, and fueled by the rejection of their Catholicism at "home."

There are a couple of important connections between the leaders of the two groups of settlers considered here. First, both John MacDonald and Alexander Macdonell came from Jacobite families and they, like so many other descendants of those who had participated in the risings, entered the military service of the British Crown to support the extension of Britain's imperial interests. The consolidation of landed authority required this allegiance as well as the pragmatic inclusion of some Jacobites.[29] The tradition of Highland military ser-vice ran deep in the lands of Clanranald and Glengarry and, while this informed both emi-grations, the links were more obvious with the disbanded Glengarry Fencibles. While throwing into sharp relief the complexities inherent in Catholic loyalism's entanglement, first with British colonization and then with settler colonialism, the decision taken by each group of people to quit Scotland altogether illuminates Highland Catholic agency

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[24] John Wolffe, "Anti-Catholicism and the British Empire, 1815–1914," *Empires of Religion*, ed. Hilary M. Carey (London, 2008), 43–63. See also John Wolffe, "A Comparative Historical Categorisation of Anti-Catholicism," *Journal of Religious History* 39, no. 2 (2015): 182–202.

[25] Evan Haefeli, ed., *Against Popery: Britain, Empire, and Anti-Catholicism* (Charlottesville, VA, 2020); Jason K. Duncan, *Citizens or Papists?: The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685–1821* (New York, 2005).

[26] Robert J. Miller, Jacinta Ruru, Larissa Behrendt, and Tracey Lindberg, *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford, 2010), 1–25; Dara Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown: Anthropology, Law, and First Nations* (Vancouver, 1998), 47; Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 764–86; Alexander Fraser, *Nova Scotia: The Royal Charter of 1621 to Sir William Alexander* (Toronto, 1922), Appendix I, 25.

[27] For an excellent summary of the field of settler colonial studies, see Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (London, 2017), 1–25. For a specifically Highland picture, see Calloway, *White People, Indians, and Highlanders*; Ken MacMillan, "'Bound by Our Regal Office': Empire, Sovereignty, and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Stephen Foster (Oxford, 2013), 80–81.

[28] Kehoe's work highlights the numerous petitions made by Highlanders for land—much of which was in use by the Mi'kmaq: Kehoe, "Catholic Highland Scots," 77–92.

[29] Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash of ye Law'," 624–25. For basic information on the role of these two families in the 1745–46 rising, see Alasdair Livingstone, Christian W. H. Aikman, and Betty Stuart Hart, eds., *Muster Roll of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's Army, 1745–46* (Aberdeen, 1985; reprint), 148; T. B. Johnston and James A. Robertson, *The Historical Geography of the Clans of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1872).

and a determined rejection of anti-Catholicism. That both groups of people made the decision to emigrate testifies to the authority they claimed over their own destinies. While there is an argument to be made that imperial engagement enabled forms of "regional particularism,"[30] there is also one to be made about the added value it offered those who had been dispossessed of the ability to worship freely and to be regarded as citizens of equal worth. That Catholic agency could be expressed at all was thanks, in no small part, to landscape, which was, in places, like the "Rough bounds" (Garbh-chriochan), so rugged that it defied the Reformation.[31] According to one local priest, "No roads with any pretence to the name existed... ... and whatever General Wade may be elsewhere, he is of no account here."[32] Much of Clanranald's lands were in the Rough Bounds and while Glengarry's were slightly beyond this, they were also largely mountainous and beyond the abilities of practically all but those born and raised there. Such a landscape maintained secret networks, much to the chagrin of the Presbyterian authorities who feared Catholicism's transference to the young people who were "tainted in their principles with the Popish Books, Rebellious Pamphlets, declarations, Manifestoes, and song put into their hands by the priests."[33] In both districts, Protestant lairds, a predominantly Protestant gentry and, in the case of Glengarry, a "nominally" Presbyterian clan chief—Alexander Ranaldson MacDonell—had jurisdiction over a local Catholic majority. Secondly, once settled, they played prominent roles, either indirectly (Macdonald provided support for religious personnel) or directly (Macdonell was a priest then became the first Bishop of Kingston), in shaping Catholicism in what would become English-speaking Canada, which is ironic given the fact that all these people were Gaelic speakers. As will be shown below, the colonial world represented—for each group—a space where they could re-establish themselves, their prosperity, and their faith.[34] In the case of these two migrations, the anti-Catholicism each group had experienced in the Scottish Highlands and in the realm of British abolitionist politics was foundational to the establishment and advancement of Catholicism and the Catholic Church in British North America.

Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland

Anti-Catholicism was a powerful social and political force across all regions in the United Kingdom, but its effect was not felt evenly as Scottish, Welsh, English, and Irish Catholics all experienced variations of the same discrimination and hostility. This matters when attempting to understand the peculiarities of the Highland Catholic experience. Some of the differences between the United Kingdom's Catholic communities were embodied in the Continental colleges that were established after the Reformation to educate the sons of Catholic elites and to train some of them as priests for the English, Scottish, and Irish missions. While Catholicism was divided along national lines, which ultimately reduced its power as a unified bloc, in Scotland, it was also divided along Highland–Lowland lines since language, culture, and customs were very different. In the colonial world, the four national groups, despite having relationships that were more "competitive than harmonious," could, and did, join forces to push against external intervention, usually that of Rome.[35] Collectively, though, all confronted an entrenched culture of anti-Catholicism

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[30] Mackillop, *More Fruitful*, 222.

[31] "Document No. VIII," *Additional Memorial Concerning the Growth of Popery* (N.L.S. MS. 68, ff. 31–2), in Noel W. Wilby, "The 'Encrease of Popery' in the Highlands, 1714–1747," *Innes Review* 17, no. 2 (1966): 95–115, at 106.

[32] Charles MacDonald, *Moidart or Among the Clanranalds* (Edinburgh, 1989; reprint of 1889 ed.), 4.

[33] Quoted in Wilby, "The 'Encrease of Popery'," specifically his copied Document No. IX, *Un to His Grace the Duke of New Castle one His Majesty's Principall Secretarys of State* (N.L.S. MS. 98, ff. 39–40), 113.

[34] Heidi MacDonald, "Developing a Strong Roman Catholic Social Order in Late Nineteenth-Century Prince Edward Island," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies* 69 (2003): 34–51.

[35] Gabriel Glickman, "A British Catholic Community? Ethnicity, Identity, and Recusant Politics, 1660–1750," in *Early Modern English Catholicism: Identity, Memory, and Counter-Reformation*, ed. James E. Kelly and Susan Royal (Leiden, 2017), 64.

that worked to exclude them from positions of power and influence.[36] How this was manifest across the United Kingdom differed. English Catholics, for example, had much in common with their Anglican brethren and many "papists" remained deeply embedded within elite circles and, in many cases, retained their lands and wealth.[37] In Ireland, the defeat of James VII and II was confirmation of the process of Catholic suppression that had long been underway. In 1703, Catholics only held about 14 per cent of the land there and the most influential Catholic elites had been either killed or were in exile across Europe. This coincided with the passing of various statutes or "Popery laws" between 1695 and 1709, many of which were enforced up until about 1750. While legal measures were not a coherent penal code, when taken together, they imposed a formidable array of restrictions on the public and private lives of Catholics of all backgrounds.[38] The Irish experience differed from other Catholic groups because they constituted a majority population, and thus retained some power to subvert and resist en masse, as well as constituting an actual security threat—a perceived threat that became a sharp reality when the Irish rebelled in numbers in 1798.[39] That Catholic involvement in settler colonialism needs to be considered within the context of this "national" rendering of loyalties is foundational for building better understandings of how and why Scottish Catholics engaged with empire.

In Scotland, the culture of intense anti-Catholicism that followed the Reformation gave Catholics reasons to be fearful. Priests were a primary target and faced imprisonment, banishment, or worse. Gilbert Blakhal's description of his near drowning with his horse as they tried to cross a freezing river undetected is an early example.[40] Originally from northeast Scotland, he attended Scots College Rome between 1626 and 1630 before returning to the Highlands as a missionary priest. Having managed to get himself (and his horse) out of the water, Blakhal was forced to go back in up to his neck to retrieve the vestments he had accidentally dropped to prevent local Protestants from "persuading themselves, finding these vestments, that some priest had been drowned in that river and rejoice thereat."[41] Visible expressions of the faith were outlawed, and people had to worship in secret. Mass stones (clach na h-aifrinn), such as Lochaber's Meall Doire, and place names, such as Mass Burn (Allt na h-aifrinn) or Priest's Rock (Creag an t-sagairt), are stark reminders.[42] As

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[36] S. Karly Kehoe, *Creating a Scottish Church: Catholicism, Gender and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Scotland* (Manchester, 2010), 33–35; S. Karly Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation: Scottish and Irish Catholics at the Atlantic Fringe, 1780–1850* (Toronto, 2022), 21–42; Carys Brown, "Catholic Politics and Creating Trust in Eighteenth-century England," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 4 (2017): 622–44, at 624; Murray Pittock, "Treacherous Objects: Towards a Theory of Jacobite Material Culture," *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, no. 1 (2011): 39–63, at 43; Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (New York, 1989), 72–106.

[37] Most studies of English Catholicism emphasize its distinctiveness from Irish and Scottish Catholicism in particular, as well as its Continental forms: Carys Brown, "Catholic Politics and Creating Trust in Eighteenth-century England," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 4 (2017): 622–44; Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, eds., *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, 2009); Gabriel Glickman, *The English Catholic Community, 1688–1745: Politics, Culture and Ideology* (Woodbridge, 2009), 4, 255–56; John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* (Oxford, 1976), 2, 7; Eamon Duffy, *Peter and Jack: Roman Catholics and Dissent in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), 18.

[38] David W. Hayton, "The Emergence of a Protestant Society 1691–1730," in *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 2, *1550–1730*, ed. Jane Ohlmeyer (Cambridge, 2018), 144–46; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992).

[39] C. Ivar McGrath, "The Penal Laws: Origins, Purpose, Enforcement and Impact," in *Law and Religion in Ireland, 1700–1970*, ed. Kevin Costello and Niamh Howlin (Basingstoke, 2021), 15; Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor, eds., *Forming Catholic Communities: Irish, Scots and English College Networks in Europe, 1568–1918* (Leiden, 2017), 1–11.

[40] T. B. Parkinson, "Episodes in the Life of a Scotch Missionary in the Seventeenth Century," *The Month: A Magazine and Review* 16 (1872), 375–76.

[41] A. MacDonell and D. Roberts, "The Mass Stones of Lochaber," *Innes Review* 17, no. 2 (1966): 71–81, at 76; John Durkan, "Miscellany," *Innes Review* 15, no. 2 (1964): 182–92, at 185.

[42] These Mass stones have their equivalents across Ireland as well, and indeed they offer a reasonably reliable map of anti-Catholic persecution in both nations. See the record from Historic Environment Scotland that estimates

Clotilde Prunier's work on perceptions of the Scottish Catholic mission during the 1720s and 1730s reveals, the eighteenth century offered little respite. One of the main reasons for this was that "Popery" was believed to pose a serious risk to established Presbyterianism because of its ability to win over Episcopalians on account of the "common Cause of Jacobitism."[43]

The districts from which the two focus migrations come were in the thick of it. In his 1724 report, General Wade declared the Glengarry and Clanranald territories troublesome because their large Catholic populations were "disaffected" to the government.[44] State rhetoric associated with the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745–46 amplified suspicions of Catholic disloyalty, even though the majority of Jacobites were Episcopalian.[45] The officers of the Clanranald and Glengarry regiments, for example, were entirely Catholic and so were targeted by state authorities.[46] In the immediate aftermath of Culloden in 1746, it was proposed that government troops be stationed in these districts for extra security since gathering information on "treasonable practices" was extremely difficult with "Knoidart, Moidart, Arisaig and Glenfinnan [being] almost void of cover or provisions, which makes it impracticable at present for any but Highlanders to subsist there."[47]

While Irish Catholics, as noted above, could at least derive political power from the fact of their numerical majority on the island, and English Catholics were typically wealthier and benefited from localized patronage and protection, Scottish Catholics—especially those in the Highlands—enjoyed none of these advantages and were arguably the most disadvantaged of the three major groups.[48] The estate forfeitures, land confiscations, and difficulties they experienced in acquiring leases, coupled with their exclusion from military service until 1793, were devastating in their long-term effects. In both Scotland and Ireland, those Catholics who managed to cling on to their landholding did so through tactical conversions into ever more complex confessional contortions.[49] The penal laws reflected "Protestant

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the date of this stone around *ca.* 1700, https://canmore.org.uk/site/23793/meall-doire. See also Hilary J. Bishop, "Classifications of Sacred Space: A New Understanding of Mass Rock Sites in Ireland," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 20 (2016): 828–72.

[43] Prunier, "Representations," 124.

[44] General Wade, "Report & c. Relating to the State of the Highlands, 1724," in *Historical Papers*, 144–45.

[45] Daniel Szechi, "Negotiating Catholic Kingship for a Protestant People: 'Private' Letters, Royal Declarations and the Achievement of Religious Détente in the Jacobite Underground, 1702–1718," in *Debating the Faith: Religion and Letter Writing in Great Britain, 1550–1880*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Clotilde Prunier (London, 2013), 113–16.

[46] John Watts has argued, rightly, that it is almost impossible to "appreciate[e] the extent and vehemence of anti-Catholic sentiment in Scotland at this time": John Watts, *Hugh MacDonald: Highlander, Jacobite and Bishop* (Edinburgh, 2002), 9.

[47] David Watson, "Proposals for Cantoning the Five Highland Additional Company's in the Western Isles and Remoter Parts of the Highlands, 1747," in *Historical Papers*, 510.

[48] Carys Brown, "Catholic Politics and Creating Trust in Eighteenth-century England," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 4 (2017): 623–28. For this point about the "social presence" denied to English Catholics, see Alexander Lock, *Catholicism, Identity, and Politics in the Age of Enlightenment: The Life and Career of Sir Thomas Gascoigne 1745–1810* (Woodbridge, 2016), 82 and 86. The number of Catholics in Wales was relatively tiny until the early twentieth century: Trystan Owain Hughes, "Anti-Catholicism in Wales, 1900–1960," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 2 (2002): 312–25; Paul O'Leary, "When was Anti-Catholicism? The Case of Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Wales," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56, no, 2 (2005): 308–25.

[49] Teresa Gourlay, "Subject to Authority: Bishop Alexander Macdonell and his Scottish Religious Superiors, 1788–1804," *Innes Review* 61, no. 2 (2010): 150–68, at 156. Alasdair Roberts, "Faith Restored: Highland Catholics and the King's Commission," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 85, no. 342 (2007): 146–61, at 151–53, discusses elite pragmatism and the renunciation of Catholicism in. Kevin Whelan's influential argument has long been that the increasing ascendancy of Protestant society in eighteenth-century Ireland was mirrored by the creation of what he termed an "underground gentry" in Catholic society: Kevin Whelan, "An Underground Gentry? Catholic Middlemen in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 10 (1995): 7–68. This narrative, while enduring for good reason, ignores the wealth generated by Catholic families via provisioning and Atlantic trade or their diversification of assets by way of plantations in the West Indies and the American colonies. For a general discussion of this, see David Dickson, "Setting out the Terrain: Ireland and the Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century," in *Ireland, Slavery, and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester, 2022), 21–39; Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish-American Trade 1660–1783* (Cambridge, 1988), 94–95.

anxiety" and affected the life experiences of all Catholics, but they were also designed deliberately to undermine the Gaelic worlds of Ireland and Scotland. The stigma of belonging to a district declared hostile and of being a people perceived as "uncivilized" and disloyal was difficult to overcome.[50] The Scottish Enlightenment's commitment to stadial theory, which pitted the "primitive" and "savage" ways of life and living in the Highlands against the "modern" and "industrious" ways of the Lowlands, was especially destructive and weakened the integrity of the entire Highlands and Islands region.[51] Its Catholics were perceived by most in Presbyterian Scotland as regressive and anti-modern. The re-education of Catholic children remained a preoccupation of Church of Scotland ministers, landowners, and parish schoolteachers until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and priests remained nervous about communicating with each other well into the 1780s—often using pseudonyms and omitting certain details "lest they were used against the whole Catholic community if the letter were intercepted by malevolent persons."[52]

While these examples show the longevity of anti-Catholicism in Scotland, the violence of the Gordon Riots and the fact that Catholic Relief legislation was only introduced for Scotland in 1793, some fifteen years after Ireland and England, reveals the influence of the Covenanting mentality of Presbyterianism.[53] This was entangled with widespread socio-economic change that severed people's ties with their ancestral lands. Consequently, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the pendulum had swung decisively toward emigration—so much so that the proportion of Catholics leaving had become a cause for concern in landowning, political, and religious circles.[54] Catholic leaders were rightly worried about Catholicism's survival in the Highlands and Scotland more widely because, apart from the persistent anti-Catholicism faced by adherents, the numbers of people choosing to leave continued to rise. The prospect of greater religious toleration and the "flattering accounts" of life in North America were very influential.[55] After a conversation with "several gentlemen from Glengary," the Catholic bishop of Scotland's lowland district, George Hay, explained that the people "want nothing but a proper opportunity to go to America" to avoid "rapacious Masters":

> ...it naturally occurred that if they could get a colony to themselves in one place where they could have all the freedom in Religion it would be infinitely preferable, & the persecution in Uist arising at the same time, has made many of the leading people among them enter more ardently into the Schemes.[56]

Hay observed a pivotal moment for Scottish Catholic Highlanders. The colonial world became, from this point onward, a place of respite where they could not only imagine greater religious toleration but activate it in their transplanted communities.

The Glenaladale Settlement of Prince Edward Island

South Uist is an island in the Outer Hebrides measuring roughly "twenty-four miles long and five miles broad." Although it was part of Clanranald's lands, the South Uist estate was

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[50] Colin Kidd, "Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland," *English Historical Review* 109, no. 434 (1994): 1197–1214, at 1198.

[51] Kidd, "Gaelic Antiquity," 1197–214.

[52] Clotilde Prunier, "'Every Time I Receive a Letter from You It Gives Me New Vigour': The Correspondence of the Scalan Masters, 1762–1783," in *Debating the Faith: Religion and Letter Writing in Great Britain, 1550-1800*, ed. A. Dunan-Page and C. Prunier (Dordrecht, NL, 2013), 131; Prunier, "Representations," 143, 154, and 165; Prunier, "'They Must Have Their Children Educated," 22–40; Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*, 55.

[53] Prunier, "Representations," 143, 154, and 165; Prunier, "'They Must Have Their Children Educated," 22–40; Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*, 55. While Brad Jones does not consider the Highlands, he provides a useful overview of the broader British and Irish response to Catholic Relief in 1778–79: Jones, "In Favour of Popery," 79–102.

[54] Marjory Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London, 2003), 117 and 207.

[55] Sinclair, "Glenelg, County of Inverness," 269.

[56] "Letter from Bishop George Hay to James Grant, 17 November 1770," BL3/220/8, Scottish Catholic Archives (SCA).

owned by Colin Macdonald of Boisdale, a Presbyterian laird. Records from the early 1790s put its majority Catholic population at around 2,950 and its Presbyterians at 500.[57] In the late 1760s, a serious fracture emerged between Boisdale and his Catholic tenants that culminated in a group exodus. These people made up a significant part of the Glenaladale settlers who went to Prince Edward Island in 1772. Writing to John Geddes, a fellow Scottish priest and his future co-adjutor, Bishop George Hay provided an overview of what was happening:

> The persecution of Ouist goes on apace, Boysdale after having got his poor people fixed for another year, has used every means in this power to harass them because they will not allow their children to be brought up as he pleases, so that there is no remedy left but to see & get a settlement for them in America and I have been employed for some time in getting proper intelligence how that could be done.[58]

More details on what some of the children were subjected to was provided by Hay's Highland counterpart, Bishop John MacDonald:

> ...he kept a schoolmaster in his house, a profligat[e] man both as to his principals and morals, the greatest nu[m]ber of his schollars being Cath he did all he cou'd to bring them to his owne way of thinking and as he did not succeede in that, he caused flesh meat to be brought in to the school in Lent and force it in their mouth, and whoever did not take it was severely scourged.[59]

Signed off by "Mr. Tiberiop," the alias of Bishop John MacDonald, these lines testified to the violence that the Catholics of South Uist endured when they refused to follow their landlord's order to convert to Presbyterianism. Boisdale, who was known locally as "Big Colin," came down particularly hard on his Catholic tenants because he lacked the experience, support, and authority required to manage an estate effectively.[60] The situation worsened before it got better, and people did what they could to avoid him and his insults. According to Hay, "the best appellative he addresses them with is 'you devil & c:21'. The blasphemous forms in which he mentioned every article of our holy religion to them are intolerable to Christian ears and makes death more eligible than any connection with him."[61] As the Gaelic scholar Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart explains, the observance of holy days had also become a "flash point" in districts with large Catholic populations. Landlords saw them as threatening to their incomes, and tenants saw attempts to cancel or reduce them as undermining established "reciprocal rights and obligations."[62] Tired of the "heightening rents," the "unrelenting oppressions," and "every kind of barbarous treatment," many Catholics on South Uist saw emigration as their way out.[63] At the same time, John MacDonald, eighth of Glenaladale, had grown frustrated with his limited options and was working on an emigration scheme that would see him establish a new settlement across the Atlantic on Prince Edward Island. So intent was he on leaving and making a fresh start abroad that he was prepared to borrow money by "mortgaging his own estate" to

[57] Sir John Sinclair, "South Uist, County of Inverness," *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1794), 13: 298, https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk:443/link/osa-vol13-p298-parish-inverness-south_uist.

[58] "Letter from Bishop George Hay to John Geddes, 12 October 1770," BL3/220/2, SCA. A sincere thank you to Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart for sharing information from the Blairs Letters, BL3/220 & 221, SCA.

[59] "Letter from Mr. Tiberiop (Bishop John MacDonald) to Bishop James Grant, 7 June 1770," BL3/221/10, SCA.

[60] Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, "Leisure and Recreation in an Age of Clearance: The Case of Hebridean Michaelmas," in *Celtic Cosmology: Perspectives from Ireland and Scotland*, ed. Jacqueline Borsje and Séamus MacMathuna (Toronto, 2012), 232.

[61] "Letter from Bishop George Hay to Bishop John MacDonald, 29 October 1771," BL2/223/16, SCA.

[62] Stiùbhart, "Leisure and Recreation," 207–48.

[63] "Letter from Bishop John MacDonald to Bishop George Hay, 29 October 1771," BL2/223/16, SCA.

make it happen.[64] Boisdale's anti-Catholicism and bullying handed Glenaladale the opportunity to recruit settlers.

Britain took Prince Edward Island, also known as Isle Saint-Jean and Epekwitk by the French and Mi'kmaq people respectively, from France with the 1763 Treaty of Paris and in 1772, the Glenaladale settlement began. Much has been written about it, including land tenure, class makeup, its connection with the broader development of the Catholic Church, and secondary migration to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island.[65] Although intended as a haven for Protestant elites, it attracted little interest from industrious and affluent English, Irish, and Scottish landowners, despite its first Lieutenant-Governor, William Patterson, who arrived in 1770, being Donegal-born.[66] The lack of interest meant that the commissioners, who had carved up the island into 67 townships, were compelled to grant tracts to people beyond the desired categories such as affluent Catholics—and MacDonald was the first one.[67] In late 1770, MacDonald had travelled to Edinburgh with the intention of securing land from Scotland's then Lord Advocate, Sir James Montgomery, so that he could set up an emigration scheme for other disillusioned Highlanders who might be persuaded to leave. Montgomery, the official responsible for sharing out the land on the island, was sympathetic. Bishop Hay explained that "tho' a man so much of the Government [Montgomery] is most willing to give them all encouragement, & their [sic] being R. Cath. is far from being an objection with him."[68] As someone poised to become a majority landholder on the island, it was in Montgomery's interest to advance its settlement and, given the preference that Scots had for working within Scottish networks, the incorporation of Scottish Catholics was not surprising.[69] While it took a few years to secure land and enough buy-in from prospective emigrants to make the journey viable, once the land was secured, Glenaladale and Hay, despite initial reservations about the prospective emigration of Catholics, started fundraising. MacDonald raised cash by selling what he could, including his two estates, Glenaladale and Glenfinnan, to his first cousin, Alexander (or "Golden" Sandy, Alasdair an Oir) MacDonald, who had made a fortune in Jamaica.[70]

Understandings of the extent to which colonial exploitation in the Caribbean enabled settler colonialism in British North America is expanding as work on Scotland's involvement in the Atlantic trade of enslaved African people evolves. There can be no doubt that money earned in that part of the empire was used to acquire land and establish settlements in northern colonies. The transaction between John MacDonald and his cousin "Golden" Sandy shows one of the forms it could take. Rather than a direct investment from Jamaica to Prince Edward Island, money was routed through Scotland. The Highlands was, like other regions in the

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[64] "Letter from Bishop George Hay to James Grant, 17 November 1770," BL3/220/8, SCA.

[65] J. M. Bumsted, "Scottish Emigration to the Maritimes 1770–1815: A New Look at an Old Theme," *Acadiensis* 10, no. 2 (1981): 65–85; J. M. Bumsted, "Highland Emigration to the Island of St. John and the Scottish Catholic Church, 1769–1774," *Dalhousie Review* 58, no. 3 (1970): 511–27; J. M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island* (Montreal; Kingston, 1987); Allan F. MacDonald, "Captain John MacDonald, 'Glenaladale'," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report* 31 (1964): 21–37; Annie Tindley, "New World, Old Problems? Aristocratic Influences on Colonial Governance and Land in Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Canada," in *Reappraisals*, ed. Kehoe and Vance, 59–74; Rusty Bittermann, *Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island: From British Colonisation to the Escheat Movement* (Toronto, 2006); Rusty Bittermann and Margaret McCallum, *Lady Landlords of Prince Edward Island: Imperial Dreams and the Defence of Property* (Montreal; Kingston, 2008); Kehoe, "Catholic Highland Scots," 77–92.

[66] H. Baglole, "Patterson, Walter," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/patterson_walter_4E.html.

[67] Callum Vere Beck, "The Protestant-Catholic Divide on Prince Edward Island, Canada: Its Creation, Growth and Resolution" (PhD diss., The Open University, 2010), 40–43; Bumsted, *Land, Settlement*, 45–46; J. M. Bumsted, "Sir James Montgomery and Prince Edward Island, 1767–1830," *Acadiensis* 7, no. 2 (1978): 77–102, at 85.

[68] "Letter from Bishop George Hay to James Grant, 17 November 1770," BL3/220/8, SCA.

[69] Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World, 1750–1820* (Manchester, 2005). Scottish networks are a major theme running throughout this book.

[70] S. Karly Kehoe, "Jacobites, Jamaica and the Establishment of a Highland Catholic Community in the Canadian Maritimes," *Scottish Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (2021): 199–217.

United Kingdom, deeply invested in the enslavement of Black people and many Highlanders welcomed the profits that their connections with the plantation economy yielded. In this respect, they were no different to countless other Britons. Their society, like others, normalized it.[71] It is not known if enslaved people worked on the MacDonald lands, but they were a visible proportion of the labor force in the early years of the colony at Prince Edward Island and were often present in the households of the wealthiest settlers.[72] Patterson, Montgomery, and other prominent island figures of Scottish or Irish origin, such as Chief Justice Peter Stewart, Attorney General Phillip Callbeck, and Speaker of the House Walter Berry, were known enslavers. The colony's introduction of a statute in 1781, which tightened up hereditary bondage by preventing any change to the status of enslaved people upon their baptism, empowered the enslavers and other settlers.[73] Upon arriving on Prince Edward Island, the Catholic Highlanders entered a colonial structure where, for the first time, they were considered a class higher than another group of people.

The first group travelled on the *Alexander* and left Greenock on 23 April 1772, stopping at Arisaig, the Isle of Eigg, and South Uist to pick up a total of 214 passengers and supplies before setting off across the Atlantic in mid-May. Its passenger list was almost entirely Catholic and represented a cross section of Highland society.[74] This was the first organized mass Scottish Catholic settlement in British North America, but John MacDonald's desire to establish himself as a paternalistic landowner alienated many of those who had joined his scheme.[75] While the settlement was not a failure, it did lose a number of the original migrants and their children to neighboring Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island where land and independence from landlords were more easily acquired.[76] This put in place an extensive Highland Catholic settler colonial program that included widespread Indigenous Mi'kmaq displacement,[77] rapid population growth, church building, and, later, a system of Catholic education, including the establishment of a seminary in 1853 that evolved into St Francis Xavier University—an institution built by and for the Highland Catholics in Nova Scotia.[78] Taking their Catholicism with them, they, along with subsequent waves of Catholic migrants from the Scottish Highlands, enabled the faith to spread much further and at a more rapid rate than would have been likely otherwise.

The Glengarry Settlement of Upper Canada

The circumstances surrounding the emigration of Alexander Macdonell and the disbanded soldiers from the Glengarry Fencibles in 1804 were not the same as those of the

[71] David Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders: Silenced Histories of Scotland and the Caribbean* (Edinburgh, 2021); Stephen Mullen, "John Lamont of Benmore: A Highland Planter Who Died 'In Harness' in Trinidad," *Northern Scotland* 9, no. 1 (2018): 44–66.

[72] Harvey Whitfield and Barry Cahill, "Slave Life and Slave Law in Colonial Prince Edward Island, 1769–1825," *Acadiensis* 38, no. 2 (2009): 29–51.

[73] H. T. Holman, "Callbeck, Phillips," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4 (Toronto, 2003); Barry Cahill, "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist Nova Scotia," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 43 (1994); 73–136; J. M. Bumsted, "Stewart, Peter," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stewart_peter_5E.html.

[74] Prince Edward Island Scottish Settlers Historical Society, *Glenaladale Settlers 1772: Scotland to St John's Island* (Charlottetown, 2016).

[75] See the Cape Breton Land Petitions for migrant statements that provide remarks about why they wanted land and what was holding them back. There were over 3,300 of them between 1787 and 1843—the majority made by people of Scottish birth or descent. While the documents may be viewed at the Nova Scotia Archives, this search engine will provide a glimpse: https://archives.novascotia.ca/cape-breton-land/.

[76] For land grants to Scottish settlers on Cape Breton Island, see the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables' Crown Land Information Management Centre: https://novascotia.ca/natr/land/grantmap.asp.

[77] The Scottish Highlanders acquired significant privilege in the Maritimes because of their sheer numbers. An important contribution on how this played out is William Wicken, *Treaties on Trial: History, Land, and Donald Marshall Junior* (Toronto, 2002).

[78] James D. Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montreal, 1996).

Glenaladale migrants but anti-Catholicism was an important factor in where they ended up. In the 1790s, there were an estimated 1,400 Catholics in Glengarry and Fr. Alexander Macdonell, who would later go on to become the first Bishop of Kingston, Upper Canada, came from one of its families.[79] Born in 1762, somewhere in Glengarry, Macdonell left Scotland for his religious training in the mid-1780s and was ordained at the Scots College in Valladolid, Spain, in 1787. A condition of his Continental education, and that of all other young men whose fees were paid by the cash-strapped Scottish mission, was that he return to Scotland to serve as a missionary priest once his studies were finished. His first assignment was the central Highland district of Badenoch, described as of "enormous extent and extremely challenging terrain."[80] He stayed there until around 1792, when, after seeing the constant stream of Highlanders migrating south to Glasgow in search of work in the cotton mills, he requested a transfer, arguing that these people needed a Gaelic-speaking priest and someone whom they could trust to deal with the mill owners.[81] The outbreak of war with France in 1793 caused major disruptions and mass unemployment in the textile sector and so in 1794, the year after Catholic Relief was extended to Scotland, Macdonell and Alastair Ranaldson Macdonell, the chief of Glengarry, formed the Glengarry Fencibles to ease the pressure of unemployment. The offer of military service benefited both sides—the government accessed home-grown troops and Catholics acquired a greater sense of inclusion, employment, and opportunity. In this respect, and in the context of the United Kingdom as a whole, they acted in a similar manner to other religious minorities, including Presbyterians.[82] Glengarry was a major Highland landowner and a young chief with a "violent disposition" who was desperate for recognition.[83] The regiment's soldiers were drawn mostly from his Glengarry estate and those who were reluctant to enlist were threatened with eviction. Alexander Macdonell served as chaplain to the roughly 620 men when the Fencibles were in Guernsey and Ireland.[84]

When war ceased and the regiment was disbanded, the volatility of the Highland economy and the vulnerability of the men and their families were laid bare. Life was precarious for the landless since there was "no mechanism for absorbing the shocks when things went wrong"—including poor decisions by "incompetent landlords" such as Glengarry whose own debt by this time was "staggering."[85] Any hope the soldiers had of retiring back to the Highlands was shattered when Glengarry raised the rents as part of the estate's economic restructuring. The people's sense of betrayal, coupled with "favorable" accounts of life in the colonial world and a desire to be with friends and family members, tipped the balance in favor of emigration.[86] Macdonell was convinced that his community's future lay abroad. His involvement in the campaign to enable Catholic military service had won him recognition and several high-level political contacts, including Henry Addington, the Prime Minister from 1801 to 1804.[87] Like Prince Edward Island had been in the early

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[79] John J. O'Gorman, "Canada's Greatest Chaplain," *Catholic Historical Review* 8, no. 2 (1922): 217–28.

[80] Gourlay, "Subject to Authority," 153.

[81] Gourlay, "Subject to Authority," 152–54. An exceptional work on this district is David Taylor, *Badenoch: The Wild Black Region: Badenoch, 1750-1800* (Edinburgh, 2016).

[82] Exceptional work on Catholic loyalism in nineteenth-century Ireland has been done by Richard Keough. See, for example, Richard Keough, "'From Education, From Duty, and From Principle': Irish Catholic Loyalty in Context, 1829–1874," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 3 (2017): 421–50.

[83] Gourlay, "Subject to Authority," 156.

[84] Brian D. Osborne, "Macdonell, Alexander Ranaldson, of Glengarry (1773–1828), Chief of Clan Macdonell or Macdonnell of Glengarry and Soldier," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, accessed 22 February 2022. https://www-oxforddnb-com.library.smu.ca/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-17453; Alexander Macdonell, "The Glengarry Fencibles," *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 26 (1904–1907): 341–51; Roberts, "Faith Restored," 157.

[85] Rixson, *Knoydart*, 116–17.

[86] McLean, *The People of Glengarry*, 134–36.

[87] David Brown, "The Government of Scotland under Henry Dundas and William Pitt," *History* 83, no. 270 (1998): 265–79.

1770s, Trinidad was, in the early 1800s, an important territorial acquisition. Having been secured by Britain with the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, Trinidad's management was hotly contested for several reasons—including the fact that its resident population was predominantly Catholic and comprised largely enslaved, French, and Spanish peoples. British colonial authorities considered the island to be underpopulated and so saw settlement and turning a profit as essential to building it up as a strategic defense position in the Caribbean, just like the other ceded islands of Dominica and Grenada.[88]

Many British abolitionists disagreed. William Wilberforce, for example, whilst being deeply anti-Catholic, was opposed to any kind of settlement for fear that it would lead to more slavery. Conversely, George Canning, a disciple of William Pitt the Younger, abolitionist and advocate of Catholic Emancipation, argued that settlers from the Caribbean who were "capable to serving in the militia" were acceptable so that "a new system of colonisation for future military purposes" might be introduced. It was a mixed response in government circles too. There were many like Addington, who were opposed to immediate abolition and wanted to recruit "whites or creoles" to settle the island.[89] Thus, when Charles Yorke, a tentative Addington ally and Secretary at War from February 1801 until May 1804, approached Alexander Macdonell in late 1802 with a proposal to lead 500 of the disbanded Glengarry soldiers to Trinidad and establish them as a militia there, it was part of Addington's agenda.[90] Macdonell's correspondence from early 1803 testifies to this and in one letter, he wrote that upon "mature" consideration, he agreed that having disbanded soldiers settled there "might prove a sufficient security upon any emergency from its internal resources." It could only work, he added, "provided Government be disposed to give them liberal encouragement."[91] Liberal encouragement included free passage, land, housing, agricultural implements, loans for laborers, a Gaelic-speaking Catholic chaplain, a chapel, and a schoolhouse.[92] Although not spelled out, it is likely that "internal resources" referred to the island's enslaved population.

Had Macdonell been able to get a straight answer from his government contacts, he would have been ready and willing to go Trinidad. This point is usually sidelined in writings on his life and career given the major role he went on to play in the development of Anglo-Catholicism in what would become Canada. If it is mentioned, it is usually with the caveat that he declined the offer to go to Trinidad because it would have exposed the men and their families to "an unhealthy tropical climate" and that he "preferred leading them to Canada where so many of their friends were already settled."[93] The high risk of death was a concern, but Macdonell's attention shifted to Upper Canada because the government got cold feet after coming under pressure from anti-Catholic abolitionists who wanted to prevent settlement. Popular literature, such as Pierre F. McCallum's *Travels to Trinidad* (1805), showcases this prejudice. Scattered throughout this work, which was described as a form of "political and literary surveillance" by the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, was an

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[88] Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783–1962* (Kingston, 1981); Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*, 162. For a good summary of the strategic considerations, see James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2012), 6–12.

[89] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 185; Patrick C. Lipscomb, "Party Politics, 1801–02: George Canning and the Trinidad Question," *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 3 (1969): 442–66, at 446–48.

[90] "Letter from Alexander Macdonell to the Rt Honorable Charles Yorke, 28 January 1803," The National Archives (TNA) CO/295/6 f.30.

[91] "Letter from Alexander Macdonell to the Rt Honorable Charles Yorke, 28 January 1803," TNA CO/295/6 f.30.

[92] "Proposal for establishing a colony of Highlanders on the Island of Trinidad, to be composed principally of the officers and men of the Reduced Fencible regiments, and there to be embodied into a militia corps upon the same principles with that of the Imperial Kingdom, so as to form an efficient internal defence to the island upon any emergency, 21 February 1803," TNA CO/295/6 f.38–9.

[93] Alexander Macdonell, "The Address of Bishop Macdonell to the Catholic and Protestant Freeholders of the counties of Stormont and Glengarry," 15 June 1836, printed in Alexander Macdonell, *A Short Account of Emigration from the Highlands and Scotland to North America; and the establishment of the Catholic Diocese of Upper Canada* (1839), 22.

anti-Catholic diatribe designed to highlight the superiority of Protestantism.[94] McCallum argued that in Trinidad, "as in other Roman Catholic countries, the priests endeavour to defeat human reason, and throw a dark veil over truth."[95] This kind of bombast, coupled with the contempt that high-profile abolitionists like Wilberforce had for Catholicism and the Catholic Church would hardly have helped Macdonell's efforts to move Catholic Highlanders there.[96] Macdonell also faced obstacles closer to home, including stiff opposition from his immediate superior, Bishop Aeneus (John) Chisholm, who feared the loss of such a large group of Catholics, and from his one-time ally, Alastair Ranaldson Macdonell of Glengarry, who, like many Highland landowners, lobbied hard against Highland emigration to avoid labor shortages.[97]

All of this took its toll and many of the Highlanders whom Macdonell had planned to bring with him got tired of waiting and began making their own arrangements to emigrate to North America. In a letter to Yorke in mid-January 1803, the priest explained that they "despaired of the success of my mission... I find that several of them have already entered into obligations with the leaders of emigrations."[98] Indeed, many saw Upper Canada as a viable option because of their friends and relatives who had already gone there.[99] Yet, efforts to secure some kind of arrangement for Trinidad were still underway in the latter part of February and a detailed proposal for settlement was sent to several people, including William Fullarton, first Commissioner of Trinidad and MP for the Scottish weaving district of Ayrshire, where a large number of Highlanders went to find work as weavers and day laborers.[100] Fullarton's appointment to Trinidad was a response to major concerns about the brutal governance of General Thomas Picton, a Welsh army officer and the territory's first British Governor.[101] Preoccupied with Picton's "ungovernable violence" and aware of the heightened tensions among colonial officials, the British Army, and the planters over the employment of Black soldiers and whether or not the slave laws applied to them, Fullarton avoided commenting on the possibility of using Highlanders as a militia corps for the island.[102] These challenges, coupled with a lack of clarity from the government officials who had first proposed the idea to him, forced Macdonell to abandon Trinidad as an option. Broader concerns about the loyalty of Highland Catholics were also likely given that tensions with both France and America were again on the rise.[103] Settling disbanded Highland Catholic soldiers along the northern border with the United States to thwart a possible invasion was more palatable.[104] According to Macdonell, the Prime Minister was

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[94] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 161.

[95] Pierre F. McCallum, "Letter III," in *Travels in Trinidad during the months of February, March and April 1803 in a series of letters addressed to a Member of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain* (Liverpool, 1805), 39. For another example, see Letters 2, 31.

[96] For brief examples, see Wilberforce's own writings in *The Life of William Wilberforce, By His Sons Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce* (London, 1838), III: 300, 310–12, and 362.

[97] The two fell out spectacularly in 1802–03. Gourlay, "Subject to Authority," 163–66; Osborne, "Macdonell, Alexander Ranaldson"; McLean, *The People of Glengarry*, 145.

[98] "Letter from Alexander MacDonell, to Charles Yorke, 11 January 1803," TNA CO/295/6 f.32

[99] McLean, *The People of Glengarry*, particularly chs. 7, 8 and 11.

[100] William Fullarton, *A Statement, Letters and Documents respecting the affairs of Trinidad including a reply to Colonel Picton's Address to the Council of that Island* (London, 1804), 1–2; Sir John Sinclair, "St Quivox, County of Ayrshire," *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1793), 7: 357, https://statacscot.edina.ac.uk:443/link/osa-vol7-p357-parish-ayrshire-st_quivox.

[101] Fullarton, *A Statement*, 2–14.

[102] Fullarton, *A Statement*, 11 and 15. His position on non-interference is detailed in the footnote. See also Roger N. Buckley, "Slave or Freedman: The Question of the Legal Status of the British West Indian Soldier, 1795–1807," *Caribbean Studies* 17, no. 3 (1977–78): 83–113; Randolph T. Jones, "The Trinidad Militia, 1801–38," *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research* 8, no. 330 (2004): 132–54.

[103] Jones, "In Favour of Popery," 83–86.

[104] Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*, ch. 4; Brad S. Gregory, "Situating Early-Modern English Catholicism," in *Early Modern English Catholicism: Identity, Memory, and Counter-Reformation*, ed. James E. Kelly and Susan Royal (Leiden, 2017), 30.

"perfectly convinced of their principles of loyalty to their sovereign and attachment to the Constitution of their country" and regretted that so many were "reduced to quitting their country <u>for ever</u>."[105]

In this case, Macdonell's emphasis on Catholic loyalty makes sense for someone who had only ever known life in post-Culloden Scotland and who was fully aware of the innate hostility and prejudice that both Catholics and Highlanders faced. Highlanders, but especially those from Jacobite families and districts, were problematized as subversives, even though by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, sympathy with the Stuart cause had practically disappeared.[106] None of this, however, eroded the intense anti-Catholicism that permeated mainstream British society. Anxieties about France and Rome were entangled with genuine fears, realistic or not, about the risk that Catholic populations posed both to the British constitution and to Britain's imperial program—after all, it would be another 25 years after the 1804 settlers arrived in Upper Canada before Catholic emancipation was passed for the United Kingdom.

What do we learn from the Scottish settlements at Glenaladale and Glengarry? The legacy of being Highland Catholic, Jacobite, or both had serious consequences for many of those at home or abroad in the Britain's colonial territories. Not only did significant numbers of Highland Catholics choose to quit Scotland forever, but their settlement in places like Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada accelerated the process of settler colonialism and extended the reach of the Catholic Church. Both emigration schemes included either members of the leading Highland Catholic families, who would contribute the religious personnel necessary for expanding Catholicism in English-speaking British North America, or who would themselves serve as its pioneers.[107] Alexander Macdonell himself is perhaps the most prominent example since he went on to become the first Catholic bishop in British North America outside of Quebec, but there was also Angus MacEachern, who became the most well-known Catholic missionary across all the Maritime colonies. His parents and other relatives had been part of the Glenaladale settlement. That the leads of both emigration schemes—John MacDonald and Alexander Macdonell—had a shared sense of dissatisfaction with what had been on offer to them and their co-religionists as Catholics and Highlanders in Scotland is what pushed them to maneuver behind the scenes to expand opportunities for themselves and for their fellow Highland Catholics. They wanted—and would receive—religious freedom because, despite being part of a persecuted minority, both were extremely effective at taking advantage of the opportunities that the empire offered.

The two settlements highlighted here, notwithstanding the different circumstances that shaped them, were peopled by Catholic colonists who rejected the restrictions that had been imposed upon them at home by a prejudiced state. The prevailing "push" factor in both cases was a culture of systemic anti-Catholicism—Scottish Highland Catholics were arguably the most marginalized of all the United Kingdom's Catholic groups due to geographic isolation, and low economic and political capital. Yet, we have argued, the pull factor was equally

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[105] Quoted in Gourlay, "Subject to Authority," 164.

[106] Daniel Szechi, "Negotiating Catholic Kingship for a Protestant People: 'Private' Letters, Royal Declarations and the Achievement of Religious Détente in the Jacobite Underground, 1702–1718," in *Debating the Faith*, ed. Dunan-Page and Prunier, 113–16; Gregory Tirenin, "From Jacobite to Loyalist: The Career and Political Theology of Bishop George Hay," *British Catholic History* 35, no. 3 (2021): 265–93, at 268; Roberts, "Faith Restored," 146–61; Robert Kent Donovan, "The Military Origins of the Roman Catholic Relief Programme of 1778," *Historical Journal* 28, no. 1 (1985): 79–102; Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*, 99–122. More work is needed on the loyalty of Jacobites and their descendants when it came to British imperialism.

[107] Mark G. McGowan, "The Maritimes Region and the Building of a Canadian Church: The Case of the Diocese of Antigonish after Confederation," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies* 70 (2004): 48–70; Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz, eds., *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750–1930* (Montreal, 1993); Terrence Murphy, "The Emergence of Maritime Catholicism, 1781–1830," *Acadiensis* 13, no. 2 (1984): 29–49.

significant. Scottish Catholics were enthusiastic settler colonists, and their motivation was both economic and faith based. They stood to prosper economically, through the acquisition of significant land resources. They also stood to gain a freedom to practice their faith free of obvious interference. The toleration of Catholicism and its expansion was a considerable improvement for the Highland Catholics who answered the call of the colonies in significant numbers. For the Indigenous peoples, whose ancestral lands they took and settled, the consequences were not softened by this pretext for settler colonization. Too often the history of anti-Catholicism in the four nations overlooks the fact that Catholics were enthusiastic colonizers whose thirst for land caused mass displacement among Indigenous peoples like the Mi'kmaq and Wulstukwiuk. It is to this that the attention of researchers must now turn.

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