

*Religion and governance in England's emerging colonial empire, 1601–1698.* By Haig Z. Smith. (New Transculturalisms, 1400–1800.) Pp. xii + 292. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. £44. 978 3 030 70130 7  
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The global turn has been one of the most invigorating recent forces in early modern religious history. With a few honourable exceptions, however, the assumption has been that early modern global Christianity is a Catholic story. Protestants rarely get a look in, and when they do, it is not generally to the particular, national Church of England that scholars have turned. But as Haig Smith reminds us in this illuminating new book, the Church of England was adapting to the challenges of global encounter long before the foundation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1698. Taking as his focus religious governance in the seventeenth-century trading company, Smith unpicks an oft-overlooked aspect of English religious history.

In this wide-ranging synoptic account, Smith uncovers the ‘patchwork of authorities’ that shaped the religious life of Britain’s early commercial empire. He deftly describes how the Church of England attempted to respond to and surpass the Catholic (and, most importantly, Jesuit) competition. The English had a reluctant admiration for Catholic evangelising achievements but were also suspicious of the ‘pious fraud’ underlying grandiose Catholic claims to be converting the world. As Smith puts it, the English aimed to both ‘mirror and oppose’ the Jesuits: their ‘ideology was not only formulated to counter papal domination and Catholic global expansion, but also to legitimise English colonialism and commerce’ (pp. 16, 13).

Smith covers an impressive geographical range which takes in the history of the Virginia, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, East India and Levant Companies (VC, PC, MBC, EIC and LC), as well as the New England Company, the first of a new species of Evangelical corporations. This breadth allows for detailed comparison of different modes of government, with admirable attention to the specifics of individual charters and the developing role of the company chaplain. Smith draws from his case studies three distinctive modes of religious governance: ‘pastoral, theocratic and ecumenical’. ‘Pastoral’ governance was that seen in the early years of the EIC and the LC, when these corporations were operating within powerful empires and did not possess jurisdiction beyond their own members. It involved a focus on encouraging good behaviour within the corporate body, in the hope that this would encourage evangelism through example. Theocratic governance, meanwhile, came to the fore in the MBC, as the company took advantage of its jurisdictional control of the colony to direct all aspects of religious life. Ecumenical governance – which developed in the later seventeenth-century EIC – also involved the exercise of jurisdiction over non-company members; in contrast to the MBC, however, the EIC embraced a pragmatic toleration of competing religions and denominations. Smith’s three categories are a helpful framework for future study, though perhaps ‘tolerationist’ would be a better label for the third: it seems to represent a grudging and unsentimental acceptance of the fact of religious diversity, rather than an ecumenical push for unity.

Smith is eager to draw attention to non-European perspectives, emphasising Native American, Ottoman and Mughal contributions to his story. He focuses on

Anglophone sources, and there is room here for other scholars to expand his account of this multicultural and multilingual world, drawing on evidence from European rivals or local agents. None the less, Smith's broad canvas of English sources allows him to trace very effectively the varied ways in which religious governance shaped English colonial expansion in different regions. On the one hand, Smith charts the intricacies of jurisdictional clashes between the MBC and Charles II's Restoration government for tighter religious control. On the other, EIC tolerance offered a challenge to assumptions about the necessity of uniformity back at home in England. Smith brings together manifold case studies and anecdotes to illustrate the fundamental flexibility of corporate structures, which could be used to underpin multiple divergent attitudes to the relationship between spiritual and temporal power. The MBC and EIC represented only two – albeit sharply opposing – possibilities on this broad spectrum.

There is the occasional minor misstep: it would have been helpful, for instance, to have made a clearer distinction between Augustine of Canterbury, apostle to the English, and Augustine of Hippo, patristic bishop (pp. 52, 59–60) when claiming Augustinian influence on English conversion methods. I noticed more typos than usual and the index is a little thin; these aspects would have benefitted from tighter editing. But such details do not diminish the great service that Smith has done early modern historians, providing an overview of the role of religion in seventeenth-century English colonial expansion for the first time.

In his conclusion, Smith emphasises the underlying similarity between the goals of English corporate religious governance as practised by the various companies under discussion. But from this reader's perspective, it is the deeply conflictual relationship between these various opposing models that stands out as the book's main finding. Smith shows us that England's 'emerging colonial empire' was as riven with religious division as the world of domestic politics. The fact that in a colonial setting the stakes were higher – in terms of economic gain, geopolitical clout and, sometimes, survival – meant that, if anything, these fault-lines became even more pronounced. Trading companies had the opportunity – and often the urgent need – to experiment with different modes of religious governance. Did corporate models of toleration abroad pave the way for religious toleration at home? Smith offers tantalising hints in this direction, which we must hope he and others will follow up.

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*Saving the Church of England. John Edwards (1637–1716) as dissenting conformer.* By Daniel C. Norman (foreword Mark Noll). Pp. xii + 291 incl. frontispiece and 1 ill. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. £28 (paper). 978 1 6667 3223 8  
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In *Saving the Church of England*, Daniel Norman sheds new light on John Edwards (1637–1716), son of the notorious mid-seventeenth-century heresy hunter, Thomas Edwards (1599–1647), and a prolific writer and theologian in his own right. In so doing, Norman contributes to ongoing attempts by early modern