

STATE PRAYERS, FASTS AND THANKSGIVINGS:

PUBLIC WORSHIP IN BRITAIN 1830-1897*

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Among the more remarkable activities of the mid nineteenth-century British state was its practice of ordering special acts of national worship – either new prayers to be read in all churches for particular dates or periods, or whole days set aside for religious duties, with complete church services composed for the occasion. These ‘prayers’ and ‘holy days’ were appointed at momentous occasions in national life, either to implore God’s forgiveness and assistance at times of threat or anxiety, or to thank God at times of relief or celebration. The practice dates from the mid-sixteenth century and was much elaborated during the following two centuries,¹ but had certainly not become a historical relic. Into the Victorian period these observances remained striking instances of government acknowledgement of divine superintendence over the nation, and presentation of official religious interpretations of particular events, from epidemics, famine, war and imperial rebellion, to harvests, public discontent and royal births. The state orders were genuinely national, reaching into every parish in Scotland and Ireland as well as England and Wales.² They were prominent expressions of the state-church relationship, while applying not just to the established churches alone but notionally to all religious denominations, and continuing beyond the 1828-9 ending of the ‘confessional state’. They not only prescribed alterations in religious services but also affected everyday secular activity: ‘holy days’ – either fast days, renamed ‘days of humiliation’ in the 1850s, or thanksgiving days – were often appointed not for Sundays but for week days, with expected suspension of all secular work. Both ‘prayers’ and ‘holy days’ were ordered by authority of the royal supremacy, and were an important attribute of the monarchy. As the sovereign nevertheless acted on government advice, the

decisions were political in the sense of always involving the prime minister and sometimes the cabinet. They were not necessarily prompted by the Archbishop of Canterbury or any church leader, nor were these always consulted in advance. Even so the possibility, occurrence, or absence of such special worship greatly exercised all the churches. They were extensively reported in the secular as well as religious press. Popular respect for these ‘days’, even when appointed for weekdays, was considerable, bringing large church attendances. They could also be occasions for expression of religious and political dissent. With their local observance of nationally-appointed acts of worship, they were also a source for late-Victorian occasions which have attracted recent historical interest: the royal thanksgiving and jubilee celebrations, and local memorial services marking the funerals of national figures.³

Plainly these special acts of national worship were significant episodes, with numerous implications for understandings of nineteenth-century public life. Yet there is no examination (not even a list) of all these observances. Only one type of occasion, the fast and humiliation days, has received published studies: Richard Janet on the cholera fast in March 1832; Peter Gray on the Irish famine fast in March 1847; Olive Anderson on the two Crimean war days of humiliation in April 1854 and March 1855; Brian Stanley on the day of humiliation for the Indian ‘mutiny’ in October 1857.⁴ In addition Frank Turner, Matthew Cragoe and Stephen Matthews have commented on government refusals to appoint fast or humiliation days, in October 1853 for cholera and January 1866 for cattle plague.⁵ Insofar as an overall interpretation emerges from these and more general studies – Janet’s unpublished dissertation on all 1832-57 fast and humiliation days, Owen Chadwick’s history of the Victorian church, and Boyd Hilton’s book on evangelicalism – this is usually an account of decline, though with varying emphases and some anomalies. For Janet radical political criticisms of the 1832 fast were the beginning of the end.⁶ For Hilton decline set in with doubts over providence theory after the Irish famine.⁷ Chadwick considered the terms of the

1853 refusal as decisive, with damaging effects for the 1854 day of humiliation.⁸ Anderson, however, found that this 1854 day attracted considerable support and that serious doubts, arising from government mishandling of the war, came only with the 1855 day of humiliation.⁹ Yet Chadwick as well as Stanley noted remarkable popular observance of the 1857 ‘mutiny’ day.¹⁰

In contrast, Cragoe was impressed not by decline but by the *persistence* of fast and humiliation days into the Victorian period.¹¹ Indeed, their frequency between 1830 and 1860 was comparable to that of any period without prolonged warfare during the previous two centuries. Criticism of fast days was not new, and had perhaps been more substantial during the late eighteenth-century American and French wars;¹² it seems unlikely that government hesitation over their appointment was new either.

Nor should fast and humiliation days be considered in isolation. Once the anxiety had passed and the petitions for divine assistance were presumed to have succeeded, ‘general thanksgiving’ was required. These further ‘holy days’ have not attracted attention, yet their number and prominence at the very least reinforces the case for the persistence of special state worship. Thanksgiving days were ordered for the end of cholera in April 1833, abundant harvest in October 1847, end of the second cholera epidemic in November 1849, the peace treaty in May 1856, and suppression of the Indian ‘mutiny’ in October 1859. Moreover, historians have noted only a few of the special prayers, though these were appointed more frequently and for a larger variety of occasions than fast and humiliation days.¹³

Once special prayers, fast and humiliation days, and thanksgiving days are considered together, a different pattern is evident. After a ten-year hiatus,¹⁴ the period from 1830 was one not of decline or even persistence but of *revival* in special occasions of national worship. These not only became numerous; types of event which had previously prompted special

worship were, after periods of suspension, once again judged to deserve religious observance. Outbreaks of popular discontent had produced prayers in 1798 and 1803, and did so again in 1830 and 1848; yet none had been appointed during the severe post-1815 disturbances. There were no observances for poor harvests between the 1801 fast and 1846 prayer, nor for abundant harvests between 1813 and 1832 prayers, though bad and good harvests had certainly occurred in these intervals.¹⁵ For the first time since the 1780s, and more often than since the seventeenth century, holy days were again proposed in Parliament. In the 1850s they even became imperial occasions, with governors in the Canadian, Australian, and South African colonies and in India following the British government in ordering days of humiliation or special prayers.¹⁶

State prayers and holy days together remained common until 1859. It was only during the 1860s that the decline occurred, and then quite sharply. From 1868 until the end of the century state-ordered worship continued only for royal occasions. It is important to understand, however, that some public episodes continued to be marked in a less 'national' form, by special prayers appointed variously by the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.

Investigating this revival and decline of special state worship opens new perspectives and fresh questions about nineteenth-century religion and ideas, state-church relations, the position of Protestant dissenters and Roman Catholics, the monarchy's place in public life, and government sensitivity towards religious opinion. Because the decisions were political, particular contingencies as well as general conditions must be considered: the changes were complex, and no single explanation is adequate – for 'decline' especially, because what actually occurred was not so much disappearance as a change in form. The next section provides the first definition and list of the special acts of national worship from 1830 to the end of the century.¹⁷ The reasons for their revival and continuance to 1859 are then

considered, both in terms of religious and political context and by examination of specific decisions. The third section explains the decline of special *state* worship for public issues. The final section indicates that the special *church* prayers which replaced them, together with developments in worship concerning the royal family, were significant for a new type of ‘national prayer’ during the twentieth century.

I

Special state prayers, fast or humiliation days and thanksgiving days were aspects of a single practice and set of beliefs, with a shared history. The practice was largely English in origin, and arose from a perceived limitation of the Book of Common Prayer. This contained apparently comprehensive ‘prayers and thanksgivings upon several occasions’ available for use at the parish clergyman’s discretion or on episcopal instruction – prayers concerning bad or good weather, harvests, ‘wars and tumults’, plague and sickness. Nevertheless, these were soon thought insufficient for moments of great crisis or relief, which were judged to require special (or ‘occasional’) replacement prayers or services. Yet under the Acts of Uniformity any departure from the Prayer Book was illegal unless ordered by special authority. Where the issue had national significance, this was understood to mean the royal supremacy rather than episcopal authority: as Archbishop Howley wrote in 1847, ‘nothing less than the Royal Prerogative can authorise the use of occasional forms of prayer’.¹⁸ Similar arrangements applied for Ireland.¹⁹ In Scotland the established church from 1689 was presbyterian, did not recognise royal supremacy and had no prayer book. Nevertheless the Church of Scotland had accepted that the crown could instruct ministers to add special extempore prayers to their services, and from the 1712 ‘toleration act’ these orders embraced the Scottish Episcopal Church. Since 1707 English, Scottish and Irish state prayers and holy days had been ordered and held on similar or the same dates, effectively creating British national observances.

Certain types of occasion were deemed by precedent to demand a particular type of worship, though here questions of timing could arise. More often further judgement was involved, with opportunity for disagreement: whether the event was sufficiently significant to require special worship; whether this should be a prayer or holy day; and whether a holy day should be a Sunday or a weekday.

Special prayers could be either of petition or thanksgiving, and replaced or were added to the prescribed Prayer Book services.²⁰ In an obvious sense these were lesser observances than holy days, though they could be a prelude to them (as during cholera outbreaks in 1831 and 1849: see Appendix) or an alternative if a weekday suspension of work seemed excessive. They were ordered by the sovereign in privy council.²¹ For England and Ireland the Archbishop of Canterbury was instructed to compose a ‘form of prayer’ (sometimes including two or three prayers) for the purpose, and the royal printer was ordered to publish and distribute sufficient copies for use in all churches on the stated dates. For Scotland, Church of Scotland and Episcopal Church ministers were more simply ordered to ‘put up a Prayer to Almighty God’. As the Appendix shows, common occasions for ‘prayers’ were royal events, abundant or poor harvests (1832, 1842, 1854) and battle victories (April 1846, September 1855). One advantage over holy days was that they could be ordered not just for single dates but for Sunday or daily services over specified or indefinite periods, as during illnesses of kings (1830, 1837), periods of discontent (1830, 1848), or epidemics (1831-3, 1849, 1865-6). They might also be organised with shorter notice, though this could cause problems with distribution of forms of prayer. That for William IV’s 1837 illness, sent with ‘pitiful economy’ by the cheapest post, often arrived too late for the nearest Sunday and he died on the following Tuesday.²²

Holy days were more considerable in significance and effort: as Peel wrote, ‘acts so solemn as the setting apart of a special day’ were reserved ‘for very special events, connected

with the most vital interests of the country'.²³ Public fasts had always been appointed for a weekday, and during the Napoleonic war Wednesday had become the customary English day. 1832 was the last occasion when governments accommodated a Church of Scotland preference for Thursdays, producing different English and Scottish fast days. Weekday appointments was one reason for order by royal proclamation, which enabled legal closure of public offices, supported by 1827 legislation for closing financial markets.²⁴ The wording of the proclamations, on this point identical for all parts of the United Kingdom, largely retained the imperative formula of the seventeenth century, including a threat of sanctions:

we do strictly charge and command, that the said public fast be reverently and devoutly observed by all our loving subjects in England and Ireland, as they tender the favour of Almighty God, and would avoid His wrath and indignation, and upon pain of such punishment as may justly be inflicted on all such as contemn and neglect the performance of so religious and necessary a duty.²⁵

Another reason for order by proclamation was that English and Irish fasts involved a more substantial departure from the Prayer Book. For 'the better and more orderly solemnizing' of the day, the Archbishops were instructed to compose a 'form of prayer' – confusingly the same term as for special prayers, but actually consisting of three services, for morning and evening prayer, and communion – and to ensure its 'timely' dispersal to all churches and chapels. As with special prayer forms, further copies were printed for private sale, which could be enormous: in April 1857 50,000 copies were printed for the clergy, but 1.1 million for sale.²⁶ For Scotland, the proclamation was to be read out and posted by town and shire officials so that 'none' could 'pretend ignorance', and read also in parish churches on the Sunday preceding the fast day, for which ministers organised their own special services.

Aside from alteration of church services, what a 'public day of fasting and humiliation' entailed – the practical meaning of 'devoutly observed' – was not officially

specified, and had not been since publication of an ‘order of fast’ for plague fast days from 1563 to 1665. Nor, it seems, had the authorities enforced observance for many decades. One of the most conscientious, Lord Ashley (from 1851 Lord Shaftesbury), in 1847 described ‘people ... at their wits’ end how to observe the fast’.²⁷ For those seeking guidance the Elizabethan ‘order’ was privately re-printed, advice appeared in religious journals and tracts were published, notably those written for the 1832 and 1847 fasts by the evangelical Anglican rector Edward Bickersteth: well over 100,000 copies were distributed on each occasion, reaching an even larger audience through clergymen using it to advise parishioners.²⁸ In the Protestant tradition fasting as such was not commended, nor interpreted literally. Rather, moderate abstention – limited and simple food and drink, and no pleasures or secular recreation – was recommended as the physical mortification which promoted the essential aims of spiritual humiliation, repentance, and intensive prayer. Indeed, many clergymen considered the term ‘fast’ outmoded, and for some it retained distasteful Roman Catholic connotations, sharpened by the ‘Protestant’ backlash against Tractarianism and ‘papal aggression’. From 1854, with negligible public comment, these occasions were re-designated as ‘days of humiliation’.²⁹ Church attendance was considered essential not just for worship but also for the preaching – set-piece sermons having always been a great feature of fast days, with many published as pamphlets or in newspapers or journals. *The Times* gave 13 columns to the main London sermons in 1847, included some from the provinces in 23 columns in 1854, and had 26 columns in 1857 (though only 4 in 1855). Other practices were household prayers, private religious reading, and alms-giving. For the 1847 Irish famine fast day Ashley had dry bread and cocoa for breakfast and consumed nothing further until the same at 10.00 pm; he attended church, at home prayed with his family and servants, and gave each copies of the form of prayer and Bickersteth’s tract; he studied Daniel chapter 10 with a commentary; and he donated money saved from household meals to an Irish relief fund.

Such strict observance was usual among the most religious, and not unique among public men.³⁰ For less earnest people, fast days more simply resembled Sundays, with church attendance for many and appeals not only from clergymen but also mayors and other civil authorities resulting in closure of private businesses, entertainments and public houses as well as public offices and banks. Public charitable appeals were normal. For the 1832 cholera fast, Bishop Blomfield urged his clergy to further ‘sanctify the fast’ by remitting their church collections to a fund for assisting the most afflicted London districts. The 1847 fast followed a ‘Queen’s Letter’ read in all Anglican churches, ordering parish collections for a national Irish famine fund.³¹ In 1854 and 1855 the Archbishop of Canterbury sanctioned collections for soldiers’ and sailors’ families, and in 1857 collections were made for distressed families in India.

After ‘a day of fasting has been appointed, it has been the custom to acknowledge the mercy of Providence in granting relief with equal solemnity’.³² In the past thanksgiving days were normally appointed for weekdays, commonly a Thursday as in November 1849, and so ordered by proclamation. But after 1830 most thanksgiving days were Sundays, and appointed by order in council.³³ In similar terms as for fast and humiliation days, both types of order instructed the Archbishop of Canterbury to prepare and distribute a ‘form of prayer and thanksgiving’ consisting of three services, and ministers in Scotland to ‘offer up prayers and thanksgivings’. The 1849 proclamation ‘commanded’ the thanksgiving, and declared that ‘we earnestly exhort that [it] be reverently and devoutly observed by all our loving subjects’. In other words, a thanksgiving day, even on a Thursday, was assumed to be like a specially-religious Sunday, with greater church attendance and much preaching – although because less dramatic, thanksgiving sermons were less often published than fast sermons (*The Times* in 1849 gave 11 columns) – but also with some innocent celebration.³⁴

In contrast to twentieth-century occasions of national religious solemnity or celebration, these holy days were very rarely marked by great state services in London, attended by the sovereign and other national leaders.³⁵ Reports of the sovereign's devotions on the day were important, but these were usually conducted in a private chapel. If Parliament was in session, by long tradition the two Houses processed 'in state' to separate services, the Lords in Westminster Abbey and the Commons in St. Margaret's Church, to hear specially appointed preachers whose sermons were normally ordered to be published. This was, however, a matter of formal institutional representation, and attendance by ordinary peers and MPs (rather than the House's officers) was usually low.³⁶ Instead most attended other London churches, exactly in the spirit of these observances – whose 'national' quality consisted not of one central event but simultaneous worship in all local churches. More typical was the customary processional attendance of the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London at St Paul's Cathedral, replicated by municipal and county leaders in cathedrals and churches throughout the three kingdoms.

II

Special prayers and 'holy days' were ordered for various and often mixed reasons, but the official explanations should not be minimised: belief in the nation as a spiritual body, in God's moral government of both natural and human worlds, in an interventionist and retributive divine providence, and in the practical effectiveness of united public prayer. The state orders and prayers expressed an official 'providentialist' doctrine derived from the Old Testament accounts of God's dealings with Israel, a doctrine which had scarcely changed since the sixteenth century³⁷ and which remained familiar from the ordinary Prayer Book services. The March 1832 fast day was ordered so that

we and our people may humble ourselves before Almighty God, in order to obtain pardon of our sins, and in the most devout and solemn manner, send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for the removal of those heavy judgments which our manifold sins and provocations have most justly deserved.

God could inflict ‘punishment’ in his ‘anger’ at the ‘iniquities’ of the nation: ‘we have grievously sinned and transgressed Thy holy laws’. Cholera and famine were ‘visitations’ of divine ‘wrath’. Yet God was also merciful: even in His ‘displeasure’ he regarded the nation with ‘compassion’ and on certain conditions might respond to supplications. As the 1847 fast proclamation declared: ‘notwithstanding the sore punishment which He hath laid upon us, and upon our people, He will, if we turn to him in due contrition and penitence of heart, withdraw his afflicting hand’. With repentance went acceptance that the ‘chastisement’ was deserved – ‘we have justly provoked Thy wrath’ – and that from Him alone came ‘deliverance’. Similarly, however ‘just and necessary’ the cause, in seeking God’s assistance in war or against rebellion the nation must confess that it had ‘offended Thee by disobedience to Thy commandments’, and put its ‘trust in Almighty God that He will graciously bless our efforts’. The end of troubles or achievement of victories was a ‘merciful preservation’ brought by ‘Divine goodness’, and as stated in the 1849 thanksgiving proclamation created ‘the indispensable duty’ of ‘prostrating ourselves before His Divine Majesty, and offering up in the most public and solemn manner our praises and thanksgivings’.³⁸

Studies of nineteenth-century providentialism have concentrated on evangelicalism, and the distinction between its ‘extreme’ pre-millenarian and ‘moderate’ post-millenarian forms.³⁹ Certainly pre-millenarian believers in frequent ‘special’ or ‘particular’ providential interventions were often active in lobbying bishops and government ministers or asking in Parliament for appointment of prayers or fasts. But in contrast moderate evangelicals held that God’s ‘general providence’, operating through natural and human ‘secondary causes’,

prevailed for 99 per cent of the time, this still allowed that, however rarely, certain events were the result of ‘special providences’.⁴⁰ Moreover, not only had state worship on providentialist assumptions long preceded the ‘evangelical revival’; belief in an interventionist God was far from confined to evangelicals alone. As studies of fast and humiliation day sermons show, it was shared across the various shades of both Anglican and Scottish presbyterian belief, and by dissenting denominations and Roman Catholics. Important differences existed over the likely balance and relationship between ‘special’ and ‘general’ providences, over what constituted ‘national sins’, and over appropriate church and secular responses, but the essential belief was ‘all but universal’: this was orthodox as well as official doctrine.⁴¹ To assume that for senior non-evangelical clergy public fasts were an aspect of religion considered simply as a ‘civic affair’, to do with stability and convention,⁴² is too reductionist. In March 1832 two prominent ‘official’ preachers, Bishops Blomfield and Maltby did attack the extreme evangelical ‘perversion’ of treating every affliction as a divine punishment, because this had destabilising social and political effects. Nevertheless for them too the cholera epidemic was a clear instance of providential intervention.⁴³ Blomfield called it a divine ‘lesson’ rather than a ‘judgment’, but again in 1847 he declared the Irish famine a ‘great mark of divine displeasure’ and justified the effectiveness of fasts by taking 1832 as his example: ‘almost from the very day on which [that] national humiliation took place, the pestilence began to decline’. The Crimean War was more plainly a consequence of human causes, but for Blomfield providence was still manifest: God had ‘decreed or permitted it’.⁴⁴ State-ordered special worship seemed no less appropriate to the high-church-inclined *Guardian* newspaper than for the ‘extreme’ evangelical *Record*. In 1857 it was impressed that despite religious controversies and sceptical philosophers, belief in an interventionist God and the efficacy of prayer remained widespread and retained a ‘real hold on the popular mind’.⁴⁵ Secular newspapers also upheld these beliefs. For *The Times* the Irish famine was

as much ‘a Divine judgment on our sins’ as a consequence of human mismanagement. It was, it declared after the 1849 cholera epidemic, false and absurd to consider acknowledgement of divine visitations and deliverances as inconsistent with proper regard for ‘the ordinary course of nature’.⁴⁶ As studies of ‘Christian political economy’ have established, such views were also held among civil servants and by cabinet ministers of both major political parties.

Among the secondary reasons for appointment of ‘days’ and ‘prayers’, precedent was often important. Large-scale natural ‘calamities’ with unknown causes and terrifying consequences had prompted such worship in the past, and in 1831 Howley presented the 1720-21 fasts for plague as an argument for a fast day for cholera.⁴⁷ Since the 1690s fasts had been appointed each year during European wars, and thanksgiving days for peace treaties.⁴⁸ Privy Council records were searched for precedents relating to decisive battles (Salamanca, Vittoria, Waterloo) before decisions for prayers after Indian victories in 1846, and the 1855 capture of Sebastopol.⁴⁹ Precedent mattered especially where it affected the sovereign’s person. Prayers during incapacitating royal illnesses had become familiar during George III’s reign. After an attempted assault on the Queen in 1840, Melbourne ‘admitted the propriety’ of a parliamentary appeal to precedents for thanksgiving prayers for similar occasions from the same reign,⁵⁰ precedents followed again in June 1842.⁵¹ Thanksgiving prayers for the births of Queen Victoria’s children – all nine – created the most common occasions for state prayers.⁵²

Yet precedents were always available, ‘providentialism’ was hardly new, and evangelicalism had been influential among national leaders since the 1790s. In explaining why special acts of worship became more numerous from 1830, further general reasons seem clear, though difficult to document because usually unstated by those taking the decisions. The 1830s and 1840s included particularly difficult periods arising not just from natural

causes – cholera, population pressure, poor harvests, potato blight – but also from social and political unsettlement, and these together generated much moral, religious and ecclesiastical anxiety, of which evangelical prophetic and adventist ideas were only the more dramatic expressions.⁵³ When European revolutions coincided with the domestic 1830 ‘Swing riots’ and 1848 Chartist campaigns, prayers for maintenance of public order invoked God both as warning to the discontented and as reassurance of ultimate social stability to everyone else. Thanksgiving prayers after the 1840 and 1842 ‘assassination’ attempts – ordered for as many as thirty days – served similar purposes. Thanksgivings for good harvests in 1832, 1842, 1847 and during wartime pressures in October 1854, and petitions for relief from scarcity during the Irish and Scottish potato crop failures in 1846-7, also had obvious social and political connotations. Special acts of worship could be regarded as means to check panic, supply comfort and hope, or express relief, to offer meaning and to reaffirm social solidarity.⁵⁴ Whatever the nature of the occasion, there were usually prayers for unity and the end of discord. Such concerns were the basic elements of official providentialism.

However, general conditions alone do not explain the particular incidence of special prayers and holy days. Here an obvious aspect was the sporadic occurrence of events of great threat or celebration – rare in the later 1830s, more common because of war in the 1850s. Even so, the pattern and types of special worship raise questions. Why, for example, was the 1832 cholera epidemic marked by a public fast but the more severe 1849 outbreak only by a prayer? Why did the crisis over the first failure of the potato crop in 1845 not prompt a prayer, but the second failure in 1846 both a prayer and a fast day? Decisions to order special worship were ultimately political,⁵⁵ and so shaped by the assessments of leading ministers. These included their readiness to be influenced by episcopal advice, other churchmen or more general religious opinion, by the sovereign and by parliamentary or wider political

circumstances. Accordingly full understanding of the special religious observances requires closer examination of the main and most revealing episodes.

The 1832 cholera fast is usually explained by the Whig government succumbing to pressure from over-excited pre-millenarian MPs. Their calls in the House of Commons for a ‘general fast’ had begun before the epidemic, in December 1830, and originated in belief that the political and social dislocations in the period since Roman Catholic emancipation, and aggravated by the parliamentary reform crisis, were signs of approaching divine judgement. The government’s January 1832 announcement of a public fast followed a motion introduced by Spencer Perceval with a frenzied ‘prophetic’ speech, with themes of an imminent apocalypse which he repeated in the Commons on the day before the fast.⁵⁶ Perceval had certainly been discouraged by Althorp, the ministerial leader in the Commons – yet the objection was not to a fast as such, but to the impropriety of Perceval’s behaviour. For the government such an issue was a matter for decision by the King in Council, not debate in the Commons; and Perceval was plainly intent on castigating the whole House for ‘infidelity’ and making a fool of himself, to almost all MPs’ embarrassment. Moreover, Althorp’s statement that the government had decided upon a fast before Perceval’s motion was entirely accurate,⁵⁷ because its real origin was different and more conventional. The sense of divine disturbance was felt not just by evangelical ‘extremists’ but very widely, producing spontaneous local ‘humiliations’ in England and Scotland and appeals to King, government, parliament and archbishop for state prayers and a fast.⁵⁸ These concerns were shared by senior churchmen. Blomfield in the House of Lords was more effective than pre-millenarians in the Commons in inserting acknowledgements of divine interposition in cholera legislation.⁵⁹ Independently of evangelical agitation, from late 1830 to early 1833 Archbishop Howley obtained Grey’s consent as prime minister for six orders for special worship, including a prayer for weekly use during the epidemic. So many special acts of

worship in such a short period was very unusual. Even given the political turbulence and cholera, further explanations seem possible. For Howley these orders were probably important as reaffirmations of the Church of England's authority in the face of its changed constitutional position, new claims by dissenters and Roman Catholics, and uncertainty about the Whig government's ecclesiastical policies, while for Grey customary church observances probably seemed useful as forms of religious and social reassurance. When in November 1831 Howley first suggested a fast, Grey expressed personal approval but wished to consult his cabinet, concerned that the occasion might give atheistic radicals opportunities to 'propagate ... their pernicious opinions'.⁶⁰ Further delays occurred when cholera temporarily abated, and because of difficulties in arranging a privy-council meeting.⁶¹ Cabinet and royal agreement were nevertheless obtained by 22 January, and reported to Perceval. But he persisted with his motion because he wanted the House of Commons to express its own errors and humiliation before God.⁶² For both Howley and Grey the issue had been whether a fast would in Howley's word be 'expedient' in terms of general opinion and the extent of alarm about cholera. Intervention by Perceval and his evangelical friends was an irritating complication.

Some commentators have emphasised the providentialist beliefs of the 1841-6 Conservative cabinet, but its decisions on special worship emphasise the complex connections between such beliefs and government action. Although Graham, the home secretary, considered military victories in Afghanistan and China in late 1842 'a merciful interposition of that divine providence, ... which is able in a moment to turn darkness into light', Peel resisted proposals for public thanksgiving by arguing that there were no precedents relating to Asian wars.⁶³ Nevertheless in April 1846 he judged it 'right' to have a thanksgiving prayer after the Sikh war: 'we shall thus break through a bad principle ... of not returning thanks to God for Indian victories'. The difference might have been because like

evangelicals Peel was impressed by how Hardinge, the Governor-General in India, publicly ascribed the victories to God, or because he shared Ashley's view that a 'very strong desire' existed among 'an immense proportion of all classes ... for some special recognition' of this 'astounding mercy'. Just as likely was government relief that Hardinge had rescued it from severe embarrassments.⁶⁴ Another contrast is also revealing. As a politician particularly anxious about social stability, after the 1841-2 food shortages, distress and popular discontent Peel accepted Graham's suggestion that a thanksgiving prayer for the abundant 1842 harvest 'would be proper'.⁶⁵ Yet although Peel, Graham and other ministers considered the 1845 potato crop failure a 'dispensation of Providence', they did not propose official petitions to God for relief from famine in Ireland. As Hilton and Gray have argued, Peel seems to have believed more in a general than a special providence. The Irish famine was a rare case of a special 'visitation', but its purpose was to enforce restoration of the general providential order: it was a lesson, a warning against injurious national policies. Consequently the appropriate response was not religious humiliation but human action, in the form of corn law repeal.⁶⁶

Russell's Whig government ordered a larger number of special acts of worship than its Conservative predecessor. In contrast to Peel's government, in October 1846 it appointed a petitionary prayer for the Irish famine. This was partly because a second potato crop failure, occurring after remedial government decisions had been taken, seemed to some ministers particularly strong evidence of a special 'calamity sent by Providence', of the sort which required religious supplication. It was also because Whig ministers were more responsive towards Irish and Catholic problems. Russell's sense that a state prayer was 'well suited to so awful a calamity' was prompted by pressure from the Church of Ireland Primate, Archbishop Beresford, and by a sense that an expression of British Protestant sympathy might help to soothe Irish opinion, especially among the Irish Catholics who were suffering

the most.⁶⁷ Beresford himself went further in his own diocese, appointing a ‘day of humiliation’, which on the suggestion of the Whig Lord-Lieutenant, Bessborough, was re-arranged with other bishops to create a weekday humiliation ‘day’ observed throughout the Church of Ireland.⁶⁸ As distress increased, another Beresford request precipitated a cabinet decision to appoint a British fast day in March 1847. This, Bessborough agreed, would ‘give satisfaction to a large class in Ireland’. The decisive element was probably, however, evidence that a providentialist and retributive explanation for the famine had become widespread in England and Scotland too, and that public pressure on the government would soon develop. Parliamentary and public petitions were being prepared, some but not all emanating from evangelicals. Howley, in an English context, also noted that a fast would ‘give great satisfaction’.⁶⁹

As the 1847 harvest was much improved, a thanksgiving day followed routinely in October. But the next thanksgiving day was unusual in that it was not preceded by a fast day. The explanation lies in an unnoticed precursor to the 1853 rejection of a fast. Cholera re-emerged during 1848, but at first its spread was gradual and sporadic. When in spring 1849 Archbishop Sumner proposed a special prayer, Russell concurred with Queen Victoria⁷⁰ that it was sufficient for bishops in the afflicted areas to urge use of the Prayer Book prayer for times of pestilence. During the summer, however, the epidemic became more widespread and more severe than that of 1832, and Sumner reported to Russell that ‘daily letters’ revealed a ‘very general wish’ for a public fast. But still he was unable to obtain a state order for any type of special worship.⁷¹ Pressure came also from Ashley who, though now responsible as chairman of the Board of Health for secular measures against the disease, nevertheless regarded the new outbreak as a divine judgement on the nation. George Grey, the Home Secretary, in reply insisted that the Prayer Book prayer was appropriate for an epidemic with a largely regional and local incidence – which ignored both Ashley’s argument

that prayer might avert its arrival,⁷² and the doctrine of national and retributive divine judgments which the state had recognised in 1832 and 1847. Quite why Russell and Grey were so resistant is unclear, though it is possible that unlike Ashley they were concerned that a prayer or fast would weaken official appeals for greater cleanliness and other anti-cholera measures. Eventually, however, Russell did concede a special prayer, almost certainly because it had become plain that lack of any state-ordered worship was causing, in Ashley's words, 'deep and general' consternation and did 'not redound to [the government's] honour'.⁷³ So strong had religious feeling now become that both English bishops (with Sumner's private encouragement) and Scottish presbyteries were ordering their own local days of humiliation. During the autumn these were held in almost every area, usually on a weekday with support from the local authorities, and attracting considerable popular observance.⁷⁴ All this coincided with separate criticisms of the government by religious opinion, when the first florin coins were found to lack the traditional motto 'defensor fides' and when the Post Office proposed to open its London headquarters on Sundays. Amidst newspaper comments about 'the unfulfilled duty of the state' in not ordering a national fast, Russell decided that once the epidemic had subsided it would be prudent, as the *Guardian* put it, 'to retrieve the omission' by an emphatic re-iteration of traditional state worship. Not only did he arrange a thanksgiving day; contrary to Sumner's proposal that the choice of a Sunday would be adequate, he stressed its special quality by appointing it for a Thursday.⁷⁵

The position which Russell and Grey had originally adopted in 1849 was maintained by their successors in the Aberdeen coalition during the next cholera outbreak, in 1853-4. Palmerston's refusal as Home Secretary to accept the Edinburgh presbyteries' appeal for a general fast was unusual in that without consulting the prime minister he issued a robust explanation, which soon became public. Nevertheless what he stated was in essence Peel's apparent view in 1845-6: that acts of providence required a secular response, in this case

improved sanitation. Privately he also thought that to give the outbreak the recognition of a national fast would have a demoralising effect: ‘it would frighten the Public out of their senses’.⁷⁶ That the controversy resulting from his statement did not produce a similar concession to Russell’s in 1849 was due chiefly to the new epidemic being milder than previous outbreaks. Although Sumner did ask for a special prayer as cholera continued during the following year he had little evidence of public demand for one, and Aberdeen with the Queen’s support simply urged use of the ‘usual prayer’ from the Prayer Book.⁷⁷

Ministerial refusals of special acts of worship could not be maintained during a European war. This was not just from force of precedent and because large-scale warfare evoked religious sentiments, but also because this particular war against the Russians was widely presented as both a divine judgement and an exemplar of the Christian notion of a just war, despite being fought in alliance with the Muslim Ottomans.⁷⁸ Even before it began, appeals for a public fast were made privately to Aberdeen and in the House of Lords. He was discouraging,⁷⁹ but when after war was declared a fast was again proposed in both the Lords and Commons he immediately conceded the case, without consulting the Queen and to her considerable irritation. When indications of possible delay provoked complaints, he moved quickly to announce an early date.⁸⁰ Evangelicals – the Ulster Conservative Roden⁸¹ as well as Shaftesbury – were particularly pressing. But these were not the only peers and MPs calling for official invocation of ‘Divine blessing on our arms’, and Aberdeen’s main concern was with the general feeling which these represented: he did not want the war to open with public differences caused by ‘clamour’ from ‘the religious part of the community’.⁸² He did, though, obtain Sumner’s approval for the substitution of the word ‘humiliation’ for ‘fast’.⁸³ This changed terminology created unexpected trouble when commercial interests protested that the 1827 Act meant that financial transactions could only be suspended if the occasion was legally designated as a ‘solemn fast’. Consequently a second proclamation had to be

issued to re-instate those words, creating a recurring anomaly in the 1850s of a proclaimed ‘fast’ being officially termed a ‘humiliation’.⁸⁴

For wartime governments the issue of special worship remained a delicate matter, as high stakes and high feelings sharpened ministerial sensitivity towards both a presumed ‘general opinion’ and a potential for embarrassments in Parliament. When an exceptionally good 1854 harvest coincided with the onset of the military campaign in the Crimea, Aberdeen decided that early announcement of a thanksgiving prayer was ‘advisable’ for ‘the purpose of meeting the general expectation’ for one.⁸⁵ Nevertheless he resisted Sumner’s requests for a petitionary prayer for the duration of the war, proposing instead (as with cholera) use of the standard Prayer Book prayer, in this case for ‘war and tumults’. When Sumner and Blomfield later reported ‘almost daily’ appeals for a special prayer, Aberdeen ‘most strongly protest[ed]’. After the costly and indecisive battles of Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman, an official appeal for God’s assistance might seem an act of desperation and so fuel criticism of the government: it ‘would infallibly lead’ to the army’s position ‘being very much misconstrued’, and ‘spread dismay throughout the country’.⁸⁶ But the issue would not subside and in December it was raised in Parliament, mostly by evangelical peers and MPs – though in inconsistent terms, some wanting a petitionary prayer, some another humiliation day, and some a thanksgiving for what they, unlike ministers, considered to be battle victories. The Duke of Grafton declared that ‘we cannot expect blessings as a nation, unless as a nation we pray’. Roden asserted that the April day of humiliation had brought success at Alma and Inkerman, and that if the government did not now call ‘loudly for thanksgiving to God’ this might be ‘the cause of great calamities’. Although Aberdeen again declined to act, his argument – that it was unwise to change Prayer Book services too often – was evasive and showed the difficulties of resisting appeals with wide religious resonances.⁸⁷ When soon afterwards revelations of the appalling condition of the army in the Crimea intensified

complaints of government mismanagement, he concluded that his cabinet could not afford continued opposition. Now Grafton only had to give private notification of a House of Lords motion for Aberdeen to concede the case for another day of humiliation.⁸⁸

Before this could be announced, Aberdeen's government collapsed. The decision of his successor, Palmerston, to appoint a day of humiliation has been attributed to pressure from Shaftesbury (his son-in-law), and criticised for misunderstanding the condition of public opinion.⁸⁹ But the wider context reveals a more complicated explanation: even before Shaftesbury began 'stir[ring] up Prelates and Ministers', Roden as well as Grafton had made it clear that more parliamentary pressure was imminent. Probably just as important, Blomfield had started a movement among bishops by calling a day of prayer in his London diocese, a movement which as in 1849 might emphasise a government omission.⁹⁰ In the event the March 1855 day of humiliation attracted an unusual amount of public criticism, because it was plain even to many of the religiously-minded that the army's sufferings resulted more from human faults than divine displeasure. But Palmerston could not easily have anticipated these divisions in opinion. His closest experience was months of public and parliamentary calls for special state worship, and as his new government was politically very shaky further rejections carried unwelcome risks. As he told the Queen, a humiliation day 'could not be refused without offence to the feelings of the country, and ... ought therefore to be complied with'.⁹¹

Nor did controversy over this 1855 humiliation day change Palmerston's assessment that special acts of worship could on certain occasions be popular. He pre-empted both general religious opinion and requests from the archbishop by initiating a thanksgiving prayer after the capture of Sebastopol in September 1855, and a thanksgiving day after the conclusion of the peace in spring 1856.⁹² A thanksgiving day for peace, Palmerston explained to the Queen, had been 'usual' in the past, so 'the country would expect' it. The

only complication was over the selection of the day: the cabinet thought a Sunday would ‘not altogether be satisfactory to the country’, but the Queen agreed with Palmerston that a weekday interruption of business would bring complaints from both employers and employees.⁹³ The appropriate day of the week was again the chief issue after the onset of the Indian ‘mutiny’ in 1857. Again Palmerston was quick off the mark, at first canvassing ministerial opinion for a petitionary prayer but soon accepting the view of Bishop Villiers of Carlisle that ‘widespread feeling’ existed for a day of humiliation, and that this would have ‘an excellent effect’ and ‘commend itself especially to the middle classes’. Only after he had obtained the Queen’s consent did Palmerston announce the decision to Archbishop Sumner.⁹⁴ Both deferred to the Queen’s preference for a Sunday, until alerted privately to religious objections. Bishops Phillpotts of Exeter and Charles Sumner of Winchester protested that Sunday was rightly a ‘jubilant’ day, not a day for humiliation: the choice was not just contrary to past practice but almost ‘anti-Christian’, and would ‘raise a very general and very grave scandal’. The Archbishop now advised that it was better not to ‘run the risks of such ... remonstrances’, and so Palmerston reverted to a Wednesday, the customary day for public fasts.⁹⁵ Once the ‘mutiny’ was suppressed in 1859, Derby’s Conservative government ordered a Sunday thanksgiving day as a matter of routine.

Decisions about special acts of worship were, then, very much affected by prime ministerial and sometimes cabinet assessments of prevailing ‘opinion’. Evangelical public figures were often the most active in calling for state orders, none more so than Shaftesbury. But the effectiveness of this activity should not be over-stated. Nor were the attitudes of particular evangelicals towards special observances as straightforward or predictable as might be expected. Shaftesbury accepted Palmerston’s reasons against a cholera fast in 1853, and at first Aberdeen’s against a second wartime day of humiliation.⁹⁶ ‘Moderate’ evangelicals in more influential positions were not necessarily strong supporters of such observances.

George Grey was obstructive in 1849.⁹⁷ Sumner, the first evangelical Archbishop of Canterbury, was on these points almost meek in his dealings with Aberdeen, and usually slower to act than Palmerston. But then Howley in the 1830s had also been clear that the issues were not theological but political: the archbishops could request and advise, but it was for prime ministers to decide. Archbishops would ask if on ‘consideration of all the circumstances’, ministers had any objections to special worship; if they did, the archbishops might offer to help in discouraging further appeals.⁹⁸ They treated it as natural that prime ministers would themselves initiate orders for petitions or thanksgivings to God; they submitted their forms of prayer to them and to the Queen for approval, and were amenable when these suggested changes. Before drafting the 1856 thanksgiving day services, Sumner even asked Palmerston whether he should state or avoid anything in particular.⁹⁹ All this was integral to an Erastian constitution where, in the era of the Gorham judgement, politicians still made decisions on matters of even more immediate concern to the clergy, including religious doctrine itself. For archbishops and still more for prime ministers what mattered was not agitation by a few evangelical ‘activists’, but the likely views of religious opinion broadly understood, occasionally elements of parliamentary opinion, and most often those of ‘the country’ or ‘the people’ at large. The essential reason why state religious occasions revived after 1830 was that, especially in conditions of an expanded political nation, account had to be taken of what Prince Albert noted in proposing a thanksgiving prayer in 1842: the degree to which since 1815 ‘the public mind has directed itself towards religious observance’. In large part this was due to the enormous efforts by clergy and lay churchmen to extend faith and build new places of worship, stimulated by both increased denominational competition and social and political unsettlement. Evangelicalism was chiefly important indirectly, to the extent that its spreading influence also contributed to a general ‘progress of religious opinion’.¹⁰⁰

III

Between 1830 and 1859, leaving aside royal prayers, the state ordered twenty-three special acts of worship, both prayers and holy days. Except for new developments in royal prayers – considered in section IV - from 1859 until the end of the century there were no state holy days and only four state prayers, all during the 1860s.

The turning point for holy days came in early 1866. A cattle ‘plague’ (rinderpest) was the kind of unexplained epidemic, seemingly uncheckable by human means, which had in the past been regarded as a providential visitation, requiring religious supplications. In October 1865 Palmerston’s government duly ordered a prayer for the duration of the plague, and allowed Archbishop Longley to add another prayer for protection against the spread of a new cholera outbreak from continental Europe.¹⁰¹ However, after the cattle plague worsened, causing considerable difficulties in rural areas and leading to appeals from ‘all quarters of the kingdom’ for further spiritual petitions, Russell’s cabinet in January 1866 rejected Archbishop Longley’s request for a day of humiliation. There are similarities with the 1849 refusal of Russell’s earlier government to allow a cholera fast. Grey again argued that the epidemic was not sufficiently ‘national’ in its incidence to warrant an additional form of worship’.¹⁰² English bishops again organised their own diocesan days of humiliation.¹⁰³ But there were differences too, marking a significant change. Since 1854 successive governments had allowed Canterbury and York convocations, the representative assemblies of Anglican clergy, to become active again, and these now expressed disappointment at the lack of a state holy day. In Canterbury convocation Longley not only made the cabinet’s rejection of his advice public, but also publicly approved the appointment of diocesan humiliation days.¹⁰⁴ In effect the Church of England was now acting as an independent body, and the Church of Scotland explicitly followed its example by appointing its own day of humiliation.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, the cabinet endorsed this independence by official publication of its correspondence with Longley, and by Grey expressing approval of the regional humiliation days.¹⁰⁶

In similar fashion, Derby, Russell's successor, later left it to the bishops to revise the existing prayer in order to accommodate both an abatement of the cattle plague and the arrival of cholera in Britain. Even so the government claimed the credit, in a unique instance of a state prayer being mentioned in a parliamentary Queen's Speech. In November 1866 it also initiated a thanksgiving prayer for the end of both epidemics.¹⁰⁷ These actions were probably instances of the minority Conservative government's general efforts to rally church and particularly evangelical opinion for party purposes. This certainly seems evident with the next state prayer. After the successful 1868 Abyssinian military expedition Shaftesbury alerted Disraeli to a 'general desire' for a thanksgiving prayer, and suggested that it would be 'better that the Government ... should take the first step, rather than appear to be brought to it by outside pressure'. Disraeli thereupon obtained the Queen's consent, explaining to her that appointment of a prayer was 'highly important'.¹⁰⁸

This was the last state prayer of the period for non-royal purposes. Further special acts of worship were periodically proposed, but were either rejected or proceeded without state authority. During the 1870 Franco-Prussian war Archbishop Tait requested a prayer for peace, but Gladstone's Liberal cabinet refused on the ground that no precedent existed for wartime prayers when Britain itself was not engaged in war.¹⁰⁹ After the 1874 Ashanti war Disraeli initially favoured the evangelical Lord Ebury's proposal for a thanksgiving prayer, but then let the matter drop.¹¹⁰ When in 1882 Gladstone wanted the nation to express 'thankfulness to God Almighty' for the Egyptian campaign, he arranged a special prayer but did so on the authority of the English archbishops, not the state.¹¹¹ During the 1884-85 Sudan campaign, when Gladstone's government was much criticised, Archbishop Benson on behalf

of the bishops and convocation twice suggested a special prayer. But in 1884 Gladstone discouraged a prayer for General Gordon, on the argument that it was inappropriate to name any individual.¹¹² After news of Gordon's death reached London in February 1885, Gladstone reluctantly approved the bishops' issue of a prayer for the British.¹¹³ Yet curiously, despite this retreat from state-ordered national worship, Benson still hoped to obtain an official day of humiliation during a severe influenza outbreak in January 1892. His expectations had been raised by numerous appeals from churchmen and the Evangelical Alliance; by widespread mourning after the Queen's grandson, the Duke of Clarence, became a victim; and by the special national services arranged for the Queen's 1887 jubilee: 'why not for a Pestilence as well as for a Jubilee?'. But the Queen was discouraging, and Benson did not persist.¹¹⁴

Why did this decline in special state-ordered worship on public issues occur? Why even during the earlier period from 1830 were prime ministers sometimes reluctant or resistant?

As Chadwick noted, part of the explanation is Queen Victoria,¹¹⁵ given that state prayers and holy days required the sovereign's consent. For William IV these were familiar Hanoverian state customs. Victoria not only lacked experience of these customs; supported by her husband, she also had critical opinions on most of their aspects. Her earliest religious influences, reinforced by marriage to Prince Albert, were Lutheran, and in her simple, pious faith she had limited sympathy with traditional Church of England doctrine and disliked parts of the Anglican liturgy. Nor had she any natural respect for bishops. Although probably under-informed about Church of Scotland doctrine, from her residences in Balmoral she increasingly preferred the simplicities of its presbyterian services. Nevertheless she took royal supremacy over the Church of England very seriously, and interpreted it in what ministers sometimes considered excessively literal and personal – rather than properly

constitutional – terms. Not only in church patronage but also on worship and even theology, she was prepared to challenge the views of archbishops and prime ministers alike. Here, particularly, she turned a need for her formal approval into a ‘right to harass’.¹¹⁶

The Queen was not opposed to thanksgiving prayers nor, in general terms, to thanksgiving days. She expected thanksgivings for royal celebrations, and she and Prince Albert had wanted a prayer after the 1842 Asian military ‘victories’. But she objected to public appeals for God’s intervention. This was true for petitionary prayers – she saw no reason to supersede those already available in the Prayer Book¹¹⁷ – and especially fast and humiliation days, which she seems to have considered superstitious. She ‘highly disapprove[d]’ of the 1847 fast day, believed it was ‘also disapproved by all enlightened people as a very absurd thing of bygone days’, and thought the royal proclamation and form of prayer ‘almost blasphemous’ in attributing the Irish famine to God.¹¹⁸ Although she had faith in a divine providence, her God was not a ‘hard judge’ but a ‘loving father’. Providence was ‘general’ rather than ‘special’, and God’s intervention could not be summoned at human will. So thanksgivings were appropriate for ‘blessings actually received’, but she disapproved ‘on principle’ of ‘recourse to special intercession’, which showed no confidence in God’s ultimate ‘merciful goodness’.¹¹⁹ She certainly doubted that, as a court official put it, ‘the Almighty would alter the course of his providence at the request of the Privy Council’.¹²⁰

With prime ministers she raised more particular objections. She asked why cholera should have a prayer when influenza did not, and why prayers were requested when an epidemic reached London but not when it struck Newcastle.¹²¹ She objected especially to the official terminology, to ‘humiliation’ as much as ‘fast’. For her the Crimean War was the fault of the Tsar, and any British confession of sins was entirely inappropriate: ‘too manifestly repulsive to the feelings of everyone, & ... a mere act of hypocrisy’. Rather, any

religious observance should express thankfulness for the nation's strength and prosperity. For the Indian mutiny she proposed 'intercession', not from expectations of divine intervention but because it was 'natural' to pray for fellow countrymen in dangerous situations. She disliked the traditional style of services, with their 'totally inapplicable' Old Testament texts. In 1854 she spoke sternly to Sumner about the proposed humiliation-day services and suggested alternative prayers, also asking Aberdeen to 'inculcate the Queen's wishes into the Archbishop's mind'.¹²² She also thought that thanksgiving and humiliation days should always be held on Sundays, not weekdays.¹²³ In 1866 the Bishop of London felt obliged to re-arrange his diocesan day of humiliation because she refused to postpone a mid-week court social occasion.¹²⁴

The Queen forced prime ministers to think hard about whether they wanted to persist, and could sometimes affect the outcome. In 1849 she played a large part in delaying the cholera prayer, and perhaps prevented a fast; and she probably stopped Disraeli in 1874, just as she did Benson in 1892. Almost certainly she was responsible for the omission in proclamations from 1854 of the traditional phrase that the nation's 'manifold sins' deserved God's 'heavy judgments'.¹²⁵ But she knew that ultimately she would have to yield to ministerial advice, so the effectiveness of her objections depended upon the assessments and determination of her prime ministers. Before 1859 the most sympathetic to her perspective was Aberdeen, a Church of Scotland presbyterian with little respect for bishops (particularly Sumner) or even 'the religious world' in general: he was usually in 'entire concurrence' with her.¹²⁶ But even he obtained the 1854 humiliation day, against her wishes. Palmerston was always particularly definite: the Queen was 'furious' with his insistence on the 1857 humiliation day, yet felt 'compelled' to 'sanction whatever is proper'.¹²⁷

As the review of 1830-59 has indicated, prime ministerial decisions on special state worship had little to do with their personal religious faith. Palmerston had few attachments to

religion or the church and in 1853 publicly doubted the efficacy of unaided prayer in a case of disease, yet he ordered more of these occasions than almost any other prime minister – two humiliation days, a thanksgiving day, and two prayers, including the 1865 prayer on disease. In contrast Gladstone, who believed in an active providence and divine judgment on nations¹²⁸ and who devoutly observed the pre-1859 occasions, from 1868 never advised or encouraged such state orders, aside from an exceptional royal episode in 1871-2. Both Palmerston and Gladstone were highly sensitive towards religious opinion, Palmerston to a sometimes surprising extent.¹²⁹ What had changed was assessment of the appropriate place and expression of this opinion. Comments by Aberdeen in 1854 are indicative. On proposals for another cholera fast he wrote that ‘we must often yield to public feeling, when strongly pronounced, even though we may entertain some doubt as to the propriety of the decision’; but on this occasion there was ‘no evidence of any general opinion as to fetter our own judgement’. In declining a proposed war prayer he again accepted that it was normally ‘the duty of a government to yield to the wishes of the People’, but noted ‘how difficult it is really to ascertain their wishes’ and ‘how easily a few active & zealous persons undertake to represent the Public’.¹³⁰ Assessing the weight and character of public feeling was a delicate matter: from 1830 to 1859 these assessments commonly favoured state orders for holy days and prayers, but thereafter the balance turned against them.

As with the earlier revival of state-ordered worship, so with its decline: general explanations about prevailing opinion may be offered. For example, Janet argued that economic, social, religious and intellectual changes brought increasing class-consciousness and sectional controversies, creating a more ‘pluralistic’ society in which the traditional practice of public fasts became less easy to justify.¹³¹ More generally, Hilton and Jonathan Parry have detected a ‘sudden lightening of the national mood’ around 1850, with a shift from ‘an evangelically-based pessimism’ to a ‘Broad Church optimism’.¹³² There might be

much in such explanations, but a difficulty is that they may be too general: they do not always fit the chronology of special acts of worship, nor take full account of other types of change – including longer-term adaptations of church and state arrangements, which produced new forms of national prayer.

There were some protests by or on behalf of radical ‘working-class’ organisations. During the 1831-2 agitations for a public fast, radical MPs, journalists and cartoonists derided both Perceval and the bishops as members of a system which forced much of the population to fast every day, and instead of appeals to God called for political reform and remedies for social distress.¹³³ In London the Political Union and the National Union of the Working Classes – imitated in Manchester and other towns – organised alternative ‘farce’ or ‘feast’ day demonstrations, prompting a Home Office warning against unlawful assemblies and, after a large protest meeting in Finsbury Square ended in scuffles, the arrest and trial of the meeting’s leaders.¹³⁴ Some state prayers were lampooned, as in 1846: ‘We beseech thee ... good Lord ... to save thy people from kingcraft and priestcraft [and] over-taxation, starvation and misrepresentation’. Hypocrisy was a common charge, of the bloated rich requiring sacrifices from the poor. In 1847, when another ‘festive’ demonstration was held in London, ‘curing famine by fast’ was denounced as a mockery, and it was declared that ‘factory slaves’ and paupers already suffered enough ‘humiliation’.¹³⁵ But most of such criticisms were associated with the parliamentary reform and Chartist agitations early in the period, and were much less evident in the 1850s. Moreover, after 1831-2 popular protest towards such occasions was not a concern registered in ministerial sources and leading newspapers, and it was becoming less, not more, common.¹³⁶ Where ‘class-consciousness’ did have a discernible effect, this worked in reverse – not so much fear of popular protest, as sympathy towards the labourer. From 1847 orders for holy days brought letters or comments in newspapers about the hardship for labourers of a day’s loss of earnings. This was countered

by suggestions that masters should continue to pay wages, as part of their religious self-sacrifice.¹³⁷ In January 1866, however, this issue was part of the government case against appointment of a state humiliation day: for most working people it would involve ‘enforced abstinence from their ordinary labour’, and ‘consequent diminution’ of the means ‘for supplying themselves with the necessaries of life’.¹³⁸

A quite different concern was the view that substantial numbers of the public, particularly among the labouring population, treated weekday holy days simply as holidays: ‘the announcement of national mortification sets millions to schemes of jollity’. Fast or humiliation days were said to be ‘profaned’ or ‘desecrated’ by resort to park amusements, railway or steamer excursions and, far worse, to public houses and debauchery.¹³⁹ Anxiety that these occasions exposed irreligion – and so might be counter-productive, by provoking further divine wrath at national sins – helped reconcile some churchmen to cessation of weekday state holy days. In 1885 Shaftesbury proposed special church services rather than a public humiliation day, fearing ‘a hideous outbreak of blasphemy and ridicule’.¹⁴⁰ Yet those anticipating the worst had usually been surprised by the outcome. Each successive holy day brought reports of ‘less holiday-making than usual on such occasions’. Although most people surely took some secular advantage of an extra day of leisure, a large portion behaved with respect and decorum. Newspaper reports from across the country routinely describe large church attendances, usually much higher than on Sundays.¹⁴¹ Shaftesbury himself was impressed by the ‘very general observance’ in 1847. Despite unusual criticisms of the 1855 humiliation day some journals considered it better observed than previous occasions.¹⁴² Church-appointed humiliation days seemed nearly as well observed as the state days. In 1849 the *Guardian* remarked that for all the fears of ‘heathenism’ in large towns, these occasions revealed that ‘the people of England are in heart still a religious and Christianity-disposed people’. In 1866 it reported widespread closures of businesses during times of

services, and sizes of church attendance which took ‘some people very much by surprise’.¹⁴³ Anxieties about ‘desecration’ and ‘holiday-making’ probably indicate rising expectations about religious behaviour, rather than registering any decline in popular observance of these occasions.

There were religious sceptics among the ‘political classes’. In Grey’s cabinet Lord Holland thought ‘nine tenths’ of the ‘reasonable class of society contemn in their hearts the observance of such superstitions’. Greville, the privy council clerk who issued many of the orders, considered them ‘great nonsense’, regarded by ‘all sensible people ... as a mockery and a delusion’.¹⁴⁴ Evidence of this kind is, however, extremely rare, which suggests both that as verdicts on general opinion these were overstatements, and that such personal attitudes had little part in the decline of state prayers. Nor can this decline be easily or largely explained by changes in understandings of natural science and public health, or developments in theological belief. As recent scholarship has shown, the relationships between secular knowledge and religious faith, and between beliefs in general and special providences, were always complex and variable, and changed only very slowly. Few except extreme evangelicals considered prayer for divine intervention sufficient alone, without accompanying human measures. A more common belief was that special providential ‘visitations’ were a corrective to inadequate human ideas and actions. Although the terms of Palmerston’s 1853 refusal of a fast shocked some churchmen, for others it was an admirable and obvious description of the general operations of providence. It had ‘pleased Providence to place within the power of man’ the means to check cholera, if they attended to the laws of nature which connected ill-health with over-crowding and bad sanitation, and exerted the faculties given them by Providence for their own welfare. Palmerston did not deny the value of prayer, but defined its purpose as invoking God’s blessings on man’s own efforts. As he stated privately, ‘an appeal to Providence to make up for human neglect is not very pious’.¹⁴⁵

Even Shaftesbury understood that Palmerston was not being ‘irreverent’, and had written with ‘abundant good sense & much truth’. Palmerston expressed increasingly common views not just among liberal churchmen, such as Charles Kingsley and Arthur Stanley, but also in the serious newspapers.¹⁴⁶ Providence and prayer interacted to advance human understanding; or prayer operated not within material nature but in the moral world, assisting humans to discern and reconcile themselves with the providential natural order. In addition, God was increasingly regarded less as a judge who punished whole nations, than as an incarnate and benevolent Father of all individuals. This was related to the advance of what Newman in 1865 denounced as a mark of liberalism in religion: a belief that ‘there was no such thing as a national or state conscience’, from which it followed that ‘no judgments can fall upon a sinful or infidel nation’. But if such shifts narrowed belief in ‘special providences’, they probably spread slowly among most believers and they did not necessarily undermine belief in providence and prayer as such.¹⁴⁷ Even the ‘prayer-gauge debate’ – arising from John Tyndall’s call for scientific testing of prayers, following state prayers for the Prince of Wales’s illness in 1871-2 – had more to do with the relative weights of science and religion than with denial of religion and prayer altogether.¹⁴⁸

Nor did debates among intellectuals about scientific and theological issues have much effect upon public culture over relatively short periods, such as that around 1870 when government turned against the general principle of state-ordered prayers. This shift was due much less to changes in religious belief than to changed views about worship – about appropriate forms of public worship, and the authority for ordering special worship. Two aspects were important: sensitivity towards religious pluralism, and institutional developments and liturgical controversies within the Church of England.

The traditional formulae of state orders for special worship assumed membership of the established churches: they contained instructions to Church of England, Church of

Scotland and Church of Ireland clergy, yet were addressed to all subjects, to the whole nation. Most other religious groups shared the beliefs in providence and the need at times of national danger or celebration for special prayer, humiliation or thanksgiving. But many denied the right of government and established church to order them to worship, as an infringement of liberty of conscience. Some also considered royal proclamations presumptuous and irreverent in warning of God's wrath towards those failing to observe public fasts. This created ambivalence and considerably varied reactions. Wesleyan Methodists normally welcomed them as appropriate actions by a 'Christian government', and organised their own services on the appointed days.¹⁴⁹ The Jewish communities, identifying with the national authorities and sharing the Old Testament belief in an interventionist God, always arranged special prayers on their Sabbath, or special services on weekday holy days.¹⁵⁰ At the other extreme the Society of Friends refused to observe these occasions. On weekday holy days most of its adherents continued their secular work, and as a Quaker John Bright protested in the House of Commons against the 1847 fast day.¹⁵¹ Congregationalists, Baptists, other Methodists and the Scottish secessionist and free churches asserted their dissent either by arranging alternative holy days, or by holding services on the official day but denying recognition to the state order. In 1854, for example, Coventry chapels were 'opened under protest'. In 1855 Liverpool civic and merchant leaders petitioned against the humiliation day because 'large classes' did not accept government authority in religious matters. In Rochdale in 1857 no nonconformist services were held, and the cotton mills continued work.¹⁵² Roman Catholic bishops urged their congregations to pray on the 1847 Irish famine fast day, but otherwise they too rejected any right of 'temporal authorities' to impose religious duties upon their church. No special services were organised on later holy days, although in 1857 Cardinal Wiseman ordered a 'day of general supplication' on the Sunday before the official humiliation day.¹⁵³

These difficulties were not insurmountable. Most simply, the language of the state orders could be modified. Among Aberdeen's changes for the 1854 proclamation was removal of the threat of 'punishment' for those neglecting to observe the humiliation day, and the 1857 proclamation dropped the last implied sanction, the reference to God's 'wrath and indignation'. Aberdeen listened favourably to nonconformist representations against the words 'command' and 'order', and Shaftesbury privately proposed that dissenters and Roman Catholics might be responsive to phrases of 'invitation'. From 1855 the Scottish United Presbyterian and Free Churches petitioned governments to the same effect, and in 1869 obtained privy council acceptance that future Scottish orders might use such words as 'exhort', 'declare', and 'propose'.¹⁵⁴

However, other circumstances made it easier just to allow state-ordered special worship for most purposes to fall into disuse. Although religious pluralism had long been officially accepted and was much extended in 1828-9, new challenges to the established churches increased political sensitivity towards other religious groups. The 1851 religious census had revealed that a very high proportion of those attending worship did so in non-established churches, and during the 1860s radical nonconformists intensified their campaigns against the privileges and claims of the Church of England, making disestablishment a live issue. In conditions of sharpened denominational conflict, just as it seemed prudent to the Church to withdraw from 'dangerously exposed positions',¹⁵⁵ so it seemed wise to governments to avoid occasions which caused friction. A related case, roughly coinciding with the last special state 'holy day', is significant.¹⁵⁶ The annual 'holy days' and associated 'state services' ordered since the seventeenth century to mark the 'martyrdom' of Charles I (30 January), the Restoration (29 May), and both 'gunpowder treason' and the 'Glorious Revolution' (5 November), were cancelled in 1859. This followed addresses from Canterbury convocation as well as both houses of parliament, on the ground

that the services were now widely ‘disregarded’. Most clergymen considered them embarrassingly ‘outdated’, largely because their language was offensive to either nonconformists or Roman Catholics: greater religious toleration had made them inappropriate.¹⁵⁷

Equally important were the more specific concerns of Liberal party leaders in the 1860s to soothe and accommodate nonconformist opinion. Gladstone himself had now accepted that if there could not be a single state church, then the state should be neutral between Christian groups: this was a corollary of religious diversity, a way to reduce denominational friction and direct all churches to purer religious efforts, and a means of preserving the Church of England from state interference. He also had some personal acquaintance with the resentments aroused by state-ordered worship: his brother Robertson chaired the Liverpool meeting which protested against the 1855 humiliation day, and he participated in the privy-council discussions on the United Presbyterian Church memorial. He knew, too, that even mid-week church days could cause irritations which did not assist religious reverence. In March 1866 he had to defend the cabinet’s decision to adjourn both Houses of Parliament during services on the Bishop of London’s humiliation day, in the face of an angry debate which was forced to a division.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps, too, he disliked a new element of political partisanship, with ironic Conservative comments in 1866 on the ‘humiliation’ of the government’s measures against the cattle plague¹⁵⁹ and Disraeli’s use of a special prayer in 1868. He thought Archbishop Benson’s desire for national prayers in 1884-5 betrayed a ‘smack of politics’.¹⁶⁰ Almost certainly, however, the main reason why Gladstone made only exceptional use of state prayers was his support as a high churchman for the Church of England’s independence in spiritual matters.

Before the 1860s bishops had been unsure on what authority, other than the royal supremacy, special prayers and services might be appointed. In 1849 at least one had been

surprised to learn that he had the authority to order a fast in his own diocese.¹⁶¹ Uncertainty and hesitation were reduced by the revival of Canterbury and York convocations, followed by further government decisions. The Church now had assemblies for preparing modified or new forms of worship, which many clergymen considered vital for meeting the challenges of population increase and social and religious changes. Among the first and most regular business was preparation of new ‘special services’ as supplements to the Prayer Book, including standard forms for occasions of national humiliation and thanksgiving, and an annual harvest thanksgiving service.¹⁶² The harvest thanksgiving, increasingly popular with clergy and congregations, became in 1863 the first to be agreed. But a difficulty then arose, with important implications, about how its use in churches should be authorised. In the past, regular Prayer Book services had always been established by parliamentary statute, but now parliament had ceased to be wholly Anglican or even wholly Protestant in composition. Moreover, with pitched battles beginning between ‘low’ and ‘ritualist’ parties in the Church over the competent authority for adjudicating on the legality of styles of worship, to refer the new service to parliament risked further discord. The bishops assumed that an order from the Queen in Council would suffice, but as Home Secretary Grey, fearing that even this might be controversial, sought legal opinions. When these raised doubts about the exercise of the royal prerogative alone to make a permanent change in the Prayer Book – implying that parliamentary legislation was needed after all – Grey on the Lord Chancellor’s advice declined to recommend any government action.¹⁶³ The bishops’ reaction was to treat their own and convocation’s authority as adequate to proceed with annual use of the harvest service. Subsequently two statutes seemed to lend support to this form of church authority. The 1865 Clerical Subscription Act, though intended to reaffirm conformity to the Prayer Book, recognised exceptions to the prescribed services when ordered ‘by lawful authority’ – a form of words which could be interpreted to mean Convocation, the archbishops or the

bishops collectively. The 1872 Act of Uniformity Amendment Act, allowing shortened forms of Prayer Book services, declared that bishops could on special occasions authorise ‘a special form of worship’.¹⁶⁴ For both bishops and cabinet ministers it became convenient that the Church of England should have independence from the state in publishing and directing use of special prayers and services. Accordingly, for Gladstone in 1882 archiepiscopal authority was the appropriate and sufficient means for arranging a special prayer.

IV

The decline of state prayers, fasts and thanksgivings must not be overstated nor over-explained. Special ‘national prayers’ did not cease in the 1860s; they continued, but in different forms. The change was not a consequence of a general loss of religious faith or loss of belief in an interventionist God. Nor should the new types of special prayer be considered as simply dilutions of the earlier practice of general fasts and thanksgiving days. Rather, these represented an adjustment to new conditions, to religious pluralism and to altered relationships between the churches and the state.

A longer-term perspective is required, because there is a further, more basic explanation for the late-Victorian reduction in state acts of national worship. As John Wolffe has noted, for decades after the 1850s there was in Britain a ‘simple absence ... of disasters of the kind that had stirred consciousness of divine judgement’ in the earlier period – no further mysterious epidemics, no major subsistence crises, no large-scale wars.¹⁶⁵ But wars and other national emergencies did occur during the twentieth century; and although Anderson rightly observed that the Crimean war was the last marked by proclamation of public fasts,¹⁶⁶ national acts of worship could take other forms. In 1900, 1914 and 1939 the outbreak of war brought revival of the practice of privy-council orders for special prayers. The first world war also generated a new type of special worship, ‘national days of prayer’,¹⁶⁷

which, continuing beyond the second world war, were even more numerous than the fast and thanksgiving days from 1832 to 1859. These days of prayer differed from traditional holy days principally in not being ordered by the state, and in not being occasions largely for the established churches. Rather, they were 'national' in a new sense: occasions of 'united prayer' arranged by co-operation between all the main churches, the nonconformists, free churches and Roman Catholics as well as the Churches of England and Scotland. A further 'national' quality was added by the sovereign's endorsement, but this was now expressed as personal approval or request, not by exercise of the royal supremacy.

These twentieth-century 'national days of prayer' were derived from the two types of 'national prayer' which continued after the 1860s: those arranged by church leaders alone, and state prayers concerning the monarchy.

Freed from dependence on government decision, the Church of England more frequently appointed its own special prayers and services. As well as the annual harvest thanksgiving service, in 1874 an annual day of intercession was established for overseas missions, with a service 'approved' by the archbishop, bishops and convocation. More 'occasional prayers' were also directed, usually (from the late 1870s) after reference to a Convocation committee of bishops on 'special prayers and services'. In 1882, for example, as well as the Egyptian thanksgiving prayer requested by Gladstone, the bishops ordered prayers for 'the present troubles in Ireland' (following the Phoenix Park murders) and for a good harvest. So familiar did such special prayers become that in 1905 Archbishop Davidson complained of being flooded with requests for them.¹⁶⁸ These arrangements had, though, a larger significance: they allowed for a changed relationship with dissenting denominations. Nonconformist ministers opposed in principle to acts of worship ordered by state authority were more ready to join in occasions of prayer requested by a fellow religious leader. Gradually, as part of wider changes in the relationship between the nonconformist and

established churches, Archbishops of Canterbury were tacitly recognised as the initiators of ‘national prayers’. A similar pattern had already developed in Scotland. The Church of Scotland’s general assembly always had independent powers to arrange special acts of worship, and as denominational friction lessened this created opportunities for co-ordination with the Free Church and United Presbyterian Church. In March 1866, for example, all three churches appointed their day of humiliation for the cattle plague on the same date, in effect creating a Scottish national day of prayer.

Notwithstanding their objections to state orders in religious matters, the nonconformist, free and Roman Catholic churches did observe, if in independent ways, the state acts of worship which continued after 1868, those for royal occasions. Religious expressions of loyalty to the monarchy were opportunities to manifest their patriotism and claims to a full part in national life; and like the established churches they invested the royal family’s domestic as well as public activities with moral and religious significance. That royal prayers and services were uncontroversial, indeed very popular, was one reason why they continued. Another was that government ministers considered them useful for reinforcing respect for a central national institution. Moreover, the Queen had no objection to, and even expected, such occasions, the more so because most were thanksgivings. She was even prepared to attend, ceremonially, the public services at St Paul’s Cathedral or Westminster Abbey, something she had refused to do for holy days. Indeed from the 1860s special prayers and services for royal occasions proliferated, and now included types of occasion never previously observed, because not concerned just with the sovereign’s person. As such, they were integral to a wider development noted in studies of the late-Victorian monarchy: the elevation in public life not just of the monarch but the royal family as a whole. For the first time there were privy-council prayers for births in the male line of succession – those of the Queen’s grandson (January 1864), and even great-grandson (June 1894). The

1868 thanksgiving prayer for the Abyssinian expedition was combined with a thanksgiving for the escape from assassination by the Queen's second son, the Duke of Edinburgh.¹⁶⁹ As William Kuhn has shown, the 1872 thanksgiving service in St Paul's Cathedral for the Prince of Wales's recovery from illness arose from Gladstone seizing an opportunity to re-assert an active, visible, public role for the monarchy, as a counter to the Queen's withdrawal from public life after Prince Albert's death in 1861.¹⁷⁰ But this was not the only novel feature of the episode. It was marked by as many as three religious observances. After the Prince had become seriously ill in December 1871, Gladstone arranged a national prayer by privy-council order, and as he recovered the Queen herself initiated a thanksgiving prayer, ordered in January 1872.¹⁷¹ When persuading the Queen to improve upon this by public attendance at a thanksgiving service, Gladstone produced what he described as precedents. Yet the service was actually as unprecedented as the two prayers: never before had special state worship been ordered for the illness of any individual other than the sovereign. Further precedents followed. After representations from City of London banking houses, under the terms of the 1871 Bank Holidays Act a proclamation ordered a holiday in London on the day of the thanksgiving service¹⁷² – a secular occasion, but guaranteeing huge crowds to watch the royal procession. On government prompting, the St Paul's service aimed for 'religious inclusivity', with representatives of the main Christian denominations, British Jewry, and even (a cause close to the Queen's heart) Indian faiths invited to join the congregation.¹⁷³ The national prayers and St Paul's service evoked such a considerable and broad popular response – *The Nonconformist* newspaper complained only that nonconformist chapels needed no orders to pray for the royal family¹⁷⁴ – that they provided the model for organisation of the Queen's jubilees in 1887 and 1897. For both occasions official forms of service were ordered months in advance, so that huge numbers were available for use across

the nation; the Queen again attended a special London service, and the day of the service was now proclaimed a public holiday for the whole country.

Acts of worship were central to the more frequent and more elaborate national observance of royal occasions during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁷⁵ Although officially involving only the established churches, the quality of the occasions as celebrations of the monarchy and royal family gave them a far wider religious appeal, with nonconformists, Roman Catholics and all the Scottish churches arranging their own services on the official dates. This had several effects. These special acts of worship assisted a renewal of the Church of England's leadership in the plural expressions of the nation's religious life, and created an expectation of the sovereign's presence at more numerous 'state services'. They also indicated how the sovereign might, on the advice of the archbishops and without the complications of government decision, attract support for a new form of 'national days of prayer', endorsed by all religious groups.

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¹ Useful studies for earlier periods include C.J. Kitching, “‘Prayers Fit for the Time’: Fasting and Prayer in Response to National Crises in the Reign of Elizabeth I’, in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *Monks, Hermits and The Ascetic Tradition* (Studies in Church History [SCH], xx, 1985); Christopher Durston, “‘For the Better Humiliation of the People’: Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving during The English Revolution’, *Seventeenth Century*, vii (1992); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), 100-10; Henry P. Ippel, ‘Blow the trumpet, sanctify the fast’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, xlv (1980-1); and Paul Langford, ‘The English Clergy and the American Revolution’, in Eckhart Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990).

² Some important definitions are necessary. First, in this period the ‘Church of England’ still included Wales; hereafter, references to ‘English’ orders and observances embrace Wales. Second, these special national ‘holy days’ were additional to the annual English religious commemorations established by statute in the seventeenth century, with services annexed to the Prayer Book by royal warrant (see XX below). Third, royal coronations and funerals are not included, because no general services (i.e. for local churches) or holidays were officially ordered for these until the twentieth century.

³ For fertile investigations, see William M. Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism. The Transformation of the British Monarchy 1861-1914* (1996), and John Wolffe, *Great Deaths. Grieving, Religion and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford, 2000).

⁴ Richard J. Janet, 'Providence, Prayer and Cholera: the English General Fast of 1832', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, li (1982), hereafter cited as '1832'; Peter Gray, 'National Humiliation and the Great Hunger: Fast and Famine in 1847', *Irish Hist. Studies*, xxii (2000), cited as '1847'; Olive Anderson, 'The Reactions of Church and Dissent towards the Crimean War', *Jl. of Eccles. Hist.*, xvi (1965) cited as 'Crimean War'; Brian Stanley, 'Christian Responses to the Indian Mutiny of 1857', in W.J. Shiels (ed.), *The Church and War* (SCH, xx, 1983), cited as '1857'.

⁵ Frank M. Turner, 'Rainfall, Plagues and the Prince of Wales: a Chapter in the Conflict of Religion and Science', *Jl. of British Studies* 13 (1974); Matthew Cragoe, "'The Hand of the Lord is upon the Cattle': Religious Reactions to the Cattle Plague 1865-67" in Martin Hewitt (ed.), *The Age of Equipoise? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot, 2000), cited as '1865-67'; Stephen Matthews, 'Explanations for the Outbreak of Cattle Plague in Cheshire in 1865-66: "Fear the Wrath of the Lord"', *Northern Hist.*, xliii (2006).

⁶ Janet, '1832', 299, 302-3, 307, 311-17. Richard J. Janet, 'The Decline of General Fasts in Victorian England 1832-57' (University of Notre Dame, Ph.D. dissertation 1984), similarly treats decline as inherent from 1832. A brief survey since the Reformation, Roland Bartel, 'The Story of Public Fast Days in England', *Anglican Theological Review*, xxxvii (1955), even dates decline from the 1650s, notwithstanding their long persistence and repeated renewal, most notably after the 1688-9 revolution.

⁷ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement* (Oxford, 1988), 112-14, 250-1.

⁸ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols. (1966, 1970), i, 490.

⁹ Anderson, 'Crimean War', 216-19, and see Olive Anderson, *A Liberal State at War* (1967), 180.

¹⁰ Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 491; Stanley, '1857', 279.

¹¹ Cragoe, '1865-67', 192-5.

¹² Ippel, 'Blow the Trumpet'; Langford, 'English Clergy and the American Revolution'; John Cookson, *The Friends of Peace. Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793-1815* (Cambridge, 1982), 14, 119-21, 134-6.

¹³ Inadequate information about the different types of special religious occasions has caused confusion: assumptions that if there was no fast day, no worship at all was ordered; occasions for just 'prayers' described as 'holy days'; and conflations between state-ordered 'days' (for the whole United Kingdom) and church-appointed 'days' for English dioceses or in Scotland.

¹⁴ Since the 1816 thanksgiving day for the Vienna peace treaty, the only special state observances had been thanksgiving prayers for the Prince Regent's escape from assassination (1817) and recovery (as King) from illness (1820).

¹⁵ Turner, ‘Rainfall, Plagues’, being concerned with state *prayers*, rightly notes their nineteenth-century ‘re-emergence’ (49). But he overstates comparison with a ‘more rationalistic’ eighteenth-century Church, by mistakenly stating that no prayers were issued in the period for natural calamities (49, 54n20). Fast and thanksgiving days were ordered for plagues in 1720-23, and prayers for cattle distemper from 1748 to 1759, English earth tremors in 1750, and (added to wartime fast services) the 1756 Lisbon earthquake. In terms of the types of event marked by special worship, continuity was stronger than any change.

¹⁶ E.g. *Times*, 16 May, p. 9d, 29 Aug. 1854, p. 8a.

¹⁷ Certain lesser prayers for the royal family are excluded from this Appendix, but see pp. XX, XX below.

¹⁸ Howley (Archbishop 1828-48) to Russell, 1 Mar. 1847: 1st Earl Russell papers [National Archives], 30/22/6B/170-1.

¹⁹ A difference was that from 1801 (until disestablishment in 1869), orders were issued sometimes from the Privy Council in London for the ‘United Church of England and Ireland’ and sometimes by the Lord-Lieutenant in Dublin to complement English orders.

²⁰ Hence, with his usual precision, Peel to Victoria, 3 Apr. 1846: Peel papers [British Library Add. MS.], 40441/174: ‘a Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to be read on the ordinary occasions of the Divine Service’.

²¹ Early in the period the precise form of authority was considered important, because it concerned the royal supremacy. See *The Croker Papers*, ed. Louis J. Jennings, 3 vols. (1884), ii, 96 (3 Jan. 1831) for a Tory view that a privy-council order for a prayer without reference to the absent William IV was a disturbing Whig blunder. When the sovereign’s absence was patently unavoidable – during fatal illness, or after Queen Victoria had given birth – the ‘Lords of the Privy Council’ acted on special authority. Even so, during William IV’s last illness Bishop Blomfield of London questioned whether privy councillors alone had the power to order prayers, so the words, ironic in the circumstances, ‘at His Majesty’s pleasure’ were employed: *The Greville Memoirs*, ed. Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, 8 vols. (1938), iii, 370 (16 June 1837).

²² Percy Fitzgerald, *The Life and Times of William IV*, 2 vols. (London, 1884), ii, 384.

²³ Peel to Victoria, 3 Apr. 1846, Peel papers, 40441/174.

²⁴ The *Act for Declaring the Law in Relation to Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes*, 7 & 8 Geo IV, c.15, placed fast days and mid-week thanksgiving days on the same basis in commercial law as Christmas Day and Good Friday, altering the due dates for bills of exchange to the preceding day. As will be seen below, p. XX, the phrasing of this Act caused later complications.

²⁵ By 1832 the formula did vary in one important respect from those used until the late eighteenth century. By omission of a pronoun and grammatical adjustment, a more direct threat of secular sanction was removed: ‘such punishment as *we* [= the Crown] may justly inflict’, had become ‘as may justly *be* inflicted’.

²⁶ Janet, ‘General Fasts’, 77.

²⁷ Shaftesbury diary, 24 Mar. 1847 [7th Earl of Shaftesbury papers, Hartley Library, University of Southampton], and see letter, ‘How Shall We Keep The Fast?’, *Times*, 23 Mar. 1847, p. 8e.

²⁸ *British Magazine*, i, 1 Mar. 1832, 33-4 (the 1563 order); ‘An Appeal to the Churches’, *Evangelical Magazine*, x (Feb. 1832), 66-8; T.R. Birks, *Memoir of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth*, 5th edn, 2 vols. (1855), ii, 20-2, 25, 388-9; Edward Bickersteth, *The National Fast of 1832. A Help for Duly Observing It*, with same title except change of date for 1847. The series was continued by his son: see Edward Henry Bickersteth, *National Humiliation and Prayer. A Tract For The Fast Day* (1854, and again in 1855).

²⁹ There were, though, more particular reasons for, and difficulties over, this change: see below p. XX.

³⁰ Shaftesbury diary, 24 Mar. 1847, and see *The Gladstone Diaries*, ed. M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew, 14 vols. (Oxford, 1968-94), iii, 609 (24 Mar. 1847), for attendance at two services, abstinence (‘Kept as A[sh] W[ednesday]’), and much religious reading, including Bickersteth’s tract; and Gray, ‘1847’, 200, for the Whig ‘Liberal Anglican’ Lord Morpeth eating just a crust and salt fish, and hearing five sermons.

³¹ *Times*, 21 Mar. 1832, 4c, and 22 Jan. 1847, 6c; also Gray, ‘1847’, 197-8, and see 211-13 for another issued before the October 1847 thanksgiving day. These Letters, issued periodically for good causes, are an unstudied aspect of royal association with charities.

³² Howley to 2nd Earl Grey, 28 Jan. 1833, [Grey papers, University of Durham Library] GRE/B9A/7/21.

³³ The exception was that in accordance with custom a proclamation ordered the thanksgiving for peace in 1856.

³⁴ As with fast days, the most conscientious wanted advice and Edward Bickersteth again supplied the need: see *National Mercies and Dangers in 1849. A Practical Help to National Thanksgiving*.

³⁵ On only 11 occasions in three hundred years had the sovereign attended state services on holy days, all for thanksgivings and all in St Paul’s Cathedral, the last in 1814.

³⁶ See e.g. Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 37, for March 1832.

³⁷ As noted by Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971; Harmondsworth 1973), 128-9.

³⁸ Unless attributed to proclamations, the quotations are from various 1830-59 forms of prayer.

³⁹ See esp. Hilton, *Atonement*, 7-26, and Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), 175-84, 332-3, 400-9; Gray, ‘1847’, 193-4, and Peter Gray, “‘Potatoes and Providence’: British

Government Responses to the Great Famine’, *Bullán*, i (1994), 76-7; David Hempton, ‘Evangelicalism and Eschatology’, *Jl. of Eccles. Hist.*, xxxi (1980); David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, chs. 3-4; John Wolffe, ‘Judging the Nation: Early Nineteenth-Century British Evangelicals and Divine Retribution’, in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds.), *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (SCH, xl, 2004).

⁴⁰ Hilton, *Mad, Bad*, 406, and *Atonement*, 16, and see *ibid.* 13-14, 23-4, 108-12, for acknowledgement of special providence by ‘moderates’, including the exemplary figure, Thomas Chalmers; also Ralph Brown, ‘Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism: the Radical Legacy of Edward Irving’, *Jl. of Eccles. Hist.*, lviii (2007), 685-90, raising doubts about a clear distinction between ‘extreme’ and ‘moderate’ stances.

⁴¹ Janet, ‘General Fasts’, 81-98, 203-10; R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832* (1976), 129; Gray, ‘1847’, 193-4 (for ‘universal’), 203-9; Anderson, ‘Crimean War’, 214-5; Stanley, ‘1859’, 279-83; Wolffe, ‘Judging the Nation’, 292, 294-6.

⁴² Morris, *Cholera*, 145-7, followed by Janet, ‘1832’, 307.

⁴³ Sermons respectively in the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey in *Times*, 22 Mar. 1832, p. 3a-b. Hilton, *Atonement*, 214, presents Maltby (Bishop of Chichester) as an opponent of belief in special providences, but the context is vital. Maltby had received ‘numberless letters’ on the subject, some for and some against – *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries*, ed. A. Aspinall (London, 1952), 212 – because disturbingly ‘prophetic’ statements by extreme pre-millenarians had made the doctrine unusually controversial, and he steered neatly between the alternatives.

⁴⁴ *Times*, 25 Mar. 1847, p. 2c, and 27 Mar. 1854, p. 7a-b. For the higher clergy and ‘intervention’, see R.A. Soloway, *Prelates and the People. Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852* (1969), 217, 255-9.

⁴⁵ *Guardian* editorials, 6 Oct 1857, p. 768b-c, and 14 Oct. 1857, p. 785a-b.

⁴⁶ 24 Mar. 1847, p. 4e-f, and 15 Nov. 1849, p. 4a-b.

⁴⁷ Howley to Grey, 19 Nov. 1831, GRE/B9A/7/12: he also proposed the 1721 wordings to describe the occasion.

⁴⁸ For an exchange over precedents, see Palmerston to Victoria, 31 Mar. 1856, R[oyal] A[rchives] VIC/G46/79, and Victoria to Palmerston, 31 Mar. 1856, Palmerston papers RC/F/697 [Hartley Library, University of Southampton]. The precedents relating to wars explain what might otherwise seem to be a pattern of *increasing* frequency of ‘holy days’ from 1830 and 1860.

⁴⁹ Peel to Victoria, 3 Apr. 1846, Peel papers 40441/174; Archbishop Sumner (1848-62) to Palmerston, 15 Sept., and G. Grey to Palmerston, 17 Sept. 1855, Palmerston papers, both GC/GR/2447.

⁵⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd. ser., [hereafter *Parl. Deb.*,] liv, c. 1100 (12 June 1840). Melbourne, hardly a churchman, misunderstood the precedent and was swept by the general parliamentary relief into offering a thanksgiving day, but was quickly corrected: Howley to Melbourne, 12 June 1840, RA MP/76/105.

Thanksgiving prayers for the King's 'merciful preservation' from attacks had been ordered in 1795 and 1800 (and again for the Prince Regent in 1817).

⁵¹ A comparable incident in May 1849 was not observed, possibly because of the circumstances or because public thanksgiving seemed incongruous during a cholera epidemic.

⁵² These prayers for the Queen's 'safe delivery' were so routine and numerous that they are not included in the Appendix.

⁵³ For prophetic excitements, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 81-104, and Brown, 'Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism', 680-2.

⁵⁴ See comments in Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 173-5; Morris, *Cholera*, 148; Janet, '1832', 298; Gray, '1847', 193; Wolffe, 'Judging the Nation', 292.

⁵⁵ They were not, however, normally party-political, and therefore are unmentioned in such books as G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Britain 1832-1868* (Oxford, 1977); but see pp. XX below.

⁵⁶ Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 36-7; Morris, *Cholera*, 150; Janet, '1832', 300-2; Hilton, *Atonement*, 214-5. See Perceval and Hughes in *Parl. Deb.*, ii, 32, 264-5, 541-6 (23 Dec. 1830, 7, 14 Feb. 1831), ix, 895-902 (26 Jan. 1832) and xi, 577-81 (20 March 1832).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, ix, c. 902 (26 Jan. 1832), and for general distress over Perceval's 20 March speech, *ibid.* xi, cc. 577-81, and *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries*, 211-13.

⁵⁸ Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 35-6; Grey to William, 21 Dec. 1830, in *The Correspondence of ... Earl Grey and ... King William IV*, ed. 3rd Earl Grey, 2 vols. (London, 1867), i, 25; Howley to Grey, 19 Nov. 1831, GRE/B9A/7/12; *House of Lords Journal*, lxiii, 245, 367 (21 Feb., 23 Mar. 1831); *House of Commons Journal*, lxxxvi, 427 (23 Mar. 1831); *Times*, 6 Dec. 1831, p. 2e; *Scotsman*, 2 Feb. 1831, p. 3, 26 Feb. 1831, p. 4, 17 Dec. 1831, p. 3, 7 Jan. 1832, p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Parl. Deb.*, x, cc. 443-4 (17 Feb. 1832), and for evangelical MPs, *ibid.* cc. 392-3, 438-41 (15, 16 Feb. 1832); Janet, '1832', 302: cf. Hilton, *Atonement*, 214.

⁶⁰ Howley to Grey, 19 Nov. 1831, and Grey to Howley, 21 Nov. 1831, GRE/B9A/7/12-13. Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 37n, noted Grey's personal reservations but not his intention of consulting the cabinet.

⁶¹ Another possible reason for delay is that during these weeks ministers and the King were persuading the bishops to withdraw from opposing the parliamentary reform bill in the House of Lords.

⁶² Howley to Grey, 30 Dec. 1831, GRE/B9A/7/14, reports the King's approval for 15 February as the fast day; but for difficulties in arranging a council meeting (and so postponement to 21 March), see Grey to Howley, 1 Jan. 1832, *ibid.* 15, and Grey to Taylor, 8 Jan. 1832, *Grey-William Correspondence*, ii, 83. For Perceval, see Althorp to William, 27 Jan. 1832, in Denis Le Marchant, *Memoir of John Charles, Viscount Althorp* (London, 1876), 388-9.

⁶³ Graham to Peel, 23 Nov. 1842, and Peel correspondence with Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, 29 Nov.-3 Dec. 1842, Peel papers, 40448/265-6, 40435/187-94. A more basic consideration was probably that the Afghan 'victories' occurred within a wider context of defeat and retreat.

⁶⁴ Peel to Victoria, 3 Apr. 1846, and Peel-Ashley letters, 3-4 Apr. 1846, *ibid.* 40441/172, 40483/182-5; Shaftesbury diary, 1-3 April 1846. In the Commons Peel himself acknowledged 'the protecting hand of Almighty God the giver of victory': *Parl. Deb.*, lxxxv, c. 436 (2 Apr. 1846). For the Indian context see M.E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India 1798-1850* (Oxford, 1980), 535-44, 552-7.

⁶⁵ Graham to Peel, 9 Sept., and Peel to Graham, 18 Sept. 1842, Peel papers 40447/134, 168-9. For Peel's social anxieties (and, pertinent to the previous point, his family's military connections), see Peter Ghosh, 'Gladstone and Peel', in Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), 49-53.

⁶⁶ Boyd Hilton, 'Peel: a Reappraisal', *Hist. Jl.*, xxii (1979), 612-4; Hilton, *Atonement*, 249-50; Gray, 'Potatoes and Providence', 78-80, and Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics. British Government and Irish Society* (Dublin, 1999), 97-100, 108-9, 213-4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 228-34; Bessborough to Russell, 5 Sept. (enclosing Beresford's letter); Russell to Bessborough, and to Howley, both 8 Sept. 1846, Russell papers 30/22/5C/38-40, 68-9, 78-9.

⁶⁸ *Times*, 21 Oct. 1846, 6c-d, 26 Oct. 1846, 6e, and see Gray, '1847', 195. This was therefore a church 'day', not formally ordered by the government.

⁶⁹ Bessborough to Russell, 27 Feb. (reporting Beresford and petitions) and 3 Mar.; Russell to Bessborough, and Howley to Russell, both 1 Mar. 1847, Russell papers 30/22/6B/135, 170-1, 172-3, 184-6; Plumptre (an evangelical MP) in *Parl. Deb.*, lxxxix, cc. 204-5 (21 Jan. 1847), and proposing a parliamentary address, in *Times*, 26 Feb., 3b, 2 Mar., 3a, 3 Mar. 1847, 2b; further petitions are in *Parl. Deb.*, xc, cc. 948, 1106; Shaftesbury diary, 26 Feb. 1847, for letter to Bishop of London. The Russell correspondence does not support

statements in Gray, *Famine*, 259, and Gray, '1847', 198, that the fast was intended to encourage donations to the fund authorised by the January 'Queen's Letter'.

⁷⁰ The Queen's attitudes are considered below, pp. XX-XX.

⁷¹ Sumner to Bishop Wilberforce, 30 July 1849, [Bodleian Library, Oxford,] Ms Wilberforce d.47/15; Russell to Ashley, 7 Aug. 1849, in Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, 3 vols. (London, 1886), ii, 297-8; *Times* 14 Aug. 1849, p. 3f; *Guardian*, 22 Aug. 1849, p. 552c; Sumner to Russell, 26 and 30 Aug. 1849, Russell papers 30/22/8A/108-9, 112-3.

⁷² Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, ii, 295-9. Grey became involved because he was minister in attendance on the Queen at Balmoral.

⁷³ Ashley to G. Grey, and Russell to Ashley, both 1 Sept. 1849, in *ibid*, ii, 299-300.

⁷⁴ Sumner to Bishop Wilberforce, 30 July 1849, Ms Wilberforce d.47/15; *Times*, 3 Sept. 1849, p. 4e; *Guardian*, 5 Sept., pp. 584a-b, 587c, 19 Sept., pp. 615-6, 26 Sept. 1849, p. 634; *Scotsman*, 3 Oct., p. 2, 6 Oct., p. 2, 13 Oct., p. 3; and for a high church example, that of Hook of Leeds, W.R.W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Walter Hook*, 2 vols. (London, 1879), ii, 261.

⁷⁵ *Guardian*, 19 Sept., p. 617a, 3 Oct. 1849, p. 648a; *Times*, 5 Oct. 1849, p. 4a; Sumner to Russell, 2 Oct. 1849, Russell papers 30/22/8A/295. For the Post Office, see Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 459.

⁷⁶ Fitzroy (Palmerston's secretary) to moderator, Edinburgh Church of Scotland Presbytery, 19 Oct. 1853, published in *Times*, 28 Oct., p. 9d, *Scotsman*, 29 Oct. 1853, p. 4. See [National Archives] HO 45/4548 for Palmerston's original draft, and his annotation on 15 Oct. 1853 letter from the Edinburgh Free Church Presbytery.

⁷⁷ Aberdeen to Victoria, 20, 22 Aug., and to Sumner, 23 Aug. 1854, Aberdeen papers [British Library Add MS.] 43049/255, 257, and 43195/128-9; Victoria to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1854, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria 1837-1901*, ed. A.C. Benson, G.E. Buckle and Viscount Esher, 3 series, 9 vols. (1907-32), [hereafter *Queen's Letters*] 1st. ser., iii, 51. Sumner later sent a memorial to Palmerston who, while as firm as in 1853, now took advice and maintained public silence: Palmerston to Aberdeen, 20 Sept. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43069/276-7.

⁷⁸ See Anderson, 'Crimean War', *passim*.

⁷⁹ Shaftesbury to Aberdeen, 20 and 22 Feb. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43252/153 and Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, ii, 466; Earl of Clancarty in *Parl. Deb.*, cxxxi, cc. 1267-9 (24 Mar. 1854).

⁸⁰ Roden and Aberdeen in *ibid.* cc. 138-40 (31 Mar. 1854); Blandford and Shaftesbury in *Guardian*, 29 Mar., 273a, and 12 Apr. 1854, p. 315c; Victoria to Aberdeen, 1 Apr. 1854, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 24-5, and see Anderson, 'Crimean War', 215-6.

⁸¹ For Roden as a pre-millenarian 'ultra-Protestant', see Hilton, *Mad, Bad*, 405, 408, and John Wolffe, 'Robert Jocelyn, Earl of Roden', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter *ODNB*].

⁸² *Greville Memoirs*, vii, 31-2 (23 Apr. 1854).

⁸³ Aberdeen used the term in the Lords on 31 March, and persisted with it despite the Queen's disapproval (though she too did not want 'fast'): Victoria-Aberdeen exchange, 12 Apr. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43049/41-2, 46.

⁸⁴ *Times*, 21 Apr. 1854, p. 9a; *Greville Memoirs*, vii, 31-2 (23 Apr. 1854). See Palmerston to Reeves, 27 Sept. 1857, British Library [hereafter BL] Palmerston papers [Add. MS.] 48580/216, for the problem explained again, and Palmerston's desire for legislation to place 'humiliation' on 'the same footing as fasting'.

⁸⁵ Aberdeen to Victoria, 11 Sept. 1854, RA VIC/A23/146. For beginnings of an agitation, see letters in *Times*, 5 Sept, 1854, p. 5f, and *Guardian*, 6 Sept., p. 689a, 13 Sept. 1854, p. 705b. Sumner to Aberdeen, 12 Sept. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43195/133, agreed that the country was 'well prepared for ... Thanksgiving'.

⁸⁶ Aberdeen to Victoria, 22 Aug. 1854; Sumner and Blomfield to Aberdeen, both 4 Nov. 1854, and Aberdeen to Sumner 26 Nov. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43049/257, 43195/142-3, 294-5, 144-5.

⁸⁷ Napier in Commons, in *Times*, 20 Dec. 1854, p. 3e; Lords discussion (also including Ellesmere) and Blandford in the Commons, *Parl. Deb.*, cxxxvi, cc. 488-93, c. 618 (19, 20 Dec. 1854).

⁸⁸ Grafton (unusually fervent)-Aberdeen exchanges, 19-23 Jan. 1855, Aberdeen papers 43255/7-8, 17, 20-21, and see Aberdeen in *Parl. Deb.*, cxxxvi, c. 1729 (22 Feb. 1855).

⁸⁹ Anderson, *Liberal State*, 180, and Anderson, 'Crimean War', 217.

⁹⁰ Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, ii, 495 (diary 14-15 Feb. 1855); Roden, and Granville reporting Roden c. 8 Feb., in *Parl. Deb.*, cxxxvi, cc. 1728-30 (22 Feb. 1855); Blomfield in *Times*, 8 Feb 1855, p. 6f.

⁹¹ Palmerston to Victoria, 16 Feb. 1855, RA VIC/G24/60.

⁹² See Palmerston to Sumner, 16 Sept. 1855 and 12 Apr. 1856, BL Palmerston papers 48579/61, 48580/79, for his being ahead of the Archbishop.

⁹³ Palmerson to Victoria, 31 Mar., 27 Apr. 1856, RA VIC/G46/79, G 47/50; Victoria to Palmerston, 27 Apr. 1856, Palmerston papers RC/F/709.

⁹⁴ G. Grey to Palmerston, 5 and 9 Sept. 1857, latter enclosing Villiers to Palmerston, 5 Sept., Palmerston papers GC/GR 2499, 2500; Palmerston to Victoria, 10 Sept. 1857 ('an impression is beginning to prevail that it would be the proper thing'), in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 313-4; and Palmerston to Sumner, 15 Sept. 1857, BL Palmerston papers 48580/214.

⁹⁵ Sumner to Palmerston, 18 Sept. 1857, enclosing Phillpotts to Sumner, 17 Sept., Granville papers [National Archives, PRO] 30/29/19/22/49-51, 45-7.

⁹⁶ Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, ii, 457, 485-6.

⁹⁷ For Grey's evangelicalism, see Hilton, *Atonement*, 238, though it is incorrect to attribute the decision for the 1847 fast to him, as is also stated in Cragoe, '1865-67', 197, and D.F. Smith, 'George Grey' in *ODNB*.

⁹⁸ Howley to Grey, 19 Nov. 1831, GRE/B9A/7/12; Sumner to Aberdeen, 29 Nov. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43195/146-7.

⁹⁹ Grey to Howley, 19 Dec. 1830, GRE/B9A/7/4; Victoria-Aberdeen letters, 12 Apr. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43049/41-2, 46; Sumner to Palmerston, 14 Apr. 1856, Granville papers 30/29/19/18/57-8, and for Palmerston making an alteration to the draft, Victoria to Palmerston, 28 Apr. 1856, Palmerston papers RC/F/710.

¹⁰⁰ Albert to Peel, 29 Nov. 1842, Peel papers 40435/187-9.

¹⁰¹ Palmerston died on 18 October, but for his involvement see G. Grey to Palmerston, 23, 27 Sept. 1865, Palmerston papers GC/GR/2581; for late addition of cholera, see Charles Wood to Victoria, 27 Sept. 1865, RA VIC/B21/74; and see note 15 for an eighteenth-century precedent for a cattle disease prayer.

¹⁰² Longley (Archbishop 1862-68)-Grey letters, 22 and 26 Jan. 1866, reported in *The Chronicle of Canterbury Convocation 1847-1892*, 58, 61-62 (7 Feb. 1866), and *Times*, 14 Feb. 1866, 9g.

¹⁰³ Details in *Guardian*, 21 Feb., p. 191c, and 28 Feb. 1866, p. 219b, and see Cragoe, '1865-67', 195-8, and Matthews, 'Explanations for the Cattle Plague', 120-2 (though both are unaware that cholera was a further purpose for the state prayer).

¹⁰⁴ *Chronicle of Convocation*, 58-61, 66, and for York Convocation, *Guardian*, 7 Feb. 1866, p. 137a-b; Longley to bishops and archdeacons, 15 Feb. 1866, Longley papers [Lambeth Palace Library] 7/228-30. Cragoe, '1865-67', 197, is incorrect in describing 'strong opposition' in York Convocation to 'days' as such: rather the issue was whether a humiliation day should be ordered by bishops or by the government, and the outcome was agreement to a petition for a state order.

¹⁰⁵ *Scotsman*, 8 Mar. 1866, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Parl. Deb.*, clxxxi, cc. 190, 867-8 (8, 21 Feb. 1866).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 184, cc. 1654, 2158 (30 July, 10 Aug. 1866: the speech was for the prorogation); Derby to Longley, 2 Nov. 1866, Longley papers 7/305.

¹⁰⁸ Shaftesbury to Disraeli, 26 May, and Longley to Disraeli, 9 June 1868, Disraeli papers [Bodleian Library, Oxford] 142/2/106-7, 134/3/39-40; Disraeli to Victoria, 6 June 1868, RA VIC/A37/39. See Dudley W.H. Bahlman, 'Politics and Church Patronage in the Victorian Age', *Victorian Studies* 22 (1978-9), 277-81, for Disraeli's use of church appointments to display sympathy with the 'Evangelical party'; and more generally Allen Warren, 'Disraeli, the Conservatives and the National Church 1837-1881', *Parl. Hist.*, xix (2000).

¹⁰⁹ Gladstone to Victoria, 25 July 1870, *Queen's Letters*, 2nd ser., ii, 47; Gladstone to Tait (Archbishop 1868-83), 25 July 1871, and Tait to Bishop Jackson of London and Archbishop Thomson of York, both 5 Aug. 1870, Tait papers [Lambeth Palace Library] 168/116-18, 88/142, 101/48-9. Tait instead accepted the cabinet's suggestion to recommend use of the Prayer Book's prayer for peace.

¹¹⁰ Ebury, and Disraeli, to Tait, 6, 8 Apr. 1874, *ibid.* 93/34-5, 36-7.

¹¹¹ *Gladstone Diaries*, x, 334-6, 15-16 Sept. 1882; *The Diary of Sir Edward Hamilton 1880-1885*, ed. Dudley W.R. Bahlman, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1972), i, 341 (16 Sept. 1882); Thomson (Tait was ill) to bishops, in *Times*, 20 Sept. 1882, p. 7g.

¹¹² *Hamilton Diary*, ii, 615, and *Gladstone Diaries*, xi, 145, both 12 May 1884: Gladstone also argued that a prayer was inappropriate while the military situation was uncertain. Benson was archbishop 1883-96.

¹¹³ Shaftesbury to Benson, 27 Apr., Benson-Ponsonby (for the Queen) letters, 29 Apr., 1 May, and Benson to Thomson, 4 May 1885, Benson papers [Lambeth Palace Library] 27/96-100, 104-5; Benson diary, 27-28 Apr. 1885; Benson to Hamilton, 28 Apr. 1885, Gladstone papers 44109/165.

¹¹⁴ Benson was also encouraged by his closest advisor, Bishop Davidson of Rochester, who was normally influential with the Queen: see Davidson to Benson, 29 Jan. 1892, Davidson papers [Lambeth Palace Library] 18/85; A.C. Benson, *Edward White Benson*, 2 vols. (1900), ii, 423; G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson*, 2 vols. (1935), i, 238. For the remarkable public reactions to Clarence's death, see Wolfe, *Great Deaths*, 208-15.

¹¹⁵ Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 490. However, his example rests on a misunderstanding: the Queen's and Peel's objection in April 1846 (Peel papers 40441/168-71) was not to the terms of the proposed prayer, but to an extravagant House of Commons speech by Inglis.

¹¹⁶ Dudley W.R. Bahlman, 'The Queen, Mr. Gladstone and Church Patronage', *Victorian Studies*, iii (1959-60), 380, and see M. Bentley, 'Power and Authority in the Late-Victorian and Edwardian court', in Andrzej Olechnowicz (ed.), *The Monarchy and the British Nation 1780-2000* (Cambridge, 2007), 175-8. For the Queen

generally on religion, see Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 158-66, and W. Arnstein, 'Queen Victoria and Religion', in Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women 1760-1930* (1986). For Prince Albert, see Daphne Bennett, *King Without a Crown* (London, 1977), 160-2.

¹¹⁷ Victoria to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1854, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 51.

¹¹⁸ Victoria to King Leopold, 23 Mar. 1847, RA VIC/Y199/76; and for 1854 as also 'absurd' see *Greville Memoirs*, vii, 31.

¹¹⁹ Victoria to Princess Victoria, 19 June 1872, 17 June 1878, in *Darling Child... 1871-1878*, ed. Roger Fulford (1976), 48, 293; Aberdeen to Victoria, 11 Sept. 1854, RA VIC/A23/146; Victoria to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1854, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 51.

¹²⁰ Phipps (acting private secretary) to Victoria, 28 Sept. 1865, RA VIC/B21/75.

¹²¹ Victoria to Aberdeen, 21 Aug. 1854, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 51.

¹²² Victoria-Aberdeen letters, 1, 3, 12, 13 Apr. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43049/1-4, 19-20, 41-2, 46, and see Albert's criticisms in Bennett, *King Without a Crown*, 257; Victoria to Palmerston, 11 Sept. 1857, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 314.

¹²³ Victoria to Russell, 31 Oct. 1849, *ibid.*, 1st ser., i, 271; and to Palmerston, 31 Mar., 27 Apr. 1856, Palmerston papers RC/F/697, 709, and 11 Sept. 1857, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 314.

¹²⁴ Tait to Victoria, and Sydney (Lord Chamberlain), to Tait, both 9 Mar. 1866, Tait papers 82/113, 123. The reason for the change soon became public knowledge: *Times*, 15 Mar. 1866, p. 9g.

¹²⁵ Anderson, 'Crimean War', 216.

¹²⁶ Aberdeen to Victoria, 22 Aug., 11 Sept 1854, RA VIC/A23/140, 146, and see Lucille Iremonger, *Lord Aberdeen* (London, 1978), 321; Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 319.

¹²⁷ Granville reported in *Greville Memoirs*, vii, 300 (27 Sept. 1857); Victoria to Palmerston, 11 Sept. 1857, in *Queen's Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 314.

¹²⁸ See esp. remarks just before the 1847 fast day in *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ed. D.C. Lathbury, 2 vols. (London, 1910), ii, 275-6, for the Irish famine as 'a calamity most legibly Divine', and 'heavy hand of God'; and generally Hilton, *Atonement*, 343-6, 351-2.

¹²⁹ See particularly his agreeing to end Sunday provision of music in London parks when faced by episcopal, evangelical and dissenter protests: Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 467; and, generally, John Wolffe, 'Lord Palmerston and Religion', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cxx (2005).

¹³⁰ Palmerston-Aberdeen letters, 20, 21 Sept., and Aberdeen to Sumner, 26 Nov. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43069/276-7, 278, 43195/144-5.

¹³¹ Janet, 'General fasts', esp. 6-14, 103-4, 245-8, and '1832', 299, 302, 311-17, partly following Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 175.

¹³² Boyd Hilton, 'Moral disciplines', in Peter Mandler (ed.), *Liberty and Authority in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), 224-5, 229-31, and Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism* (Cambridge, 2006), 16, 71, 97-9.

¹³³ Hunt and Hume in *Parl. Deb.*, ii, cc. 205-6, 490 (7, 14 Feb. 1831), ix, c. 902 (26 Jan. 1832), x, cc. 392-3, 438-9 (15, 16 Feb. 1832); *The Poor Man's Guardian 1831-35*, ed. Patricia Hollis, 4 vols. (London, 1969), [hereafter *PMG*], i, 273-5, 306; *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires ... in the British Museum*, xi, ed. M.D. George (London, 1954), nos. 16943, 16969, 17021, 17155, 17197; and petitions in *House of Commons Journal*, lxxxvii, 21, 215 (14 Dec. 1831, 23 Mar. 1832).

¹³⁴ *PMG*, i, 285, 295-6, 317, 327-8, 332, 334; *Times*, 20 Mar., p. 3e, 22 Mar. 1832, p. 3b; and see Janet, '1832', 311-16.

¹³⁵ *PMG*, i, 159-60, 12 Nov. 1831; *Northern Star*, 3 Oct. 1846, and 13, 27 Mar. 1847; Gray, '1847', 201.

¹³⁶ The trend is clear from the evidence in Janet, 'General Fasts', 110-25.

¹³⁷ E.g. *Times*, 22 Mar. 1846, p. 8d; 10 Nov. 1849, p. 3b; 3 Mar., p. 10d, 19 Mar. 1855, p. 12d; *Guardian*, 14 Mar. 1855, p. 213b and (at York Convocation), 7 Feb. 1866, p. 137b.

¹³⁸ Grey to Longley, 26 Jan. 1866, in *Times*, 14 Feb. 1866, p. 9g.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, editorial, 2 Nov. 1853, p. 8c, and see e.g. *ibid.* 3 Sept. 1849, p. 4d; *Guardian*, 5 Sept. 1849, p. 584a-b, 24 Apr. 1854, p. 340c.

¹⁴⁰ Shaftesbury to Benson, 27 Apr. 1885, Benson papers 27/96-7, and see earlier comments at York Convocation, and editorial, *Guardian*, 7 Feb., p. 137b-c, 28 Feb. 1866, p. 220c.

¹⁴¹ E.g. *Guardian*, 21 Nov. 1849, p. 756a, 3 May 1854, p. 349a, 14 Oct. 1857, p. 777a, and *Times* reports after each occasion; and see Janet, '1832', 307; Gray, '1847', 199-200, 202; Anderson, 'Crimean War', 216; Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 491.

¹⁴² Shaftesbury diary, 24 Mar. 1847; *Illustrated London News*, 24 Mar. 1855, p. 270; *Scotsman*, 24 Mar. 1855, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Guardian*, 26 Sept. 1849, p. 632c, 28 Mar., p. 324c, also 23 May 1866, p. 541c; though see Cragoe, '1865-7', 198-201, for less observance in northern industrial towns.

¹⁴⁴ *The Holland House Diaries 1831-1840*, ed. Abraham D. Kriegel (1977), 157, 21 Mar. 1832; *Greville Memoirs*, ii, 96-7 (26 Dec. 1830), vii, 31-2 (23 Apr. 1854), and 300 (22 Sept. 1854).

¹⁴⁵ Fitzroy to moderator, Edinburgh Presbytery, 19 Oct. 1853, in *Times*, 28 Oct., p. 9d; Palmerston to Aberdeen, 20 Sept. 1854, Aberdeen papers 43069/276-7.

¹⁴⁶ Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, ii, 457; *Times*, 2 Nov. 1853, p. 8c; *The Nonconformist*, 2 Nov. 1853, p. 886b-c; *Guardian*, 23 Nov. 1853, p. 781a-b; and see Wolffe, 'Palmerston and Religion', 916-7; [C. Kingsley], 'Lord Palmerston and the Presbytery of Edinburgh', *Frasers Magazine*, xlix (1854), 47-53; Stanley in *Times*, 21 Mar. 1866, 5e; and see J. Llewelyn Davies, 'Nature and Prayer', *Macmillan's Magazine*, xiii (1866), 233-40, and for Scottish equivalents, Revs. J. Cranbrook and G. Gilfillan in *Scotsman*, 17 Oct., p. 3, and 8 Nov. 1865, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Hilton, *Atonement*, 5-6, 289-304, 332-6, for 'incarnationalism', and J.H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 2nd edn. (1865), 295; but see Brown, 'Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism', 694-704, for persistence of older providentialist and prophetic views.

¹⁴⁸ Turner, 'Rainfall, plagues', *passim*.

¹⁴⁹ See esp. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Nov. 1846, p. 1139, for Russell's 'Christian patriotism', and *Nonconformist*, 6 Oct. 1857, p. 784a, for the Wesleyan conference agreeing to denominational observance.

¹⁵⁰ For Jewish observances in the 1850s, see M. Saperstein, 'British Jewish preachers in time of war 1800-1918', *Jl. of Modern Jewish Studies*, iv (2005), 257-8.

¹⁵¹ *Parl. Deb.*, xli, cc. 336-7 (23 Mar. 1847), and see Bright diary, 26 Apr. 1854, in G.M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (London, 1913), 234-5.

¹⁵² *Nonconformist*, 20 Mar. 1855 (reporting 1854), p. 219a, 14 Mar. 1855, p. 197c, 14 Oct. 1857, p. 806a. Generally, Janet, 'General Fasts', 71, 76, 204-6, and Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality. Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999), 243-6.

¹⁵³ Gray, '1847', 200, 202; *Guardian*, 6 Oct. 1857, p. 765b.

¹⁵⁴ E. Ellice, MP for Coventry, in *Nonconformist*, 20 Mar. 1855, p. 219a-b; Shaftesbury to Granville (Lord President of the Council), 4 Apr. 1856, Granville papers 30/29/19/18/53-4; and Scottish representations and Privy Council minutes 1855-69 in HO 45/8073 and [National Archives, Privy Council papers] PC 8/155.

¹⁵⁵ Arthur Burns, 'The authority of the church', in Mandler, *Liberty and Authority*, 194-5.

¹⁵⁶ A further sign of difficulty was perhaps a June 1860 request in the House of Commons for a 'Return of the occasions ... on which Special Services have been used in England by Royal Proclamation, since the year 1800': *Parliamentary Papers* 1860 (415), liii, 163.

¹⁵⁷ *Guardian*, 13 May 1857, pp. 380-1; *Parl. Deb.*, cli, cc. 475-503, 1392-4 (28 June, 13 July 1858): the royal warrant ending the state services was dated 15 Jan. 1859, and the act of repeal for the fast and thanksgiving days is 22 Victoria c. 2 (Mar. 1859). See also Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, i, 491, and David Cressy, 'The Fifth of November Remembered', in Roy Porter (ed.), *The Myths of the English* (Cambridge, 1992), 81-3.

¹⁵⁸ *Parl. Deb.*, clxxxii, cc. 498-507: the government won the division by 259 to 112 votes. Gladstone's changed conception of the relation between religion and the state is well established, but especially useful is J.P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986), 153-64.

¹⁵⁹ See Carnarvon in the Lords, *Parl. Deb.*, clxxxii, cc. 188-90 (8 Feb. 1866).

¹⁶⁰ *Hamilton Diary*, ii, 615, 12 May 1884. Benson caught Gladstone's meaning, and in proposing episcopal prayers was much concerned to avoid political 'misconstruction': Benson letter in *Guardian*, 21 May 1884, 772c, and Benson to Gladstone, 10 Feb 1885, Gladstone papers 44109/141-2.

¹⁶¹ Maltby (now of Durham) to Russell, 28 Sept. 1849, Russell papers 30/22/8A/266.

¹⁶² The extensive discussions and drafts are in *Chronicle of Convocation* volumes from 1854 to 1862.

¹⁶³ *Chronicle of Convocation 1863*, 1145-6, 1337-8; legal opinion, 6 June 1863, in Longley papers 5/36-9.

¹⁶⁴ 28 & 29 Victoria ch. 122, 1; 35 & 36 Victoria ch. 35, 3, and see R.C.D. Jaspar, *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy 1662-1980* (London, 1989), 47-8, 57-8. Some senior clergymen remained uneasy, however, and in 1874 Convocation ordered an (inconclusive) enquiry on the legal status of the harvest service. A difficulty was the uncertain meaning of 'lawful authority', because undefined in the statute: see the historical memorandum attached to *The Canon Law of the Church of England* (London, 1947), 215-23.

¹⁶⁵ Wolffe, 'Judging the Nation', 299.

¹⁶⁶ Anderson, 'Crimean War', 215.

¹⁶⁷ These occasions are considered in Philip Williamson, 'National Days of Prayer: the Churches, the State and Public Worship in Britain 1899-1957', forthcoming.

¹⁶⁸ *Times*, 18 May 1882, p. 6e, responding to a motion from the Lower House of Canterbury Convocation for a 'day of national intercession', *Chronicle of Convocation 1882*, 166-7, 227; *Times*, 29 June 1882, p. 8e; Bell, *Davidson*, i, 483.

¹⁶⁹ This thanksgiving prayer was a late addition, not mentioned in either Disraeli's or Tait's letters, and was even given priority over the prayer they originally proposed. It was probably inserted at the Queen's request.

¹⁷⁰ William M. Kuhn, 'Ceremony and Politics: the British Monarchy 1871-72', *Jl. of British Studies*, xxvi (1987); and Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism*, 38-47.

¹⁷¹ Gladstone Diaries, viii, 74, 8-9 Dec. 1871; Philip Guedalla, The Queen and Mr. Gladstone 1845-1879 (1933), 318-9, letter nos. 400, 402; Randall Davidson and William Benham, Life of A.C. Tait, 2 vols. (London, 1891), ii, 106-7 (diary, 10 Dec. 1871, 21 Jan 1872).

¹⁷² See Gladstone in Parl. Deb., ccix, c. 290 (13 Feb. 1872). Kuhn, 'Ceremony and Politics', 146-54, and Kuhn, Democratic Royalism, 38-47, are unaware of the two prayers, and sometimes conflate discussion of the thanksgiving prayer with the St Paul's thanksgivings service. Turner, 'Rainfall, Plagues', 59-60, has the prayers, but mistakes the creation of a bank holiday in London for a 'proclaimed ... day of national thanksgiving'.

¹⁷³ John Wolffe, 'National Occasions at St. Paul's since 1800', in Derek Keene, Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint (eds.), St. Paul's. The Cathedral Church of London 604-2004 (New Haven, 2004), 385.

¹⁷⁴ Nonconformist, 24 Jan. 1872, p. 92; also 13 Dec. 1871, 24 Jan. and 28 Feb. 1872, for extensive attention to the Prince's illness and recovery, and for the prayers of 'all' nonconformists.

¹⁷⁵ See Kuhn, Democratic Royalism, 6-7 and ch. 5, stressing the religious aspects as a corrective to David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c.1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983).