Robert Montgomery Martin and the origins of 'Greater Britain'

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The idea of 'Greater Britain' has been associated mainly with the later Victorian era, but it was anticipated in most important particulars. This article examines perhaps the most ambitious single text on the British empire produced during the first half of the nineteenth century: Robert Montgomery Martin's five-volume, 3,000 page History of the British Colonies. *Published in 1834-5, in the midst of seminal debates over imperial administrative and commercial policy, Martin's opus offered the first comprehensive account of Britain's overseas possessions. Read in context, the* History *emerges as a political clarion call. It sought not only to awaken the British to the worth and unity of their allegedly undervalued foreign dependencies, but also to intervene in specific controversies about the workings of imperial government, and to reveal the Divine purpose that lay behind Britain's ascent to global power. Martin's* History*, it is suggested, was a monumental and in some ways path-breaking attempt to fuse religion and statistics with arguments about the future of the empire.*

Keywords: Robert Montgomery Martin; empire; imperial political thought; Greater Britain.

Introduction

Later-Victorian Britain had an appetite for substantial treatments of imperial problems. Prominent figures including J. R. Seeley, J. A. Froude, Goldwin Smith, Charles Dilke, Henry Maine, and J. A. Hobson all found eager audiences for their writings on empire, and some of the most powerful recent scholarship on Victorian political ideas has been concerned with making sense of the analyses they offered.[1] As Duncan Bell has shown, the idea of 'Greater Britain' lay at the core of these later-nineteenth-century debates.[2] The case that the empire was integral to Britain's status and purpose in the world, that it ought to be drawn closer together, and that there were practical means by which this could be achieved, was developed in detail by a strikingly diverse array of imperial commentators, thinkers, and historians.

But imperial literature looked quite different before the 1860s, when these full-dress dissections started to emerge. It was more diffuse, more politically partisan, faster moving, and much less the domain of intellectual aristocrats and leading public moralists.[3] Work on early-nineteenth-century imperial thought has, as a result, paid less attention to the elaborated thinking of unusually engaged individuals. Most of this period's best-known analyses of empire prioritised political economy over history, and aspired to some sort of general relevance beyond the circumstances of their production.[4] This describes Herman Merivale's *Lectures on Colonies and Colonization* (1841), George Cornewall Lewis's *Essay on the Government of Dependencies* (1841), and Edward Gibbon Wakefield's *Letter from Sydney* (1829).[5] But examining texts of this kind can only take us so far into the imperial political

thought of the early nineteenth century. Between the 1820s and the 1850s, as debate simmered about how to recast an authoritarian, centralized, protectionist, Anglican empire that was becoming increasingly restive, most public imperial argument dealt in practicalities, partisan agendas, and competing visions of Britain's immediate responsibilities.[6] Most of this controversy was fragmented, looking towards the different circumstances found in different British possessions. A few writers, however, sought to weld the parts into a connected whole.

This article examines probably the most ambitious single text about the British empire produced in the first half of the nineteenth century: Robert Montgomery Martin's *History of the British Colonies*.[7] First published in 1834-5, the work occupies five volumes and slightly more than 3,000 closely-printed octavo pages. It offered the first comprehensive account of the globe-spanning version of the British empire which had taken shape in the course of the Napoleonic wars, placing India and Canada under the same umbrella as Malta and Gozo. In this respect it was clearly a landmark in imperial literature. But it is rarely cited, and not at all studied. The Irishman Martin is known to historians mainly as a (very) minor participant in Britain's imperial projects in India and Hong Kong: the story of his career, and of his prolific published output, has been painstakingly reconstructed by Frank H. H. King.[8] There has been some investigation of Martin's later writing on the Indian Mutiny, but the agenda pursued in his earlier work remains unclear.[9] There is more to say about the arguments of a figure who Lynn Zastoupil has rightly identified as 'a pioneering advocate of the Greater Britain idea'.[10]

Part of Martin's significance is that he appointed himself historian of the empire, at a time well before most scholars locate the origins of imperial history. Early-nineteenth-century British colonial histories, as a genre, certainly need more attention.[11] But the *History* was, as King put it, 'not properly history', and was only in part a study of the imperial past.[12] Zoë Laidlaw remarks that it was in fact 'a mix of geography, history, statistics, economics, ethnography and geology'.[13] To this list might be added sociology, theology, zoology, ichthyology, meteorology, jurisprudence, descriptions of postal arrangements, and some comprehensive vegetable taxonomies. Much of the text is uncompromisingly dry. This article suggests, however, that the *History* should be understood as a serious attempt to project a political vision. Martin's aim in producing the work, it argues, was to redirect a set of debates about imperial administrative, constitutional, and commercial policy which had been raging since the 1820s, and which took a number of new turns over the period of composition. In particular, he sought to cast the empire in a new light: not just as a web of advantageous trading relationships and strategic posts, but as a divinely inspired engine for the reformation of the world. Read in context, Martin's opus casts important light on imperial political thought in early-nineteenth-century Britain, and on the origins of the 'Greater Britain' vision.

The article begins by outlining Martin's life and politics, and the political and intellectual background to the *History*. The remaining sections then deal with the overall architecture of the work, the concept of empire it sought to establish, and the changes in policy it demanded.

Martin and British politics

Martin's career is examined in as much detail as the sources allow in Frank H. H. King's 'bio-bibliography', so only a brief outline is necessary here.[14] Martin was born into an Anglican Protestant family in Dublin around 1800. After training as a doctor, he spent the 1820s working as a surgeon between Ceylon, East Africa, New South Wales, and Calcutta, and travelling even more widely among the colonies. A stint editing the *Bengal Herald* in association with Rammohun Roy was followed by his return to Britain in 1830, where he

edited a London journal during the peak of the Reform crisis. The rest of his life was taken up writing, editing, participating in societies (including the Statistical Society of London and the Aborigines Protection Society), and pursuing official employment. Pamphleteering in the early 1830s set him up to produce the enormous *History* in 1834-5, and a tide of further work. His vast published output covered an extraordinary range of issues – from the tea trade, to the Bible, to railway speculation, to Ireland, to the handloom weavers – but the empire was always his main concern. Having finally secured a colonial appointment as Treasurer of Hong Kong in 1844, he left the post the next year to lobby for changes in Britain's China policy.[15] After extensive further writing on the colonies, India, and other topics, and more than a decade editing the supplementary despatches of the Duke of Wellington, Martin died in 1868.

Party politics and identities in 1830s Britain were so fluid, and often in such a state of confusion, that attributing definite partisan allegiances to individuals outside of formal party structures can obscure as much as it reveals. Later-nineteenth-century writers on empire and imperialism, by contrast, often had more formalized or at least more consistent political affiliations, which has encouraged historians to draw tighter connections between party politics and imperial thought. Even in the generally unstable and fast-changing context of British politics after 1830, however, Martin stood at an unusual angle to the party-political landscape. Lynn Zastoupil finds signs of 'Tory Radicalism' in Martin's work, and it is certainly tempting to align him with the Tories.[16] His only success in securing colonial patronage came from a Conservative Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley; he became closely associated with the Wellesley family; and, as an opponent of the repeal of the Corn Laws, he stood as a Protectionist candidate in an 1846 by-election. But there are signs of broad Whig principles in his writing too, and of a more than moderate reforming temperament. Martin was a vocal advocate for 'the great and unalterable principles of civil liberty', and for religious toleration, and he professed support for the measure of parliamentary reform carried in 1832.[17] He argued against the punishment of death, against flogging, and against both arbitrariness and harshness in the criminal law.[18] At a time when 'liberalism' was becoming an object of open hostility for most Tories, moreover, the *History* went out of its way to praise the application of 'liberal principles' in the empire, and the 'liberality' of the more congenial Colonial Secretaries.[19] Martin did, however, reject republicanism and revolution, insisting that the people should not try to better their conditions by physical force, and justified the privileged position of the aristocracy in the British state.[20] He argued for a middle way in constitutional affairs: if Britain wanted to extend the reach of the democratic principle in its constitution, it should strengthen the monarchical principle at the same time.[21]

Martin deliberately claimed to belong to no political or religious party.[22] He was always at pains to stress his disinterestedness, claiming a few years before the *History* that he was on the point of pursuing employment in Continental Europe as his domestic prospects were so limited.[23] As far as partisan labels were concerned, he professed to be neither Whig nor Tory, but rather an advocate for 'national principles'. He did remark in the *History*, however, that the Whigs did not pay sufficient regard to the colonies, while the Tories showed them proper solicitude.[24] He criticised Earl Grey's Reform government for its 'meddling propensity', and for shaking the interests of the country.[25] This certainly mirrored wider Conservative critiques of Whig administration, at home and in the colonies.[26] But Martin's imperial writing for the most part aimed to transcend partisanship, and the detailed arguments he set out did not align cleanly with the wider positions staked out by any of the contemporary parties.

It makes sense that Martin should have been able to write at a remove from the partisan politics of 1830s Britain. He insisted that the foundation of his imperial thought was not

abstract theory or party doctrine, but extremely wide practical experience. Martin claimed to have been to 'nearly all' Britain's foreign possessions, and there cannot have been another early-nineteenth-century writer on empire and imperial government who had visited as many of the colonies as he had.[27] The imperial tours that would become a relatively common pursuit among members of the British political class from the 1860s had yet to become established, and what imperial travel did go on in the first half of the nineteenth century was mostly connected with official business. Martin could claim, as such, to be able to look beyond the obfuscations of narrowly conceived theory to what worked in practice; and to have experienced for himself how British rule could benefit other parts of the globe. It was surely not a coincidence that just like Charles Dilke, who would popularise the concept of 'Greater Britain' in the 1860s, Martin had seen a significant chunk of the imperial world.[28] There was something in the concrete spectacle of the empire which helped to inspire some of the nineteenth century's most ambitious visions of imperial unity and consolidation.

Martin was fairly consistent in his political positions. He did reverse his views on both the Union with Ireland and the administration of the East India Company at the beginning of the 1830s, in each case turning from criticism to celebration.[29] Thereafter, however, there were few dramatic changes in his imperial arguments. After publishing his major work in the form of the *History* in 1834-5, he spent twenty years updating the material he had compiled, and wrestling it into different forms. His 10-volume *British Colonial Library* of 1836-7 was a reorganised version of the same text, with much of the statistical material stripped out.[30] *The British Colonies,* published between 1851 and 1857, again repeated much of the *History,* but included substantial additions mainly to the historical sections, alongside fresh discussions of Britain's newly-acquired possessions.[31] There was little in this extremely long text, however, which suggested that Martin had changed his mind on any significant general points about imperial trade or government since the early 1830s.[32] Making sense of his expansive vision of the British empire, then, means understanding the original context of the *History*.

Reformed politics and the contexts of the *History*

Later-nineteenth-century visions of 'Greater Britain' were constructed against the backdrop of a relatively stable, prosperous, self-governing settler empire. While proponents of imperial consolidation were often motivated by anxieties about Britain's declining international competitiveness, and by the seeming emergence of new threats from foreign empires, it was easy to take pride in the seeming successes of the nation's experiments in colonization.[33] This had been the case since the 1850s, when the grants of 'responsible government' to the settler colonies, the adoption of imperial free trade, and the emergence of a more optimistic domestic political climate, had made it more straightforward to celebrate the empire as a symbol of attractive British values.[34]

In the early 1830s, however, the circumstances were different. Martin wrote amidst the first, uncertain stages of a great imperial reorganisation, both economic and constitutional. The fall of the Tories from office in 1830, after nearly half a century in power, ushered in a Whig-led Reform ministry whose aspirations for the empire were not immediately clear. The 1832 parliamentary Reform Act, moreover, shifted the parameters of debate about the British colonies, and made them a more prominent subject of public discussion than they had been for decades.[35] The abolition of colonial slavery in 1833 encouraged reflection on the moral character of the empire; the expiration of the East India Company's Charter in the same year brought the government of the subcontinent into closer focus; and fierce debates about Britain's political economy started to call the material value of the colonies seriously into

question.[36] Most significant for the future of arguments about 'Greater Britain', however, was the abolition of the informal system of colonial representation. In doing away with 'nomination' boroughs, the 1832 Reform Act closed the door by which most Members of Parliament identified with colonial interests had secured their seats.[37] Whether or not this system had ever worked efficiently, its demise stimulated the airing of new ideas about how to restructure the administrative and legislative relationships between Britain and its colonies.

All this took place amidst increasingly vocal colonial discontent. With the whole empire beyond India still subject to the centralized authority of the Colonial Office, and the idea of 'responsible government' yet to enter general circulation, the privileges properly due to different varieties of possession – and even the category of 'settler colony' – were yet to be clearly established. At the end of the 1820s, calls from a number of colonies with significant settler populations for the extension of constitutional and civil rights had created standoffs with the imperial authorities: most seriously in Lower Canada, which descended into deadlock. Pressure for the redress of long-standing complaints from the Cape, New South Wales, and Ceylon also gathered steam around the turn of the 1830s.[38] All this is to say that Martin wrote the *History* at a time when the future of the empire had suddenly come to appear unsettled, and when hostility to the colonial system as it stood was sweeping across British politics.

For our purposes, there are two main points to draw out of the voluminous and wide-ranging imperial debates of the early 1830s. The first is that, while there were few explicit calls for Britain to surrender its colonies, there was endless criticism of the cost of maintaining colonial establishments, and queries as to why this should fall on the British taxpayer.[39] Anyone seeking to defend the empire in the 1830s had to prioritise a serious answer to the financial question. This leads on to the second point, which is that it was still uncommon to conceptualise the empire as a whole in terms of national destiny.[40] Many politicians and commentators in this period, to be sure, did not possess a concept of empire in this sense, instead treating Britain's overseas possessions as a congeries of separate interests ranged across the globe. But the habit of talking about the colonies in primarily instrumental terms, either economically or as a support to British power, was deeply ingrained. Saying that they could not be abandoned because Britain had contracted a responsibility, as many did, was not the same thing as saying that there was a higher purpose to British global expansion.

It was towards these political debates that the *History* was primarily directed. The work, in the final form it took, did not engage seriously with other authoritative texts on colonial policy and imperial government.[41] Enlightenment figures, mainly Montesquieu, were cited, but only in passing.[42] Martin was more seriously interested in the theories of the 'systematic colonizers', led by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, disagreeing with them on the grounds that his experience disproved their speculations. But there was only so much that the *History* could take account of, since it predated all the most celebrated texts on British colonial policy and imperial government produced in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Richard Cobden had yet to begin his public career; Charles Buller and Lord Durham would not pronounce on colonization and 'responsible government' until the late 1830s; Merivale and Cornewall Lewis entered into the subject only in the 1840s; and John Stuart Mill's writing on colonial subjects in this period was anonymous and buried in newspapers.[43] Martin drew heavily on historians for his information, and evidently read very widely, looking at Muslim historians of India as well as the standard Western authorities.[44] As befitted a work composed during the age of the 'statistical movement', however, his priority was hard data, culled from blue books and solicited directly from colonial officials.[45] Martin owed a significant amount

of this material to the rash of colonial Commissions of Inquiry which had been despatched in the 1820s to investigate the government and finances of various parts of the empire.[46] Their evidence became an important weapon in Martin's effort to challenge the claims of the anonymous 'anti-colonial writers', theorists, and 'false economists' against whom the *History* was explicitly levelled.[47]

It is worth asking, in this context, what Martin meant by designating his account a *History*. Certainly he did not propose to offer a connected account of change over time meeting the criteria recently laid out by Thomas Macaulay in his 1828 essay 'History': Martin's text did not set out to unite an 'affective and picturesque' narrative with 'profound and ingenious reasoning', and it did not aspire to exhibit 'the character and spirit of an age… in miniature'.[48] In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the word 'history' was still applied to quasi-scholarly inquiries of various kinds. In the case of writing on the empire, a 'history' could be a compendium, a set of statistics, a vindication of a personal case, a travel account, or some combination of all these things – as well as, in some parts or cases, an interpretatively ambitious treatment of past political transactions. Innumerable such 'histories' of British overseas possessions, individually and by region, were published in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, and some of them – especially James Mill's 1817 *History of British India*, and the sea of writing on Indian history produced after the Mutiny of 1857 – have attracted close examination.[49] But the point is that 'histories' of empire in the early and middle decades of the century were a sprawling, messy affair. They were produced for different purposes, by different classes of writers, for different categories of readers, and were rarely engaged directly with one another. There was no counterpart literature to the relatively coherent, compact imperial historiography of the post-Seeley era, from which it is still common to date the study of British imperial history.[50] This doubtless accounts for why historians have paid only limited attention to the place of the past in British thinking on empire before about 1860.[51] Yet in a political culture which placed enormous weight on partisan readings of history, especially that of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain, claims about the imperial past – however fragmented – frequently played significant roles in imperial political controversies.[52]

Martin chose the title of the *History* more as a label of convenience than a statement of intent. He was as flexible in his use of the language of 'history' as most of his contemporaries: the two major repurposings of the text of the *History* respectively abandon and downgrade the term, while one of his statistical collections, published in 1839 under the title *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire*, was reissued in 1843 as a *History of the Colonies of the British Empire*.[53] Despite the unprecedented span of the *History*, moreover, Martin had very little to say about the overall shape of British imperial history, beyond giving Elizabeth I the credit for setting Britain on the path towards maritime dominion.[54] But as part of his battle against 'speculative opinions however plausible', he repeatedly made a virtue out of resting his arguments on historical data.[55] He insisted that 'the experience derived from the past' was 'the surest guide for present or future conduct', and he regularly looked back to the colonial system of the seventeenth century as a model for Britain's empire in the present.[56] As with the later discourses around 'Greater Britain', especially among its most celebrated proponents, history was one of the sharpest weapons in Martin's imperial arsenal.

The other context which needs to be considered is the *History's* reception. The work was not a publishing sensation. By the late 1840s, on Martin's own (conceivably exaggerated) account, a respectable but not remarkable 8,500 copies had been printed.[57] The first volumes of Macaulay's *History of England*, by comparison, went through 12,000 copies in their first

month on sale.[58] It is probably fair to assume that most purchasers would have bought Martin's *History* for reference, and that few contemporaries would have read it cover to cover. The work was passed over in the leading elite reviews – those of the order of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* – and not extensively discussed in the major newspapers. As a result, it does not seem to have stirred the minds of the British political and literary classes, as far as a survey of their published correspondence and writing can indicate. Martin may, in fact, have made more of an impact overseas: Alexis de Tocqueville owned the volume of the *History* which dealt with India, and the first premier of united Canada, Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, read something by Martin in the 1830s.[59] This is not to say that Martin's labours went entirely unappreciated in Britain. The stripped-down *Colonial Library* sold better than the *History*, and *The British Colonies* in the 1850s boasted a quite impressive list of subscribers, including the Queen, the Earl of Derby, and the third Earl Grey.[60] But Martin never managed to generate any sustained critical engagement with the wider arguments he sought to make. As far as the *History* is concerned, the serial publication of its five volumes doubtless made it harder to grasp the overall priorities of the work, as more fatally did Martin's decision to bury his theses in colossal mounds of detail. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone to attempt a general interpretation of the text once it was complete.

Where individual volumes of the *History* were reviewed in the press, this was usually in brief, with a few passages extracted and matters of particular interest highlighted. More engaged reviewers took issue with the accuracy of some of Martin's statistics, but the focus of contemporary criticism was on his habit of entering into 'crude and frothy political discussions', and venting his personal prejudices.[61] There was, however, no question about the *History's* completeness, or about the originality of its conception.[62] It was, as reviewers remarked, 'the first history of our colonies', correcting what had been 'the striking and painful anomaly of an utter absence of any Colonial history', and in that sense was 'not more called for than it was new'.[63] As one writer noted, 'we have detached works on the various colonies without number; but a corrected and comprehensive history of all our colonial possessions is what we have never had'.[64]

The structure of the *History*

Martin did not leave his reviewers to discover his originality for themselves. He introduced his text as the '*first* Colonial History', and one which would remedy 'an acknowledged blank in the History of our country'.[65] Readers were reminded regularly throughout the sprawling work that it was 'the first connected view of the British Colonies that has ever been laid before the public'.[66] And it was a work framed as meeting a defined need. It asserted that the construction of the Empire, at home and abroad, was 'in a momentous state of transition'.[67] Preserving the integrity of the British possessions would rely on the domestic public paying closer attention to the colonies, the worth of which they had yet to register, and forcing the government to offer better protection to Britain's colonial and imperial interests.[68] The need for such a work was all the more pressing now that the Reform Act had, by Martin's reckoning, eliminated the colonists' voice in Parliament.[69] The aim of the study, then, was 'to enable the British public to appreciate duly the vast importance and actual condition of the Colonies of this Empire'.[70]

Martin laid down clear precepts as to how this would be achieved in practice. The *History*, he explained, was a work in which utility was placed ahead of style.[71] It was not about analysing the means or motives of colonial expansion, but about providing data on which judgements could be based. [72] Correct facts and practical conclusions would always be prioritised over

theoretical views and abstract disquisitions: or, as Martin described the practice of political speculation, 'extracting sun-beams from cucumbers'.[73] In responding to later criticism, he insisted that the work was one 'in which no assertion is put forth unless supported by irrefragable public and official documents'.[74] The *History's* five volumes, published over the course of 1834 and 1835, dealt in turn with Britain's possessions in India, the West Indies, North America, Australasia, and Europe. Each individual colony was given its own section, and in each case Martin offered a brief political history, a description of major towns and sites, an account of government, a summary of the state of the law, and whatever other information he could get his hands on – from local costumes to rock formations. Sometimes he included poems, and there are five detailed pages on Maltese fig husbandry.[75] Martin was not always entirely precise about his sources, but his command of official records was obviously prodigious. The labour behind the text was visibly herculean, especially when it came to the painstakingly compiled statistical tables offered for nearly every possession.

But the *History* spent much of its protracted length beyond the tramlines Martin had painted. For all that he insisted that the work was one of grinding facts, and that he was a 'dry statist', Martin was rarely able to abstain from politics for long.[76] Colonial governors were alternately praised and criticised, while suggestions for the reorganisation of imperial administrative functions were thrown out with alacrity.[77] Long disquisitions were indulged in on points which piqued Martin's interest, as on the superiority of the Cape over the Euphrates route to India; while lengthy appendices on recondite subjects, such the advantageous commercial policy pursued on the Danish island of St. Thomas, were also included.[78] The *History*, in other words, was deeply interested in the political challenges facing the empire in the 1830s.

The difficulty in making sense of the *History*, however, is that it never reaches its climax. Martin claimed repeatedly, in that text and elsewhere, to be a student of the forces which governed the prosperity and decline of nations and empires.[79] But throughout the first four volumes of the *History*, he continually deferred consideration of the larger questions involved in constructing and governing an empire to the fifth volume. This, he promised, would deal expansively with colonial policy ancient and modern.[80] It promised to be a sequel to the last such major work, Henry Brougham's 1803 *An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers*, which Martin cited respectfully.[81] But it never arrived. In the event the fifth volume of the *History* turned out to be on Britain's possessions in Europe, the treatments of some of which were suspiciously drawn out.[82] At that point Martin promised that he was preparing an account of the colonies of (among other states) France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, as a means of contextualising Britain's own system of colonial policy, and for which the massive corpus of facts presented in the *History* would serve as a backdrop.[83] This would have broken all kinds of new ground: but it, too, never emerged.[84] In 1837 Martin issued a pamphlet called *Colonial Policy of the British Empire, Part I. – Government*, which focused again on Britain's empire, and which tilted towards political philosophy. This is treated, for present purposes, as part of the *History*, having clearly been conceived as belonging to it.[85] But it was as far as Martin's enterprise of a synthetic study of colonial policy ever got. Some broader reflections on the topics he had anticipated covering in the *History* made their way into later works, and especially into articles in a periodical Martin conducted in the early 1840s, the *Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal*.[86] But reconstructing the idea of empire projected in the *History* itself is an exercise in piecing together fragments.

The *History* and the empire

‘The British Empire’, for Martin as for most writers of the early 1830s, was a concept which embraced both the British Isles and its overseas possessions. It would not be until the 1860s that the phrase would commonly be used to describe only the foreign dependencies of the British crown. This absence of a convenient shorthand was one of the reasons why imperial debate around the time of the *History* tended to draw a line between the ‘Indian empire’ and the ‘colonial empire’. The fact that these two entities possessed entirely distinct systems of government was another. Martin, however, arranged everything under the same umbrella. He took the word ‘colonies’ to describe all the territories subject to British sovereignty not then represented in the British parliament, and discussed them as part of the same phenomenon.[87]

Martin’s starting point was that the empire was grand, glorious, and exceptional. It was ‘the greatest Colonial Empire in the World’, covering every part of the globe, and offering an incredible diversity of productions.[88] There had, of course, been large and wealthy empires before, but Martin insisted that Britain’s ‘vast *maritime* empire’ was ‘totally different in formation, and in constitution from any dominion that has heretofore been established on earth’.[89] This was, in essence, because it was British – or English, with Martin using the terms interchangeably, and having little to say specifically about Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Martin never tired of dilating on England as the cradle of civilization, the resting-place of religion, and the asylum of liberty.[90] He argued that, as England was so intimately identified with progressive perfection, the welfare of mankind must depend on the permanent maintenance of its global power.[91] The empire was an engine for diffusing these hard-won blessings – order and peace, freedom and happiness, Christianity – through the most distant regions of the earth.[92] His case for the empire rested on four main points: that it was valuable to Britain; that it was good for the world; that the alternatives were worse; and, most importantly, that it was what God wanted.

The *History’s* arguments about the advantages of the empire to Britain were familiar, but unusually well supported. Martin did make the strategic point that Britain’s colonial possessions were a critical element in upholding the nation’s power against international rivals, but he focused as the 1830s demanded on more tangible costs and benefits.[93] He argued that agriculturalists, manufacturers, capitalists, and emigrants all gained from the empire as an outlet for capital, productions, and superabundant population, and as a source of raw materials.[94] But he sought most strenuously to show that the claims made about the direct financial impact of the colonies were mistaken. Arrays of statistics and complex calculations were brought to bear in service of the case that most colonies accused of being a drain on the national exchequer were, in fact, nothing of the sort.[95] Even those which the British taxpayer did have to support, Martin insisted, would soon be able to maintain themselves under a revised commercial policy, or with the grant of a local legislature.[96] There was no part of the empire which could safely be dispensed with: only an ‘unnational’ ministry would contemplate giving up even Cape Breton.[97]

The benefits of the empire to the world were traced just as carefully. These certainly could not be taken for granted, especially so soon after the triumph of the campaign against colonial slavery. One of Martin’s reviewers began their consideration of the *History* by remarking of Britain’s imperial past that ‘in the whole range of the annals of human depravity, it is difficult to find a history darker or more dreadful’.[98] The *History* sought to make the case that the empire was, in fact, a protector of the oppressed, a crusader against despotism, and a field for promoting the happiness of humanity.[99] Evidence for these propositions was stacked up throughout the work. That recent abolition of slavery, in the first place, had inaugurated a ‘glorious and happier era’ in the western world, and lent England a ‘crown of glory that

encircles her with a halo far brighter than that of all her conquests and battles'.[100] Martin picked out tangible improvements in social conditions all across the empire, and offered calculations of colonies' rising wealth which demonstrated their progress mathematically.[101] Even in unpromising locations like New South Wales, or the Ionian Islands, Britain had managed to raise the tone of society.[102] Martin approvingly cited one writer who had claimed that Britain had assumed the government of Canada not from ambition, but from generosity.[103] The picture was not all rosy. Martin did not paper over the vocal discontent being expressed in many colonies, and some possessions – like Sierra Leone – presented a distressing spectacle.[104] In such cases, however, as we will see in the next section, Martin knew what needed to be done in order to restore Britain to its rightful role as a promoter of improvement.

Martin's most detailed demonstration of Britain's imperial beneficence was in relation to India. He had already laid the groundwork for this argument in earlier writing prepared at the time of the East India Company's Charter renewal.[105] He sought to show that, under the rule of the Company, the subcontinent had been restored from anarchy and despotism, to peace, order, and prosperity.[106] Britain's expansion had been dictated largely by self-preservation, and it was in any case natural for a civilized power to diffuse its influence across a county as harried by internal divisions as eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century India had been.[107] Not only had Britain combatted the stains of human sacrifice, infanticide, and widow-burning, but it was in the process of abolishing slavery, and of gradually extending 'those palladiums of liberty', the press and trial by jury.[108] The first volume of the *History* is dotted with litanies of the practical improvements British rule had effected in different parts of the subcontinent.[109] The most promising sign of the times, however, lay in the changing social structure of India under British rule. Clearly influenced by the eulogies read to the 'middle class' in the debates around the Great Reform Act, Martin drew attention to the emergence in India of a 'middle rank which will form the connecting link between the government and the mass of the nation'. Freedom and prosperity had always followed when such orders emerged, whereas in every country which possessed only two social extremes, 'mental and bodily despotism have supervened'.[110] The Company, then, had annihilated the curse of feudalism, and created the conditions in which Indian peasants could start to learn their own worth.[111] Given these palpable achievements, Martin dismissed the 'rash and crude plans of fancied perfection', many involving radical alterations in the machinery of Indian government, which had proliferated prior to passage of the Charter Act in 1833.[112] He recognised that British rule in the subcontinent might not last for ever, but he hoped the day of its dissolution would be distant.[113]

Britain's empire was, for Martin, unquestionably the most benevolent history had seen.[114] Superior moral character had been displayed as much in its foundation as in its conduct: of all nations, Britain had been the least guilty of wars of aggression, and had often been forced on to colonial acquisitions by the necessity of self-preservation.[115] This full-spectrum imperial exceptionalism was repeatedly underlined by contrasts with other empires, past and present. Babylon, Nineveh, and Rome had fallen and left no traces of their past glory: but this was no harbinger, because their empires had been territorial, their government was that of the few, they lacked freedom of the press, and, critically, they had not been Christian. Britain was the opposite in all respects, and as such there was no reason to expect any imminent imperial decline.[116] Martin's main reference points here, however, were the other European colonial empires with which the history of Britain's own was intertwined.[117] These were imperial projects of an entirely different character to Britain's own, which were rather to be damned than praised. The Dutch in Ceylon had run a campaign of plunder and monopoly, which went

to explain many of the difficulties under which the country still suffered.[118] The Portuguese had spread idolatrous superstition wherever they went, and their compulsory introduction of Roman Catholicism was simply bad policy.[119] Both France and Spain had treated the American Indians who had come under their tutelage abysmally, while France's capture of Grenada was 'a monstrous mix of fanaticism and knavery'.[120] In French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies, moreover, the systematic underpayment of officeholders meant that corruption was rife.[121] Britain, in fact, had been forced into many of the undeniable missteps in its colonial history by the short-sighted policies of other powers.[122] As far as the slave trade was concerned, Britain had been the last European nation to enter into it, and the first to abolish the abominable practice.[123]

Underpinning all these arguments, at a very fundamental level, was religion. The Christianity Martin projected in his published works was of a broad, practical character, concerned not with sectarian minutiae but with the broader strokes of the Divine plan. But the bedrock of the *History* was the conviction that the British empire had been raised up by God. It was obvious to Martin that the rise of British power over the globe could not have been the work of blind chance, or even national policy. He insisted that the Almighty had 'a complete governing control over the actions of His creatures', and that to suggest otherwise was impious and untenable.[124] Colonization must be divinely approved, because it followed the prime decree of heaven: that man should make fruitful and multiply.[125] As Martin noted elsewhere, it was suggestive that England had not become a colonizing and commercial nation until shortly after the establishment of Protestantism, and the translation of the bible for foreign dissemination.[126] The conquest of India was transparently a dispensation of Providence; and Martin would later interpret the discovery of the gold fields in Australia in the early 1850s as an immediate divine intervention, possibly in recognition of the recent founding of a new penal settlement dedicated to reforming rather than punishing convicts.[127]

The *History* insisted that the future prospects of the empire depended on how far Britain's conduct was regulated by the precepts of Christianity.[128] As far as policy was concerned, however, this did not mean either that that conversions should be pursued at all costs, or that Christians should be given exclusive political privileges. The policy of toleration was the best one, because it meant that erroneous religions could be edged aside gradually.[129] Ultimately, however, only Christian nations could expect permanent prosperity.[130] The basis of Martin's pro-imperial arguments in the *History*, in short, was that the colonies had been attached to Britain by Divine Providence to work out the salvation and happiness of the human race.[131] It was the on the duty that England as a great imperial power owed to God that Martin closed the last revision of the *History* in 1857, as he reflected back on a quarter-century of labour.[132]

The *History*, imperial government, and colonial reform

The *History* was not an argument that the empire was already in a state of grace. Martin was alive to the fact that that the British colonies, for all their merits, were not fulfilling their potential as promoters of human happiness. It was hard to think otherwise in the early 1830s. The question for all imperial writers was how the empire ought to be recast, to better serve British interests, or to meet its appointed duties. So the *History* was as much an attempt to push imperial reform in a specific direction, as it was a celebration of British beneficence.

The lessons from history here were clear. Martin was convinced that if the British empire were to collapse then it would, like the ancient empires, be as a consequence of its own misguided acts.[133] In the more recent past, Britain had deserved to lose its North American

colonies, because it had not appreciated their value, and had interfered mistakenly in their affairs.[134] Martin shared the popular nineteenth-century conviction that the empire had grown up in spite of rather than because of British policy, and thanks more to the pressure of circumstances than skilled ministerial stewardship.[135] At the critical juncture at which the empire found itself in the early 1830s, however, it was clear that matters could not be left to work themselves out.

Some of the changes Martin demanded were very particular, and based rather on his observations in the colonies than any broader philosophy. On one of the great questions in colonial policy in the early 1830s, the price at which to sell land to emigrants, his views were decided. Edward Gibbon Wakefield was wrong: a high upset price deterred the emigration of precisely the social groups that colonies most needed.[136] Government, meanwhile, should regulate emigration, but not itself sponsor colonizing schemes.[137] Martin was a vigorous defender also of the reformatory potential of transportation, and resisted the arguments circulating at the time that it should be made more retributive.[138] As far as the difficulties encountered by the British colonies in Western Africa were concerned, the solution was obvious: apply what had worked elsewhere in the empire. An organisation on the model of the East India Company, with delegated sovereignty, would effectively civilize the region.[139]

The technical points, however, were subordinate to a grander vision. What Martin wanted to see realised was a more closely consolidated, commercially integrated, constitutionally liberalised empire, connected as much by the bonds of affection as by the authority of the Colonial Office. This would cement Britain's place at the centre of global civilization.

Knitting the ties of empire more closely together was a necessary response to the unsettled conditions of the age. Writing in 1833, Martin proclaimed that there had never been an era 'when the consolidation of the empire was more imperiously required than at the existing moment', with civil society rocked to its core, and the huddled masses struggling to better their condition in life.[140] He set out his stall clearly in the introduction to the first volume of the *History*, claiming that Britain's colonists wanted to be treated as citizens of a kingdom not divided by any ocean.[141] Steam power, he claimed later on in the work, would annihilate space, bringing distant possessions thousands of miles nearer, thus 'connecting and consolidating our maritime empire'.[142] Martin's vision did not involve the imposition of more restrictive administrative fetters. Policies of divide and rule were to be abandoned, and every possible measure taken to foster goodwill among Britain's colonial subjects.[143] With the empire placed on this surer footing, Martin was confident that Britain would eventually become 'the nucleus around which all the nations of the earth will form… themselves in concentric circles, in proportion to their advancement in the scale of social bliss'.[144]

This consolidation would rest, in the first place, on a fundamental revision of imperial commercial policy. Martin was a devoted believer in the notion that commerce was among the best means of promoting human brotherhood, Christian charity, and Christianity itself.[145] Placing restrictions on imperial trade, as such, amounted to hobbling both the economic and the moral potential of the empire. The *History* was filled with complaints that British commerce with any number of colonies might be far more valuable than it was, if only it was freed from restriction.[146] Tariffs and monopolies were 'the bane of our colonial policy', and meant pitting the colonies against one another.[147] They ignored the wisdom which could be derived from looking at the early history of the British colonies, which had flourished under a freer commercial system.[148] And they denied God's purpose: Providence had adapted Britain and its possessions to trade with one another, but the blessings which might be derived from

their connection was being 'wantonly or wickedly or inadvertently neglected'.[149] Persisting with the system as it stood would eventually render the empire a nullity. Freedom for colonial commerce, by contrast, would make Britain independent of the world, give wider employment to its population and so renovate the social fabric at home, and render England more secure in its dominion.[150] Unfortunately, however, the government of the day seemed to be more susceptible to other influences. Granting commercial concessions to foreign powers at the expense of the colonies, at the best of a 'visionary school of political economists', constituted a 'spurious liberalism' which might break up the empire.[151] Martin's vision of a consolidated imperial free-trade area, insulated from outside competition, clashed with the priorities of the Whigs, and indeed with the protectionist schemes of many Conservatives.[152]

The other great obstacle to realising the full glory of the empire was Britain's system of imperial administration. This was badly flawed in both its local and its central manifestations. When it came to government in the colonies themselves, the problem was simple: Britain was keeping them too much in leading strings, and not granting necessary constitutional liberties.

This was certainly not the case everywhere. Martin argued that England had given its colonies more liberties, practically speaking, than any other nation ever had.[153] He exulted in the spread of 'liberal principles' in Britain's maritime possessions, and praised the advance of 'liberal institutions' and 'constitutional freedom' in many British dependencies.[154] Trial by jury, that 'bulwark of British freedom', was increasingly in evidence across the empire, as was the even more fundamental principle of press freedom.[155] He was delighted to see the latter making progress even in India.[156] But movement towards this ideal was not in every case happening fast enough, and too many colonies were governed despotically when this had ceased to be necessary. Martin hated despotism, and its social consequences.[157] In describing the complaints of Lower Canada against its irresponsible administration, for instance, he saw corruption 'creeping through the whole frame of society', and 'the leprous influence of a despotic form of government' spreading to the extremities of the polity.[158]

Martin's conviction was that colonies ought to be granted local legislatures, as soon as practically possible. This was the 'grand principle' that ought to be applied after they had reached a certain (unspecified) level of population and wealth.[159] It could not be done suddenly, and should be done judiciously, but it had to be done: it was invariably better for communities to be closer to their governing power.[160] And it was, once again, all the more imperative to make such concessions in a timely fashion since the informal system of colonial representation in the British parliament had been stripped out in 1832.[161] All through the *History* Martin praised the 'signal advantages' which came with the establishment of houses of assembly.[162] The historic struggle of the Jamaican assembly against the encroachments of the Crown in the seventeenth century, for instance, had been a 'noble contest', and the assembly's triumph was cause for satisfaction to 'every lover of liberty'.[163] The people of Trinidad, still under an absolute governor in the early 1830s, and facing all the trials of slave emancipation and apprenticeship, were 'very properly endeavouring to obtain something more liberal than such a mockery of freedom'.[164] Representative government was, for Martin, a practical as well as a principled question. Seeking to keep colonies in leading strings once they had outgrown them was a recipe for imperial collapse.[165] Martin dismissed the contemporary argument that liberal institutions were incompatible with the integrity of the empire: he insisted that they were essential to it.[166]

Martin held to these arguments with virtually no exclusions. Clearly he saw no problem with the existence of representative institutions in slave-holding societies. Even in colonies with

particularly intractable and violent tensions between settlers and native populations, like the Cape, he advocated rapid movement towards elective Legislative Assemblies.[167] The same was true for colonies with small populations, like Mauritius.[168] Martin was not simply making the case that power belonged properly in the hands of British settlers rather than the Colonial Office: his sympathies were broader. He thought it 'shameful' that Britain had deprived the Maltese of their political liberty, and advised them to keep up their struggle for the rights and privileges of British subjects, in a possession often treated by contemporaries as a military station which could not support representative government.[169] The newly emancipated slave of the West Indies was 'equally entitled with his white brethren to every right and privilege of man', even if he might be inferior in skill and intelligence to the European: it was right that colonial legislatures had started to strike down legal disabilities attached to race, and Martin looked forward (cautiously) to the former slaves becoming qualified by education and morals to assume a more advanced position in society.[170] Though the timescale here was murkier, and no details about the appropriate form of political representation were offered, Martin also considered it Britain's responsibility to 'effectually prepare the natives of British India for the government of their own country at some future period': the native population needed actively to be educated, not left uninstructed in the misguided and unworthy hope of shoring up an empty dominion.[171] In short, Martin shared the broad optimism about the political capacity of non-white races and non-British peoples that was so widespread in the 1830s, and that would fade so dramatically by the 1850s.[172]

Martin was rarely specific about the precise form new colonial assemblies should take. Few British writers were, before the Canadian rebellions and the Durham Report inaugurated an age of more intensive debate around colonial constitutional draftsmanship. Martin argued in any case that colonies should be at liberty to mould their own Houses of Assembly, as they progressed in population and wealth.[173] He was consistently of the view, however, that the franchise ought to be held by 'the property and intelligence of the inhabitants', in preference to any more democratic schemes.[174] What this would mean for aboriginal populations was not clear. Martin would go on to become an active member of the Aborigines' Protection Society, founded in 1837, and considered Bartolomé De Las Casas a hero for his protests against the Spanish treatment of the American Indians.[175] While sharing the then-common assumption that the aboriginal peoples of Australia were more likely than not to die out, he insisted in the *History* that it was Britain's duty 'to save the wild and untutored savages from perishing before our race'.[176] He approved in principle of the appointment of 'protectors of Indians' in British Guiana, and remarked that he thought it advisable to appoint a Lieutenant Governor to oversee frontier districts at the Cape, which may have been with a view to limiting the authority of the mooted Assembly over native relations.[177] In the early 1830s, however, it is not clear that Martin had anticipated all the dangers of allowing settlers to pursue their own native policies: the imperative to extend local representative government was the key priority.

A consolidated, freer empire would also require a more stable system of government at home. Systemic critiques of the organisation and activity of the Colonial Office had gathered steam over the course of the Reform crisis of 1828-32, and Martin here echoed points which were being made increasingly widely among Radicals and reformers.[178] The department suffered from 'defective construction': Colonial Secretaries and Under-Secretaries rotated too quickly, and too few of them possessed any meaningful qualification for the offices they held.[179] While the Office possessed one of the largest repositories of patronage in the British state, parliament paid no attention to its affairs, rendering it practically irresponsible.[180] In the absence of any effective check from public opinion, it interfered inappropriately in matters of internal legislation in the colonies, producing an endless series of disputes. [181] Martin had a

number of proposals for improving this situation, outlining a reformed system of colonial agency, and a better process for the appointment and training of governors. But the main innovation he suggested was precisely the one that recommended itself to so many advocates for the idea of Greater Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century: a permanent Colonial Board.[182] Such models were readily to hand, in the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India for one, but also in the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, the Board of Excise, and the like.[183] The adoption of such a scheme would finally see colonial interests and views properly represented, because Commissioners would be chosen from among distinguished men in the colonies themselves, and would and infuse greater certainty and steadiness infused into the central administration of the empire. It would make the empire more compact, more durable, better able to bolster Britain's position on the global stage, and more powerful to pursue the illustrious mission which Providence had marked out.

Conclusion

Martin never claimed success for the mission he began in the *History*. Writing in the early 1850s, he remarked that he had lived long enough to see imperial ideas once deemed fanciful transformed into sober realities. Even so, he continued to think that the importance of the colonies was 'unappreciated' in Britain'.[184] Certainly it is hard to see that Martin had any significant legacy for Victorian imperial thought. Merivale and Cornewall Lewis both cited him as a source of factual information, but not as an interlocutor.[185] There is little sign of his work in the writings of the leading later-nineteenth-century imperial thinkers, and not much more in the wider landscape of public imperial discourse, beyond the odd mention of the *History* and its allied studies as obsolete reference texts.[186] Dilke at least did his homework, noting in 1890's *Problems of Greater Britain* that 'the idea of imperial unity… is far from modern', having been 'put forward by Montgomery Martin in his history of the colonies published before the present reign'.[187] But Martin does not appear to have had much direct influence on later schemes of thinking around 'Greater Britain'.

What he did do was foreshadow strands of thought which would in time become integral to the fabric of British imperial debate. The *History of the British Colonies* was among the first serious attempts to impose intellectual order on Britain's imperial project in its post-1815 shape. Spurred into action by a series of perceived threats facing the empire in the early 1830s – Colonial Office misrule, Whig imperial apathy, and the faulty theories of anti-colonial political economists and fiscal reformers – Martin articulated a vision of the British empire which anticipated the proponents of 'Greater Britain' in most major particulars. He argued that the empire was at the heart of Britain's national and Providential purpose; that it ought to be knitted more closely together, economically and constitutionally; that such reforms were practical; and that instituting them would allow Britain to take its rightful place at the centre of world order. What this suggests is that while it was only under the specific political and intellectual conditions of the later-Victorian decades that ambitious schemes of imperial consolidation managed to become popular – with the emergence of new threats from foreign empires – it was under different circumstances that they became possible to imagine.

Where Martin's scheme differed most substantially from later visions of 'Greater Britain' was in not allotting such a distinct and dominant role to the white settler colonies and the Anglo-Saxon race. Writing before the grants of 'responsible government' to Canada, Australia, South Africa, and yet-to-be-colonized New Zealand, he necessarily lacked a well-defined concept of the 'settler colonies' as an administrative category; writing at a time when there was still widespread optimism about the capacities of certain subject races for political

education and improvement, there was less apparent need for sharp dividing lines. In this respect Martin's scheme, emphasising as it did the common purposes, possibilities, and destinies of every single possession covered by the British imperial umbrella, went even further than those of his better-known successors in the cause of imperial unity. Martin's vision failed to resonate with his contemporaries in large part because he was not well-known, and because it was so brutally ill-digested. It also went against a cultural and political climate in which 'the empire' was rarely understood as an entity with an overarching identity, instead being debated mainly in terms of its component fragments. So while Martin's labours did not go unappreciated, his arguments were overlooked. This does, however, make the imaginative leaps he took – as part of a generation not accustomed to thinking about the shape and purpose of the empire in the round – all the more remarkable.

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[1] Bell, *Reordering*, esp. chs 1-2; Mantena, *Alibis*; Cain, *Hobson*. On later-nineteenth-century critiques of empire see also Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*; Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition*.
[2] Bell, *Greater Britain*. See also Martin, "Empire Federalism".
[3] J. S. Mill certainly had a vision of the early-nineteenth-century empire, but it was not one of his main intellectual priorities: see Bell, "Mill on Colonies"; Moir et al., *Mill's Encounter*; Zastoupil, *Mill and India*. Thomas Macaulay's public writing on India was historical and barely addressed contemporary issues, while Thomas Carlyle's thoughts on colonization were scattered. For Utilitarian imperial thought see Schultz and Varouxakis, *Utilitarianism and Empire*; and for the category of 'moralists' see Collini, *Public Moralists*.
[4] For imperial political economy in this period see esp. Winch, *Classical Political Economy*; Semmel, *Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*; Gambles, *Protection and Politics*.
[5] Merivale, *Lectures*; Lewis, *Dependencies*; Wakefield, *Letter*.
[6] For this conception of the empire see Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.
[7] Hereafter *History*.
[8] King, *Survey our Empire*. King's work on Martin arose from an interest in Hong Kong politics. On Martin's Hong Kong career see also Munn, *Anglo-China*; Munn, "Chusan Episode"; and on his time in India and early years in England, Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy*, esp. 122-8.
[9] Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 163-82; Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*, ch. 1; Marriott, *The Other Empire*, 130-1. Martin's Indian writing is also cited in Cohn, *India*, 91.
[10] Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy*, 123.
[11] See below, 'Reformed politics and the context of the *History*'.
[12] King, *Survey our Empire*, 11.
[13] Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 185. The *History* is dismissed by Edward Beasley as 'largely statistical': Beasley, *Mid-Victorian Imperialists*, 10.
[14] King, *Survey our Empire*. See also King's entry on Martin in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
[15] He also produced a major work designed to awaken domestic interest in China: Martin, *China*, i, i.
[16] Zastoupil, *Rammohun Roy*, 124.
[17] *History*, iii, 131-2; Martin, *British Relations with the Chinese Empire*, v. See also Martin, *British Colonies*, i, i. His preference was for William III over Charles II: see *History*, ii, 400; iii, 17.
[18] *History*, i, 480-1. For where this placed him on the spectrum of early-nineteenth-century thinking about the handling of criminals see Hilton, "The Gallows".
[19] Craig, "Language of 'Liberalism'"; *History*, i, 613; and e.g. on Lord Goderich, *History*, iii, 548.
[20] Martin, *Taxation*, v-xx.
[21] *History*, i, 613.
[22] *History*, v, xiii. He was certainly prepared to reach across the aisle, seeking help from the arch-critic of the colonial system Richard Cobden on one of his Hong Kong schemes: Richard Cobden to Robert Martin, 29 Dec. 1849, in Howe, *Cobden Letters*, 180.
[23] [Martin], *Anglo-Eastern*, 398.
[24] *History*, iii, xx.
[25] *History*, iii, 539.
[26] Middleton, 'Conservatives and Whig Colonial Government'.
[27] [Martin], *Anglo-Eastern*, v.
[28] Dilke, *Greater Britain*.
[29] He renewed his defence of the Union after the Famine: Martin, *Ireland Before and After the Union*, and cf. Staunton, *A Reply*. For Martin as a supporter of the Union see Kennedy and Johnson, "The Union", 37; and for wider reflections on Irish Unionism and commitment to the British empire see Bew, "Foreign Fields"; Ridden, "Britishness"; Ridden, "Elite Power".
[30] Martin, *British Colonial Library*.
[31] Martin, *British Colonies*. The extended history of India offered in this work was the same as in the first volume of Martin's *Indian Empire*.
[32] The Indian Mutiny did however prompt some re-evaluation: see below, note 187.
[33] Bell, *Greater Britain*, chs 1-2.

[34] Parry, *Patriotism*, ch. 4.
[35] For the context see Parry, *Rise and Fall*, chs 2-4, which does not however say much about imperial debate. Martin himself, looking back from the 1850s, noted that the colonies had become unusually prominent in public discussion in the years immediately after the Reform Act: Martin, *British Colonies*, ii, 422.
[36] Quotation in *Times*, 25 February 1828, p. 2.
[37] Taylor, "Empire and Parliamentary Reform", 295-302.
[38] Manning, "Colonial Crises", 42-3.
[39] Shaw, "British Attitudes"; Martin, "Anti-Imperialism".
[40] The Indian empire specifically was of course very often conceived in these terms.
[41] On its evolving shape see below, "The structure of the *History*".
[42] E.g. Martin, *Colonial Policy*, 58.
[43] See above, "Introduction"; and for analyses of Merivale and Cornewall Lewis, see Francis, *Governors and Settlers*, ch. 1.
[44] *History*, i, 61. Martin did not share James Mill's slighting take on Indian intellectual culture: i, 226.
[45] Goldman, "Origins of Social Science".
[46] Laidlaw, "Investigating Empire"; Lester, Boehme, and Mitchell, *Ruling the World*, part I.
[47] *History*, ii, 420; iii, xvii.
[48] Macaulay, "History", 122-3, 157.
[49] On India see Rajan, *Under Western Eyes*; Plassart, "Mill's Treatment of Religion"; Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*; Herbert, *War of No Pity*; Peers, "Poetical"; Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination*, ch. 2; and the perplexing Mittal, *India Distorted*. See also, on John Crawfurd's *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820), Knapman, *Race and British Colonialism*; on Harriet Martineau and empire, Kaplan and Dzelzaninis, *Harriet Martineau*; and on imperial history in general, Proudman, "The Most Important History", 182-3. For schoolbooks and 'popular' history in these years see Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, chs 4-5, and on the empire in schools in the later period see Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*.
[50] Seeley, *Expansion*. For Seeley's foundational role in imperial historiography see e.g. Behm, *Imperial History*; Ghosh, "Imperial Turns", 775-6; and, somewhat more ambiguously, Bentley, *Modernizing*, ch. 3; Burroughs, "Seeley"; Howsam, "Imperial Publishers". More broadly, see Winks, *Historiography*.
[51] The early nineteenth century is given only limited attention in Hall and McLelland, *Race, Nation and Empire*. The question of 'imperial' influences on the writing of British history, both tangible and intangible, is a separate issue: on which see De Groot, *Empire and History Writing*; Hall, "Macaulay's Nation"; Hall, *Macaulay and Son*; and from a different angle, Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*. Equally little attention has been paid to early-nineteenth-century thinking about the histories of the ancient empires and of European colonial empires, both subjects of considerable interest to students of later Victorian ideas. For the ancients see Vance, *Victorians and Rome*; Butler, *Britain and Rome*; Kumar, "Greece and Rome"; Hagerman, *Imperial Muse*; Bradley, *Classics and Imperialism*: and for European empires see Middleton, "European Colonial Empires". For the historical consciousness of the other leading nineteenth-century imperial state, see Agmon, "Failure on Display".
[52] Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*; and for the early modern era, Burrow, *Liberal Descent*, ch. 1.
[53] Martin, *Statistics*; Martin, *History of the Colonies of the British Empire*. This claimed to include three million figures.
[54] *History*, i, 611-12.
[55] *Colonial Policy*, 57-8.
[56] Martin, *Taxation*, v. See also *History*, i, vi.
[57] "List of Mr Martin's Works", in Martin, *China*, i, n. pag. By the same account, a further 22,000 copies of the stripped-back and deliberately more popular *Colonial Library* had also been produced. The later *British Colonies* boasted an impressive list of subscribers, in terms of both numbers and distinction.
[58] Thomas, "Macaulay".
[59] Tocqueville to Henry Reeve, 14 Nov. 1843, in Tocqueville, *Oeuvres completes*, 211; La Fontaine, *Journal*, 62-3. Some of Martin's later work was translated into French, and there are hints of a Continental reputation in Montgomery-Martin, *La révolte*, esp. i-iii.
[60] 22,000 copies of the *Colonial Library* had been printed by 1847: "List of Mr Martin's Works", in Martin, *China*, i, n. pag; *British Colonies*, i, n. pag.
[61] For statistical criticism see e.g. *Spectator* 8 (1835), 905; quotation in *Athenaeum* 392 (May 1835), 336. For further questioning of Martin's decision to enter into politics see *Athenaeum* 373 (Dec. 1834), 919-20; *Athenaeum* 329 (Feb. 1834), 116; "Montgomery Martin's *British Colonies*", *Monthly Review* 1, 75.
[62] Its fullness was widely considered to make it a 'standard work': e.g. "R. M. Martin's *History of the British Colonies*", 400. See also *Metropolitan Magazine* 11, no. 42 (Oct. 1834), 46.
[63] "Our Colonies", 581, 575; "Montgomery Martin's *British Colonies*", *Monthly Review* 4, 593.
[64] "The British Colonies", 261.
[65] *History*, i, iii-iv.

[66] *History*, ii, xxii.
[67] *History*, i, vi.
[68] *History*, i, vi; iii, xvi.
[69] *History*, iv, 116-17. Martin presented himself as an advocate for the colonies, seeking to build bridges to British opinion, and even to show the colonists by his own engagement with their grievances that there was no disinclination to listen to their arguments among the British public.
[70] *History*, i, 170.
[71] *History*, i, 3.
[72] *History*, i, 8.
[73] *History*, ii, xxii.
[74] R. Montgomery Martin to the Editor of the *Times*, *Times*, 14 Mar. 1835, 6.
[75] *History*, ii, 348; v, 235-8.
[76] *History*, iii, 87.
[77] E.g. on the meritorious conduct of Lord William Bentinck in India, *History*, i, 580; and on Malacca as a possible seat of government for Britain's Eastern possessions, *History*, i, 598.
[78] *History*, i, 573-80; *History*, ii, 506-14. See also, for a 56-page letter on secondary punishments not by Martin, iv, 'Appendix. Secondary Punishments, Illustrated in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edward G. Stanley'.
[79] Martin, *Ireland as it Was*, iii-iv; *History*, i, iv; v, ix.
[80] E.g. *History*, ii, 256; iii, 36, 87, 138; iv, v.
[81] Brougham, *Colonial Policy*; e.g. Martin, *British Colonies*, i, xx. He dissented from Brougham on certain points: *History*, i, 481.
[82] The history of Gibraltar, for instance, occupied ten pages more than had the history of Lower Canada.
[83] *History*, v, ix, xiii-xiv, 550.
[84] For Victorian engagement with other European colonial empires see Middleton, "European Colonial Empires".
[85] Hereafter *Colonial Policy*.
[86] E.g. on ancient and early modern colonization, Martin, *British Colonies*, i, iv-ix.
[87] Ireland therefore stood clearly outside the parameters of the work.
[88] *History*, i, iii; *Colonial Policy*, 6-9.
[89] *History*, i, 607.
[90] [Martin], *Anglo-Eastern*, 399.
[91] *Colonial Policy*, 80; *History*, i, 614.
[92] Martin, *Wellesley*, i, v.
[93] *History*, iii, 554. The strategic point became more prominent later on: see Martin, ed., *Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal* 1 (1840), preface.
[94] *History*, i, iv.
[95] E.g. Jamaica, *History*, ii, 200; Honduras, 420; the North American colonies, iii, xvi; etc.
[96] E.g. Trinidad, *History*, ii, 255.
[97] *History*, iii, 368.
[98] *Leeds Times*, 16 Aug. 1834, p. 4.
[99] *History*, i, 613-14.
[100] *History*, ii, ix.
[101] E.g. Honduras, *History*, ii, 414-15.
[102] *History*, iv, 374; v, 358, 458.
[103] *History*, iii, 30.
[104] *History*, iv, 616-17.
[105] Martin, *Anglo-Eastern*.
[106] On the Company as an enemy of despotism see Martin, *Anglo-Eastern*, 400.
[107] *History*, i, 17.
[108] *History*, i, 183. On slavery, i, 476; and on the press see also i, 405.
[109] E.g. *History*, i, 492-504.
[110] *History*, i, 501. On the idea of the 'middle class' in this period see Wahrman, *Imagining*, chs 9-11.
[111] *History*, i, 502.
[112] *History*, i, 331. Martin would be considerably more subtle in his analysis of Indian politics, and critical of the Company's conduct, when he looked at the subject in the light of the Mutiny: Martin, *Indian Empire*, ii.
[113] *History*, i, 570.
[114] Martin, *China*, i, iii-iv.
[115] *History*, i, 8.
[116] *History*, i, 614.
[117] This would remain the case: see Martin, *British Colonies*, v, 550.

[118] *History*, i, 554, 559. There were, however, cases where Dutch rule had been superior to British, as in British Guiana: *History*, ii, 38.
[119] *History*, i, 570, 609.
[120] *History*, iii, 18; ii, 266. France had also brutalised Dominica: ii, 338. On critiques of French imperial rule more generally in this period see Middleton, "French Algeria".
[121] *History*, iii, 289.
[122] E.g. *History*, iii, 313.
[123] *History*, ii, ix-x.
[124] *History*, i, 608.
[125] For the wider purchase of this idea see Drayton, *Nature's Government*.
[126] Martin, *China*, i, viii.
[127] Martin, *Wellesley*, i, iv-v; Martin, *Australia*, iii-iv. So Martin was a believer in special providence: for the context here see Hilton, *Age of Atonement*.
[128] *History*, i, 608. Martin always argued in favour of a more Christian government in India: Martin, *Eastern India*, i, iv. After the Mutiny he insisted that the way to win back the confidence of the Hindus was to avow more confidently the truth of Christianity: Martin, *Indian Empire*, i, 11; ii, 503.
[129] *History*, i, 609.
[130] Martin, *Analysis of the Bible*, vii-viii.
[131] *History*, ii, xxii.
[132] Martin, *British Colonies*, vi, 158. Martin's *Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal* criticised the introduction to Merivale's lectures for not developing adequately the principle of colonization on Christian grounds: see volume 1 (1840), 384.
[133] *History*, iii, xvii; Martin, *British Relations with the Chinese Empire*, vii. He applied the same analysis to the Moghul empire: Martin, *British Colonies*, v, 547.
[134] *History*, ii, 160; iii, vii-ix.
[135] Martin, *Australia*, vii.
[136] *History*, iii, 547-51; iv, 500-3.
[137] *History*, iii, 553-4.
[138] *History*, iv, ix-xi.
[139] *History*, iv, 600.
[140] Martin, *Ireland as it Was*, v.
[141] *History*, i, vi.
[142] *History*, i, 579. See also i, 614. On this theme in British political thought see Bell, "Dissolving Distance".
[143] *History*, iii, 134.
[144] *Colonial Policy*, 81.
[145] *History*, i, 368.
[146] E.g. on Ceylon, *History*, i, 562.
[147] *History*, ii, 433, 426. The most glaring case here was that of East Indian versus West Indian sugar: Martin wanted tariff parity and reduction. See *History*, i, xi-xiv; ii, 212. For the debate see Huzzey, "Slave Sugar".
[148] *History*, ii, 455.
[149] *History*, i, 367.
[150] *History*, i, 613.
[151] *History*, iii, 539, xiv.
[152] See Howe, *Free Trade*, chs 1-2; Gambles, *Protection and Politics*. On the basis of these arguments, Martin considered the unilateral version of free trade adopted after 1846 economically irrational. In the 1850s he still looked forward to Britain and the colonies joining together into a single commercial league. See Martin, *British Colonies*, ii, x-xi; i, xxi.
[153] *Colonial Policy*, 28-9.
[154] *History*, i, 613; ii, 211.
[155] *History*, ii, 419; and e.g. British Guiana, *History*, ii, 58; Canada, iii, 178. Martin advocated for both institutions where they were yet to be found: e.g. *History*, v, 458.
[156] *History*, i, 405-9.
[157] He would later argue that it was wrong for the free British to have assumed the position of military despots in India: Martin, *Indian Empire*, i, 10-11. He also admired Napoleon, on the basis that the French emperor had been sent to earth to teach a lesson to arbitrary rulers and tyrants: *History*, ii, v; iv, 520-1.
[158] *History*, iii, 136-7.
[159] *History*, ii, 255.
[160] *Colonial Policy*, 47-8; *History*, iii, 279.
[161] *History*, iii, xx; iv, 116-17.
[162] *History*, ii, 148.

[163] *History*, ii, 149, 154.
[164] *History*, ii, 251.
[165] *History*, iii, 139, 279.
[166] *History*, iii, 307.
[167] *History*, iv, 8, 116-17.
[168] *History*, iv, 188-9.
[169] *History*, v, 294.
[170] *History*, ii, xii-xiii.
[171] *History*, i, 610-11. See also Martin, *British Colonies*, v, 531. There were strong echoes here of Thomas Macaulay's famous 1833 speech on the East India Company's Charter, claiming that (eventually) to have ruled the people of India 'as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens' would be 'the proudest day in English history': *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, 19:536, 10 July 1833. Martin did not enter into the vexed question of whether should be extensive British colonization of India in the *History*, which we should probably read as opposition to the idea: free trade was his panacea for the subcontinent.
[172] Hilton, *Mad, Bad*, 256-7; Price, *Making Empire*.
[173] *History*, iii, 279.
[174] *History*, iv, 189.
[175] King, "Martin"; *History*, ii, 214. On the Society see Heartfield, *Aborigines Protection Society*.
[176] *History*, ii, 53-4; iv, 304-5.
[177] *History*, iv, 117.
[178] Middleton, 'Corruption'.
[179] *History*, iii, 552. See also iv, xii.
[180] *Colonial Policy*, 37-9.
[181] *Colonial Policy*, 46; *History*, iii, 278.
[182] *Colonial Policy*, 49-57, 73-7, and *passim*.
[183] *Colonial Policy*, 53.
[184] Martin, *British Colonies*, ii, xiii. Martin would cite the continued absence of serious public and parliamentary engagement with imperial issues among the complex aggregation of forces he saw behind the Indian Mutiny of 1857. His analysis of that uprising was considerably more lugubrious, and critical of British rule, than anything to be found in the *History*. But he resisted the temptation to see it as a Providential visitation, treating it instead as a political event to be explained through forensic analysis, and continued to insist on the potential of the British regime in India to do good, if properly conducted. See Martin, *Indian Empire*, ii.
[185] Merivale, *Lectures*, i, 85, 95, ii, 211, 285; Lewis, *Dependencies*, 177.
[186] "Problems of Greater Britain", 201; and more generously, citing the *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire* as 'for some year the standard authority on "the Colonies"', "Progress of our Colonial Empire", 347-8.
[187] Dilke, *Problems*, ii, 494-5. Dilke was however confusing the *History* with the later *British Colonies*.