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Carla Gardina Pestana

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**Carla Gardina Pestana : Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World:

The imperial expansion of Europe across the globe was one of the most significant events to shape the modern world. Among the many effects of this cataclysmic movement of people and institutions was the intermixture of cultures in the colonies that Europeans created. Protestant Empire is the first comprehensive survey of the dramatic clash of peoples and beliefs that emerged in the diverse religious world of the British Atlantic, including England, Scotland, Ireland, parts of North and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Beginning with the role religion played in the lives of believers in West Africa, eastern North America, and western Europe around 1500, Carla Gardina Pestana shows how the Protestant Reformation helped to fuel colonial expansion as bitter rivalries prompted a fierce competition for souls. The English who were latecomers to the contest for colonies in the Atlantic joined the competition well armed with a newly formulated and heartfelt anti-Catholicism. Despite officially promoting religious homogeneity, the English found it impossible to prevent the conflicts in their homeland from infecting their new colonies. Diversity came early and grew inexorably, as English, Scottish, and Irish Catholics and Protestants confronted one another as well as Native Americans, West Africans, and an increasing variety of other Europeans. Pestana tells an original and compelling story of their interactions as they clung to their old faiths, learned of unfamiliar religions, and forged new ones. In an account that ranges widely through the Atlantic basin and across centuries, this book reveals the creation of a complicated, contested, and closely intertwined world of believers of many traditions.

"Protestant Empire is the most balanced account we now possess of religion and the shaping of the British Atlantic world from the Reformation to the American Revolution. Carla Gardina Pestana lucidly shows how religion joined the various parts of that world into a bounded whole yet introduced deep divisions whose consequences remain with us today. Her successful synthesis offers an authoritative introduction to these developments for students and scholars alike." David Armitage, Harvard University

"A remarkably learned survey of religion and empire in the British Atlantic world." Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography

"Britain was the world's mightiest Protestant empire, but it was also an empire of striking religious diversity and fragmentation. In this important, wide-ranging book, Carla Pestana examines the religious consequences of Britain's early modern expansion for people throughout the Atlantic basin. The result is a major contribution to the history of the British Atlantic world." Eliga H. Gould, University of New Hampshire

"In an ambitious, compelling discussion of Protestantism in the British Atlantic, Carla Gardina Pestana asks whether religion trumped politics and militarism in the shaping of colonies, the growth of empires, and the development of cultural identities. She makes a strong case that religion became the driving force of British expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." William and Mary Quarterly

About the Author Carla Gardina Pestana, W. E. Smith Professor of History at Miami University, is the author or editor of several books, including *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction: Religion in the British Atlantic World

The expansion of Europe from its peninsula into other parts of the globe was one of the most significant events to shape the modern world. Among the many effects of this cataclysmic movement of people and institutions was the intermixture of cultures that occurred in the colonies that Europeans created. Europeans crossed oceans, encountered native inhabitants, and interacted with them in a myriad of ways. What emerged from these encounters was, as historians James H. Merrell and Colin Calloway have pointed out, a new world for everyone involved. Central to the creation of this new world was a clash of religious beliefs and practices. As a result of cultural encounters, all religions were changed European Christianity no less than Native American spirituality. When Europeans moved out into the Atlantic basin, they brought together the diverse religious traditions and experiences of people from three continents. By 1800 Christianity had reached into sub-Saharan Africa, both in the Kongo, where Portuguese Catholics had introduced Catholicism centuries before, and more recently into Sierra Leone, a new colony under British authority peopled by Protestant settlers of African descent who were strongly committed to the Christian faith. Native religions had been reshaped by the introduction of Christianity in vast areas of North and South America. Roman Catholicism had become an indigenous religion over centuries of adaptation in Latin America to the south and in Quebec to the north, while Protestant Christianity had made serious inroads in some communities in the broad central swath of North America. The movement of peoples with their beliefs and practices had spread not just Christianity generally but competing versions of that faith, so that in Anglophone areas of the Atlantic world a variety of Christian faiths flourished and vied for adherents, from Baptists and Methodists to Moravians and Quakers, by 1800. Though Christianity was dominant among the new religions, the other Old World monotheistic faiths Judaism and Islam were also represented in the Atlantic world of 1800, while the traditions of many non-monotheists continued to be practiced, whether by enslaved Africans or native peoples of the Americas. Although it made a late and unpromising start in the bid for colonies, England contributed profoundly to the religious history of the North Atlantic. As one of the principle sources of Protestant colonization in the America (along with the Dutch), England was often at odds with the Roman Catholic empires of Spain, France, and Portugal. In the British colonies, a diverse array of Protestant groups, along with a smattering of Catholics, participated from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the northern reaches of western Europe. Native Americans in the mainland colonies and Africans everywhere further complicated the religious assortment. The mixing of peoples that occurred in the English and

British colonies was arguably more complicated than in any other colonial setting, with the possible exception of the Dutch. The English failed almost completely in asserting the level of control over religious practice that the Spanish achieved in New Spain. Only weakly establishing the Church of England, they oversaw an increasingly diverse religious landscape. Yet, despite this failure to create a uniformly Anglican Atlantic world under English purview, expansion established a broadly shared culture that united believers from different Protestant churches (and different ethnic and racial backgrounds) into a common Anglophone spiritual orientation. Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century would split the British Atlantic politically but the ties that bound it religiously would remain, shaping faith in Western Europe, parts of West Africa, northern North America, and the Caribbean. More than any other cultural practice, religion had a far-reaching impact on the very process of colonization and the world that resulted. Religion fueled expansion, justifying conquest and the authority that was established in the wake of those conquests. To a great extent, it sorted people into migration streams, so that Protestants generally went to the colonies of specific countries, Catholics largely to others. Given the variety of spiritual options available in Protestant Europe, diversity came quickly to those colonies opened to migration from England and the United Provinces. That variety would become their most startling feature and would prompt the eventual separation of church and state in the United States. Although religious liberty had intellectual justifications, drawn from the Enlightenment or older ideas about freedom of conscience, the social reality of a complex and contested religious scene propelled those ideas to the fore. Freedom of religion, though heralded in histories of the United States as one of the great accomplishments of the revolutionary era, was adopted reluctantly by most of those who oversaw colonial expansion in British North America. Viewing religion within the framework of the Atlantic highlights a number of significant processes that shaped that history. As with many other works of Atlantic history, this book considers circulation not only the movement of people but also of ideas and the books that carried those ideas. European expansion brought people with their religious ideas and assumptions into contact with others. In turn, this contact prompted innumerable religious encounters, not only among inhabitants from the four continents bordering the Atlantic basin but also among Europeans of different faiths. People moved in every conceivable direction: Africans who converted to Christianity in the Americas traveled widely as sailors, including manning slave ships that transported cargos from West Africa; Native Americans, sometimes kidnapped and sometimes voluntary, were displayed in European capitals, feted in royal courts, and baptized into state churches; Jews who had been driven from Spain settled in the Netherlands where their descendants participated in colonization and founded communities in both Dutch and British outposts. The very act of moving around changed people and their beliefs. Change occurred not only in the places that Europeans went but also in Europe itself, as people came to terms with the existence of the lands, faiths, and cultures that encounter brought together. Particularly among the Protestants who play a leading role in the British Atlantic, books that circulated were important carriers of ideas and markers of identity. For Protestant Europeans literacy was seen as fundamental to civility and to one's ability to function successfully as a converted Christian. A believer needed to be conversant with the Bible, and while familiarity with the Good Book was by no means limited to those who were literate, the ability to read was widely perceived as significant by those doing the converting and by converts themselves. This emphasis on literacy affected the way Europeans went about the project of converting those they encountered. It would also provide one reason many masters feared the prospect of slave conversion. On one level, books were commodities that circulated like any other; but they were also repositories for ideas and potential sources of power. A second process that shaped the history of religion on this scale is that of transplantation. Early colonizers used the term "plantation" to refer to actual settlements as well as to the process of creating them. The term connoted carefully uprooting and replanting people and institutions in a new setting. Sometimes whole communities were literally transplanted, such as the Baptist church of Swansea in Wales which removed to Plymouth Plantation in the 1660s. On a broader scale, monarchs expected that the religious institutions of their kingdoms would be transplanted to distant colonies, there to bolster state authority just as they did in the Old World. English monarchs not only assumed that planters (as early settlers were frequently called) would introduce Protestant Christianity to far flung Atlantic locations but also that their adherence to England's state church would help to make them loyal and effective representatives of the crown. This initial expectation was based on their observation of Iberian successes as well as on commonly held assumptions about the necessity for religious unity in a political polity, particularly a geographically dispersed polity. Spanish rulers, working from similar assumption about the centrality of Catholicism to their imperial agenda, organized Spain's movement into the New World to achieve a degree of religious uniformity that English monarchs would envy. Having previously banished Muslims and Jews from Spain, they worked from a more homogenous context. For the English, this assumption of easily transplanted religious institutions proved not only a chimera but a problematic goal. As much as the common wisdom of the era dictated religious uniformity, England after the Protestant Reformation never achieved the ideal, having always a Catholic minority at the very least with which to contend. With England, Scotland, and Ireland all ruled by the same king from 1603, the religious diversity of that monarch's realm was remarkably complicated. Events of the mid-seventeenth century also drastically increased the complexity and contention of religious landscape under the later Stuart rulers. Diversity within and among kingdoms made the simple transplantation of a uniform religious framework impossible. The unlikelihood of colonies being anymore

homogenous than the metropolitan core was exacerbated by the impulse at all levels from rulers to the ordinary prospective colonist that the Atlantic settlements might offer opportunities for the religiously marginal. Diversity at the center remarkable as it gradually became offered only a pale reflection of the multiplicity of religious faiths and practices that eventually characterized life at the margins. The institutional weakness of the Church of England in the colonies, the diversity of Protestant (and other) options everywhere, and the rising commitment to toleration all ensured that any plan to make the state church a central pillar of the British Atlantic was doomed. The planting of religious institutional was never limited to the official faith, but was in fact a process participated in by many of those outside the established church like the Swansea Baptists and even beyond European Christianity. It therefore complicated the religious milieu rather than, as had been anticipated, helping to keep it simple. The challenge of transplantation affected ordinary people's ability to carry their faiths and practices with them too. Some of the people in motion were able to travel with their community and its leader the puritan migrants to New England who included more clergymen per capita than any other English group comes to mind whereas others were cut loose from some or all of their previous relationships. European Catholics, for instance, left their shrines and holy places. For African captives, the religious disruption enslavement entailed arose from leaving behind the small-scale, intimate social landscape in which their beliefs and practices had flourished. For the original residents of the Americas, the arrival of Europeans set into motion massive epidemics and repeated displacement of populations, both of which severed ties spiritually significant communities and locations. Even as a religious environment in its entirety proved difficult to transplant, everyone brought their interpretive frameworks, and these frameworks shaped interactions that would take place in colonies and other Atlantic outposts. For the Protestant English majority, their understanding of the purpose and meaning of their move into the wider Atlantic world was molded by their anti-Catholicism. The long and painful sundering of the ties that initially bound Tudor England to Roman Catholicism left a bitter legacy of suspicion and fear among many English Protestants, and this fear was perpetuated by seventeenth-century events such as the Catholic plot to blow up parliament in 1605. If antipopey was a uniquely Protestant viewpoint, other interpretive schemes were more widely held. The idea that spiritually powerful beings had to be respected in order for believers to remain safe manifested itself in different ways among those of various traditions; whether it was Christians asking God for forgiveness or Africans honoring spirits of the dead, a common impulse to respect the wishes of the spiritually powerful animated many believers. Another framework involved witchcraft, in which spiritual power could be yielded by an ill-intentioned individual. This understanding often came into play in the context of encounter, such as when native peoples in New France suspected Jesuit missionaries of witchcraft after many of their companions mysteriously died. These interpretive frameworks which touched on many aspects of life were key components of the encounters that occurred in the Atlantic world. A final process that characterized the meeting of religions in the British Atlantic was negotiation. Religious encounters involved an ongoing transaction of give and take. As people encountered new ideas and practices and worked to make sense of them in relation to what they already knew, they negotiated between the familiar and the unfamiliar. If the new appeared to have value, it could be incorporated, often creating a hybrid version that blended elements of two traditions into something new. When Christianity was brought to Europe initially, the process unfolded in this way, so that, for instance, older community celebrations and rituals were subsumed into the Christian calendar. Native Americans who gradually altered the way that they envisioned the afterlife while doing so in the context of their long-held belief system participated in a version of this process. As historian John Thornton has described this development in the African context, they "naturalized" the unfamiliar, making sense of it in terms of the familiar. That concepts and practices from various traditions might be melded into some new whole made sense in the context of the Native American or West African attitudes toward the potential usefulness of new beliefs or practices. Their religious systems tended to be more open to borrowing to create something both new and recognizably old. Even though they too participated in the blending process, European Christians officially rejected it intellectually, assuming that other traditions were by definition incorrect. Europeans entering the Atlantic arena in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation expected to convert the heathens of America, Africa, and the Caribbean to their version of Christianity whether it was Iberian Catholicism, English Protestantism, or another option. They anticipated that a person confronting Christianity would undergo a dramatic and life-changing alteration. Conversion was a concept deeply ingrained in the Christian tradition, and it carried with it certain expectations about how the process would occur. As the word suggests, it was supposed to change the individual completely. When they carried Christianity to new places and encountered new peoples, Europeans sought to spark a drastic alteration in that individual as he or she embraced the new (and, in their view, superior) faith. Europeans who set about converting Africans, Indians or, for that matter, one another, expected that experience to proceed in a proscribed and predictable way. Christian missionaries were shocked to learn that this all or nothing understanding of the conversion process did not hold true for some converts. To incorporate former practices or beliefs into a new religion was anathema to their view of the transformative nature of this event. Whether absorbing new into old ways, retaining some of the old while ostensibly embracing the new, or converting wholeheartedly to a new faith, all of these variations on the encounter necessitated negotiation. Within this larger context of continuity, change and negotiation, individual choices occurred. A colonist who converted to a new belief system might do so because he was alienated

from his community's dominant faith, found a spiritual option that reminded him of the practices he had experienced in childhood, or saw some benefit to come to her loved ones. Fearwhether of the spiritual power of others or their ability to do harm in more prosaic ways was often central to these interactions too. Individual, cultural, and situational contexts shaped encounter, in which negotiation of opportunities, hopes, and fears all played a role. Thinking of the negotiation process on such a large scale helps us to get a sense of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the meeting of peoples and beliefs that occurred in these centuries. If the British Atlantic ultimately took shape out of the decisions of many people to migrate, to convert, to accept selectively or in full, to proselytize, or to remain silent we must also consider that migration or conversion could be forced, while individual voices could be silenced. It is clear that no person worked as a wholly free agent, totally unencumbered and able to act as he or she pleased. The frustration of kings when they tried to implement new religious policies and on one occasion thereby sparking a war offers a dramatic case of the limits of individual purposive action to shape religion. Choices were often constrained, by options that were available or by the power relations that prevailed. Like circulation and transplantation, negotiation was a contested process. Religion in the British Atlantic World is intended for any reader interested in religion, the expansion of Europe, and New World cultural encounters. Religion has not been studied on such a broad canvas before, but specialized work produced by many scholars makes this wider ranging account possible. Without detailed treatments of specific religious communities, of religious institutions, and of interfaith encounters, this book could not have been written. While something is lost when working on such a scale, much is gained as well. At this extent we can see connections and trends that might escape the close observer of one aspect or another of this history. Perhaps reading about the broad sweep of these religious encounters and the change they brought will encourage readers to look into specific incidents or groups in more detail. Readers interested to learn more should see the suggestions for further reading at the end of this volume. Definitions of some key terms identify the scope of this book. "Religion" is used here to designate any shared understanding of what modern Westerners think of as the supernatural world (although that idea of a supernatural world separate from the natural world makes more sense in some religious contexts than others). The shared understanding shapes a community's beliefs about its relationship to the spiritual, whether the spiritual is understood to be interwoven with or distinctive from the natural world. Commonly held views serve as the basis of a community's religious system, providing a set of institutional practices and relationships that structure the social world in which people operate. Looking at how religion worked in the lives of individuals opens up a common ground among different faiths. Native American beliefs about spirit in animals and objects structured that community's world view in a way that was broadly analogous to English use of the idea that God shaped even the most minor occurrence in the life of the Christian. The term "British Atlantic" designates those lands bordering on the Atlantic Ocean that were controlled by England or, after the 1707 Union of England and Scotland, by the newly designated "Britain". It also encompasses those places where British people had a presence even when they were not in control, such as chaplains in trading forts on the coast of Africa or visitors to the continental interior who recorded their observations of native peoples. The English were the first subjects of their monarch to become actively engaged in Atlantic endeavors, and they migrated in the largest numbers of any residents in the first decades of colonization. What began as a largely (although never exclusively) English endeavor came to involve a large number of Scots as well as some Irish and Welsh, so that eventually the Atlantic world controlled from the seat of government at Westminster was indeed British ethnically, politically and, in some senses, religiously as well. This book is organized chronologically, moving around the Atlantic world to lay out major trends and events. It begins with a sketch of the religious beliefs and practices in West Africa, Western Europe, and eastern North America in 1500. Its aim is, first, to establish a baseline against which the change wrought by expansion can be measured and, second, to demonstrate the centrality of religion in the lives of all the peoples on the edges of the Atlantic at that time. The story then turns to Europe to explore the Protestant Reformation the rupture in Western European Christianity that led to the creation of many new versions of that faith, all of them outside the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformation split Western Europe into Protestant and Catholic camps, which immediately went to war (literally and figuratively). The rivalry between them further fueled the geographic expansion that was already underway. The book's focus then narrows to the English case, charting the outward movement of Protestant England as well as the complexity of the religious situation prevailing in the three kingdoms of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Complications within that composite monarchy (as these multiple kingdoms under a single sovereign are called) greatly influenced the colonies that the English began to plant in earnest after 1600, as did revolutionary events in those kingdoms in the first half of the seventeenth century. It was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that the English first began seriously to grapple with the immense diversity of their colonies. Not only did the variety of Protestant alternatives increase in this era, but the large scale importation of enslaved Africans, the arrival of Jews, and the first sustained missions to the Indians created a varied and complex religious scene. After a century of expansion, the end of the seventeenth century witnessed a number of crisis political revolution in England, Indian wars in the mainland colonies, and witchcraft scares in New England and Scotland all of which had religious causes and consequences. The account then moves into the early eighteenth century, during which the reverberations of revolution continued while, at the same time, a number of contradictory trends began to reshape British Atlantic religion. Religious revivals at mid century affected Britain and many of its

colonies, introducing to Christianity notable numbers of captive Africans for the first time. Evangelical Christianity thus became a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. The era of the American and French revolutions marked a watershed, as political events redefined the contours of the British Empire and drastically altered the religious configuration within it and in the new United States. Despite such political rupture, continuities remained in the shared religious culture. In focusing on the English and British experience I only occasionally glance at encounters that occurred among Africans, Native Americans, and the Europeans from Spain, Portugal, France, and the Dutch United Provinces, to name only the most prominent of the other colonizers. The religious history of European expansion into the Atlantic includes a number of chapters, of which the Protestant and British story is but one. A significant chapter, it is a story that has not been told except in fragments. Although I draw occasional connections with and contrasts to other Europeans in their encounters with the religions of America and Africa, a sustained treatment of their religious histories represents other chapters which are beyond the scope of this book. Taking the Western Hemisphere as a whole, the Spanish encounter with native America had an enormous effect, bringing to much of North and South America an Iberian form of Catholicism which combined with various indigenous belief systems. Protestants who came to the Atlantic arena later were well aware that their entry was both little and late. The major Protestant rival of the British, the Dutch for a time provided competition by overseeing another set of colonies especially Suriname and, until 1664, New Netherland (which in that year became New York) to which Protestants might migrate. Although geographically more limited than the Spanish case, the British encounter had an impact that was both far-reaching and sustained, shaping not only the United States but also Canada, portions of the Caribbean, sectors of Atlantic Africa, Ireland, and Britain itself. As the first post-Reformation empire in the Atlantic world, British expansion embodied features tied to its Protestant character. I learned a great deal while working on this book, which had the usual result of making me aware of how much I do not know. Some of my lack is no doubt the result of personal failing, in which a smarter, more tenacious, or more imaginative person could have done better. Some of the holes in my knowledge arise from the limits to what can be known. Uncovering the experiences, worldviews, and even the actions of past peoples, all of whom were participants in cultures and societies drastically different than my own, is not simple. Understanding beliefs that may never have been expressed in any form that would have survived or plumbing the motives for actions that were never explained is more difficult still. Why did a particular enslaved African adopt Christianity? Did he understand his conversion in the same way as did the white missionary who left a record explaining it? What did Squanto, who had been to Europe, think of the passengers on the Mayflower once he learned of their religion? Did he understand enough about the religious divisions within Europe to place this group of separatists in a Protestant framework? Had his sojourn in Catholic and Protestant Europe as both a slave and a free man affected his own religious faith? Why did some colonists choose to become Quakers in violation of brutal local laws? I do not know answers to these questions, which could be multiplied almost endlessly, and I am not sure anyone can know. Conscious of this book's and of my own limitations, I hope readers will still