



Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World

Carla Gardina Pestana

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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.

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