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EUROPE AND THE MAKING OF ENGLAND, 1660–1760

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN REFERENCES

BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
BL	*British Library*
CJ	*Commons Journals*
Cobbett	William Cobbett, ed., *The parliamentary history of England* (36 vols., 1808–1820)
EHR	*English Historical Review*
HLQ	*Huntington Library Quarterly*
HJ	*Historical Journal*
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JMH	*Journal of Modern History*
LJ	*Lords Journals*
ODNB	Colin Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *The Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 60 vols., 2004)

INTRODUCTION

A funny thing happened to William Bromley on his way to the speakership of the Commons in 1705. As a stern Tory, whose party had just retained their majority in a general election, Bromley could have expected a good run at the chairmanship of the house. Yet strangely, as he began to work for support amongst his fellow MPs, his campaign was torpedoed from a quite unexpected direction. Nearly two decades earlier, Bromley had toured Europe and had published an account of his travels.[1] Now the work reappeared without his permission, this time accompanied by a spoof table of contents drawing attention to the youthful absurdities of the volume.[2] Bromley's reputation sank in general hilarity, and his Whig rival, John Smith, carried the election.[3]

It is not entirely clear who engineered this debacle. John Oldmixon, writing long after the event, attributed Bromley's downfall to Robert Harley, the secretary of state. Oldmixon claimed the minister had invited groups of leading statesmen to evenings at his house and had then distributed the republished volume as after-dinner entertainment, exclaiming 'have you not seen Mr Bromley's *Travels*?'[4] The story is plausible. Harley was a master manipulator of public opinion, and was determined to block Bromley's elevation because he feared a rabidly Tory speaker would undermine his mixed and moderate administration.[5] Bromley himself suspected Harley. A note in his handwriting on one copy of the offending work accused 'one of the ministry' of being 'very conversant in this sort of calumny'.[6] Yet whatever

[1] Bromley toured in 1688–9 to produce [William Bromley], *Remarks in the grande tour* (1692).
[2] [William Bromley], *Remarks made in travels through France and Italy* (1693), exactly reproduced the 1692 work despite the title change. A 'table of principal matters' was added in 1705.
[3] For more on the contest, W. A. Speck, 'The choice of speaker in 1705', *BIHR*, 37 (1964), 20–46.
[4] John Oldmixon, *The history of England during the reigns of King William and Queen Mary* (1735), p. 345.
[5] For Harley's propaganda activities, J. A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the press* (Cambridge, 1979).
[6] David Hayton, Evelyn Cruikshanks and Stuart Handley, eds., *The House of Commons, 1690–1715* (3 vols., Cambridge, 2002), III:348.

the pleasure of guessing who was behind Bromley's embarrassment, the precise manner of his humiliation is far more interesting. Reading the table of contents – and exploring how it helped to frustrate a career – reveals much about the fundamental assumptions of the English Augustan age.

For the most part, the spoof contents took aim at the almost unrelieved banality of Bromley's prose. By the time the young man had toured Europe, a tradition of travel writing had emerged, in which authors not only noted the places they visited, but also commentated on the historical, scientific, geographic or political significance of what they had seen.[7] In capable hands, this tradition could produce valuable works of reference. In Bromley's case, unfortunately, it resulted in a straining for profundity: a catalogue of tautology and failed analysis which the new contents page exposed ruthlessly. Thus Bromley was trying to write good travel literature when describing the geographical situation of his landing point on the continent. He had so little of importance to say, however, that 'the table of principal matters' which was attached to the satirical edition could reduce his thoughts to 'Boulogne, the first City on the French shore, lies on the Coast.' Similarly, his attempt to describe the difficulties of travelling in winter became 'A deep Snow in January, and the Weather cold'; whilst comments upon town construction in Europe were summarised as 'Pavements of . . . broad Stones, convenient for walking on' or 'A Door shut up, and clos'd to the Middle with Brick, not pass'd through since'. By the time Bromley had arrived in Italy, this style of ridicule had got into its stride. Observations on architecture became 'The English Jesuits Colledge at Rome may be made larger than tis, by uniting other Buildings to it', whilst the author's stab at natural history in the Alps came out as 'Carponi, a fish in the Lake di Garda, by the similitude of the Fish and Name, the Author much questions if they are not the same with our Carps.' Towards the end of the table, the jokes got pithier, ranging from the magnificently tautologous – 'Parmesan ham . . . from Parma'; on through the blindingly obvious – 'Travelling by Night not proper to take a View of the adjacent Countries'; to the gratuitously cruel – 'The Author visits a Mad House.'[8]

By themselves, such comments may not have destroyed Bromley's reputation. His own sense that his 'trifling' observations should be excused because he was 'very young' when he wrote them, may well have been shared by many who chuckled over the work in Harley's drawing room.[9] What really did the damage was the spoof's suggestion that the author condoned Roman Catholicism. In the instances above, humour stemmed from a condensation of Bromley's prose into a summary so bare that it revealed the emptiness

[7] See below, ch. 1. [8] Quotes from [Bromley], *Remarks made* (1705 edn), table.
[9] Hayton, *House of Commons*, III:348.

of the original. At other points in the work, this same satirical compression removed qualifications in the author's descriptions of Roman worship, and so made him appear sympathetic to a faith which most Englishmen viewed as a wicked perversion of Christianity. The satirist's treatment of miracles was typical. Again and again, the process of summary removed any sense that Bromley was merely reporting superstitious traditions, and left him apparently repeating miraculous stories as true. For example, the table of principal matters omitted the words 'they say' from Bromley's account of Catholic folklore in the Spanish Netherlands. Consequently it advertised 'A Side Chappel in the great Church at Aix, into which if any Woman enters she is immediately struck Blind'. Again, all sense that Bromley was simply relaying popular beliefs and noting public monuments disappeared in the satirist's 'Divers miracles wrought by St Nicholas' Arm, as the Author was assur'd, and which were afterward confirm'd . . . by a Description on the Wall'. At its worst, such condensation actually put Roman Catholic words in Bromley's mouth (as in its treatment of what was obviously a guide's spiel: 'The Shelves of a Library supported by the Statues of Arch Hereticks, viz. Luther, Calvin, Cranmer &c.'); or simply twisted the meaning of the author's original prose to suggest complicity in papal claims. In one passage of Bromley's original *Remarks*, he had commented with surprise on the Pope's tolerance of other faiths: 'In the evening I was admitted to the Honour of Kissing the Pope's Slipper; who, though he knew me to be a Protestant, gave me his Blessing and said nothing of Religion.'[10] In the table of contents, however, Bromley's folly in reporting this meeting in such friendly terms was magnified by a summary which suggested it was the writer, rather the pontiff, who ignored the inappropriateness of a Protestant's participation in a popish ceremony. 'The author kiss'd the Pope's Slipper, and had his Blessing, . . . but not a word of Religion'. When the satirist added to this subterfuge by highlighting a section which suggested Bromley might have sympathies with the exiled dynasty of Catholic Stuarts, the demolition was complete.[11] The candidate for the speakership stood revealed as a fellow traveller as well as a banal one. He was in league with a sinful faith, whose troops in the armies of Louis XIV were even then endangering all Protestant nations.

There are perhaps two important things to note about this story and its implications for contemporary attitudes. First, it reveals the continuing purchase of religious commitment in England in the early eighteenth century. In contrast to a tradition of scholarship which has argued that English society became rapidly more secularised and religiously indifferent after the civil

[10] [Bromley], *Remarks made* (1693 edn), p. 149.
[11] Bromley referred to William III as prince of Orange, not king of England – the satirist accused him of questioning of the monarch's legitimacy.

war, Bromley's humiliation suggests that the defence of England's faith was still a very live issue fifty years after that conflict.[12] When the man's enemies wanted to ruin his chances of becoming speaker, they insinuated that he was a closet Catholic, presumably believing that there was still no other charge which could be more damaging to his reputation. Second, the republication of Bromley's work reveals the strong European dimension of popular English thought in the period. In contrast to interpretations which have suggested pre-modern England was insular and xenophobic – or that with the rise of national sentiment, it was becoming even more so – the 1705 incident suggests that people were actually closely interested their European neighbours.[13] After all, the satire launched at Bromley was only possible because he had taken a tour on the continent and had published an account of it which he thought people would like to read. The satire was also only possible because Bromley had tried to write in a tradition of travel literature which had been established by authors making the journey before him, and which had already become dominant enough to influence the young tourist. Finally, it is probable that the satire was aimed at an audience who had themselves visited places Bromley described. Jokes about the suffocating obviousness of what Bromley reported, and about the author's credulousness in the face of tawdry superstition, would have been funniest to those who had seen what he had seen. Therefore, alongside a fiercely Protestant England there was a cosmopolitan one: the English were familiar with, and fascinated by, their neighbours.

This book sets out to explore the obvious paradox contained in the attitudes revealed by the shaming of William Bromley. For the crucial period between the restoration in 1660 and the accession of George III a century later, it aims to explain how the English to adhered to a vehement Protestantism, yet remained closely connected to a continent on which Catholicism predominated. Examining this apparent contradiction is vital – not only because the paradox clouds England's attitudes to the outside world at precisely the moment when she emerged as the world's premier power – but also because scholarship has deepened the problem. Traditional narratives, as mentioned above, saw the English becoming less interested in religious conflict in the century after 1660. One result of this, it was assumed,

[12] For explicit statements of this tradition: Christopher Hill, *Some intellectual consequences of the English revolution* (1980); Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism: ideology and the making of English foreign policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge, 1996); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), last sections; C. J. Somerville, *The secularization of early modern England* (Oxford, 1992).

[13] For English xenophobia: Paul Langford, *Englishness identified: manners and character, 1650–1850* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 199–225, and works in n. 15 below. Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992), chs. 1–2, suggested 'Britishness' meant alienation from a benighted continent.

was that the population fell in love with Europe as an enlightened tolerance ended bigoted shunning of alien faiths. Established accounts, therefore, could explain the cosmopolitanism of late Stuart and Georgian England, but only at the expense of ignoring its continuing loyalty to the Protestant cause.[14] Some more recent scholars, most notably Linda Colley, have tried to reverse this trend by reasserting the importance of religious rivalries in post-civil war society.[15] They have argued that the English saw themselves primarily as a Protestant people: a nation chosen by God to uphold the true religion and to crush the anti-Christian distortions of his faith which were embodied in the church of Rome. The problem here is the opposite intellectual trap. Whilst arguing strongly that anti-Catholicism survived, this reading of the past suggests this staunch Protestantism set the English apart from other Europeans. Anti-popery made the Catholic-dominated continent alien, whilst the notion that the English were a chosen people gave them a sense of isolating uniqueness. Looking at these interpretations together, there is a clear and urgent problem. We have religiously committed Englands on offer, and cosmopolitan ones: but there are few accounts of that simultaneous anti-popery and engagement with the continent which destroyed Bromley in 1705.

The chapters which follow try to supply this deficiency. As they do so, they uncover a complex story, in which attitudes to religion and to foreigners interacted in different ways, were constantly renegotiated, and affected a range of political and cultural disputes. On examination, it appears it has not only been historians who have had difficulty reconciling a deep attachment to an English faith and a sense that England was part of a wider continent. Contemporaries wrestled with the tension between these attitudes, and tried to resolve it in an inventive variety of action and argument. For example, the first chapter illustrates the ambiguities by continuing where the Bromley story left off. It explores English travel writing, and finds authors struggling to describe a continent which they knew would be of interest to readers, but whose prevailing cultural force – the Roman Catholic church – had to be condemned. In this struggle, travellers divided Europe into reformed

[14] Almost all histories of the enlightenment assume a connection between cosmopolitanism and shunning religious conflict. For a concise guide: Dorinda Outram, *The enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995); though Roy Porter, *The englightenment* (Houndmills, 2001), suggests pride in enlightenment could lead to British patriotism.

[15] Colley, *Britons*, passim; Linda Colley, 'Britishness and otherness: an argument', *JBS*, 31 (1992), 309–29. Also, Colin Haydon, 'I love my king and country, but a Roman Catholic I hate', in Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds., *Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 33–52; Kathleen Wilson, *The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 169–74; though Jonathan Scott, *England's troubles* (Cambridge, 2000), asserts strong continentalism in English anti-popery.

and unreformed regions. They denigrated the latter and expressed solidarity with the former, but they also saw things which linked their contrasted mental entities. Especially, they recognised a common Christian civilisation which provided familiar points of reference even at the darkest heart of the Catholic world. Chapter 2 similarly illustrates a continual remodelling of identities, this time within works of history. Surveying ways in which English authors wrote about their nation's past, it demonstrates a sense that the country had been radically separated from its neighbours by the sixteenth-century reformation; but also a sense of participation in a broad renewal which had also gripped Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. At yet another level, elements of the nation's story – particularly the medieval heritage of its church – drove historians to identify with communities larger than Protestantism. They were forced to acknowledge that England had once been part of a culture which had included the lands still dominated by popery, and that in some important senses, she still was.

The remaining chapters build on such ambiguities, and examine how ideas about faith and geography fuelled debates about England's role in the world, and about her domestic settlement. Chapter 3 looks at foreign policy. It admits it can be hard to see this driven by religious or cosmopolitan identities because England allied with people of a variety of faiths to pursue what looked like material national interests. Yet the chapter also examines public justifications of foreign relations, and in these the picture changes. The English often discussed their external interventions as attempts to defend the European reformation in complex situations where it was unwise to alienate all Roman Catholics. They also showed considerable concern for Christianity as a whole. They supported campaigns to protect the faith from Islam in the Balkans and Mediterranean, and took vigorous action against its enemies from within. Thus policies which can certainly be read as political moves against rival nations must also be understood as attempts to uphold Protestantism or an international Christian order. The fourth chapter goes on cataloguing clashing identities. Concentrating on the battles between Whigs and Tories which dominated English history from the 1670s to the 1720s, it shows these driven by different readings of England's participation in communities of faith which spanned Europe. So, party debates over the constitution were shaped by disagreement about how best to serve England's obligations to believers abroad. Must the English assert popular rights against bad rulers if they were to protect the faithful of the continent, or would such ideas destabilise the nation and ensure it failed in this duty? Ecclesiastical arguments between Whigs and Tories had a similarly foreign focus. Should the English identify more with the international reformation charted by the historians in the second chapter, or with the broader

Christian church which those scholars had also outlined? In all these discussions, widely shared – but often also contradictory – assumptions led protagonists to startlingly different conclusions. Individuals were forcing diverse pieces of their worldview to create responses to ambiguities and dilemmas; this could lead to hopeless inconsistencies, bitter disagreements and sudden shifts of position.

Much of what follows, therefore, may seem to deepen rather than dispel the confusions of English faith and cosmopolitanism. Yet there are broad lessons which emerge from the late Stuart and Georgian material which can begin to simplify what was going on in English minds. Most importantly, it becomes clear that a religious confession cannot ultimately be a force for insularity, however frequently Protestantism might appear to have isolated England from her neighbours. Contemporary commentators may have implied that upholding the Protestant faith made the English a unique people, and modern historians may analyse the construction of a foreign Catholic 'other' which forged English identity in rejection of the alien abroad, but in fact religious commitment tends to introduce wider perspectives than this. As Israel's God made clear in the later books of the Old Testament, deities who confine their attentions to one country are diminished deities.[16] Religions usually have missions to the whole of mankind. They claim to have branches across the world and to recruit for a universal struggle against the ungodly, so their adherents cannot base a narrow nationalism on their faith.[17] Late Stuart and early Georgian Protestantism was no exception. As will be demonstrated, it had a supranational vision, which saw the English as only a part of a European community of the reformed. If the English were in any way special or chosen, this election merely meant they had a peculiar duty to protect this widely dispersed community. For them, Protestantism and cosmopolitanism were not contradictory, but flowed straight from each other.

The second lesson also reconciles religion and Europe, but does so in a context even broader than the protestant international. It is that the concept of 'Christendom', an identity encompassing all followers of Jesus of whatever denomination, survived in England into the Georgian era. Even through the bitterest wars of religion, and even amongst those most committed to the Protestant cause, there remained a belief that all Christians were united and that the continent on which they lived shared a common destiny. Traditional interpretations would doubt this. The Protestant reformation is usually held

[16] For instance Isaiah 49:6 made it clear the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles, not simply a saviour of the Jews.

[17] Historians of the Tudor and early Stuart church have recognised the internationalism of English Protestantism: Patrick Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke, 1988), ch. 1.

to have destroyed the medieval vision of a single western church, and replaced it by bitter rivalries.[18] It is this interpretation which demands a weakening of religious affiliation before cosmopolitanism could re-emerge. Europe had to be integrated through a *secular* enlightenment, the argument implies, because after the sixteenth century faith could only divide. However, whilst it is true some people sought to unite Europeans by attacking religious enthusiasm, this was not the only type of cosmopolitanism. Those most deeply committed to their own confessions, including English Protestants, retained a vision of a single Christendom. As we shall repeatedly see, they tried to defend it against infidel enemies from outside, they believed it enshrined a moral order of international relations which must be upheld, and they even felt the pull of a transnational church which had somehow survived the schisms of the sixteenth century.

A third lesson is simply how powerful the two religious internationalisms were. As the following chapters show, concepts of a Protestant international, and of a united Christendom, emerged repeatedly in the century after the civil war. They shaped the possibilities of thought, formed vital parts of English identity, and frequently determined the grounds of debate. Indeed, they provide material for a profound challenge to existing interpretations of English history. The period between 1660 and 1760 has long been recognised as crucial to England's development. This was when the country emerged from international impotence to become the world's strongest power; and when she secured her peculiarly free, pluralistic and stable politics. Yet existing accounts of these achievements have centred on internal processes. To explain progress, scholars have analysed England's constitutional settlements; her social, economic and cultural development; and the bureaucratic organisation of her 'fiscal-military' state.[19] By contrast, prominent discussion of Christians overseas suggests that those involved in remodelling the country did not always focus on such domestic matters. Frequently, they were driven by their profound sense of belonging to a transnational reformation, or to a Europe-wide – even worldwide – faith. Put simply, the English often felt their strongest duties were to their coreligionists abroad. It was these duties which led them to support the wars which built England's international strength; and these which led them to reject internal settlements which might hobble the country's godly obligations.

[18] A recent statement is Edwin Jones, *The English nation: the great myth* (Sutton, 1998), which asserts: 'The reformation was the greatest revolution in English history. It meant that England was suddenly separated from the Europe of Western Christendom', p. 15. General accounts of the reformation also assume a sundering: e.g. Euan Cameron, *Early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1999) – which sees the 'harmony of the Christian world . . . in fragments' by 1550, p. 100.

[19] See below, chs. 3–4.

Fourthly, whilst it is clear we must go beyond England to explain the English, we must also choose the right international context in which to study their history. In the last decades of the twentieth century, scholars urged each other to avoid considering England in isolation, but the wider picture many adopted was still pretty local. A style of 'new British history' demanded that the English past be understood as a constant interaction with Scots, Welsh and Irish, and for a while the field came to be dominated by studies of 'anglo-celtic' entanglements.[20] The chapters which follow obey some of this interpretation's strictures by considering the importance of such themes as the 1707 union with Scotland. Yet even as the new 'British' interpretation gained momentum, doubts crept in. Some commentators objected that the narrative of full, reciprocal interaction between the 'British' nations was too complex to tell; or that many who had tried to tell it had actually fallen back on an 'enriched English' history, which only attempted to understand the other countries in so far as they had affected their larger neighbour.[21] This work accepts such criticism by making no bones about its English bias. This is a study of England, not Britain; and it sacrifices many of the fascinating complexities of 'anglo-celtic' interaction in order to tell a focused story. It also, however, challenges the assumptions behind the new British history. Concentration on England can be defended both because the 'British' nations remained very different cultures throughout our period (so including Scotland or Ireland would confuse an already complex story of multiple identities), and because England remained the dominant core of the British state created in 1707. Beyond this, the fact that the English cared so much about an extremely wide-ranging Protestantism, and about an even broader Christendom, suggests relations with immediate neighbours were not always their most pressing anxiety. As we shall see, the English *were* concerned about the fate of the Scots and Irish; but they were at least as concerned about the reformation's survival in France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany and Austria; about Christianity's struggle with infidels at the borders of the faith; and about dangerous apostates in the very heart of the

[20] The original call for 'British history' was made in J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *JMH*, 47 (1975), 601–28. Glenn Burgess, ed., *The new British history* (1999), usefully analyses the historiography for the Stuart age. For a flavour of the scholarship: Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber, eds., *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state 1685–1725* (Harlow, 1995); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); S. J. Connolly, ed., *Kingdoms united? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500* (Dublin, 1999).

[21] For criticisms: Nicholas Canny, 'Irish, Scottish and Welsh responses to centralisation, 1530–c1640', in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (1995), pp. 147–69; Tony Claydon, 'Problems with the British problem', *Parliamentary History*, 16 (1997), 221–7; Tony Claydon, 'British history in the post-revolutionary world', in Burgess, *New British history*, pp. 115–37.

faithful's territory. The new British history, therefore, has helped set England in a wider context, but the evidence suggests this context was not wide enough, and in what follows we will deliberately play it down to stress a continental alternative.

This geographic lesson has another aspect. Although some scholars concentrated on the three kingdoms at the expense of Europe, some others ranged way beyond these. A long tradition of imperial history charted interactions with peoples around the globe, and this has recently been joined by an 'Atlantic' history, stressing the particular interdependence of Britain, Ireland and their settlements in North America and the Caribbean.[22] Again, much admirable work has been done in these spheres: but again it risks demoting continental Europe in English perceptions. First, we will see that England's inhabitants were relatively ignorant of far-flung places in the late Stuart and early Hanoverian periods. Few went to Africa or Asia; these regions had relatively little impact on the consciousness of those who stayed at home; and although the American colonies were being settled, they were of surprisingly little concern to people of the metropolis before the crisis of the 1760s.[23] The Ottoman Turks have been claimed as a possible exception to this neglect of non-Europeans, but the claim dissolves on examination. English comment on the Turks peaked in the 1680s when they were at the gates of Vienna, but as they were driven from the heart of Europe in the next decades, interest faded. Second, we should note that even the transnational religious identities we will examine rarely directed eyes across the great oceans. Almost all the world's Protestants lived in north-west Europe, and the English tended to worry about reformed Christians elsewhere primarily as colonial extensions

[22] The fruits of imperial scholarship were summarised in Nicholas P. Canny, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire*, vol. 1, *The origins* (Oxford, 1998); and Peter Marshall, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire*, vol. 2, *The eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1998). For examples of Atlantic history: Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the realm: cultural margins of the first British empire* (Williamsburg, 1991); David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world* (2002); David Armitage, ed., *Greater Britain, 1516–1775* (2004).

[23] For lack of travel, see below, pp. 63–6. Arguing for a lack of interest in America is difficult when there are real examples of engagement. See the missionary activity mentioned below, p. 355, or the interchange of people across the ocean (Gillian Wagner, *Thomas Coram, gent., 1668–1751* (Woodbridge, 2004), takes a figure whose American links are often forgotten). However, the point is the *relative* lack of interest. This is demonstrated, for example, by the European focus of English discussion of 1689 (see below, ch. 4) even though American colonies also experienced political turmoil: Richard R. Johnson, 'The revolution of 1688–9 in the American colonies', in Jonathan I. Israel, ed., *The Anglo-Dutch moment* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 215–40. Similarly, English politicians were happy to give away American gains to secure European allies at the 1748 Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle; and many readings of the 1760s crisis stress the ignorance in England of American circumstances: e.g. I. R. Christie, *Crisis of empire* (1966); P. D. G. Thomas, *British politics and the Stamp Act crisis* (1975).

of European wars.[24] Of course Christians generally were more widespread than their reformed variant. Beyond the lands occupied by Protestants and Roman Catholics (which will be the core of this study) there were the Orthodox of the near east and Russia; the African churches of Ethiopia and southern Sudan; and groups of the faithful in the Caucausus and elsewhere. Many of these communities were respected and ancient, and were sometimes mentioned in English ecclesiological discussions.[25] However, the existence of such Christians was usually marginal to the public discourse on which we shall focus. For example, few non-westerners featured in debates on foreign policy because these people were not major powers. The exception was Russia, but her influence was only becoming clear towards the end of our period, and her spheres of control were only starting to impinge upon English interests.[26] In discussion of domestic issues, tensions within Protestantism and the threat of Rome were familiar and hotly discussed. In comparison, Orthodoxy and other theologies were too little known to have much purchase.[27] For the English, therefore, 'Christendom' meant largely Christianity in western and central Europe. For all these reasons we will discuss Africa, the Orient, the Levant, Russia or the Americas when they became relevant to contemporary perceptions, but this did not happen nearly as often as Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, France or Spain came to the front of people's minds.

The final lesson is implicit in the other four. It is simply that English identity was – and almost certainly remains – far more fluid, open and multi-layered than is often believed. Commentators on modern culture often assume a fixed and narrow Englishness. They lament a bigoted English insularity, which accounts for everything from reluctance to learn languages to scepticism about the pan-European project.[28] Historians, meanwhile, have noted an

[24] In our period, concern for the American colonies was concentrated at times when European wars spread over the Atlantic. Thus there was far more in the 1740s than in the 1720s: see Kathleen Wilson, *The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Oxford, 1995); Robert Harris, *A patriot press: national politics and the London press in the 1740s* (Oxford, 1993).

[25] There was sympathy for Greek Christians under the Turk, and interest in their evasion of Rome's clutches. See (among figures who will feature elsewhere in this book): Paul Rycaut, *The present state of the Greek and Armenian churches* (1679); Bishop Henry Compton's care for the Greeks in his diocese – Edward Carpenter, *The Protestant bishop* (1965), ch. 19; or Edward Stephens' work for reconciliation between English and Greek churches – Geoff Kemp, 'Stephens, Edward', *ODNB*, LII:461–2.

[26] For Russia's increasing impact and cultural prominence: e.g. A. Rothstein, *Peter the Great and Marlborough* (1986); Anthony Cross, *Anglo-Russian relations in the eighteenth century* (1977).

[27] Interestingly, the preface to Rycaut's *Present state* assumed readers would need guiding through unfamiliar material, and stressed the lessons the eastern churches had for the more familiar Romanists and reformed.

[28] Press comment is joined by scholarly analysis: Robin Cohen, *Frontiers of identity: the British and the others* (Harlow, 1994); and the introduction and conclusion of Colley's *Britons*.

abiding English xenophobia; and they have charted the rise of a nationalism (albeit dating it to very different periods), which set up the national interest as its highest ideal, and was based on rejection of a series of alien, foreign 'others'.[29] Yet in the vital period when England emerged as the major, and as a peculiarly liberal, power, there was no such unreflecting introspection. Certainly, the people we shall meet were aware of their Englishness. They appealed to English law and history, to the rights of Englishmen, to England's trading interests, even to England's extraordinary covenant with God. But whilst English people *were* English, they were just as clearly Protestants and Christians. These broader (though sometimes contradictory) identities exploded any constricting nationality, and ensured England was endlessly tossed between different levels of self-understanding. This was especially true as neither Protestantism nor Christianity were themselves fixed bodies. They could be envisioned as encompassing different people (for instance, the English disagreed bitterly whether all followers of the reformation were equal brethren), and they could be understood in different senses (Christendom was by turns a geographical, a moral, a military and an ecclesiological construct). As William Bromley discovered, such ideological turbulence could be uncomfortable. Yet it opened people to a vast range of experience; and it explained much of the astonishing dynamism of English society in the century after the civil war.

[29] For attempts to date English nationalism: Leah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: five roads to modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), and Jones, *English nation*, argue for Henry VIII's reign; Steven Pincus, '"To protect English liberties": the English nationalist revolution of 1688–9', in Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds., *Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850* (Cambridge, 1998) – the late seventeenth century; and Gerald Newman, *The rise of English nationalism, 1740–1830* (1987) – the mid-Georgian period. Other scholars plump for the middle ages, or the nineteenth century.