From Reformation to Enlightenment in post-Civil War orientalism

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The Enlightenment has long been taken to have employed stereotyping in order to distinguish and define itself. Traditional historiography identifies a series of stereotypes that served as foils for the Enlightenment’s commitment to philosophy and secular liberalism. First the impostor and the priest, and later the oriental despot, became regular targets of critique. This expanding range of targets is taken to match up with the Enlightenment’s emergence as a species of political and religious radicalism and its evolution into a programme of domestic and colonial governance. Since the 1980s, however, the notion that the Enlightenment was inherently opposed to Christianity, emancipatory in its early stages and only later corrupted by an alliance with state power has slowly lost all credence. Today even many of the most strident and learned exponents of the traditional view, such as Jonathan Israel, grudgingly admit the existence of a Christian Enlightenment, even if they consider it backsliding and disastrous.¹

Less ideologically loaded renderings of the Enlightenment are now readily available.² But they have not yet incorporated an understanding of Enlightenment stereotyping that is consistent with a recognition that the Enlightenment took Christian, authoritarian and imperialist forms from the beginning. This chapter extends our understanding of the origins and nature of the English Enlightenment’s stereotypical repertoire by exploring its links to religious conformism, orientalism and colonial expansion. The discussion is focused on the later Stuart period but extends into the later eighteenth century. Its primary aim is to clarify how the politics of stereotyping related to popery and puritanism (discussed above by Harris, Lake, Peters and Morton) were transformed and deployed in Enlightenment depictions of societies outside western Europe, and in particular the Ottoman empire. This was one way in which post-Reformation stereotypes enjoyed wide currency well beyond the end of the seventeenth century, lending themselves, on new frontiers, to discovery, edification, polemics and propaganda.³

The Restoration era was a crucial moment in the transition from Renaissance and Reformation to Enlightenment in England. The emergence
of Enlightened stereotypical discourse is one of many clear indicators. Two of the most important post-Reformation polemical discourses – anti-puritanism and anti-popery – were central to the development of early Enlightenment forms of stereotyping that had potentially universal application. The post-Civil War universalisation of anti-popery has already been observed by a number of historians. Steve Pincus, for instance, has documented the partial shedding of the theological content of popery and universal monarchy in international politics. After the Restoration, these two terms became so ideologically and referentially capacious that they were applied to a variety of the English state’s alleged enemies – most importantly, to France and the Netherlands. Popery and universal monarchy obviously no longer necessarily referred exclusively to the pope, to monarchies or even to Catholics. Instead, they signified the seeking of universal dominion and the actions that conduced to it. They could be applied both to Catholic tyrannies and to Protestant republics.

Mark Goldie and Justin Champion have observed similar developments in their examinations of connections between English religious politics and the early Enlightenment. In the later Stuart period, they have shown, Christianity in general was described as an imposture for the first time, at least in England. Around the same time a new Whig term of abuse, ‘priestcraft’ (apparently coined by James Harrington, a republican proponent of civil religion, in 1657), became a central slogan of the English Enlightenment. Priestcraft was, in Goldie’s words, ‘popery universalized’. All religious leaders, the logic went, had a tendency to behave in a manner once specifically associated with the pope and his priestly minions. ‘Priests’ abused the unwarranted power they exerted over ordinary people in order to realise their own political ambitions or solidify their empires. In the process, they threatened both true religion and civil stability.

There are, however, at least three things we have yet to appreciate about the emergence of a universal typology of religious corruption in the Restoration period. The currently available narrative reflects the remnants of Whiggery and insularity present in much recent work on later Stuart England. An expansive, early Enlightenment understanding of religious and political imposture and corruption was embraced by a far wider portion of the English elite than simply the Whigs and their republican predecessors. In the Restoration era this understanding was commonplace among both Stuart absolutists and Anglican persecutors. Secondly, the absolutist and conformist variants of this discourse were above all characterised not by a universalised anti-popery but rather by a universalised anti-puritanism. Thirdly, the early Enlightenment’s new, secularised language of religious and political deformity was confined neither physically nor referentially to Europe. As England entered into an increasingly complex and intense
engagement with the early modern Islamic empires and their Muslim, Jewish, pagan and Christian populations, these populations became central sites for the development of Enlightenment discourses of priestcraft and despotism that incorporated the languages of both anti-papery and anti-puritanism. Servants of the Restoration English empire, who led England’s engagement with the Islamic empires, fashioned the emergent stereotypes of the early Enlightenment while promoting their political, economic and religious agendas abroad.

As this all suggests, there is in fact a direct historical relationship between post-Reformation stereotyping and modern British orientalism. This relationship cannot be understood simply by supposing that the universalist stereotypes of the English Enlightenment emerged exclusively from the discourse of anti-papery. This supposition inevitably leads one to over-emphasise the foundational, central role of enemies of the Church of England in the English Enlightenment. Moreover, historical treatments of general developments in early modern Europeans’ political thinking about the Islamic empires exhibit similar tendencies for similar reasons. They have yet to take adequate account of the crucial shifts in orientalist discourse that resulted from the employment of post-Reformation, intra-Protestant stereotyping and led to distinctive, Enlightened forms of political thinking about non-Christian religions and societies.7 The later seventeenth century is the moment at which the relationship between universalised forms of post-Reformation stereotyping and Enlightenment depictions of non-Christian religions and societies crystallised.8

This chapter maintains that any plausible account of the transformation of religious stereotyping that occurred in later Stuart England must recognise the primacy of civil stability and the centrality of conformist Anglicanism in the early Enlightenment. It must also place the English religious stereotyping examined throughout this volume in its European and global contexts. This perspective first allows us to see that both anti-puritanism and anti-papery, directed against multiple targets in different ways by figures of varying ideological affinities, provided the basis for an Enlightenment language of religious corruption that was employed both domestically and abroad. Second, this perspective exposes the fact that the constellation of Enlightenment stereotypes with roots in post-Reformation polemic was hardly limited to the languages of priestcraft and imposture. It was equally constituted by the languages of enthusiasm and fanaticism. Third, this perspective illuminates the fact that conformist and Tory elements were just as instrumental in the emergence of the notions of priestcraft and imposture as their religious and ideological opponents were. After all, as Noel Malcolm has recently made clear, the discourse of imposture, both originally and in its early incarnations, was largely employed by establishment figures.9
Finally, and most importantly, this perspective allows us to explain how the universalisation of post-Reformation stereotyping occurred: not simply by means of intra-English stereotyping but also by the application of stereotypes that originally developed within intra-Christian contexts to all the known religions of the world. In other words, the post-Reformation languages of religious corruption were not artificially or philosophically universalised by a radical clique. They were empirically universalised in an intellectual culture that was still relentlessly historical in orientation by writers of a wide variety of ideological orientations.

All these correctives emerge simultaneously if we take a close look at the learned writing of the travelling historians and orientalists of England and its empire. These men – servants of the trading companies, the church and the Crown – were immersed in the historical culture of the late Renaissance and the early Enlightenment. They used this background to craft scholarly reports on the Islamic empires, their inhabitants and the history of Eastern religions. They operated within a political culture of counsel, propaganda and information management. Historical scholarship conceived in this milieu was inherently rhetorical and ideological, but it simultaneously adhered to the latest methodological standards for uncovering ‘matters of fact’. It was founded upon an assumption that both the wise management of politics and religion in these empires, and the instability, decline and excesses of the same polities, yielded important lessons for English statesmen and churchmen who sought to manage better their dominions within and without the British Isles, to conduct foreign policy and to convert Jews, pagans and Muslims to Christianity. The late humanist, global understanding of the Republic of Letters that these men had internalised dictated that useful knowledge about the histories of Asia and Africa was to be sought from the non-European inhabitants of these continents, their literary traditions and their public records.¹⁰

It should be clear already that the orientalist works under study in this chapter are selected from a much smaller body of texts and authors than the one famously surveyed by Edward Said from the late eighteenth century onwards. They were at least in part historical works, whether they described the ancient past or the contemporary world. They featured both performances of erudition and appeals to wider bodies of educated readers, in varying proportions. They were normally intended as works of political counsel. This meant that in an ostensible effort to aid the ongoing work of the imperial state or the church they provided sustained analyses of particular Islamic empires. The polemics surrounding Said’s *Orientalism* do not provide a reliable guide to such works because of the dichotomy they establish between scholarship and the exercise of power. Said, of course, was well aware that many orientalist texts improved the accuracy of Western
understandings of Islamic societies, praised these societies in important ways and drew comparisons between the laudable characteristics of the East and the West. He was also largely uninterested in these facts and, in isolation, none of these facts is of any importance to the present chapter either. The orientalist histories of the later Stuart period never dwelled exclusively on either difference or critique. They probed common ground and regularly praised the political and religious wisdom of non-Europeans. But this chapter is concerned more generally with the fact that oriental scholarship and writings derived from it – whether plentiful or deficient in factual veracity – were without exception important political resources.

As a result, these works’ content was fundamentally determined by their utility and legibility for Europeans. That criterion of utility could lead and did lead to a body of writing that varied significantly in its content and ideological orientation. Depending upon what activities it was meant to motivate or guide, the utility of any given orientalist text could rest upon varying doses of inaccuracy and accuracy, sophistication and simplicity, likeness and difference, native informants and armchair erudition. This is why the stereotyping described below is best appreciated as a practice of both analysis and critique. While the particular geographical and demographic foci of the later Stuart orientalist texts under examination here varied enormously, the likenesses and continuities between them are equally important. Orientalism, when applied to any particular part of the Islamic empires, was both ideologically multivalent and intended to mobilise political activity with recourse to either counsel or propaganda and polemic.

From Renaissance and Reformation to Enlightenment

Civil and natural religions were the usual antidotes to religious violence prescribed by the writers of the early Enlightenment. These religions of peace were typically described not in philosophical treatises but in historical narrations and descriptions. These histories tended not to be positive in nature because early Enlightenment writers largely followed their late humanist predecessors in assuming that religions of purity and order were best described by reference to their opposites. The writing of histories of religion had been spurred and motivated by confessional conflict, missionary zeal and imperial aggression since the sixteenth century. Catholics and Protestants identified idols, superstitions and other forms of corruption on a global scale – among fellow Christians and unbelievers, in the past and in the present, and at home and abroad. Employing techniques developed in the late Renaissance and Reformation, they gradually assembled a global history of religious imposture, conspiracy and ignorance. Yet the terrestrial

From Reformation to Enlightenment orientalism

289
causes of error did not exclusively consume their attention until the later seventeenth century. It was at this point that they were first able to describe the universal features of religious corruption without recourse to theology or demonology. Eastern religions, in particular, had traditionally been derided with primary reference to their diabolical origins.13

English developments were variants within a pan-European process. From Elizabeth’s reign onwards, the most important discourses employed for diagnosing and narrating religious corruption – anti-popery and anti-puritanism – slowly became universalised in both their content and range of application. Before the end of the sixteenth century, anti-popery’s ambit had been extended beyond Protestant polemics against Continental Catholicism and its alleged English remnants. As suggested by Harris, conformist divines in the reigns of Elizabeth I and the early Stuarts regularly tarred the behaviour and political thinking of puritans with the brush of anti-popery. From the moment this was first done in the 1570s, the claim that puritanism was popish became an element of the broader discourse of anti-puritanism.14 Lengthy, derisive descriptions of puritan theology, ecclesiology, pastoral work and piety claimed to reveal the hypocrisy, libertinism, theatricality, delusion, divisiveness and sedition of the godly.15 At the same time, anti-puritans brought anti-popery itself into contestation by espousing points of practice and doctrine that other Protestants viewed as popish. And by the early Jacobean period, the enemies of popery were indulging in detailed comparisons between popery and paganism. They were also expanding their analytical gaze by turning their attention to the more obviously political and international dimensions of Catholicism. Now Catholic princes joined the pope as the great architects and masterminds of popery: all were would-be universal monarchs. As these comparative practices developed, anti-popery and anti-puritanism came to draw on a humanist discourse of superstition.16 This helped them slowly to separate from their theological moorings and their original polemical triggers.

The widening scope of English anti-popery and anti-puritanism thus contributed to a development of even greater scale: the use of scholarly tools developed in the late Renaissance and the Protestant and Catholic Reformations to fashion the characteristically anthropological understanding of religion that typified the Enlightenment. Erudite Christians in early modern Europe possessed a range of techniques for diagnosing religious corruption that were ancient in origin. Historians and antiquarians on both sides of the Reformation divide used these tools to furnish accounts of idolatry, superstition and other types of error. They observed these deformities among fellow Christians as well as among the pagans of antiquity and contemporary Asia, Africa and America. The crucial transformation in this documentation of corruption occurred in the later
seventeenth century. Some scholars decided no longer to interpret idolatry and other instances of religion gone wrong with recourse to theology and demonology. Instead, they moulded the ancient understanding of superstition into a sociological model of religion. This ultimately allowed Voltaire in 1764 to dismiss the term ‘idolatry’ as useless and pejorative.\textsuperscript{17}

This development occurred on three main fronts: confessional polemic, antiquarian treatises on ancient religion and travellers’ accounts of Europe’s new worlds. Scholars working in each area were driven by confessional, missionary and imperial goals. Utilising the techniques of late humanist historical criticism, they identified dynamics common to Christianity and other religions, both ancient and contemporary.\textsuperscript{18} The fecundity of this comparative style of inquiry was clear enough in England by the early seventeenth century that in 1613 popery could be identified among the Native Americans of Virginia who, according to Samuel Purchas, accepted the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This doctrine was the foundation for their popish belief that works on Earth determined eternal rewards and punishments. Even the immortality of the soul itself was supported by popish argumentation: the Native Americans, Purchas wrote, ‘tell tales of men dead and revived again, much like to the popish legends’.\textsuperscript{19}

Like his Catholic contemporaries, Purchas mostly examined modern paganism through an ancient lens. But the utility of comparing modern paganism to Catholicism was still compelling. By the middle of the seventeenth century, other English Protestants had become so accustomed to applying anti-popery and anti-puritanism to the study and the criticism of non-Christian religions that this method rivalled ancient frames of reference in its importance. Especially in printed works that sought readerships somewhere between the scholarly and the middling and saw confrontation with corrupt religion as an unavoidable consequence of expansion, the discourses of popery, puritanism, enthusiasm, idolatry, superstition and priestcraft mingled constantly. At this point, they resembled a single, voluminous stream of historical knowledge more than they resembled separate traditions or discourses. In this form they were capable of yielding a typology of corruption and imposture. The Civil War was the crucial moment when this universalisation of anti-popery and anti-puritanism began to accelerate in England. Learned writers of all ideological stripes quickly developed a preoccupation with identifying the mechanics of religion gone wrong and the sources of political instability, whether populist or authoritarian. The conflicts among these writers were for the most part not intellectual in nature. Instead, commentators differed over which groups in English society were engaging in the sorts of behaviour that everyone knew hazarded another decade of devastation and extremism.\textsuperscript{20} Anti-popery and anti-puritanism were among their most important analytical and polemical tools.
Stereotypes and stereotyping

Sir Paul Rycaut on the Greek church and the Ottoman empire

My focus here will mostly be on English treatments of Islam, even though scholars working in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries described a variety of religions practised in the Islamic empires – including Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Christianity – as popish, puritanical, priest-ridden and conducive to tyranny. While anti-popery and anti-puritanism were only thoroughly universalised after the Civil Wars, some of the earliest humanistic travel writing dealing with Asian religion described Islam and the Islamic empires as popish and puritanical. Examples include the first extensive ethnographic text to emerge from the East India Company’s activities in South Asia, the chaplain Edward Terry’s *A voyage to East-India*. Mostly written in the 1620s but published in 1655, this book was rife with analysis of the popery and puritanism of Islam.21

In general, though, these were isolated developments prior to the restoration of the monarchy. By that time, those who sought to endorse their own particular version of a Protestant *via media* certainly had a developed stereotypical vocabulary at their disposal. One example would be Samuel Pepys, discussed by Magliocco in Chapter 7. These writers most commonly described religious corruption as popery, puritanism, fanaticism, enthusiasm or imposture. Again, by the Restoration period these stereotypical discourses were already and commonly being applied to multiple groups. Popery need not be Catholic, puritanism could assume many different, errant Protestant forms, fanaticism could be found in a variety of groups, enthusiasm was taken to be an all too widely shared trait and imposture crossed the Catholic–Protestant divide.22 Yet while these discourses were generalised, they were hardly universal, since they still referred overwhelmingly to corrupt forms of Christianity.

The terrain quickly began to shift, however. This transition is most clear in the writings of those who directly served England’s empire in the Mediterranean world.23 These establishment figures also allow us to correct the bias that results from studying the universalisation of post-Reformation discourse solely from the perspective of freethinkers and republicans. The central portion of this chapter will explore the full contours of the early Enlightenment universalisation of anti-popery and anti-puritanism by paying close attention to the writing of one Mediterranean traveller, Sir Paul Rycaut. Rycaut was perhaps the pre-eminent English travelling historian of his day, and his works were crucial sources for many later Enlightenment writers, including Pierre Bayle, Montesquieu and the *philosophes*.24 He is primarily known as a diplomat, consul and secretary who spent over a decade living in the Ottoman empire and became a member of the Royal Society. The relationship between his scholarly pursuits and his religious
views, however, has been largely ignored. Like so many of the most talented orientalists of his day, Rycaut was a Tory Anglican conformist with (it appears) some Laudian inclinations in matters of piety. This structured the way he wrote about Islam and the Ottoman empire, but it also influenced his treatment of Greek Christianity.25

In the irenic and ecumenically minded preface to his Present state of the Greek and Armenian churches (1679), Rycaut attacked both Catholics and radical Protestants. He blamed ‘the extreme ambition of the Roman Jesuitical clergy on the one side, and the too hot and blind zeal of some Pharisaical professors on the other’, who dared to ‘penetrate into the decrees of predestination, dispute the manner of the Holy Ghost’s procession, and dive into the mysteries of Holy Trinity, and secrets of the eucharist’, for the rift between the Roman and Protestant churches.26 His irenicism, however, was no ‘latitudinarianism’: instead it seems to have been the sort of irenicism characteristic of so many Laudians, which very often entailed serious interest in union with Eastern Christianity.27 In the same preface, Rycaut praised Greek Christians for how ‘they are startled and affronted at the sentence of excommunication, how strict and frequent some are in their confessions, how obedient and submissive to the censure and injunction of the priest; which certainly do evidence some inward tenderness of conscience, and dispositions toward being edified’.28 When speaking of England, while he lauded the ‘daily lectures we hear from our pulpits’ and the comparably wide access to Scripture in England, in order to compare his home country partially favourably with Greece, he immediately moved on to add that, for the most part, these Reformed traditions of active preaching and familiarity with the Word among the laity only ‘serve to render us more blind, or perverse’, because they had led English Christians to forget more essential traditions.29 ‘Who is it that values the excommunication of a bishop, or other ecclesiastical censures?’, he complained, implying that his countrymen cared little for these processes.30 ‘Who accounts of vigils and fasts according to the institutions of the universal, and of their own church? Or weighs the private instructions of a priest, who is the monitor of his soul?’ Here, Rycaut said, even conforming Anglicans were often guilty of a laxity that they would themselves describe as ‘the characteristical point of a phanatick’.31

Rycaut went on to attack the arrogance of those who considered these institutions of ‘the clergy’s power’ unnecessary. While these critics of the ministry believed ‘that they are better instructed than to be guided by their priests or to stand in awe of the condemnation of a supercilious prelate’, it was in fact the case that the ‘humble and submissive’ layman who was ‘willing to be instructed’ was ‘a better Christian’.32 Rycaut made a pointed argument for the restoration of priestly confession in the Church of England
and went on to expressions of nostalgia for the days of William Laud’s dominance. He speculated that had Cyril, a patriarch of Constantinople who published a rigorously Calvinist confession of faith in 1631, at that time ‘spent some time in England, and there observed that purity of our doctrine, and the excellency of our discipline, which flourished in the beginning of the reign of King Charles the Martyr, and viewed our churches trimmed and adorned in a modest medium, between the wanton and superstitious dress of Rome, and the slovenly and insipid government of Geneva’, he would have ‘entertained a high opinion of our happy Reformation’ and drawn ‘a pattern whereby to amend and correct the faults of the Greek church’.

Rycaut was not only something of an anti-Calvinist, as these excerpts make clear, but also a virulently anti-Catholic writer and politician. He detested Europe’s aspiring universal monarch, Louis XIV. Even so, in his most famous work, The present state of the Ottoman empire (1667), Rycaut warned against European elites’ obsession with the French potential for universal monarchy because it distracted them from the Ottomans. Europe’s governors were utterly mistaken in taking the Turks to be ignorant barbarians. This European ignorance was in his view partly responsible for the success of Ottoman aggression in European territories. The Habsburgs, in particular, made foolish peace treaties with the Ottomans because the Habsburg emperor was preoccupied by the French. Rycaut’s description of Ottoman government was similar to his description of French government, but his normative judgement differed. He argued that tyranny was appropriate and prudent for a state constituted in the way the Ottoman regime was. Both the Turks and the French had embraced Justinian’s notion of absolute rule. This was appropriate, Rycaut argued, for any state seeking universal dominion. In his mind, the powerful link between popery and universal empire knew no religious or national boundaries.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is more important to appreciate the religious side of Rycaut’s application and universalisation of stereotypes of Reformation-era lineage, and to consider his exploration of the political consequences of religious corruption. Rycaut described Islam in the Ottoman empire with recourse to the languages of both anti-puritanism and anti-popery. It was not, of course, that he was unaware of the fundamental differences between the Christian and Ottoman religions and empires, but that he used his understanding of Catholic institutions and puritan habits to guide his analysis of Islam at numerous points. Popish and puritan doctrines, ceremonies and political strategies, he argued, enabled the expansion and relative stability of the Ottoman empire.

Like adherents of Rome, Rycaut said, the Turks ‘conceive that the civil law came as much from God, being delivered by their Prophet, as that which
immediately respects their religion, and came with the same obligations of injunctions to obedience’. Here the Ottomans mimicked the imperialist scheming of the Prophet himself, who ‘made his spiritual power as large as his temporal’. In the Ottoman dominions ‘the dignity and authority of infallible determinations’ in religious matters was granted to the mufti, ‘the principle head of the Mahometan religion or oracle of all doubtful questions in the law’. While the mufti was never contradicted on matters of doctrine, he was usually not a source of civil instability because ‘his election is solely in the Grand Signior’ and his judgements were regularly used to add religious legitimacy to the sultan’s rulings. In any case where the sultan could not procure the ruling he wanted, ‘the mufti is fairly dismissed from his infallible office, and another oracle introduced, who may resolve the difficult demands with a more favorable sentence’. Here Rycaut was describing Ottoman policy in terms of an understanding of popery appropriate to the second half of the seventeenth century, when pontifical claims for political superiority rang hollow, dependent as they often were upon Spanish or French cooperation. The mufti aimed not to protect the original intent of the Qur’ān, but to adjust its authoritative meaning to imperial imperatives. ‘Though they preach to the people the perfection of their Qur’ān, yet the wiser hold, that the mufti hath an expository power of the law to improve and better it, according to the state of things, times and conveniencies of the Empire’, Rycaut wrote. ‘Their law was never designed to be a clog or confinement to the propagation of faith, but an advancement thereof, and therefore to be interpreted in the largest and farthest fetched sense, when the strict words will not reach the design intended.’ As in Catholicism, Rycaut suggested, honest exegesis had been sidelined in favour of evangelical and political strategy.

The materiality of Islam also mirrored that of Catholicism. ‘The Turks are very magnificent in their mosques and edifices directed to the service of God’, Rycaut wrote, ‘and not only in the buildings, but the endowments of them, with a revenue which records the memory of the donor to all posterity and relieves many poor who daily repeat prayers for the souls of such as who died with a persuasion that they have need of them after their decease.’ This belief was common despite the fact that it could not be linked to the contents of the Qu’ran. Ottoman piety was in many senses a potent combination of the excesses of puritans and papists. ‘The Turks’, Rycaut continued, ‘are certainly a very cleanly people in their exterior manner of living, as in their washings relating to their holy exercises and duties, they are very precise and superstitious; some of them believing that the very water purifies them from the foulness of their sins, as well as from the uncleanliness of their bodies.’

In his description of Ottoman religion, Rycaut also regularly described Ottoman ecclesiastical organisation as many would have described the
Roman. Imams, for instance, were to be understood as ‘parochial priests’. He emphasised what he called the prevalence of ‘monasteries and orders of religious men’ or ‘friars’ among the Ottomans. These units included the Sufi orders. He explained this with reference to Muhammad’s supposed borrowing from Christianity. Nevertheless, he said, there was little evidence of Muslim religious orders prior to the early Ottoman era. This contradicted Ottoman claims that they were coeval with Muhammad. The Ottoman counterparts to Catholic religious orders joined those orders in attributing miracles to the founders of their traditions. The Ottoman monks, he wrote, ‘incline to a pretended mortification and strictness of life, to poverty, and renunciation of the world’s enjoyments, according to the devotion of Christians a thousand years past’. The best-known inhabitants of the ‘Mahumetan convents’, the dervishes, ‘pretend to great patience, humility, modesty, charity and silence, in presence of their superior or others ... They profess poverty, chastity, and obedience, like Capuchin friars or other orders of St. Francis.’ Some dervishes, he claimed, ‘exercise some kind of legerdemain, or tricks, to amuse the minds of the common people; and some really apply themselves to sorceries and conjurations by help of familiar spirits’. Indeed, members of many orders were masters of priestcraft: ‘notable sophisters and hypocrites, their secrets they reveal to none but those of their own profession, by which means they are able to cheat those of other religions’. All the orders, in their monkery, also practised various extremes of asceticism and hermitry. Many monasteries had a patron ‘saint’ or master whom they honoured, and to whose tombs thousands made pilgrimage.

What struck Rycaut most of all about Ottoman Islam, however, was its puritanism. Like Oliver Cromwell and Muhammad, the Ottomans built their empire on a false providentialism. They attributed military success to divine favour. Anyone who died in battle with infidels, they claimed, would be saved. ‘The same argument’, Rycaut pointed out, ‘in the times of the late rebellion in England, was made use of by many, to entitle God to their cause, and make him the author of their thriving sin, because their wickedness prospered.’ The structure of Ottoman religious institutions also recalled the Cromwellian church. Rycaut noted that the mufti ‘hath no jurisdiction over the imams, as to the good order or government of the parishes, nor is there any superiority or hierarchy as to rule amongst them; every one being independent and without control in his own parish’. This ecclesiastical form, he noted, ‘may not unaptly seem to square with the Independency in England, from which original pattern and example our Sectaries and Phanatick Reformers appear to have drawn their copy’. The likenesses between Ottoman Islam and puritanism extended to doctrine. Continuing to survey Ottoman beliefs about providence and
predestination, Rycaut noted that ‘the doctrine of the Turks in this point seems to run exactly according to the assertion of the severest Calvinists; and in proof hereof their learned men produce places of Scripture, which seem to incline to the same opinion’. Because Turks ‘are of the opinion that every man’s destiny is wrote on his forehead’, their soldiers were ready ‘to throw away their lives in the most desperate attempts’, and they were taught not to fear the plague. Some were such strict predestinarians that they denied the notion of human will and contended that even the smallest human action was divinely determined. From time to time these opinions had led to antinomianism. A Muslim, some Ottomans claimed, ‘though guilty of the grossest sins, is not punished for them in this world, nor receives his absolution or condemnation after death’. Puritanical Turks believed too that ‘as impiety with the true belief shall never be punished, so piety and good works proceeding from a false and erroneous faith, is of no validity or power conducing to the fruition of the joys of paradise’. ‘To these’, Rycaut wrote, ‘may not improperly be compared some sectaries in England, who have vented in their pulpits that God sees no sin in his children, and that the infidelity of Sarah, being of the house of the faithful, is more acceptable to God, than the alms, prayers and repentance of an erroneous believer without the pale and covenant of grace.’ In addition, many Ottomans had made a fetish of their spiritualism, arguing in their condemnation of the dervishes that ‘the Qurʾan expressly forbids all devotion and service to God with music’. Therefore, ‘in calling their people to prayers, they use no bells’. In Rycaut’s view, Ottoman Islam also exhibited, like puritanism, an inherent tendency towards a proliferation of conventicles and sects that often hatched rebellion. Some sects were politically acquiescent. They were careful never to ‘derogate from the authority of their governors, or produce factions or disturbances of state’. In the Ottoman empire, unlike England, there was no automatic movement from heterodoxy to sedition. ‘These modern times’, however, ‘have produced other sects among the Turks, some of which seem in part dangerous, and apt to make a considerable rupture in their long continued union; when time changes and revolutions of state shall animate some turbulent spirits, to gather soldiers and followers under these doctrines and other specious pretences.’

Ottoman disunity mirrored the fissiparous nature of puritanism. The main ‘separatist’ grouping in the empire disagreed amongst themselves so thoroughly on how properly to understand the equity and unity of God that they ‘divided into two and twenty sects, which are maintained with that passion on all sides, that every party accuses his opposites of infidelity’, spurred on in their division by ‘wrangling sophisters’. Members of one such group were
of a melancholy and Stoical temper, admitting of no music, cheerful or light discourses, but confine themselves to a set gravity ... They are exact and punctual in the observation of the rules of religion ... In short, they are highly pharisaical in all their comportment, great admirers of themselves, and scorers of others that conform not to their tenets, scarce according them a salutation or common communication.

Others ‘observe the law of Mahomet in divine worship with a strictness and superstition above any of the precisians of that religion’, but because of their extremely low estimation of men’s capacity for understanding the divine, they ‘hold it unlawful to adjoin any attributes to God’. These Ottoman separatists mirrored the divisive and hypocritical social practices of the godly in England. Many of the religious orders also engaged in a series of enthusiastic and mystical practices. Another ‘sort of fanaticks’ of an antinomian stripe ‘pretend to religion’ by means of ‘libertinism and looseness in their conversation’. Indeed, ‘fools and frantick people’ had long ‘been had in honor and reverence amongst the Turks, as those whose revelations and enthusiasms transported [them] out of the ordinary temperament of humanity’.

Similarly, in the early empire, there appeared ‘a sort of phanatick Mahometans which at first met only in congregations under pretence of sermons and religion, appeared afterwards in troops armed against the Government of the Empire’. These revolutionaries saw that ‘broaching a new sect and religion’ and ‘persuading the people to something contrary to the ancient Mahometan superstition’ was the best way to ‘raise sedition’ and civil war. Their leader, Rycaut reported, ‘vented doctrines properly agreeing to the humor of the people, preaching to them freedom and liberty of conscience and the mystery of revelations’. He ‘used all arts in his persuasions, with which subjects used to be allured to a rebellion against their prince’, and the main weapon of these religious rebels was preaching. All this, Rycaut noted, showed ‘that the name of God’s cause, revelations, liberty and the like, have been old and common pretences and delusions of the world, and not only Christians, but infidels and Mahometans have wrote the name of God on their banners, and brought the pretence of religion into the field to justify their cause’.

The presence of (in Rycaut’s estimation) well over seventy sects in Ottoman Islam suggested to him that England was to be acquitted ‘from the accusation of being the most subject to religious innovations’. The Ottoman spectacle of sectarian proliferation was attributable to ‘superstitious and schismatical preachers’, and thus to popery and puritanism. ‘We might proceed’, he wrote, ‘to recite as many sects as there are towns or schools in the empire, every one of which some pragmatic preacher or other have
always started a new opinion, which can never want disciples.’ It was as if ‘the diversity of opinions in Turkey is almost infinite’. Every prospective sectmaster ‘who was but a form above a meer pedagogue, and reads a few books of the Arabian fables, esteems himself of mean account, if by some singular opinions which he instils in his disciples, he distinguishes not his gymnasia from the common and inferior schools’. In this way, Rycaut thought not simply about Islam and Ottoman Islam in general, but about division within Islam, in terms of Christian religious corruption.

Some of the Ottoman sects even seemed popish in certain respects. The adherents of one rejected the doctrine of predestination, ‘affirming that everyone is a free agent, from whose will as from the first principle all good and bad actions flow and are derived, so that as with just reason God crowns man’s good works with the rewards of bliss and felicity; so on the other side justly punished his evil actions in the world, and in the next to come’. Others argued ‘that a man fallen into any great or mortal sin, is put into the condition of a deserter of his faith; and though he be a professor of the true belief, shall yet without recovery forever be punished in hell’. Still others adopted a doctrine approaching that of purgatory, believing that ‘whosoever hath but the weight of an atom remaining in his heart of faith, shall in due time be released from the fiery torments; for which cause some sects among the Turks use prayers for the dead’. At a final extreme, some sectarians, ‘though Mahometans in profession, seem yet to run contrary to the stream and general consent of all its professors who give themselves commonly the title of enemies and confounders of idolatry’, because their men could be found ‘commonly worshipping the sun, and the women the moon, and others the Arctic pole’. In the variety of Ottoman Islam Rycaut saw reflected nearly every form of religious corruption familiar to Christians.

The eighteenth century

Rycaut’s histories had counterparts among the writings of East India Company and Church of England servants working in South Asia during the later Stuart era. Between 1696 and 1702 the physician John Fryer, the chaplain John Ovington and the ambassador William Norris all composed or published historical accounts that followed a pattern established by English scholars of the Ottoman and Moroccan empires. The Mughal world, they argued, was a theatre of popery, puritanism, priestcraft and despotism.

The author of the most vivid account of the three, Fryer, spent nearly a decade serving the East India Company in the Safavid and Mughal empires.
between 1672 and 1682. He published his New account of East-India and Persia in 1698. It described Hinduism as idolatry supported by the priestcraft of the Brahmins and the enthusiasm of monks, saints, pilgrims and ascetic impostors. Fryer was, however, far more interested in Islam. The Mughals were ‘of a more puritanical sect’ of Islam than the Persians, he said. He had witnessed the florid piety of Mughal ‘conventiclers’ and other hypocritical holy men, who professed strict religious observation but practised licentiousness. He had also observed a recent crackdown on most religious holidays by ‘a religious bigot of an emperor’, Aurangzeb, who believed that such holidays gave ‘opportunity’ to unbelievers ‘to think Muslemen favor the lewd worship of the heathens’. In this way ‘the jollity and pomp of the heathens is much allayed by the puritanism and unlimited power of the Moors’, Fryer claimed. Even among the Persians Fryer encountered ‘such strict puritans, that if they meet a Christian, Jew, or Banyan, and by chance his garment brush against him, they hye them home, shift and wash, as if they had been defiled with some unclean thing, a dog or hog; undervaluing all but their own sect, as if there were no holier creatures in the world’. Yet the Muslims of Persia and India were not wholly without popery. Some of them indulged in ‘guardian angels’, a ‘sacramental wafer’ placed in the tombs of the dead, ‘petitions’ for the dead, superstitious saints’ tombs, rosary beads, prelacy and the worship of the Prophet. Islam, Fryer argued, was perfectly outfitted for bolstering tyrannical empire in Persia and south Asia. But in its more puritanical forms, it could also prompt rebellion.

The connections between post-Reformation and orientalist stereotypes are equally obvious in accounts of Islam in general and the Ottoman empire in particular that appeared in the early eighteenth century. The literary figure and projector Aaron Hill, who lived in the Ottoman empire for four years with his relative Lord Paget, the English ambassador in Constantinople, exemplified this continuity. His Full and just account of the present state of the Ottoman empire (1709) rehearsed nearly all the supposed likenesses between Islam and both Catholicism and puritanism found in earlier works. Even the more learned and less hostile introductory material in George Sale’s 1734 English translation of the Quʾran noted both the extremism and the political utility of early Islamic beliefs in ‘absolute election and reprobation’. Sale also observed that such tenets spawned politically disruptive heresies of free will.

The movement from post-Reformation to Enlightenment, or from anti-popery and anti-puritanism to anti-priestcraft and anti-enthusiasm, solidified in the second half of the eighteenth century. In writings on South Asia, for example, explicit references to either Catholicism or radical Protestantism became rarer and rarer. It is the disappearance of these clues that has obscured the deep roots of Enlightenment orientalism.
in post-Reformation historical scholarship and led historians to assume that this form of orientalism was invented by French philosophers. Some writers on the Ottoman empire continued in the tradition of Hill and his predecessors. In his *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768), Sir James Porter observed ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘religious tyranny’ that appeared to be Muslim forms of Pelagianism and monasticism.\(^78\) Alexander Dow, an historian of South Asia, was keen to emphasise that Islam was ‘perfectly calculated for despotism’, since Muhammad ‘enslaved the mind as well as the body’. One ingredient of Mughal mind control, according to Dow, was the doctrine of ‘absolute predestination’, which had led to absolute docility in Muhammad’s followers and in more recent times pacified the subjects of Muslim tyrants. Latter-day Muslim antinomians, Dow claimed, trust ‘the whole to Providence’ and make ‘God agent in [their] very crimes’.\(^79\)

During the early period of East India Company rule in Bengal, however, Islam drew less attention than Hinduism. Writings on Hindu religion mostly relied upon the stereotypical language of priestcraft. The deist J. Z. Holwell, in an effort to unearth a ‘pure’ and ancient Hinduism, documented the corruption of contemporary Indian religion in an Enlightenment idiom that exhibited traces of Reformation polemic. He blamed the corruption of ‘the simple doctrines of Bramah’ on the Brahmins, ‘the laity thus being precluded from the knowledge of their original scriptures’. Some Brahmins, like imagined pre-Reformation proponents of vernacular Bible translations, were concerned about such attempts ‘to enslave the laity’. This, Holwell said, caused the first schisms within Hinduism. At this juncture a set of pseudo-scriptures, the Vedas, were invented by the reformers, adding another layer of corruption. ‘Priestly power’ predominated everywhere. Civil authorities recognised that political stability was threatened by princes’ dependence on religious experts and the ‘sacerdotal slavery’ those experts fostered among ordinary people. Holwell asserted that entire families and households were being turned into ‘machines’ by the Brahmins living amongst them. The haze of superstition and slavery in which they found themselves predisposed Hindus to submit to ‘the yoke of Mahommedan tyranny’, itself a providential punishment for the desecration of their once pure, native religion.\(^80\) Other writers echoed Holwell’s fundamentally anti-popish commentary on scriptural control, government of the mind, schism and ritual superstition.\(^81\) Warren Hastings, for one, likened Brahmin ‘spiritual discipline’ to ‘the religious order of Christians in the Romish Church’.\(^82\) Holwell, however, had also linked Hinduism to puritan enthusiasm and fanaticism, which was most obvious in Hindus’ devotion to *sati*.\(^83\) In the end this Enlightenment portrait of Hinduism was a combination of the stereotypical discourses of puritanical enthusiasm and popish

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\(^{77}\) A. Dow, *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768).

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\(^{79}\) Alexander Dow, *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768).

\(^{80}\) Holwell, *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768).


\(^{82}\) Holwell, *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768).

\(^{83}\) Holwell, *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners of the Turks* (1768).
libertinism and performativity. In a vivid example of the combination, Dow described mendicant philosopher enthusiasts who made use of pilgrimages, self-flagellation and erudition to render their order ‘more revered among the vulgar’.84

The process at work in all these texts was in one sense a classic case of what some social psychologists call ‘anchoring’.85 These writers were themselves seeking to understand non-Christian religions with reference to familiar categories of analysis and critique, and in their writings they provided this same form of intelligibility and largely pejorative understanding for their patrons and readers. It is also clear, however, that this process was strategic in its relation to domestic English politics. These commentaries on other religions were also clearly intended to serve as coded commentaries on the English scene. Both processes encouraged the emergence of universal stereotypes. The extension of anti-puritanism and anti-popery to Islamic contexts implied the cross-cultural applicability of core concepts of religious corruption that could be grafted onto fuller descriptions of particular societies and religions. The use of Islamic history as a parallel for English history encouraged much the same thing. The new vocabulary of priestcraft, imposture, enthusiasm and fanaticism simply rendered explicit the effect of ceaseless historical comparison. Only by adopting a global perspective and eschewing liberal and secularist assumptions can we begin to unravel the startling agility, function and persistence of stereotyping in the early Enlightenment, early modern orientalism and post-Restoration public discourse.

Notes

3 For the wide range of functions served by post-Reformation stereotypes, see the two final sections of this chapter and pp. 15–25 above.
4 This chapter cannot discuss similar uses of non-Christian religions in earlier Protestant polemics against Catholics and radical Protestants, but a convenient and excellent discussion of European uses of Islam and the Ottoman empire is available in Noel Malcolm, *Useful enemies: Islam and the Ottoman empire in Western political thought, 1450–1750* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 76–103.


7 These developments can be incorporated within the general account available in Malcolm, *Useful enemies*. This work, in its treatment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tends to emphasise more radical currents of thought and (accordingly) to see ‘orthodox’ accounts as fundamentally unchanged from earlier periods.


10 Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, ch. 3.


20 Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*.

On fanaticism and enthusiasm see anon., *A breif description or character of the religion and manners of the phanatiques in generall* (London, 1660); Meric Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasm* (London, 1654).

For numerous other examples and a discussion that partly overlaps with the content of this chapter, see Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*; Bulman, ‘From anti-puritanism and anti-p popery to orientalism’; Bulman, ‘Publicity and popery on the Restoration stage’. For additional, related, primary materials see Lancelot Addison, *The first state of Mahumeadism* (London, 1678); Lancelot Addison, *West Barbary* (Oxford, 1671); Lancelot Addison, *The present state of the Jews* (London, 1675); Francis Osborne, *Politicall reflections on the government of the Turks* (London, 1656).


Anderson, in *English consul*, p. 20, appears to mistake such professions of irenicism for liberalism when she makes a series of misleading and undocumented references to Rycaut’s ‘passionate belief in religious toleration’.

Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*, sig. a2r.

Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*, sig. a2v.


Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*, sig. a2v.

Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*, sig. a3r.

Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*, sig. a3r–a4v.

Rycaut, ‘The preface’, *Greek and Armenian churches*.

See e.g. Anderson, *Rycaut*, p. 269.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 97.

Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 104.

Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, pp. 97, 105.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 106.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 112. See also p. 129.

Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 158.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 144.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 105. See also pp. 115–16.


Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 115.
Stereotypes and stereotyping

54 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 126.
55 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 126.
57 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, pp. 128, 135.
58 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 128.
59 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 123.
60 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 130.
61 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, pp. 135–43.
63 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 150.
64 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 116.
65 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 127. See also p. 135.
66 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 123.
67 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 135.
68 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 128.
69 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 125.
70 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 126.
71 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 126.
72 Rycaut, *Ottoman empire*, p. 132.
76 Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present state of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1733 edn), pp. 37–42, 45, 47–9, 51, 54–6, 58–60. See also Thomas Shaw, *Travels, or observations relating to several parts of Barbary and the Levant* (Oxford, 1738).
From Reformation to Enlightenment orientalism


