

Religion has never exercised such concentrated strength in the New Empire as it put forth in the Old, never so much in the Old Empire after 1660 as before. This does not mean unmixed praise for the earlier years of the Old Empire as compared with later times. There is the criticism to be made that the driving power of religion in England was greatest when it was most directed to enmity and severance, and when there was least toleration. But the same might be said with equal truth of all countries and, whether religion made for good or harm, there can be no doubt as to its strength as a driving force in the Empire prior to 1660. It may have been the perpetual antagonism of Protestant sects to one another over and above their standing antagonism to popery, which diverted their attention from the duty of preaching the Gospel to the heathen. This was the greatest sin of omission in the Old Empire, as trade was the source of its greatest positive crimes.