

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

DEFINED BY WHAT WE ARE NOT:
THE ROLE OF ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN THE FORMATION
OF EARLY AMERICAN IDENTITY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF HISTORY

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LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

APRIL 2012

Introduction

While touring America during the early 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville reflected upon the religious character of the young country. As he described America's founding, he captured the interconnection between the country's Protestant piety and political system: "Most of English America has been peopled by men who, having shaken off the authority of the Pope, acknowledged no other religious supremacy; they brought, therefore, into the New World a form of Christianity which I can only describe as democratic and republican. . . . From the start, politics and religion were in agreement and have continued to be so ever since."¹ While people widely acknowledge that America was founded by people seeking religious freedom, many fail to recognize the fundamentally Protestant and largely anti-Catholic character of this undertaking.

The pervasiveness of anti-Catholicism in early America and the dramatic scenes it produced prompt reflections on this frequently overlooked influence on national development. Hanging an unpopular politician or tax collector in effigy and tarring and feathering were both Revolutionary protests that have become familiar images of America's early history. However, before the colonists protested their British government, they had years of practice publicly protesting Catholicism on Pope's Day. Each November 5, Englishmen in the mother country and in her colonies paraded papal effigies and carts through the streets, celebrating the preservation of English Protestantism as they vilified Catholicism.²

Another evidence of widespread anti-Catholicism was the refusal to observe the December 25 holiday. Consistent with Puritan piety that considered holidays to be Catholic

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 336.

² Brendan McConville presents Pope's Day and the anti-Catholicism it represented as fundamental features of British imperial identity in colonial America in "Pope's Day Revisited, 'Popular' Culture Reconsidered," *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4 (Jan. 2000): 258-280 and *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

perversions, many American Protestants refused to celebrate Christmas as late as the nineteenth century.³ Lamenting the small number of New York City churches open on December 25, 1840, George Templeton Strong criticized “the Papaphobic dissenters” for refusing to celebrate what they considered “a relic of popery.”⁴ Perhaps most striking to the modern American would be the Protestant aversion to using the cross as a Christian symbol. Anti-Catholic rioting that tore through Philadelphia in May 1844 provided a striking example of opposition to the cross as a fundamentally Catholic symbol. As flames engulfed the St. Augustine Catholic Church, rioters outside expressed great satisfaction as the fire finally destroyed the cross atop the church. While all Protestants certainly did not share in this kind of anti-Catholic violence, most denominations carried on the Reformation tradition of repudiating vestiges of Catholicism. For many, this entailed a rejection of all ornamentation, including such things church decoration and vestments as well as crosses.⁵ Parading papal effigies, refusing to celebrate Christmas, and rejecting the use of the cross were all indications of the widespread influence of anti-Catholicism in Protestant America.

The initial inspiration for this study on the role of anti-Catholicism in shaping American identity came from a reading of Brendan McConville’s *The King’s Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776*. Defining the “political culture” between the Glorious Revolution and the Declaration of Independence as “decidedly monarchical and imperial,

³ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39.

⁴ George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong: Young Man in New York, 1835-1849*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 154.

⁵ Ryan K. Smith, *Gothic Arches, Latin Crosses: Anti-Catholicism and American Church Designs in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-2, 6. Smith presents a compelling argument that the popularity of Gothic design in Protestant religious spaces during the mid-nineteenth century emerged as a response to the profound growth of the American Catholic Church. By assimilating many of the material aspects of Catholicism, such as architecture, symbolism, and decoration, into their own Protestant worship, they sought to utilize effective features of Catholicism, while undermining its influence (10).

Protestant and virulently anti-Catholic, almost to the moment of American independence,” McConville emphasizes that colonial Americans understood their identity in terms of their English heritage.⁶ Focusing on the symbolism imbedded in words and actions, McConville shows widespread colonial participation in what he calls the “cult of Protestant monarchy.”⁷ Conflicts between Protestantism and Catholicism had profoundly shaped English religious and national identity, and Americans largely adopted the oppositional, conspiratorial outlook of the English Whigs.⁸ The fear that Catholic influence would bring the end of liberty remained an enduring feature of American anti-Catholicism.

Two insightful overviews of the history of the Catholic Church in America are Jay Dolan’s *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (1985) and James Hennesey, S.J. *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (1981), both of which focus on Catholic laity. Understanding the internal challenges to American Catholicism and the experiences of ordinary parishioners as their church established itself in Protestant America provides important context.⁹ Ray Allen Billington’s *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (1938) remains a standard resource for an overview of anti-Catholic sentiment through the antebellum period as it tracks the changing issues and rhetorical shifts. His work is rich in primary sources and serves as a kind of guidebook for further study. While Billington highlights key episodes of anti-Catholicism, his study remains general at points and offers little comment

⁶ McConville, *The King’s Three Faces*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸ Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992), 33-34, 45-46.

⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985); James Hennesey, S.J. *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

on the examples of cooperation between Protestants and Catholics.¹⁰

While addressing points of contention between Protestants and Catholics, Margaret C. DePalma also emphasizes examples of cooperation, using *Dialogue on the Frontier: Catholic and Protestant Relations, 1793-1883* (2004) to lend greater balance to the study of anti-Catholicism. She illustrates that Catholic and Protestant relations were not uniformly wrought with conflict in the West. Rather they exhibited a mixture of collaboration and confrontation, especially as Catholics and Protestants needed to depend on each other in the settlement of the region.¹¹ Regional studies aid in revealing common experiences throughout the country while also highlighting variations in anti-Catholic sentiment.

While studying the West offers examples of cooperation, examining New England Puritanism points to the region's widespread antagonism against Catholicism and its influence on national sentiment. In *Necessary Virtue: The Pragmatic Origins of Religious Liberty in New England* (1998), Charles Hanson presents anti-Catholicism as a fundamental part of New England's Puritan identity that it lost through the alliance with Catholic France during the American Revolution. Although New Englanders struggled to reconcile Catholic alliance with their religious integrity, Hanson observes that their progress toward greater religious toleration revealed "a deep strain of pragmatism in the Glorious Cause."¹² Similarly, Francis D. Cogliano's *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (1995) charts the evolution of New England's anti-popery as the American colonies declared independence and formed their own government. Explaining anti-popery as a key part of their English

¹⁰ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1938).

¹¹ Margaret C. DePalma, *Dialogue on the Frontier: Catholic and Protestant Relations, 1793-1883* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2004).

¹² Charles P. Hanson, *Necessary Virtue: The Pragmatic Origins of Religious Liberty in New England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 4.

nationalism and “an important intellectual source for the American Revolution,” he presents post-revolutionary New England as defined by relative toleration as well as the persistence of anti-popery.¹³

Studies of nineteenth-century anti-Catholic discourse and literature clearly demonstrate the persistence of the sentiment in American culture. Jody Roy’s *Rhetorical Campaigns of the 19th Century Anti-Catholics and Catholics in America* (1999) addresses the exchanges between Protestants and Catholics, discussing anti-Catholic convent literature, conspiracy theories, and political discourse.¹⁴ In *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (1994), Jenny Franchot analyzes fictional literature, attempting to enter the intellectual framework of nineteenth-century Protestants, who worked to unite America’s national character with their own religious identity. Instead of focusing on the overt anti-Catholicism of nativists, Franchot shows how Americans interacted with Catholicism through such mediums as travel, historical accounts, artwork, and fiction, all of which helped shape their impressions of the religion.¹⁵

From their British heritage, Americans had inherited anti-Catholicism as a fundamental part of political culture, and in the nineteenth century, that sentiment further shaped America’s newly formed republic. In *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (2011), Elizabeth A. Fenton presents the sentiment as central to the development of American government, arguing that the country

¹³ Francis D. Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Jody Roy, *Rhetorical Campaigns of the 19th Century Anti-Catholics and Catholics in America* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

gained its liberal identity by articulating opposition to Catholicism.¹⁶ Similarly, Philip Hamburger argues that anti-Catholicism played a central role in shaping notions of American religious liberty. In *Separation of Church and State* (2002), he explains that “the idea of separation did not become popular until the mid-nineteenth century, when opponents of Catholicism—many of them nativists—depicted it as a principle of government evident in most American constitutions, even if it was not guaranteed by these documents.”¹⁷ As Englishmen, American colonists understood their identity based largely upon their opposition to Catholicism, and even after establishing their own independent country, anti-Catholicism continued to shape notions of American liberty.

This oppositional identity meant that the ideals of American liberal democracy differed greatly from those of Catholic tradition. An engaging survey of the development of the American Catholic Church, including its developing character and emerging challenges, is Chester Gillis’s *Roman Catholicism in America* (1999).¹⁸ Jay Dolan’s *In Search of American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (2002) examines Catholicism and Americanism as what he calls “two cultures, two traditions.”¹⁹ Surveying American history from the late eighteenth century to the present-day, he highlights the influence of Americanism, or “modernity,” on Catholicism, which Americans often viewed as a retrogressive element in their progressive society.²⁰ Presenting a similar contrast in *Catholicism and American Freedom: A*

¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Fenton, *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 10.

¹⁸ Chester Gillis, *Roman Catholicism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

History (2003), John McGreevy tracks “the interplay between Catholic and American ideas of freedom” from the nineteenth century to the present as he characterizes Protestant and Catholic confrontations as conflicts between liberalism and Catholic tradition.²¹ Each of these texts highlights the countercultural nature of Catholicism within American society. Viewing the nation’s development and the growth of the American Catholic Church reveals the difficult pursuit of national religious harmony.

From the colonial era through the mid-nineteenth century, anti-Catholicism colored key points of development in America’s early history. Amidst the English colonial experience, the Revolution and establishment of the republic, and the educational reform efforts of the nineteenth-century, anti-Catholicism emerged as a fundamental factor in the development of America’s characteristically Protestant political and religious identity. While many studies of early American anti-Catholicism focus on one region or time period, drawing connections across geographic boundaries and constructed historical periods attests to the sentiment’s pervasive and enduring influence. While this sentiment varied in intensity throughout America over time, its presence profoundly shaped the country’s cultural orientation. Americans tended to believe that their emphasis on simplicity, egalitarianism, and independence were irreconcilable with the Catholic Church’s ornamentation, hierarchy, and foreign authority. This contrast in cultural values challenged relations between Protestants and Catholics, often inspiring anti-Catholic sentiment as Americans sought to define and preserve their developing national identity.

Although this study extends through the mid-nineteenth century, the characterization of contrasting values survives in the modern day. Anti-Catholicism endured and intensified as America transitioned into the twentieth century, continuing to receive large numbers of Catholic

²¹ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 14.

immigrants into her fold. Not unlike the dramatic Pope's Day processions, the Kennedy quarters of 1960 illustrate the persistence of anti-Catholicism as an influential theme in American culture. Appearing in newspapers around the country on December 10, 1960, an Associated Press report announced that "strange red-and-silver quarters featuring George Washington dressed as a Roman Catholic cardinal are being widely circulated in some parts of the country. . . ." Using red enamel or tape, the creators of this anti-Catholic currency gave Washington Catholic vestments, including the characteristic red cap and cassock, in protest of Kennedy's upcoming inauguration. The Bureau the Mint explained that the government had not discovered a single group responsible for this defacement, which was not illegal but could require the Treasury Department to recoin the red quarters.²² The conviction that Catholic influence on American government would bring subjection and corruption remained from America's founding to modern times. Examining the role of anti-Catholicism in the country's early history demonstrates how this sentiment informed the development of American political culture.

Chapter one examines the anti-Catholicism of the English colonial experience, highlighting the American appeals to their Protestant identity as they opposed the Quebec Act of 1774. As Englishmen, Protestants in the American colonies inherited a long history of strife with Catholicism. Especially after the unequivocal declaration of England's Protestantism through the Glorious Revolution, colonists feared Catholicism and sought to maintain vigilance against Catholic threats to their liberty. However, as relations between the American colonies and the mother country experienced growing strain, colonists often appealed to their English Protestant identity in defense of their rights. Contributing to this growing discontentment with

²² Associated Press, "COINS DOCTORED: Washington 'Dressed Up' As Cardinal on Quarters," *Owosso Argus-Press*, December 10, 1960; Associated Press, "Coins Show Washington As Cardinal," *Lawrence Journal-World*, December 10, 1960; Associated Press, "Coins Slam at Religion of Kennedy," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, December 10, 1960; Associated Press, "Washington Disguised as Prelate on Coins: Prank Creates 'Kennedy Quarters,'" *Eugene Register-Guard*, December 10, 1960.

England was the Quebec Act in which the British government granted Canadian Catholics significant political and religious freedom. Remembering the many threats that Britain had faced from the Catholic foes, France and Spain, the Continental Congress expressed shock that their government would simply deliver the American colonies, unprotected, to a Catholic menace. This period of tension with the mother country proved to be a transitional time for American attitudes toward Catholicism. While anti-Catholicism informed colonial complaints against Britain, the American colonists also began to consider whether the threat of British tyranny might not be even greater than that of their Catholic neighbors. Even as the Continental Congress opposed the Quebec Act, they simultaneously appealed to Canadian Catholics for support in opposing Britain. While the American Revolution was partially inspired by anti-Catholic fervor, it also challenged deep-seated anti-Catholic sentiments among the American people as the exigencies of wartime compelled them to seek alliance with Catholics.

Chapter two focuses on the transitional period of fighting the War for Independence and establishing a new independent republic, which propelled Americans toward granting greater religious toleration to Catholics. While the Continental Congress failed in multiple attempts to garner Canadian support in the War for Independence, the 1778 alliance with Catholic France exhibited America's useful toleration of Catholicism to achieve its larger aims. Working together to fight for independence and then establish their new country fostered a kind of shared national spirit, even while some restrictions on Catholic political activities remained. Although the Constitution forbade a national religious establishment, the predominantly Protestant population lent a distinctly Protestant character to the developing country. Through large scale immigration during the nineteenth century, the Catholic population soon experienced exponential growth, a phenomenon that severely tested the American commitment to religious liberty for all.

Chapter three addresses conflict between Protestants and Catholics in the realm of education. Guided by the nineteenth century's spirit of reform, Protestants took up the cause of education, believing that virtuous instruction was the essential means for safeguarding the republic and its liberties. To revivalist Lyman Beecher, the influence of Catholics on the education of the West proved to threaten liberty; therefore, he sought to further Protestant influence in the West, employing harsh anti-Catholic rhetoric to win support for his endeavor. For common school advocates, a nonsectarian Protestant curriculum using the King James Bible seemed to be the ideal educational model for teaching a common national identity. However, the growing Catholic population faced inequity in an educational system that disparaged their faith and forbade their religious practices at school.

While American political culture espoused ideals of religious toleration, the anti-Catholicism of its early history reveal that this toleration had its limits. Since the colonial era, America had been populated almost solely by Protestants. Even by the mid-nineteenth century, the Catholic population's significant growth still left them far behind the Protestant majority. While the New World represented a place of religious freedom for its early settlers, these people were nearly all Protestants who carried with them a strong aversion to the Catholicism of the Old World. Establishing a fundamentally Protestant society, Americans embraced the ideal of religious toleration, largely understanding this concept as it applied to interactions among various Protestant denominations. As greater numbers of Catholics arrived in America, they requested an equal share of religious liberty, forcing Protestants to consider how these newcomers and their faith would affect American culture. Since Catholicism seemed to embody the very Old World values American Protestants had abandoned, efforts to preserve liberty against the corrupting influences challenged the country's ideal of religious toleration.

Chapter 1

Sharing in “the same fair inheritance”: Anti-Catholicism in the English Colonial Experience

In October 1774, members of the Continental Congress expressed dismay as they reflected on what would cause their own nation of Great Britain, which had been “led to greatness by the hand of Liberty,” to perform “the ungrateful task of forging chains for her Friends and Children,” becoming an “advocate for Slavery and Oppression.”¹ In this petition to their fellow Englishmen, the delegates framed their complaints in an appeal to nationalism. They identified themselves as “we, who are descended from the same common ancestors . . . whose forefathers participated in all the rights, the liberties, and the constitution . . . who have carefully conveyed the same fair inheritance to us,” as they justified their objections.² Among the recent events that signaled colonial American captivity was the Quebec Act, which granted concessions to Canadian Catholics and in the colonists’ minds, amounted to Parliament’s establishment of a violent, unholy religion.³ The delegates’ strong opposition to the Quebec Act illustrates the centrality of anti-Catholicism in articulating English, and soon afterward American, identity.

To understand why the Quebec Act created such a stir merits a reflection on the close connection between national and religious identity in the English historical consciousness. From the time of the English Reformation through the late seventeenth century, England’s national religious character changed in accordance with the varied convictions of her monarchs.

Swinging from Catholicism to Protestantism under their reigns created an uncertain environment

¹ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1904-37), 1774, 1:82.

² *Ibid.*, 1:82.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:83.

for religious groups in England. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution's guarantee of a Protestant monarch, England assumed the character of a distinctly Protestant country whose people learned to equate national stability with the absence of Catholicism. Thus, in protesting the Quebec Act, the Continental Congress sounded thoroughly English as they made arguments reminiscent of Whig political rhetoric. In appealing for their rights, many colonists came to view their mother country as a greater threat to liberty than even the Catholics of Canada or France and ultimately sought the aid of both during the War for Independence. To understand the influential role of anti-Catholicism in shaping early American identity, one must examine colonial American life in the context of key events that affected the larger English empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Three factors during this period fundamentally shaped early American anti-Catholic sentiment: the settlement of the colonies amidst religious instability in England, the challenges to Protestant England internally and internationally, and the American appeal to English identity in protesting their government.

Long before they defined themselves as Americans independent of England, most colonists understood their identity in light of a distinctly Protestant historical consciousness. From the time of King Henry VIII's renunciation of Rome in 1533, years of religious instability ensued and formed the context for the English settlement of North America. Between the ascension of Edward VI in 1547 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, England experienced significant political flux and drastic changes in religious toleration. This volatile period convinced Englishmen of the close connection between their political and religious identity.⁴

Literature preserved, spread, and reinforced the memory of religious conflict. After England's break from the Catholic Church in the 1530s, the reign of Henry's Catholic daughter

⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 18-19.

Mary witnessed the reinstatement of Catholicism as the religion of the realm. Although Anglicans and Dissenters differed in the extent to which they altered or abolished Catholic doctrines and practices, they shared the conviction that the Roman Catholic Church represented religious corruption. Ruling from 1553 until her death in 1558, Mary forced Protestants to flee England or face persecution. After England's return to Protestantism under Elizabeth I, John Foxe published his expansive account of persecution entitled *Book of Martyrs, containing an account of the sufferings and death of Protestants in the reign of Queen Mary* (1563). When republished in 1732 in thirty-one installments, this book became accessible to a broader audience than ever before and became an integral part of home libraries. Foxe's book proved influential not only in strengthening the connection between religious and political threats in England but also stirred members of the various Protestant groups with stories of ordinary Christians who faced martyrdom for their beliefs.⁵

Later during the reign of Charles II, the Puritan preacher John Bunyan penned the *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) while imprisoned for his non-conformist religious activities. Bunyan framed the Protestant struggle against Catholicism in allegorical terms as he sought to illustrate the negative influence of Catholicism on social order. He soundly criticized Catholicism when he described the arrival of his main character, Christian, at the cave of Pope and Pagan, a dwelling surrounded by human carnage. He explained that throughout history the "power and tyranny" of these two characters perpetrated this violence, but he assured his readers of Christian's safety because Pagan had already died and Pope no longer had any power.⁶ By suggesting that paganism and Catholicism dwelt together and had the same destructive influence

⁵Colley, *Britons*, 25-28; Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 35-39.

⁶ John Bunyan, *The Annotated Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 81-82; Colley, *Britons*, 28.

on the world, Bunyan clearly implied that the practices of Catholicism differed little from superstitious pagan ritual, an observation that many English colonists made regarding the acceptance of Catholicism by the Indians in North America. While uniting the baneful influences of paganism and popery for his readers, Bunyan also considered Catholicism a self-defeating system. These works by Foxe and Bunyan gained wide influence and proved instrumental in disseminating and perpetuating anti-Catholic sentiment in England and her American colonies.

Establishing its first permanent settlement in North America at Jamestown in 1607, England entered New World colonization during a century that would profoundly shape its people's perspectives on their identity. Over the course of the seventeenth century, England experienced regicide, rumors of Catholic threats, and revolution. Initiated in 1603 with the ascension of James I, the Stuart dynasty witnessed several key events that helped mold the country's religious and political character, including the production of the Protestant King James Bible, the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, the tumultuous events of the English Civil War and subsequent Restoration of 1660, and the last Catholic monarch in England.⁷ Throughout the growth of early America, one can observe the lasting legacy of these seventeenth-century events on attitudes about the place of Catholicism in America.

With Catholic foes in France and Spain and, at times, in their own monarchs, Protestant Englishmen commemorated their preservation against Catholic threats and sought to inspire vigilance against any potential Catholic incursions.⁸ The infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, believed to be a plan for bringing a Protestant England back into the Catholic fold, furnished

⁷ For more on the significance of the Protestant King James Bible in American anti-Catholicism, see chapter 3.

⁸ Colley, *Britons*, 19-20.

Englishmen with a holiday upon which to celebrate their country's Protestantism. The thwarted plot involved the efforts of five conspirators, one of which was the now legendary Guy Fawkes, to attack the House of Lords and kill James I on the State Opening Day, November 5, 1605. As the foiling of the plot spared James' life, he declared November 5 a day of thanksgiving, which Anglican churches would observe with special services each year.⁹ This holiday evolved into a day of festivity that vividly affirmed England's Protestantism, being commemorated in England and in the American colonies.

In a Protestant England, the terms *Romish*, *Papist*, and *Popery* served as common insults meant to deride persons or things even slightly resembling Catholicism. Consequently, one may wonder how Catholics could find a place in the English settlements in North America. While events under the Stuarts contributed to the growth of anti-Catholicism in the realm, this period did provide English Catholics with the opportunity to have their share in the New World. Although many colonists did travel to America seeking religious liberty, one must remember that the liberty sought was generally for specific groups dissenting from the established church while excluding people of other faiths from its provisions. While the founding documents of the colonies attest to the advancement of Christianity as a central aim, the Anglicans, the various Dissenter groups, and the Roman Catholics each held their own interpretations of how to exercise pure Christianity in the New World. Existing in varying degrees in colonies such as Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, religious toleration often had its limits, sometimes requiring assent to particular Christian tenets, permitting private but not public practice for some groups, and preventing non-conformists from participating in colonial government.

⁹ UK Parliament Website, Living Heritage: The Gunpowder Plot, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/parliamentaryauthority/the-gunpowder-plot-of-1605/> (accessed December 6, 2011).

Since Maryland is often thought of as America's Catholic colony, a survey of its founding and early history provides an insightful perspective on the limits of religious liberty in early America. By the 1630s, English Catholics, like their Protestant countrymen, had experienced drastic changes in status since the time of their country's Reformation. While Mary had favored her fellow Catholics, the reign of her sister, Elizabeth, suppressed them. Many Catholic scholars went into exile in France, where they produced a vernacular Bible meant to strengthen persecuted Catholics.¹⁰ The beginning of the Stuart reign in 1603 seemed to promise greater freedom for Catholics in England. Although events such as the Gunpowder Plot and the demands of public sentiment restricted religious toleration at times, Catholics could abide in England in relative peace and growing prosperity during the reigns of James I and Charles I.

Knighthood in 1617 by James I and later called the Baron of Baltimore, George Calvert, a convert to Catholicism in the 1620s, actively supported New World colonization. His efforts enabled the settlement of Maryland. From Charles I, Calvert received permission to colonize Maryland, named for the king's Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria. Although George Calvert died in April 1632 before the Charter of Maryland was finalized, the document passed to his son, Cecil Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore. Cecil Calvert accepted the task of promoting colonization as a profit-making venture in a climate of religious toleration.¹¹ Perhaps the New World could be an environment capable of fostering religious harmony that proved elusive in the Old World.

¹⁰ Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 70-71. For more on the production of the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible, see chapter 3.

¹¹ George Calvert was a stockholder in the Virginia Company, a member of the Council of New England, and the leader of an attempted settlement in Newfoundland during the 1620s. After finding the Newfoundland climate inhospitable, he became interested in Virginia but was concerned about intolerance of Catholicism there. Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 71-73; John Tracy Ellis, *Catholics in Colonial America* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965), 325-326.

Issued in June 1632, the Charter of Maryland praised the Second Lord Baltimore for “being animated with a laudable, and pious Zeal for extending the Christian Religion, and also the Territories of our Empire” even though many English Protestants likely questioned whether the Catholic Calvert would indeed spread true Christianity. As part of his proprietorship, Calvert personally owned the colony’s land, possessed authority over the administration of its government, and even received the responsibility of having churches built to serve the needs of his colony.¹² In spite of the great potential this Catholic-led venture promised to afford English Catholics, an environment of relative toleration and the prospect of social advancement under Charles I meant that of the 140 people who sailed on the *Ark* and the *Dove* as Maryland’s first settlers, the majority of them were Protestant.¹³ Leonard Calvert, brother of the Second Lord Baltimore and a fellow Catholic, served as the first proprietary governor, receiving the responsibility of guiding this diverse group in their journey and settlement. Remaining in England, the Second Lord Baltimore advised his brother that Maryland Catholics should “suffer no scandal or offense” toward Protestants and ought to practice the Catholic faith “as privately as may be” and avoid religious disputes.¹⁴ The aim of promoting harmony between Catholics and Protestants did not hinder the Catholic settlers from endeavoring to spread their faith to the natives of the New World, as had been the goal of Spanish and French Catholics that preceded them.

Among the Catholic minority on board was Father Andrew White, one of three Jesuits who started the journey in November 1633. Father White recorded his thankfulness for God’s

¹² The Charter of Maryland (1632), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/ma01.asp (accessed December 5, 2010).

¹³ Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 69-73.

¹⁴ “Lord Baltimore’s Instructions to the Pioneers of Maryland, November 15, 1633,” in *Catholics in Colonial Law*, ed. Francis X. Curran, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1963), 19.

mercy amidst the perils of their voyage, his observations of the fruitful land in which they settled, and their interactions with the native peoples he hoped to convert. His description of the voyagers' arrival at St. Clement's Island on March 25, 1634 reveals the Catholic piety that influenced their undertaking:

in this place on our b: [blessed] Ladies day in lent [Feast of the Annunciation], we first offered [mass], erected a crosse, and with devotion tooke solempne possession of the Country: here our governour was aduised not to settle him-selfe, till he spoake with the emperour of Pascatoway, and told him the cause of his comeing (to wit) to teach them a divine doctrine, whereby to lead them to heaven, and to enrich with such ornaments of civill life as our owne country abounded withal. . . .¹⁵

Although initially fearful of these settlers, the natives soon showed gracious hospitality by dwelling with them in peace and offering them lodging. Father White concluded his account with optimism for the future prosperity of Maryland and for the betterment of the natives' lives through Christianity.¹⁶

Cooperating in the settlement of Maryland, Protestants and Catholics dwelt together in this New World experiment in religious toleration. Dated 1638, the Act for Church Liberties promised freedom of worship, saying "that Holy Church within this Province shall have all her rights liberties and immunities safe whole and inviolable in all things."¹⁷ Political upheavals in the larger empire, particularly the English Civil War, challenged this arrangement.

With the victory of the Puritan Parliamentarians bringing Charles I's execution in January 1649, the Second Lord Baltimore submitted several proposals to the Maryland Assembly, one of which was An Act Concerning Religion. As approved by the Maryland

¹⁵ Andrew White, *A Briefe Relation of the Voyage Unto Maryland*. Archives of Maryland Online. Vol. 552. 18-19. <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000552/html/index.html> (accessed December 7, 2011).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-24.

¹⁷ Act for Religious Liberties, Maryland (1638), The Forum at the Online Library of Liberty: A project of the Liberty Fund, Inc., http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1046&Itemid=264 (accessed December 7, 2011).

Assembly in September 1649, this act opened with a declaration that “in a well governed and Christian Common Wealth matters concerning Religion and the honor of God ought in the first place to bee taken, into serious consideracion and endeavoured to bee settled.” This act sought to protect things sacred to both Protestants and Catholics, including respect for the name of God, the members of the Trinity, “the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of our Saviour,” the Apostles, and the Evangelists by imposing serious penalties for any violations. Furthermore, it proscribed any derogatory references to a person on account of his religion including such terms as “heritick,” “Idolator,” “puritan,” “Jesuited papist,” and “Separatist” and required reverence for the Sabbath. Acknowledging that negative effects of “the inforceing of the conscience in matters of Religion,” the act proclaimed that no one “professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any waies troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect to his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof . . . nor in any way compelled to the beleife or exercise of any other Religion against his or her consent. . . .”¹⁸ During Oliver Cromwell’s Commonwealth, a Puritan-led Maryland government repealed this toleration act, but the Restoration of Charles II saw the return of Maryland’s 1649 provisions, which remained until the Glorious Revolution.¹⁹

Restored to the throne in 1660, Charles II sought conciliation throughout the realm. While this impulse inspired him to promise greater religious toleration, Parliament resisted his efforts and instead worked to strengthen Anglicanism, restricting the political participation and religious activities of non-conformists. Charles’ brother, James the duke of York and Albany, served as lord high admiral and close advisor to the restored king but proved a highly

¹⁸ Maryland Toleration Act (September 21, 1649), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/maryland_toleracion.asp, (accessed December 7, 2011).

¹⁹Curran, *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 29-31; Edward Papenfuse, Jr., “Two Acts of Toleration: 1649 and 1826,” in *An Act Concerning Religion, 1649: An Interpretation and Tribute to the Citizen Legislators of Maryland* (Annapolis: Maryland State Archives, 1999), <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc2200/sc2221/000025/html/toleration.html> (accessed December 7, 2011).

controversial figure for his religious loyalties. In the late 1660s, James converted to Catholicism, and in 1673, he resigned from his political positions instead of submitting to the Test Act, which would have forced him to deny his faith. In 1673, Charles II was still without a legitimate heir when James married the Catholic Mary of Modena. These circumstances inspired the panic surrounding the 1678 Popish Plot, a conspiracy theory that James would assassinate his brother to take the throne and make England Catholic. In 1679, Parliamentary factions struggled over the exclusion of James from royal succession, and the two sides assigned the derogatory names, *Whig* and *Tory* to characterize their enemies' position. Those who fought to exclude James received the label of *Whigs*, suggesting their insurgency, while those favoring natural succession, gained the designation of *Tories*, implying that they were Catholic criminals. In the face of strong opposition, James ascended the throne upon Charles' death in 1685, but persistent fears over Catholic power ultimately led to the Glorious Revolution.

The policies enacted by James II combined with international events to heighten anti-Catholicism. He was dedicated to seeing the repeal of the Test Acts and placing Catholics in leadership roles. Concurrently, in 1685, Louis XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes. By ending the toleration accorded to French Protestants, Louis's action prompted an exodus of Huguenots. This seemed to justify English condemnations of French Catholicism and inspired many American colonists to protest the plight of their French Protestant brethren.²⁰ Before 1688, James' only heirs were his two Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne; however, in June, his Catholic wife bore a son. The political environment created by these alarming events led to invitation for William of Orange to invade England, prompting James to flee. In the wake of

²⁰ Thomas Kidd, "Recovering 'The French Convent': Views of the French and the Uses of Anti-Catholicism in Early America," *Book History* 7 (2004): 100.

James' flight, the House of Commons offered this justification for placing James' Protestant daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange as joint monarchs:

Resolved, That King James the Second, having endeavoured to subvert the Constitution of this Kingdom, by breaking the Original Contract between King and People; and, by the Advice of Jesuits, and other wicked Persons, having violated the fundamental Laws; and having withdrawn himself out of the Kingdom; has abdicated the Government; and that the Throne is thereby vacant.²¹

The English Bill of Rights of 1689 declared that “it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a popish prince, or by any king or queen marrying a papist” and stipulated that from henceforth Roman Catholics could not govern England.²² The injustice enacted by the Louis XIV of France and the events of the Glorious Revolution firmly entrenched Protestantism in English identity throughout the empire.

The 1689 coronations of William and Mary initiated the tradition for English monarchs to participate in ceremonies rich with Protestant symbols and declarations.²³ Coinciding with the avowed Protestantism of these monarchs was the development of the imagery memorializing the failure of the Gunpowder Plot. Over time, the November 5 observance had transformed into Pope's Day, an occasion to celebrate the triumph of the Protestant English over Catholicism. Decrees issued throughout the 1660s had placed Pope's Day on colonial American calendars, providing the occasion for memorial sermons and papal effigies.²⁴ Raised to equal importance with the royal birthday and coronation celebrations, Pope's Day, was one of the three holidays

²¹*House of Commons Journal*, Vol. 10: 1688-1693 (January 28, 1689): 14. British History Online. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=28740> (accessed February 10, 2012).

²²An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown, *English Bill of Rights* (1689). The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/england.asp (accessed February 10, 2012).

²³ Colley, *Britons*, 46-48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-22; McConville, *The King's Three Faces*, 56-63.

declared at the beginning of William and Mary's rule.²⁵ By the late-seventeenth century, even the Puritan New Englanders, who generally opposed following a calendar of church holidays, came to participate in memorializing anti-Catholicism.²⁶ Parading Catholic effigies through the streets proved a vivid way to celebrating triumph over popery throughout the mother country and in the American colonies. In addition to Protestant imagery, William and Mary issued a policy of religious toleration that extended only to Protestants. While the Toleration Act of 1689 made some accommodations for Protestant Dissenters, it specifically excluded "any papist or popish recusant" from its benefits.²⁷

As affirmations of English Protestant identity strengthened, power shifts occurred in royal and proprietary governments, usurpers challenged the Protestant monarchy, and Catholics experienced greater restrictions on their religious and political activities.²⁸ In Maryland, John Coode led a group of rebels called the Protestant Association, who aimed to dismantle the Catholic proprietorship. In November 1689, the rebels demanded that Catholics be unable to hold governmental or military positions in the colony. By 1692, Maryland had become a royal colony and remained so until the proprietorship was restored in 1715.²⁹

While the Glorious Revolution of 1688 did clearly define England as a Protestant country, the eighteenth century brought challenges to that identity both internally and

²⁵ McConville, *The King's Three Faces*, 64. "The founding of the College of William and Mary spurred the celebration of November 5 in Virginia. Because the college's primary patrons had landed at Torbay on November 5, 1688, that day (which was also celebrated as William III's birthday) became a triple holiday at the school." McConville, "Pope's Day Revisited," 261.

²⁶ McConville, "Pope's Day Revisited," 260-261.

²⁷ Toleration Act of William and Mary (May 24, 1689), in *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 60-61.

²⁸ Curran, *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 62-67.

²⁹ "Maryland Catholics Excluded from Office, November 22, 1689," in *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 65. When the Lord Baltimore's son converted to the Church of England in 1714, the Calverts regained the proprietorship. Pauline Maier, *The Old Revolutionaries: Political Lives in the Age of Samuel Adams* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 206.

internationally. Although the placement of William and Mary was meant to guarantee a Protestant monarchy, the Stuart Pretenders seemed to pose a constant threat to the stability of the throne. Endeavoring to usurp the throne in 1701, James II's exiled Catholic son, James Francis Edward, gained distinction as the Old Stuart Pretender; however, the ascension of Mary's Protestant sister Anne in 1702 maintained the Protestant succession. Anne's inability to produce an heir allowed for another potential crisis in succession as the Old Pretender once again vied for the throne in 1715. However, in seeking Anne's closest Protestant relation, Parliament looked to Germany to call upon the Hanoverians to preserve Protestant rule in England. Not allowing Hanoverian rule to go unchallenged, Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, carried on his father's legacy. He made a final attempt to retake the crown for the Catholic Stuarts in 1745 at the Battle of Culloden. Although both the Old and Young Pretenders failed in their efforts, the memory of their threats to the Protestant throne were seared in the minds of many Englishman, instilling within them the perpetual fear of a Catholic conspiracy to subvert their system of government and steal their liberties.

As the Catholic Pretenders challenged Protestant Hanoverian rule, Catholics in colonial America became the subjects of suspicion and experienced greater restrictions. Since Maryland had been founded by a Catholic proprietor, the suppression of Catholics in that colony aptly demonstrates the strength of anti-Catholic sentiment in the eighteenth century. In 1716, any person desiring public office in Maryland had to swear allegiance to the king, reject the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, and avoid participation in a Catholic mass.³⁰ Expressing concern about an enlarging Catholic population and their potential power, a 1718 act barred all "professed Papists" from voting and subjected "any person or persons suspected to be Papists, or Popishly inclined" to submit to "oaths and subscriptions" to prove their innocence of Catholic

³⁰"Maryland Catholics Excluded from Office, 1716," in *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 93-94.

beliefs.³¹ By mid-century, Maryland Protestants tended to view Catholics as spies among them, undoubtedly allied with France and the pope. Thus, adherence to Catholicism amounted to disloyalty to the monarch and a contradiction of British identity.³² While the Calvert founders had hoped to establish a colony in which Catholics and Protestants could dwell in peaceful toleration, by the eighteenth century this seemed to be an impossible ideal.

Since the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, November 5 had been a day for celebrating Protestantism as the triumphant faith of England, but in the eighteenth century it also became an occasion for criticizing the challengers to Protestant succession. For their attempted usurpations of the throne, the Stuart Pretenders received the punishment of having their effigies join that of the pope on the holiday's processional carts, portraying these presumptuous men in league with the pope and Satan.³³ Protestant colonials urged loyalty to their reigning monarchs by denouncing the Stuart Pretenders on Pope's Day. In 1768, the "Extraordinary VERSES on *POPE-NIGHT*" in a Boston broadside depicted the processional cart, gave a dramatic account of the pope's degradation, and left readers with the following admonition: "But to conclude, from what we've heard / With Pleasure serve the King: / Be not *Pretenders, Papishes, / Nor Pope, nor s'other Thing.*"³⁴ The anti-Catholic holiday proved its versatility in assuming new forms as it adapted to its protest to the most current threat to English liberties.

From the time of the Glorious Revolution through much of the eighteenth century, American colonists found themselves in the midst of European conflicts over the control of

³¹ "Maryland Catholics Disfranchised, 1718," in *Catholics in Colonial Law*, 96-97.

³² Timothy W. Bosworth, "Anti-Catholicism as a Political Tool in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Maryland," *The Catholic Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (Oct. 1975): 540-541.

³³ McConville, *The King's Three Faces*, 58.

³⁴ "South End Forever. North End Forever: Extraordinary Verses on Pope-Night; or A Commemoration of the Fifth of November . . ." (Printers Boys in Boston, 1768).

contested territory in North America.³⁵ With Protestant England pitted against Catholic France, the people of both countries understood their wars as conflicts not only for political power but also for religious ideologies.³⁶ From this mindset issued two influential kinds of literature for reinforcing anti-Catholicism, the captivity narrative and the patriotic sermon.

For New England Protestants, facing French Catholics and their Indian converts in wartime led to the production of captivity narratives, which reinforced Puritan piety and anti-Catholic sentiment. Combining multiple literary genres into one compelling form, the Puritan captivity narrative provided both moral instruction and entertainment and had an enduring influence on American literature into the nineteenth century.³⁷ Two notable captivity narratives recounted episodes during King William's War (1689-1697) and illustrated Puritan experiences with spiritual warfare amidst their country's military engagements.

John Gyles' *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, Etc.* (1736) recounted his observations of the Indian way of life and the trials he faced. Taken as a child from his home in Maine in 1689, Gyles did not obtain his freedom until after 1698. His description of being purchased from his Indian master by a Jesuit conveyed the intense fear of Catholic influence. Refusing to eat food from the Jesuit, Gyles explained his concern that this Catholic "had put something in it to make me love him, for I was very young and had heard much of the Papists

³⁵ King William's War (1689-1697) was part of the War of the League of Augsburg, and Queen Anne's War (1701-1714) was part of the War of Spanish Succession. King George's War (1744-1748) was part of the War of Austrian Succession, and the French and Indian War (1754-1763) was the North American name for the Seven Years War.

³⁶ Colley, *Britons*, 3-4.

³⁷ "Cups of Common Calamity: Puritan Captivity Narratives as Literature and History" in *Puritans Among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1981), 4-10, 28.

torturing the Protestants, etc., so that I hated the sight of a Jesuit.”³⁸ Another captive, Hannah Swarton, was a wife and mother, who was taken from her Massachusetts home in 1690. Separated from her family members by death or distance, she endured five and half years in captivity. Swarton interpreted her capture as God’s punishment for her family’s worldly decision to move from Beverly, an established town with its own church. Moving to Casco Bay, a settlement lacking a church, she lamented that she and her husband had allowed “our children to be bred ignorantly like Indians and ourselves to forget what we had been formerly instructed in.”³⁹ After being taken by her Indian captor into Canada, she experienced hospitality from her new French masters but needed to remain vigilant against their attempts to convert her to Catholicism. Until her release, she relied upon her knowledge of Scripture to refute their arguments and encourage herself to stay faithful to Protestantism.⁴⁰

While both Gyles and Swarton resisted Catholicism and eventually left their captors, the story of John Williams’ family gives an example of failed redemption. In the midst of Queen Anne’s War (1701-1714), Reverend Williams watched his family and his congregation fall victim to French and Indian forces in February 1704. Williams’ *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1707) recounts his resistance to the religion of his captors and his concern for the spiritual fortitude of his dispersed family and congregation. Although Williams and others obtained release in 1706, he explained that “I have yet a daughter of ten years of age and many neighbors whose case bespeaks your compassion and prayers to God to gather them, being

³⁸ John Gyles, *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, Etc.* (1736) in *Puritans Among the Indians*, 99.

³⁹ Hannah Swarton and Cotton Mather, “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton Containing Wonderful Passages Relating to her Captivity and Deliverance” (1702) in *Puritans Among the Indians*, 150-151.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 152-157.

outcasts ready to punish.”⁴¹ The young daughter of which he spoke was Eunice, who eventually became a Catholic convert and the wife of an Indian, having no desire to return to her Puritan relations.⁴² Seared in memory and recorded in print, these captivity narratives offered a glimpse into how some New Englanders personally experienced the spiritual and political struggle between their Protestant country and its Catholic foes.

This period of frequent conflict between England and her Catholic enemies also provided ministers with occasions for equating religious duty with supporting the Protestant Hanoverian line. Fashioning England’s experiences in biblical terms, ministers often described their country’s trials and triumphs as if they were the Israelite people.⁴³ Benjamin Colman’s sermon entitled *Fidelity to Christ and to the Protestant Succession* (1727) centered on his analogy between Britain and Israel. Delivering his sermon upon the ascension of George II, Colman based his message on 1 Chronicles 12, in which King David’s army strengthened as he enjoyed the loyalty of Amasai, his chief of captains. Thankful for the connections that Colman could draw between the biblical account and his own country, he placed great significance on Protestant Hanoverian rule: “The House of our King is unto us as the House of David, chosen and raised by the God of Heaven as the present bulwark against Popery, and for the security of the true knowledge and worship of God among us.”⁴⁴ Speaking of Protestant succession as a providential development, he praised God for the Glorious Revolution and preservation from the

⁴¹ John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1707), in *Puritans Among the Indians*, 225.

⁴² Vaughan and Clark, “Cups of Common Calamity,” in *Puritans Among the Indians*, 16.

⁴³ Colley, *Britons*, 23-24, 30-31.

⁴⁴ Benjamin Colman, *Fidelity to Christ and to the Protestant Succession in the Illustrious House of Hannover* (Boston: Bible and Three Crowns, 1727), 9.

Stuart threat.⁴⁵ As God had blessed his people Israel in their faithfulness to the anointed king, so Colman hoped that God would continue to bless Britain for her loyalty to the Hanoverian monarchs.

During King George's War (1744-1748), the itinerant minister George Whitefield celebrated British success in war and the prosperity of Protestantism under the Hanoverians in his sermon *Britain's Mercies, and Britain's Duties* (1746).⁴⁶ Reflecting upon the British victory at the Battle of Louisbourg and the sinking of a French fleet in a storm, Whitefield, like Colman, encouraged his listeners to consider God's mercies toward the Israelite people and draw connections to contemporary events. He praised George II who, happily united with the Church of England, was above reproach and full of equity. Reminding his listeners of the great crisis averted by the Young Pretender's failure to take the throne, he offered a frightful description of a Catholic England overrun by Catholics and their profane doctrines.⁴⁷ Under their rule, he envisioned an end to "that invaluable blessing, liberty of conscience" as ignorance would settle on the empire.⁴⁸ Thus, he urged his listeners to give proper thanks to God for preserving them from the assault of Catholicism, which to him, would have exceeded the oppression under the infamous persecutor of Christians, the Roman emperor Diocletian. Reflecting on the country's history since the English Reformation, Whitefield recognized God's hand in the preservation of

⁴⁵ Colman, *Fidelity to Christ*, 11.

⁴⁶ King George's War (1744-1748) was waged between France and England over boundary disputes in Canada, northern New England, and the Ohio Valley. In spite of the victories and losses experienced by each side during the conflict, the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle returned the two countries to the status quo antebellum.

⁴⁷ George Whitefield, *Britain's Mercies, and Britain's Duties* (1746), in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 124-127.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

their Protestantism.⁴⁹ Speaking on behalf of his fellow Protestant Britons, Whitefield joyfully identified with the Protestant monarchy as a safeguard of religious liberty.

Having England's most recent conflict with Catholicism as the context, American opposition to Catholicism went beyond the battlefield and into the halls of Harvard. In 1750, upon the passing of Chief Justice Paul Dudley of Massachusetts, Harvard received from this benefactor the funds for instituting a lecture series that would address specific religious topics on a yearly rotation. Dudley indicated that arguments against Catholicism should be a regular part of the series for the purpose of "detecting & convicting & exposing the Idolatry of the Romish church, their tyranny, usurpations, and other crying wickedness in their high places; and finally that the church of Rome is that mystical Babylon, that man of sin, that Apostate church spoken of in the new Testament."⁵⁰ Although criticisms of Catholicism had characterized Protestant discourse since the time of the Reformation, these lecturers explained contemporary circumstances in terms of a grand struggle between the truth and liberty of Protestantism and the falsehood and tyranny of Catholicism. Thus, the trials of the British Empire in the North American had millennial implications in that the defeat of Catholic foes presented the potential for ushering in Christ's kingdom.⁵¹

In 1765, Jonathan Mayhew, the pastor of West Church in Boston, delivered his Dudleian lecture entitled *Popish Idolatry*. While the focus of his address was the idolatry he perceived in the Catholic practices relating to the Eucharist as well as the veneration of saints and religious images, Mayhew drew a close connection between Catholic influence and loss of British liberty.

⁴⁹ Whitefield, *Britain's Mercies*, 130-131, 134.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Pauline Maier, "The Pope at Harvard: The Dudleian Lectures, Anti-Catholicism, and the Politics of Protestantism," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series 97 (1985): 17-18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 20-23.

Beyond his grave concerns regarding spiritual matters, Mayhew told his listeners that opposition to Catholicism amounted to “a defence of our laws, liberties, and civil rights as men, in opposition to the proud claims and encroachments of ecclesiastical persons, who under the pretext of religion, and saving mens souls, would engross all power and property to themselves, and reduce us to the most abject slavery.”⁵² He made this unequivocal declaration regarding the political implications of Catholicism: “Popery and liberty are incompatible; at irreconcilable enmity with each other.”⁵³ Additionally, he issued a warning that Catholicism was gaining influence in England as greater numbers of people converted to that faith and many more proved willing to tolerate it. He advised vigilance against Catholics, urging that “We should not be ignorant of their devices; nor ever off guard against them.”⁵⁴ Mayhew was not alone in fearing Catholic influence in England as many American colonists worried that they might see the end of their precious liberties as Englishmen.

Finally during the 1760s and 1770s, American colonists protested their English government through appeals to their English identity, often describing that identity in anti-Catholic terms. As their government enacted offensive legislation, many colonists referenced their English Protestant heritage in word and in action as they expressed their displeasure. With the issuance of the Quebec Act in 1774, the breach between the colonies and their mother country had grown to the point that they began to reevaluate their allegiance. While their anti-Catholic heritage fueled their petition for a greater respect of rights, it also posed a challenge as they found the need to seek Catholic Canadian and French allies to oppose English rule.

⁵² Jonathan Mayhew, *Popish Idolatry* (Boston: Draper, Edes & Gill, and Fleet, 1765), 48-49.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

In 1765, after the passage of the Stamp Act, John Adams, a supporter of the Dudleian lectures, issued similar warnings to those offered by Mayhew about the dangers of political and religious subjugation. First published anonymously in the *Boston Gazette*, *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law* articulated Adams' concern over the encroachment on English rights by the Church of England working in conjunction with the government.⁵⁵ While the Stamp Act threatened life in the public sphere, the potential for the Church of England to place a bishop in the American colonies suggested to many Dissenters that church and state were forming a union of tyrannous control.⁵⁶

Notably, in Adams' *Dissertation*, he employed anti-Catholic argumentation against the Protestant English government. He used a history of the Catholic Church's influence to demonstrate how corrupt his own government could become if not kept in check, comparing efforts made by the Church of England and the government with Catholic canon law and feudal law, which he considered "the two greatest systems of tyranny." Writing that canon law enabled the suppression and exploitation of its adherents in mindless obedience, Adams explained that only through the Protestant Reformation did people experience freedom from bondage to the "wicked confederacy" of canon and feudal law. Reflecting on the history of the colonies, he explained that resistance to these oppressive systems brought settlers to America as they sought spiritual and political liberty. He credited his Puritan forefathers with recognizing the need for "popular powers" to check "the powers of the monarch and the priest, in every government" so that it would not "become the man of sin, the whore of Babylon, the mystery of iniquity, a great

⁵⁵ Charles H. Metzger, S.J. *Catholics and the American Revolution: A Study in Religious Climate* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), 11. The Stamp Act was a direct tax on printed materials levied on the American colonies to help the British government pay off its debts from the recently concluded French and Indian War.

⁵⁶ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 94-98.

and detestable system of fraud, violence, and usurpation.”⁵⁷ By using Catholicism as a point of reference and employing language of anti-Catholic rhetoric, Adams issued a strong admonition for American colonists to remember their Protestant heritage and its liberties, especially as English rights seemed threatened.

The Stamp Act prompted American colonists to appeal to their English identity in a variety of ways. Knowing that the act would take effect in November, representatives from nine colonies formed the Stamp Act Congress in October 1765. As the first unified legislative body in the colonies, this congress sought to represent the concerns of their fellow colonists before the king, vigorously protesting taxation apart from direct representation in Parliament. Taking effect on November 1, 1765, the Stamp Act arrived just in time to be incorporated into the street festivities of November 5. As Adams had used anti-Catholicism to oppose the government’s actions, so Pope’s Day participants adapted the holiday to present their political grievances. Protestors fashioned effigies incorporating the Stamp Act, and in at least one documented instance, they hanged the Stamp Act effigy along with that of Satan, reminiscent of the anti-Catholic protests that united the pope with Satan.⁵⁸

In addition to this street festivity, the Stamp Act met with resistance as colonists began to realize the potential of consumer protest and as England merchants questioned the wisdom of this legislation.⁵⁹ Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in March 1766; however, by issuing the Declaratory Act the same day, it assumed the right “to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever,” while declaring Parliament’s

⁵⁷John Adams, *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, <http://www.ashbrook.org/library/18/adams/canonlaw.html> (accessed December 1, 2010).

⁵⁸ McConville, “Pope’s Day Revisited,” 274-275.

⁵⁹ For more on the role of the Stamp Act in the evolution of colonial American consumer politics, particularly non-importation, see T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 218-234.

authority to invalidate any colonial legislative action.⁶⁰ As the British government continued to expect colonial submission and American colonists continued to base their appeals on their English rights, relations between the mother country and its colonists deteriorated.

As tensions mounted between British Americans and their English government, the anti-Catholicism that had long characterized English identity continued to inform colonial protests. In the wake of opposition to the Tea Act of 1773, Parliament issued what the colonists termed as the Coercive, or Intolerable, Acts, one of which was the Quebec Act.⁶¹ For these English colonists, the Quebec Act of 1774 seemed both outrageous and injurious in light of their national history, and thus, the anti-Catholicism of their heritage proved an impulse for seeking independence. Examining the Quebec Act's provisions and analyzing the colonists' anti-Catholic inheritance shows how sincerely they believed their political rights depended upon protection of the Protestant faith.

Passed on June 22, 1774, the Quebec Act represented the efforts of British Parliament to obtain favor with the Canadians of the empire by restoring the French law they had once enjoyed. No longer restricted to private religious observance, the Canadian Catholics, who had numbered over sixty-five thousand in 1763, received "the free Exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome, subject to the King's Supremacy" and the option to take an amended British oath so that they would not have to renounce their Catholic faith.⁶² In response to the Coercive Acts, nearly all colonies sent representation to Philadelphia for the First Continental Congress,

⁶⁰ The Declaratory Act (March 18, 1766), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declaratory_act_1766.asp (accessed February 16, 2012).

⁶¹ Three other offensive acts that made up the Coercive Acts of 1774 were the Boston Port Bill, which closed off Boston's harbor from trade; the Massachusetts Government Act, which stripped Massachusetts governing structure and issued martial law, and the Quartering Act, which required colonists to host troops in their homes, if needed.

⁶² The Quebec Act (October 7, 1774), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/quebec_act_1774.asp (accessed December 1, 2010).

which first met on September 5.⁶³ Adopting the objections expressed by colonists in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, on September 17, the Continental Congress complained that the Quebec Act was “dangerous in an extreme degree to the Protestant religion and to the civil rights and liberties of all America.”⁶⁴ Allowing the free practice of Catholicism immediately to the north and west of the American colonies appeared to pose a grave threat.

In an October 21 appeal to their fellow Britons, the Continental Congress listed the Quebec Act as one of the many examples of unfair violations of their English rights.⁶⁵ They perceived that this act facilitated the continued growth of the Canadian Catholic population so that these people might become “fit instruments in the hands of power, to reduce the ancient free Protestant Colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves.”⁶⁶ Afraid of becoming servile to the English ministry, Americans expressed their concerns in the spirit of seventeenth-century Whig opposition ideology, which urged constant vigilance against political corruption.⁶⁷ To make their case, the delegates briefly but vividly recounted their understanding of the influence of Catholicism on English history when they questioned how “a British Parliament should ever consent to establish . . . a religion that has deluged your island [England] in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder and rebellion through every part of the world.”⁶⁸ Some colonists used Pope’s Day to publicly demonstrate their opposition to the Quebec Act, perceived

⁶³ The First Continental Congress consisted of fifty delegates with representation from each colony except Georgia.

⁶⁴ Continental Congress, 1774, 1:34-35.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1:83-87.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1:87-88.

⁶⁷ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 46-51. Bailyn considers Whig ideology the unifying force for American Patriots as it brought together diverse influences on their pursuit of independence, including the classical world, the Enlightenment, English common law, and Puritanism (33-34).

⁶⁸ Continental Congress, 1774, 1:88.

as the most recent Catholic threat to their liberties.⁶⁹

While anti-Catholic sentiment propelled the American colonists toward seeking independence, it also proved to be an impediment in their attempts to gain valuable alliances. Ironically, just five days after sending their appeal to the British, the Continental Congress composed a “letter to the inhabitants of Quebec,” requesting their alliance against England. The letter appealed to Quebec “as a member therein deeply interested” in the injustices of the British government upon its North American territories.⁷⁰ The delegates sought to show the Canadian Catholics that the recent Quebec Act was not a benefit but, in actuality, a denial of the inborn religious freedom granted by God and hardly a means of securing their French rights.⁷¹ After delineating the many reasons that these Canadians should fear British subjection, the letter assured them that friendship between the American colonies and the province of Quebec could be possible and fruitful, remarking that “We are too well acquainted with the liberality of sentiment distinguishing your nation, to imagine, that difference of religion will prejudice you against a hearty amity with us.”⁷² However, during the same session of the Continental Congress, the delegates also addressed their king, citing the recent establishment of Catholicism in Canada among the many threats against the British liberty.⁷³ The appeal of the Continental Congress first to one side and then the other demonstrated the conflict between religious character and political need amidst crisis.

⁶⁹ Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution*, 26-31.

⁷⁰ Continental Congress, 1774, 1:105.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1:108.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:112.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:115-122.

While under English rule, anti-Catholicism was a way of life for most colonial Americans. Through their historical memory and public discourse, they understood their identity based upon their opposition to Catholicism. The settlement of the American colonies amid religious instability in England, the challenges to Protestant England internally and internationally, and the colonial appeal to their English heritage in protest all attest to the central role of anti-Catholicism in defining early American identity. However, the Continental Congress' appeal to the Canadians revealed that the exigencies of the times could challenge even this fundamental tenet, permitting the unprecedented acceptance of Catholicism during the War for Independence and the establishment of the new republic.

Chapter 2

“The cause of every virtuous American citizen Whatever may be his Religion”:
Religious Toleration in the War for Independence and the Establishment of the Republic

In September 1775, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, General George Washington, composed a letter imploring the people of Quebec to unite with the American colonies in striving with Britain for their liberties. He declared that “the cause of America and of liberty is the cause of every virtuous American citizen Whatever may be his Religion or his descent, the United Colonies know no distinction, but such as Slavery, Corruption and Arbitrary Domination may create.”¹ Anti-Catholicism played a noteworthy role in helping American colonists articulate their English identity and ultimately pushed them to reevaluate their place within the empire. However, in seeking to establish their own independent government, the exigencies of their situation compelled them to practice greater toleration for Catholics, a sincere gesture for some and perhaps only a utilitarian one for others.

In the move toward independence from Britain and later in the fashioning of a new government, this revolutionary generation arrived at new and remarkable conclusions, granting Catholicism a larger place in the public sphere. Seeking Catholic alliance and forbidding national religious establishment set America on a course of offering its citizens unprecedented religious liberty. However, while the founders regarded religious virtue as essential for the maintenance of the republic, Old World tensions remained as Protestant Christianity formed the basis of American political identity. Although expressions of anti-Catholicism many times proved impractical and outdated during and after the Revolution, Catholics still struggled to find their place among the Protestant majority. Although religious tension persisted, the experience

¹ George Washington to the Inhabitants of Canada, September 1775, in *George Washington: A Collection*, edited by W.B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), The Online Library of Liberty, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/848/101719> (accessed February 19, 2012).

of Protestants and Catholics fighting alongside one another, the alliance with Catholic France, and expanding notions of liberty made the Revolution and early republic periods of greater acceptance for Catholics.

From the beginning of the Revolution, many Americans recognized the necessity of alliance with their Catholic neighbors. Having arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in July 1775, Washington accepted the difficult situation of directing the siege of Boston that had followed the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April.² Since the Continental Congress was working to persuade the Province of Quebec to join the American colonies, he urged his men to conduct themselves in a manner that would encourage this alliance. In February 1775, agents of the Continental Congress received the task of evaluating Canadian interest in union with the colonies, but proved unsuccessful gaining a reception by the Canadian people.³ Undertaking an invasion of Canada, the Americans hoped that their efforts would convince their northern neighbors that union with the American colonies was far better than being subject to the British government. However, the effort to gain alliance with Canada through an invasion was fraught with issues.

As the spiritual leader of the Catholic Canadians, Bishop of Quebec Jean-Olivier Briand had maintained a strong loyalist position since establishment of the Province of Quebec in 1763. Throughout 1775, he urged his people to remain loyal to the British crown, threatening those

² Incensed by the British government's legislative rebukes and the growing numbers of British regulars, Massachusetts colonists had spent the winter of 1774 and 1775 stockpiling arms in Concord and building up their militia. On April 19, 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord saw the British destruction of colonial arms but also the success of Massachusetts militiamen in exacting heavy losses on the British regulars. Following the British to Boston, the militiamen instituted a siege that would last until March 17, 1776 when the British army withdrew to Nova Scotia.

³ Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 74.

who supported the Americans with denial of the sacraments.⁴ In addition to the opposition of the Catholic bishop, Loyalists and Patriots offered their criticism of the incursion into Quebec and the entire effort to garner Canadian support. To Loyalists, the American overtures to Catholic Canada betrayed the moral weakness of the rebellious colonies as they were willing to sacrifice their integrity to achieve material ends. Among Patriots, concerns dealt with the inappropriateness of seeking to ally with Catholic Canada and of conducting an invasion while Americans claimed to be acting only in self-defense.⁵ The same colonists that had vehemently opposed the Quebec Act were not only extending a hand of friendship to their Canadian neighbors but also using a military invasion to secure this alliance. This created a rather complex situation to explain.

In response to the objections of Loyalists and some Patriots, supporters of the alliance and invasion found several ways to justify their position. For example, they drew a distinction between the Canadian people and their priests, suggesting that the people disliked their priests and desired liberty. They reasoned that although the Canadian people sought liberty, Canadians' ignorant, tractable nature made them incapable of achieving liberty on their own and required American assistance.⁶ Additionally, Patriots tried to justify the invasion as self-defense. Adams warned that if Canada remained under British control "it would enable them to inflame all the Indians upon the Continent, and perhaps induce them to take up the Hatchet and commit their Robberies and Murders upon the Frontiers of all the southern Colonies, as well as to pour down Regulars, Canadians, and Indians, together upon the Borders of the Northern."⁷ In spite of the

⁴ Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 34-35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-83.

⁷ John Adams, quoted in Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 72.

criticism surrounding the invasion, the Continental Congress authorized General Philip Schulyer to take Montreal, and then in September 1775, Washington sent Colonel Benedict Arnold to take Quebec.

Before Arnold's difficult march through the wilderness to Quebec, Washington prepared a letter for him to deliver to the Canadian people. Characterizing the colonial cause as a promising endeavor, Washington announced that "the Hand of Tyranny has been arrested in its Ravages, and the British Arms, which have shone with so much Splendor in every part of the Globe, are now tarnished with disgrace and disappointment." Offering an example, he drew attention to the ongoing siege of Boston in which the newly formed Continental Army was successfully confining British forces in the city. Reminiscent of the earlier appeals from the Continental Congress, Washington explained that allying with the American colonies would defy the British conviction that "Canadians were not capable of distinguishing between the Blessings of Liberty and the Wretchedness of Slavery. . . ." Identifying their cause as a common one, he explained that the planned invasion of Canada was "not to plunder but to protect you," inspiring them with the same realization of their English rights.⁸ Claiming that American forces had humbled the British and that Americans respected the intelligence and rights of Canadians far more than did their British government, Washington personally appealed for the support of the Canadian people.

In addition to his letter for the Canadians, Washington also prepared guidelines for how Arnold ought to conduct the invasion. On September 14, 1775, he ordered respect for Catholics and their practices: "Prudence, policy, and a true Christian spirit will lead us to look with compassion upon their errors without insulting them. While we are contending for our own liberty, we should be very cautious not to violate the rights of conscience in others, ever

⁸ Washington to the Inhabitants of Canada.

considering that God alone is the judge of the hearts of men, and to him only in this case they are answerable.”⁹ Although anti-Catholic sentiment had long been a feature of English colonial identity, Washington’s orders indicated that the situation demanded for men to lay aside their prejudice. Guided by the same diplomatic spirit, Washington targeted the tradition of anti-Catholic revelry on November 5. Forbidding his soldiers from observing Pope’s Day, he denounced what he called “that ridiculous and childish custom of burning the Effigy of the pope.” Washington urged his men to abstain from mocking Canadian Catholics and “to consider them as Brethren embarked in the same Cause.”¹⁰ Maintaining anti-Catholic practices while striving to garner Canadian alliance was offensive to their potential allies and worked to undermine diplomatic efforts.

While the Continental Army effectively maintained their siege of Boston throughout 1775, the Canadian invasion soon met with failure. After General Richard Montgomery replaced Schulyer, Montgomery and Arnold orchestrated a joint attack on Quebec in December. Unfortunately, Arnold’s men were severely weakened after their arduous journey through the wilderness on their way to Quebec. Choosing to attack the city during a blizzard resulted in Montgomery’s death and Arnold’s wounding. However, Arnold led the Continental forces in maintaining a siege of the city that lasted until May 1776.¹¹ This was far from the stunning victory they had hoped would sway the Canadians to support the American cause.

⁹ George Washington to Colonel Benedict Arnold, September 14, 1775, in *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. III (1775-1776), edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889), The Online Library of Liberty, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2378/225134> (accessed February 19, 2012).

¹⁰ “George Washington Bans Guy Fawkes Day in the Army, November 5, 1776,” in *Documents of American Catholic History*, ed. John Tracy Ellis (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), 136.

¹¹ Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, Rev. and Expanded (New York: Free Press, 1994), 66.

Despite the invasion's relative failure, Arnold did make a noteworthy addition to the Continental Army during the Quebec siege. In January 1776, he added two Canadian regiments to the Continental Army and in doing so placed Father Louis Eustace Lotbinière as chaplain of one of them. Serving as military chaplain from 1776 through 1781, Father Lotbinière was the only Catholic chaplain of the war and the first chaplain approved by the Continental Congress, rather remarkable distinctions in light of the anti-Catholic sentiment of the era.¹² Although the invasion of Canada did add some regiments to the Continental Army, it proved unsuccessful in eliciting the support that Continental Congress sought, and in February 1776, the congress made another proposal for gaining Canadian alliance.

Although being a Catholic in the American colonies was generally a hindrance rather than a benefit, on February 15, the formation of a committee to Canada demonstrated an altered attitude toward Catholics. With the task of garnering Canadian support for the move against Britain, the committee consisted of Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase, and Charles Carroll, a Catholic from Maryland, as well as Charles' cousin John, a Catholic priest.¹³ Although known for his outspoken hatred of Catholicism, Adams offered his support for each of the committee members. Writing to James Warren on February 18, Adams extolled Charles Carroll for his knowledge of French culture, which would be an asset for engaging with the Canadian people. He further noted that "what is perhaps of more Consequence than all the rest, he was educated in the Roman Catholic Religion and still continues to worship his Maker according to the Rites of that Church."¹⁴ Praising Carroll for the courage he had already demonstrated in promoting the

¹² Charles H. Metzger, S.J., "Chaplains in the American Revolution," *The Catholic Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (April 1945): 35-36, 44.

¹³ Continental Congress, 1776, 1:151-152.

¹⁴ John Adams to James Warren, February 18, 1776, in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund Cody Burnett, no. 508 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1921), 354.

“Cause of American Liberty,” Adams declared that Carroll’s work in Canada would certainly further his reputation.¹⁵

While Adams’ praise of Charles Carroll was noteworthy, perhaps more remarkable was Adams’ approval of Charles’ cousin John, a Jesuit priest. Especially in England, the Society of Jesus had long received censure as a conspiratorial organization, poisonous to political liberty. To be called a “Jesuited papist” or to be otherwise accused of involvement with the order was a serious insult. Additionally, in 1773, the pope disbanded the Jesuit religious order, an event that severely challenged their organization.¹⁶ Referring to Father Carroll as “a Gentleman of learning and Abilities,” Adams explained that this priest would accompany the other men so that he could minister to the spiritual needs of the Canadian Catholics.¹⁷

Upon learning of the delegation in which he would participate, Father Carroll expressed both appreciation as well as apprehension. Fearing that his religious training and vocation had not prepared him for being a suitable diplomat, he also doubted that the Canadians would actively take either the side of the British or that of the American colonies. In his estimation, “They have not the same motives for taking up arms against England, which renders the resistance of the other colonies so justifiable.”¹⁸ As Congress seemed sure that sending Catholic representatives would help foster goodwill with the Canadians, Father Carroll accepted his

¹⁵ Adams to Warren, 354. In 1773, Charles Carroll gained prominence through his opposition of Daniel Dulany in a debate over the Maryland governor’s extension of fees paid to Church of England. Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution*, 80-82.

¹⁶ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 55-56.

¹⁷ Adams to Warren, 354.

¹⁸ John Carroll to Unknown Recipient, 1776, in *The John Carroll Papers, Vol. 1: 1755-1791*, edited by Thomas O’Brien Hanley, S.J. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 46.

assignment in spite of his reservations.¹⁹ While Arnold strove to maintain the siege of Quebec, these four diplomats from the overwhelmingly Protestant American colonies embarked upon their mission to gain Canadian alliance.

Throughout the trip, which lasted from April 2 through June 2, Charles Carroll recorded his observations of the terrain, fortifications, and natural resources in the northern regions of the colonies and in Canada as well as his interactions with Generals Schuyler and Arnold.²⁰ Arriving in Montreal on April 29, Father Carroll began working among the Catholic clergy, acting as an ambassador of the Continental Congress. Sent to reassure the Canadians that union with the colonies would secure and strengthen their liberties, Father Carroll carried the congressional pledges that they “held sacred the rights of conscience” in respect to the Canadians’ religion. Congress guaranteed “the free and undisturbed exercise of their religion,” promising not to place any restrictions on holding property or participating in government and not requiring the people to support religion through any mandatory tithe or tax.²¹ As Father Carroll had anticipated, he found that the Catholic clergy were satisfied with their situation under British rule. They were also not inclined to think that the American colonies would respect their religion, pointing to the frequent injustices rendered to Catholics in the colonies. Furthermore, the anti-Catholic sentiment expressed after the Quebec Act made subsequent gestures of friendship from the American colonies appear disingenuous.²² The text of a March 24 letter

¹⁹ Brantz Mayer, ed. “Introductory Memoir Upon the Expedition to Canada in 1775-1776, in *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton during his Visit to Canada, in 1776, as one of the Commissioners from Congress* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1876), 20.

²⁰ For a detailed account of the journey, see Charles Carroll, *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton during his Visit to Canada, in 1776, as one of the Commissioners from Congress*, edited by Brantz Mayer (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1876).

²¹ Mayer, “Introductory Memoir,” 27.

²² *Ibid.*, 29-34.

from Canada revealed the sense of betrayal felt by one crowd who heard the appeals made by the Continental Congress to Canada and Britain: ““O the perfidious double-faced Congress! Let us bless and obey our benevolent Prince, whose humanity is consistent, and extends to all religions; let us abhor all who would seduce us from our loyalty, by acts that would dishonor a Jesuit, and whose addresses, like their resolves, are destructive of their own objects.””²³ With anti-Catholicism coloring the heritage and diplomacy of the American colonies, promises that America would ensure religious liberty for Canadian Catholics remained questionable.

This envoy failed to win Canadian support, but it did contribute positively to the colonial religious environment. By considering the Carrolls’ Catholic faith an asset to the American cause, the Continental Congress acknowledged that Catholics could be loyal Patriots.²⁴ When the American colonies declared their independence in July, Charles Carroll gained the distinction of being the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence. Pauline Maier identifies him as “the most prominent Roman Catholic participant in what was in 1776 a militantly Protestant revolution, one that took inspiration from the Glorious Revolution of 1688.”²⁵ While Carroll was a distinguished Catholic participant in the Revolution, there were also many others of his creed who supported the cause. Whether from the notable Carroll or Brent families or from less noble stock, Catholics participated in the drive for independence as common soldiers as well as trusted aides and military leaders.²⁶

Having long characterized life in the American colonies, anti-Catholicism made the decision to support American independence or remain loyal to Britain challenging for

²³ Mayer, “Introductory Memoir,” 34n.

²⁴ Ellis, *Catholics in Colonial America*, 402-403.

²⁵ Maier, *The Old Revolutionaries*, 204.

²⁶ Hennessey, *American Catholics*, 59-60.

Catholics.²⁷ Likely composing only one percent of the colonial population during the war, the Catholic population concentrated in Maryland and around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Although members of this religious minority did support the Patriot cause, the American colonies produced no distinctly Catholic regiment.²⁸ While American Catholic representation in the War for Independence was small, the shared struggle of Catholics and Protestants combined with the achievement of French Catholic alliance to inspire a greater sense of American identity across religious lines.

On February 6, 1778, the country that had long been regarded as a preeminent threat, Catholic France, became a key ally of the American colonies.²⁹ Although the Continental Congress had been aghast at the British toleration of Catholicism in the Quebec Act, Americans chose to accept French aid in spite of their longstanding animosity toward both French culture and religion.³⁰ Remarkably, upon achieving the alliance, Congress fashioned the divine right king Louis XVI as “THE PROTECTOR OF THE RIGHTS OF MANKIND.”³¹ As with the overtures made toward the Canadians, the alliance with France garnered criticism of America’s moral inconsistency. Additionally, some Patriots held lingering concerns about the power that the French could assert over the American colonies. In fall 1778, when the French offered their aid for another American invasion of Canada, General Washington rejected. He privately expressed concern that since Canadians shared the Catholic faith of the French and were

²⁷ Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution*, 178, 268-269.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 152; Metzger, “Chaplains,” 52.

²⁹ “Treaty of Amity and Commerce Between the United States and France,” February 6, 1778, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fr1788-1.asp. (accessed December 1, 2010).

³⁰ Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 85-86.

³¹ Quoted in Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 120.

formerly under their rule, once in Canada, the French might take the territory and overpower the American colonies. While his fears never came to fruition, the relationship between the unlikely allies was at times strained. Their long history of animosity had created an environment ripe for conflict over small matters.³² As British subjects, the Americans had long nurtured strong resentment of the French. Thus, the transition from enemies to friends had its challenges.

In spite of the issues that sometimes surfaced, the alliance with France provided America with crucial financial support and manpower to secure independence. Protestant Americans who supported the alliance worked to reconcile their Catholic ties with their own religious convictions. Endeavoring to relate their situation to biblical precedents, some Protestants, fashioning America as Israel, compared Louis XVI with Cyrus the Great of Persia, a Gentile king whom God used to aid His chosen people.³³ Thus, God could choose to use even nonbelievers to accomplish His good purposes. In 1781, not long before that Battle of Yorktown, Reverend William Gordon delivered a Dupleian lecture in which he explained how Protestants could still argue against the Catholic faith while supporting the alliance with France. Gordon believed that by maintaining consistent opposition to Catholicism, Protestant Americans aided the French alliance by demonstrating their constancy toward God, which would carry over to their faithfulness in diplomacy.³⁴ Although Protestants and Catholics had by no means reconciled all of their grievances, the alliance of the American colonies with France strongly influenced America's emerging identity.

As a formative period for a newly independent America, the Revolution and the establishment of the new republic brought the country to an unprecedented level of religious

³² Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 110-114.

³³ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

toleration. Declared the same year as American independence, George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights stated "that religion . . . can be directed by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other."³⁵ Endeavoring to uphold rights of conscience, several founders recognized the exclusion of religious establishments as the best way to address religious diversity. However, since Catholics composed such a small part of the population, the context for applying religious toleration was largely among various Protestant denominations.³⁶

Foundational to the religious settlement eventually reached in the Bill of Rights of 1791, Thomas Jefferson's arguments for upholding the rights of conscience in religious matters guided America's pursuit of religious toleration. In writing the *Notes on the State of Virginia* around 1781, Jefferson expressed his conviction that religious diversity was a positive phenomenon and that the Virginia legislation prohibiting heresy ought to be thrown out. He argued that "it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."³⁷ He identified the denial of reason and free inquiry as the real threat to freedom. While praising religious diversity, he disparaged the Catholic faith and identified Protestantism as the bearer of progress: "Had not free inquiry been indulged, at the æra of the reformation, the corruptions of Christianity could not have been purged away."³⁸ While English

³⁵ Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/virginia.asp (accessed November 23, 2011).

³⁶ Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution*, 152.

³⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984), 284-285.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 285.

Protestant history, especially in the form of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, still reminded participants in the new republic of attacks on the body, the greater concern dealt with attacks on the mind.³⁹ Although religious toleration of previous centuries forbade harm to a person's body or property while recalling horrors of the Catholic persecution, it still permitted established churches. By contrast, the religious liberty advocated by men such as Jefferson extended further as they identified harm to the mind that resulted from political restrictions applied on the basis personal religious beliefs. Consequently, descriptions of past Catholic violence diminished as arguments centered less on freedom from bodily harm, which was of little threat in the new republic, and more on freedom from mental bondage.⁴⁰ Even as Jefferson argued for greater religious liberty, he described Catholicism as utterly opposed to "free inquiry," a hallmark of the enlightened American republic.

In 1786, Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom signaled an end of discrimination on the basis of religion in the public sphere in that state, declaring "that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities." For any later members of the Virginia General Assembly who may have wished the repeal of this act, it issued a clear warning that "such act will be an infringement of natural right."⁴¹ While Jefferson's historical perspective caused him to think of Catholicism as opposed to freedom, his experiences as a foreign minister also contributed to his negative assessment of the religion. Writing from Paris in 1786, Jefferson lamented the "ignorance, superstition, poverty, and oppression of body

³⁹ Chris Beneke, "Not by Force or Violence": Religious Violence, Anti-Catholicism, and Rights of Conscience in the Early National United States," *Journal of Church and State* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 7-8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-18, 27-28.

⁴¹ Act for Establishing Religious Freedom (January 16, 1786), Library of Virginia: Virginia Memory, <http://www.virginiamemory.com/docs/ReligiousFree.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2012).

and mind in every form” he found, hoping that the example of his act for religious freedom would influence European countries for the better. Believing in the superiority of enlightened American values, he declared that even if Europe’s leaders sought to change the religious and intellectual environment, “a thousand years would not place them on that high ground on which our common people are now setting out.”⁴² In the contrast drawn between the Old World and the New, Jefferson articulated the common characterization of Catholicism as regressive while Protestantism represented progress.

While anti-Catholic sentiment persisted during America’s founding, Washington’s presidency inspired the Catholic population with hope for the preservation and advancement of their rights. Having shown a magnanimous attitude during the war by urging his troops to respect the Catholic faith, Washington elicited high regard from American Catholics. In 1789, the year of Washington’s inauguration, American Catholics gained their first bishop, Father John Carroll.

A brief examination of the establishment of the American Catholic Church at the same time that America was establishing her new independent identity illuminates the nature of Catholic citizenship in the early republic. As the rift between the American colonies and the mother country had dramatically changed political and social order, it also required a change in Catholic religious organization. Until 1775, the Vicar Apostolic of London oversaw the American Catholic Church, but American independence required that the Catholic Church find an ecclesiastical structure suitable for the new republic. An established church hierarchy was necessary for the American Catholic Church to perform blessings, conduct confirmations, and place priests. Attempting to address the situation in 1784, the Sacred College of Propaganda

⁴² Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, Paris, August 13, 1786, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984), 859.

Fide placed Father Carroll as the “Superior of the Mission in the thirteen United States.” Displeased with this decision, Father Carroll believed that since America was a country with Catholic citizens, it was far more than a mission. It needed its own American-based ecclesiastical structure to train and select clergy. At the time of Carroll’s ascension, he reported that about 15,800 Catholics resided in Maryland, 7,000 in Pennsylvania, 200 in Virginia, and 1,500 in New York.⁴³ In spite of his frustrations, he used his position to try to address the challenging tasks confronting the church, finding suitable clergy and arbitrating trustee conflicts.⁴⁴

As these challenges persisted, in 1788, the American clergy petitioned Pope Pius VI to establish a diocese in America with a bishop born and chosen there for the purpose of providing greater stability to the struggling church. In November 1789, Father Carroll was appointed as the first bishop of Baltimore, granting him jurisdiction over the United States.⁴⁵ Writing in 1790 on behalf of the approximately 35,000 American Catholics, Bishop Carroll addressed President Washington, bringing attention to the noteworthy but limited gains for Catholic equality in this post-revolutionary era.

Written in celebration of Washington’s election and appearing in national newspapers, the “Address from the Roman Catholics of America to George Washington” credited the new president with improving the situation for Catholics.⁴⁶ Declaring that “it is your peculiar talent,

⁴³ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 73.

⁴⁴ Trustee controversies occurred when the laity attempted to dictate the placement of pastors rather than submit to the decisions of their hierarchs.

⁴⁵ DePalma, *Dialogue on the Frontier*, 15-23.

⁴⁶ John Carroll, “Address from the Roman Catholics of America to George Washington,” in *The John Carroll Papers, Vol. 1: 1755-1791*, edited by Thomas O’Brien Hanley, S.J. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 410-411. Signed by Bishop Carroll, who represented the clergy, the address also bore the signatures of

in war and in peace, to afford security to those who commit their protection into your hands,” Carroll articulated Catholic confidence in Washington’s character and the “respect for religion” that he fostered. Reflecting upon their contributions to the revolutionary cause, they believed that their sacrifices merited equal citizenship. They argued that “whilst our country preserves her freedom and independence, we shall have a well founded title to claim from her justice, the equal rights of citizenship, as the price of our blood spilt under your eyes, and of our common exertions for her defence, under your auspicious conduct—rights rendered more dear to us by the remembrance of former hardships.”⁴⁷ American independence had brought an end to prohibitions of Catholic political participation in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, but restrictions of Catholic liberties persisted in other states.⁴⁸ Acknowledging that injustice remained, Catholics hoped that the rights they had gained would continue and full religious liberty would become a reality.⁴⁹

Responding to his Roman Catholic constituents on March 15, 1790, Washington expressed appreciation for their loyalty, assuring them that they would, in time, see greater equality for members of their faith: “As mankind become more liberal they will be more apt to allow that all those who conduct themselves as worthy members of the community are equally entitled to the protection of civil government.” Speaking of the Protestant majority, Washington believed that Catholic aid at home and from France for winning the Revolution would surely inspire greater respect for American Catholics. Washington concluded by wishing that “the members of your society in America, animated along by the pure spirit of Christianity, and still

Charles Carroll, Daniel Carroll, Dominick Lynch, and Thomas Fitzsimmons, who represented Catholic laity from Maryland, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

⁴⁷ Carroll, “Address from the Roman Catholics,” 410.

⁴⁸ DePalma, *Dialogue on the Frontier*, 14.

⁴⁹ Carroll, “Address from the Roman Catholics,” 410-411.

conducting themselves as faithful subjects of free government, enjoy every temporal and spiritual felicity.”⁵⁰

The letters exchanged between Bishop Carroll and President Washington spoke of the place of American Catholic citizens in light of their contributions to the revolutionary cause and the progress of religious toleration in the new country. In spite of lingering concerns that Catholic submission to a foreign pope might mean that they could not be loyal Americans, the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century witnessed examples of remarkable cooperation. Perhaps the task of establishing their new country helped them find ways to rise above the tensions that generally characterized their interactions. As an indication of the changes taking place, the name *Catholic* ceased to be the common term of derision it had once been.⁵¹ While many maintained their opposition to Catholic tenets, the passionate and highly public anti-Catholic sentiment of the colonial period waned as the more accommodating spirit of the early republic largely took its place.

Bishop Carroll aimed to foster positive relations between the American Catholic Church, still hovering around one percent of the population, and the predominately Protestant society in which it was growing. He dedicated his ministry to encouraging American Catholics to reckon a balance between integrating themselves into American society while not compromising the integrity of their Catholic faith.⁵² Although anti-Catholic sentiments never fully disappeared, under Bishop Carroll’s influence, the American Catholics enjoyed remarkable cooperation with the Protestant community. Having established his reputation as a man of upstanding character

⁵⁰ George Washington to the Roman Catholics in the United States of America, March 15, 1790, in *George Washington: A Collection*, edited by W. B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), Online Library of Liberty, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/848/102102> (accessed February 24, 2012).

⁵¹ Joseph Agonito, “Ecumenical Stirrings: Catholic-Protestant Relations during the Episcopacy of John Carroll,” *Church History* 45, no. 3 (Sept. 1976): 359.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 358.

and loyalty during the Revolution, Bishop Carroll had gained the regard of many non-Catholic countrymen, even as they still disliked his Catholic faith. Bishop Carroll believed that by engaging with the Protestant majority around them, Catholics could gain greater acceptance for themselves and their faith and, in the process, win some Protestants to the Catholic faith.⁵³ Remarkably, as Protestant Americans accepted Catholics as their fellow countrymen, some also actively supported the Catholic community.

Being small in number and part of a newly organized diocese, Catholics often lacked a place to celebrate the mass. This sometimes led to surprising demonstrations of support from Protestants either by allowing Catholics to borrow space or by funding Catholic building efforts. This was especially true in newly settled backcountry areas such as Kentucky. In the late eighteenth century, Catholic Marylanders were among the many settlers that migrated west seeking new opportunities in the fertile land of Kentucky. These Catholics established numerous settlements, prompting Carroll to send Father Stephen Badin as their missionary priest in 1793.⁵⁴ For Catholic and Protestant pastors, ministering on the frontier required them to struggle with the lack of resources, the harshness of the environment, and the resistance of the settlers to pious instruction. As Father Badin learned, experiencing these shared difficulties could foster a sense of commonality and even friendship between Catholic and Protestant clergy, even while maintaining their theological differences.⁵⁵ In some cases, Protestants on the frontier even supported the building of Catholic structures, perhaps motivated by a desire to better their area through development.⁵⁶ In Kentucky, St. Peter's in Lexington, St. Louis in Louisville, and St.

⁵³ Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings," 359-360.

⁵⁴ DePalma, *Dialogue on the Frontier*, 24-26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Joseph's Cathedral in Bardstown were among the churches established with Protestant assistance through donations of money, land, or labor. Even beyond the frontier, Catholics in Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania were among those who received assistance from Protestants in building their churches.⁵⁷ These examples demonstrated that, at times, Catholics and Protestants could cooperate with one another for mutual benefit.

Protestant goodwill helped the small Catholic community to prosper as they tried to build up their church in America. By the early nineteenth century, Bishop Carroll was able to support the construction of a grand cathedral in Baltimore. Having built a solid rapport with many of the nation's founders and a reputation for cooperating with the Protestant community, Bishop Carroll helped his newly formed diocese transition into a period during which the church experienced exceptional growth, which eventually inspired the renewal of vehement opposition.

In 1806, building began on the Baltimore Cathedral, a magnificent structure that became the headquarters of the new Archdiocese of Baltimore. With Catholic communicants spread across the country, the need for expansion of the Catholic hierarchy became evident. In 1808, Carroll assumed the role of archbishop, and the American Catholic Church divided into four smaller suffragan sees based in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Bardstown, Kentucky.⁵⁸ While the hierarchy underwent reorganization, the construction of the cathedral moved forward. Noted for his work on the United States Capitol, Benjamin Latrobe offered to design the cathedral, a structure that became one of his greatest architectural achievements. Guiding Latrobe's design was Carroll's desire for the cathedral to be in the stately neoclassical style popular during the Federal Era. By its design, the cathedral demonstrated that in action as well

⁵⁷ Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings," 362-364.

⁵⁸ "Archbishop John Carroll," The Baltimore Basilica: America's First Cathedral, <http://www.baltimorebasilica.org/index.php?page=archbishop-john-carroll> (accessed March 8, 2012).

as appearance, American Catholics should integrate themselves into their society as they maintained their commitment to the Catholic faith.⁵⁹ Although Archbishop Carroll died in 1815 before witnessing the 1821 completion of the cathedral, the structure testified to his legacy of guiding the Catholic Church to be a respected part of the larger American society.

While the experiences of fighting the Revolution and establishing a new country inspired greater opportunities for Catholic participation, the experiences of the early nineteenth century promised to test the country's commitment to religious liberty. Evident in politics as well as religion, a strong democratic spirit inspired the young nation. Politically, America experienced growing emphasis on the participation of the common man, and similarly, religious revivals focused on the personal, and sometimes dramatic, spiritual experiences of ordinary individuals.⁶⁰ With its hierarchy and ornamentation, the Catholic Church inevitably stood out from the egalitarianism and simplicity of American culture. As America emerged victorious from the War of 1812, people took even greater pride in their independent identity and providential purpose. As their forefathers had thought of themselves as the chosen Israelites, nineteenth-century Americans tended to believe that their new country was uniquely chosen by God to accomplish great tasks. Fundamental to accomplishing America's purpose was national unity.⁶¹

Unity represented a key theme of James Monroe's 1817 inaugural address, which looked expectantly toward the future increase of America's greatness. Assessing the country's brief but glorious history, Monroe declared that "during a period fraught with difficulties and marked by very extraordinary events the United States have flourished beyond example." Having separated

⁵⁹ "Brief History of the Basilica," The Baltimore Basilica: America's First Cathedral, <http://www.baltimorebasilica.org/index.php?page=brief-history-of-the-basilica> (accessed March 8, 2012).

⁶⁰ For more on the influence of the era's democratic ideals on religion, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁶¹ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 7.

herself from the Old World, America seemed set on a course of unprecedented achievement. To demonstrate this point, Monroe challenged the notion that any strife or injustice remained in America. With the recent demise of the Federalist Party, America appeared, on the surface, to be free from the division of two-party politics. Contrary to Monroe's analogy of America as "one great family of common interest," lingering restrictions on Catholic political participation in some states challenged his assertions of complete unity and equality. As the course of the nineteenth century would demonstrate, defining the "common interest" proved difficult as identifying a single political party or national religious ideology could not answer the problems of social disunity and growing religious diversity.⁶²

Praising American expansion, Monroe declared that "if we look to the history of other nations, ancient or modern, we find no example of growth so rapid, so gigantic, of a people so prosperous and happy."⁶³ While Monroe's positive characterization of American growth brimmed with optimism, the population growth the country would experience throughout the century appeared to many people not as a blessing but as a threat. In the wake of the War of 1812, European immigrants, many of them from Catholic countries, began arriving in large numbers. While many Americans looked apprehensively to the east coast, observing the arrival of these foreigners, they also looked west, seeking to settle and civilize the frontier.

Having gained a vast amount of land in 1803 through the Louisiana Purchase, Americans recognized western land as holding both opportunity and responsibility. Westward movement brought profound expansion of the Catholic Church in the former Northwest Territory, including Ohio and Kentucky, bringing the 1808 establishment of the diocese in Bardstown, Kentucky.

⁶² First Inaugural Address of James Monroe (1817), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe1.asp (accessed March 8, 2012).

⁶³ Ibid.

Western dioceses extended into western states such as Michigan, Indiana, and Tennessee as Catholic hierarchical organization followed the establishment of Catholic charities including schools and hospitals. By 1822, nine Catholic dioceses existed with their northeastern bases in Boston, New York, Philadelphia; the Chesapeake bases in Baltimore and Norfolk; the southern base in Charleston; the midwestern base at Bardstown; and the base at New Orleans encompassing the Louisiana Territory.⁶⁴ Bishops often sought the assistance of foreign mission-aid societies sponsored by Catholic monarchs, including the French Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Leopoldine Foundation, and the Ludwig's Mission Society.⁶⁵ While monetary support from fellow Catholics seemed necessary for the survival and growth of newly established western dioceses, sponsorship of American Catholic churches by foreign monarchs led some Protestants to fear that Catholicism would subjugate the republic to foreign powers. Since the West had long been in Catholic hands, many Protestants urged missionary activity in the West to counter Catholic influence there.⁶⁶

Articulating his anxieties over the great influx of European immigrants in the 1830s, Reverend Lyman Beecher warned that these people, who were ignorant of American ways, “may at no distant day equal, and even outnumber the native population.”⁶⁷ Describing the potential threat to liberty, Beecher feared that the majority of immigrants could “through the medium of their religion and priesthood” be “as entirely accessible to the control of the potentates of Europe

⁶⁴ Edwin S. Gaustad and Philip L. Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 310, fig. 3.25.

⁶⁵ Hennesey, *American Catholics*, 110-112.

⁶⁶ Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002), 164.

⁶⁷ Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1835), 51-52.

as if they were an army of soldiers.”⁶⁸ By 1850, the largest percentages of immigrants were coming from Ireland (42.8%) and Germany (26.0%), countries with sizable Catholic populations.⁶⁹ At this point, American Catholics numbered around one million, and while this marked a notable increase, they still comprised only 5 percent of the total population. Even by 1890, when the American Catholic Church had become larger than any single Protestant denomination, Catholics were still only 12 percent of the total population.⁷⁰ Although Beecher’s fear that Catholics would overwhelm the nation failed to materialize, by 1890, the Catholic Church had replaced the once prevailing Congregational and Methodist churches in denominational predominance across the northeast.⁷¹ While Protestants continued to far outnumber Catholics in the total population, the growing presence of Catholicism, especially in that region, appeared to many Protestants as a threat to the republic.

Compelled by the exigencies of wartime and inspired by proclamations of religious liberty, Americans showed remarkable acceptance of Catholicism during the Revolution and the establishment of the new republic. While the Catholic population remained small in number, the Protestant majority had little reason for concern as well as limited opportunities requiring them to practice toleration. Most Americans entered the nineteenth century believing that the enlightened Protestantism of the New World was what enabled their republican government to

⁶⁸ Beecher, *Plea*, 56-57.

⁶⁹ Gaustad and Barlow, *New Historical Atlas*, 61, fig. 2.3.

⁷⁰ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 120-122. Finke and Stark argue that most studies addressing the growth of American Catholicism rely upon faulty statistics. First, they explain that many incorrectly assume that immigrants from Catholic countries were certainly Catholic, while many were in fact Protestant. Additionally, Finke and Stark note that because the Catholic Church counted christened infants as members while other churches, particularly the Baptist churches, did not, comparing membership numbers without accounting for these differences produces skewed comparisons. These factors caused Finke and Stark to differ in their statistical analysis and ultimately place Catholicism as the largest American denomination in 1890, rather than the commonly quoted date of 1850 (117-120).

⁷¹ Gaustad and Barlow, *New Historical Atlas*, 358, fig. C.2, 359, fig. C. 3, 360, fig. C.4, 361, fig. C.5.

excel beyond Old World political systems. However, a growing Catholic population seemed to jeopardize the unity America needed to progress. Consequently, the fear of large scale Catholic immigration sparked the resurgence of strong anti-Catholic sentiment during the antebellum period.

Chapter 3

“Fear is what we need”: Anti-Catholic Anxiety in the Pursuit of a Common Religious and National Identity

The prophet had no words of comfort as he sought to awaken his listeners to the gravity of their situation. “Fear is what we need,” declared the prominent revivalist of the Second Great Awakening, Lyman Beecher, as he warned of growing Catholic influence in the West.¹ Issuing *A Plea for the West* in the 1830s, Beecher feared that America, having such potential before her, would fail to take due caution to preserve her Protestant piety and republican political system. Inspired by the reform impulse that characterized the Second Great Awakening, Beecher was one of many voices who urged that virtuous education was the essential means by which Americans could maintain their recently won liberties. For Beecher, becoming the president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, was his opportunity to further Protestant education. Other voices articulating the critical need for a virtuous republican education were common school advocates such as Horace Mann. While promising to provide education open to all students regardless of economic status or religious affiliation, common school educators presented a distinctly Protestant interpretation of American identity, a fact that brought them into conflict with the growing Catholic population.

For both awakening revivalists and common school advocates, their reform impulses required a unified effort that crossed denominational lines. Since Protestants had composed the vast majority in America since the colonial era with their religious ideals shaping the character of the republic, generally to be an American was to be a Protestant. Thus, although this was a period in which Protestants separated into increasingly more denominational divisions, many sought to overlook their differences to unify in opposition to Catholicism. With the goal of

¹ Beecher, *Plea*, 43.

preserving the American system by creating a virtuous citizenry, these nineteenth-century Protestant reformers emphasized the value of education, sought unity through denominational cooperation, and drew sharp contrast between the Old World and the New. In doing so, Catholics became competitors with them in education, Christians that did not fit within their Protestant consensus, and representatives of the very Old World regression they shunned.

Education was an essential tool for preserving Protestant American identity. For Beecher, this was especially true as he viewed the mission field of the western frontier, which he believed to hold America's political and spiritual future. In July 1830, he wrote to his daughter Catherine that "the moral destiny of our nation, and all our institutions and hopes, the world's hopes, turns on the character of the West."² While recognizing the region's grand potential, he questioned "what will become of the West, if her prosperity rushes up to such a majesty of power while those great institutions linger which are necessary to form the mind, the conscience, and the heart of that vast world."³ His concern was not that the West did not have any educators, but he feared the influence of those educators already there, explaining that "the competition is now for that of preoccupancy in the education of the rising generation, in which Catholics and infidels have got the start of us."⁴ Chief in his mind was the concern over Catholic competition in winning the hearts and minds of the many people who were settling in the West, far from eastern influence.

More than merely a region, the American West represented a concept, informed by Americans' long history of viewing wilderness as both a land of opportunity and a foe to be

² Lyman Beecher, *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, ed. Barbara Cross (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1961), II:167.

³ Beecher, *Plea*, 31.

⁴ Beecher, *Autobiography*, II:167.

subdued. To men like Beecher, the wilderness threatened to bereave men of the benefits of civilization, allowing them to lose proper restraint. Consequently, to avoid the wilderness overtaking men, the goal was to cultivate, or civilize, the wilderness.⁵ Articulating this imperative for subduing the land, Beecher declared advancement of religious education a productive means of accomplishing this: “The sun and the rain of heaven are not more sure to call forth a bounteous vegetation, than Bibles, and Sabbaths, and schools, and seminaries, are to diffuse intellectual light and warmth for the bounteous fruits of righteousness and peace.”⁶ Beecher’s decision to leave the civilized East and venture west appeared to mirror the quest of his Puritan predecessors to redeem the wilderness for true Christianity.⁷ While Frederick Jackson Turner explained that wilderness gave men the opportunity for “continually beginning over again on the frontier,” he also noted apprehensions that removing oneself from America’s eastern core could lessen the attachment to the American way of life, corrupting manners and political persuasions.⁸ For Turner, Beecher’s *Plea* was representative of New Englanders’ anxiety about losing political, economic, and religious oversight of western settlements.⁹ Acting on the conviction that the wilderness of the West desperately needed civilized eastern influence, Beecher embraced his western post as a means of safeguarding the American way of life against the danger of corruption.

Fueling his apprehension was the region’s long history as contested territory among

⁵ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 25-32.

⁶ Beecher, *Plea*, 37.

⁷ James W. Fraser, *Pedagogue for God’s Kingdom: Lyman Beecher and the Second Great Awakening in America* (Landam, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 99-100; Nash, *Wilderness*, 35-39.

⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 2, 33-35.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

European nations and the native peoples. The captivity narrative played a formative role in shaping Puritan ideas about the largely unsettled West. Grappling with the West's uncertain fate and strategic position, Beecher said of Catholics that "their policy points them West, the destined centre of civilization and political power . . . bounded on the north by a Catholic population, and on the south by a continent not yet emancipated from their dominion."¹⁰ He concluded that such geography offered them just the opportunity for extending papal control over the United States and believed that this control was becoming a reality since Catholics had already reached the Indians through their mission work and established parochial schools that many Protestant children attended.¹¹ In offering free education, Catholics appeared to Beecher as having far from benevolent intentions. He accused Catholic educators of trying to wield power over the minds of American children, stating that "by underbidding and gratuitous instruction" Catholics sought "to monopolize the education of the coming generations."¹² He entreated his audience: "I am pressing upon republican America that it is better for her to educate her population by her own sons and money, than to rely on school-masters and charitable contributions of the despotic governments of Catholic Europe. . . ."¹³ In Beecher's mind, Catholic involvement in education offered the very inroad that tyrannical powers needed to undermine Protestant Christianity and the American way of life.

Through his move from Connecticut to Ohio, Beecher exhibited the westward orientation of the century. Calling Cincinnati, Ohio, "the London of the West," Beecher soon made this

¹⁰ Beecher, *Plea*, 117.

¹¹ Beecher, *Autobiography*, I:167.

¹² Beecher, *Plea*, 75.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

burgeoning city his base of operations.¹⁴ By the time of his arrival in 1832, Cincinnati had become a strategic center for influencing the West due to its location on the Ohio River and its immense growth. Remarking on Cincinnati's rapid transformation from frontier outpost into a bustling metropolis, the English visitor Frances Trollope wrote that "though I do not quite sympathize with those who consider Cincinnati as one of the wonders of the earth, I certainly think it a city of extraordinary size and importance, when it is remembered that thirty years ago the aboriginal forest occupied the ground where it stands; and every month appears to extend its limits and its wealth."¹⁵ Declaring it a sin to neglect the region's need for Protestant education, he declared that "the safety of our republic depends upon the intelligence, and moral principle, and patriotism, and property of the nation."¹⁶ To combat the apparent threat to American political and religious liberty, Beecher preached for moral reform through education to overcome ignorance, which he deemed the basis of foreign tyranny.

Emphasizing the power of human activity to accomplish spiritual change and societal transformation, the revivals of the Second Great Awakening frequently inspired reform efforts. Although Protestants were divided into numerous denominations, many sought to blur their distinctions and unite to achieve common goals. By identifying social issues larger than their own interdenominational disagreements, many Protestants sought to work together, finding commonality in furthering a generalized Protestantism that became accepted as a kind of national religion. As a prominent New England revivalist, Beecher represented these ideals in his own ministry. An examination of Beecher's religious training and ministerial goals reveals his

¹⁴ Lyman Beecher to Catherine Beecher, Boston, July 8, 1830, in *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, II:167.

¹⁵ Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. Donald Arthur Smalley (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1949), 43.

¹⁶ Beecher, *Plea*, 48, 50.

inheritance of anti-Catholicism and his pursuit of revival by whatever means necessary.

During the 1790s, Beecher attended Yale to prepare for the ministry, studying under Reverend Timothy Dwight. Dwight's ideals proved to have great influence on his pupil's own ministry. Dwight fervently supported revivals and the Connecticut religious establishment while vehemently opposing the liberalizing trends that had issued from the Revolution. Dwight held no regard for the French as he regretted the wartime alliance. He believed that the French Catholic faith had fomented New England's struggles with the Indians, tainting the Puritan piety that had guided New England society.¹⁷ Through association with Dwight, Beecher came to recognize "a new era of revivals" unseen since the days of Jonathan Edwards, remarking that "a new day was dawning as I came on stage, and I was baptized into the revival spirit."¹⁸ Deeply influenced by his mentor, Beecher effusively wrote, "I love him as my own soul, and he loved me as a son."¹⁹ Consequently, Beecher's own ministry carried on his mentor's commitments to promoting revival, looking to the Puritan past, and opposing Catholic influence.

From Dwight, Beecher learned how to promote revival through convicting sermons and voluntary societies. Upon his graduation, Beecher began his pastoral ministry in New England churches guided by his vision of preparing for the millennium, dedication to moral reform, and policy of moderation. He was a preacher who hearkened to the past, confronted the present, and pushed toward the future. As Dwight had lamented the liberalization of religion during and after the Revolution, especially the toleration of Catholicism, Beecher, likewise, desired a return to the rigorous morality and intense commitment to biblical truth of the Puritan past. However, he also emphasized the value of Christian activity in the present. Like many other reformers of his day,

¹⁷ Hanson, *Necessary Virtue*, 204-210.

¹⁸ Beecher, *Autobiography*, I:45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I:27.

he desired to prepare society for Christ's millennial reign on earth. As a spirit of voluntarism fueled the revival spirit, many societies emphasized the value of Protestant morality and religious education, including the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), and the American Tract Society (1825).²⁰ Reflecting his belief that morality was essential for preserving the American system, he participated in forming the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the Promotion of Good Morals and delivered his 1813 sermon entitled "A Reformation of Morals Practical and Indispensible." Another voluntary society that received his support was the Charitable Society for the Education of Indigent Pious Young Men for the Ministry of the Gospel.²¹ His preaching and participation in these voluntary associations foreshadowed his program of moral reform in the West, as he championed Lane's educational vision through his anti-Catholic *Plea*.

For Beecher, ushering in the millennium was a goal American Christians could achieve through moral purity. His conviction that Christ's kingdom would arise on American soil fueled his pursuit of religious activity in the West. At the beginning of his *Plea*, Beecher offered a grand account of the opportunities for national growth and advancement of Christianity through westward expansion. Just as his New England forefather, Jonathan Edwards, had declared that the millennium may arise in America, Beecher agreed, placing hope in the West for the future of America and the cause of Christ.²² Endeavoring to foster the environment necessary for the millennium to begin, Beecher assumed the roles of missionary and prophet, delivering a message of potential hope as well as potential peril, depending on the effectiveness of Protestant influence in the region. This perspective gave him the reputation of a visionary who was always ready to

²⁰ Gaustad and Schmidt, *Religious History*, 140-142.

²¹ Fraser, *Pedagogue*, 20, 32-33.

²² Beecher, *Plea*, 10; *Ibid.*, 6.

face the next challenge, whether it was Unitarian liberalism, the evils of alcohol, or Catholicism in the West. Reverend D. Howe Allen, one of Beecher's Lane colleagues, praised him as man of prophetic vision who continually sought the next challenge to embrace as his own cause.²³

Recognizing an uncertain future for American democracy and Christian morality in the West, Beecher committed himself to securing the region for Protestant revival.²⁴

Guiding Beecher's ministry was his pursuit of denominational cooperation as he recognized national and religious unity as essential for ushering in the millennium.²⁵ Although Dwight and Beecher had fought to preserve Connecticut's religious establishment, the state's constitution of 1818 brought its end. Moving forward from this defeat and recognizing it as an opportunity for a new era of religious activity, Beecher embraced denominational cooperation.²⁶ While Beecher's reform efforts demonstrated his willingness to move beyond differences and reach compromise, they also showed that he saw Catholicism as a hindrance to Christian unity.

A clear example of Beecher's capacity for compromise to further revival was his truce with Charles G. Finney, whose "New Measures" he had once vehemently opposed. Finney's methods of extemporaneous preaching and calling for men and women to take public action to change their spiritual states profoundly affected many of his hearers, but they also inspired concern among some of his fellow ministers.²⁷ In July 1827, Beecher labeled Finney and a

²³ Diarca Howe Allen, *The Life and Services of Rev. Lyman Beecher, as president and professor of theology in Lane Seminary. A commemorative discourse, delivered at the anniversary, May 7th, 1863, by Rev. D. Howe Allen* (Cincinnati: Johnson, Stephens, and Co., 1863), 5-6, 22.

²⁴ Beecher, *Plea*, 11.

²⁵ Fraser, *Pedagogue*, 29.

²⁶ Gaustad and Schmidt, *Religious History*, 139.

²⁷ Charles Finney, *The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney: The Life Story of America's Greatest Evangelist in His Own Words*, ed. Helen Wessel (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1977), 57, 109, 158. Finney's revival methods prompted immediate response, urging those desiring conversion to stand up within the crowd and eventually instituting the "anxious seat" as a place to which these hopeful converts could come for spiritual counsel.

pastor who hosted his revivals as “disturbers of the churches” and issued this bold warning: “Finney, I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come into Connecticut and carry a streak of fire to Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I’ll meet you at the State line, and call out all the artillerymen, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I’ll fight you there.”²⁸ However, in spite of Beecher’s fiery tone during the summer of 1827, by spring 1828, he reached a truce with Finney.²⁹ In 1828, he wrote his friend Reverend Asahel Nettleton, who had also been concerned about Finney, explaining his decision to seek peace. Beecher argued that tolerating Finney’s different approach would be more useful to the revival cause than continuing to squabble: “though some revivals may be so badly managed as to be worse than none . . . yet they be, on the whole, blessings to the Church.”³⁰ Moderation enabled him to recognize that even though he disagreed with Finney’s methods, he could still appreciate their value for reaching people.

Beecher’s pursuit of moderation did, however, have its limits. With unsettled disputes between Protestants and Catholics dating to the Reformation, he viewed Catholic influence as an intolerable disruption to the harmony necessary for the millennium. By contrast, although Finney’s ministry countered Catholic ideas and influence, he did not make this opposition a central theme. A strong advocate for revival, Finney did oppose liturgy, rituals, and catechisms that he believed were distractions from heartfelt, individual religious experiences, but he did not participate in the vocal anti-Catholicism of his day.³¹ Two noteworthy encounters with Catholics

²⁸ Beecher, *Autobiography*, II:74-75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 76-77.

³⁰ Lyman Beecher to Asahel Nettleton, Philadelphia, May 28, 1828, in *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, II:77-79; Fraser, *Pedagogue*, 62-68.

³¹ Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, “Charles G. Finney and Evangelical Anti-Catholicism,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 45.

during his revivals demonstrate his moderate stance, especially compared with Beecher. The first was the dramatic testimony of a Roman Catholic tailor, whom Finney had convinced to attend his Sunday meetings before allowing the man to take his measurements. During one of the meetings, the tailor testified that Catholicism had made him fearful of reading the Bible, but the revival revealed to him salvation through Christ.³² The other Catholic convert had been a lawyer in Rochester, who, upon his conversion became a minister. Much to Finney's astonishment, this man ultimately became a Catholic priest who advocated revivals in that church. Although Finney disagreed with Catholicism, he remarked that the man "seems to be an earnest minister of Christ, given up, heart and soul, to the salvation of Roman Catholics."³³ These are much kinder words than Beecher would have deemed appropriate.

While Beecher spent many years of his ministry in the East, he embraced the task of carrying the revival westward by helping to raise up a new generation of Protestant preachers there. Established in 1828, Lane Theological Seminary was to provide young men lacking economic means with a seminary education, a cause that Beecher had championed earlier in his ministry.³⁴ An 1832 promotional pamphlet outlined the "Character, Advantages, and Present Prospects" of Lane while presenting its Theological Department as a direct answer to the needs of the West in its strategic Cincinnati location: "All who are acquainted with the urgent demand for a greater number of able and faithful ministers in this great valley, are prepared to appreciate the importance of having a Theological Seminary of a high order, in some central point in the western states, at which our increasing hundreds of young men can qualify themselves for

³² Finney, *Autobiography*, 101-103.

³³ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

³⁴ *History of the Foundation and Endowment of the Lane Theological Seminary* (Cincinnati: Ben Franklin Printing House, 1848), 4.

extensive usefulness in western churches.”³⁵ Based in the city of Cincinnati that not too long ago had been a frontier town, Lane could become a kind of base for Protestant activity in the West.

The seminary struggled from the beginning. Having received its charter from the General Assembly of Ohio in February 1829, Lane acquired its first teacher in the spring and began instructing three to four students in the fall. From its inception, Lane needed money and enlisted its board members as well as its first teacher to try to garner support; but experiencing little fundraising success, their teacher resigned after only one year. By fall 1830, the school was at a crisis point, finding itself without professors, students, or facilities, causing the seminary’s Board of Trustees to conclude that the seminary would surely fail without eastern support.³⁶ When offered the presidency of Lane, Beecher accepted, declaring “that duty to Christ called him to the West.”³⁷ As a man who embraced crises as opportunities to advance the cause of Christ, Beecher assumed his post in late 1832 with the mission of rescuing the seminary.

Tasked with gaining eastern support for Lane, Beecher set out on a fundraising trip in 1834, using his *Plea* to warn fellow easterners of the perils of Catholic influence on western education. Declaring that “the destiny of the West” depended on whether Catholics or Protestants held control over the region’s education, Beecher stated that education was capable of advancing either “the purposes of superstition, or evangelical light, of despotism, or liberty.”³⁸ Beecher viewed education as a holy mission through which “a redeeming spirit is rising which

³⁵ *The Cincinnati Lane Seminary and Walnut Hill School. Its Character, Advantages, and Present Prospects. January 1832*, (Cincinnati: Robinson and Fairbank, 1832), 4.

³⁶ *History of the Foundation and Endowment*, 10; Lawrence Thomas Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Antislavery in Antebellum America* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), 30-37.

³⁷ *History of the Foundation and Endowment*, 11.

³⁸ Beecher, *Plea*, 12.

will save the nation.”³⁹ By defining Protestant education as the primary weapon in defense of American democracy, he told his eastern brethren that support for Lane Seminary equaled support for the endurance of the American system.⁴⁰ Chosen amidst Lane’s financial crisis, Beecher proved capable of lending necessary credibility to the school, garnering its desperately needed funding, and expanding the student population through his anti-Catholic *Plea*.⁴¹ As a man always ready to confront the next crisis, Beecher came to Lane during its perilous early years and rescued it from failure by successfully uniting the destiny of the seminary with that of American democracy.

Beecher’s *Plea* was just one example from the body of popular anti-Catholic literature that emerged during this period, contrasting the New World ideals of America with those of Old World Catholicism. Beecher’s arguments in his *Plea* articulated the intertwining of religious and political concerns that characterized debates over Catholicism in America. Famed for his work with the telegraph, Samuel F.B. Morse also gained renown for his virulent anti-Catholicism published in the *New-York Observer*. In 1835, he published a collection of articles written under the pseudonym Brutus in *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*, meant to expose the treachery of Catholicism, a religious system he believed would bring the demise of American institutions. He specifically attacked the mission-aid society as a means by which foreign Catholic despots were trying to subvert the American system.

Foreign visitors to America also weighed in on this debate over the compatibility of Catholicism with the American system. Michael Chevalier, a Frenchman who visited America

³⁹ Beecher, *Plea*, 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-31.

⁴¹ Allen, *The Life and Services*, 10. “It may be comprehensively stated here that, in the three years following the spring of 1833, Mr. Vail, aided by Dr. Beecher, raised at the East subscriptions to the amount of \$40,000 for a fourth professorship, and for the erection of a chapel and a professor’s house.” *History of the Foundation and Endowment*, 14.

between 1833 and 1835, saw democracy as an outgrowth of Protestantism's "republican" nature, concluding that American democracy would be impossible to replicate in the context of the "monarchical" Catholic religion.⁴² As discussed previously, Tocqueville recognized American Christianity as "democratic and republican," but he did not see that Catholics would be ill-suited for participation in American society. Believing that the Catholic faith inspired a strong sense of equality among its adherents, Tocqueville argued that Catholics would make good citizens.⁴³ By contrast, Beecher clearly refused to recognize any merit in Catholicism for promoting good citizenship and used his *Plea* to argue that Catholicism could never exist peacefully with American democracy.

During Beecher's 1834 fundraising tour, anti-Catholic sentiment turned into violence in Boston. Visiting the city in August, he delivered his address at three of the city's churches, requesting support for Lane Seminary to oppose Catholic influence in the West. This was just the day before an angry mob attacked the nearby Ursuline Charlestown Convent, setting fire to the property and requiring a complete evacuation of the nuns and their pupils.⁴⁴ This incident showed how attacks from the pulpit and through the pen could aggravate violence in the streets.

In the tradition of the Puritan captivity narrative, nineteenth-century convent literature articulated fears of spiritual and physical danger in the hands of Catholic captors. In early New England, Catholic Indians represented the haunting presence of impure religion, a concern evident in John William's 1707 account as he struggled with losing his children to the Catholic

⁴² Michael Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States*, in *Through Other Eyes: Some Impressions of American Catholicism by Foreign Visitors from 1777 to the Present*, edited by Dan Herr and Joel Wells. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), 38-39, 41.

⁴³ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 337-338.

⁴⁴ Billington, Protestant Crusade, 72-76; "Burning of the Charlestown Convent," *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 12, 1834, *The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition*, <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/949.htm> (accessed March 10, 2012). Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire & Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 165-166.

faith.⁴⁵ Within the context of nineteenth-century Romanticism, the exaltation of domesticity, and the heartfelt religion of the Second Great Awakening, captivity literature transitioned from a narrative of spiritual endurance to one of emotional experience. Two profoundly influential captivity narratives, Rebecca Read's *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) and Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* (1836), followed this theme of revealing the emotional trauma supposedly suffered by young women at the hands of Roman Catholic priests and nuns.⁴⁶ Desiring to guard traditional domesticity and save vulnerable women from the secrecy of confessionals and convents, concerned readers opposed convents, especially in the education of Protestant girls.

The violence against the Charlestown Convent in 1834 showed apparent connections with Beecher's fiery preaching. Although he attempted to exonerate himself from provoking the crime, his rhetoric certainly did nothing to assuage the existing antipathy between Protestants and their Catholic neighbors.⁴⁷ In September 1834, the *Christian Examiner* seemed to suggest Beecher's culpability as it described "*The late Outrage at Charlestown*" as perpetuated "in part perhaps by the writings and preaching of some one or more of those pests of our community, who seem to have little other notion of religion, than that it is a subject about which men's passions may be inflamed, and that they may be made to hate each other."⁴⁸ Revealing the significance of Protestant fears of Catholic institutions, Jenny Franchot argued that the violence against the convent served as an important catalyst for the growth of nineteenth-century anti-

⁴⁵ Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 96-98.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁷ Beecher, *Autobiography*, II:251.

⁴⁸ "Notices and Intelligence: The late Outrage at Charlestown," *The Christian Examiner and General Review* 17, no. 1 (Sept. 1834): 133. Schultz, *Fire & Roses*, 166.

Catholicism.⁴⁹ Although Beecher experienced great success in his fundraising efforts, his anti-Catholic campaign became associated with violence and received criticism as nothing more than a fundraising ploy.

In response to Beecher's *Plea*, James Hall penned *The Catholic Question*, in which he criticized Protestant attacks against Catholics as examples of the majority taking advantage of the minority.⁵⁰ He lamented that the American public seemed to hunger for sensational anti-Catholic literature so that the production of such pieces was "a part of the regular industry of the country." He further declared that "ingrained by education," prejudice against Catholics "has grown with our growth" as a nation.⁵¹ Hall found American Catholics as loyal to democracy as any other citizens, and since they were still so few in number compared with the total population, he deemed the fear of dangerous Catholic influence to be wholly unfounded.⁵² Criticizing the motives behind Beecher's *Plea*, Hall caustically remarked that, "We are happy to learn . . . that he did not neglect in his great love for 'the West,' and his terror of Austria, and ignorance, and papacy, and the wild Irish, the main object of his visit to New England, which was to raise money for Lane Seminary. . . ." ⁵³ Hall concluded that, far from describing real threats, Beecher's *Plea* was nothing more than a fundraising endeavor that played upon eastern fears of Catholic influence in the West.

Regardless of Beecher's motives in delivering his *Plea*, his address clearly articulated the tensions of nineteenth-century life concerning the character of the West and the future of

⁴⁹ Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 136.

⁵⁰ James Hall, *The Catholic Question, to which are annexed critical notices of A Plea for the West, from the Western Monthly Magazine of 1835, by James Hall, Esq. (Cincinnati: Catholic Telegraph Office, 1838)*, 3-4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 26.

American democracy. Uniting ideas about the wilderness, millenarian aspirations for the future, and nativist conspiracy theories, Beecher's powerful rhetoric demonstrated the crisis of American identity created by the convergence of revival Christianity, large-scale European immigration, and westward expansion. Locating himself on the frontier battleground at Lane, Beecher assumed a prophetic role and delivered a fearful message, declaring that "strong language is demanded; for this giant nation sleepeth and must be awaked."⁵⁴ For Beecher, anti-Catholicism became an effective tool for promoting reform in western education, aiming to bring America one step closer to initiating Christ's millennial reign.

Inspired by a similar reforming vision, common school advocates in the East shared the belief that virtuous education was an indispensable safeguard of the republic, especially in light of the country's rapid growth. Valuing denominational unity, they trusted the King James Bible to forge a common religious character by accommodating diverse beliefs. However, common school conflicts during the 1840s in New York and Philadelphia revealed the difficulty of defining a single national identity. The growing Catholic population challenged the common school ideal since they did not fit within the distinctly Protestant orientation of the country and of public education. For common school advocates, the King James Bible seemed an apt vehicle for inspiring common Christian virtue and patriotism that crossed denominational lines, but religious conflict persisted and precluded their desired religious harmony.

Chosen as text for promoting Christian virtue in the classroom, the King James Bible was intended to be a book of unity since its inception in the early seventeenth century. A brief examination of its creation demonstrates its long held role in promoting national and religious unity and highlights one of the King James Bible's essential features, the absence of marginal

⁵⁴ Beecher, *Plea*, 76.

notes. The fact that this Bible had no marginal notes proved a key issue in the common school debates of the nineteenth century.

Desiring national and religious unity, King James I assembled Anglican and Puritan leadership at Hampton Court in January 1604. Since the Church of England officially used the Bishops' Bible and many clergy and laity used the Geneva Bible, some feared that multiple texts undermined religious relations and the credibility of the Church of England. Although the Anglican and Puritan participants at Hampton Court held different aims for seeking revisions of the official English Bible, their meeting led to the production of a translation that united English speakers.⁵⁵ King James hoped "that some especial pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation" for the English people. Desiring loyalty among his subjects, he specified that "no marginal notes should be added," explaining that the Geneva Bible included "some notes very partial, untrue, seditious and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits," which were annotations that favored opposition to monarchs.⁵⁶ Discussing biblical annotations in the context of period literature, William Slights characterizes marginal notation as "a series of preemptive strikes in the white space intended to defend the perimeter of Scripture from the unholy attack of contending sects."⁵⁷ Inspired in part as a reaction against the interpretive annotations of the Geneva Bible, the King James Bible includes few marginal notes, not for the purpose of explaining a passage's meaning but only for clarifying translations or

⁵⁵ David Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20, 81-84.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History*, 84.

⁵⁷ William Slights, "'Marginall Notes That Spoile the Text': Scriptural Annotation in the English Renaissance" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (April 1992): 258. Although English translators often showed hesitancy about adding marginal notes to Scripture since they were not the direct recipients, the Matthew's Bible and the Geneva Bible show the use of annotations as efforts to prevent the formation of wrong beliefs (260-262). Slights further notes that through the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, this pattern of Bible production developed: "Each time an elaborately margined Bible rolled off the press, it was followed by one or more modestly annotated versions with just enough marginalia to counteract what were viewed as the more bizarre glossorial excesses of the previous one" (268-269).

referencing related passages.⁵⁸ Since scriptural annotations appeared to be potential weapons of religious combat or means of justifying disloyalty, King James opposed notations to ward off conflict. As history would show, the King James Bible became a version shared among English speakers across denominational lines so that speaking the language of American culture meant being conversant in the language of this text.⁵⁹

The widespread use of the King James Bible secured its place in the development of American public education. As King James had recognized the value of Christian unity and virtue for solidifying his kingdom, so Americans valued moral education to prepare children for dutiful citizenship. The pursuit of unity was evident in the name and the program of common school education. Leading the standardization of Massachusetts common schools during the 1830s and 40s, Horace Mann proposed an educational plan of instructing children in those things that all Americans could hold in common while avoiding disputable matters, especially in religion and politics.⁶⁰

Although the Second Great Awakening had seen the division of Protestantism into even more denominations, Protestants increasingly came to identify anti-Catholicism as a point of common ground. Philip Hamburger describes the conception that many Americans had of their nation as being “harmonized by Protestantism,” explaining that “as different denominations increasingly indulged in internal quarrels, they found anti-Catholicism all the more important for its capacity to bind them together.”⁶¹ Similarly, Timothy Smith defines the guiding principle of

⁵⁸ Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History*, 88; Slights, “Scriptural Annotations,” 270.

⁵⁹ Mark Noll, *The King James Version of the Bible in American History*, webcast, Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3895 (accessed July 7, 2011).

⁶⁰ Lawrence A. Cremin, “Horace Mann’s Legacy,” in *The Republic and the School: Horace Mann on the Education of Free Man*, ed. Lawrence A. Cremin (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1957), 3-15.

⁶¹ Hamburger, *Separation*, 213.

nineteenth-century public education as “an interdenominational Protestant ideology” for its emphasis on smoothing over doctrinal differences to foster a sense of common national and religious identity.⁶²

For many common school advocates, the Bible was the essential anchor for keeping non-sectarian education virtuous. While valuing the influence of Christianity on education, Mann opposed private denominational schools, arguing that they taught children “to wield the sword of polemics with fatal dexterity” so that the gospel was not “a temple of peace” but “an armory of deadly weapons, for social, interminable warfare.”⁶³ Mann faced criticism from those who feared that non-sectarianism was generic moralism that obscured the Christian message. However, he dismissed their arguments by declaring that “if any man’s creed is to be found in the Bible, and the Bible is in the schools, then that man’s creed is in the schools.”⁶⁴ Mann believed that his plan would not discriminate against any students, even “those who, in the imperfect light of the world, are seeking, through different avenues, to reach the gate of heaven.”⁶⁵

Several characteristics of the King James Bible seemed to make it a perfect fit for a non-sectarian common school curriculum. Familiarity with this version was common across denominational lines. Also, the absence of interpretive marginal notes was consistent with the spirit of an enlightened America that urged discerning truth for oneself. However, common school leaders failed to acknowledge that a significant portion of the American population did

⁶² Timothy Smith, “Protestant School and American Nationality, 1800-1850,” *Journal of American History* 53, no. 4 (March 1967): 680.

⁶³ Horace Mann, *First Annual Report*, in *The Republic and the School*, 33.

⁶⁴ Horace Mann, *Twelfth Annual Report*, in *The Republic and the School*, 105.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

not hold the King James Bible as their common biblical text or place confidence in non-sectarianism.

As Catholics immigrated to America, their ethnic and religious traditions forced them to stand out from the Anglo-Saxon Protestantism that predominated common schools. English-speaking Catholics used the Douay-Rheims Bible, a late sixteenth-century vernacular translation, which held the imprimatur of the Roman Catholic Church.⁶⁶ In preparing the Rheims New Testament, translators declared that Protestant attacks on Catholic doctrine necessitated the production of this translation to support the Catholic faith.⁶⁷ Alexandra Walsham explains that “the marginal notes were in many ways intended to counteract the perils of ‘private judgement’ and lay self-instruction” and thereby meet the people’s need for proper interpretation even in the absence of clergy.⁶⁸ Not only was the King James Bible not an approved version of the Scriptures for Catholics but it also encouraged their children to personally interpret the text, a violation of their tradition. Rather than a point of common ground for all Christians, the use of the King James Bible seemed to Catholics to reveal a Protestant bias in public education.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Alexandra Walsham, “Unclasping the Book? Post Reformation English Catholicism and the Vernacular Bible,” *Journal of British Studies* 42, no. 2 (April 2003): 143. In 1582, exiled Roman Catholics published the New Testament at Rheims, France, and later in 1609, they published the Old Testament at Douay, France. Walsham’s article provides an insightful analysis of this translation of the Roman Catholic Scriptures into the vernacular. Walsham argues that translation of the Bible into English was not exclusively a Protestant effort. The context for the production of the Douay-Rheims Bible shows that some Roman Catholics had come to believe that translating the Bible into English was a necessity for the Church’s welfare amidst persecution. She concludes that producing the Douay-Rheims was both a reaction to Protestant confrontation and an indication of growing confidence among Roman Catholics in the wisdom of vernacular translation.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 152-155. She explains that many Roman Catholics expressed concern that translation of the Bible into the vernacular would diminish the reverence it received. They recognized that when the Scriptures were in Latin and difficult to obtain, they received a higher level of respect than one would give to a common thing. They believed that reading the Bible ought to convey a similar sense of mystery as partaking of the Eucharist (156).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶⁹ Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 121-122.

In 1840, New York City became the site of controversy between the Public School Society and Bishop John Hughes, who represented a large body of Catholics who felt ostracized from the existing public education. Beginning in 1805, the Public School Society promised that through public funding it could provide a free, “virtuous education” open to all New York City children regardless of denomination or financial situation.⁷⁰ The society supported a specifically non-sectarian religious program that “without observing the peculiar forms of any religious Society” would “inculcate the sublime truths of religion and morality contained in the Holy Scriptures.”⁷¹ By 1826, this interdenominational society managed the only publicly funded schools in New York City. Although the Public School Society consciously promoted piety among its students in an effort to show that education could be Christian without being sectarian, its schools created an unwelcoming environment for Catholic children.⁷²

Petitioning the Board of Alderman in 1840, Bishop John Hughes represented concerned Catholics who argued that the Public School Society’s curriculum, including the King James Bible and Protestant-oriented textbooks, undermined their children’s faith. Hughes challenged the society’s claim of offering general Christian principles without any specific doctrines, saying that such teaching would produce no religion at all but, rather, “infidelity.”⁷³ Recognizing clear and “essentially anti-catholic” sectarianism in the society’s religious education, Hughes spoke for his fellow Catholics who desired the removal of derogatory references to their church from

⁷⁰ William Bourne, *History of the Public School Society of the City of New York* (New York: William Wood and Company, 1870), 3-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷² The Public School Society reserved Tuesday afternoons for various denominations to catechize children according to the wishes of their families, assembled children on Sunday mornings to direct them to the church of their parents’ choice, and stressed godliness in the home along with the value of religious instruction. Smith, “Protestant School,” 683.

⁷³ “Petition of the Catholics of the City of New York,” in *American Writings on Popular Education: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rush Welter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971), 101.

textbooks and sought equal religious accommodations for their children. Because of the biased curriculum, many parents who were unable to pay for private education refused to send their children to the society's free schools. Therefore, Hughes also pled for public funding for Catholic schools to better meet the educational needs of Catholic children. He promised that these schools would reserve religious instruction for after school hours only.⁷⁴ In its reply, the Board of Alderman maintained its confidence in the Public School Society's efforts, acknowledged the society's willingness to amend offensive textbook material, and refused public aid for Catholic schools.⁷⁵

While the Catholic petition questioned the appropriate use of public funding, it also inspired some Protestants to fiercely protect the King James Bible from a supposed plot to throw the Bible out of schools. A group of Methodist pastors defended exclusive reading from the King James Bible. They remarked that "we are sorry that the reading of the Bible, in public schools, without note or commentary, is offensive to them" and opposed Catholic use of the Douay-Rheims at school.⁷⁶ Although Hughes' request had been for the ability of Catholic children to refer to their church's version of the Bible, these pastors issued a dire warning. If the Catholic Bible were "put in the hands of the children, who may hereafter be the rulers and legislators of our beloved country," they would fall prey to the influence of annotations that supported the exclusive authority of the Roman Catholic Church, which would undermine

⁷⁴ "Petition of the Catholics of the City of New York," 103-108.

⁷⁵ "Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Alderman," in *American Writings on Popular Education*, 109-115.

⁷⁶ "Memorial of a Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church," in *American Writings on Popular Education*, 116-117.

republican liberties.⁷⁷ The New York public school controversy illuminated how differently Protestants and Catholics approached and interpreted religious liberty as they debated the use of the King James Bible.

Turmoil regarding Bible reading also broke out in Philadelphia. Since the establishment of the city's public schools in 1834, teachers had read the Bible, generally the King James version, "without note or comment." In 1838, a new law required the use of the Bible as a reading textbook, which meant that not only teachers but also students would be reading from the Bible. While having Catholic children listen to the King James Bible had not caused dispute, requiring them to actively participate in reading it did prove contentious. Catholic Bishop Francis Kenrick argued that the schools were inherently Protestant and thus, unfairly favored one religious group over another.⁷⁸ Throughout the early 1840s, various controversial events regarding Catholic Bible reading widened the growing rift between Philadelphia's Protestants and Catholics regarding religious education. A Catholic teacher faced dismissal for not reading from the King James Bible in her class, and Catholic children who would not read from the King James Bible or who brought the Douay-Rheims Bible experienced discipline and criticism. In November 1842, Kenrick approached the Philadelphia Board of Controllers and tried to explain that Catholics were not requesting that all public school students use the Douay-Rheims but

⁷⁷ "Memorial of a Committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church," 117. Although the Board of Alderman rejected the Catholic petition, Hughes' subsequent appeal to the New York legislature inspired the passage of the 1842 Mclay Bill. Faulting the Public School Society for the low attendance of common schools, this bill removed the society's control and placed New York public education under the guidance of elected officials. While the Mclay Bill provided some resolution regarding the disputed public funds for education, it could not alter the growing belief that Catholics were threatening the preservation of the Bible in American institutions. Gutjahr, *An American Bible*, 123-125.

⁷⁸ Vincent P. Lannie and Bernard C. Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory of God: The Philadelphia Bible Riots of 1840," *History of Education Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 46-51.

simply that Catholic students be permitted to use that Bible in accordance with their religious convictions.⁷⁹

Kenrick's plea met with mixed results. Characterizing Catholic activities as threats to the preservation of the Bible and the republic, a group of Protestant pastors formed the American Protestant Association with the desire "to awaken the attention of the community to the dangers which threaten the liberties, and the public and domestic institutions."⁸⁰ In spite of the pastors' opposition, in early 1843 the Board of Controllers decided to excuse children from Bible reading based on parental conviction and permit the use of an alternate version as long as it excluded annotations. Catholic children were still prevented from bringing the Douay-Rheims Bible to school because of its explanatory notes. While Kenrick's original request had been for what he saw as equal accommodations, Protestant opponents recast the debate so that a person was either for or against the Bible, depending on whose side he took.⁸¹

In 1844, developments in the debate transformed the verbal hostility into violent action. In March, Kenrick issued a stronger petition to the Board of Controllers, asking that either the Douay-Rheims be allowed for Catholic students or Bible reading be excluded altogether. While continuing to deny use of the Douay-Rheims, the board excused Catholics from all religious exercises in common schools. By May, dissatisfaction over the Bible debate melded with ethnic and economic tensions. The death of a Protestant young man during the conflict became a rallying cry for violent action against Catholics in the city, as various Catholic homes and

⁷⁹ Quoted in Lannie and Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory," 54-57.

⁸⁰ "The Launching of the American Protestant Association Against the Catholic Church, November 22, 1842," in *Documents of American Catholic History*, 264-265.

⁸¹ Lannie and Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory," 58-68.

churches became Protestant targets.⁸² From his home in New York City, diarist George Templeton Strong criticized Philadelphia's government for permitting the violence, writing on May 8 that "I would not live in such a hornets' nest as the City of Brotherly Love appears to be."⁸³ Although the May violence subsided after a few days, July witnessed another flare-up. A Fourth of July rally that urged Protestants to proudly defend the Bible to protect American Christianity and free-government, caused concern among Catholics. Preparing for possible renewed violence, members of St. Philip's Church gathered arms. Fear among angry Protestants that Catholics were arming themselves prompted another episode of rioting, which necessitated military intervention.⁸⁴

The New York school debates and the Philadelphia Bible Riots show how differently Protestants and Catholics understood religious freedom. While Catholics in both cities believed they were only requesting equal treatment under the law, Protestants interpreted challenges to the exclusive use of the King James Bible as equivalent to challenging the Bible itself. Examining the different interpretations of history and individual liberty held by Protestants and Catholics helps to explain why they seemed unable to find common ground regarding religion in public education.

Since the founding of the English colonies, the majority of Americans had thought of their national identity as essentially Protestant. Within the Protestant interpretation of history, the Reformation served as the pivotal event marking the dawn of Protestant-driven enlightenment and progress that contrasted with Catholic error and stagnation. From the Reformation onward, Protestants celebrated their role in history as furthering the triumph of text

⁸² Lannie and Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory," 72-79.

⁸³ Strong, *Diary*, 232-233.

⁸⁴ Lannie and Diethorn, "For the Honor and Glory," 81-87.

over image, overcoming the outward, visual, and “material” focus of Roman Catholicism with the inward, spoken, and “spiritual” emphasis of Protestantism. Some Protestants who opposed harsh anti-Catholicism did so because they viewed Catholicism as self-defeating, irrelevant, and thus, no real threat to Protestant Americans.⁸⁵ Refusing to view Catholicism as a threat was a far cry from respecting it as a religion worthy of toleration. Although the religious settlement forbade discrimination on the basis of one’s beliefs, the full implications of religious liberty for all remained unclear. How would Catholics, who seemed to represent the very Old World characteristics America had rejected, fit within this new country? Ruth Miller Elson’s extensive survey of nineteenth-century schoolbooks led her to conclude that “no theme . . . before 1870 is more universal than anti-Catholicism.”⁸⁶ Whether geography books, spelling books, or historical accounts, the materials used in public schools consistently disparaged Catholicism, whether as a false religion, as the cause of national stagnation, or as the faith of dissolute clergy.⁸⁷

In addition to divergent historical interpretations, Protestants and Catholics also held different interpretations of individual liberty. Describing the limited view of religious freedom during the nineteenth century, Tracy Fessenden explains that “freedom *from* rather than freedom for Catholics . . . had long been a fixture of American republicanism.”⁸⁸ Hamburger credits nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism with prompting a reinterpretation of American religious liberty to involve the separation between church and state, a previously unpopular concept that first gained prominence amidst the debates between Protestants and Catholics over school

⁸⁵ Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 12-15, 23.

⁸⁶ Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1964), 53.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-53.

⁸⁸ Tracy Fessenden, “The Nineteenth-Century Bible Wars and the Separation of Church and State,” *Church History* 74, no. 4 (Dec. 2005): 786.

funding.⁸⁹ Hamburger explains that Protestants could justify their use of school funds while denying that privilege to Catholics because they “tended to assume that, whereas Catholics acted as part of a church, Protestants acted in diverse sects as individuals.” Therefore, public support for Catholic education violated the separation between church and state while support for Protestant education did not.⁹⁰ Catholic clergy received criticism for engaging in politics, even while their Protestant counterparts became vocal spokesmen for political causes. Many Protestants sought to uphold a clear separation of church and state for Catholic clergy, considering it the only safeguard against becoming slaves to Rome.⁹¹

Controversies over the King James Bible emphasized the different approaches taken by Protestants and Catholics regarding biblical interpretation. American Protestants generally embraced making up one’s own mind as a hallmark of enlightened, republican virtue. Catholics, however, believed that they could be loyal citizens while maintaining their deference to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant interpretation of freedom of conscience meant keeping Bible reading free of commentary so that children could draw their own

⁸⁹ Hamburger, *Separation*, 10-11, 220. Hamburger argues that examining the development of attitudes toward the separation in America points to the centrality of anti-Catholicism in shaping notions of religious liberty. He explains that at the time of the nation’s founding, dissenters did not want religion separate from government. “Ever conscious of the broad relevance of their beliefs, their congregations, and the Christian church to their lives in this world, late eighteenth-century American dissenters advocated conceptions of religious liberty more compatible with their hopes for themselves and their Christianity” (20). They believed that it was important for their religious beliefs to influence the government in order to maintain morality. Rather than desiring separation, dissenters favored “laws that did not take cognizance of religion.” (85) “In contrast to the separation between church and state, which constrained both institutions, these antiestablishment demands for religious liberty constrained only the government” (94-95). Dissenters desired the passage of legislation respecting religion for protective purposes in such areas as property, exemptions, and marriages (107).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 246.

conclusions, but the Catholic interpretation of freedom of conscience would allow the choice to bring the Douay-Rheims Bible to school.⁹²

During the nineteenth century, reformers like Beecher and the common school advocates believed that American education needed to have its foundation in Protestant piety and historical consciousness. This proved especially important as the country expanded westward, encompassing wilderness in which Catholics had already gained notable influence. The growing Catholic population in northeastern cities made the preservation of American Protestant identity imperative. While Beecher's advocacy of Protestant education in the West, clearly identified Catholics as competitors from the outset, common school educators proposed that their program could accommodate all religious groups. Aspiring to develop an ideal educational system for fostering common virtue and patriotism in all men, many Protestants were confident that nondenominational Christianity would make this possible. Catholics, however, struggled to fit within a distinctly Protestant program.

Beecher's crusade to combat Catholic influence in the West and the common school controversies over the King James Bible demonstrated the persistence of Old World religious conflicts in America. Through rejecting national religious establishment and granting unprecedented religious liberty, the American republican system promised to achieve the high ideal of religious toleration and harmony unseen in the Old World. However, the anti-Catholicism that had long shaped the American religious and political character challenged commitments to respecting freedom of conscience in the increasingly diverse nineteenth-century society.

⁹² Fessenden, "The Nineteenth-Century Bible Wars," 791.

Conclusion

When Tocqueville identified American Christianity as “democratic and republican,” he encapsulated the close connection between America’s political and religious character.¹ While Americans held lofty ideals for religious liberty in their New World republic, the pursuit of national unity revealed the difficulty of truly granting liberty to all. Populated by a Protestant majority from the beginning, American culture developed a characteristically Protestant, anti-Catholic orientation. Thus, many of the same tensions that plagued Protestant and Catholic relations in the Old World emerged in America. Inherited from English history and shaped by experiences in America, anti-Catholic sentiment proved an influential force in the development of early American identity.

During the colonial, revolutionary, and antebellum eras, anti-Catholicism inspired unity among Protestant denominations while also causing religious division. While Protestants could find common ground in opposing Catholicism, the country struggled to achieve national unity, especially as anti-Catholic sentiment ostracized the growing Catholic population. Although Protestants composed the majority, the Catholic minority requested an equal share of religious liberty. Anti-Catholicism also displayed both variation and continuity. On the one hand, this sentiment surged and declined in accordance with national and world events. The continuity of anti-Catholicism throughout early American history forms the basis of this study, which draws connections across geographic boundaries and historical periods. As a theme running through America’s development, anti-Catholicism consistently helped American Protestants explain who they were. Defined by what they were not, Americans, like their English forefathers, fashioned an oppositional identity. Echoing seventeenth-century Whig political rhetoric, Americans

¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 333.

believed in the need for vigilance to safeguard national virtue against the corrupt influence of Catholicism.

During the colonial era, American settlers brought English anti-Catholicism to the New World. Settling the colonies amidst religious strife in England, the colonists carried their memories of Catholic threats to America in literature, public festivity, and political discourse. While part of the English empire, Americans participated in their country's conflicts with Catholic Spain and France and experienced threats of Catholic usurpation of the throne. Growing tensions with the mother country prompted American colonists to view English tyranny as the most pressing threat to their liberty. In arguing for their English rights, colonists appealed to their anti-Catholic English identity as they opposed their government.

During the Revolution, colonists recognized that the need for wartime alliance required them to temper their anti-Catholic sentiment. As Protestants fought alongside Catholics in the War for Independence, they were better able to recognize the cause of American freedom as a common one. In fashioning the new republic, the founding generation forbade national religious establishment and removed religious restrictions on Catholic political participation in many states. However, since Protestants greatly outnumbered Catholics, the country developed a distinctly Protestant character.

In the antebellum period, reformers placed great faith in the ability of education to safeguard the republic. Revivalist Lyman Beecher believed that the hope for the American West lay in the ability of Protestant education to defeat Catholic influence there. He believed that this would save the country from the tyranny that Catholicism would surely bring. Similarly uniting Americanism with Protestantism, common school advocates sought to mold a virtuous citizenry through a nonsectarian Protestant educational program. Valuing interdenominational

cooperation and frequently contrasting the Old World with the New, these reformers tended to identify Catholics as competitors, who hindered the American Protestant consensus and embodied fundamentally anti-American values.

From the public school controversies in the 1840s to the end of the century, the outcomes of the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics over religious education charted the course toward separate schooling and the eventual secularization of public schools. Catholic leaders, such as Hughes and Kenrick, increasingly poured their energies into parochial education, abandoning all hope for public education. Also, state Supreme Court decisions to end Bible reading in the public schools of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1873 and of Edgerton, Wisconsin, in 1890 indicated that religious diversity was forcing Americans to reconsider their application of religious freedom in the public school setting.²

The nineteenth century was a crucial time for the young country to establish itself and discover its political and religious identity. The prevailing Protestant values seemed essential for preserving the republic. Appearing to many as a countercultural religion, Catholicism challenged Protestant homogeneity. Many Protestants perceived Catholicism as a corrupt religious system with dangerous foreign ties.³ As greater numbers of Catholic immigrants came

² For more on the role of public school controversies in reshaping concepts of religious freedom, see Robert Michaelson's "Common School, Common Religion? A Case Study in Church-State Relations, Cincinnati, 1869-70," *Church History* 38, no. 2 (June 1969): 201-217. In light of these controversies, R. Laurence Moore examines the shifting role of the Bible in public education from teaching Christianity to inspiring discipline in "Bible Reading and Nonsectarian Schooling: The Failure of Religious Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Public Education," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (March 2000): 1581-1599.

³ David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (Sept. 1960): 211-212. Anti-Catholicism was not the only target of an uneasy Protestant majority. Established in 1830 by Joseph Smith, Mormonism was another religious system that many hated and feared as a threat to American society. Just as Protestants argued that Catholicism held its adherents in mindless obedience to a mysterious system, many believed the same of Mormon religious organization. Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22-23, 122-123. While one could identify and despise Catholicism for its foreignness, Mormonism, although countercultural, arose in America. Consequently, it

to America, the Catholic presence became more visible, and cultural confrontation seemed unavoidable. This survey of early American anti-Catholicism points to the conflict of two differing ideological systems, Americanism and Catholicism. These anti-Catholic episodes reveal at least three contrasting cultural values commonly held by Protestants versus those maintained by Catholics: homespun simplicity versus ornamentation, egalitarianism versus hierarchy, and independence versus foreign authority.

During the American Revolution, wearing simple homespun items rather than imported British goods testified to one's Patriot convictions. As America gained her independence, the value for simplicity in manner, speech, and style remained a distinguishing cultural characteristic. This carried over into religious worship as many American Protestant denominations reflected Puritan simplicity in their religious activity and church construction. By contrast, Catholic worship was far more ornate in ceremony, décor, and religious vestments. As Catholics began constructing elaborate cathedrals, their growing population presented Protestant Americans with reminders of monarchical Europe. Similarly, American egalitarianism largely eliminated signs of deference while emphasizing the common equality of all men. Therefore, physical displays of reverence or respect through bowing and kneeling as well as the principle of submission to Catholic hierarchy seemed to defy the American democratic spirit. Finally, American independence represented a rejection of the Old World, and the young country frequently sought to protect itself from being undermined by any foreign influence. Thus, the foreign-based Catholic Church seemed to challenge this independence, especially as people feared the ability of the Vatican to exercise its will over American government.

was easier to characterize Catholicism as un-American than it was for Mormonism, which emerged as a heretical element within the borders of Protestant America.

Providing a more modern example of this apprehension, during his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy regularly confronted public concerns that his Catholic faith would bind him to do the will of the pope rather than what was best for the American people. While his election was a remarkable event in the history of the American Catholic experience, Kennedy responded to these fears by describing religion as a private rather than public matter, creating a strong separation between sacred and secular.⁴ While many Protestants would admire a leader who allowed his religious convictions to guide all aspects of his life, some would likely have reservations over that assertion from a Catholic, fearing that submission to the pope could overcome wise governance.

The fundamental role of anti-Catholicism in shaping early American identity illuminates the difficult development of religious freedom. Long before modern controversies between Christians and secularists over the place of religion in America, Christians disputed with one another over the implications of religious freedom. Influential throughout America's early history, anti-Catholicism provided the materials for articulating an oppositional identity but hindered the country from achieving its ideal of equality. By trying to define themselves by what they were not, many nineteenth-century Americans failed to recognize that their country was quickly becoming a place defined by diversity, in which people of varying backgrounds and creeds could share in preserving American liberty.

⁴ Mark S. Massa, "A Catholic for President?: John F. Kennedy and the 'Secular' Theology of the Houston Speech, 1960," *Journal of Church & State* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1997).

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