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“No Popery! No French Laws!”: Anti-Catholicism during the American Revolution

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of History,
University at Albany, State University of New York
In partial fulfillment for the requirements
for graduation with honors in History

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Research Advisor: Christopher Pastore, Ph. D.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how widespread anti-Catholic sentiment unified the colonies against the British Crown during the early stages of the American Revolution. Also, this paper explores how loyalists utilized fear of Catholicism in order to undermine the Revolution, showing that anti-Catholic fearmongering played a vital role to both causes. Overtime, historians have placed varying emphasis on certain reasons behind the American Revolution. Since the Progressive Era, there has been a shift from economic reasons, like class conflict and the Crown's restrictive trade policies, to a more ideological stance, one that emphasizes philosophical influence and constitutional interpretations. Instead, this essay asserts that religious xenophobia played a significant role in the political changes of the Era of the American Revolution. We will explore how the Protestant religion defined English society, which made Catholicism subversive in the minds of Englishmen. When Parliament passed the Quebec Act of 1774, establishing Catholicism in North America, the American colonists believed that the terror of the inquisition would be thrust upon them. The colonial press railed against the Act, while many colonists rallied around the calling "No Popery! No French Laws!" However, after the rebellious colonists united with the French monarch, Loyalists began denouncing the Revolution as nothing more than a Catholic cabal. This essay looks to tell the story of Protestants using religious xenophobia in order to advance political agendas. We will look to the American Revolution in order to explore how fear of a societal outcast can unify people behind a common cause.

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Introduction

It was May 17, 1775 when the House of Lords convened to discuss one of the Crown's most controversial North American policies. According to the *South Carolina & American General Gazette*, on this day "the House of Lords was remarkably full" as the members of the House and "strangers" attended to hear Charles Pratt, Lord of Camden's condemnation of the Quebec Act of 1774.¹ An ardent advocate for colonial interests, Camden would once again attempt to push back the date of what he considered an inevitable event: the breaking apart of the British Empire. The House of Lords faced a crisis. Though there exists no record of the general feeling in the room, there can be little doubt that the outlook was grim, for Parliament was faced with the almost certain collapse of the British Empire. After reading a petition signed by the British subjects of Quebec Province, Lord Camden proposed the repeal of the Quebec Act and launched into a lengthy speech, attacking the Act and its harmful effects on the sanctity of the British Empire. This very body had passed the Act with little opposition a year previously, in May of 1774, since then, the conflict had drastically escalated.² The shot heard around the world had yet to be heard in Parliament, and the Whigs believed that this was their last chance at saving British North America.

Lord Camden's first critique regarded the extension of the boundaries of Quebec, which stretched from northern Canada down to the Mississippi River in the west. Lamenting this policy, Camden stated that there "could be no good reason for extending the limits of Quebec," and "that by drawing the limits of the province so close along the interior settlements of the old English colonies, so as to prevent their further progress, an eternal barrier was intended to be

¹"European Intelligence, May 18" *The South Carolina & American Gazette*, July 7-July 14, 1775
http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_396_032

² *American Archives, Fourth Series*, ed. Peter Force, (Washington, DC:1837) 169-171.

placed, like the Chinese wall, against the further extension of civil liberty and the Protestant religion.”³ Camden’s use of religion when criticizing the expansion of Quebec conveyed how important the spread of Protestantism was to eighteenth-century Britons. It was fundamentally intertwined with British identity.

Camden also attacked the provisions in the Quebec Act that created protections for the Catholic religion in the province. Camden denounced the notion that the Act was merely allowing for religious freedom. Instead, he argued that “the popish religion, though not in express terms, is in effect really and fully established in the province of Quebec.”⁴ According to Camden, protecting the Catholic religion would merely allow for the inhabitants to freely exercise Catholicism. However, the Act went further by permitting the Catholic clergy to enjoy all of their ecclesiastical rights and dues. Furthermore, it allowed for the establishment of a bishop in the province who was protected “in the exercise of his spiritual powers and function.”⁵ Finally, the Act created a tailor-made oath of supremacy that allowed Catholics to hold office. Camden emphasized the danger here, highlighting that “even the governor himself, may be of the Romish religion.”⁶ Essentially, the Crown had permitted the Catholic Church to be as powerful as it had been prior to the British conquest in 1760. He claimed that all of this blatantly violated a decree made by Queen Elizabeth I, “which forever exclude[d] the pope from all jurisdiction within the Kingdom of England.”⁷ To grant such privileges to the Catholic religion was in essence, fundamentally anti-British.

³ “Substance of Lord Camden’s Speech in the House of Lords, on May 17, 1775, on Presenting a Petition for the Repeal of the Quebec Bill.” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 19, 1775.

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_1286_020

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

Anti-Catholic anxieties and rhetoric had dominated British society for centuries before the Imperial Crisis. Indeed, by the mid-eighteenth century the fear of a papal takeover was well entrenched in the hearts and minds of Britons. In the aftermath of the Interregnum, a period of political upheaval during the seventeenth century (1649-1660), British society was in a state of shock, leaving the masses vulnerable to the slightest threat to their established ways of life. While Britain faced this time of uncertainty, several British authors bombarded the populace with anti-Catholic literature. Prominent writers like John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Jeremy Collier, and Elkanah Settle created an English identity that was enlightened, free, and Protestant. This identity was juxtaposed against Catholicism: an ignorant, perverse, greedy, unholy, and anti-British ideology. Through pamphlets, essays, and poems, many writers used the fear of a Catholic takeover in order to advance political agendas, and by doing so, Catholicism became synonymous with tyranny and violent upheaval. By the 1680s, religious ideology became intertwined with national identity, where to be English was to be Protestant, while Catholicism was subversive.⁸

The British Empire's very foundation stood upon hatred of the Catholic Church. In *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, historian David Armitage explained the tenor of anti-Catholic sentiment: "The common Protestantism of the Empire was not based on doctrines of salvation, the church, or of Jesus's divinity. Instead, and increasingly, it depended on a common anti-Catholicism that was more negative in content than affirmative in structure."⁹ The fear of Catholicism was furthered by violent conflicts such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which James II, a Catholic, was dethroned by William of Orange, a Protestant. In the eighteenth century

⁸Raymond D. Tumbleson, *Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁹ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 66.

there were several attempts to restore the Catholic Stuarts to the throne, the Jacobite Uprising of 1715 and the Revolt of 1745 being the most noteworthy. Because of conflicts like these, Catholicism was further cemented in the hearts and minds of Britons as dangerous to the order of civil society. Also, the British feared a more silent Catholic takeover, one that involved a slow infiltration of authority. Through clandestine means, Britain's vital institutions would be overrun by Catholics. They would infiltrate the government, the Anglican Church, and the military, and under the direction of the Pope in Rome, Britain's established free society would be dismantled. The Pope would force mass conversion under the threat of gruesome bodily harm, and the horrors of the inquisition would reign down over the British Empire. In this way, Catholicism became the phantom-like "other" that threatened British freedom.¹⁰

Throughout his speech, Camden's emphatic rhetoric painted a grim picture for British North America. His was a nightmarish scenario whereby the land surrounding the British colonies would fill with Roman Catholics. They would usurp the Indian trade, economically dominate the British colonists to the East, and slowly but surely erode British liberties and the Protestant religion. It was a truly terrifying prospect for the North American colonists, but it had far greater implications for the rest of the empire. The Crown had assented to the establishment of Catholicism within the British Empire, thereby opening the door to the infiltration of the British government. In the minds of the Whigs in parliament, the Quebec Act confirmed centuries of fears and anxieties. In Lord Camden's words, it appeared that the Act was "intended to extend the shackles of arbitrary power and popery over all the future settlements and colonies

¹⁰ Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

in North America.”¹¹ Given this image, who could blame the American colonists for their violent revolt?

Historians have given little credence to the Quebec Act as a cause of the American Revolution. In fact, in the historiography of the Imperial Crisis, the Quebec Act is vastly overshadowed by other ideological and economic factors, such as competing interpretations of the British Constitution or class conflict.¹² The relatively few historians who have covered it since the late nineteenth century have analyzed the Act from the angle of its intentions more than its consequences. More specifically, the debate over this complicated legislation provides a distinct divide between those who see it as one of Parliament’s Coercive Acts, and those who view it as a humane attempt to bring a people of foreign lineage, culture, language, and religion into an expansive empire.¹³ As for the consequences, historians are nearly unanimous in the

¹¹ “Substance of Lord Camden’s Speech in the House of Lords, on May 17, 1775, on Presenting a Petition for the Repeal of the Quebec Bill.” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 19, 1775.

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_1286_020

¹² Charles A. Beard, *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915); Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1920); Vernon Louis Parrington *Liberalism and Puritanism and the Colonial Mind: Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. I* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1927); John C. Ranney, “The Bases of American Federalism,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January 1946): 1–35; Edmund S. Morgan, “Colonial Ideas of Parliamentary Power, 1764–1766,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1948): 311–41; Stella F. Duff, “The Case against the King: The Virginia Gazettes Indict George III,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (July 1949): 383–97; Douglass Adair, “The Tenth Federalist Revisited,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (January 1951): 48–67; Bernard Bailyn *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Richard Hofstadter *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, and Parrington*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Edmund S. Morgan *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*, (New York: Norton, 1988); Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution, A history* (New York: Random House, 2002); Pauline Maier *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991).

¹³ Adam Shortt, “Review of The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution,” by Victor Coffin, *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Vol I*. (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1896); Victor Coffin, *The Province of Quebec Act and the Early American Revolution* (Madison WI: The University of Wisconsin, 1896); John G. Bourinot, *Canada Under British Rule* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1901); Duncan McArthur, “The New Régime,” in *Canada and its Provinces*, ed. Adam Shortt and A.G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow Book Company, 1914); C.W. Alvord, *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1917); Lionel Groulx, *Vers L’Emancipation* (Montreal: L’Action Française, 1921); W.P.M. Kennedy, *The Constitution of Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922); Marjorie G. Reid: “The Quebec Fur-Traders and Western Policy 1763-1774” *Canadian Historical Review*, 6 no.1, 1925: 15-32; Reginald Coupland, *The Quebec Act* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925); Chester Martin, *Empire and Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929); Louise Kellogg, “A Footnote to the Quebec Act,” *Canadian Historical Review* 13 no.2, 1932: 147-156; A.L. Burt, *The Old Province*

belief that the Quebec Act was extremely ill-timed and that it was ultimately a failure because it did not provide an adequate government for the French-Canadian population, nor the British who settled there.¹⁴ Whether the Quebec Act was designed with the rebellious colonies in mind or not, or if it provided an adequate government, is not the focus of this paper. Rather, it is an analysis of British society in the eighteenth century. Colonial reaction to the Quebec Act exposed an often times overlooked cultural phenomenon of the era: the use of anti-Catholic prejudices for political gain. Both Whigs and Loyalists utilized anti-Catholic prejudices in order to advance their political agendas during the American Revolution. For the Whigs, the Quebec Act provided the perfect evidence needed to arouse public support against a government that appeared to be infiltrated by Catholics.

But that did not end the story of anti-Catholic sentiment during the American Revolution. Just as the Continentals used the Quebec Act and British anti-papal prejudices to justify their rebellion, the Loyalist faction used the French alliance and those same anti-papal fears against the Continentals. Utilizing newspapers, broadsides, and sermons, the Loyalist faction employed that very same anti-Catholic bigotry to undermine the goals of the Revolution. In *No King, No Popery*, Francis D. Cogliano explained this transition, stating that “Loyalists ... retain[ed] a more ‘traditional’ view of popery, especially when their Whig rivals allied with France.”¹⁵ Just as the Whigs used the Quebec Act and fears of Catholicism, the Loyalists used the Franco-American alliance for political purposes.

of Quebec (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1933); Thomas Chapais, *Cours d’Histoire du Canada*, Vol. 1 (Quebec: J.P. Gareneau, 1934); Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-1793, Vol. II* (London: Longmans, 1964); Hilda Neatby, *Quebec During the Revolutionary Age, 1760-1791* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966).

¹⁴ Hilda Neatby, *The Quebec Act: Protest and Policy* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

¹⁵ Francis D. Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995) 154.

British bigotry towards Catholics severed as a pillar of society, and this paper seeks to explore its effects on the Revolutionary Era. Whigs and Loyalists used popular anti-Catholic fears in order to drum up support for their political causes from the 1760s until the early 1780s. The long-established specter that lurked clandestinely in the shadows of the empire became a vital political tool in the war of words. Whig reaction to the Quebec Act of 1774 is the starting point to explaining this phenomenon during the Imperial Crisis, and the French alliance will serve as the pivot point where “anti-popery” shifts from Whig sentiment to Loyalist. Through this analysis, what can we learn about the use of societal outcasts for political purposes? It appears that during a time of crisis, where the Crown and its colonists were at complete odds, they both used a time-tested political tool: widespread fear of the clandestine “other.”

I. Colonial Anti-Catholicism Prior to the Imperial Crisis

Anti-Catholic bigotry can be summed up in one word: “popery.” According to the Oxford dictionary, “popery” is a derogatory word which relates to “The doctrines, practices, and ceremony associated with the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church; papal power or domination; Roman Catholicism.”¹⁶ This definition presents a basic idea of what “popery” is. However, in order to fully understand the implications of it, we must look at examples of colonial anti-Catholic sentiment. The Colonies wrote of “popery” well before the Imperial Crisis. In fact, the first true influx of colonial anti-papal literature sprang up in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 and Jacob Leisler’s Rebellion in 1689.

¹⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed (2006), s.v. “popery.”

Printed in 1698 in New York, a pamphlet entitled *Loyalty Vindicated* is rich with Catholic fearmongering. Defending the actions of Jacob Leisler's rebellion, the author states "Capt. Leisler with his friends had taken hold of that wonderful Deliverance offered immediately from God to redeem His people from Slavery upon Earth, and Popish Damnation in Hell."¹⁷ The author evokes how damning Catholicism was in the mind of British colonists: it enslaved one in life, and sent them to hell in death. The author further evokes the destructive power of Catholicism, writing that God had delivered the Empire from "the two greatest plagues of mankind, popery and slavery."¹⁸ Lastly, this document accuses several priests in New York of being "Popish Trumpets" who believed that the colonists should "hold our Protestant throats to be cut by the command of a popish king."¹⁹ The pamphlet displays recurring English fears regarding a papal takeover: parallels between Catholicism and slavery, the association of British liberty with Protestantism, and a cabal of Catholic preachers posing as Protestants.

Colonial Massachusetts echoed similar language. On August 7, 1689, *Two Addresses from the Governour, Council, and Convention of the Massachusetts Colony*, was presented to King William III. The addresses by the leadership of Massachusetts heartily thanked and congratulated their new king for his glorious revolt. The document highlights the joy that New Englanders felt upon "Hearing what was done in England, and how the Prince of Orange, in conjunction with the Nobility and the Gentry, had most gloriously rescued themselves, their Religion, and Country from the Innundation of Popery and Slavery."²⁰ Once again, colonists

¹⁷ *Loyalty Vindicated: Published for the sake of Truth and Justice by a hearty lover of King William and the Protestant Religion*, Boston, B. Green and J. Allen, 1698. (Report, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/1042 1698) http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_1042_065

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ *Two Addresses From the Governour, Council, and Convention of the Massachusetts Colony Assembled at Boston in New-England*, August 7, 1689 (Proclamation; Petition, The National Archives, Kew,

attached Catholicism to a denigration of free society into a state of bondage. Also, the document charges the Catholic regime with being “Illegal and Arbitrary” while declaring that it was in “Violation of [New England’s] charters and Undoubted Rights.”²¹ Lord Camden would invoke the exact same language nearly a century later, declaring the Quebec Act “Arbitrary” in his speech before Parliament. In fact, this language is repeated time and again: Englishmen saw “popery” as an arbitrary and illegal power, set to violate the rights that they held dear. In the same year, the President and Council for the safety of the people of Massachusetts also addressed the new Protestant king and his ministers. They described the 1688 revolution as a “Blessing of Heaven” and they assured the king that they rejoiced in the “Deliverance of the Distressed Kingdoms... from Popery and Slavery.”²² Furthermore, they praised King William for “Encouraging the English nation to cast off the Yoak of a Tyrannical and Arbitrary Power.”²³ Catholicism was tyrannical, arbitrary, and a threat to free English life.

The looming threat of “popery” took other forms as well. While it was mainly seen as a threat to liberty, it was also believed that the Catholic Church was corrupted by institutionalized sin. For instance, the Pope was often referred to as “Babylon’s Whore” or the “Whore of Babylon.” John Adams used that very same language in 1765 while writing about the foundation of colonial government. According to Adams, the founders of the colonies “saw clearly that popular powers must be placed, as a guard, a countroul, a ballance, to the powers of the monarch, and the priest, in every government, or else it would soon become the man of sin, the whore of Babylon, the mystery of iniquity, a great and detestable system of fraud, violence, and

CO5/8551689/08/07).http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/libproxy.albany.edu/Documents/Details/CO_5_8_55_039

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

usurpation.”²⁴ In other words, had the first colonists not been careful in settling America and creating proper English governments, they would have been susceptible to a Roman Catholic takeover. Inevitably, sin and violence would follow. To the colonists, Roman Catholicism was also a looming danger which bred civil disorder and iniquity.

The danger of Catholicism went further than rhetoric in the press. In fact, several Colonial governments enacted legal protections against “popery.” In 1700, the General Assembly of New York passed a sweeping resolution entitled *An Act Against Jesuits and Popish Priests*. This act stated that “all and every Jesuit and Seminary priest, Missionary, or other spiritual, or ecclesiastical person, made or ordained by any authority, power or jurisdiction, derived, challenged or pretended from the Pope or See of Rome, now residing within this province ... shall depart from and out of the same at or before the First day of November next, in this present year, One Thousand Seven Hundred.”²⁵ The Act completely forbade Catholic priests and missionaries from residing in the colony of New York. Fear and distrust of Catholicism was deeply engrained in colonial society, thus, the assembly’s outright banishment of the religion is hardly surprising. However, one must question the timing of the Act. Why then? What precipitated an outright ban?

The Assembly believed that Catholic priests and Jesuits had influence over the Native tribes, and this influence would allow the French to disrupt English government. Thus, the ban was necessary for the safety of the colony. The document states that the Jesuits and Priests “by

²⁴ John Adams, “A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law,” *The Papers of John Adams, Vol. 1* in the Massachusetts Historical Society <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-06-01-02-0052-0005#sn=1>

²⁵ “An Act Against Jesuits and Popish Priests,” *Acts passed by the General Assembly of New York, in July, August, and October, 1700*, (Legislation, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/1144 1700/07-1700/10). http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_1144_009

their wicked and subtle insinuations, industriously labor to debauch, seduce, and withdraw the Indians from their due obedience unto His Most Sacred Majesty and to excite and stir them up to Sedition, Rebellion, and open Hostility against His Majesty's Government."²⁶ This law was the result of conflicts between New France, New England, and their respective Native allies. King Williams War, a dispute caused by tensions along the border of New France and New England, had just ended in 1697 with the Treaty of Ryswick. Though the war left the borders of the two empires *status quo antebellum*, a serious tension remained over tribal alliances, especially England's alliance with the Iroquois nations. In *The Edge of the Woods*, Jon Parmenter explains "Although [The Iroquois] accepted annual presents from the king of England, League leaders continued to exercise their right to independent negotiations with New France, thereby underscoring their hard-won diplomatic neutrality between competing European empires in North America."²⁷ With the Covenant Chain insecure, many English colonists feared an Iroquois-French alliance. This scenario would be truly terrifying to a colonial New Yorker: evil Catholics were clandestinely winning the hearts and minds of the Native Tribes, and they would use them to spread violence and "popery" over the colony. The threat of subjugation to Catholics would suddenly become very real to the English. They had never seen the Pope in Rome raise an army designed for the overthrow of their government, but they certainly knew the destructive force that Native Americans could muster. With Catholics winning them over and eventually directing them in a violent revolt, the threat of a bloody takeover seemed all too real.

In the same year, Massachusetts Bay passed a similar act. Massachusetts had its own *Act Against Jesuits and Popish Priests*, and the language is nearly identical to the New York law.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010) 272.

This includes harsh penalties to be imposed on those that did not comply. Massachusetts warned Catholics that any “who shall continue, abide, and remain, or come into this province, or any part thereof, after the Tenth day of September aforesaid, shall be deemed and accounted an Incendiary, and disturber of the Publick Peace and Safety and an enemy to the true Christian religion and shall be adjudged to suffer perpetual imprisonment.”²⁸ Massachusetts and New York threatened Catholics with harsh prison sentences if they did not leave the colony by their respective set dates. Massachusetts also threatened that “if any person, being so sentenced and actually imprisoned, shall break prison and make his escape... he shall be punished with death.”²⁹ Though the New York law also threatens execution, it lists other possible punishments such as forfeitures and vague penalties. Massachusetts gave Catholics very few options: they could leave or be imprisoned. If they attempted escape from prison they would pay with their lives. Also, just like New York, Massachusetts’ state-sanctioned ban on Catholicism was due to a perceived threat of a Jesuit-Indian alliance. These laws show an established fear of Catholics winning over Native Tribes, which opens a new dimension of the Quebec Act. The Province of Quebec was sprawling, with numerous tribes living within it, and if Catholics poured into that area they could use the Natives for war against the English colonies to the east.

Originally founded by the Catholic Lord of Baltimore as a haven for Catholic colonists, Maryland also enacted anti-Catholic legislation in the early days of the eighteenth century. Passed on October 3, 1704, *An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery within this Province* restricted Catholics in the exercise of their religion. Maryland’s Assembly decreed “That

²⁸“An Act against Jesuits and Popish Priests,” *Acts and laws passed by the Great and General Court or assembly of the province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England; held at Boston, May 1700 to February 1701*, (Legislation, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/772 1700/05/29-1701/02/12).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_772_011

²⁹ Ibid

whatsoever Popish Bishop, Priest, or Jesuit, shall baptize any Child or Children, other than such who have popish parents, or shall say mass, or exercise the Function of a Popish Bishop or Priest within this Province, or shall endeavor to persuade any of Her Majesty's Leige people... to embrace and be reconciled to the Church of Rome... shall forfeit the sum of Fifty Pounds Sterling for every such offence."³⁰ The Assembly legally prevented Catholic priests from exercising their duties. Though perhaps not as harsh as the north-eastern colonies' outright ban, Maryland's act put up legal barriers that prevented Catholics from practicing their religion. Catholic parents were allowed to have their children baptized into the church. However, the Act made the conversion to Catholicism a finable offence. Furthermore, Maryland prevented Catholics from attending mass, thereby preventing the proper exercise of their religion and the fulfillment of their priests' clerical duties. It was not an outright ban, but limited Catholic Marylanders' ability to practice and preach their religion, which served as a de facto prohibition. Also, it legally made them outsiders in the colony. Their ideology was perceived as being so dangerous, so vile, that the legislature had to limit how they practiced their religion. It legally made them the "other."

New Jersey furthered anti-Catholic legislation by enacting in 1722 an oath of loyalty that was meant to expose and punish Catholics within the province. Entitled *An Act for the Security of His Majesty's Government of New Jersey*, this legislation allowed "for two or more justices of the peace ... to administer and tender the oaths and declaration herein ... to any person or persons whatsoever, whom they shall or may suspect to be dangerous or disaffected to His

³⁰ "An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery within this Province," *The Laws of Maryland*, (Legislation, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/729 1692/05/10-1715/06/03)
http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_729_003

Majesty or His Majesty's Government."³¹ Those who refused to take the oath would be "esteemed and adjudged A Popish Recusant Convict" who would "be proceeded against."³² The oath required suspected Catholics to declare transubstantiation, the worshipping of the Virgin Mary, the adoration of saints, and allegiance to the Pope in Rome as "superstitious and idolatrous."³³ New Jersey's law, though damaging to Catholics, was not as harsh as those in New York, Massachusetts, and Maryland. It did label Catholics as outsiders to society and, indeed, a danger to New Jersey's government. However, it lacked the punitive measures outlined in the New York and Massachusetts laws. Convicted Catholics were threatened with jail time and even death in those colonies, whereas New Jersey's law vaguely describes penalties and forfeitures, but says nothing about execution or even imprisonment. It also allowed the accused to clear his or her name. A person found to be a "Popish Recusant Convict" could be discharged from the conviction if he or she recited the oath in the presence of the chief justice or governor of the colony, and obtained a certificate acknowledging that he or she had done so.

The laws outlined above are just some examples of the nature of Catholic hatred in Colonial America. Every colony put up barriers to the Catholic faith, and the small sampling above displays how the colonies harmed Catholics. What is important about these laws is that no matter how the colonies went about it, they all labeled Catholics as outsiders to English society. New York and Massachusetts were the extreme examples of fearmongering. After all, the next step after banishment could only be execution. Maryland restricted the practice of Catholicism, but its law was more designed to hinder the church's priests from their ecclesiastical duties and

³¹ "An Act for the Security of His Majesty's Government of New Jersey," *Acts passed by the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey, at Perth Amboy, in 1722, being the Eighth Year of His Majesty's Reign*, (Legislation, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/1005/A 1722)

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_1005_A_008

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

from spreading the religion to Protestants. New Jersey's anti-Catholic law was by far the laxest. It required an anti-Catholic oath to be taken, which was filled with malice but was in keeping with colonist sentiment. All provinces in the British Empire required similar oaths. So, why is it important to explore these early examples of anti-Catholic sentiment?

The point is that these laws established Catholics as outsiders who threatened freedom and sanctity of government. For the sake of security they had to be regulated. In light of these documents, we must reconsider how anti-English the Quebec Act would have appeared to the colonists, and vice-versa how dangerous the Franco-American alliance appeared to Loyalists. For nearly a century before the American Revolution, colonials openly spoke of and wrote about the dangers of "popery," equating it to slavery and arbitrary power and even "damnation in hell." Colonial legislatures created laws to protect society from the evils of papists. But in 1774, the Crown established Catholicism in America while also handing the Catholics the largest contiguous colonial territory in British North America. It was a landmass full of vital waterways, and important hunting grounds. It was also full of Native tribes, and in the minds of Englishmen, full of Roman Catholics. These laws have shown us just how instrumental anti-Catholicism was to British society, and in light of that, how remarkably anti-British the Quebec Act was.

In the wake of the French and Indian War and the Proclamation of 1763, the Empire was hurdling toward crisis. Several controversial British policies were enacted throughout the 1760s, and colonial propagandists began attacking the Crown in pamphlets and in the press. The common theme throughout most of their protestations and accusations fixated on potential futures rather than the realities of the present. Historian Philip Davidson once observed, "The particular point they stressed was that the *right* to lay revenue acts was the central danger, for it threatened every interest. The emphasis was upon future penalties rather than present

hardships.”³⁴ The propagandists charged that the taxes that were levied upon the colonists put them all on a slippery slope towards tyranny. For instance, in 1765 a propagandist named Stephen Johnson wrote of the dangers associated with the duties on stamps. He contended that if American colonists allowed for this abuse of power then Parliament would establish a “poll tax, a land tax, a malt tax, a cider tax, a window tax, a smoke tax; and why not tax us for the light of the sun, the air we breathe, and the ground we are buried in?”³⁵ In essence, these taxes were more than simple attempts to raise revenue for the British Empire. Rather, they were maliciously designed to establish precedents that would allow the Crown to run roughshod over all colonial rights. The propagandists wanted it to be known that this went far beyond economic interests: all rights, including civil and religious liberties, were under assault.

As the crisis continued, American colonists became increasingly anxious as their normal ways of life appeared to be under assault. In this anxious state, they declared many acts of Parliament to be attacks on their most treasured part of life: religion. Even measures that appeared to have no religious designs were recast as evidence of the imminent usurpation of America’s religious liberties. For instance, writing of the Port Act in 1774, a broadside published in Massachusetts explained the true danger facing America: “Gentlemen, The evils which we have long foreseen are now come upon this town and Province, the long meditated stroke is now given to the civil liberty of this country. How long we may be allowed the enjoyment of our religious liberty is a question of infinite moment. Religion can never be retained in its purity

³⁴ Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 117.

³⁵ Stephen Johnson, “Letters to the New London Gazette,” Sept. 6, 1765, in Davidson *Propaganda and The American Revolution*, 118.

where tyranny has usurped the place of reason and justice.”³⁶ Though the Port Act did not at all affect religion in Massachusetts, propagandists realized that the true way to rally the colonists against the Crown was to raise the specter of religious tyranny.

The threat to religion came in many forms and preyed on the fears of many different congregations and parts of the country. Propagandists agitated many in the North who feared the establishment of an American episcopate. Just as the writers of the late seventeenth century used Catholicism to put terrible fears into the people of Britain, during the Imperial Crisis some propagandists warned of the potential violence of an established Anglican episcopate in America. Utilizing this fear, Robert Livingston wrote “You are yet to be chastised only with whips but depend upon it, when the apostical monarchs are come over... you, and such as you, will be chastised with scorpions... the bellum episcopal will doubtless be declared with every circumstance of awful pomp; and this extensive continent may soon be alarmed with the thund’ring signal, the sword of the Lord, and of the Bishop.”³⁷ Such apocalyptic rhetoric regarding Anglicanism worked well in some colonies, where those anxieties were most prevalent. However, this fear did not exist in other places. Davidson explains this problem: “To arouse the fear of Anglicanism was good propaganda in New England and the middle colonies, but the appeal would alienate southern colonies.”³⁸ Attacking the Anglican Church would not suffice in unifying the colonies against the Crown.

³⁶ “A Proclamation” in *Letter from Lieutenant General Gage to Lord Dartmouth, including a proclamation for discouraging certain illegal combinations and a covenant drafted by the Committee of Correspondence* http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_763_023

³⁷ William Livingston, “The American Whig,” *New York Gazette* April 4, 1768, in Davidson *Propaganda and The American Revolution*, 124.

³⁸ Davidson, *Propaganda in the American Revolution*, 124.

From Massachusetts to the Southern colonies and into the sparsely settled West, all Englishmen recognized the perceived threat of a Catholic plot, and propagandists seized upon this fear. *The Boston Gazette* published numerous essays written by “The Puritan” which emphatically highlighted the threat of Roman Catholicism to the liberties of Englishmen. Published on April 4, 1768, one of “The Puritan” essays read, “I confess I am surpris’d to find so little attention is given to the danger we are in, of the utter loss of religious Rights. To say the truth, I have from long observation been apprehensive that what we have above everything else to fear, is POPERY.”³⁹ At a time when the Crown was attempting to raise revenue through taxation, the colonial press was accusing the Parliament and the King of usurping the colonists’ religious freedom. Furthermore, they accused the British government of having designs of replacing Protestantism with the Roman Catholic religion. Here, “The Puritan” was presented as the guardian of America’s religious sanctity against the oppressive King and Parliament, who wished to impose “popery” on America. Just six years after “The Puritan” was published, the Quebec Act established Catholicism in North America, lending credence to such conspiracy theories.

II. Crisis in the Wake of the Quebec Act of 1774

As rising tensions between the colonies and the Crown grew closer to a breaking point, Parliament decided to impose a more aggressive policy towards its recalcitrant subjects. Eric Robson explains this shift, writing “The British now decided that as conciliation had failed, the time had come to assert, as well as declare, supremacy: there was to be no more ‘fatal

³⁹ “The Puritan,” *Boston Gazette*, Apr.4, 1768 in Davidson *Propaganda and The American Revolution*, 125.

compliance' which had encouraged the Americans 'annually to increase in their pretensions'.⁴⁰ Parliament followed this more assertive policy by enacting four pieces of legislation over the colonies, all of which fueled the flames of revolt. The Boston Port Act, The Massachusetts Government Act, The Administration of Justice Act, and the Quartering Act were passed in 1774, and all were viewed as authoritarian. These acts galvanized the colonists more than they subjugated them, and very soon after they were passed, the Quebec Act was voted on and passed by the Parliament. Historians are divided over whether the Quebec Act was designed with the rebellious colonies in mind or not. Regardless, Whig propagandists weaponized the Quebec Act and anti-Catholic sentiment in order to advance their cause.

The colonial press erupted within months of the passage of the Quebec Act, and all were made aware of the danger to their rights and well-being. Some of the first protests came from Massachusetts, the colony most affected by the Coercive Acts with some of the strictest anti-Catholic laws. An article in *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal* told of extreme discontent amongst the people of England. On Monday September 5, 1774, the paper printed an account of Englishmen, outraged by the Quebec Bill, attacking King George III in public. According to the article, Parliament Street was "thronged with multitudes of people" and "As the king passed they gave him a most cordial salute of groans and hisses; the universal cry was, "No Popery! No French Laws! No protestant popish king! The Duke of Gloucester forever!"⁴¹ The article reports that these events took place on June 23, 1774, meaning that almost immediately following the

⁴⁰ Eric Robson, *The American Revolution In it's Political and Military Aspects* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966) 69.

⁴¹ "London, June 23," *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal* Sept. 5, 1774, "Letters from Lieutenant General Gage to Lord Dartmouth, including a letter from the judges, a covenant signed by the people of Springfield, the proceedings of the county of Suffolk and two newspapers" (Correspondence; Miscellanea; Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/763 1774/08/17-1774/09/20).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_763_033

bill's royal approval, the King was met with protest in the streets. They groaned and hissed, called him a "popish king" and most importantly, chanted "The Duke of Gloucester forever," which was a reference to George III's younger brother. The connotations could not be misinterpreted: the English people were so outraged by the Quebec Act that some were calling for King George III to be replaced by Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester. Such was the apparent outrage over the existence of "popery" in the British Empire.

The article continues, painting a vivid picture of an angry mob harassing the villainous King. The British people were so enraged by the "Romish Business" of King George, that they chastised him until he was made "conscious that he was suffering in a religious cause," and was forced to physically "change colour." As the coach sped into a nearby park, "a prodigious concourse of people" swarmed his carriage, and the chants of "No Popery! No French laws! The Protestant Duke of Gloucester!" apparently "became incessant." The mob went so far as to rip the sword of state out of the carriage because "the case which contained it [was] shaped like a *crucifix*." The people insisted that it truly contained "a present from the court of Rome, of a *popish crucifix*, for the use of the *Protestant King of England!*" However, the crowd was disappointed to find that it only contained the sword of state, not proof of an Anglo-Roman cabal. Apparently, the sword was last seen on the shoulder of "a fellow returning through the park."⁴² The King was harassed, his carriage was stormed, and the sword of state was stolen: the people of England appeared to be moving towards their own serious conflict with King George III over the Quebec Act and the associated dangers of "popery."

⁴² Ibid

The validity of this event is quite questionable. After all, it is extremely unlikely that people would publicly harass their king in the streets, no matter how unpopular the bill may have been. Whether this account is an exaggeration or an outright piece of fiction is not important to this study. The importance stressed here is that the press told colonists that the Quebec Act, in their minds the last piece of the Coercive Acts, caused extreme uproar in England. To a colonist in Massachusetts, this story would have undoubtedly given assurance that there truly was some kind of conspiracy between the Pope and the King. Furthermore, it provided evidence that the Empire was collapsing, not just from the periphery, but at its heart. The article makes clear that the people of England, though perhaps not angered by the other North American acts of 1774, were on the precipice of violence, maybe even war, due to the Quebec Act. Any outrage, injustice, or fear that a colonist felt due to the Quebec Act would have been validated by such a news story. The article displays blatant disrespect for the King, and more importantly, that he could do nothing about it. He was helpless in that carriage, perhaps undermining his authority among his subjects on the periphery.

In the very same week, Massachusetts colonists were further assured that something sinister was behind the Quebec Act. On Thursday September 8, 1774, readers of *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette* were made aware of the dangers of the Quebec Act. An article addressing the Act asserted that “The free constitution of England abhors all ideas of slavery, and does not admit that the people inhabiting any part of its dominions should be under Arbitrary power, and be slaves, instead of subjects, of the Crown...” and that the Quebec Bill “contradicts our constitution... and establishes POPERY and TYRANNY.”⁴³ Here we see the

⁴³ “London, June 15,” *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1774, “Articles from 'The Massachusetts Gazette and The Boston Weekly News Letter', no.3702 relating to topics such as the dismissal of John Hancock as Commander of cadets, and dissolution of cadet corps" (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/160 1774/09/08). http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_160_010

same exact language used in the decades and even century before the imperial crisis: Catholicism was synonymous with tyranny, arbitrary power, and slavery. In this article, the Quebec Act was labeled “High Treason” and the author called for those behind it to be impeached, otherwise “there could be no spirit or virtue in the nation.”⁴⁴ Colonial fears were seemingly becoming reality: the Crown was guilty of treason to the English people, and now “popery” and all of its disastrous consequences were coming to America.

This article, however, was not the only significant part of this edition of *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette*. In fact, on the very same page there was an article entitled “London, June 23,” that appeared to report the very same incident that the *Boston Gazette and Country Journal* had published just three days previously. Though this article does not contain any mention of an angry mob storming the King’s carriage and stealing the sword of state, it does report an angry mob harassing the King on June 23. The article explained, “Yesterday the concourse of people who follow His Majesty to and from the house of Peers, kept continually roaring out, D—n him, there goes the pope.”⁴⁵ Although this abridged version lacked the climatic action of the previous one, it would have had the same effect. Such assurances would galvanize the protestors of Crown policy: they were not alone. In fact, it appeared that the Quebec Act spelled the epitaph of peace within the entire empire.

The article continued with accounts of suspicious Catholics acting within the colonies. Apparently, Catholic French and Spanish agents were jailed in New England for enlisting “ship

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ “London, June 23,” *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1774, “Articles from 'The Massachusetts Gazette and The Boston Weekly News Letter', no.3702 relating to topics such as the dismissal of John Hancock as Commander of cadets, and dissolution of cadet corps” (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/160 1774/09/08). http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_160_010

carpenters and caulkers to go to Havana, on promise of great encouragement.”⁴⁶ Perhaps those agents had something to do with the latest news out of New York, which reported on August 18 that “Advices were received from Rome, which say, that ‘the Chevalier Stuart’ (commonly called the Pretender) was preparing to set out on a voyage to New England; and ‘twas asserted that he would go in some Spanish vessels, which are ready for that purpose.”⁴⁷ The article is referring to Charles Edward Stuart, the grandson of King James II, the Catholic king deposed as a result of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Charles Edward Stuart infamously failed to regain control of the throne in the Rebellion of 1745, but the threat of the Stuarts never left the minds of Englishmen. Stuart was synonymous with popery, bloody rebellion, and tyrannical rule. According to news from New York, which came by way of Rome, he may have been sailing in Spanish vessels to the coast of New England. Meanwhile, Spanish and French agents were imprisoned in New England for enlisting the help of ship builders. The French king was also mentioned in the news that day, apparently he had “given the most satisfactory assurances to the States General, that the losses which their subjects sustained in the late reign shall be amply made up.”⁴⁸ What did all of this mean to the general public?

In one newspaper, Bostonians were made aware of the illegality of the Quebec Act, how controversial it was in England, and strange stories of Catholics suspiciously working in the colonies. Furthermore, “the pretender,” the grandson of the deposed Catholic king, was traveling

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ “New York, August 18,” *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1774, “Articles from ‘The Massachusetts Gazette and The Boston Weekly News Letter’, no.3702 relating to topics such as the dismissal of John Hancock as Commander of cadets, and dissolution of cadet corps” (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/160 1774/09/08). http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_160_010

⁴⁸ “London, June 23,” *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1774, “Articles from ‘The Massachusetts Gazette and The Boston Weekly News Letter’, no.3702 relating to topics such as the dismissal of John Hancock as Commander of cadets, and dissolution of cadet corps” (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/160 1774/09/08). http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_160_010

in Spanish ships set for New England. The news came by way of Rome, which begs the question, was Stuart acting under direct orders from the Pope? A man whose name was synonymous with “popery” was sailing from Rome in Spanish ships. Also, the French king’s ominous statement regarding making up for the losses of the late reign had a range of possible meanings. Were the French encouraged by the Quebec Act to somehow infiltrate or retake the province? If so, were the English colonies in danger? Was there some kind of cabal between the French monarch and the Crown, with the Quebec Act being just one part of a larger operation?

An article printed in the *Cape Fear Mercury* encouraged the belief that the British Crown was leagued with the French monarch. Written in 1774 but published posthumously in 1775, Josiah Quincy’s remarks on the Quebec Act accuse the Parliament and King of engaging in a French cabal. He believed “that the planners and promoters of this bill will, in the end, be found to have advanced the interest of France, to the destruction of that of Britain, in a much more eminent degree than has hitherto been done by the worst minister that ever lived.”⁴⁹ Quincy told a tale of clandestine deals made during the peace negotiations that ended the French and Indian War. He reported that Thomas Hollis had discovered “FOUR SECRET ARTICLES” which were to be enacted after the British claimed Canada for itself. These articles were “I. That a popish bishop was to be fixed by the king in Canada. II. That the popish religion was to be established there. III. That the bounds of Canada were to be fixed. IV. That Canada, when thus fixed, was to be given back to France.”⁵⁰ Quincy admits that he “did not believe it possible” when he first heard this story, but after the passage of the Quebec Act, it seemed to be true. He warned British colonists that “Canada restored to the French, thus fixed and improved, will

⁴⁹ “Hartford,” *The Cape Fear Mercury*, Aug. 7, 1775, (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, MFQ 1/131 1775/08/07) http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/MFQ_131_004

⁵⁰ Ibid

enable France to distress our colonies, and, in the end, give a mortal stab to the trade, the liberty, and the glory of Britain.”⁵¹ Here we see one of the many American conspiracy theories that surrounded the Quebec Act: it was truly designed to increase French power in North America at the expense of British safety. Many theories and accusations were made against the Crown because of the Quebec Act, all of them concluded that the Crown was using “popery” as a weapon against their rights and security. Quincy’s article and the numerous articles found in *The Massachusetts and Boston Weekly Gazette* in September of 1774 perfectly outlined colonial fears and encouraged xenophobic hysteria.

Colonists in Pennsylvania received a similar message. On September 28, 1774, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* printed an article that detailed the Quebec Act’s destructive effects on the entire British Empire. The author writes under the pseudonym Marcus Brutus. Much like “The Puritan” articles, the author’s pseudonym alone displays the message of the piece. The real Marcus Brutus was a leading figure in the assassination of Julius Caesar, a guardian against tyranny. The article is a stern warning to King George III regarding the destructive effects of the Quebec Act. It asserts that the Quebec Act would surely push the colonists to open rebellion, and perhaps, even independence. First, the author highlighted the colonists’ “obdurate ... religious and political principles” and how their “spirits [were] kindled and incited by resentment to unite as one man against the Boston port bill alone.”⁵² Marcus Brutus then pondered what actions would be taken regarding the “despotic fiats, by which the Bostonian charters are annihilated, and Popery, with a Gallic constitution, [is] established at Quebec!”⁵³ The article

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² “From the London Evening Post,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 2388, Sept. 28, 1774, (Newspaper; Proclamation, The National Archives, Kew, EXT 1/262 1774/09/28)
http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/EXT_1_262_004

⁵³ Ibid

then pivots to an analysis of King Philip II of Spain, who championed the Roman Catholic Church's Counter-Reformation. Brutus found the similarities between Philip's disastrous reign and the current situation in America to be uncanny. The dispute between Spain and her colonies in the Netherlands, he continued, began with taxation, but soon escalated to "the introduction of the inquisition" and the "persecution of the followers of Luther."⁵⁴ These injustices culminated in the 80 Years War, which saw the King "concede that [the Netherlands] should be independent from Spain."⁵⁵ This was a warning to King George to learn from history and reverse course before it was too late.

The author prophesized that the same events would take place in America. Like Spain, "our dispute has commenced with taxation ... and has ended with religion; it remains to make the resemblance more compleat, to introduce the inquisition at Quebec, and to erect Lord North's statue at Boston ... trampling upon the expiring liberties of America." Spain's imperial losses began with taxation, just like the American colonies. It appeared that the Quebec Act was the beginning of the next step: an American inquisition. Finally, these disputes would result in war, and eventually, independence from Great Britain. Marcus Brutus championed the Americans to move toward independence, writing "If the Americans are wise, they must know how much more necessary they are to us, than this country to them." Furthermore, in order to avert the oncoming political upheaval, the author petitions King George III to "return to the wise and considerate counsels of your predecessors—those councils by which the colonists were considered as brethren, and as joint co-heirs of freedom, by which they were once ruled and attached to us." Lastly, Marcus Brutus called the Quebec Act an "arbitrary decree" and declared it "the close of

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

the last act of a Tragedy of Errors.”⁵⁶ This article was an encouraging call to arms for the aggrieved colonists, a condemnation of Crown policy and of Catholicism, and a prophecy for the breaking up of the empire. Furthermore, it perfectly exemplified how authors in the press used the Quebec Act to advance the American cause by preying on the xenophobic fear of French Catholicism while displaying colonial strength, fortitude, and righteousness.

News articles like the ones above could be found throughout the colonies in late 1774. The columns almost always appeared among articles that condemned taxation, discussed the nature of the British Constitution, and spread news from the occupied city of Boston. In this way, colonists read about one outrageous act of the Crown after another. Bear in mind that this literature was printed every week, with often times multiple publishers in a given area. Therefore, there can be little doubt that the average colonist felt bombarded. Article after article featured a condemnation of Crown policy that was often followed by a plea for reconciliation. Sometimes threats directed at the King and other times ominous assurances of colonial strength. However, news articles were not the only way of spreading information about Crown policy. Though less dominant than the written or spoken word, visualizations in newspapers, broadsides, magazines, and almanacs also spread the Whig message. One of the most prominent magazines for Whig cartoonists was the *Royal American Magazine*. The Quebec Act was attacked in these cartoons, along with the Intolerable Acts and members of the British administration.

⁵⁶ Ibid



Figure 1

Printed in the *Royal American Magazine* in October of 1774, the engraving above was created by Paul Revere. Titled *The Mitred Minuet*, the image shows British clergymen holding hands and dancing in celebration around the Quebec Act. In the background are non-descript members of Parliament, who seem to be gleefully watching the celebration and casually socializing. Meanwhile, Lord Bute is distinctly dressed in Scottish attire while playing the bagpipes. He is playing a Scottish instrument, which in turn, provides the music for the dancing clergymen. Anti-Scottish sentiment was common in eighteenth century British propaganda, mostly due to Scotland's association with the Stuart family and Catholicism. The Jacobite uprising of 1715 and the Revolt of 1745, which were attempts to restore the Stuarts, started in the Scottish Highlands. These attempts made the rest of Britain suspicious of Scotland: if a bloody,

⁵⁷ Paul Revere, *The Mitred Minuet*. England United States, 1774. [May 1] Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004672698/>.

“popish” revolt were to happen, it would most certainly come from there. Thus, Lord Bute’s Scottish attire would have been instantly recognizable to a colonist.

The image sent a clear message that the Quebec Act was an attempt to restore Catholicism to the British Empire, except this time it came in the form of silent infiltration rather than revolution. Standing to Lord Bute’s left is Lord North, the Prime Minister of Great Britain during the imperial crisis. Lord North was largely blamed for the Coercive Acts and here he smiles in approval of the dancing clergymen. The devil, who also appears to approve of the celebration, hovers over their shoulders. Here, the Quebec Act is depicted as more than punishment for the colonists. It was in fact, evidence that the government had been taken over by evil papists. Philip Davidson writes “The engravings in the *Royal American Magazine* (published for little over a year) combined in different attitudes both the friends and enemies of America- the Pope, the Devil, or George III (who was caricatured in these pictures long before he was burned in effigy)- and Liberty, Minerva, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, or some other well-known patriot.”⁵⁸ Thus, the engraving above was just one of many from the *Royal American Magazine* that portrayed the Crown as having evil designs towards the colonies.

The Quebec Act and the inflammatory news articles and cartoons it elicited drew a strong response from colonial leaders. However, none of these documents have been tied to any government body or organization. On September 5, 1774, the Continental Congress wrote an address to the colonists that emphasized the various dangers behind the Quebec Act. They warned of the inevitability of a British controlled Catholic army that would threaten colonial safety. Also, they attacked the geographic expansion of Quebec Province, which promised to

⁵⁸ Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution*, 187.

block colonial expansion into the Ohio Valley. After condemning the other Intolerable Acts, Congress condemned “an act for extending the province of Quebec, so as to border on the Western frontiers of these colonies, establishing an arbitrary government therein, and discouraging the settlement of British subjects in that wide extended country, thus by the influence of civil principles and ancient prejudices to dispose the inhabitants to act with hostility against the free protestant colonies, whenever a wicked ministry shall chuse so to direct them.”⁵⁹ Here the Continental Congress mixed the religious aspect of the Quebec Act with the geographical.

III. Religion, Geography, and War

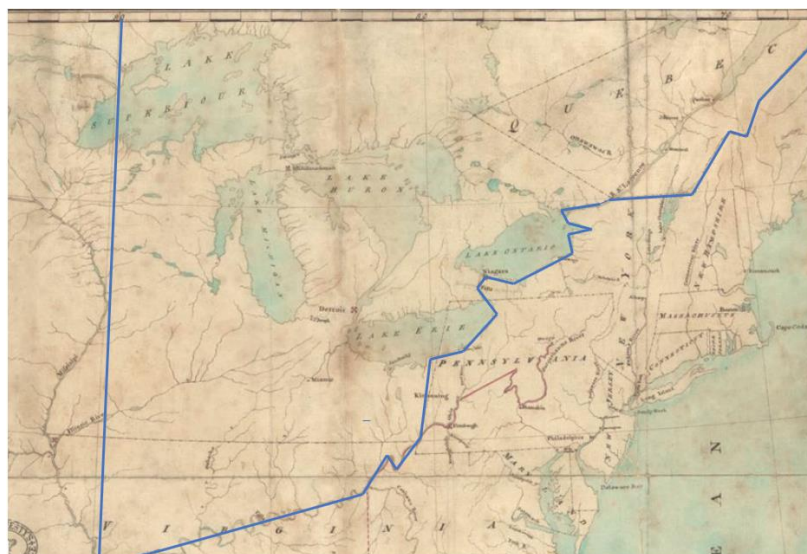


Figure 2

⁵⁹ “The Association,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, Nov. 3 1774, “Extracts from ‘Rivington’s New York Gazette’, no. 81 and from ‘The Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser’, no. 1,664” (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/317 1774/10/26-1774/11/04).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_317_044

⁶⁰ “Map showing boundary lines between the British colonies and the country of the Six Nations and the Southern Indians, as recommended in the representation of 7 March 1768 from the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations to the King,” (Map, The National Archives, Kew, MPG 1/280 1768).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.libproxy.albany.edu/Documents/Details/MPG_1_280_001

It is vital to address the fact that Quebec was turned into a veritable super-sized colony. In fact, it became the largest English colony in North America. In the eyes of the Continental Congress and many colonists, Quebec's religious biases would disincentivize English immigration, and would instead, become a beacon for Roman Catholics. Given the image above, a new reason behind colonial outrage becomes apparent. Stretching from Labrador near Hudson's Bay, across the Great Lakes and finally ending at the boarder of Spanish Louisiana, Quebec, and the Catholics who inhabited it, surrounded the other Protestant colonies. There, however, is another aspect of colonial society that we must acknowledge in order to truly understand the full implications of having Catholics to the north and Catholics to the west.

The true contents of America's interior were still unknown to the colonists. In *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire*, Paul Mapp revisits the French and Indian War in order to explain how leaders of the English, French, and Spanish Empires made decisions regarding North America despite having little information about the continent's interior. Mapp concludes "that perceptions of western American geography influenced the course of imperial diplomacy, the ideas about the undiscovered West contributed to the origins, unfolding, and outcome of the mid-eighteenth century's Great War for Empire."⁶¹ Essentially, ignorance of the resources and economic potential of the west led to heightened fear and anxieties regarding each empire's respective rivals. Fear of what the competitor might be doing, and the gain in power that would result from it, directly influenced imperial policy. Illustrating this fear, Mapp explains "Unease about the implications of British Hudson Bay exploration helped draw France into war with Britain. Spanish concerns about French westward exploration reinforced Spain's neutral

⁶¹ Paul Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) 429.

tendencies ... until its entry was too late to forestall French defeat or British victory.”⁶² Though writing about the French and Indian War, Mapp showed that ignorance of the vast territories of the West caused extreme fear amongst those who had designs for it, and this fear influenced political decisions.

By the imperial crisis, knowledge of the North American interior was still shrouded in mystery. The true potential of the West was an enigma to Europe’s North American empires, and the political effects of that uncertainty were still prevalent in colonial society. Missing out on western migration meant missing out on economic and political dominance of the continent. Given this, how would colonists react to the Crown inviting hordes of Catholics from across the world to occupy vast tracts of the West? It was a massive Catholic colony that bordered Spanish territory. It effectively barred coastal Protestants from accessing western lands and resources. The only way that British North Americans could take part in exploring these lands and unlocking their economic and political potential was to live under “popery,” arbitrary power, and slavery. Also, with Catholics in control of all of it, what destruction could they inflict on Protestants who were trapped on the east coast? The Continental Congress’ address provides evidence that the size of Quebec coupled with religious xenophobia struck fear into the eastern colonists. Though the address makes no mention of the population of Quebec, it equates its geographic size to potential overwhelming power. Thus, we see the same phenomenon explored by Mapp: ignorance of western geography produced fear, which in turn, influenced political decision-making.

⁶² Ibid

On the same day, the Continental Congress printed another address that attacked the Quebec Act, however this one was addressed to the British people. Keeping in line with true eighteenth century Englishmen, the Congress first attacked the establishment of Catholicism. They proclaimed, “We think the legislature of Great Britain is not authorized by the constitution to establish a religion, fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets, or, to erect an arbitrary form of government in any corner of the globe.”⁶³ Congress then addressed the geographic aspect in conjunction with the religious, writing “the dominion of Canada is to be so extended, modelled, and governed, as that by being disunited from us ... that by their numbers daily swelling with Catholic emigrants from Europe...they might become formidable to us, and on occasion, be fit instruments in the hands of power, to reduce the ancient free protestant colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, they expressed shock “that a British Parliament should ever consent to establish in that country a religion that has deluged your island in blood and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder and rebellion through every part of the world.”⁶⁵ By analyzing this address closely, many of the Continental Congress’ fears regarding Quebec can be exposed.

First Congress attacked the Province’s “extended” boundaries and unconventional government (Quebec lacked a legislative assembly), which, according to this address, were designed to set Quebec apart from the other colonies. Quebec was meant to be a non-British colony that apparently saw multitudes of foreign immigrants arriving “daily.” Since the 1763 conquest the colony saw very little immigration, and the few who settled were actually British

⁶³ “To the People of Great Britain,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, Nov. 3 1774, "Extracts from 'Rivington's New York Gazette', no. 81 and from 'The Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser', no. 1,664" (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/317 1774/10/26-1774/11/04).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_317_044

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

Protestants. This hyperbole provides insight into the imagination of the colonists: papists swelled in numbers daily, gaining more power to form a grand army of subjugation. Over the course of a year, this was the image being displayed in newspaper articles, cartoons, and even in formal addresses of the Continental Congress. The Crown, infiltrated by papists, had designed Quebec to be a Catholic super colony that blocked the colonists from westward expansion. Even worse, the Province was created to attract Catholics from across the globe who could be used to assert absolute rule. Finally, the address warned the people of Britain to consider what this situation could lead to. If the ministry “by the power of Britain, and the aid of our Roman Catholic neighbors, should be able to carry the point of taxation, and reduce us to a perfect state of humiliation and slavery...may not the same armies enslave you?”⁶⁶ This final statement may have been designed as way of drumming up support for the revolutionary cause in mainland Britain. If the British people did not see the danger in taxing the colonists, perhaps the fear of a Catholic army set on enslaving the empire would. Bear in mind that these addresses were written in the fall of 1774, about six months before the opening shots of the war were fired. The Congress may have been attempting to start popular protests in mainland Britain, thereby pressuring the Crown to repeal its Coercive Acts and avoid civil unrest in mainland Britain.

As 1774 moved into 1775, political and religious condemnation of the Quebec Act continued. In fact, in *Rivington's New York Gazetteer* on June 22, 1775, Alexander Hamilton weighed in on the controversy and the dangers behind the Quebec Act. He began by arguing that the Act did not protect Catholicism in Quebec. Rather, it called “for the permanent support of popery.”⁶⁷ This was a common point throughout American critiques of the Quebec Act.

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Alexander Hamilton, “Remarks on the Quebec Bill: Part Two, [22 June 1775],” Founders Online, National Archives, accessed September 29, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0059>

However, Hamilton went into greater detail by explaining how exactly it was established. Much like Lord Camden, his argument rested on the Catholic Church's protected rights and dues, particularly the ability to collect tithes from the population of Quebec. From Hamilton's perspective, the Act allowed for the funds *left over* from the Catholic Church's accustomed rights and dues to be used for "the encouragement of the Protestant religion, for the maintenance and support of a Protestant clergy, within the said province, as he, or they shall, from time to time, think necessary and expedient."⁶⁸ Hamilton believed that there would never be anything left for the Protestant church, thus, the Catholic church held a government sanctioned heightened status in Quebec. Because of this, he declared the Quebec Act to be "an atrocious infraction on the rights of Englishmen, in a point of the most delicate and momentous concern." Hamilton found the Quebec Act's subordination of the Protestant religion to be an egregious violation of the rights of all Englishmen. As the article continued, he echoed the fears of the Continental Congress by attacking Quebec's religious biases in conjunction with its expanded geographic size.

Hamilton found that Quebec's religion and geography were both detrimental to Protestant safety. He wrote "[T]he protestant religion has been left intirely destitute and unbefriended in Canada," and he predicted that "the province will be settled and inhabited by none, but papists."⁶⁹ Clearly, Canadian immigration was a major fear for the English colonists. Hamilton further elaborated that Quebec "will attract droves of emigrants, from all the Roman catholic states in Europe; and these colonies, in time, will find themselves encompassed with innumerable hosts of neighbours, disaffected to them, both because of difference in religion and government."

[Original source: The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, vol. 1, 1768–1778, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 169–176.]

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

The similarities between Hamilton's points and those expressed in the addresses from the Continental Congress are uncanny. The fear of an army of Catholics who, in Hamilton's words, "will be the voluntary instruments of ambition; and will be ready, at all times, to second the oppressive designs of administration against the other parts of the empire,"⁷⁰ could be found throughout the colonies.

Hamilton was also one of the only authors in the press who attacked the expansion of Quebec's boundaries in detail. He wrote "However justifiable this act may be in relation to the province of Quebec with its ancient limits, it cannot be defended by the least plausible pretext, when it is considered as annexing such a boundless extent of new territory to the old."

Hamilton's critique regarding the size of Quebec is very similar to Lord Camden's, who addressed Parliament on this matter just a month before. Much like Camden, Alexander Hamilton was puzzled as to why "it has also added the immense tract of country that surrounds all these colonies."⁷¹ Here, Hamilton used a very important word: "surrounds." Quebec and Spanish territory dwarfed the East Coast colonies, and surrounded them. This produced two fears, the first being that a Catholic army could be raised and used to subjugate the Protestants and spread "popery" over North America. The second fear was that British colonists would be barred from the Trans-Appalachian West.

On May 29, 1775, the Continental Congress printed a *Letter to the Inhabitants of Canada*. The letter significantly complicated the published anti-Catholic and anti-Quebec sentiments of Congress. It was more than a simple letter addressed to the Canadian people.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

Rather, it was a patriotic call to “FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN.”⁷² Seemingly in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the Canadians, the Continental Congress assured them that they had felt a strong bond since the close of the French and Indian War, writing “we have been happy in considering you as fellow-subjects, and from the commencement of the present plan for subjugating the continent, we have viewed you as fellow-sufferers with us.”⁷³ Furthermore, because the acts of the Crown were so dangerous to basic liberties, the Congress felt that “the fate of the protestant and catholic colonies to be strongly linked together.”⁷⁴ This is a stark departure, if not a reversal, from the language coming from the colonies in the year prior.

In stirring up support for the rebellion, Congress and the press made terrifying assurances of a Catholic army being created for the destruction of the empire. There were remarks of French plots to retake the land, that the colonists were caught up in some terrible “popish” conspiracy, the result of which could only be Canadian Catholics upending their Protestant ways of life. But here the Continental Congress called for brotherhood between the Protestants and Catholics, a union that would insure the rejection of “the fetters of slavery, however artfully polished.”⁷⁵ Less than a year previously, the Continental Congress made a similar call for a Protestant-Catholic alliance, stating in 1774 “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.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, the 1774 address exemplified the possibility of Protestants and Catholics living in harmony by stating “The Swiss Cantons furnish a memorable proof of

⁷² “Letter to the inhabitants of Canada,” May 29, 1775, *Journals of the Continental Congress*
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_05-29-75.asp

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ “To the Inhabitants of the Province of Quebec,” Oct. 26, 1774,
https://archive.org/details/cihm_36354/page/n5/mode/2up

this truth. Their union is composed of Roman Catholic and Protestant states, living in the utmost concord and peace with one another.”⁷⁷ When the Continental Congress addressed the Canadians, they attacked the Quebec Act, but in a way that left out the establishment of Catholicism and the expansion of Quebec’s borders, both of which were the main areas of focus in other protestations.

When addressing the Canadians, the Continental Congress attacked the form of government that the Quebec Act established. They criticized Quebec’s lack of a legislative body. Without a real voice in their government, Canadians, Congress cautioned, would “have nothing that you can call your own, and all the fruits of your labour and industry may be taken from you, whenever an avaritious governor and a rapacious council may incline to demand them.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, Congress warned the Canadians that “You are liable by their edicts to be transported into foreign countries to fight Battles in which you have no interest, and to spill your blood in conflicts from which neither honor nor emolument can be derived.”⁷⁹ This statement preyed on a Canadian fear that made itself present during Pontiac’s War of 1763-1764, an uprising that saw a union of Native American tribes fighting to push European settlers out of the Great Lakes region.⁸⁰ During this conflict the governor of Quebec, James Murray, attempted to raise a Canadian militia in order to put down the Native tribes, and the Canadians resisted. Mark Anderson highlights this in *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony* by stating “Some habitant opposition originated in rumors alleging that the government intended to send volunteers ‘to

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ “Letter to the inhabitants of Canada,” May 29, 1775, *Journals of the Continental Congress* https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_05-29-75.asp

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

serve in distant possessions of the British Empire,' or that enlistees would be soldiers for life."⁸¹
 The Continental Congress made this fear the main focus of their attack in 1775.

Congress continued to suggest the terrible fate that would befall the Quebecois if they allowed the British to govern them. They cautioned, "Should you ... assent to your new establishment, and a war break out with France, your wealth and your sons may be sent to perish in expeditions against their islands in the West Indies."⁸² The message was clear: the British administration did not care about the lives, wishes, and desires of the Canadian people. Their goal all along was to simply use the Quebecois as a tool of subjugation throughout the empire. The Crown may even force them to fight against their French brethren. The 1775 address to the Canadians closed with a final plea for unity. The Congress wrote "We yet entertain hopes of your uniting with us in the defence of our common liberty, and there is yet reason to believe, that should we join in imploring the attention of our sovereign, to the unmerited and unparalleled oppressions of his American subjects, he will at length be undeceived, and forbid a licentious Ministry any longer to riot in the ruins of the rights of Mankind."⁸³ The Continental Congress was calling for Quebec to stand with the Protestant colonies against the Crown, regardless of their faith and national heritage.

What can be made of such an odd departure from the common colonial narrative? How could the Continental Congress vehemently condemn Canada and Catholicism while addressing the people of Britain, yet call the Canadians their "friends and countrymen" less than a year later? How could the colonists attack the size of Quebec and emphasize the dangers it raised to

⁸¹ Mark R. Anderson, *Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2013), 35.

⁸² "Letter to the inhabitants of Canada," May 29, 1775, *Journals of the Continental Congress* https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_05-29-75.asp

⁸³ *Ibid*

the survival of the Protestant colonies, yet make no mention of this at all in their address to the Canadians? When this address was approved and printed several military developments had already taken place. Fort Ticonderoga had already been seized, Benedict Arnold had gained control of Lake Champlain by capturing a British schooner called the *Liberty*, and Ethan Allen's "Green Mountain Boys" had already attacked Fort St. Jean in Canada.⁸⁴ With fighting already taking place along the Canadian border, the Congress was most likely trying to neutralize the Canadian population. By assuring friendship the Continentals could continue their advance into Canada with hopefully little resistance. Also, it could prevent the Canadians from willingly attempting to reverse the military successes at Ticonderoga and Lake Champlain. Effectively, the Crown's largest possession in North America would be rendered useless and open to conquest. Less than a year earlier, the Continental Congress vilified the Canadians and their religion. They cried out against the danger that they posed to the sanctity of the entire British Empire, and now they wrote to them as friends and allies.

Here colonial anti-Catholicism is shown to be what it really was: a political tool. The specter of Catholicism worked well in drumming up support for the Revolution in the Protestant colonies as well as in Britain. However, in an attempt to neutralize the Canadians or maybe even to convince them to join the struggle, the colonists dropped their narrative of dangerous Catholics filling up the super colony to the north. In short, anti-Catholicism was used when it was politically convenient. The colonies already had strict anti-Catholic laws and British society had long seen Catholicism as the ultimate threat to their liberties and safety. Thus, it provided an easy way for propagandists and colonial leaders to convince people that the Crown was truly out of control and needed to be stopped. Propagandists recognized the fundamental importance of

⁸⁴ Anderson, *Battle for the Fourteenth Colony*, 57-68.

religion, and if they could convince the colonists that they were engaged in a holy fight rather than one simply over taxes and representation, it might resonate better. However, as the Continental invasion of Canada persisted throughout 1775, rhetoric on the Quebec Act faded from the colonial press. The last genuine protestations can be found in one of America's most sacred documents.

The Declaration of Independence presents us with a final word on the Quebec Act from the Whig perspective. Rather than attacking the law on religious grounds, the Declaration holds the Crown responsible “For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies.”⁸⁵ Much like the letters addressed to the Canadian people, the anti-English government is the focus of the critique here. Also, we once again see the geographical size of Quebec influencing the colonists' perception of its political and economic power. In Jefferson's words, the super colony provided the Crown with a “fit instrument” to impose its tyranny on the coastal colonies. The arguments here echo many of the pieces so far explored, with the omission of anti-Catholic rhetoric. We can only speculate as to why the establishment of Catholicism, which was the landmark issue in the press, is not part of the Declaration. Perhaps Congress was worried that it would be a step too far and would damage future potential relations with Catholic nations, most notably France: Britain's long-time enemy. This is supported by the fact that the Declaration of Independence was authored with the potential French-American alliance in mind. Alan Taylor explains, “Independence would help Congress secure the foreign assistance needed

⁸⁵ “Declaration of Independence: a Transcription,” *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

to fight the British. French agents assured congressmen that France could provide little aid until the Patriots broke with Britain and formed a union strong enough to provide a stable diplomatic partner.”⁸⁶With the French alliance in mind, it makes sense that Congress would cautiously exclude the bigoted rhetoric so far explored, such as the overwhelming threat of Catholics or the belief in a French-British cabal.

IV. Loyalist Anti-Catholic Rhetoric in the Wake of the Franco-American Treaty of Amity

On February 6, 1778, a Franco-American alliance was secured in Paris. The thirteen-article document outlined a political relationship between France and the United States. The ultimate goal was “to maintain effectually the liberty, Sovereignty, and independance absolute and unlimited of the said united States, as well in Matters of Gouvernement as of commerce.”⁸⁷ The United States officially made itself “good and faithful Allies” with the Catholic King of France, putting the infant nation in rhetorical contradiction. Just four years earlier Whig writers in the press wrote “No French Laws! No Popery!”⁸⁸ Only three years earlier Josiah Quincy accused the authors of the Quebec Act of having designs of a Franco-British cabal.⁸⁹ But by 1778 French Catholics earned praise. The colonists had every reason to celebrate the French alliance. First, a foreign power had formally recognized their republic as a free and independent

⁸⁶ Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016) 159-160.

⁸⁷ “The Franco-American Treaty of Alliance,” Opened for signature February 6, 1778, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-25-02-0476>

⁸⁸ “London, June 23,” *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal* Sept. 5, 1774, “Letters from Lieutenant General Gage to Lord Dartmouth, including a letter from the judges, a covenant signed by the people of Springfield, the proceedings of the county of Suffolk and two newspapers” (Correspondence; Miscellanea; Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/763 1774/08/17-1774/09/20).

http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_763_033

⁸⁹ “Hartford,” *The Cape Fear Mercury*, Aug. 7, 1775, (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, MFQ 1/131 1775/08/07) http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/MFQ_131_004

state, both politically and commercially. Second, the French vowed to send military support for the young nation. The treaty also recognized the United States' right to "attempt the Reduction of the British Power remaining in the Northern Parts of America, or the Islands of Bermudas," and if successful, "those Countries or Islands... shall be confederated with or dependant upon the said united States."⁹⁰ Furthermore, Louis XVI agreed to forever renounce possession of Canada and the Bermuda islands, allowing for American expansion into those territories without resistance from the French. Despite this, Loyalist propagandists spent the second half of the war accusing the Continentals of forfeiting North America to the French.

Loyalist propaganda played an important role in the use of anti-Catholic sentiment during the Revolution. Philip Davidson explains that Loyalist propaganda was defined by persuasive language, writing, "Only by suggestion could [the rebels'] loyalty to America be undermined."⁹¹ Propagandists and officials quickly took advantage of the Franco-American alliance in order to undermine the legitimacy of the Revolution. Prime examples of Loyalists using the power of suggestion against the French can be seen in the *Royal Gazette*, a prominent New York Loyalist publication. On October 7, 1778, the *Gazette* published an article that compared the situation of the colonies in 1773, to their current state in 1778. The author examined government, protection, security, commerce, taxes and religion, arguing that the colonists had been far better off prior to the war in every area of their lives. Regarding religion, the author writes "1773-toleration was complete, and the rights of conscience were preserved inviolate; 1778-New England Presbyterians are now in alliance with Romanism!"⁹² Here we see the unique, suggestive quality of Loyalist propaganda. Whereas the Whigs vehemently attacked the Crown and the Quebec Act,

⁹⁰ "The Franco-American Treaty of Alliance," Opened for signature February 6, 1778, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-25-02-0476>

⁹¹ Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution*, 312.

⁹² *Royal Gazette*, October 7, 1778.

the Loyalists simply advised the reader to compare and contrast their present conditions to those prior to the conflict. The suggestion regarding religion is simply that prior to the conflict, the colonists enjoyed and were protected in their Protestant faith. However, the French alliance put those Protestants in danger of “Romanism,” a term synonymous with “popery.” By aligning themselves with the French, the Americans were opening the door to civil disorder, slavery, iniquity, and the inquisition. Loyalists acted quickly to reverse the narrative previously explored by the Whigs: the rebels were leagued with “papist” Frenchmen.

Loyalist attacks against the Franco-American alliance often mirrored early Whig attacks on the Quebec Act. Echoing the Whigs in 1774 and 1775, an article from New York asked the question: “Is America unacquainted with the tenets of Popery? Is there a Popish country in the world, where the Protestant religion is tolerated?”⁹³ The author wanted people to consider the full implications of the French alliance. The colonists were increasingly moving towards “a state of civil, as well as religious slavery.”⁹⁴ The Whigs in 1774 and 1775 promised the public that the Quebec Act had insidious designs that would destroy their religion, their government, and enslave them. The article expressed the very same message, but with the French alliance as its target. Fear of Catholic priests posing as Protestants was another typical anti-Catholic conspiracy. According to the author, the Catholic Church clandestinely operated with “shoals of priests” who worked “under every possible disguise.” Papists could be anywhere and they could be plotting anything, the only certainty was the true aim of the alliance: to advance French authority in North America. “The people of North America,” the author concluded, “are too well acquainted with the history of mankind, to be so deceived ... that nothing can be for the interest

⁹³ *Royal Gazette*, October 14, 1778.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

of France, which will not prove disagreeable, detrimental, destructive to America.”⁹⁵ In 1774 Josiah Quincy wrote that the Quebec Act was meant “to have advanced the interest of France, to the destruction of that of Britain.”⁹⁶ By 1778 Loyalists accused the Whigs of deceiving the public and advancing the interests of France.

This rhetorical about-turn can be seen in other documents as well. In the same month that the Franco-American treaty was signed, the Crown created the Carlisle Peace Commission, which consisted of several negotiators who were sent to North America. They were tasked with making concessions to the rebels, so long as they agreed to remain in the British Empire. The Commission responded to rejected peace offers in a published address that attacked the French alliance. First the authors promoted the strength of Loyalist support in America, writing, “There are thousands in every colony on this continent waiting ... for an opportunity of testifying their affection to the constitution of Great Britain.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, they believe that “the ambitious designs of the leaders of this rebellion are now become manifest, they will no longer receive the countenance and support, they have hitherto experienced, but that their conduct will appear to all the world, presumptuous and without parallel.”⁹⁸ The commission trusted that the rebels would lose support because of “The unnatural alliance, they have formed with the court of France, which has ever been at enmity with Great Britain.” In response to the “unnatural alliance,” they called for a unity in the “whole empire in one common effort to render abortive a confederacy

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ “Hartford,” *The Cape Fear Mercury*, Aug. 7, 1775, (Newspaper, The National Archives, Kew, MFQ 1/131 1775/08/07) http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/MFQ_131_004

⁹⁷ “The address of the Inhabitants of the City of New York, and its dependencies, and others his Majesty’s faithful and loyal subjects, late inhabitants of the revolted colonies,” *Royal Gazette*, Nov. 25, 1778, (Newspaper; Proclamation, The National Archives, Kew, CO 5/181 1778/11/25) http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/CO_5_181_025

⁹⁸ Ibid

that threatens ruin to the civil and religious liberty of mankind.”⁹⁹ The French alliance proved that the rebel leadership truly had selfish designs in mind, and that the alliance with French Catholics threatened the liberties and the Protestant religion of the Empire. The resemblance to colonial rhetoric regarding the Quebec Act was uncanny. The Whigs saw the Quebec Act as proof of a Franco-British cabal set to destroy civil and religious liberties, while the Loyalists saw the Franco-American alliance as a cabal set to destroy civil and religious liberties.

Loyalists continued to publish anti-Catholic and anti-French propaganda throughout 1779 and 1780. A remarkable example of Loyalist anti-Catholic sentiment can be found in the March 17, 1779 edition of the *Royal Gazette*. The article reminded readers that just a few years earlier the very idea of independence would have seemed shocking and abhorrent to most colonists. However, the author argued, “But remote from probability as this design some time ago might have been imagined, it is by no means so strange as the conjunction which the colonies have formed with the French nation.”¹⁰⁰ The Franco-American alliance was labeled as unnatural as “the tyger and the ox feed[ing] at one stall, or the lion and the lamb lay[ing] down together.”¹⁰¹ Finally, the author prophesized what would result from the alliance in the form of future news articles. Dated November 10, 1789, the first prophesy read “His excellency Count [Tryon] has this day published by authority from his majesty, a proclamation for the suppression of heresy and establishment of the inquisition in this town, which has already begun its functions in many other places of the continent under his majesty’s dominions.”¹⁰² Without explicitly stating it, the author has predicted that the alliance could only result in French domination of North America.

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ *Royal Gazette*, March 17, 1779.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid

Within ten years, William Tryon, the governor of New York, would be enforcing the edicts of a despotic French king, and the horrors of the inquisition would reign over America.

The predictions continued in a day-by-day format, revealing the many horrors that would result from the French alliance. The prophesy for November 11, 1789 stated “The Catholic religion is not only outwardly professed, but has made the utmost progress among ranks of people here, owing in a great measure to the unwearied labours of the Dominican and Franciscan Friars, who omit no opportunity of scattering the seeds of religion and converting the wives and daughters of heretics.”¹⁰³ Also, the “Old South Meeting” house, where town meetings formerly took place, was “fitting up for a Cathedral.” The article continued to predict the calamitous future of America, which included: Sam Adams reading “his recantation of heresy”; the banishment of the English language; ships full of “Rosaries, Mass books, and Indulgences” docking on American shores; and the beheading of George Washington in the New Bastille due to his possession of “a dangerous influence in a newly conquered country.”¹⁰⁴ The article perfectly displayed the Loyalist’s use of persuasion: the author attempts to undermine the Revolution by suggesting what could come of an alliance with Catholics. Articles like this were printed in numerous issues of the *Royal Gazette* from 1778 to 1780. The newspaper bombarded New Yorkers with the promise that British victory was their only hope of avoiding the terror of “popery.”

The propaganda and rumor frustrated some of the rebel leadership. James Warren and Samuel Adams acknowledged the danger that such propaganda posed to the Revolution in their correspondence. On May 10, 1778, Warren expressed his concern to Adams, writing “The Tories

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

are very Industrious in Instilling prejudices into the minds of the people against our Connections with France. The danger of Popery is held up to them, and every other Art that Wickedness and weakness can devise is practised, but I hope with little Effect.”¹⁰⁵ Warren then asked Adams what consequences would result if a member of Congress “Express[ed] his apprehensions or rather his Opinion that this connection will ruin America.” He concludes by reminding Adams that news and rumor spread quickly with Tories, and that “when such an opinion is given in the hearing of one Tory Lady, you may easily conceive it is told to others, and quoted by the great Numbers with which your dear Town abounds.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, if utterances of a “popish” plot are heard by just one Loyalist woman, it will quickly become the talk of the town.

Adams responded by revealing that he had seen very similar Tory propaganda. In a letter dated June 1, he wrote “The Arts you mention as being practiced by the Tories in Boston, to prejudice the people against our new connections, are similar to those which I find on reading a late Phila[delphia] Paper, are practiced there. The Danger of Popery is particularly held up by the Partizans of that King, who would wish to drain Ireland of its Catholicks to carry on his bloody Purposes in America.”¹⁰⁷ Samuel Adams explained that he had seen anti-papal Loyalist propaganda coming out of Philadelphia that attacked America’s alliance with Catholics. Meanwhile, King George was enlisting Irish Catholics to fight in America. Adams was pointing out the contradictions in Tory sentiment: the partisans of the King were terrified of Catholics, yet they were pleased to have them fight for the Loyalist cause. Through this correspondence we find that Loyalists in Philadelphia and Boston were both utilizing the fear of “popery” in order to

¹⁰⁵ “James Warren to Samuel Adams, May 10, 1778,” *Warren-Adams Letters: Being Chiefly a correspondence among John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Warren, Vol. II*, Massachusetts Historical Society, 9

<https://archive.org/details/warrenadamslette7321mass/page/n8/mode/2up>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ “Adams to Warren, June 1, 1778,” *Warren-Adams Letters, Vol. II*, 15
<https://archive.org/details/warrenadamslette7321mass/page/14/mode/2up>

attack rebel leadership. Also, such propaganda was widespread enough to cause some in the rebel leadership to worry about its effectiveness. The Loyalists spread their anti-papal sentiment through other media as well.

The French alliance and Catholicism were also attacked in sermons. For example, a Loyalist priest named Charles Inglis preached a sermon on January 30, 1780 that depicted the Revolution as a holy struggle. He attacked the leaders of the rebellion for having “leagued with Popish, inveterate Enemies of our Nation, of our Religion and Liberties.”¹⁰⁸ Inglis warned that this would result in France taking control of British North America, writing “they have virtually... delivered this country into the hands of a despotic power—a power which has extinguished Liberty, and extirpated the Protestant Religion from all its dominions; and would, doubtless, gladly avail itself of the opportunity ... to exterminate Both in this Country also.”¹⁰⁹ Once again, the French alliance showed the Revolution for what it truly was: a plot based solely on the greed of the rebel leaders, who willingly joined forces with the French in order to instill “popery” over the North American continent.

V. Conclusion

Religion was thoroughly intertwined with nationality during the eighteenth century. To Englishmen, Protestantism was as important to personal and societal security as the British Constitution. Its importance to British identity was on par with the union jack and the English language. Through centuries of propaganda and political conflict, Catholicism became everything that threatened society’s security, and it was considered by the masses to be a

¹⁰⁸ Charles Inglis, *The duty of honouring the King, explained and recommended: in a sermon, preached in St. George's and St. Paul's chapels, New-York, on Sunday, January 30, 1780; being the anniversary of the martyrdom of King Charles I*, NEW-YORK: Printed by Hugh Gaine <http://anglicanhistory.org/charles/inglis.html>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

dangerous anti-British ideology. English fear of Catholics built up to the point that the mere mentioning of “popery” or “Romanism” put a terrifying image into the minds of Englishmen. Therefore, by the 1770s the use of anti-Catholicism was a proven political tool, one that was effective and easily employed. Whigs and Loyalists used popular anti-Catholic fears in order to drum up support for their political causes during the American Revolution. As the empire shattered, both sides of the political fissure used religion in order to ensure the public that their agendas had righteous means. By raising the specter of the dangerous Catholic, both sides depicted themselves as the true guardian of Britishness, and logically, that made their opponent the enemy of it. Depicting themselves as the enforcers of the Protestant religion worked well for the Whigs in the early days of the conflict. However, as they moved towards independence this narrative was abandoned as it could have damaged their alliance with France. Likewise, the establishment of Catholicism in Quebec put Loyalists on the defensive and kept them from utilizing anti-Catholic fears in the early days of the war. However, the Franco-American alliance provided a scenario that could easily be spun in order to raise the specter of Catholicism against the Whigs.

The Quebec Act governed Canada throughout the American Revolution. After the war a large population of exiled American Loyalists resettled in the province, and its defects became more apparent. A push for a new form of government was made in the late 1780s, as the newly settled English colonists desired a legislative assembly, a full English legal system, and an end to the privileged status of the Roman Catholic Church. This presented the British administration with a quandary. Many British leaders learned from the Revolution, and it was their belief that the only way to prevent a similar outcome in Canada was to grant the Canadians the full British Constitution. However, there were others who realized that the British population was still a

meager 21,000 people, compared to the 110,000-person French majority. They felt that undoing the Quebec Act would result in French-Canadian uproar against the British administration, which could result in myriad difficulties. This debate resulted in the Constitutional Act of 1791, which divided the province into two areas: Upper Canada (for the English) and Lower Canada (for the French). The only major change it made to the government of Quebec was the addition of a legislative assembly.¹¹⁰ In *The Old Province of Quebec*, A.L. Burt found that the English population “welcomed the division as a deliverance from dependence upon French Canada,” and that they “did not object to having an assembly of their own.” Ultimately the Act resulted in the English being “saddled with an assembly which they could never hope to control. The division of the province would perpetuate their minority position.”¹¹¹ The changes made to the government of Canada were scarce, and divisions between French and English Canadians persisted.

Anti-Catholic sentiment remained in the British empire well after the Revolution. Examples of bigotry and fearmongering towards the Catholic faith can be found throughout the Victorian Era in British literature. For example, “The Blight of Popery” appeared in *The Bulwark or Reformation Journal* in 1851. The article describes the depressed nature of Catholic countries, noting that, “The public streets swarm with clergy and soldiers, in their respective uniforms, as parasites of a despotism which controls the liberty of thought and action.” The author demonstrates more typical anti-Catholic prejudices, writing, “With the advancement of popish power and influence there has always been retrograde movement in virtue and civilization.”¹¹² Essentially this article is sending the same message as anti-Catholic literature centuries before: Catholicism bred tyranny, iniquity, and hindered society. In the *Address of the Grand Orange*

¹¹⁰ A.L. Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec, Vol. II*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart Limited, 1968) 193-205

¹¹¹ A.L. Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec, Vol. II*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart Limited, 1968) 205.

¹¹² “The Blight of Popery, 1851” in *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, ed. E.R. Norman (London: University of Cambridge, 1968) 184.

Lodge against Catholic Emancipation, Henry Maxwell claimed “In the present era, our religion is menaced by the attacks of Popery and Infidelity, while our constitution is assailed by faction and sedition.”¹¹³ Maxwell also declared that when it came to being British “no man unless his creed be Protestant, and his principles loyal, can associate with us.” These articles coincided with political change, namely the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which allowed Catholics to serve in Parliament, and the “Papal Aggression” episode in 1850, in which the Catholic Church created its own network of Catholic bishops in England.¹¹⁴ Also, the rise in anti-Catholic sentiment coincided with the Great Famine in Ireland. The famine resulted in numerous political changes, notably Irish emigration around the empire and harsh criticism at the British administration’s failure to manage the crisis. In the mid-nineteenth century Great Britain was experiencing political changes, and it is no coincidence that in the wake of these changes anti-Catholic bigotry grew rampantly.

Pushes for toleration came about in some of the most prejudiced areas of the United States in the years following independence. Focusing on the New England colonists, Francis D. Cogliano writes “New Englanders adapted quickly and found a new devil to replace the pope and his minions: the King of England and his ministers.” Furthermore, he explains “This transition enabled them to ally with French Catholics against British Protestants.”¹¹⁵ Though far from completely eliminated from society, fear of “popery” faded. This was in large part due to the French alliance and efforts made by Whig leaders to promote toleration.¹¹⁶ After securing the presidency in 1790, George Washington exemplified this transition while addressing Catholic

¹¹³ “Address of the Grand Orange Lodge against Catholic Emancipation, 1828,” in *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, 129.

¹¹⁴ E.R. Norman, “Maynooth,” in *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, 23.

¹¹⁵ Francis D. Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995) 154.

¹¹⁶ Cogliano, *No King, No Popery*, 154.

Americans: he wrote “And I presume that your fellow-citizens will not forget the patriotic part which you took in the accomplishment of their Revolution, and the establishment of their Government: or the important assistance which they received from a nation in which the Roman Catholic faith is professed.”¹¹⁷ Centuries of papal fearmongering seemed to fade away with the French alliance and the closing of the Revolution. However, as America faced its own political struggles during the nineteenth century, anti-Catholicism would return as an effective political tool.

Despite some early legal reforms and efforts to move society away from “anti-popery,” America produced its own catalogue of post-revolutionary anti-Catholic literature. One of the most widely read anti-Catholic books was Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, which reported supposed tales of scandal in the Catholic Church. Tales of violent, sexual, and macabre practices made up the content of the book, and it was widely read and accepted as truth.¹¹⁸ Contemporary work of the period informed the public that “women were being kidnapped from confessionals, imprisoned and raped in convents; Inquisitors continued to maintain and use hidden torture chambers; Jesuits practiced their time-honored treacheries; nuns posing as governesses corrupted Protestant children; priests hovered over death beds, snatching away family fortunes; Papal emissaries plotted to overthrow government power; Mother superiors tyrannized helpless girls, barring all parental intervention.”¹¹⁹ Like the resurgence of

¹¹⁷ “From George Washington to Roman Catholics in America, c.15 March 1790,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-05-02-0193>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 5, *16 January 1790–30 June 1790*, ed. Dorothy Twohig, Mark A. Mastromarino, and Jack D. Warren. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996, pp. 299–301.]

¹¹⁸ Kathleen Kennedy, “The Nun, the Priest and the Pornographer: Scripting Rape in Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures*,” *Genders* no. 57, (2013): 11-20.

¹¹⁹ Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 1.

anti-Catholic literature in Great Britain, America's nineteenth century "anti-popery" coincided with political changes, namely immigration. The large influx of Irish and southern European immigration during the 1840s and 1850s "roused nativist suspicions," which gave rise to the return of the anti-Catholic political tool.¹²⁰ Though the oppressive yoke of Great Britain had been cast off in the century prior, much of Britain's prejudices and bigoted values remained in America long after peace was made at Paris.

The story explored here has been one of prejudice and political crisis. In the hysteria that came as the British Empire crumbled, the press took advantage of English xenophobia in order to advance political agendas. The accusations, embellishments, and outright lies that were printed and circulated exhibited how a societal outcast can be used by media. Catholicism had long been labeled a vile ideology that was set on destroying the freedom and sanctity of the world, and propagandists used these beliefs during the imperial crisis to achieve their political goals, in what amounts to (for lack of a better term) fake news. The idea that the press willfully misleads the public for political purposes seems to us like a modern phenomenon. However, propaganda from the Era of the American Revolution shows that America's battle with hyperbole and its tendency to weaponize xenophobia is as much a part of its origins, as it is a part of its present and future.

¹²⁰ Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 3.

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