

Ecclesiastic anti-Catholicism in Britain after the Glorious Revolution



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This essay focuses on religious anti-Catholicism in England after the Glorious Revolution and aims at challenging a number of assumptions concerning post-1688 anti-Catholicism. The critical consensus on the topic revolves around three points, the main one being that anti-Catholicism declined after the 'Bloodless' Revolution because it had become obsolete:

After the Glorious Revolution, the debates cut off, suddenly irrelevant. . . One state could not have two established churches. Each side needed to be absolutely right to justify its claim to truth and therefore to power. Once James left, Catholic liberty to print and plausibility as a theological threat to the Church of England left with him, so that one party could not make its case and the other had no continuing need to do so. (Tumbleson 104-105)

Besides, whatever was left of it – and this is the second point – is supposed to have taken place outside England, mostly in Scotland. Finally, it is assumed that the function of what remained of anti-Catholicism was essentially social rather than religious:

The establishment of God's kingdom on earth had ceased to be the politicians' goal. Men were busy with public concerns, and religious belief was increasingly a private matter. . . Insofar as religion was a matter of public concern, it was as a means of improving the behaviour of the masses (Crawford 177).

After 1688, the argument goes, anti-Catholicism was a merely social phenomenon whose main function was that of bonding Protestant Britain together.

Such assumptions need qualifying, and this study offers tentative rather than conclusive evidence to argue this point, showing that anti-Catholicism did persist, although one should be cautious to make a distinction between actual persecution and anti-Catholic *feeling*, that is to say, "the anti-popery long sheltered in the national psyche" (Mullett 1996). That anti-Catholicism was not only social, but also religious, or rather, ecclesiastic, is the second point that is worth addressing. Though Catholics were technically no longer a danger for the Church – the *Toleration Act* of 1689 included Protestant Dissenters but excluded Catholics, and the *Test Act* of 1673 remained in force until 1829 – strong evidence of anti-Catholicism is to be found in Anglican homiletics and pamphleteering. The first part of this study is therefore devoted to a brief overview of anti-Catholicism at large as a prerequisite to a better understanding of its ecclesiastic dimension, while the second one analyzes the function that anti-Catholicism fulfilled as regards the Church of England. Finally, the last section explores the various strategies Anglican polemicists implemented to de-legitimize Catholicism.

The general background of anti-Catholicism in England has already been well researched, notably by Colin Haydon's seminal work (Haydon 1993). This first part therefore merely aims at providing a brief overview of that background so as to grasp the specificities of *religious* anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth century. British anti-Catholicism manifested itself mostly in three ways, the first one being political distrust. Especially after 1688, Catholics were reproached with paying allegiance to a foreign monarch in the person of the Pope. John Locke's first *Letter on Toleration* (1689), in which he maintained that British Papists could *not* be granted proper toleration since their Church "[was] so constituted that all who enter it *ipso facto* pass into the allegiance and service of another prince" (Locke 133), summarized the prevailing feeling on the topic and was taken up in countless tracts and sermons throughout the eighteenth century. Tolerating the Roman Church in England, Locke argued, would lead to an *imperium in imperio*, a foreign

jurisdiction in the kingdom. Far from being arguments that only the intelligentsia resorted to in polemical debates, these were feelings harboured by the general population, whose fears had been further exacerbated by the reign of James II, however short, as well as by the increased circulation of the Catholic press that had ensued. Anti-Catholicism also manifested itself through theological disputes. Popery was seen as antithetical to true Christianity inasmuch as the Pope rather than Christ was said to be at the centre of Catholic faith, and because tradition superseded the Bible: belief in Papal infallibility "[D]estroys the obligation to Faith which ariseth from the rational evidence of Christian Doctrine" (Stillingfleet 131). Besides, central Catholic tenets, notably justification by works rather than by faith, and transubstantiation, were deemed heretical. Finally, the clergy wielded a political power which Englishmen viewed as worrying and denounced as the evil-doing of 'priescraft'.

But the most subtle, albeit efficient, form of anti-Catholicism was the strong emphasis that Anglican theologians and pamphleteers laid on the *Test Act*. Indeed, the power of Catholics, real or imagined, was all the more threatening as the Church was "in a state of institutional anxiety" (Tumleson 153). The so-called "Glorious Revolution" had shattered one of the fundamental assumptions that the Church of England was based on, namely that an unbreakable bond existed between Church and State. This was a notion that preachers had been very keen to emphasize, using the Latitudinarian *topos* of the "Great Chain of Being" and drawing a parallel between the manner in which servants should obey their masters and the obedience that nations are required to show Kings. The somewhat tendentious argument put forward by Anglicans after 1688 – paying their due to the *de facto* monarch did not prevent them from being faithful to the *de jure* king – did little to hide their embarrassment. The Revolution also forced the Church to reflect on something that had so far been an unquestioned assumption, that is to say its role and position in the English society. No longer secure in its centrality in society, the Church strongly resisted all suggestions of "toleration," lest it lead to "comprehension" and a further weakening of its position. Indeed, "Churchgoing remained the sole test of what Catholics polemicists dubbed 'Parliamentarie Religion'" (Hill 12), since conscience was "internall, invisible, and not in the power of the greatest monarch in the world, in no lymittes to be streightened, in no bondes to be conteyned."¹ Though Anglicans eventually

¹ The phrases are Edward Aglionby's, in a speech delivered in response to a proposed bill of 1571 'for coming to common prayer and for receavinge of the communion' (Crawford 12).

had to accept the 1689 *Toleration Act*, they repeatedly fought against the repeal of the *Test Act* – whose full name, it is worth remembering, was "An Act for preventing dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants." Fighting against the repeal of the *Test Act* therefore actually meant fighting against Catholicism. Indeed, the 'Sacramental Test' remained the last *de facto* link between Church and State, which, should it be abolished, would inexorably lead to the disappearance of Christianity itself: "the great Objection we have against repealing [the] *Sacramental Test* [...] is, that we are verily perswaded the Consequence will be an entire Alteration of Religion among us, in a no great Compass of Years" (Swift II, 116). Conforming in *deeds*, which overrode the question of personal *feelings*, was the only safeguard to ensure that the Anglican religion survived.

Beyond the political vicissitudes of the time, the need for anti-Catholicism can be partly accounted for by the emergence of what has come to be known as 'the public sphere'. Even if the limits of the 'public sphere' as defined by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1988) are being debated (Goodman 2-20), the fact itself is not to be questioned. From the second half of the seventeenth century onward, a shift occurred from a monolithic order to an uncomfortable plurality. The hitherto unquestioned political and religious institutions now had to be submitted to public enquiry thanks to "argumentation" (Habermas 38-70). The Church therefore found itself in a position where it had to justify its ways, since the source of authority underwent a drastic change – no longer a transcendent origin accepted by everybody without discussion, but deriving from *opinion*, that is to say, the result of open debate and discussion. Significantly, the noun "public" gradually replaced its former equivalents, *i.e.*, "world" or "mankind." In this new society, Jonathan Swift lamented, "Authority is very much founded on Opinion" (Swift III, 150), thus aptly expressing the shift from a humanist conception of society to one based on the subjectivity of opinion. Anglican polemicists as a whole were keenly aware of this fact and repeatedly expressed their distrust of public groupings which are not only "composed of Men with all their Infirmary about them," but also have "the ill Fortune to be generally led and influenced by the worst among themselves; I mean, *Popular Orators, Tribunes*, or, as they are now stiled, *Great Speakers, Leading Men* and the like" (Swift I, 227). In this new 'public sphere', the structural fragility of the Church made the question of its legitimacy somewhat problematic. Indeed, as is well-known, the Church of England proceeded first and foremost from an institutional rather than a theological questioning. As a consequence, the texts most central to Anglican

apologetics, namely those of Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, were published about fifty years after the emergence of what was to become the Church of England and were but a retrospective justification both of the rupture with the Catholic Church, and of the comparatively small amount of reforms introduced in the new Church. When confronted to the question of its legitimacy, the Church claimed to be 'established' and recognized by the State *because* it was the secular embodiment of the divine truth; *mutatis mutandis*, the Church was the best guarantor of the stability of the State. The two were therefore in a relationship of "mutual dependence," as the phrase would have it at the time, a concept which Anglican theologians took to its limit: "And I think it clear, that any great Separation from the established Worship, although to a new one that is more pure and perfect, may be an Occasion of endangering the publick Peace" (Swift II, 11).

Anti-Catholicism was therefore for the Church of England a convenient means of deflecting unwanted attention from its own doctrine. It prided itself on its silence with respect to intricate doctrinal matters, thus claiming to avoid the pitfalls of either dogmatism or scepticism. The Anglican divine William Chillingworth theorized at the time what the critic Richard Popkin later defined as "skeptical fideism" (Popkin 1973):

So that those places, which contain things necessary, and wherein errors were dangerous, need no infallible interpreter, because they are plain; and those that are obscure need none, because they contain not things necessary, neither is error in them dangerous. (Chillingworth I, 211)

Only the Church of England had found the right balance, the *via media* between what Anglicanism defined as two extremes, that is, the undue emphasis that Catholics laid on works on the one hand, and the excessive importance that Dissenters gave to 'inner feelings' and to subjective spiritual experiences. Its irenicism was "that virtuous mediocrity which our Church observes between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttishness of fanatic conventicles" (Patrick 7).

It has been contended that "the 'long eighteenth century' finds in 1688 its date of foundation;" "[1688] is a foundational myth (or re-foundational myth). It is the birth certificate of modern England" (Bony 25).² It might be argued that the same goes for the Church and that "the overwhelming Catholicism of large parts of Continental Europe, and especially France and Spain" provided not only "a newly-invented Britain," but also a newly re-invented Church of England "with a formidable 'other' against which it could usefully define itself" (Colley 16). That is how anti-Catholicism came to play a major role in the foundational myth of the Church of England.

What characterizes a myth among other things is its ability to turn chance occurrences into coherent discourse. While Protestantism had always provided such an interpretative framework for most British citizens, the Church now needed to defend and strengthen its position in English society. Rewriting the story of its origins in order to appear in direct apostolic succession was one of the ways the Church found of legitimizing its status as established Church. The stakes were high, since the Catholic Church, *not* the Anglican one, was naturally the one to be traditionally regarded as part and parcel of the apostolic succession. Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub* is one of a handful of texts that boldly address the issue in a direct manner, a most striking example of such rewriting under the guise of fiction in the well-known embedded story of the three brothers and the so-called 'allegory of the coats'.³ While Peter (the Catholic) and Jack (the Puritan) both use the coat (*ie*, the sacred text) to their own advantage, Martin (the Anglican) manages to remain faithful to the Father's testament, thanks to his right reason which, unlike his brothers', is not perverted by pride. The interesting point is that the two occurrences of the word "rupture" that appear in the allegory are mentioned in relation *not* to the Church of England, but to Catholicism as embodied by Peter, who is thus described: "We left *Lord Peter* in open Rupture with his two Brethren" (Guthkelch 133). On the other hand, Martin

² My translation.

³ A father bequeaths his three sons Peter, Jack, and Martin, a precious coat, standing for his religious legacy, recommending that they by no means alter it in any way. After seven years of harmony – a direct reference to the first seven centuries of Christianity – the three brothers meet three women, respectively embodying greed, ambition, and pride, an encounter which sets them at loggerheads, since they each try in their own way to make their father's testament compatible with the ways of the world.

appears as the one respecting the father's legacy and preserving the coat at all costs:

But Martin, who at this Time happened to be extremely phlegmatick and sedate, begged his Brother, of all love, not to damage his Coat by any Means; for he never would get such another: Desired him to consider, that it was not their Business to form their Actions by any Reflection upon Peter's, but by observing the Rules prescribed in their Father's Will. (*ibid.*139)

Such examples, however, are the exception rather than the rule. Another, more common, manifestation of this hankering after a foundational myth was the strengthening of the long-standing equation between religious and national identities. Such an attitude was presented by Anglican ministers as no less than a providential role: as the foremost Protestant power, it was the duty of England, and therefore of the Church, to rescue true religion from Popery, which was first and foremost a 'foreign' religion. In order to secure its position as national religion, the Church of England increasingly came to rely on the figurehead of Charles I, and from 1662 until 1859, there was annexed to the Book of Common Prayer an order of service for use on January 30, the anniversary of the death of Charles I.

Anti-Catholicism was thus gradually institutionalized and 'Charity Schools' turned into weapons in the fight against 'Popery'. While the aim of these schools was not to eradicate poverty – something which was inconceivable in a world where natural catastrophes, famines, and epidemics were but the devastating manifestations of the Almighty's boundless power – they nevertheless played a social and economic role. The latter, however, was only

ancillary to their self-assigned religious purpose, which was that children should be raised as "good Christians:"

The Children are not so educated as to be *above* low Business, but fitted *for* it, by Religion and other Knowledge. They are not bred *Scholars* but *Christians*; which must have a good Influence upon Persons of all stations, and Conditions, from the highest to the lowest. It has been said, I have heard, that the *Charity-Children* make the *worst Servants* in the World. There may have been *some* Instances of this; but it cannot be true in the general. (Trapp 22-23)

If what is meant by the phrase "good Christians" remains implicit in this sermon, it is overtly stated in others: being a "good Christian" means fighting against Catholicism, and children should therefore be become "little garrisons against Popery" (Jones 14). Charity-Schools were assisted in their task by both the *Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge* and the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*.

But sermons were evidently the most efficient form of propaganda. Archbishops gave instructions to their clergy and some ministers claimed to have preached against 'Popery' every single Sunday in September, others boasting that they "design[ed] to sound Popery in the People's Ears till they [were] sick of it's [*sic*] very name" (in Haydon 134-135). Sermons were all the more powerful as they were more often than not published, either as such, or in a slightly modified form as pamphlets or prints. The sermons preached and/or written in the North of England, where the fear of the Catholic threat was obviously more acute than in the rest of the country, are especially significant. Not only did the vast majority of preachers choose the same Biblical text as a basis for their homily, but they used the same version of that text, that is, 2 Corinthians 32: 1-24. This version of the text is the one in which the political and military interpretation of events most overrides the religious

agenda behind the text, unlike the versions to be found in 2 Kings 18: 13 or Isaiah 36-38, which both emphasize Isaiah's role as a prophet. The text from Corinthians enabled preachers to draw a parallel between contemporary England and Biblical times: just as Sennacherib, the idolatrous king of Assyria, had tried to intimidate Hezekiah, the French (Catholic) king was now threatening the King of England. As one minister put it: "Thus are the opposite Characters of those Monarchs drawn in Scripture, and their History bears so strong a Resemblance to the Present Times, that it might almost seem to allude to 'em" (in Deconinck 171). Others went even further, as when Isaac Watts compiled his best-selling translation of the psalms in 1719, and did not balk at replacing all mentions of "Israel" from the original text with "Great-Britain" (Colley 30).

Such practices were but one manifestation of the polemical war that took place at the time and which was an extremely potent form of anti-Catholicism. As has been pointed out, the question of the theological legitimacy of the Church of England was problematic. Besides, one of the consequences of the advent of the 'public sphere' was the increasingly important role of polemical debate. *Rhetorical* anti-Catholicism thus became a powerful weapon that Anglican polemicists wielded freely.

It is essential to understand that the term "Catholicism" was often used less as an objective than a subjective sign, and gradually became the rhetorical equivalent of aberrant behaviour. Besides, it was not rare for eighteenth-century Anglican homiletics to instrumentalize the Scriptures in such a way that legitimized Anglicanism and de-legitimized Catholicism. Stock criticisms pertaining to the theological sphere were repeatedly used by preachers.

Confessions, Absolutions, Penances, Pilgrimages, Purgatory, and Prayers in an unknown Tongue to Angels, Saints, a Virgin, with the Adoration of Reliques, Images, a Cross, a Wafer, and other Articles, all imposed under the Pain of eternal Damnation. (in Deconinck 182)

Other traditional objections to Catholicism were the worshipping of Mary, arguing that she was the mother of Jesus and not of *God*, the use of Latin, which fostered ignorance among the laity, as well as the fact that lay people were not allowed to read the Bible themselves, which made it possible for the Catholic hierarchy to stay in power. Jonathan Swift's sermon "On the Trinity" is most representative in that respect. Addressing the question of mysteries, the preacher explains that "It is impossible for us to determine for what Reasons God thought fit to communicate some Things to us in Part, and leave some Part a Mystery. But so it is in Fact, and so the Holy Scripture tells us in several Places." A mystery can however come "under Suspicion" if it "turns to the Advantage of those who preach it to others." It soon becomes clear that this remark is but an excuse for a self-righteous reassertion of the Anglican faith ("we [never] preach Mysteries without Warrant from Holy Scripture") to the detriment of Roman Catholicism:

It is true indeed, the *Roman Church* hath very much enriched herself by trading in Mysteries, for which they have not the least Authority from Scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal Wealth and Grandeur; such as *Transubstantiation, Worshipping of Images, Indulgences for Sins, Purgatory, and Masses for the Dead*; with many more. (Swift IX 162-163)

Transubstantiation was indeed a favourite target, and it is worth bearing in mind that it was also the crux of the oath for the *Test Act*, which said: "*I do declare that I do believe that there is not any transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or in the elements of the bread and wine, at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever.*" But typically, preachers did not refute the doctrine by opposing it to another (Anglican) doctrine, but by showing the internal contradictions of the Catholic dogma and presenting it as contrary to the traditional definition of sacraments.

But the most powerful delegitimizing strategy was yet another one: describing the Catholic faith as irrational. Presenting Catholicism as such had many an advantage. It became a convenient argument for Anglican preachers when it was no longer possible to define Catholicism as exclusively foreign,

and increasingly difficult to pass it off as tyrannical. Then, quite obviously, it was yet another efficient, albeit somewhat facile, strategy to discredit Roman Catholicism, an easy way of dismissing it as idolatrous; "idolatry," "Popish Superstitions" (Brooke 13), and "bigotry" were terms repeatedly used by Anglican preachers in the polemical war that they were fighting. Roman Catholic doctrine could thus be blamed for its irrationality and complexity, and Anglicanism *a contrario* appear as the very embodiment of a rationality and plainness that suited the age in its creed as well as in its preaching, which "ought to be plain, practical, methodical, affectionate." Indeed, "He that affects hard [words], speaks in an unknown tongue, and is a *Barbarian* to his Auditors; they hear the sound, but are not edified." On the other hand, plainness is "a Character of great latitude, and stands in opposition, First to *hard words*. Secondly, to *deep* and *mysterious* notions. Thirdly, to affected *Rhetorications*, and Fourthly, to *Phantastical Phrases*" (Glanvill 11-12).

Much more fundamentally, such emphasis on reason enabled the Church to monopolize rational discourse and exclude Catholicism from it by presenting it as antithetical to reason. In the face of growing rationalism, it was indeed of paramount importance to bear as little resemblance to the 'superstitious' Catholic faith as possible. Appearing as a rational faith was a role that the Church eased into comfortably, given that reason had always been at the core of its creed, a fact that cannot be properly apprehended without referring to Latitudinarianism. While the term has been used in a variety of contexts which can seem to discourage any attempt at a clear definition — "from a synonym for religious moderation [...] to a derisive sobriquet in the hands of embittered Nonconformists, High Churchmen, and Non-Jurors, to a convenient but indeterminate historical description of the entire eighteenth-century Anglican establishment" (Spellman 1) — it is however possible to uncover the meaning the word had in the eighteenth century on the basis of Simon Patrick's pamphlet, entitled *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men* (1662). A theologian and scholar from Cambridge, Patrick made the term popular and gave it its most common meaning. The theology of these 'men of latitude', most of whom had studied in Cambridge in the second half of the seventeenth century, derived from mediaeval Augustinianism. Besides, they strongly opposed the idea of persecution of any kind, believing that the Church's mission was to emulate the spirit of peace that characterizes God's Holy City. Hence the emphasis on reason; only a rational religion would make it possible to avoid both theological ratiocinations and dogmatism: "[There is no point in divinity] where that which is most ancient doth not prove the most

rational, and the most rational the ancientest; for there is an eternal consanguinity between all verity" (Patrick 10-11). Nothing could be more wrong than to oppose reason and revelation, since reason itself is of divine origin:

And now let no man accuse them [the Anglicans] of hearkening too much to their own reason [...]. For Reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of everything, nor can a man beleve [*sic*] any thing except he have some reason for it, whether that reason be a deduction from the light of nature, and those principles which are the candle of the Lord, set up in the soul of every man that hath not wilfully extinguished it; or a branch of Divine revelation in the oracles of holy Scripture. [...] For he that will rightly make use of his Reason, must take all that is reasonable into consideration. (*ibid.*, 10)

This defence of a rational religion, which aimed at avoiding the double pitfall of atheism, as exemplified by Hobbes, on the one hand, and socinianism⁴ on the other, was not without its dangers. Should Anglicanism insist too much on man's nature as *animal rationale*, it would turn him into an intrinsically good creature, and therefore render Redemption supererogatory. Arguments putting forward the role of reason in religion were nevertheless unceasingly taken up in various forms by eighteenth-century theologians and preachers, as shown by the following example, taken from a sermon that John Sharp:

⁴ Named after Socinus, Socinianism rejects both the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus. This doctrine lays the emphasis on the prophetic function of Jesus's life to the detriment of his divine attributes.

Nothing can be an article of Faith that is contrary to Reason. The Deity himself tho' omnipotent cannot work contradictions, forasmuch as he is a Being of Infinite Perfection. But it does not follow that a thing is contrary to Reason because it is contrary to the ordinary Laws of Nature. Faith & Reason though they have their distinct Provinces, are by no means incompatible, but when properly directed mutually assist each other; And add light to & strengthen the Christian Cause, & conspire together in the Advancement of Religion & Virtue. (in Deconinck 425)

Among these theologians, Richard Hooker occupies a central position. His *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593) were meant to give intellectual and theological import to the notion of a rational faith. The 'laws' mentioned in Hooker's title refer both to God's divine law and to human law, namely, reason, and according to Hooker, man's fallen nature makes it impossible for him to have anything else than a partial and imperfect view of the divine law. Man must nevertheless make sure he follows this law to the best of his abilities, that is, by abiding by human laws which are the human equivalent of divine law.

To the risk of "turn[ing] the Grace of God into a wanton Notion of Morality [...] making Reason, Reason, Reason, [the] only Trinity, and sole Standard, whereby to measure both the Principles and Conclusions of Faith" (Standish 24-25), the notion of 'reasonable belief', or 'reasonable faith', came to assume a central role in Anglicanism, which established a distinction that was to become famous: "It is an old and true Distinction, that Things may be above our Reason without being contrary to it" (Swift IX,164). Anglican divines could thus pride themselves on enlisting reason to explain Revelation to their congregations.

Such a stance was always, explicitly or implicitly, in opposition to the positioning of Roman Catholicism as regards reason. Unlike ‘Papists’, Anglicans had nothing to hide and could justify everything they proclaimed.

We of the Reformed Religion are not like the Roman Catholicks afraid to have our Principles examined into, but submit them to the Test of Reason. In those passages, w^{ch} are above our comprehension though at the same time not contradictory to Reason, there Faith has its full Scope; but all the other Parts w^{ch} come within the reach of human capacity, we prove & judge of by the Rational Powers w^{ch} God has been pleased to give us; So that Our Religion is a System of Morality made perfect by the Scriptures, And Our FAITH, a REASONABLE BELIEF.

(*ibid.*, 440)

By laying increasing emphasis on reason, Anglican theologians gradually redefined the very notion of religion in a manner that made it possible for them to repeatedly use Catholicism as a counter-example of what true religion should be.

From this monopolizing of rational discourse to the appropriation of empiricism, there was then only one step. Managing to combine scientific and religious ideologies was the real *tour de force* of post-1688 Anglicanism, inasmuch as it was what really enabled the latter to reassert the centrality of its position in a now plural society, to the exclusion of Catholicism.

How intertwined the histories of Latitudinarianism and of the kind of natural philosophy practised at the Royal Society are, is a fact that can hardly be overemphasized. Quite a few high-ranking Anglican divines, such as Thomas Sprat, Joseph Glanvill, and John Wilkins, were also among the better-known members of the Royal Society. Bishop John Wilkins gave Anglicanism its best theory of homiletics with *An Essay towards a Real*

Character and a Philosophical Language (1668) and a treatise, *Ecclesiastes, or a Discourse concerning the Gift of Preaching as it falls under the Rules of Art* (1646), which epitomizes the Anglican spirit of the time in these matters: "the principal Scope of a Divine Orator is to teach clearly, convince strongly, and persuade powerfully" (Wilkins 2). Beyond this biographical evidence, there was a clear link between Anglicanism and science on both an ideological and epistemological level. Indeed, Anglican divines strove to prove that the emerging paradigm, far from questioning theologically-based assumptions about the world, only confirmed them. Both science and Anglicanism could benefit from such an alliance: the former would avoid being associated with Puritan anarchy or Catholic irrationality, while the latter might draw on the authority of science when necessary. From the epistemological point of view, Anglicans resorted to the centuries-old metaphor of the 'two Books' to present theological and scientific discourses as complementary in their interpretation of God's works, that is, the Book of Nature on the one hand, the Book of God (*i.e.*, Scripture) on the other hand. Provided one be guided by 'right reason,' deciphering God's intention as it was inscribed in both books was an easy and natural task: "The natural philosophers were providing for the book of nature what Martin Luther had accomplished long ago for the Bible: the "right" method of interpreting it" (Affentranger 117).

Interestingly, the scientific authority Anglican apologetics drew from Empiricism was mostly *discursive*. In this polemical age, speaking the language of rigorous precision, and thus appearing as being above factions, was a non-negligible asset. This accounts for the influence that the Royal Society had on Anglican homiletics. For the former indeed, rigour was essential in all areas in order to separate the wheat of truth from the chaff of illusion – "to separate the Knowledge of Nature, from the colours of Rhetorick, the devices of Fancy, or the delightful deceit of Fables," – and a proper attitude toward language was therefore necessary:

They [the Members of the Royal Society] have therefore been most vigorous in putting in execution the only Remedy, that can be found for this *extravagance* [the constant use of figures of speech], and that has been, a constant Resolution to reject all Amplifications,

digressions, and swellings of style; to return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men deliver'd so many *Things* almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that of Wits and Scholars. (Sprat 113)

Reading Edward Stillingfleet, one realizes how pervasive the discourse of science had become in Anglican homiletics. The readability of God's design is strikingly expressed thanks to a scientific metaphor rather than a biblical one:

The word [as revealed in the Bible] is a *Telescope* to discover the great *Luminaries* of the world, the truths of highest concernment to the *souls of men*, and it is such a *Microscope* as discovers to us the smallest *Atome* of our *thoughts*, and discerns the most secret *intent* of our *heart*. And as far as this *Light* reacheth, it comes with *power* and *authority*, as it comes armed with the *Majesty* of *God* who reveals it. (in Affentranger 114)

Starting from the epistemological isomorphism of nature and Scripture, Anglicans gradually came to regard empirical evidence as on a par with Biblical evidence. The laws of Empiricism therefore applied to religious matters as elsewhere, and what was known was only what was manifest to sense. From there, it became easy to devalue Roman Catholicism for not abiding by these rules and in that respect, Anglican attacks on transubstantiation were always loaded with ulterior motives: not only did the central Catholic dogma come to epitomize Catholic irrationality, but mostly, it was used to prove that the Catholics' claim to truth could not possibly be legitimate, as this dogma contradicted experimentally verifiable facts.

It was thanks to this appropriation of Empiricism that Anglicanism dealt Catholicism the final, most definite blow. Experimental natural philosophy had indeed the invaluable advantage of providing a *native* alternative to *foreign* scholasticism with which to refute Catholic school-theology. It is certainly no coincidence that Catholics were hardly ever called precisely that, and were instead dismissively dubbed "Papists," believers in Popery: the Pope rather than Christ was at the centre of their faith. As Sterne puts it, Catholics "must believe in the *Pope*" (Sterne IV, 260) and even worship him:

Would one think that a church, which thrusts itself under this apostle's patronage [St Peter], and claims her power under him, would presume to exceed the degrees of it which he acknowledged to possess himself. – But how ill your expectations are answered, when instead of the humble declaration in the text – Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us, as if our own power and holiness had wrought this; – you hear a language and behaviour from the Romish court, as opposite to it as insolent words and actions can frame. –

So that instead of, Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us, – Ye men of Israel, *do* marvel at us, – hold us in admiration: Approach our sacred pontiff, – (who is not only holy – but holiness itself) – approach his person with reverence, and deem it the greatest honour and happiness of your lives to fall down before his chair, and be admitted to kiss his feet. – (Sterne IV, 302)

It is no coincidence either that the adjective most commonly applied to Catholics should have been 'outlandish', which is to be understood quite literally, since to the modern meaning of 'bizarre' was added the more literal sense of 'foreign'. Catholics therefore appeared not merely as different, but as citizens that did not really belong. This point the Anglican Church drove home repeatedly, and in doing so, asserted for good its role in English society.

Describing anti-Catholicism as "the chief ideological commitment of the nation [between 1714 and 1780], a set of generally held attitudes, not the obsession of 'ultra-Protestants'," and even as "part of England's general culture, one facet of the collective mentalité [which] was ever-present to some degree in most men's consciousness" (Haydon 18 ; 51) may at first sight seem somewhat overstated. This was not, after all, Jacobean England; the *Toleration Act* had been passed and one might have thought that Catholics "during the century after 1688 were not on any reasonable judgement an oppressed minority," since there were numerous "beneficent effects of the Revolution on English Catholics." (Bossy 370 ; 376) Yet, one has to realize that the root of anti-Catholicism lay elsewhere, that the intolerance toward Catholicism was mostly rooted in fear, as well as "in the way Britons chose to remember and interpret their own past. For large numbers of them. . . , time past was a soap opera written by God, a succession of warning disasters and providential escapes which they acted out afresh every year as a way of reminding themselves who they were" (Colley 19). Thus, religious anti-Catholicism during 'the Long Eighteenth Century' cannot be accounted for in purely rational terms. After 1688, the fear of Roman Catholicism took "absurd proportions" precisely *because* Catholicism was less overtly present, thus fuelling paranoid feelings about its power. To this was added the fact that the status and position of the Church of England after 1688 were far more complex than before. It both remained a central social institution and was regarded by the new regime with some suspicion. The Church therefore had to (re)assert its status as the best ally to the state, which it did in two different ways. It first drew on time-old references to the indestructible links between Church and state. Thus, during the coronation ceremony of William and Mary in 1689, a copy of the English Bible, the key text of the Reformation, was for the first time carried in the procession to Westminster Abbey. Unlike their predecessors, the monarchs had to swear that they would rule according to the 'true profession of the gospel, and the Protestant reformed religion established by law'. Once crowned, they each received a copy of the Bible, 'to put [them] in mind of this rule and that [they] may follow it' (in Colley 47). The Church also played endlessly on the well-ingrained fear of Catholicism: Anti-Catholicism was thus as necessary in the eighteenth century as it had been before, since it had become part and parcel of England's "ecclesiastical patriotism" (Bossy 288). Without (anti-)Catholicism, English Protestantism could not "fulfill the proto-nationalistic function of supplying a mystification underwriting the inauguration of modernity and imperialism, 'justify[ing] the ways of God to men'" (Tumbleson 97).

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