

Anti-Popery In Colonial Pennsylvania

IN THE mid-eighteenth century, Conrad Weiser, an otherwise broadminded Pennsylvania Indian agent, could discriminate in his will against one of his daughters merely because she had dared to marry a Roman Catholic. A religious seeker himself, Weiser, far from castigating himself as a bigot, very likely saw himself as a staunch defender of true religion.¹ He may have been uncertain about what he favored, but there was no uncertainty about what he opposed. Even though he lived in the most tolerant of the British North American colonies, Weiser also inhabited a society in which a hatred and fear of popery was common.

Anti-popery was grounded in an antipathy for Roman Catholicism which emerged in many European countries during the Protestant Reformation. It especially affected the lives of Englishmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during Britain's struggles to resolve her internal Protestant-Catholic and Protestant-Protestant turmoil. An insular kind of anti-papist paranoia also developed from England's conflicts with Catholic Spain, France, and Ireland. A product as well as a cause of emerging British national consciousness, anti-papist prejudices incorporated into law, education, and social patterning the stereotype of a consistently hostile, foreign, and anti-national threat. Anti-popery came to provide a peculiarly religious definition of national security in terms of defensive conflict with all the real and imagined agents of the Church of Rome.²

¹ J. Bennett Nolan, "Conrad Weiser's Inventory," *PMHB*, LVI (1932), 269. Weiser changed religions several times in the 1730's and 1740's. Theodore Tappert and John W. Doberstein, eds., *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* (Phila., 1942-58), I, 102-3, 143-4, 170, 172, 188-190.

² The struggles of England in those years assumed "an even more religious, more ideological character, exhibiting more sense of moral regeneration and missionary zeal" than that of her counterparts in central and eastern Europe. Richard S. Dunn,

As a popular nationalistic medium through which to mobilize the country against internal as well as external enemies, anti-popery possessed an amazing flexibility of application and thus was susceptible to being applied promiscuously by opportunists, or when social and political crises demanded a scapegoat. Almost anyone was liable to anti-papist accusations, depending on the ebb and flow of contests for political or theological supremacy. As such, anti-popery was often counterproductive in rooting out real internal enemies, but it did serve to define the boundaries of national allegiance.

The nationalistic element also facilitated the transference of anti-popery sentiments from England to all of her colonies. Despite their various differences with the mother-country, the initial ethnic composition of the colonies almost dictated some cultural affinity, and bound those settlements in a union of sensitivity to every threat to England from Catholic France and Spain. That sensitivity, and that union, became even more intense in the eighteenth century as the colonies came to share in the military peril from traditional popish enemies.³ In the

The Age of Religious Wars, 1559-1689 (N Y, 1970), 47 Ray Allen Billington, in *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago, 1964), 2, also argues that British hatred of Catholicism was due largely to the anti-national character of that religion, "for Catholicism was feared not only as an antagonistic theology, but also as a force through which the English government itself was to be overthrown." Anti-Catholicism was "a patriotic as well as religious concern." Anti-popery, then, contained an element which could be called nativism—a cultural trait which John Higham describes as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign connections." *Strangers in the Land Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (N Y, 1970), 4 Higham sees anti-Catholicism as just one element in nativism, and not the other way around. Loyalty to Protestantism in England was wedded to patriotism in the person of Elizabeth I by the Act of Supremacy, by that sovereign's national popularity, and by the longing of the English for stability. Anti-nationalism and treason were fixed on Catholicism by the Rising of the North in 1569, by Pope Pius V's bull *Regnans in Excelsis* (1570) which released English subjects from allegiance to their sovereign, by the Spanish Armada of 1588, and by the 1605 Gunpowder Plot—a conspiracy by disaffected Catholics to blow up Parliament with King, Lords, and Commons inside. Henry Gee and William Hardy, eds., *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (London, 1896), 442, 458, Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (N Y, 1954), III, 272, 418, Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (Boston, 1959), Philip Caraman, *Henry Garnet and the Gunpowder Plot* (N Y, 1964). This relationship between Protestantism and patriotism was maintained in the colonies.

³ To the question, "what Occasion there is at this Time of the Day [1731] for an Oration against Popery, is the Protestant Interest in any Hazard from that Quarter?" a Gentleman answered, "the Church Militant will never be out of Danger, and therefore she has Watchmen set upon her Walls. The common Enemy is still in Being, and hath great Power in the World, so that we have no Reason to be secure." *A Seasonable Caveat against Popery or, an*

tolerant Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, that peril was compounded after the 1720's by the fear of cultural bastardization from increased foreign immigration, a fear that was used by political and religious factions in the colony in their contests for power.

But there was more to the continuance of anti-popery in the colonies than simple ethnocentrism or nationalism. Hostility to Catholicism remained strong in the colonies, and even reached a peak in the mid-eighteenth century, just as it was beginning to weaken in the mother-country. Also, during the height of anti-papist fervor in the 1750's, many American colonists did not hold their national or cultural ties to England so high as to prevent them from illegally trading with Catholic France and Spain.

A more enduring and fundamental element in anti-popery was the intellectual component. This element, which cherished the values of reason and individualism, was a mixture of envy and disdain. Popery was held in awe and feared as an absolutist method for organizing people and holding fast to their thoughts, allegiances, and even their consciences. It was very effective in this because of its alleged freedom from rationality and individual choice, but these traits defined a corrupt system for Protestants. In the contest for souls, Protestantism would have to suffer losses and divisiveness as the price for right religion. Popery's authoritarian structure could appeal to those who opted for security over freedom in a world of turmoil;⁴ its international organization could recruit those malcontents in every society who longed for participation in an entity greater than an unstable nation-state; its rituals

Essay on the Merchandise of Slaves and Souls of Men; Revelations XVIII, 13, with an Application Thereof to the Church of Rome, by A Gentleman (Boston, 1731; reprinted London, 1733) 3, 4-5. In 1765, Jonathan Mayhew wrote:

The agents of Rome, ever restless and scheming, compass sea and land to make proselytes; going about continually from country to country, seeking whom they may devour: And, probably, there is no protestant country, in which there are not some of them, at least lurking, if they dare not discover themselves. We should not be ignorant of their devices; nor ever off our guard against them.

Jonathan Mayhew, *Popish Idolatry: A Discourse Delivered in the Chapel of Harvard-College in Cambridge, New England, May 8, 1765* (Boston, 1765), 50-51.

⁴ In comparing Catholic with Protestant faith, one anti-papist wrote "they believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and Christ to be the Son of God, because the Church of Rome doth tell them so." Ignotus, *Thirty Plain, but Sound Reasons Why Protestants Differ from Popery; to which are added thirty-four points held by many Papists, which were never yet rationally proved by any one of them* (London, 1688; reprinted 1851), 8.

could work on the emotions as well as "enslave" the mind;⁵ and its sense-defying "trickery" (transubstantiation, Jesuitical mental reservation and undercover subversion, priestly absolution, papal indulgences, etc.)⁶ could win over weak minds intrigued by the mysterious and magical. The time-tested appeal of such "charlatanry" and "idolatry" would forever "enslave" hordes of Catholics, and threatened to "seduce" many Protestant Englishmen confused by the proliferation of creeds and organizations and desirous of a faith beyond the postulates of reason alone. Thus, anti-popery erected as the chief defensive works of an evolving and troubled Protestantism what it admitted were its chief weaknesses in the battle for souls. Freedom from "superstition" and enforced religious conformity became for Protestant identity what freedom from Rome, Paris, and Madrid became for British national identity.⁷ Yet, anti-papist preachers were ever on guard to prevent the

⁵ On Catholic faith as enslavement, see the general argument in A Gentleman, *A Seasonable Caveat*

⁶ Catholic mortuaries, rights of burial, relics, pilgrimages, canonization, vows, and Masses, prayers and indulgences for souls in Purgatory were also attacked as popish trickery. A Gentleman, *A Seasonable Caveat*, 7-12. The number of undercover Catholic missionaries in England was never very great. By 1578, there were only 50 seminarists—missionaries trained at the College des Prêtres Anglais in Douai, Flanders—operating in England, but their influence was magnified, for the Bishop of London complained in 1577 "that the papists marvelously increase in numbers and in obstinate withdrawal from church and services of God." Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, III, 303. In all of Elizabeth's reign there were only 440 seminarists and a handful of Jesuits in England—too few effectively to subvert a total of 8,000 parishes. What was alarming was the fact that of the 183 executed by Elizabeth, 54 were converts to Catholicism, and 9 had been clergymen in the Established Church. Marvin R. O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation, 1559-1610* (N.Y., 1974), 236-9.

⁷ A Gentleman boasted that France, Spain, Italy, and parts of other nations "were left to wallow in the Filth and Mire of Popery, and are perishing in Antichristian Darkness even to this Day," and wondered with nationalistic and intellectual pride why those nations suffered themselves "to be thus grosly gull'd and abused, and not see thro' the Cheat to this Day." A Gentleman, *A Seasonable Caveat*, 31-32. Perhaps the best summary of what popery meant for Englishmen and British colonials is contained in Jonathon Mayhew, *Popish Idolatry* (1765), 48-49. Detestable as the idolatry of the church of Rome is, there are other of her principles and practices which more immediately affect the peace and order of civil society, the honor of princes, and the liberty and common rights of mankind. Our controversy with her is not merely a religious one. It is not, on our part, only a defence of the worship of one God by one Mediator, in opposition to that of a thousand demons or idols, of the authority of the sacred oracles, in opposition to that of idle legends and traditions, and of sober reason in opposition to the grossest fanaticism. But a defence of our laws, liberties, and civil rights as men, in opposition to the proud claims and encroachments of ecclesiastical persons, who under the pretext of religion, and saving men's souls, would engross all power and property to themselves, and reduce us to the most abject slavery. It is a defence, of the common rights of seeing, smelling, tasting, all

natural human tendency to slide back into a comfortable surrender to a sensual, but sense-defying, Catholicism; and they were naturally sensitive to the mixed blessing of denominationalism formed by emphasizing reason and celebrating the individual as the center of thought, belief, and action.⁸

Religious and political stability of a sort came to Britain with the establishment of the Church of England. Theologically and organizationally, Anglicanism was a "middle way," occupying a precarious position somewhere between Catholicism and the more radical forms of Protestantism.⁹ Established in 1559 by the Act of Supremacy,

which popery attacks and undermines, by the doctrine of transubstantiation, and would take them from us, as a means of making us dutiful sons, or rather wretched slaves of the church we ought in reason and prudence to detest the church of Rome, in the same degree that we prize our freedom Popery and liberty are incompatible, at irreconcilable enmity with each other

⁸ The perception of Catholicism as sensual was perhaps best expressed by John Adams, who, after having visited Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Philadelphia, wrote
This Afternoons Entertainment was to me most awfull and affecting The poor Wretches, fingering their Beads, chanting Latin, not a Word of which they understood, their Pater Nosters and Ave Maria's Their holy Water—their Crossing themselves perpetually—their Bowing to the Name of Jesus, wherever they hear it—their Bowings and Kneelings, and Genuflections before the Altar The Dress of the Priest was rich with Lace—his Pulpit was Velvet and Gold The Altar Piece was very rich—little Images and Crucifixes about—Wax Candles lighted up But how shall I describe the Picture of our Saviour in a Frame of Marble over the Altar at full Length upon the Cross, in the Agonies, and the Blood dropping and streaming from his Wounds

The Musick consisting of an organ, and a Choir of singers, went all the Afternoon, excepting sermon Time, and the Assembly chanted—most sweetly and exquisitely

Here is every Thing which can lay hold of the Eye, Ear, and Imagination Every Thing which can charm and bewitch the simple and ignorant I wonder how Luther ever broke the spell

John Adams to Abigail Adams, 9 October 1774, L H Butterfield, ed, *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), I, 166-7 The Protestant emphasis on reason was expressed in all anti-papist writings Ignotus wrote that "Popery fighteth with sense and reason, The Papists would make men void of sense" *Thirty Plam, but Sound Reasons*, 12 William Sherlock, in *A Dissertation or Discourse concerning a Judge of Controversies in Matters of Religion* (London, 1686), 26, argued that the individual man had "the best evidence that he can possibly have for anything, that the consecrated bread and wine are still bread and wine, not flesh and blood, for all his senses tell him so"

⁹ As William Sherlock argued, the Church of England justified her doctrines and practices both from Scripture and antiquity, while the Church of Rome "alleges antiquity to prove such doctrines and practices as the Scripture either condemns or knows nothing of" As for the Dissenters in England, Sherlock said that the Anglican dispute with them is "not about articles of faith, but the external modes and circumstances of worship, or the government and discipline of the Church" *A Dissertation or Discourse*, 22, 23

which transferred to the crown any jurisdiction ever exercised or claimed by the pope, and by the Act of Uniformity, which imposed the rites and prayers of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer as the only lawful form of worship, the Church of England became wedded to the sovereign and came under attack from other Protestants for that marriage, and for having retained such vestiges of popery as bishops, vestments, candles, and the kneeling position for reception of the Lord's Supper.¹⁰ As one non-Anglican Protestant put it, "The papacy was never abolished, . . . but transferred to the sovereign."¹¹ When several clergymen were suspended in 1565 for failure to wear the prescribed vestments, anti-papist voices were raised against the Church of England for this "new filth and restored relics of wretched popery."¹²

Anglicanism faced the dilemma of having to uphold the twin intellectual pillars of anti-popery, reason and individualism, while denying them in order to enforce the religious conformity deemed essential to the national welfare. As the state church with its destiny intricately bound up with the fate of the British nation, it shared in all the shocks to the realm from foreign Catholics and from internal dissidents. Along with the monarch, the Church of England was brought low by the Puritan Revolution, in which an effective use of anti-popery was made against it. Returned to a less lofty position of power with the Restoration of 1661, the Church of England faced an uneasy alliance with a monarchy gradually veering toward Roman Catholicism, and under attacks from Quakers and other Dissenters or Nonconformists.

The Anglican counter-attack accentuated the third element in anti-popery as it was passed on to the colonies—the element of utilitarianism. During the terrors of the alleged Popish Plot, characteristics which formerly had been used to identify and root out Catholics in England were attributed to members of the Society of Friends; and both groups were penalized under the same existing laws for non-attendance at Anglican services.¹³ Ironically, in 1671, when King Charles II, in an

¹⁰ O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation*, 154, 360-363, Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston, 1952), 183-210

¹¹ H. Robinson, ed., *The Zurich Letters* (Cambridge, 1846), 246

¹² O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation*, 155

¹³ A 1582 law which forced Papists to pay £20 monthly for absence from the Established Church, and a 1605 law giving the king the option of accepting that sum or all of the personal, and two-thirds of the real, estate of the accused, were used to penalize Quakers. In 1678, when Parliament was reassessing the laws against popery, an oath by which the penalty could be

apparent effort to assist Roman Catholics, suspended the execution of these laws, Quakers benefited as well. Nearly five hundred Friends who had been imprisoned, some for several years, were set free by the royal proclamation.¹⁴

The Quakers, of course, were thankful for their legal association with papists in this case, but they were frequently at pains to separate themselves from Catholics because of the theological confusion fostered by the laws and by the anti-papist charges of the Established Church. On January 22, 1678, William Penn felt compelled to point out to a Committee of Parliament:

I have not only been supposed a Papist, but a seminarist, a Jesuit, an emissary of Rome and in the pay of the Pope. . . . some zealous for the Protestant cause have been so far gone in this mistake as not only to think ill of us and to decline our conversation, but to take courage to themselves to prescribe us as a sort of concealed Papist. All laws have been let loose upon us, as if the design were not to reform but to destroy us, and that not for what we are, but for what we are not.¹⁵

Theologically, nothing could have been further from the truth than that Quakers and Catholics were doctrinally alike. Quakers' deep-seated antipathy for popery was vehemently expressed in George Fox's *The Arraignment of Popery*, Josiah Coale's *The Whore Unveiled, Or the Mystery of the Deceit of Rome Revealed*, Robert Barclay's *Anarchy of the Ranters, and other Libertines; the Hierarchy of the Romanists, and other Pretended Churches, equally refused and refuted*, and William Penn's own *A Seasonable Caveat against Popery*. Written in 1670, *A Seasonable Caveat*, while espousing Penn's unshakeable belief in religious toleration, nevertheless attacked the tenets of Catholicism as inconsistent with Scripture, right reason, and the opinions of the early Christians. Nine years later, Penn was still struggling to disentangle his beliefs from the net of popery which the penal laws and the Anglican clergy had cast around him. In *One Project for the Good of England—that is, Our Civil Union is our Civil Safety*, he argued that all English Protestants

avoided was proposed, but that did the Quakers little good, since they were in conscience opposed to the taking of oaths. Charles J. Stille, "Religious Tests in Provincial Pennsylvania," *PMHB*, IX (1885), 379, *RACHSP*[Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia], I (1884-6), 75-6

¹⁴ *Passages From the Life and Writings of William Penn* (Phila., 1882), 110

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 201

pledged their allegiance and subjection to the civil government alone, whereas Catholics owed their allegiance to the pope in Rome. Therefore, dissenting Protestants should not be persecuted, and they should be given the opportunity, by public declaration or test, to prove that they were not Catholics and alien threats to the nation. The declaration which he drew up denied the pope's authority to depose any sovereign or to absolve subjects of their allegiance to a sovereign, the pope's position as Christ's vicar on earth, the existence of Purgatory, transubstantiation in the Lord's Supper, and the lawfulness and efficacy of prayers to saints and images. Penn hoped that Parliament would set a day when this declaration would be required in every town and parish in England.¹⁶

Penn's efforts at establishing what should have been the self-evident distinctions between Quakerism and Catholicism were nullified by the strength of anti-papery paranoia in England. The Quakers' doctrine of the Inward Light, their disregard for social and religious hierarchy, and their principle of religious toleration allowed them to be labelled as anarchic, destructive of the established religio-political order, and detrimental to a unified Protestant front to the inroads of popery. Anglicans charged Penn with being a papist or a Jesuit, or at least engaged in a treasonous correspondence with the Jesuits in Rome. Allegedly he had been bred at St. Omer's, the English Jesuit college, and had received Holy Orders at Rome. Since, obviously, Penn was married, which Catholic priests were not, he supposedly had received a dispensation from the pope for that purpose. Worst of all, Penn's intimacy at the court of James II, and his supposed influence with that papist sovereign, dragged him deeper into the anti-papist trap. In 1686, he defended his principle of toleration against the attacks of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson. Penn argued

I am a Catholic, though not a Roman. I have bowels for mankind, and dare not deny others, what I crave for myself. I mean liberty for the exercise of my religion, thinking, faith, piety, and providence a better security than force, and that if truth cannot prevail with her own weapons, all others will fail her.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 99, 212-213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 310, 313.

In 1687, and again in 1688, James II issued a declaration of liberty of conscience in England and forbade all tests and penalties for not attending Anglican worship. To the Anglicans this was tantamount to treason, for by weakening the revenues of the Established Church, he was threatening the state itself. To make matters worse, in 1688 he also permitted the Jesuits to erect a college in the Savoy in London, the friars to appear publicly in the dress of their order, and the Papal Nuncio d'Ada to enter Windsor with great pomp and ceremony. Popery indeed seemed to be in the ascendant, and, of course, Penn shared in the fallout. One of Penn's friends, William Popple, Secretary to the Board of Trade and Plantations, warned him of his peril. Penn responded that

If the asserting of an impartial liberty of conscience, if doing to others as he would be done by, and an open avowing and a steady practicing of these things at all times and to all parties, will justly lay a man under the reflection of being a Jesuit or Papist of any sort, I must not only submit to the character, but embrace it too.¹⁸

Within a fortnight, however, James had been overthrown, William, Prince of Orange, had landed in England, and Penn was left exposed to popular indignation as one who had plotted to establish popery and arbitrary power in England. His planned second visit to his Pennsylvania domain had to be postponed for several years.

Penn remained under suspicion as a political and religious subversive until about 1695, and avoided the public during those years. During his enforced seclusion, he composed a tract entitled *A Key, Opening the Way to Every Capacity How to Distinguish the Religion Professed by the People Called Quakers From the Perversions and Misrepresentations of Their Adversaries* in which one of the errors attacked was "that the Quakers set up works, and meriting by works, like the papists, whereby justification by faith in Christ is laid aside."¹⁹ Despite his efforts, however, the charge of theological similarity with popery would plague Penn and his Quaker followers, even in far away Pennsylvania, because it served the purposes of antagonistic groups in England and in the colony.

At a time when proprietary colonial grants were falling into disfavor

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 329-41, 347.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 351-2, 361-2, 364, 368-383.

and when the Crown was attempting to bring all the colonies under direct royal control, every anti-papist accusation was not to be taken lightly. During his first visit to Pennsylvania in 1682, Penn had to be defended in London against charges that he was a papist and kept "a Jesuit to write his books."²⁰ According to Penn's 1682 Frame of Government, office-holding in Pennsylvania was open to all who expressed belief in the Christian God. In 1692, however, when Penn's rights of government in the colony were temporarily suspended, King William III demanded that all office-holders subscribe to the oath then in use in England. Quakers were permitted to make an affirmation; but because of the questionable legality of the demand, there was some resistance. Under pressure from Queen Anne in 1702, the Pennsylvania legislature complied, and all office holders took the oath or affirmation. In 1705, it was given statutory form by the Assembly.²¹ The formula, duplicating the wording of English tests, required the prospective office-holder to swear or affirm,

that I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure as impious and heretical that damnable doctrine that Princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever.

He further had to

solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I do believe that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, at or before the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever, and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass, as they are used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous.

Finally, there was the required admission that he

solemnly in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare, that I do make this declaration and every part thereof in the plain and ordinary sense of the words now read to me as they are commonly understood by English Protestants without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope, or

²⁰ Joseph L. J. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia* (Phila., 1909), 12.

²¹ John Tracy Ellis, *Catholics in Colonial America* (Baltimore, 1965), 371-2; Stille, "Religious Tests," 387-395.

any person whatsoever, and without any hope of such dispensation from any person or authority, or without thinking that I am or may be acquitted before God or man, or any person or authority should dispense with or assume the same and declare the same null and void from the beginning.²²

The declaration obviously took great pains to prevent surface conformity covering over all sorts of mental reservations which were believed to be resorted to by Jesuits and other papists.

The testimonies of faith contained in the declaration could have been lifted directly out of Penn's own proposed declaration of 1679. Quaker tolerance towards Catholics in Pennsylvania, however, seemed to negate that fact. Catholics were among the first settlers in the colony, and some of them were wealthy and achieved political influence.²³ Pennsylvania became a haven for Catholics driven out of New York by Leisler's Rebellion and for those who fled during the frequent anti-Catholic disturbances there.²⁴ After 1692, when Maryland prohibited public mass by statute, nowhere else in the British colonies except Pennsylvania could Catholics worship publicly, although there was no regular resident priest until 1729 and no official church building until 1732.

This liberality brought Penn increasing worry at a time when his affairs were in a shambles, with Penn actually spending part of 1708 in a London jail for debt. That year he wrote anxiously to his agent in the colony, James Logan, that

Here is a complaint against your government that you suffer publick Mass in a scandalous manner. Pray send the matter of fact, for ill use is made against us here.²⁵

²² James T. Mitchell and Harry Flanders, eds., *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801*, (Harrisburg, 1896), II, 219-220, Stille, "Religious Tests," 391

²³ John Gray, alias Tatham, was a London "Gentleman" who came to Pennsylvania in 1685. He possessed extensive lands on both sides of the Delaware River, and for a short time served as Governor of New Jersey. His estate was valued at £3,765 at his death in 1700. Peter Dubuc was a French "gentleman" who settled in Philadelphia in the 1690's. The Philadelphia tax list of 1693 ranks him tenth among 705 taxpayers. Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 14-16.

²⁴ *RACHSP*, I (1884-6), 82, *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1856-1887), II, 41, 71, III, 585-6, 609, 617, 674, 689, "Leisler's No Popery Revolt in New York," *ACHR* [American Catholic Historical Researches], XIV (July, 1897), 123-5, H. L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (N. Y., 1907), III, 130-1, N. D. Mereness, *Maryland as a Proprietary Province* (N. Y., 1901), 38-42.

²⁵ 29 July 1708. Deborah Logan and Edward Armstrong, eds., *Correspondence between*

That one incident to which Penn refers, which involved the celebration surrounding the conversion to Catholicism of Lionel Brittin, an Anglican church warden in Philadelphia, and his son, was deemed "scandalous" because it confirmed anti-papists' fears of back-sliding into Catholicism among Protestants. Pennsylvania was obviously as vulnerable to the seductions of popery as was poor beleaguered England. The conversion was also sufficient proof of the errors of Quaker toleration, and prompted at least one Anglican clergyman to raise the familiar cry that Quakers and Catholics were in secret league with each other. Rev. John Talbot, minister of Saint Mary's Church in Burlington, New Jersey, complained that "Mass is set up and read publicly in Philadelphia, and several people are turned to it,"²⁶ and he stridently reported to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that

There's an Independency at Elizabethtown, Anabaptism at Burlington, and the Popish Mass at Philadelphia. I thought the Quakers would be the first to let it in, particularly Mr. Penn, for if he has any religion, 'tis that.²⁷

The small group of Catholics in Pennsylvania at that time was usually not so ostentatious in their religious celebrations, meeting as they did in private houses, and only occasionally favored with the ministrations of an itinerant Maryland Jesuit.²⁸ That invisibility, however, only served to increase the anti-papists' fears that there were many more Catholics and Jesuits operating in a clandestine manner.²⁹ The major differences between sixteenth-century England and eighteenth-century Pennsylvania notwithstanding, the inherited prejudice against popery remained so strong that it could still magnify minor incidents into major crises.

Talbot's report, however, indicates that there was more to the

William Penn and James Logan (Phila., 1872), II, 294.

²⁶ Rev. John Talbot to Rev. George Keith, 14 February 1708, quoted in *ACHR*, new series, I (1905), 122.

²⁷ 10 January 1708, quoted in *RACHSP*, I (1884-6), 80.

²⁸ Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 31-2.

²⁹ This belief was popular in the colonies even before Penn's grant. In 1680, two Labadist ministers in passing through New York reported "We are in every one's eye and yet nobody knew what to make of us. . . Some declared we were French emissaries going through the land to spy it out; others, that we were Jesuits travelling over the country for the same purpose." Bartlett B. James and J. Franklin Jameson, eds., *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680* (N.Y., 1913), 249.

maintenance of anti-popery in Pennsylvania than mere inherited prejudice against an alien creed. Until the 1740's overt anti-popery was almost the exclusive preserve of the Anglican clergy. All Protestants, including the Quakers, shared an antagonism for popery, but only the Church of England felt compelled to use that popular medium to explain certain events. After the 1740's the Presbyterians joined the Anglicans on the anti-popery stage.

All religious organizations had some difficulty in adapting to the new and unexpected conditions in Pennsylvania, a society which was referred to as "hell for preachers."³⁰ The Anglican, and later the Presbyterian, Church, accustomed to state support in Europe, were especially disoriented. The Quakers and other sectarians, the pariahs of European society, seemed to fare much better in the New World. Unlike the churches, whose ministers were separated from laymen by education, vocation, and ordination, the sects chose their leaders from the congregation with no special qualifications. Weakened by the absence of a resident bishop with powers of ordination and discipline, the Anglicans were always hampered by a shortage of reputable ministers.

Every loss of souls to the Church of England in Pennsylvania was attributed to the political power of the Quakers and to their principle of toleration. Toleration was assailable because it opened the door to popery in the colony. When they were unsuccessful in installing one of their own as schoolmaster in Chester in 1741, the Anglicans argued that "the Quakers, with all their power and ill offices," had worked to drive him away and "set up another, not one of their own sort truly, but a native Irish biggoted Papist."³¹ The specter of popery was used to explain "the thinness of Churches in this part of the world," as two Philadelphia Anglican ministers expressed it. "Great advantages are given to dissenting preachers and Romish priests, to seduce the people and add to their own numbers, already but too great."³²

Even internal problems, arising more from the scarcity of preachers and the weakness of disciplinary agencies than anything else, were

³⁰ Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, ed. and trans. Oscar Handlin and John Clive (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 48.

³¹ Richard Backhouse to the Secretary of S.P.G., 25 July 1741, William S. Perry, ed., *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, (Hartford, Conn., 1871), II, 216.

³² William Sturgeon and John Hughes to the Secretary of S.P.G., 23 March 1765, *ibid.*, II, 374. See also, *ibid.*, II, 4, 6, 68, 69, 82, 105, 135, 161, 162, 178, 182-3, 294, 358-9, 404-5.

explained in terms of the ancient popish threat and Quaker-Catholic collaboration. One Anglican priest, Francis Philipps, was accused in 1714 of having debauched three gentlewomen of Philadelphia. As the case wore on, however, defenders of Philipps appeared who argued that he was the victim of a popish conspiracy. Governor Charles Gookin and others pointed out that one of the accusers was "a reputed Roman Catholick," obviously insinuating that the testimony of a papist was not to be trusted.³³ Another defender asserting that Philipps "hath been vehemently abused and persecuted by a Popish crew," charged that the Anglican rector of Burlington, Rev. John Talbot, was "more like to be a Jesuit or a father confessor," and came to the conclusion that "the Quakers combined with the highflyers as so called but more fitly stiled Papists to try our Minister by their illegal Laws."³⁴

After Penn's death in 1718, Quaker-Catholic collaboration remained a fixture of anti-popery, and it was reinforced by the less invisible threats posed by increasing foreign immigration. In the 1720's, Pennsylvania began to be flooded with immigrant Redemptioners and convicts from the German Palatinate and from Northern Ireland. In 1728, Lieutenant Governor Patrick Gordon appealed to the Assembly to "provide a proper law against these crowds of Foreigners" and to "prevent the importation of Irish Papists and convicts." Yet, even though the Quaker Assembly responded by asserting that such action was necessary for "the Preservation both of Religious and Civil Rights of the People of this Province," the final bill omitted the word "Papists" and merely placed a duty on the importation of "Irish servants and Persons of Redemption."³⁵

The prospect of increased foreign immigration seemed to present an internal security threat as well as a religious one during the frequent eighteenth-century wars of England against France and Spain and their Indian allies. The growing strategic importance of exposed Pennsylvania in those wars placed that colony in a position analogous to that of exposed England during the wars of religion. Thus, anti-popery gained added strength. Already in 1688, there had been reported the alleged connivance of "Papists" with the northern Indians to "cut off the

³³ Gov. Charles Gookin and Others to the Bishop of London, 7 March 1715, *ibid.*, II, 87.

³⁴ John Newberry to Mr. Vesey, 30 November 1715, *ibid.*, II, 95.

³⁵ PCR [Pennsylvania Colonial Records], I, 299, III, 546-7; PA [Pennsylvania Archives], 4th ser., I, 455, 896.

Protestants, or at least to reduce them to the See of Rome.”³⁶ In 1710, the governor of Pennsylvania told the Provincial Council that a Peter Bezalion, “a Frenchman and a *Roman Catholic*, a trader among the Indians at Conestogue, had lately spoken some suspicious words and done some misdemeanor.”³⁷ At councils held in 1721, and again in 1732, the government warned the Indians “not to be deluded by their Jesuits and Interpreters” who came among them speaking only of peace.³⁸

Anti-papists’ fears of internal enemies—or their use of those fears for political or denominational reasons—increased in spite of the scarcity of Catholics in Pennsylvania in the fifty-five years preceding the American Revolution. There were only 37 of them in a Philadelphia numbering in 1732 a total of 12,000 persons.³⁹ One Anglican clergyman admitted in 1738 that “I know but four or five Papists in all my circuit,” but he felt compelled to add that “there are many reputed ones in the quakers’ Garb & Frequent their meetings.”⁴⁰ In 1745 another Anglican minister complained that Philadelphia “is much infested with Popery,” when in fact there were less than 140 Catholics in the whole county.⁴¹ When there were less than 88 Catholics in Reading, a Protestant resident there worried because they were “very numerous in this County.”⁴² Anglican Provost William Smith of Philadelphia in 1759 reported that there were 10,000 Catholics in the colony out of a total population of 250,000, when existing records indicate that Catholics numbered only about 1,500.⁴³ National and religious antipathy, plus the unsettled state of affairs in a booming Pennsylvania, combined in anti-papist

³⁶ PA, 4th ser., I, 138, 141, PCR, I, 277, 279

³⁷ PCR, II, 530

³⁸ PCR, III, 129-130, 441

³⁹ RACHSP, I (1884-6), 79

⁴⁰ Richard Backhouse to the Secretary of S P G, 9 December 1738, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 202

⁴¹ “This City [Phila.] is very much infested with Popery & sysmatical divisions among the Protestant Inhabitants & its influence spreads into the Country. There is scarce a Missionary but complains of one or other & many of both.” Robert Jenney to the Secretary of S P G, 14 November 1745, *ibid.*, II, 236

⁴² J. Bennett Nolan, *The Foundation of the Town of Reading in Pennsylvania* (Reading, Pa., 1929), 152-6

⁴³ Horace Wemyss Smith, *Life and Correspondence of the Rev. William Smith, D.D.* (Phila., 1879-80), I, 219, PA, IV, 144, “Report of Bishop Challoner to Rev. Dr. Stoner, Clergy Agent at Rome, September 14, 1756,” *ACHR*, XIII (1896), 35

exaggeration of the size and power of an internal "threat" of a group which comprised only .6% of the total population.

There were always sufficient visible reminders, however, to fuel anti-papist suspicions of the nearly invisible popish enemy. In 1733, for example, Catholics in Philadelphia erected their first official religious structure in any of the colonies, Saint Joseph's Church, immediately adjacent to the Quaker Almshouse. Complaints were soon made that such open display of popery was contrary to the laws of England. The Pennsylvania Council responded in 1734, however, that Penn's Charter of Privileges guaranteeing free exercise of religion antedated those laws passed in the reign of William III and had not been repealed.⁴⁴

The symbolic significance inherent in the proximity of the two structures was not lost on anti-papists. In 1737, a British writer charged, in terms strongly reminiscent of the accusations made against William Penn in England, that

In the town of Philadelphia. . . is a public Popish Chapel, where that religion has free and open exercise, and in it all the superstitious rites of that Church are as avowedly performed as those of the Church of England are in the royal chapel of Saint James. And this chapel is not only open upon fasts and festivals, but is so all day and every day in the week, and exceedingly frequented at all hours either for publick or private devotion, tho' it is fullest. . . at those times when the meeting house of the men of Saint Omers is thinnest, and so *vice versa*.⁴⁵

After 1740, rumors of popish plots proliferated as Pennsylvania shared in the shocks of King George's War and the French and Indian War, as foreign immigration continued to transform the political and social complexion of the colony, and as schism wreaked temporary havoc on many church organizations while leaving the Quakers untouched.⁴⁶ At the beginning of both imperial wars, in 1740, and again in 1755, Quakers helped protect the recently constructed Saint Joseph's church from mobs of axe-wielding Presbyterians intent

⁴⁴ Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 32-4, 35, 39-40.

⁴⁵ *London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, 7 July 1737, quoted in *RACHSP*, I (1884-6), 83.

⁴⁶ Martin E. Lodge, "The Crisis of the Churches in the Middle Colonies, 1720-1750," *PMHB*, XCV (April, 1971), 202-216. See also, Frederick B. Tolles, "Quietism versus Enthusiasm: The Philadelphia Quakers and the Great Awakening," *PMHB*, LXXIX (1945), 26-49.

on destroying that concrete symbol of the inroads of popery in the colony.⁴⁷ Philadelphia newspapers in 1741 printed accounts of the trials and executions of those involved in an alleged Negro plot to burn New York City and massacre the white population, in which the supposed head conspirator, Anglican priest John Ury, was consistently described as "the Romish Priest."⁴⁸ George Whitefield's preaching in those years raised Anglican fears that he intended "to set up for the head of a sect" and that he was "supported under hand by deists & Jesuits or both."⁴⁹ Yet Whitefield was attacking the Anglican clergy as "Doctrinal Papists."⁵⁰ Still, twenty years later, Anglicans were explaining New Light inroads by charging that "Romish Priests are busy among the people on the one hand and the Sectaries dependent on the Quaker on the other."⁵¹ When Lutheran minister, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, was on the point of setting out for South Carolina and Georgia, rumors circulated that his real purpose in going abroad was to celebrate Catholic mass for King George, who was said to have turned papist.⁵² One Anglican minister in 1742 complained of the obstructions he and his colleagues met with in that "nursery of Jesuits," Pennsylvania. With great alarm he reported that

no less than two priests are in Philadelphia, four in Conestoga. . . and what the end of Quaker power may prove we may painfully guess. Many Irish Papists turn Quaker and get into places as well as Germans.⁵³

⁴⁷ Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 53, "Extracts from the Diary of Daniel Fisher," *PMHB*, XVII (1893), 274

⁴⁸ *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, III, 198, 201, Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 54

⁴⁹ Archibald Cummings to the Secretary of S P G, 29 August 1740, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 203 At the same time in Connecticut, a group of Moravians was being persecuted because rumor had it that they were Jesuits in disguise working among the Indians *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 1636-1776 (Hartford, Conn., 1850-1890), VIII, 521

⁵⁰ Archibald Cummings to the Secretary of S P G, 31 July 1740, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 210-211

⁵¹ William Smith to the Secretary of S P G, 26 August 1760, *ibid.*, II, 325-6

⁵² Tappert and Doberstein, eds., *Journals of Muhlenberg*, II, 693

⁵³ Colin Campbell to the Secretary of S P G, 2 November 1742, quoted in *ACHR*, VI (1889), 183 Joseph Greaton, S J, was the only resident Catholic priest in Pennsylvania from 1729 until 1741 when he was joined by Henry Neale, S J, William Wappler, S J, and Theodore Schneider, S J But by 1749, there was again only one priest—Robert Harding, S J In 1758, Ferdinand Farmer, S J, arrived, but after 1772, when Harding died, he too was alone In 1773, Robert Molyneux, S J, joined Farmer This small number of priests was

Every move of the imagined army of Catholic missionaries was scrutinized.⁵⁴

By the 1740's Penn's sons, Richard and Thomas, had left the Society of Friends for the Church of England, the Quakers in Pennsylvania no longer comprised a majority of the population, and the immigration of Germans and Scots-Irish Presbyterians had complicated the social and political situation. The Presbyterians settled largely in the militarily exposed frontier areas and were therefore sensitive to issues of wartime defense. In addition, in 1740, Presbyterian clergymen were faced with increasing lay independence in church affairs, a situation which was exacerbated by the inability to provide enough ministers for the swelling Presbyterian population and by the turmoil created by the Great Awakening. Scots-Irish Presbyterians, led by William Allen, joined with the Anglicans and the Proprietors in attacks on the Quaker party in the Assembly for refusing to pass a militia law and otherwise provide for defense against the Catholic French and their Indian allies on the frontier. On the other side, the Germans, who by 1755 comprised nearly one-half of the population of Pennsylvania, consistently supported the continuance of Quaker power.⁵⁵

Other colonies also believed they recognized the implications of Quaker policies and German immigration, and that perception contributed to the maintenance of anti-popery. In March, 1744, Governor Lewis Morris of New Jersey expressed his anxiety to Governor George Clinton of New York that

They have there [Pa.] a popish chapel and numbers of Irish and Germans that are Papists and I am told that should the French appear and 1500 to 2000 men, they would in that Province soon get ten or twelve thousands together, which

responsible for five far-flung churches and congregations in seven Pennsylvania counties, eleven New Jersey counties, one in Delaware, and one in New York. They were thus almost constantly on the road. Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 26-7, 45, 47, 74, 94, 96, 97.

⁵⁴ Richard Backhouse reported in 1742 that "in Lancaster there is a priest settled, and they have bought some lots and are building a Mass House" and "there is another itinerant priest that goes back in the Country." Six years later, he was alarmed that "as to ye Papists, we find more in numbers, than ye particular number of Families I us'd to mention in my *Notitia Parochialis*," but "how many more, it is impossible for me to tell." Backhouse to the Secretary of S.P.G., 14 June 1742 and 26 June 1748, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 232, 252. Richard Locke at Lancaster wrote in that same year that "the country is so much overrun with Jesuitism, Moravians and New Lights." Locke to S.P.G., 29 September 1748, *ibid.*, II, 253.

⁵⁵ Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy*, 1740-1776 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1953), 11-19, 36; Lodge, "The Crisis of the Churches," 202-216.

would in that case, be not a little dangerous to these and neighboring colonies.⁵⁶

When Charles Edward Stuart invaded England in 1745, more evidence appeared of a trans-Atlantic papist conspiracy. On January 8, Lieutenant Governor George Thomas informed the Pennsylvania Assembly that "a most unnatural Rebellion had broke out, . . . in favor of a Popish Pretender, supported by France and Spain."⁵⁷ On April 24, the "Covenanted Presbyterians in America" assembled in Philadelphia, and resolved that

we being threatened with trouble by a Popish Pretender and with the Indians going with the French we judge our indispensable duty immediately to draw up ourselves in companies to exercise, in order to prepare for war, if necessary called thereto for the defence of our sacred and civil rights.⁵⁸

Pennsylvania rejoiced when the Battle of Culloden proved the undoing of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Governor Thomas proclaimed July 24, 1746, a day of thanksgiving for the "completest victory over ungrateful and rebellious subjects encouraged and supported by our ancient and inveterate enemies, the French and Spaniards" and by "that monster of Iniquity the Court of Rome."⁵⁹ The churches of Pennsylvania, like those of England, held services of thanksgiving for the fortuitous discovery of the Jacobite plot "first hatched in hell, and afterwards nursed in Rome."⁶⁰ On August 24, George Whitefield, only lately having been under suspicion as a Jesuit collaborator, harangued his listeners in Philadelphia concerning their happy deliverance from the rule of the Pretender, the loss of English liberty, and vassalage to Rome. If England had failed, he queried,

how soon would whole swarms of monks, dominicans and friars, like so many locusts, have overspread and plagued the nation; with what winged speed would foreign titular bishops have posted over, in order to take possession of their respective sees? How quickly would our universities have been filled with youths who have been sent abroad by their popish parents, in order to drink in

⁵⁶ Quoted in Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 55

⁵⁷ PCR, V, 6

⁵⁸ Quoted in Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 57

⁵⁹ Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 57.

⁶⁰ George Whitefield, *Works* (London, 1771), V, 82

all the superstitions of the church of Rome.”⁶¹

Even Benjamin Franklin was caught up in the contagion. “‘Tis well known,” he argued in *Plain Truth on the present state of the City of Philadelphia* written in 1747, “that we have a number of the same religion with those who of late encouraged the French to invade the Mother-country.” A major source of danger to Pennsylvania, he continued, was the Six Nations because of their conversion by French missionaries. To stave off the threat, Pennsylvanians had to rely upon the children of those brave people who in former times had “made so glorious a stand for our religion and liberties, when invaded by a powerful French army, joined by Irish Catholics, under a bigoted Popish King.”⁶² Similarly, in 1748 Lieutenant Colonel Thomas James appealed to the militia to uphold “the Glory, Strength and Prop of a Protestant Government. . . the Protestant Religion Conscientiously held in its Purity” lest it be “trodden under foot by the bloody and tyrannical power of Popery.” It was well-known, he added, that

we have numerous, or rather numberless enemies amongst us, many of them fed at our tables, and nursed at our bosoms, as it were, who are ill-wishers to the Protestant interest, and may, if they have an opportunity, rise to such a height in rebellion that neither Church discipline nor civil law can quash them.⁶³

The near-hysteria nourished by the sense of impotency in the face of an invisible and uncontrollable, yet “self-evident” internal enemy reached its peak with the outbreak of the French and Indian War. New Light clergymen, such as George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, portrayed French activity on the frontier as part of a papal conspiracy.⁶⁴ William Smith, an Anglican, in sermons and in his pamphlet *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania*, constantly belabored the supposed threat of Irish and German Pennsylvanians uniting with the French and Indians to cut the throats of all good

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, V, 82, 84.

⁶² Benjamin Franklin, *Plain Truth on the present state of the City of Philadelphia* (Phila., 1747).

⁶³ Reported in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 13 June 1754.

⁶⁴ *Pennsylvania Journal*, 25 December 1754; Sister Mary Augustina Ray, *American Opinion of Roman Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1936), 95 n. 90.

Protestants.⁶⁵ Many sober citizens reared in the tradition of anti-popery, while admitting Smith's exaggerations, agreed with his overall accusations.⁶⁶ Political writers, such as Philanthropos, addressed the colony through the newspapers. "Can we endure the thought," he asked rhetorically,

of having our children enslaved by the Church of Rome and forced contrary to the Light of their Minds, either to comply with all its idolatrous superstitions or fall a sacrifice to the cruel and bloody zeal of bigotted Priests, and their blinded Followers, who think they do God a good service by cutting off such as they call Heretics from the face of the earth, and such, in their esteem, are all those who are not of their Community. Nor will it afford us a more agreeable prospect to view the tender offspring of our dear children, whom Priestly Rage has murdered, sitting at the feet of those inhuman butchers and meekly receiving for divine Truths, all the monstrous Tenets of that anti-Christian Church; and how cutting the consideration, that we ourselves should be accessory to all those intolerable Evils.⁶⁷

The Pennsylvania press also helped to spread the contagion by reprinting inflammatory sermons and addresses from other colonies and from England.⁶⁸

The Justices of Berks County expressed their alarm in an address to the governor on July 23, 1755. Some Catholics had allegedly shown great joy at the news of Braddock's defeat, and, the petition demanded that they should be disarmed or otherwise controlled. The Justices reported that around Goshenhoppen, where the Catholics had a "magnificent chapel," thirty Indians were lurking, "well armed with Guns and Swords or Cutlasses." It was further rumored that the priests who administered to Reading and Goshenhoppen every four weeks had told their congregations that they would not be returning for nine weeks, an absence interpreted as occasioned by a visit to Fort Duquesne to consult with the French for some treasonous purpose. The Justices concluded by complaining that it was

⁶⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24, June 1755, William Smith, *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania* (London, 1755), Horace W. Smith, ed., *Works of William Smith* (Phila., 1803), II, 20, 22, 91, 107.

⁶⁶ Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn, 1 July 1755, quoted in Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 79-80.

⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 5 September 1754.

⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 29 August 1754 and 1 May 1755. Other anti-popery polemics from England were carried in the same newspaper on June 12 and July 17, 1755.

a great Unhappiness at this Time to the other People of this Province that the Papists should keep Arms in their Houses, against which the Protestants are not prepared, who therefore are subject to a Massacre whenever the Papists are ready.⁶⁹

The Assembly took no action on this petition because a committee of investigation reported that the Indians at Goshenhoppen—six warriors with their wives and children—were beggars, the recipients of Catholic Rev. Theodore Schneider's charity. Again in October, another alarm was raised as thirteen-hundred French and Indians were said to be approaching, and again investigation proved that the rumor was unfounded.⁷⁰

These rumors were grounded in the real shock of British military defeat in the first years of the war, and anti-popery provided a more palatable explanation than British military blunders. The nationalistic, theological, and opportunistic components of the stereotype provided a buffer against harsh reality. But that perennial bugbear of Protestantism, a sense of moral guilt, also provided its share. The advance of popery was seen as punishment for moral failing. In a sense, the internal enemy which had to be expurgated was guilt over failure in colonial society taken advantage of by French Catholics. Failure to gain converts, failure to combat religious indifference, and failure to hold the allegiance of the Indians were explainable both as the result of popish machinations, and as the cause of the ascendancy of popery over true religion. One frontier Anglican minister seemed to understand this when he lamented that British traders had consistently cheated the Indians while "the French always paid them well for their Skins, &c.; built houses for them; instructed their children and took care of their wives when they went to war." He added sadly that

While the French were industrious in sending Priests and Jesuits among them, to convert them to Popery, we did nothing but send a set of abandon'd profligate men to trade with them who defrauded and cheated them, and practic'd every vice among them that can be named, which set the English and the Protestant Religion in such a disadvantageous light, that we have reason to fear they detest the name of both.⁷¹

⁶⁹ PCR, VI, 503, 533.

⁷⁰ H.W.Kriebal, "The Schwenkfelders in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings*, XII (1902), 141-2.

⁷¹ Thomas Barton to the Secretary of S.P.G., 8 November 1756, Perry, ed., *Historical*

Paranoia regarding internal enemies was also augmented by ethnic fear and political opportunism. Among others, Benjamin Franklin had long been concerned with the enormous immigration of Germans into the colony. In 1752 he had recommended that all non-English speaking people should be barred from holding civil or military office. He also believed the importation of German books should be prohibited, that all legal documents should be in English only, that a quota should be placed on German immigration, and that intermarriage should be encouraged to force the Germans to assimilate more rapidly. In addition, he proposed that English schools be established among the Germans to Anglicize the children of these clannish people.⁷²

William Smith believed that there were already 100,000 Germans in a total population of 250,000, and knew "nothing that will hinder them, either from soon being able to give us Law and Language, or else by joining with the French, to eject all the English Inhabitants." He bemoaned, in *A Brief State*, of the

extraordinary indulgence and privileges granted to Papists in this Province—privileges plainly repugnant to all our political interests considered as a frontier colony, bordering on the French and one half of the people an uncultivated Race of Germans, liable to be seduced by every enterprising Jesuit, having almost no Protestant clergy among them to put them on their guard and warn them against Popery. . . .

He argued that the French "have turned their hopes upon this great body of Germans" and therefore had sent Jesuit missionaries among them "to persuade them over to the Popish religion" and "draw them over to the French in multitudes." Despite the fact that only .9% of the Germans in Pennsylvania were Catholics, Smith claimed that

there are near one-fourth of the Germans supposed to be Roman Catholics who cannot be supposed friends to any design for defending the country against the French. Many are Moravians who hold some tenets and customs. . . very much akin to those of the Roman Catholics.⁷³

Collections, II, 280.

⁷² Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 35

⁷³ Quotations from William Smith, *A Brief State*. Statistics on Catholic Germans are found in *PCR*, VII, 447. Thomas Barton agreed with Smith's accusations. On 8 November 1762, he wrote to the S.P.G. that "Popery has gained considerable ground in Pennsylvania of late years. The professors of that Religion here are chiefly Germans who are constantly supplied with missionaries from the Society of Jesus, as they are pleased to stile themselves. One of that order

Other Anglican ministers confirmed Smith's speculations, but were perhaps more upset that in all of Pennsylvania by 1764 only one-fiftieth of the people belonged to the Church of England.⁷⁴

The result of all this furor over supposed internal enemies was twofold. For one, a society for English schools among the Germans was established, with Benjamin Franklin, William Smith, William Allen, and Conrad Weiser among the trustees. Many Germans, including influential editor Christopher Sauer, opposed the idea, and by 1756 the experiment had failed. The Quakers also opposed the project because they sensed, and rightly so, that under the guise of war-time defense, cultural homogeneity, and anti-Catholicism lay a political stratagem by the Proprietary party to separate the German vote from the Quakers. Indeed, as William Smith had already said, if the Germans were properly instructed, "so as to be capable of using their own judgment in matters of Government, they would no more be misled by Acts of a Quaker preacher, than a lurking French priest."⁷⁵ In Smith, British colonial ethnocentrism was taken to the extreme of identifying good judgment in religion and politics as a byproduct of the English language.

Secondly, generations of fruitless searching for hidden popish enemies manifested itself in a witch-hunt for subversive Catholics in Pennsylvania. The first victims were the 454 French Acadians deported from their homeland by the British and dumped in Philadelphia in November 1755. Many Pennsylvanians feared that these newcomers would join with their fellow countrymen on the frontier and accomplish some pincer-like aggression along with the imagined swarms of Irish and German Catholics already in the colony. These Acadians were at first quartered in "neutral huts" in Philadelphia, where Anthony Benezet, a Quaker, and Rev. Robert Harding, a Catholic, cared for them. Later they were distributed throughout the province, one family to each township.⁷⁶ On March 21, 1757, five of the exiles were arrested at the

resides in this place [Lancaster], and had influence enough last Summer to get a very elegant Chapel of hewn Stone erected in this Town. Their behaviour in outward appearance is quiet and inoffensive; but they have been often suspected during this war of communicating intelligence to the Enemies of our Religion and Country." Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 343.

⁷⁴ George Craig to the Secretary of S.P.G., 3 September 1764, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 361.

⁷⁵ Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 36.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The Great War for the Empire* (London, 1946), VI, 242-344;

request of Lord Loudoun as fomenters of treasonous mischief. After serving time on a prison ship, they were allowed to return to Philadelphia in 1758, where the arrival of such "bigoted papists" proved "very disagreeable to the people."⁷⁷ Despite anti-papists' fears, the conditions of the Acadians' confinement and the rapid reduction of their numbers by disease eliminated them as a real internal threat.

In 1756, the story of another popish plot was concocted on the basis of allegedly treasonous correspondence. Certain persons in the colony were purported to be designing to sell out England's interests to the French.⁷⁸ Rumors surrounding the plot spread far, for on July 9, Sir George Hardy, governor of New York, wrote to Pennsylvania's Governor Robert Morris that he was "rather Inclined to think the Treasonable Correspondence must have been carried on by some Roman Catholics." Hardy had learned, he explained, that "you have an ingenious Jesuit in Philadelphia."⁷⁹

The tensions of war merely stimulated further an audience already conditioned to accept when the *American Magazine, or Monthly Chronicle for the British Colonies* warned Pennsylvanians of the number and wealth of the Jesuits in Maryland, and the danger of having such a stronghold of popery in the very heart of the colonies.⁸⁰ Many believed the truth of the relationships drawn in a 1764 cartoon: a house being destroyed by fire, Indians killing settlers, and a Quaker astride a Catholic Priest.⁸¹ Already in 1755, the Catholic church in Philadelphia had been narrowly saved from destruction by a mob; but on December 15, 1760, the Catholic church in Lancaster was completely destroyed by enraged Protestants.⁸²

The legislature was finally moved to action by popular pressure. Catholics were disarmed, disallowed from serving in the militia, forced to pay double taxes, and those residing in the colony were registered so

PCR, VII, 5-20, 44, 45, 239, 241, 293, 446, PA, II, 573, III, 565-8, 4th ser., I, 549, 554, 579, W B. Reed, "The Acadian Exiles, or French Neutrals, in Pennsylvania, to which is appended A Relation of their Misfortunes by John Baptiste Galeron," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, VI (1858), 285, 289.

⁷⁷ PCR, VII, 32, Gipson, *The Great War*, VI, 310-318

⁷⁸ Intercepted correspondence is in RACHSP, X (1899), 208-221

⁷⁹ PA, II, 694.

⁸⁰ October 1757-October 1758, 345, 352-4, 510.

⁸¹ Plate in Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics*, facing p. 89

⁸² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 December 1760.

that their every movement could be scrutinized.⁸³ Recruiting instructions forbade the enlistment of non-Englishmen unless they could definitely be identified as Protestants. Spies were everywhere busily earning their informer's reward and summoning unoffending citizens before the courts.⁸⁴ For example, the Irish extraction of Indian traders George Croghan and Francis Campbell was enough to bring them under suspicion.⁸⁵ The Assembly even attempted to prohibit Catholics from holding land in the colony, but this measure was blocked by the governor. The Assembly did succeed, however, in preventing Catholic settlement in a planned western buffer colony.⁸⁶

Overt harrying of suspected papists declined once the French threat was removed from North America by the Peace of Paris. Colonists took pride in membership in the victorious British empire. Anglican optimism for a resolution of their long-standing institutional problems in Pennsylvania soared in the post-war period as clergymen eyed the newly-won lands in Canada as their salvation from the unfair competition of the sectarians in Pennsylvania.⁸⁷ Rev. Thomas Barton recommended to the S.P.G. that "the lands lately belonging to the Romish

⁸³ PA, III, 131-2, 144-5 The militia act was disallowed by George III for unrelated reasons. The return of April 28, 1757, showed 1,365 Catholics in Pennsylvania 949 Germans and 416 Irish and English PCR, VII, 447

⁸⁴ PA, 2nd ser., II, 594-5, PCR, II, 344, PA, III, 16-17

⁸⁵ PA, II, 114, 228-9, 694, C H Browning, "Francis Campbell," PMHB, XXVII (1904), 63

⁸⁶ PCR, IX, 596 Only Catholics who were British citizens could hold land in Pennsylvania. Foreign Catholics were barred from naturalization, and therefore from owning land. This impediment was circumvented by an English or Irish Catholic holding land in trust for the foreigner Kirlin, *Catholicity*, 58 n. 3 Even though barred from holding land in the province, a foreign Catholic like Joseph Cauffman, who arrived from Germany in 1749, could become a large investor in lands in Philadelphia, Chester, Bucks, Westmoreland, Indiana, Blair, and Montgomery Counties Theodore F. Rodenbough, *Autumn Leaves from Family Trees* (New York, 1892), 13-14 In at least one case, that of Simon Ruffner, a foreign practicing Catholic took the oath of allegiance to the Crown and to the Church of England, and so was allowed to purchase land Jane S. Sweinberger, *Ruffners of Pennsylvania and Collateral Lines, 1743-1978* (San Diego, Calif., 1979), 16-24

⁸⁷ "It is the unanimous opinion of all here who wish well to the preservation & enlargement of the Church, that in the Settlement of our late conquests in America application should be made in the very beginning for the allotment of Lands towards the support of a Clergy regularly ordained in our Church, after the example of the French, who constantly pursued this scheme in Canada, & thereby maintained a numerous Body of priests and Jesuits, who are over zealous and active in proselyting [sic] the Natives and sowing among them the seeds of prejudice and antipathy against the British." Alexander Murray to the Secretary of S P G, 25 January 1764, Perry, ed., *Historical Collections*, II, 357

Clergy in Canada, are sufficient to support a Bishop in America, and a number of Missionaries in the new Conquests, without adding to the burden of the Mother Country."⁸⁸

In such an atmosphere, there was a positive shift away from anti-papist diatribes by the Anglican clergy. Even William Smith began referring to Catholic Father Harding as "a worthy Jesuit" and insisted that Harding "was always in good Terms with us."⁸⁹ Charges of Quaker-Catholic collaboration ceased because Anglican leaders perceived their real enemy now to be the more numerous Presbyterians who, as Smith asserted in 1768, "from one end of the Continent to the other are attacking the Church about American Bishops."⁹⁰ His colleague in Newcastle County, Philip Reading, contended that "Our present danger indeed doth not arise so much from the avowed designs of Papists against the Church, but from the attempts of Dissenters of various kinds."⁹¹ Once again the Church of England found itself on the receiving end of anti-papist attacks as she had in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England.

The extreme aggressiveness of non-Anglicans against the establishment of an episcopacy in America was just one aspect of a growing alienation in the colonies with certain developments in the mother-country. Just when trans-Atlantic national and cultural bonds seemed the strongest, Protestants in Pennsylvania and other colonies thought they perceived a definite back-sliding into the errors of popery in England. Already there were ominous rumblings out of New England.⁹²

As in its earlier phases, intellectual or religious anti-popery was inseparable from anti-popery grounded in social and political sources. Attempts by the mother-country in the 1760's to make the colonies more productive within the mercantilist system appeared to many to signal a shift toward centralization and a limitation of Protestant individualism.

⁸⁸ Barton to the Secretary of S.P.G., 16 November 1764, *ibid.*, II, 368.

⁸⁹ Smith to the Lord Bishop of London, 13 October 1773, *ibid.*, II, 462.

⁹⁰ William Smith to the Secretary of S.P.G., 6 May 1768, *ibid.*, II, 427. Hugh Neill also complained that "The Dissenters very well know that the sending of a Bishop to America would contribute more to the increase of the Church here than all the money that has been raised by the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel." Neill to the Secretary of S.P.G., 19 May 1766, *ibid.*, II, 405.

⁹¹ Philip Reading to the Secretary of S.P.G., 15 March 1775, *ibid.*, II, 469.

⁹² Jonathon Mayhew, *Papish Idolatry*, 50.

The spectre of Charles I and James II was raised again. An emerging yet incoherent resistance movement began to identify nationally and culturally no longer with Great Britain in general, but with British dissidents; and both opposition groups justified themselves by claiming a greater purity and consistency with traditional Protestant English values.⁹³

The Quebec Act of 1774 provided a confirmation of American fears and a whipping boy for American and English demagogues. The law activated all the components of the traditional anti-papist stereotype which for generations had provided easy explanations for complex issues, security in a changing society, comfortable links to some glorious national past, and powerful political weapons in the hands of opportunists. The Act stirred up a new wave of ferocious anti-popery producing a temporary unifying element for all the disparate provincial resistance movements.⁹⁴

One London agitator opened his attack on the Bill with "if this don't rouse the most lethargic man amongst you I shall be amazed."⁹⁵ Another Englishman prodded the well-known sensitivities of his Pennsylvania readers, in particular frontier Presbyterians, by asking "Must Protestants mourn while Papists rejoice? We believe to keep a large body of Popish Canadians in *terrorem* against our Protestant Brethren in America the true ground and principle of the Bill."⁹⁶ Pennsylvania newspapers carried the story of the king's encounter with the London mob as he rode to Parliament to sign the Act, their jeers and their suspicion that the case of the sword of state contained in reality a popish crucifix.⁹⁷ The *Pennsylvania Packet* printed a widely circulated English ballad, "A New Song," representing "Goody" North singing a lullaby "to the foundling brat, the Popish Quebec Bill." The last stanza read

Then heigh for the penance and pardons,
And heigh for the faggots and fires;

⁹³ Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York, 1972), 161-248.

⁹⁴ "Selections from the Letter-Books of Thomas Wharton of Philadelphia, 1773-1783," *PMHB*, XXXIII (1909), 319, 441, XXXIV (1910), 41; Anne Izard Deas, ed., *Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard of South Carolina, 1774-1804* (New York, 1844), I, 28; *ACHR*, VI (Oct., 1889), 147, VII-VIII (1911-12), 391.

⁹⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 28 September 1774.

⁹⁶ *Tribunus*, "Letter to the King," 30 June 1774, *London Evening Post*, in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 September 1774.

⁹⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24 August 1774.

And heigh for the Popish Church wardens,
 And heigh for the Priests and the Friars;
 And heigh for the rareshew relics,
 To follow my Canada Bill-e,
 With all the Pope's mountebank tricks;
 So prithee, my baby, lie still-e.
 Then up with the Papists, up, up,
 And down with the Protestants, down-e;
 Here we go backwards and forwards,
 All for the good of the crown-e.⁹⁸

Pennsylvania opponents of the Bill deplored the Quebec Act as "openly countenancing Popish conspiracies" designed solely for the destruction of Protestant Americans by Catholic Canadians.⁹⁹ "We may live," one writer declared, "to see our churches converted into mass houses and our lands plundered by tythes for the support of the Popish clergy." The logical outcome of the Act was that "the Inquisition may erect her standard in Pennsylvania and the city may yet experience the carnage of St. Bartholomew's Day."¹⁰⁰ Fulfillment of this prophecy seemed near when several Pennsylvania newspapers reported that a popish army of thirty thousand Canadians was being formed to subdue colonial troublemakers.¹⁰¹ One writer illustrated what might be expected from the change in Canada by reviewing the persecution of Protestants in Europe in the previous two centuries. All that remained to make the resemblance complete was "to introduce the inquisition at Quebec, and to erect Lord North's statue at Boston, in the posture of the Duke of Alva's at Antwerp, trampling upon the expiring liberties of America."¹⁰²

Sermons against the Act were preached throughout the colony, and the Presbyterian clergy of Pennsylvania appealed to the memory of past warfare against popery in their *Address to the Ministers and Presbyterian Congregations in North Carolina*.¹⁰³ An "Association of Protestant

⁹⁸ *Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 August 1774.

⁹⁹ *Pennsylvania Journal*, 5 October 1774.

¹⁰⁰ *Pennsylvania Packet*, 31 October 1774.

¹⁰¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 19 October 1774; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 2 November 1774. See also *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 September, 12 October 1774; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 14 September, 5 October 1774; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 August 1774.

¹⁰² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 21 & 28 September 1774, 26 July 1775.

¹⁰³ *The State Records of North Carolina* (Goldsboro, N. Car., 1886-1907), X, 86, 222.

School Boys" canvassed Philadelphia collecting tea with which to feed "a BONFIRE on the memorable fifth day of [November], commonly called GUNPOWDER PLOT DAY." The bonfire was to commemorate the revival of an old custom "of exhibiting a piece of pageantry, to show their abhorrence and destestation of the *Pope*, Pretender, etc., and such of their *Adherents* as would overthrow the GOOD OLD ENGLISH CONSTITUTION."¹⁰⁴ Even the American Philosophical Society discontinued its meetings in protest against the "Bill for establishing popery and arbitrary power in Quebec."¹⁰⁵ Thomas Paine exclaimed "An aim of Parliament was to subvert the Protestant Religion" by "the Roman Catholic Religion not tolerated but established."¹⁰⁶ The newly formed Continental Congress "in order that their Religion, Laws and Liberties may not be subverted" drew up appeals to the King and to the people of Great Britain. These addresses expressed astonishment "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."¹⁰⁷

The colonies thus began their separation from the mother-country by using the same arguments that had helped establish British national identity in the sixteenth century. In a sense, the tradition of anti-popery facilitated the creation of a new nation by permitting England to be cast off as morally corrupt and by allowing colonists to proudly assert that they were the real guardians of a Protestant ideal that had been lost elsewhere. The stereotype was universal enough, even in tolerant Pennsylvania, to provide the necessary bonding element for the resistance movement. It also allowed the labelling of pro-British sympathizers as internal enemies detrimental to both civil and religious freedom.

But anti-popery had served several functions even before the Revolution. It existed at two levels. The first was the level of actual theological differences and real fear of the destruction of Protestantism. As such, it should have provided a unifying element for a Protestantism wracked

¹⁰⁴ *Pennsylvania Journal*, 9 November 1774.

¹⁰⁵ *Early Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge*, 1744-1838 (Phila., 1884), 87.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in *ACHR*, new ser., II (1906), 10.

¹⁰⁷ Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Wash., D.C., 1904-1931), I, 28, 44.

by internal divisions and insecurities in a besieged England and later in a seemingly besieged Pennsylvania. Anti-popery did not perform that function because of a second level of significance, an amazing adaptability in the hands of individuals and groups vying for power and influence in an uncertain world. In England, anti-popery was used by the civil government to consolidate its power, by radical Protestants to destroy the established Church of England, and by the Anglicans to discredit religious dissidents. In early Pennsylvania, anti-popery was used by the Church of England to rectify an imbalance Anglicans perceived as stemming from a misguided tolerance and Quaker political and religious dominance, by Presbyterians living in the exposed backcountry to force the Quaker Assembly to provide for defence, and by the religious supporters of the Proprietary party in their campaign against the Quakers. In the agitation preceding the Revolution, Presbyterians used the prevalence of anti-popish sentiment to stymie Anglican efforts to obtain an American bishop, and resisters of British imperial decrees focused on the Québec Act as a dangerous example of Romish tyranny by the mother-country herself.

Anti-popery, however, was a response as well as a tool. That was most evident in the tendency of anti-papists to exaggerate the numbers and influence of Catholics in the colony and to search for internal enemies where very few could be found. For a people disconcerted by ethnic and religious pluralism and an unstable political balance, the evils and power of popery were something certain on which to rely, even at the expense of denying one of the major bulwarks of Protestantism—the evidence of the senses. Actual persecution of Catholics in Pennsylvania was rare. Prejudices became virulent only when social change, foreign entanglements, and increases in alien immigration seemed to threaten an established order. Only during the French and Indian War, when a real French threat was imminent and some Pennsylvanians sensed the moral failings of British colonial policy towards the Indian, did overt social and political persecution of Catholics result.