



*Apologetics of Harmony:
Mathew Carey and the Rhetoric of
Religious Liberty*

WHILE VISITING PHILADELPHIA, the respectable Mr. Fitzwhylsonn of Richmond observed Catholic Mass at St. Augustine's Church, following in the footsteps of numerous other curious Protestant spectators who attended Catholic ceremonies in the early nineteenth century. The Protestant found the event to be a magnificent but hollow spectacle. Dining later with Mathew Carey, he declared that "there is no religion in it. It is nothing but parade." Mischievously, Carey allowed Fitzwhylsonn to continue before explaining that he and the others were Catholics. Thunderstruck, Fitzwhylsonn exclaimed, "I had always fancied myself one of the most liberal of men on the score of religion, and behold I have made a most miserable display of illiberal prejudice." Carey, ever delighting in turning "illiberal prejudice" on its head, joined Fitzwhylsonn in a hearty laugh. Indeed, he made it a

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standing joke that still tickled him many years later when he wrote his autobiography.¹

But laughter served a serious purpose. Snickering at “illiberal prejudice” undermined the respectability of the anti-Catholicism that Carey spent much time, energy, and printer’s ink combating. An Irish immigrant, Carey arrived in Philadelphia in 1784, a time when Americans were rethinking the meaning of toleration, the role of religion in the public sphere, and the place of Catholics in the new republic. The revolution, which succeeded only with the help of Catholic France, had loosened the hold of centuries of anti-Catholicism, but it left lingering mistrust about Catholic morality, religiosity, and republicanism. Catholics would at least be grudgingly tolerated in the new nation, but what, precisely, would religious liberty mean in practice? In Carey’s Philadelphia, the situation looked unusually promising; colonial Pennsylvania had no established church and boasted a long history of toleration, which extended even to Catholics. Philadelphia even housed the oldest legally functioning Catholic parish in British America, dating back to 1733. Yet, Catholics—like Jews, Atheists, Deists, and (later) Mormons—tested the limits of religious liberty; after 1705, Pennsylvania’s Catholics had to abjure their faith to hold office, and Jews had always been barred from public service. After 1790, Catholics enjoyed the same legal rights as their Protestant neighbors; elsewhere, restrictions on Catholics slowly weakened or even disappeared in the decades after the Revolution. But the status of Catholics in the republic was more than a matter of nominal rights or disestablishment; legal toleration and cultural acceptance were very different matters. By the late eighteenth century, a growing number of Protestants frowned on “illiberal prejudice” and insisted that religious liberty included polite respect for—or even cooperation with—Protestants in other denominations. They often blanched, however, at extending respect to Catholics. In fighting against “illiberal prejudice,” Carey tried to form a broader culture of religious liberty—extending across the Protestant-Catholic divide—that went beyond mere legalities or grudging tolerance.²

¹ Mathew Carey, “Memoirs,” n.d., in *Miscellanies [Pamphlets and Papers]*, ed. Mathew Carey, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1826), 142–43, Library Company of Philadelphia; Mathew Carey, *Mathew Carey Autobiography* (1837; repr., Brooklyn, NY, 1942), 87–88; Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), 189–90.

² Charles P. Hanson, *Necessary Virtue: The Pragmatic Origins of Religious Liberty in New England* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998). Chris Beneke argues that, by the late eighteenth century, Protestant conceptions of religious liberty often included respect for the legitimacy of other forms of Protestantism. Chris Beneke, *Beyond Toleration: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism*

Drawing on a legacy of Enlightenment and revolutionary thinking, Mathew Carey called for a culture of religious harmony and respect. He prided himself on religious cooperation: he published Catholic and Protestant books, he joined with Protestants to form a Sunday school, and a few of his children even married Protestants. Yet Carey also wore his Catholicism on his sleeve and defended Catholics from attacks. But even while engaging in apologetics, Carey showed deep concern for religious harmony. He avoided traditional apologetics that aimed at proving the superiority of Catholic teachings. Rather than arguing over doctrines, he defended Catholicism by linking it to enlightenment, toleration, and religious liberty. Catholicism deserved respect, but as one religion among many. Carey defended Catholicism as a true religion that promoted morality and benevolence, not as *the* true religion. Carey did not dismiss the value of doctrinal truth within communities. True religion, however, contrasted sharply with a sectarian fixation on the details of difference.

Carey's commitment to religious liberty exemplifies a broader moment of thawing in Catholic-liberal and Catholic-Protestant relations, a moment often overshadowed by a longer history of tension. As John McGreevy has shown, by the mid-nineteenth century, Catholics and liberals articulated antagonistic notions of freedom, individualism, and community. Antebellum Catholics developed a rich devotional and religious culture that intensified lines of opposition to Protestant culture and its intellectual life.³ But the lines had not always been so clear. Carey joined a host of early republican Catholics who eagerly demonstrated the compatibility of Catholicism with republicanism and modern ideas. Catholics, especially in Philadelphia, experimented with "republican" church structures. For example, Bishop John England of Charleston wrote a diocesan constitution enhancing the role of the laity.⁴ An

(Oxford, 2006), 113–201. Yet, such respect often depended on a shared Protestant identity. Eric Schlereth points to the gap between legal and cultural ideas of religious liberty, but he usefully stresses the limits of religious liberty and the tendency of early national Philadelphians to define toleration narrowly, trying to exclude undesirable beliefs from the public sphere. Eric Schlereth, "A Tale of Two Deists: John Fitch, Elihu Palmer, and the Boundary of Tolerable Religious Expression in Early National Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 132 (2008): 6–7; J. William Frost, *A Perfect Freedom: Religious Liberty in Pennsylvania* (Cambridge, 1990), 59, 16–17, 21.

³ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, 2003).

⁴ Dale Light, *Rome and the New Republic: Conflict and Community in Philadelphia Catholicism between the Revolution and the Civil War* (Notre Dame, IN, 1996); Patrick Carey, *An Immigrant Bishop: John England's Adaptation of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism* (Yonkers, NY, 1982), esp. 111, 114–60.

"English Catholic Enlightenment" developed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was led by figures such as John Lingard. Their beliefs, including an emphasis on church councils rather than papal authority, limits on the Church's temporal authority, and toleration as a natural *right*, not a concession, struck a more irenic posture.⁵ Although rapprochement did not last, it represented a significant, if rejected, possibility that deserves closer attention.

Such possibilities, however, have been neglected by historians, who have tended to focus on hostility between Catholics and Protestants.⁶ While anti-Catholicism and anti-Protestantism remain fruitful areas of study, the emphasis on hostility overshadows other kinds of interaction. Hostility was only a part of, not the sum of, Catholic-Protestant relations. Emphasizing hostility, moreover, has led to a neglect of the early republic, seemingly a period of tranquility when juxtaposed with the blazing convents and lurid sex tales of late-antebellum America. The early republic appears primarily as a false calm in the storm of anti-Catholicism, barely worth passing notice.⁷ Seeing only the calm blinds us to the swirling complexities of a religious dynamic that was neither violent nor entirely peaceful. Mathew Carey—and his attempts to juggle competing identities and ideas—provides a fascinating window into early republican religious cooperation, but historians know little about his religious role.⁸

⁵ See Joseph Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment: John Lingard and the Cisalpine Movement, 1780–1850* (Shepherdstown, WV, 1980).

⁶ The few works treating more positive relations between Catholics and Protestants include Joseph P. Chinnici, "American Catholics and Religious Pluralism, 1775–1820," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16 (1979): 727–46; Joseph Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings: Catholic-Protestant Relations during the Episcopacy of John Carroll," *Church History* 45 (1976): 358–73; Thomas W. Jodziewicz, "The Wharton-Carroll Controversy and the Promise of American Life," in *Studiolum Speculum: Studies in Honor of Louis J. Lekai O. Cist*, eds. Francis R. Swietek and John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo, MI, 1993), 135–54; Jodziewicz, "American Catholic Apologetical Dissonance in the Early Republic? Father John Thayer and Bishop John Carroll," *Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 455–76.

⁷ Joseph Agonito treats the era as an anomaly; others give it minimal attention as a precursor to later events. Agonito, "Ecumenical Stirrings," 373; Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, 1938). An exception is John Dichtl's *Frontiers of Faith: Bringing Catholicism to the West in the Early Republic* (Lexington, KY, 2008), which situates Catholic growth in the trans-Appalachian West in terms of more fluid relations.

⁸ Carey lacks a full-length biography; historians have written specialized studies of particular aspects of his life. Jay P. Dolan, "The Search for an American Catholicism, 1780–1820," in *Religious Diversity and American Religious History: Studies in Traditions and Cultures*, eds. Walter H. Conser Jr. and Sumner B. Twiss (Athens, GA, 1997), 26–51, gives only brief attention to Carey's relations with Protestants. R. Laurence Moore inaccurately asserts that Carey paid little attention to Protestant hostility. R. Laurence Moore, *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in*

This article is a preliminary exploration of an uncharted terrain on which religious devotion and an antisectarian commitment to harmony met and flourished.

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Mathew Carey was born in Dublin in 1760, and it was in Ireland where he gained an abiding interest in religious tolerance. Growing up under the Penal Laws, the hot-tempered youth became increasingly involved in radical politics. The Irish Penal Laws denied Carey and his fellow Catholics many rights of citizenship, including the right to vote, hold public office, join the legal profession, and attend Trinity College, and seriously limited Catholics' ability to acquire property or build schools. Political exclusion taught Carey (and others like John England, the future Bishop of Charleston) to be wary of religious disabilities and to link republicanism and religious freedom. At nineteen, Carey penned *The Urgent Necessity of an Immediate Repeal of the Whole Penal Code against the Roman Catholics* (1779), which denounced all religious intolerance, especially toward Catholics. Few people read the pamphlet because his advertisement warned of "the VERY GREAT *Danger*" of penal laws.⁹ His fiery rhetoric alarmed the aristocratic Catholic Committee, which sought accommodation with the British government (and disavowed political loyalty to Rome). The committee offered a forty pound reward to find the unnamed author, so Carey fled to France for a year until the furor quieted. He returned unrepentant, and two years later he began a radical newspaper and demanded democracy, religious equality, and, by 1784, revolution. With a "superabundance of seal [*sic*] and ardour," but less prudence, Carey lashed out at the Irish Parliament. His ardor forced him to sneak, disguised as a woman, onto a ship bound for Philadelphia.¹⁰

American History (Louisville, KY, 2003), 38. After completing this article, except for final revisions, I learned that Michael Carter recently finished a dissertation on an earlier (1780s–early 1790s) stage of Carey's republican Catholicism; this article focuses on the early nineteenth century. Michael Steven Carter, "Mathew Carey and the Public Emergence of Catholicism in the Early Republic" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2006).

⁹ Carey, *Advertisement to the Roman Catholics of Ireland*, in *Miscellanies*, 69; Carey, *The Urgent Necessity of the Immediate Repeal of the Whole Penal Code against the Roman Catholics, Candidly Considered*, in *Miscellanies*, 70–143.

¹⁰ Carey, *Autobiography*, 5–7; David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 15; Edward C. Carter II, "Mathew Carey in Ireland, 1760–1784," *Catholic Historical Review* 51 (1966): 519.

Carey chose his ship well; Pennsylvania had a long history of religious freedom, and his anti-British radicalism found a congenial home in postrevolutionary American politics. There, Carey's interest in the fate of Catholics and Ireland continued unabated; he pushed for Catholic Emancipation until it succeeded in 1828, and he even dueled with a competitor who had accused immigrants of base ingratitude.¹¹ He joined the American Society of United Irishmen, a cross-denominational group of emigré radicals—both Catholics and Protestants—seeking Irish political reform, the elimination of the Penal Laws, and, eventually, Catholic Emancipation (which restored Catholics' rights to hold most public offices). In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Catholics, despite their reputation for supporting the Federalists, allied with transatlantic radicals to push for full political and religious rights in the neighboring state of New York.¹² Carey firmly linked political freedom, religious toleration, and Catholic rights.

Carey quickly built a reputation in both politics and publishing. He hurled himself into American affairs, publishing the *Pennsylvania Herald* within three months of arriving, followed quickly by the *American Museum*, a literary and political magazine, which he published until 1792. By 1794, he focused his efforts on publishing and selling books, printing almost 1,100 books between 1785 and 1821; he cornered the southern book market with the aid of his Protestant traveling salesman, Mason Weems.¹³ In politics and publishing, as in religion, Carey claimed to place harmony and the common good over political loyalties or parties.¹⁴ He printed anti-Constitutional views in his *Museum*, rather than

¹¹ Carey, *Autobiography*, 13–16; *Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia), Nov. 5, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Dec. 10, Dec. 17, Dec. 24, 1785, Jan. 7, Jan. 21, 1786; *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, Nov. 9, Dec. 7, Dec. 10, Dec. 14, Dec. 31, 1785, Jan. 11, 1786; Carey, *The Plagi-Scurriliad: A Hudibrastic Poem* (Philadelphia, 1786); *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 23, 1786.

¹² Carey, *Autobiography*, 6–9; Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, 11, 18. Wilson notes that while Carey later denied being involved, he did so during the Alien and Sedition Acts furor; such denials should not be credited. For Catholic-radical alliances in New York, see Jason Duncan, *Citizens or Papists? The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685–1821* (New York, 2005), 129.

¹³ Carey arrived well connected; he knew Benjamin Franklin from his exile in France, and Lafayette loaned Carey money to start his paper. James N. Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia, 1985), 22. See James Gilreath, "Mason Weems, Mathew Carey and the Southern Book Trade, 1794–1810," *Publishing History* 10 (1981): 27–49; Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia, 1996), 130–36.

¹⁴ See David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 201–7.

only those “on the right side,” as “zealots” might wish. He was a political maverick, breaking ranks with the Democratic-Republicans to advocate the American System and protective tariffs.¹⁵ His most famous political piece was his *Olive Branch, or, Faults on Both Sides, Federal and Democratic* (1814), which responded to divisions sparked by the war—and again, staked a position ostensibly above partisanship.¹⁶ Even while defending his positions, Carey exalted harmony over party.

Carey’s calls for harmony in politics and religion sprang from his belief that the public good transcended the divisions of party or denomination. He depicted his policies as springing from compassion, not partisanship; he believed that relying on foreign manufactures created poverty and misery. A concern for suffering was a crucial part of being a moral, religious person in the early republic, and Carey eagerly proved his humanity. In 1793, he founded a society to alleviate the “sufferings and wretchedness” of Irish immigrants; in 1830, he headed a society to aid poor Catholics.¹⁷ Carey also preached what he practiced, and he wrote prolifically on poverty, rebutting claims that benevolence created “idleness and improvidence.” Low wages, not dissipation, drove women to prostitution.¹⁸ Carey’s interest in promoting and practicing benevolence extended into retirement.¹⁹ When he died in 1839, his concern for “suffering humanity” found mention in even the shortest of over thirty obituaries, which appeared as far away as Pensacola. His funeral was the best attended in living memory in Philadelphia, drawing thousands of mourners.²⁰

¹⁵ Mathew Carey, “Preface,” *American Museum* 3 (Jan. 1788): xvi; Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Editor, Author and Publisher: A Study in American Literary Development* (New York, 1912), 54; Kenneth Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Baltimore, 1933).

¹⁶ It sold more copies than any other political book in America before 1820. Edward C. Carter II, “Mathew Carey and ‘The Olive Branch,’ 1814–1818,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 89 (1965): 399; unionists reprinted portions during the Civil War in *The Boot on the Other Leg, or, Loyalty above Party* (Philadelphia, 1863). For politics, see Edward C. Carter II, “The Political Activities of Mathew Carey, Nationalist, 1760–1814” (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr, 1962).

¹⁷ Carey, *Autobiography*, 29; *Constitution of the Society for Bettering the Condition of Indigent Roman Catholics of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1830), Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Notre Dame.

¹⁸ Carey, *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia* (1828), in *Miscellaneous Essays* (Philadelphia, 1830), 155, 190–93; many essays are printed in *Miscellaneous Essays*, 266–90.

¹⁹ For example, A Citizen of Philadelphia [Carey], *A Plea for the Poor, Particularly Females* (Philadelphia, 1837), in *The Jacksonians on the Poor: Collected Pamphlets* (New York, 1971), 3.

²⁰ David Kaser, “The Retirement Income of Mathew Carey,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 80 (1956): 411; *United States Catholic Miscellany* (Charleston), Oct. 5, 1839; *Pensacola Gazette*, Oct. 5, 1839; “The Funeral of the Late Mathew Carey, Esq.,” *Pennsylvania Inquirer and Daily Courier*, Sept. 20, 1839; *U.S. Gazette* (Philadelphia), Sept. 20, 1839; *Niles*

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Carey's obituaries testified to his public importance, but they fell oddly silent on his religiosity.²¹ In 1839, religious relations in Philadelphia and the nation were tense, and his calls for religious cooperation no longer fit the public mood. By the 1830s, Catholics increasingly stressed their differences with Protestants and asserted a distinctively Catholic identity; Protestants, wary of the dangers of Catholic expansion, proved no more eager to compromise. The antisectionarian world in which Carey had operated—and in which his Catholic devotion played out in his commitment to religious harmony—was fading rapidly, giving way to a world in which lines between Catholics and Protestants were both clear and growing clearer. In 1834, a Protestant mob burned down a Catholic convent school in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and in 1844, the Bible Riots exploded in Philadelphia, precipitated in part by a debate over the exclusive use of Protestant Bibles in schools.

The riots were only one flare-up in a huge firestorm sweeping through American cities over Bible reading and religious teaching and practices in schools. The spark was a stridently sectarian sensibility among Catholics and Protestants, which stressed points of divergence. Rather than seeing the Bible as a unifying text, Philadelphia Protestants refused Bishop Kenrick's 1842 request that Catholics be permitted to read Catholic Bibles, rather than the Protestant King James Version, in public schools. Such stridency over differences echoed across the nation. Nineteenth-century Catholics debated among themselves whether they should assimilate into the public system or form separate schools; Protestant hostility strengthened the hand of those calling for separate Catholic schools. In 1859, a ten-year-old Bostonian refused a teacher's order to recite the Protestant, rather than Catholic, Ten Commandments. Despite similarities between the versions, the teacher tolerated no deviations from the Protestant wording, forbidding the Catholic students to even mumble over the points of difference—such differences in wording trumped a shared belief in the Commandments. As the conflict escalated, hundreds

National Register (Baltimore), Sept. 21, 1839. See also Newspaper Notices of the Death of Mathew Carey and His Son Edward L. Carey, box 28, folder 2, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²¹ One described him as a friend of religious liberty; most remained silent. "Obituary," *Pennsylvania Inquirer and Daily Courier*, Sept. 18, 1839.

of Catholics abandoned the public schools and created alternative, but stridently Catholic, schools.²²

This late-antebellum sectarianism in religious education—both in Philadelphia and across the nation—stood in stark contrast to a world of religious cooperation in the early republic. In 1791, Mathew Carey and several prominent Philadelphia Protestants, including Benjamin Rush and Episcopal Bishop William White, had formed a society for “First Day or Sunday Schools.” Even the name—using both “Sunday” and the Quaker “First Day”—emphasized religious cooperation.²³ The society’s schools excluded divisive doctrines and focused on instilling the moral values shared by all Christians. The school served as common ground to supplement, but not replace, individual religious beliefs; students attended worship, but in their own churches. Excepting the years 1792 to 1801, the society taught reading and writing through the Bible, since, Rush noted, each sect “finds its peculiar doctrines in it.”²⁴ Carey likewise stressed convergence. In 1785, he warned that such schools risked abuses “from party, civil or religious”; religious education should focus on points of agreement and leave differences to “the various pastors.”²⁵ Carey and the society placed denominational differences in a context of broader agreement. They aimed to instill morality and religiosity in Philadelphia’s poor. For the school’s elite organizers, the threat of a growing population of irreligious, immoral, and uneducated Philadelphians mattered far more than reinforcing the boundaries separating Christians. Carey turned to sectarian Sunday schools only in 1816—after Protestants began stressing denominational specifics rather than morality and broad religion.²⁶ Significantly, when a Charlestown, Massachusetts, mob torched the Ursuline convent school, they attacked not only Catholics, but also the

²² McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 7–11, 42.

²³ *Society for the Institution and Support of First Day or Sunday Schools, in the city of Philadelphia, and the Districts of Southwark and Northern Liberties* [Philadelphia, 1796]. Despite the commonly attributed date of 1796, Carey was attending meetings in 1791. See Carey diary, Mar. 4, 1791, vol. 26, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection. See also Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution 1790–1880* (New Haven, CT, 1988), 7.

²⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 30, 1791; Jacqueline S. Reinier, “Rearing the Republican Child: Attitudes and Practices in Post-Revolutionary Philadelphia,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 161–62; Benjamin Rush, “A Defense of the Use of the Bible as a School Book, in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Jeremiah Belknap, of Boston, from Dr. Rush,” *American Museum* 9 (Mar. 1791): 134.

²⁵ *Pennsylvania Evening Herald, and the American Monitor*, Aug. 10, 1785.

²⁶ *Constitution of the Roman Catholic Sunday School Society of Philadelphia, in Miscellanies*, 537. Gradually these schools gave way to denominational ones dedicated to indoctrination. Boylan, *Sunday School*, 6–21; Reinier, “Rearing the Republican Child,” 161–62.

ecumenical spirit among elites. Many wealthy Protestants sent children to the convent school; the pupils prayed together and received religious instruction, but did so using prayers “common to all Christians” and learning the “practical truths, and religious duties which are peculiar to no sect.”²⁷ Religious differences mattered, but they did not preclude the search for a common religious goal.

That sectarian warfare erupted over Bibles also shows that much had changed. In Carey’s Philadelphia, Catholics and Protestants read different Bibles, but Carey published both. He had made his name publishing Bibles and religious books, and he published Protestant works so prolifically that he was once mistaken for “some d—d methodist [*sic*] parson.”²⁸ After Carey’s first King James Bible appeared in 1801, he regularly produced editions until 1820. Although the Bible proved profitable (no small matter for a father of eight), Carey’s publishing was rooted in a vision of religious harmony and cooperation.²⁹ He denounced the “contemptible prejudice which confines its benevolence within the narrow pale of one religious denomination.”³⁰ Not all Philadelphians agreed. Carey contrasted his benevolence to Protestants with his competitors’ treatment of Catholics, including one “ultra puritan” who “would rather print the *Woman of Pleasure*, than such a pestiferous, idolatrous book” as a Catholic Catechism.³¹ Publishing Protestant books affirmed the value of religious cooperation.

Carey lived in a world in which he and others, though not all, believed that the goal of advancing religion and morality extended beyond denominational identities. In 1788, Carey’s friend Benjamin Rush reminded Americans that, in the matter of morality, “you are neither catholic nor protestants. . . . One spirit actuates you all.” Rush proposed a convention of Christians to reform America, as it would show “that it is possible for Christians of different denominations to love each other, and to unite in

²⁷ “Report of the Committee, Relating to the Destruction of the Ursuline Convent, August 11, 1834,” reprinted in *The Works of the Right Rev. John England*, collected by Ignatius Aloysius Reynolds (Baltimore, 1849), 5:235.

²⁸ Carey, *Autobiography*, 87. See also Carey, “Memoirs,” 137.

²⁹ Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA, 1999), 23; Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital*, 52, 172n87.

³⁰ [Mathew Carey], *Address to the Subscribers for the Doway Translation of the Vulgate Bible* [Philadelphia, 1790], 2–3.

³¹ Carey, “Memoirs,” 34–35, 280–81.

the advancement of their common interests.”³² Presbyterians and Congregationalists even put aside their differences in their 1801 Plan of Union to evangelize the West together. Divisions between Catholics and Protestants loomed larger than those between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, but Catholics benefited in smaller ways from the spirit of cooperation. The forces of infidelity and immorality seemed more dangerous than Catholics. Protestants even donated money to construct Catholic churches. In 1796, the Protestant George Washington and Catholic Mathew Carey both donated money to build Philadelphia’s St. Augustine’s Catholic Church (which ironically was destroyed in the 1844 Bible Riots).³³

Carey aimed for similar cross-denominational cooperation in his publishing. Though by 1842 Protestants refused to allow children to use Catholic Bibles in school, in 1789, Carey had hoped that Protestants might use his Catholic Douay edition themselves. He pitched an advertisement to Protestants, boasting that the Douay Bible could serve as a corrective to the “various important errors” in the King James Version; he even printed a Protestant’s assessment of its usefulness. Most subscribers were Catholic, but at least one Protestant—Benjamin Rush—purchased it. Carey’s hope—even if a vain one—signals a remarkably different mindset than that which prevailed by the mid-nineteenth century.³⁴

Carey’s goal of attracting a cross-confessional readership extended well beyond the Bible. He happily published Protestant works, such as prayer books for Episcopalians and Jonathan Edwards’s *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. But Carey also produced Protestant-friendly editions of Catholic works, including an 1816 edition of Chateaubriand’s *Beauties of Christianity*; a Protestant wrote the preface and notes and

³² Benjamin Rush, “Address to the Ministers of the Gospel of Every Denomination in the United States, on Subjects Interesting to Morals,” in *Essays Literary, Moral and Philosophical*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1806), 114, 122, 124.

³³ Each donated \$50 (a substantial donation); the entire subscription raised \$8,679. John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia: 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1376; Protestants in the West donated land and money to build Catholic churches. Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith*, 95.

³⁴ [Carey], *Address to the Subscribers*, 2–3; Mathew Carey, *To the Roman Catholics of America, Mathew Carey Respectfully Submits the Following Proposals . . .* [Philadelphia, 1789], 4; Michael S. Carter, “‘Under the Benign Sun of Toleration: Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789–91,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (2007): 457. However, Carey ensured that Protestants did not buy it mistakenly. Mathew Carey to Isaiah Thomas, Feb. 19, 1789, Letterbook, 1788–1794, Lea and Febiger Records 227b, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; *Miscellanies*, 244.

excised its most Catholic remarks.³⁵ His Protestant traveling salesman, Mason Locke Weems, saw their venture in publishing as a boon to morality and religion, helping “bring back the golden age of Light, Liberty, and Love.”³⁶

Yet Carey’s cooperation with Protestants sprang from a devotion to Catholicism, not from a sense of indifference about religion. He sought harmony and cross-confessional cooperation precisely because he wanted to be accepted as a *Catholic* citizen. His 1787 diary began “In nomine domine amen”; using Latin signaled the Catholic core of his invocation.³⁷ Carey dined with bishops and priests, and he attended Mass most Sundays, occasionally noting the quality of sermons. He threw himself into St. Mary’s parish politics.³⁸ When his daughter Frances married the Quaker Isaac Lea, she did so in a Catholic church and only after Lea promised not to influence her religion.³⁹ (“Mixed” marriages were common, despite clerical wariness; even Bishop John Carroll presided at the marriage of a relative to a Protestant).⁴⁰ Most significantly, Carey began his Bible-publishing career by printing the first Catholic Bible in America, despite his well-grounded fears about the financial risks, given the scarcity of Catholics. Carey would know that it had only been ten years since the first domestic—and financially disastrous—New Testament.⁴¹ In 1789, with the personal aid of Bishop John Carroll, Carey solicited subscriptions for the Bible.⁴² Even without enough subscribers

³⁵ William Clarkin, *Mathew Carey: A Bibliography of His Publications, 1785–1824* (New York, 1984), 25, 142. Some Catholics disapproved of his use of Kett’s preface (see below); A Catholic of Kentucky to Mathew Carey, [n.d.], and Bishop Simon Bruté to Mathew Carey, Feb. 13, 1816, in “Selections from the Correspondence of the Deceased Mathew Carey,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 10 (1899): 106–7 and 12 (1901): 98–100.

³⁶ Mason Weems to Mathew Carey, Mar. 24, 1801, in *Mason Locke Weems: His Works and Ways in Three Volumes*, ed. Emily Ellsworth Ford Skeel (New York, 1929), 2:186.

³⁷ Carey diary, Jan. 1, 1787, vol. 26, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Mar. 4, 1820, Apr. 1, Apr. 29, Oct. 17, and Oct. 21, 1821; for politics, see e.g., A Catholic Layman, *Review of Three Pamphlets Lately Published by the Rev. W. V. Harold* (Philadelphia, 1822).

³⁹ Isaac Lea to Frances Carey, June 10, 1819, Scrapbook B, Carey and Lea Family Manuscripts and Photographs, Library Company of Philadelphia.

⁴⁰ Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith*, 128–29; Anne C. Rose, *Beloved Strangers: Interfaith Families in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 14–34.

⁴¹ Gutjahr, *An American Bible*, 23; Carey to Rev. W. O’Brien, May 14, 1789, Letterbook, 1788–1794, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b.

⁴² Carey, *To the Roman Catholics of America*; John Carroll to Mathew Carey, Jan. 30, [Aug.], and Sept. 10, 1789, all in *The John Carroll Papers*, ed. Thomas O’Brien Hanley (Notre Dame, IN, 1976), 1:348, 375, 380–81. See also Carter, “Under the Benign Sun of Toleration,” 437–69.

to defray his expenses, Carey printed it, and he did so again in 1805.⁴³

For both men, publishing the Catholic Bible—and other religious works—was crucial both to defining Catholicism in the early republic and to defeating anti-Catholic prejudice. The Bible and religious works, they predicted, would not only nurture the moral and spiritual development of Catholics but also reform Catholics into respectable people who deserved the esteem of their Protestant neighbors. In 1791, when Carey solicited funds for a Catholic publication society, he hoped that such a project would instill morality in the Catholic population; he fretted that many Catholics could not easily explain doctrines and lacked moral formation.⁴⁴ Such lack of doctrinal or moral training undermined Catholics' public standing. For the printer and the bishop, sincere religious concern for moral and religious education blended with a desire to instill respectability. The Bible project also promised to challenge anti-Catholic prejudice in broader ways.⁴⁵ Protestants, as Carey noted, incorrectly, but commonly, believed that Catholics were neither interested in reading the Bible nor allowed to do so; he encouraged Catholics to support his Bible to disprove such criticisms. Both men feared it would be a "disgrace" if they could not get at least 400 subscribers (they ultimately got 471).⁴⁶ Publishing Bibles and other Catholic works was crucial to defeating anti-Catholicism.

The concern about Catholics' public standing mattered so much because the new opportunities for harmony and cooperation existed alongside enduring prejudice and mutual suspicion, both in Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole. The growing toleration of Catholics unnerved some Protestants who viewed the republic as a de facto Protestant nation. But if anti-Catholic prejudice had not disappeared, the world of

⁴³ Carey, *To the Roman Catholics of America*, 1; Clarkin, *Mathew Carey*, 9 entry 5, and 79–80; Margaret T. Hills, *The English Bible in America: A Bibliography of Editions of the Bible and the New Testament Published in America, 1777–1957* (New York, 1961), 4–5, 21–23.

⁴⁴ Mathew Carey, *Reverend Sir, The Opportunity Afforded by the Present Meeting is So Favourable, That I will Avail Myself of It, to Call Your Attention to the Institution for Printing Roman Catholic Books* [Philadelphia, 1791]; Mathew Carey to John Carroll, Mar. 27, 1791, box 27, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection.

⁴⁵ John Carroll to Mathew Carey, Jan. 30, 1789, in *Carroll*, 1:348; see also Carey to Carroll, Apr. 6, 1789, Letterbook, 1788–1794, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b; Carroll to Carey, Jan. 30 and Apr. 8, 1789, and Mar. 7, 1792, in *Carroll*, 1:348–49, 355, 2:23.

⁴⁶ Carey, "Address to the Subscribers," 1–2; Mathew Carey to John Carroll, Apr. 6, 1789, Letterbook, 1788–1794, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b; John Carroll to Mathew Carey, Apr. 8, 1789, and Carroll to Francis Neale, Jan. 19, 1790, in *Carroll* 1:355, 420; a similar point is made in Carter, "Under the Benign Sun of Toleration," 459.

Catholic-Protestant relations had still changed significantly. What is striking is not just that anti-Catholicism had *relatively* weakened but that Catholics defended themselves in new ways, drawing upon religious freedom, harmony, and Enlightenment ideals. Carey abandoned the traditional claims of apologetical literature, which aimed at convincing nonbelievers of the truth of one's positions. He instead tried to convince others of the value of harmony and religious liberty. Staking his ground on harmony and pluralism, Carey forced anti-Catholics into a sectarian mold. It was their bigotry—not Catholicism—that did not belong in an enlightened society.

Carey showed a life-long willingness to defend Catholics; in 1826, when he bound his earlier pamphlets and published works into seven volumes, he filled an entire volume with works related to Catholicism.⁴⁷ He began defending Catholics in Ireland in 1779 against the penal laws. In 1792, he leapt to Catholics' defense when a Philadelphia Quaker compared lotteries to indulgences as "forgiving and permitting sins, to raise money."⁴⁸ In 1808, he fumed when John Mason, editor of the *Christian's Magazine* in New York, accused present-day Catholics of claiming divine sanction for cruelty and murdering Protestants. Mason denounced Catholic doctrines as being "calculated to gratify those sensual passions and desires" of wicked hearts.⁴⁹ Likewise, the struggle for Catholic Emancipation in the United Kingdom inspired Carey's pen. When, in 1817, William Godwin resurrected charges that Irish Catholics had massacred Protestants in the 1641 rebellion, Carey wrote *Vindiciae Hibernicae* (1818).⁵⁰ It not only challenged Godwin's account, but it also blamed the insurrection on *Protestant* persecution of Catholics. Carey's *Letters on Religious Persecution* (1826) refuted warnings that Catholic emancipation would endanger Protestants.⁵¹ In 1828, Carey helped cre-

⁴⁷ See Carey, *Miscellanies* (1826).

⁴⁸ A Catholic, *American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Jan. 6, 1792, in Verax [F. A. Fleming], *The Calumnies of Verus, or, Catholics Vindicated, from Certain Old Slanders Lately Revived* (Philadelphia, 1792), 7. This controversy is discussed in detail in Michael S. Carter, "What Shall We Say to this *Liberal Age*?": Catholic-Protestant Controversy in the Early National Capital," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26 (2008): 79–95.

⁴⁹ John M. Mason, "John Rogers, the Proto-Martyr under Queen Mary," *Christian's Magazine* 2 [1808], 150–51; Mathew Carey, "To the Rev. John M. Mason," unidentified newspaper, [*Democratic Press*?], [Sept. 1808?], in *Miscellanies*, 149.

⁵⁰ William Godwin, *Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England* (Edinburgh, 1817).

⁵¹ Specifically, he responded to praise of Joseph Blanco White's work; White, *Practical and Internal Evidences against Catholicism* (London, 1825).

ate an association of “Vindicators of the Catholic Religion from Calumny and Abuse,” which rebutted claims that persecution was “almost exclusively perpetrated by Roman Catholics.”⁵² Eleven days after a Protestant mob torched the Charlestown Ursuline Convent in 1834—forcing the sisters and pupils to flee into the night—Carey’s *Address to the Public* responded to Samuel Miller, a Presbyterian cleric, who had dubbed Catholics “FOES OF GOD AND MAN.”⁵³

Carey’s geographic scope of concern was broad; he fought anti-Catholicism across the Atlantic and across America, especially in Massachusetts, New York, and Philadelphia. Despite such geographic breadth, his work showed clear patterns: he selectively responded to charges that struck at Catholic claims to morality and true religion or that denied their right to participate in the civic life of the republic. Critics of Catholicism drew on a legacy of linking republicanism to anti-Catholicism. As Mark Noll argues, during the Seven Years’ War, republicanism took on a distinctively Christian character when it fused with longstanding anti-Catholic ideologies and suspicions of Catholics’ loyalty.⁵⁴ Protestants viewed Catholics as enemies of liberty, especially religious freedom. When Protestants denounced Catholics as uniquely intolerant—or accused them of supporting the murdering of Protestants—they rhetorically banished Catholics from the republic. Even arguments against Catholic Emancipation in Ireland, Carey recognized, bore ideological weight in America.

Accusations of unique Catholic immorality undermined the possibility of a Catholic republicanism; Catholics were either moral contaminants or moral monsters, preying on their neighbors. This charge—and Carey’s response—reflected a growing emphasis on morality as the foundation of the republic. Rather than defining morality in religious terms (such as limiting true virtue to the elect), Americans increasingly saw morality as common ground, distinct from issues of salvation and accessible through the laws of nature. Morality took root in human reason or the broad principles of Christianity; a moral common ground provided a foundation for

⁵² “Vindicators of the Catholic Religion from Calumny and Abuse,” in *American Catholic Historical Researches* 7 (1890): 158–59; for a list of the 179 members, see Martin I. J. Griffin, “The Life of Bishop Conwell,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 28 (1917): 172–73.

⁵³ Quoted in Carey, *Address to the Public. On Religious Intolerance and Persecution* [Philadelphia, 1834], 2, 20.

⁵⁴ Mark Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002), 78–81.

a religiously pluralistic republic. Pennsylvania's 1790 constitution offered broad tolerance, but it linked political rights to a belief that an afterlife would reward virtue and punish vice.⁵⁵ But if Catholics thought—as their critics claimed—that “*the Pope can change the essential nature of moral good and evil*,” then Catholics believed in an inverted moral government in which God rewarded vice. As such, they could not be trusted.⁵⁶ Carey combated such claims by insisting on Catholics' morality: “Are they worse husbands, worse wives, worse parents, worse children, worse friends, worse neighbors, worse citizens, than the protestants, presbyterians, quakers, or methodists?”⁵⁷

Carey also fought accusations of Catholic immorality because such charges undermined Catholicism's claims to be a true religion. He tapped into broad shifts in conceptions of religion: true religion resided in the hearts and behavior of practitioners rather than in an adherence to doctrines. Carey drew on a tradition, growing since the late seventeenth century, of stressing human happiness and morality as key aims of religion.⁵⁸ Indeed, by the late eighteenth century, benevolence stood at the core of Christian virtue, and Carey prided himself—and his religion—on it. He began one work by quoting: “if we see our fellow-beings suffering with cold, or hunger, or destitute of covering, and do not relieve them, WE HAVE NO FAIR CLAIM TO THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS.” The Catholic philanthropist insisted that Catholics showed just as much humanity as Protestants; Catholics' morality and sympathy for sufferers vindicated their claims to be true Christians.⁵⁹ True religion, rooted in the heart and flowering in morality and humanity, contrasted sharply with a sectarian focus on divisive doctrines.

Carey's stress on morality contrasted with doctrinally oriented apologetics, and, with few exceptions, he refused to debate doctrines with Protestants. He explained that “those who dispute most about forms, modes, and creeds of religion, have frequently the least of it in their

⁵⁵ Frost, *Perfect Freedom*, 77.

⁵⁶ Carey, *Address to the Public*, 2; A Catholic, *American Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 6, 1792, in *Calumnies*, 7.

⁵⁷ A Catholic Layman [Mathew Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution* (Philadelphia, 1827), 6.

⁵⁸ See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1991); James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, 1985), esp. chaps. 2 and 3.

⁵⁹ Unnamed philanthropist, quoted in Carey, *Plea for the Poor*, 14; Carey, *Address to the Public*, 4.

hearts.”⁶⁰ Americans could disagree about doctrinal specifics if they shared a commitment to morality and religion. But while Carey claimed to “most cordially abhor religious controversy,” his distaste for controversy did not mean distaste for doctrine itself.⁶¹ He debated with other Catholics and delighted in John Milner’s works that defended Catholic beliefs. Yet Carey’s primary aim was not to convince Protestants of Catholic truth; rather, he sought to convince them that Catholics were moral and respectable people with whom Protestants could and should live in harmony. His “Vindicators of the Catholic Religion from Calumny and Abuse” likewise declined to publish books “merely of religion,” of which there was an “abundant supply.”⁶²

In the rare cases that Carey ventured into doctrines, he engaged in an “apologetics of convergence” that downplayed what was unique about Catholicism and stressed shared values and ideas across denominations.⁶³ Anglicans could not be “fastidious” about Catholic doctrines of infallibility when Queen Elizabeth had “enforced submission” more rigidly than any pope or council.⁶⁴ Echoing a point made by Bishop John Carroll in 1784, Carey argued that Protestants who denounced the Eucharist as idolatrous should also condemn the Calvinist who “FEEDS ON THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST” and Lutherans who believed in consubstantiation and Christ’s presence in the host.⁶⁵ Rather than defending the uniquely Catholic transubstantiation, Carey emphasized the more broadly held belief in the Real Presence—and defined that as capaciously as possible. Carey hoped to convince Protestants that Catholicism resembled their beliefs and belonged to the realm of reasonable, moral, and respectable religion.

Carey cast himself as an apologist for religious harmony, rather than a controversialist, and his commitment to harmony limited and structured his responses. It meant avoiding any hint that Catholics’ rights sprang from the truth of their creeds. In the rare cases that he praised Catholics,

⁶⁰ Carey, *Address to the Public*, 3, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶² Mathew Carey to Bernard Dornin, Oct. 27, Nov. 2, and Nov. 30, 1808, and Carey to Robert Walsh, Oct. 12, 1808, Letterbook DD, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b; “Vindicators of the Catholic Religion from Calumny and Abuse,” 159.

⁶³ For apologetics of convergence, see Chinnici, “American Catholics and Religious Pluralism,” 736.

⁶⁴ [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 10.

⁶⁵ [John Carroll], *An Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America by a Catholic Clergyman* (Annapolis, MD, 1784), 92; [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 12.

it was for their liberality. In 1808, he convinced Benjamin Rush that William Penn had learned the “sublime lesson of religious toleration” from the Catholic Lord Baltimore.⁶⁶ Instead of defending Catholics on Catholic terms, Carey used neutral or even Protestant terms—he cited Protestant sources, even when he could have made a stronger case using Catholic ones.⁶⁷

Likewise, Carey was loathe to appear a sectarian who picked fights, and he placed the “blame” on “those who provoke a warfare, from which no possible good can arise.”⁶⁸ Religious bigotry demanded a response—for the sake of harmony and Catholicism.⁶⁹ But Carey insisted that he acted only to “repel gross and outrageous assault” and responded only when it would be “criminal to be silent; thus leaving the ignorant and unwary to infer our acquiescence in the odious accusations.”⁷⁰ Indeed, while his works showed remarkable consistency over time (he never used a new argument when an old one would do), he responded to specific events—whether the burning of the Ursuline convent in 1834 or the 1820s campaigns against Catholic Emancipation in Ireland. In 1808, he fumed when a New York paper delayed printing his response to John Mason for ten weeks, complaining that “the very extraordinary delay of the essays has totally destroyed the Connexion” between the response and provocation. Printing so late “would be raking up the ashes of the dead,” effectively instigating a new controversy.⁷¹

Especially after 1808, a commitment to religious liberty formed the conceptual core of Carey’s apologetics. Religious liberty could be denied to none; he condemned persecution of Jews and Muslims, including the “odious restrictions” still afflicting British Jews in 1834.⁷² For Carey, persecution’s “ill-fated victims are either hypocrites or martyrs” and its practition-

⁶⁶ Benjamin Rush to Mathew Carey, Nov. 24, 1808, in *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton, NJ, 1951), 2:989; See also Carey, *Brief View of the Policy of the Founders of the Colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, West Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina, as Regards Liberty of Conscience* [Philadelphia, 1828], 147–51.

⁶⁷ Carey, *Autobiography*, 61; [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 19–20.

⁶⁸ Carey, “To the Rev. John M. Mason.”

⁶⁹ Mathew Carey to Bernard Dornin, Dec. 12, 1808, Letterbook DD, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b; Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae: or, Ireland Vindicated*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, 1837), 5, 7.

⁷⁰ Carey, *Address to the Public*, 26, 3; see also [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 21, 32.

⁷¹ Mathew Carey to William Christie, Dec. 13, 1808, and Carey to Bernard Dornin, Dec. 12, 1808, Letterbook DD, Lea and Febiger Records Collection 227b.

⁷² Carey, *Address to the Public*, 5–6.

ers tyrants, robbers, or murderers.⁷³ Carey defended religious liberty on principle and not merely as a necessity for maintaining peace in a pluralistic society. Humanity, he insisted, had no right to control religious belief; persecution was “blasphemous” and “the genuine Antichrist.”⁷⁴ In 1826, Carey boasted that Americans did not speak of “toleration,” which “means, that a miserable worm, who worships God in one particular form, permits his fellow worm to do the same.” Carey echoed George Washington, who insisted on the language of “liberty of conscience,” instead of “toleration,” which implied indulgence rather than “inherent natural rights.”⁷⁵

Stressing religious liberty, not rights based on creedal truth, led Carey to the startling demand that both Catholics and Protestants forgive and forget the wrongs of the past. Protestant “men of glass should throw no stones” at Catholics; Protestants had not only engaged in just as much persecution as Catholics but also bore the added inconsistency of invoking the right of private judgment while doing so.⁷⁶ Carey intended his never-published “Religious Olive Branch” to encourage cross-confessional charity and forgiveness, and he described his 1826 essays as a “religious olive branch to inculcate the divine doctrine of mutual forgiveness and forgetfulness of the crimes of ages.”⁷⁷ Forgiveness was needed all around, and he aimed to show that the “dire insanity and atrocious wickedness of punishing the body by stripes, cropping, hanging, drawing, quartering, tortures, drowning and flames, for the errors of the mind, real or supposed, have been confined to no denomination.” Even outspoken critics of such “injustice and cruelty” persecuted when given power.⁷⁸ Just as he stressed the convergence of doctrines, he emphasized the convergence of errors. Carey denounced his church’s use of persecution, even when

⁷³ Carey, “Dedication of the Religious Olive Branch” (1817), in *Miscellaneous Essays*, 291; see also *Miscellanies*, 527.

⁷⁴ Carey, “Dedication of the Religious Olive Branch,” 291; [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 19, 21.

⁷⁵ Carey, “Reflections on the Subject of Emigration from Europe with a View to Settlement in the United States” (1826), in *Miscellaneous Essays*, 134; George Washington to the Clergy of Newport, RI, in *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, ed. W. W. Abbot et al. (Charlottesville, VA, 1996), 6:284–86; for the linguistic shift, see Beneke, *Beyond Toleration*, 114, 152.

⁷⁶ [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 16–17, 28; Carey, *Address to the Public*, 13, 14.

⁷⁷ In 1830, the “Religious Olive Branch” remained incomplete, and I find no indication that he ever published more than its dedication and preface; Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, 291.

⁷⁸ Carey, “Dedication of the Religious Olive Branch,” 291.

mocked for it. His point had never been to deny Catholic wrongs but only to deny their *uniqueness*. The olive branch demanded reciprocity; Protestants should admit *their* errors.

Few images more aptly encapsulate Carey's views than the olive branch, which appeared frequently in his works. He exhorted Catholics and Protestants, northerners and southerners, Federalists and Democrats alike to accept olive branches and put animosity aside. He could portray this positively by appealing to a desire to reject the religious bigotry behind the convent blaze or the fight against Catholic Emancipation. He praised a Protestant supporter for "soaring above the influence of sectarian prejudices."⁷⁹ But the rhetoric had a sharper edge. By depicting his opponents' positions as extremist, divisive, and sectarian, he could engage in a fierce defense of harmony. He believed he could "force conviction on all but the willfully blind."⁸⁰ The olive branch made a convenient stick for beating those who refused it.

For all his talk of harmony, Carey left little room for opposition—intolerance was an unenlightened vestige of a former age. In 1808, he wrote to John Mason that while reading his magazine, he "fancied myself transported to distant periods" rather than a tolerant, enlightened age.⁸¹ While both men denounced persecution, Mason saw it as inherent in Catholic doctrine, while Carey saw persecution in chronological terms, as a nondenominational "epidemical disorder" of a bygone era to be eradicated in an enlightened age.⁸² Yet, intolerance did not disappear; Carey's frustration grew as the march of time failed to yield expected results. In 1808, Carey counted on enlightenment to destroy bigotry, which did not belong in an enlightened age. By 1834, in the wake of the convent fire, his confidence had waned, and he described the "fiendish spirit" of persecution thriving in a "*soi-disant* enlightened age" and hinting darkly at future "horrors."⁸³ While in 1792 Carey had seen attacks on Catholicism as "the offspring of ignorance or illiberality," by 1817 he described them as "*the mark of the beast*," and in 1834 he attributed such attacks to "the

⁷⁹ Mathew Carey, printed form letter, to Rev. James Quinn, Nov. 9, 1837, Scrapbook B, Carey and Lea Family Manuscripts and Photographs.

⁸⁰ [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 19.

⁸¹ Carey, "To the Rev. John M. Mason," 149.

⁸² Mason, "John Rogers, the Proto-Martyr under Queen Mary," 150; [Carey], *Letters on Religious Persecution*, 49.

⁸³ Carey, *Address to the Public*, 1, 3.

satanical passions of our nature.”⁸⁴ Fiery rhetoric aside, Carey correctly perceived a chilling of Catholic-Protestant relations. By 1834, religious harmony was fading fast.

Carey’s insistence on Catholics’ right to respect, rather than the rightness of Catholicism, represented a set of possibilities in the early republic. Catholic reactions suggest both the promise of and the limitations on such possibilities. Carey was only one man, but he was not alone. Indeed, John Thayer—a priest and ex-Protestant who was best known for his attempts to convert Protestants—even defended Christianity in decidedly ecumenical tones in the 1790s rather than uphold peculiarly Catholic doctrines.⁸⁵ Carey exemplified a pattern in early republican Catholicism—represented in the hierarchy by Bishops John Carroll and John England—of merging traditional Catholicism and Enlightenment ideals, especially religious liberty. Bishop John England—a fellow Irish immigrant, bishop of Charleston, and one of Carey’s supporters—described religious liberty as a divine gift and inalienable right as opposed to a state’s prerogative. England praised American religious liberty as a model for the world and denounced persecution. Religious liberty meant not only legal toleration but also “security of the feelings from insult”—in short, the right to respect that Carey advocated.⁸⁶ Bishop England was “pleased and instructed” by Carey’s *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, commiserating with him over his difficulties reprinting it in 1823.⁸⁷ Bishop Carroll similarly praised Carey’s efforts to defend religious liberty.⁸⁸ Like Carey, Carroll was wary of religious controversy. Carroll insisted that Catholicism would pass the tests of reason, morality, and free inquiry.⁸⁹ Carey’s approach was not identical to the bishops’ methods. Carroll’s affirmation of religious liberty rested, in part, on his belief that it paved the way for the triumph of Catholic truth.⁹⁰ In contrast, if Carey dreamed

⁸⁴ A Catholic, *American Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 6, 1792, in *Calumnies*, 7; *Proposal for Publishing, by Subscription, The Religious Olive Branch*, in *Miscellanies*, 5; Carey, *Address to the Public*, 2–3.

⁸⁵ Thomas W. Jodziewicz, “The Catholic Missionary of Boston’ Fr. John Thayer: Controversialist and Ecumenist?” *American Catholic Historical Studies* 112 (2001): 23–47.

⁸⁶ P. Carey, *Immigrant Bishop*, 49, 89, 91.

⁸⁷ John England to Mathew Carey, June 23, 1823, box 22, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection.

⁸⁸ John Carroll to Mathew Carey, Jan. 30, 1789, in *Carroll Papers*, 1:348.

⁸⁹ [Carroll], *Address to the Roman Catholics*, 114, 7, 10, 22, 28; Jodziewicz, “Wharton-Carroll Controversy,” 147.

⁹⁰ [Carroll], *Address to the Roman Catholics*, 114; Jodziewicz, “Wharton-Carroll Controversy,” 149; Chinnici, “American Catholics and Religious Pluralism,” 727–46.

of converting people, he was quiet about it. Yet all three shared a common tone: they emphasized cross-confessional harmony and the right of all religious groups to be respected.

Carey's views found a welcoming audience in the Catholic community. Despite his avoidance of doctrinal disputes, many early republican Catholics found Carey a staunch defender of their religion. In 1808, Robert Walsh dubbed Carey "the *old, able, and prompt defender of the faith*." Others offered to reprint and circulate his pamphlets. As late as 1826, Carey's "Vindicators of the Catholic Religion from Calumny and Abuse" enlisted 179 members, including Bishop Henry Conwell and the future bishop John Hughes. The society even sponsored a reprinting of Carey's *Letters on Religious Persecution*. In 1808, Charles Kenny gushed that Carey's responses to anti-Catholic attacks "must endear you to every sincere professor of the Catholic religion."⁹¹

Perhaps not every professor; in 1808 Carey faced few criticisms, but as the decades wore on an increasing number of detractors worried that Carey's focus on defending Catholics' rights, rather than their beliefs, flirted dangerously with indifference. This fear reflected a broader shift in the attitudes of the laity, clergy, and episcopacy. In 1816, Bishop Simon Bruté of Vincennes fumed when Carey let a Protestant edit Chateaubriand's *Beauties of Christianity* to make it more appealing to Protestant readers. Baltimore's new archbishop, James Whitfield, refused to subscribe to *Letters on Religious Persecution* in 1829. He griped that Carey turned "toleration, persecution, humanity" into "the ground of controversy—It is bringing Religion to a human test" in which "Protestants were as well off as Catholics."⁹² Indeed, Carey had significantly narrowed the grounds of debate by focusing on religious liberty, not truth claims. When the *Catholic Herald* printed Carey's 1834 *Address to the Public*, it silently omitted the second and third letters; the second linked all intolerance to the "infernal spirit" of the Inquisition, thus equating Catholic and Protestant intolerance. Carey voiced surprise at the objection, but not

⁹¹ Robert Walsh to Mathew Carey, Oct. 3, 1808, and Charles Kenny to Mathew Carey, Nov. 4, 1808, in "Selections from the Correspondence of the Deceased Mathew Carey," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 10 (1899): 109–10 and 11 (1900): 213; William Taylor to Mathew Carey, Dec. 20, 1821, box 25, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection; Griffin, "Life of Bishop Conwell," 172–73.

⁹² Simon Bruté to Mathew Carey, Feb. 13, 1816, in "Selections from the Correspondence of the Deceased Mathew Carey," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 12 (1901): 98–100; James Whitfield to Mathew Carey, Aug. 22, 1829, Archdiocese of Philadelphia Collection (CAPI) 1/03.05, Archives of the University of Notre Dame.

all Catholics appreciated a call for mutual admissions of error. The *Herald* likewise objected to Carey's criticisms of polemics as useless; apologetics *did* lead to conversions.⁹³ In 1833, Philadelphians pored over the heated apologetical battles waged between John Hughes and John Breckinridge in the newspapers. Like Carey, Hughes defended religious liberty and argued that Protestants were no more tolerant than Catholics, but Hughes's primary point was to "prove the truth of the Catholic religion"—in doctrinal detail.⁹⁴ Increasingly, many Catholics found Carey's avoidance of Catholic truth claims troubling. The early wariness of conflict, exemplified by Carroll and England as well as Carey, gave way to an eagerness for controversies in Philadelphia and across the nation.

Such reactions hinted at a deeper debate within the Catholic community over the direction of American Catholicism. In addition to defending Catholic doctrine, a growing group of Catholic leaders worried that the willingness to join with Protestants—both in marriage and in moral reform societies—threatened the coherence of the Catholic community. Carey had imagined Catholics and Protestants working together to advance morality and religion, and he tore down social and cultural barriers between the groups. In his drive to convince Protestants that Catholicism merited respect, he defined Catholicism in terms that would make his elite Protestant neighbors comfortable. Even as Carey fought intolerance by arguing that Catholicism was a moral and enlightened religion, he aimed—through publishing religious works and creating benevolent societies—to shape the Catholic community into a moral population that would assimilate peacefully into the broader population. As Carey denounced Protestants who fixated on divisive doctrines, he also implicitly condemned Catholics who emphasized creeds at the expense of religious cooperation, benevolence, or morality.

A new generation of Catholic leaders and reformers perceived such extensive cross-confessional cooperation as a threat to Catholic distinctiveness and religiosity. Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick—who assumed leadership of the Philadelphia Diocese in 1830—aimed to instill morality and religiosity in Philadelphia by building Catholic benevolent associa-

⁹³ Carey, *Address to the Public*, 5, 8, 20, 3; *Catholic Herald* (Philadelphia), Sept. 4, 1834, and see also Sept. 25, Oct. 2, Oct. 9, 1834.

⁹⁴ *Controversy between Rev. Messrs. Hughes and Breckenridge: on the Subject "Is the Protestant Religion the Religion of Christ?"* 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, 1834), 165, 191–92; Daniel Lee Crosby, "A Christian Nation: Evangelical Protestantism and Religious Conflict in Antebellum Philadelphia" (PhD diss., Washington University, 1997), 142–49.

tions, societies, and institutions, which also served as protective walls around the Catholic community. Drawing on a broader transatlantic Catholic revival, Kenrick aimed to make the parish the center of Catholic social and religious life. The reformers of this new generation directed their efforts at molding Philadelphians into not just moral people but also moral Catholics. Catholics and Protestants both took temperance pledges, but for Catholics, a priest administered the pledge before the altar.⁹⁵

Kenrick and other reformers also worried that the Catholic community had too readily embraced the principles of republicanism and liberalism. During the 1810s and 1820s, Philadelphia's Catholic community had been torn apart—to the point of a schism that provoked Vatican intervention—over the roles of lay trustees, priests, and bishops in governing parishes, particularly over who could appoint priests. As the lay trustees argued for the right to appoint and dismiss priests (a right enjoyed by their Protestant counterparts), they appealed to the languages of republicanism and liberalism. Kenrick and other bishops asserted episcopal control over parishes and strengthened ties with the Roman hierarchy, and they showed growing wariness of liberalism, which they associated with the trustee crisis and European revolution; in the coming decades, revolutions similarly strengthened the Vatican's hostility to liberalism.⁹⁶

Carey articulated one set of possibilities for Catholics in the new republic, but as he aged, the possibilities of religious cooperation were fading. New pressures limited the eagerness of both sides to cooperate, and the lines dividing Catholicism and Protestantism hardened. Invigorated by the Second Great Awakening, evangelicals dreamed of converting the nation to Protestantism; they watched in alarm as the Catholic Church grew rapidly in institutional strength and numbers. Increasing numbers of immigrants, especially lower-class ones (who, unlike Carey, were more likely to need than provide financial assistance), poured into the nation. Not only did immigration pose a demographic challenge to any hopes of a de facto Protestant nation, the expansion of white male suffrage across class lines also meant that the rapidly exploding Catholic population posed a political challenge to Protestant domi-

⁹⁵ Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 269–99, esp. 238–84, 290–94. For the pledge, see Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 291.

⁹⁶ For the Philadelphia lay trustee controversy, see Light, *Rome and the New Republic*; for the new tone, see also McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 7–42.

nance. Growing numbers of priests and religious orders—especially female religious orders full of unmarried women—challenged Protestant gender roles and ideals of domesticity.⁹⁷

The institutional strength of Catholicism—and the threat it posed to Protestant dreams—coincided with a shift of tone in American and European Catholicism. A new generation of Catholics stridently asserted their Catholic identity and eagerly leapt into the religious controversies that a previous generation had reluctantly accepted.⁹⁸ Where Carey had understood cultural and intellectual assimilation as the key to Catholic respectability in the new republic, a substantial constituency of antebellum Catholic leaders grew wary of the dangers that such assimilation might pose to Catholic identity and belief. Catholics, worried about Protestant teachers proselytizing, constructed their own schools as alternatives to public or Protestant institutions, creating a rich, but decidedly sectarian, Catholic culture. Catholic piety increasingly emphasized precisely those beliefs and practices that many Protestants found jarring, such as miracles and Eucharistic or Marian devotions. By midcentury, the rapprochement had given way to straightforward sectarianism, unabashed avowals of Catholic superiority, and an antagonistic relationship with Protestantism. Liberals and evangelicals, for their part, fought fiercely against a newly confident and assertive Catholicism. By the mid-nineteenth century, American Catholics and liberals stood at odds, invoking competing and antagonistic notions of freedom and the individual.⁹⁹ Neither group cared to downplay differences in the name of harmony.

Carey's case suggests that, however briefly, the early republic offered new opportunities for merging Catholicism, antisectarianism, liberalism, and Enlightenment attitudes. Defending Catholicism through religious harmony and religious liberty, and meshing Catholic and Enlightenment thought, Carey articulated one set of possibilities for Catholicism in the early republic. The rhetoric of liberalism, rather than undermining Catholicism, served Catholic ends, and religious cooperation was premised on individual religious devotion and a shared vision of a moral, religious, and harmonious nation. Traditional polemical models, though

⁹⁷ Tracy Fessenden, "The Convent, the Brothel, and the Protestant Woman's Sphere," *Signs: A Journal of Culture and Society* 25 (2000): 451–78; Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727–1834* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), esp. 258–64.

⁹⁸ For the growth of apologetical debates in the West, see Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith*, 175.

⁹⁹ See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, esp. 7–42.

never entirely abandoned, made room for an apologetics of harmony that relied upon religious cooperation and respect as well as religious devotion. The early republican vision of harmony gave way to fiery sectarian polemics in the nineteenth century, but that vision of harmony echoed into the twentieth century. The ideal of harmony proved, in the long run, to be more lasting, but it would be a long road.

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