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Apocalypse Now: War and Religion in Late Colonial and Early Republic America

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Apocalypse Now: War and Religion in Late Colonial and Early Republic America

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Bristow, Virginia

Bachelor of Arts, University of Virginia, 2015

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William & Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
History

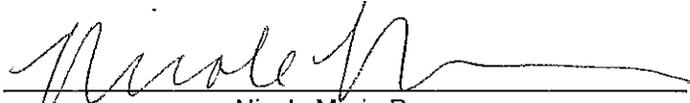
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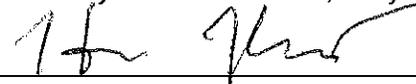
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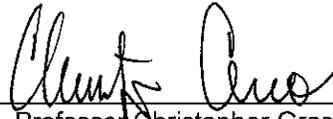
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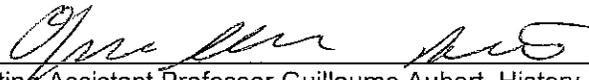


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ABSTRACT

French “Idolators,” British “Heretics,” Native “Heathens”: The Seven Years’ War in North America as a Religious Conflict

With France and Great Britain as its primary belligerents, the Seven Years' War was an international conflict with a decidedly religious dimension, one based on the longstanding rivalry between Catholicism and Protestantism. In North America, the conflict galvanized clergymen in both the British and French colonies to frame the war as a religious struggle with potentially apocalyptic consequences. This discourse remains understudied by historians, and efforts to address religion's role in America during the Seven Years' War is usually one-sided, focusing either on the French or British experience. This paper aims to fill this historiographic gap by analyzing both sermons produced by Protestant ministers from across the American colonies and pastoral letters issued by the Catholic Bishop of Quebec between 1755 and 1763. Moreover, this paper argues that both French and British religious leaders viewed the Seven Years' War as an extension of the Catholic-Protestant European religious wars of the previous century, and believed that the conflict's outcome would determine the survival of their respective religions in North America. This paper also describes how Native Americans figured in this discourse, employing a combination of captivity narratives written by Protestant ministers and the reports of Jesuit missionaries to further illustrate the war's perceived apocalyptic significance.

ABSTRACT

“The English Establishment Is, Itself, Of a *Beastly Nature*”: Catholicizing Great Britain in Pro-War American Discourse During the War of 1812

In order to catalyze support for their cause against the British during the War of 1812, pro-war writers in the United States revived a rhetorical device that had once served their Revolutionary predecessors: the casting of Great Britain as an anti-Protestant and practically Catholic agent. Specifically, these writers were reacting to claims made by certain New England religious and political authorities shortly after the war's inception that Great Britain was Protestantism's “bulwark,” and as a result should be viewed as an American ally rather than as an enemy. An examination of pro-war newspaper articles and published sermons ranging in origin from Vermont to Maryland demonstrates how pro-war writers deconstructed Great Britain's historically accepted role as Protestantism's defender. It also reveals how this rhetorical strategy intensified in comparison to its brief employment during the Revolutionary period, thanks to the manner in which Napoleonic France was perceived as an effective check against the Papacy. Finally, these sources demonstrate the extent to which pro-war writers employed apocalyptic imagery from the biblical Book of Revelation to bolster their denunciation of Great Britain, which they argued stood alongside the Catholic Church as one of the beasts of the Apocalypse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedications	iii
Intellectual Biography	1
French “Idolators,” British “Heretics,” Native “Heathens”: The Seven Years’ War in North America as a Religious Conflict	5
“The English Establishment Is, Itself, Of a <i>Beastly Nature</i> ”: Catholicizing Great Britain in Pro-War American Discourse During the War of 1812	45

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To the 2015-2016 History Graduate Cohort: it has been an absolute honor to learn and laugh alongside you for the past year. I have discovered something new and valuable about our field every day thanks to every one of you, and I will miss the many hours we spent together each week in our various seminars (and trying to make the most of the Williamsburg bar scene). To my friends from college and high school: thanks for keeping my sane as I spent a year essentially reading for a living. Last, but absolutely not least, I would like to thank my family: Brian, Sarina, Sophie, and Maddie Penn (and Bosco!). While I would like to say that I have finally hit the “no more history!” mark, I think I've become too addicted to this field to ever truly leave it. However, we can all take comfort in the fact that Dad will always be a much better military historian than I, even as my “armchair analyses” during dinnertime conversations have become more insufferably authoritative in tone. You can blame graduate school for that, but then again, you all are the real reason I got this far to begin with.

A Note on Translations:

All translations from French sources into English have been the author's own.

Dedicated to Mom and Dad

Intellectual Biography

My interest in the intersection of religion and war in American history began with an undergraduate research seminar that I took at the University of Virginia under D.H. Dilbeck, a PhD student in the history department at the time. In this course, we read a number of new military history monographs that focused specifically on religion's role as an interpretive device in times of war throughout various points in American history. It was in this seminar that I wrote my first major research paper, detailing the American Catholic debate over the issue of slavery during the antebellum and Civil War era. That paper fed into a larger honors thesis that analyzed religion's role in galvanizing Confederate loyalties amongst southern Catholics during the Civil War. In graduate school, I have attempted to broaden both my general understanding of eighteenth and nineteenth century American religious and military history and my knowledge of the research directions that are possible within a historiographical theme that is as general as "religion and war." It is my sincere belief that, given the complicated but profound role that religion has played in American society, religion operates as a crucial discursive framework within all of the major wars in American history between the colonial era and the Civil War. Religion offered a means through which to oppose or justify a recourse to arms and to grapple with the moments of triumph and horror inherent to warfare – a fact that can complicate realist interpretations of past American conflicts.

Having explored this theme thoroughly within the context of the Civil War, I chose to use my research portfolio as a means to study other American conflicts

with which I have less familiarity. Nevertheless, I did not want to stop studying issues related to Catholicism in America. That is why I chose to investigate religious issues within the context of the Seven Years' War in North America and the War of 1812, as both conflicts specifically offered opportunities to study anxieties related to Protestant-Catholic issues. In my first paper, titled "French 'Idolators,' British 'Heretics,' Native 'Heathens': The Seven Years' War in North America as a Religious Conflict," I hoped to capture the extent to which the citizens of the French and British colonies in North America viewed the Seven Years' War as an apocalyptic contest between Protestantism and Catholicism. My hope was to capture a widespread sense among these French and British colonists that the war was not just one between empires over issues of territory and expansion, but a struggle between Protestants and Catholics for the survival of their respective faith on the North American continent. Tangentially related to this subject, my second paper, titled "'The English Establishment Is, Itself, of a *Beastly Nature*': Catholicizing Great Britain in Pro-War American Discourse During the War of 1812," initially began as a project to distill the extent to which Americans viewed the war against Great Britain as an opportunity to demonstrate their superior allegiance to Protestantism in comparison to their English cousins.

Although the evidence that I uncovered while conducting research for both of these papers largely supported my initial hypotheses, there were some differences between what I had originally intended to prove and the final product. In the end, the paper that I produced on apocalyptic discourse during the Seven Years' War in North America focused specifically on the ideas produced by

religious leaders in the French and British North American colonies, rather than acting as an assessment of these societies as a whole. Employing the sermons of prominent British Protestant ministers and deacons such as Samuel Davies, William Smith, and Robert Eastburn, and French clerics such as Jesuit Pierre-Joseph-Antoine Roubaud and Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, the Bishop of Quebec, I found that both French and British religious leaders in the colonies feared the annihilation of their religious traditions should their side lose the contest. Furthermore, both sets of religious leaders mapped these concerns onto their respective society's relationship with Native Americans. The deviation between my hypothesis and eventual findings for my paper on American religious perceptions during the War of 1812 was a little more profound. In this piece, I analyzed a combination of pro-war lay and religious writings (namely, sermons and newspaper articles) from a variety of state and Protestant backgrounds, and found within them a strong propensity to "Catholicize" Great Britain as a means to widen the cultural gulf between American and British society. Specifically, these authors were reacting to certain claims from New England that Great Britain was a "bulwark" of Protestantism and thus deserved American respect and friendship, and contested such claims by arguing that Great Britain was a greater friend and ally to Catholic interests than it ever had been to Protestantism.

In order to make these papers publishable, there are some substantive revisions/further investigations that I will need to complete. For the piece on Franco-British religious discourse in the North American colonies during the

Seven Years' War, I will need to develop a much stronger understanding of French historiography of New France, in order to situate my research more fully within work produced by francophone historians. I also want to conduct more detailed archival research in order to incorporate other clerical voices from the period and region than just Bishop Pontbriand, in order to demonstrate the extent to which Pontbriand's wartime thought trickled down through the hierarchy. As for my paper on pro-war American discourse during the War of 1812, I want to prove that the "Catholicization" of Great Britain served as more than just a rhetorical device by a few fringe writers who were obsessed with the book of Revelation, and actually resonated with the American public at large. In order to do so, I need to consult an even larger sampling of newspapers, with the hope of finding similar references to Great Britain as a Catholic ally and Revelation's "beast" in pieces published in most of the major newspapers and periodicals across the United States during this period.

French “Idolators,” British “Heretics,” Native “Heathens”: The Seven Years’ War in North America as a Religious Conflict

Introduction

Speaking to a recently-raised company of Virginia volunteers in 1755, Presbyterian minister Samuel Davies thundered forth a somber assessment of the current state of colonial affairs to the men assembled before him: “Our Territories are invaded by the Power and Perfidy of *France*; our Frontiers ravaged by merciless Savages, and our Fellow-Subjects there murdered with all the horrid Arts of *Indian* and Popish Torture.” While Davies was undoubtedly disturbed by the material and economic consequences that Native American attacks and French colonial expansion spelled for the British colonies, it was ultimately the religious repercussions of such incursions that frightened him the most. In an era when British colonials were quick to associate “French power” with “Catholic power,” French success in the North American theater of the Seven Years’ War portended the dawn of a new age of religious persecution: the expansion of Catholic tendrils into the heart of the Protestant stronghold that the British colonies represented on the continent.¹

Hundreds of miles north in the middle of French Canada, Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, the Catholic bishop of Quebec, offered similar words of warning barely six months later. As part of his instructions to all the Canadian dioceses to recite special prayers and conduct specific rituals for the sake of

¹ Samuel Davies, *Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a Good Soldier: A Sermon Preached to Captain Overton’s Independent Company of Volunteers, Raised in Hanover County, Virginia, August 17, 1755* (Philadelphia: 1755), 3.

French success in the struggle against Great Britain, Pontbriand noted that French Canada faced enemies that were “irritated by our victories” and who were “making new preparations” that seemed “to threaten us from all parts.” In particular, Pontbriand made a point to reference the recent British expulsion of French colonists from Acadia, concluding that “the conduct that they [the British] maintain with regard to the people of Acadia foreshadows that which we should fear, should they be victorious [in the war].” That which the French colonists needed to “fear,” in Pontbriand’s estimation, was not just mass expulsions of French colonists from territory claimed by Great Britain, but furthermore the imposition of a heretical religious rule, manifested mainly through the destruction of churches and the suppression of Catholic religious rights and privileges. Furthermore, a British victory could also put an end to the missionary work that various Catholic orders had been conducting amongst Canada’s Native inhabitants. Like their Protestant counterparts, the Catholic clergy operating within French Canada interpreted the Seven Years’ War as a conflict with potentially devastating religious ramifications.²

While a number of historians of the period have explored the role that religion played over the course of the Seven Years’ War in North America, such as Fred Anderson, Timothy J. Shannon, and Jacques Mathieu, this subject has rarely formed the central theme of an article or monograph. More importantly, those works that do consider the war’s religious discourse have often only done

² Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, “Mandement Pour des Prières Publiques – Dispersion des Acadiens,” in H. Tètu and C.O. Gagnon, eds., *Mandements: Lettres Pastorales et Circulaires des Évêques de Québec* (Québec, 1888), 2:105.

so through the perspective of one of the belligerents, and not in a comparative fashion. In doing so, they miss an opportunity to explore the full extent to which the Seven Years' War's North American theater represented an essential continuation of the religious wars that had raged in Europe a century prior. This is a particularly important historiographic lens given the stark differences in the respective religious constitutions of the French and British colonies. It was French imperial policy to forbid non-Catholics from emigrating to the French colonies, thus ensuring that all colonial communities in these territories would remain purely Catholic. While there was no similar injunction against Catholic immigrants to the British colonies, the British government actively encouraged Protestants to settle in its overseas territories, thereby preserving Protestantism's denominational supremacy by 1755. Analyzing the religious discourse generated by ministers and clergymen from both sets of colonies over the course of the Seven Years' War thus demonstrates how the religious drama of the Protestant-Catholic rivalry succeeded in crossing the Atlantic. It also demonstrates how both French and British colonials viewed the Seven Years' War as the apex of a longstanding religious struggle, with potentially apocalyptic consequences should either side lose the contest. Finally, discourse in both colonies included Native Americans as key players in this religious conflict, particularly as figures upon which Protestant and Catholic clergymen mapped these apocalyptic concerns.³

This article will be split into three segments, each analyzing the religious language produced by the war's belligerents. The first uses sermons written by

³ Timothy J. Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, 2014), 8-9.

popular and influential Protestant ministers such as Samuel Davies, Isaac Morrill, and William Smith (Presbyterian, Church of Christ, and Anglican ministers from Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, respectively), to analyze the war's impact on religious discourse in the British colonies. This section references a variety of authors in order to reflect the diverse range of Protestant denominations that existed within the British colonies by the mid-eighteenth century, and to prove that the concerns they articulated regarding the threat of "Popish power" were not just relegated to one sect or geographic area. The second switches sides to analyze comparable religious language produced in the French colonies, transmitted primarily through the "mandements" (pastoral letters) issued by Pontbriand over the course of the war. Given that Catholicism was the French colonies' official religion, and that these letters served as religious (and arguably political) instructions for all of the dioceses in French Canada, there is not as much need for authorial diversity in analyzing the French colonial case as the British. The third section will attempt to incorporate Native Americans into this discourse, particularly by looking at a captivity narrative written by Robert Eastburn, a New England minister, and the observations of Father Pierre Roubaud, "Missionary to the Abnakis," who also witnessed the infamous Fort William Henry Massacre of 1757. These perspectives serve as another angle through which to understand the religious narratives that British colonial Protestants and French colonial Catholics were constructing over the course of the war.⁴

⁴ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977), 38; Pierre Roubaud, "Lettre du Père * * *",

Analyzing these materials and placing them in conversation with one another ultimately shows that the Seven Years' War was a conflict that British and French colonials understood in apocalyptic terms. Both Protestant ministers and the Catholic clergy saw the war as a struggle for the survival of their respective religions, and given the high status that these individuals wielded within their respective societies, it is likely that these views influenced those of the colonial laity as well. In addition to framing the war as a zero-sum game for religious dominance, both sides offered interestingly similar conceptions regarding "Providence's" role in the war, citing it as a force that used wartime failures and successes as indicators of God's respective displeasure and approval. Finally, both religious narratives demonstrated a strong conflation of religion with nationality, with loyalty to the French king and his empire cited as a religious obligation by Pontbriand, while Protestant ministers emphasized the intrinsic link between Protestantism and British "liberty." These discourses diverged on the subject of Native Americans, reflecting the differing relationships that Native Americans maintained with French and British colonists. Catholic colonial clergymen worried that their "civilizing" work amongst Native Americans would be interrupted by the military triumph of Protestant heresy, while British colonial ministers, for whom Native Americans were more often a source of terror than community, used the apparent "success" of Native conversions as further evidence of Catholicism's inherent link to "idolatry." In the end, British success in

Missionnaire chez les Abnakis. Saint-François, October 21, 1757," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* (Cleveland, 1899), 70: 90.

Quebec in 1760 seemed to confirm Protestantism's victory in this religious conflict, a fact bemoaned by French colonial clergymen and celebrated by British colonial ministers across the colonies. However, it was a victory tempered by a peace treaty whose concessions to the French undermined the sense of religious achievement that British colonials felt they had earned, and arguably contributed to the "Americanization" of British Protestantism in the colonies.

Section I: British Colonial Ministers and the Culmination of the Protestant Anti-Popery Crusade

Although Alan Heimert classically argued that British colonial ministers "were not disposed to tie the cause of Protestantism, much less the millennium, to the fortunes of war," an analysis of selected sermons produced by colonial ministers over the course of the Seven Years' War in North America demonstrates that this assertion blatantly ignores some of the most emphasized, emotionally charged, and urgent religious messages articulated during the conflict. To these writers, the war against France was an intrinsically religious war, one that would determine the future of Protestantism and Protestant conceptions of religious liberty in the New World. Furthermore, as Heimert's contemporary and fellow religious historian Nathan O. Hatch has noted, the Seven Years' War actually contributed, during the post-Great Awakening lull, to a religious revival in the British colonies, with war serving as grounds to unite all under the banner of the Protestant cause. This section will trace the apocalyptic and providential language that British colonial ministers employed when discussing the war against France, in addition to demonstrating how this

discourse reflected evolving notions of their identities as both “Britons” and “Americans.”⁵

To believe that British colonials failed to ascribe a strong religious significance to any conflict involving France is to ignore the important role that Protestantism played in defining “Britishness.” Linda Colley has covered this connection extensively, particularly through noting that historically, “the English, the Welsh and the Scots could be drawn together – and made to feel separate from much of the rest of Europe – by their common commitment to Protestantism.” This “commitment to Protestantism” was not just a commitment to a religious denomination that refused to acknowledge the Pope as the head of the Christian Church: it was a religion that was deeply intertwined with the representative political institutions and constitutional monarchy that Britons held dearest. As a result, religion played an important role in deepening the gulf between Great Britain and its most important rival in the eighteenth century: Catholic France. There was nothing that eighteenth-century Britons feared as much as the notion of a French-Catholic *Reconquista* of their island nation, one that would bring with it the tyranny of “popery” and absolute monarchy, its natural political ally. Because of these associations, Catholics were frequently at the heart of the blame for many of the most destabilizing moments in British history prior to the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, such as the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the Irish Rebellion of 1641, and even the Great Fire of London in 1666,

⁵ Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, 1966), 325; Nathan O. Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (July 1974), 417.

and usually occupied the roles of the “Antichrist” or the “Whore of Babylon” in British millennialist language.⁶

The conflation of Protestantism with “Britishness,” and its accompanying conflict with Catholic France, easily traversed the Atlantic as citizens from throughout Great Britain settled and established families in the American colonies. Peter Silver notes that “the American colonies went to war with Canada after 1689 as often as the mother country fought France” – a tangible expression of the extent to which the religious wars of the Continent found themselves transported to a new stage in the Americas. After all, the Nine Years War and the War of Spanish Succession both had their colonial analogues in “King William’s War” and “Queen Anne’s War,” respectively. As Thomas S. Kidd has additionally chronicled, British colonial print culture played an essential role in fomenting anti-Catholic discourse in the 1720s and 1730s. New England in particular served to catalyze such discussion, thanks to the establishment of a newspaper in Boston in 1704, within which British colonials were able to print stories of Catholic atrocities and bungling from around the world, from the trial and execution of two women in Vienna over the sullyng of a crucifix to a similar trial and execution of an “Ass” for wandering into a church and drinking from a receptacle of holy water. These stories, as often fraudulent as they were based in truth, were designed to both mock Catholicism and demonstrate the danger that it posed to the world at large. Furthermore, Kidd argues that the legacy of Puritanism in the British colonies, a movement that “had been anti-Catholic and, in a sense,

⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), 18, 25.

internationalist from the beginning,” added to the sense of urgency that many British colonials felt towards fighting Catholicism’s threat to both Europe and the New World.⁷

In addition to the unique role that the Puritan legacy played in fomenting British colonial anti-Catholicism in the American colonies, it is also important to highlight the contribution that the First Great Awakening made to this particular religious climate. After decades of declining church attendance and lowered levels of popular piety, influential ministers such as Massachusetts’ Jonathan Edwards, the Tennents of the Middle Colonies (William Sr., Gilbert, John, and William Jr.), and the Anglican George Whitefield – with whom this movement is particularly associated – introduced an innovative style of “plain style” preaching designed to attract new and revitalized crowds of followers. The most radical leaders of this movement, commonly known as the “New Lights,” were particularly prone to employing apocalyptic and providential rhetoric in their sermons. This rhetorical evolution paved the way for facilitating future confluences of Armageddon with a Protestant-Catholic showdown in North America. Although some historians have argued that the First Great Awakening was in decline by 1745, recent monographs, such as John Howard Smith’s *The First Great Awakening*, suggest that the religious energy produced by the revivals of the First Great Awakening, and their accompanying inter-denominational strife, had

⁷Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008), 41; Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2009), 161; Thomas S. Kidd, “‘Let Hell and Rome Do Their Worst’: World News, Anti-Catholicism, and International Protestantism in Early-Eighteenth-Century Boston,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No.2 (June 2003), 273, 266.

merely been refocused to combating the Catholic threat that by the 1750s seemed poised to inflict serious damage upon the British colonies.⁸

In analyzing sermons produced over the course of the eighteenth century, one finds that the rhetoric of British colonial ministers brimmed with references to Catholic injustices in the Old World, such as “the inquisition, the fury of Queen Mary, the schemes of the Stuarts, and the...suppression of Protestants in France.” They also frequently paired Britishness with Protestant adherence, such as Samuel Davies’ appeal near the middle of his 1755 sermon to the Virginia volunteers, addressing them as “*Virginians! Britons! Christians! Protestants!*” and asking that “if these Names have any Import or Energy, will you not strike home in such a Cause [against the French]?” Despite their colonial status, individuals living in the American colonies maintained a strong attachment to their British identity, one that was continually reinforced by their struggle against an old enemy that continued to plague them from its unholy Canadian stronghold.⁹

Before embarking further, it is important to establish the role that ministers and their sermons played in colonial life. After all, one could easily argue that it was only natural that ministers used war as an opportunity to spread a religious message, and that the ability for these sermons to influence colonial mentalities was relatively limited. However, as Timothy J. Shannon has noted, “Ministers were prominent members of their communities in British North America, and their sermons served as an important means of spreading and interpreting news

⁸ John Howard Smith, *The First Great Awakening: Redefining Religion in British America, 1725-1775* (Madison, N.J., 2015), 2-3, 225-226.

⁹ Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America,” 418; Davies, *Religion and Patriotism*, 14.

among the population.” Although the figures are sketchy and highly debatable, noted historians such as Patricia Bonomi, Peter Eisenstadt, and Jon Butler have argued that roughly 70 percent of New Englanders and Virginians between 1750 and 1760 at least attended church irregularly – a number suggesting that a large majority of British colonists gained at least a modicum of exposure to the thoughts of the ministers that claimed to be guiding them. As a result, it should be safe to assume that the anti-Catholic messages inherent to wartime British colonial sermons were not just indicators of the personal prejudices of their authors, but were political messages designed to appeal and shape the minds of as many worshippers and their families as possible.¹⁰

It was not long after a 21-year-old George Washington delivered Governor Robert Dinwiddie’s letter demanding that the French leave the Ohio territory to the *Canadien* Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre that British colonial ministers began expounding heavily on apocalyptic themes in their sermons. This was in line with a long tradition of political exegesis originating in Great Britain, whose ministers were wont to drawing parallels between Britain and Israel, France and Satan. To such minds, French success in any military engagement against Great Britain marked the end of British civilization, and with it the end of the Protestant struggle against Catholicism’s “superstition.” The bleak picture painted by Isaac Morrill, a minister of the Church of Christ in Wilmington, Massachusetts, in his

¹⁰ Shannon, *The Seven Years’ War in North America*, 46; E. Brooks Holifield, “Why Are Americans So Religious? The Limitations of Market Explanations,” in Stievermann et al., eds., *Religion and the Marketplace in the United States* (New York, 2015), 36.

1755 sermon to a company of Wilmington soldiers serves as an illuminating example of these kinds of apocalyptic fears:

Are we willing to be driven into the Sea, and drown'd? Are we willing to be bound to the Stake and burnt? This seems to appear from the best Intelligence we have of the Conduct of the French, that their Design is as soon as possible to change the Government of these Provinces; and if they change the Government of this Land, they will the Religion of it too. Are we willing to give up our civil Rights and Privileges, and become subjected to Tyranny and arbitrary Government? Are we willing to give up our Religion, the Religion of Jesus, which we now enjoy in it's [*sic*] Purity, and which should be more dear to us than our Lives? Are we willing to give up this for Ignorance, Error and Superstition? to resign our Bibles, and contentedly walk in the dark? In a Word, have we no Love to the dear Land of our Nativity; the Womb that bear us, the fruitful Land that has fed and nourished us? Can we calmly submit to give up this Land to usurping Powers, that our Fore-fathers purchased for us at the Price of their Blood? O! for God's sake, let us think of our Danger, and labour to prevent our Ruin. Let us determine to defend our Country, though it be at the Price of our Blood. Let there not be an unwilling Mind, or a faint Heart in any Son of New-England.

Not to be outdone by Morrill, Davies echoed many similar sentiments in his Virginia address, given just a few months after Morrill had delivered his warning to the New England company, justifying armed conflict against France as a means:

To protect your Brethren from the most bloody Barbarities - to defend the Territories of the best of Kings against the Oppression and Tyranny of arbitrary Power, to secure the inestimable Blessings of Liberty, British Liberty, from the Chains of French Slavery - to preserve your Estates, for which you have sweat and toiled, from falling Prey to greedy Vultures, Indians, Priests, Friers [*sic*], and hungry Gallic Slaves, or not-more-devouring Flames - to guard your Religion, the pure Religion of Jesus, streaming uncorrupted from the sacred Fountain of the Scriptures; the most excellent, rational and divine Religion that ever was made known to the Sons of Men; to guard such a dear precious Religion (my Heart grows warm while I mention it) against Ignorance, Superstition, Idolatry, Tyranny over Conscience, Massacre, Fire and Sword, and all the Mischiefs, beyond Expressions, with which Popery is pregnant - to keep from the cruel Hands of Barbarians and Papists, your Wives, your Children, your Parents, your Friends - to secure the Liberties conveyed to

you by your brave Fore-Fathers, and bought with their Blood, that you may transmit them uncurtailed your Posterity.

These two passages alone convey many of the most important characteristics of Protestant apocalyptic language: the identification of fire as a tool of Catholic persecution; the idealization of Protestantism as the last guarantor of liberty; the notion that contemporary Protestants were honor-bound to protect this liberty as it was fought for and handed down to them by their ancestors. Despite the New Testament's general injunction against violence, to these ministers, any conflict with Catholic France was religiously justified given the zero-sum nature of the consequences of French success.¹¹

Of the three characteristics previously outlined, the connection between Protestantism and liberty is one that warrants more detailed investigation, given its role in defining expressions of Protestant thought in the British colonies (and future American states). Nathan O. Hatch has concluded that it was in the 1740s and 1750s, as conflict between the British and French colonies increased in intensity, that "this idealization of British liberty, both civil and religious, came to maturity." Indeed, it was rare in this period to find a colonial sermon condemning the French that did not, most of the time in the same breath, hold British Protestantism as God's hand-chosen guardian of political liberty. For example, in a sermon given in June 1755 in "Christ-Church," Philadelphia, Anglican priest and first provost of the University of Pennsylvania William Smith decried the

¹¹ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 31; Isaac Morrill, *The Soldier Exhorted to Courage in the Service of His King and Country, from a Sense of God and Religion: In a Sermon Preach'd at Wilmington, April 3. 1755. To Capt. Phineas Osgood and His Company of Soldiers: Before Their Going Out into Publick Service* (Boston, 1755), 21; Davies, *Religion and Patriotism*, 13.

“doctrine of Non-resistance” against the French as “now sufficiently exploded,” as “God gave us Freedom as our Birth-right; and in his own government of the world he never violates that Freedom, nor can those be his Vicegerents who do.” In Smith’s view, preserving the liberty of the British colonists was a religious duty, and to ignore such a duty was nothing short of outright blasphemy.¹²

Speaking in Philadelphia almost a year later to another company of volunteers, Gilbert Tennent, a Presbyterian minister and leader in the “Great Awakening” religious movement of the previous few decades, offered similar sentiments. Specifically, he argued to his “Brethren” that:

...we are born not meerly [*sic*] for ourselves, but the Publick God! which, as Members of Society we are obliged (*pro virili*) to promote! Life without Liberty, Life under the sordid Shackles of Idolatry, Superstition and Tyranny, is worse, infinitely worse, than Death! happy therefore, and blessed is the Man, who rewardeth our Pagan and Papal enemies, as they have served us!

It is worth noting here that underlying both Tennent and Smith’s strong language regarding the urgency and religious necessity of combatting the French Catholic menace was a fierce rebuke of Pennsylvania’s Quakers, a religious group that both Tennent and Smith hoped to see removed from political power, not least because of their espousal of nonviolence in the midst of an ostensibly religious war. Even so, these assertions are important, because they demonstrated a turn

¹² Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America,” 427; William Smith, “An Earnest Exhortation to Religion, Brotherly-love and Public-spirit, in the Present Dangerous State of Affairs. Preached in Christ-Church, Philadelphia, June 24, 1755,” in *Discourses on Several Public Occasions During the War in America. Preached Chiefly with a View to the Explaining the Importance of the Protestant Cause, in the British Colonies; and the Advancement of Religion, Patriotism, and Military Virtue. Among Which are a Discourse on Adversity; and Also a Discourse on Planting the Sciences, and the Propagation of Christianity, in the untutored Parts of the Earth. With an Appendix, Containing Some Other Pieces* (London, 1759), 49.

in apocalyptic thought from the manner in which it had been articulated during the era of the Great Awakening. No longer was the Antichrist just religious heresy, and the Millennium the age of newfound religious piety; rather, the Antichrist was tyranny, as embodied by Catholicism, and the Millennium the age of unconstrained political and religious liberty, as defended by British Protestantism.¹³

Despite their confidence in their religion's political mandate, British colonial ministers also demonstrated through their sermons a strong deference to Providence's role in guiding human affairs – even if it meant accepting defeat in the war's earliest stages. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these ministers never assumed that French success was ever a sign of Catholic righteousness; rather, the early losses at the Battle of Fort Bull, the Battle of Fort Oswego, and the Battle of Fort Henry were divine punishments handed down as a result of waning Protestant religious zeal. As British colonial forces were left reeling in the aftermath of the slaughter at Fort Bull, William Smith blamed the British loss on the fact that British colonials had “neglected the exercise of their holy Protestant Religion, trusting to the lying vanities of this life.... In the midst of light, they have chosen darkness.” Even before this succession of disastrous fort battles, ministers were calling on increased religious piety (some as early as 1755) as an indispensable weapon in securing the blessings of Providence. For example, in

¹³ Gilbert Tennent, *The Happiness of Rewarding the Enemies of our Religion and Liberty, Represented in a Sermon Preached in Philadelphia, Feb. 17, 1756. To Captain Vanderspigel's Independent Company of Volunteers, at the Request of their Officers* (Philadelphia, 1756), 21; Nicole Eustace, “Vehement Movements: Debates on Emotion, Self, and Society during the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania,” *Explorations in Early American Culture*, Vol. 5 (2001), 99.

his 1756 Philadelphia sermon, Gilbert Tennent blamed the success of French and Native American war parties in ravaging the undefended frontier homesteads of Pennsylvania on the fact that “the Province in general remain’d in a State of Indolence, and deep Security, without any suitable religious Improvement...to protect the back Inhabitants, who were left defenceless, and expos’d as an easy Prey to a bloody Enemy, as Sheep for the Slaughter!” Once again, it is worth noting that this was likely a particular indictment of the Society of Friends, whose pacifist elements had produced an epistle declaring their commitment to nonviolence in the face of war in 1755, and by 1756 had been ignoring public fasts and other occasions for prayer mandated by Pennsylvania’s governor for the sake of improving British fortunes. To Tennent, the destruction and carnage in Pennsylvania, however horrible, was a just punishment for such religious “laxity,” and a wake-up call for all Protestant colonials to renew their religious commitments with vigor.¹⁴

The fatalistic and punishment-driven language found in sermons produced during the war’s early stages changed dramatically following the fall of Quebec in late 1759. Especially in New England, a territory that had always keenly felt the French threat and remained the heartland of some of the most vocal and evangelical denominations of colonial Protestantism, “sermons had probably outnumbered bonfires” as part of the victory celebrations. Providence’s role again

¹⁴ Smith, “An Earnest Exhortation to Religion,” 79; Tennent, *The Happiness of Rewarding the Enemies*, 19. It is interesting to note that Tennent also used this sermon to shame soldiers that he believed were not preparing for the conflict seriously enough, and were using their position for less noble reasons, such as for social advancement and advantageous marriages: “And therefore, whether it becomes the Gentlemen of the Sword, the Glory of whole military Character will be more advanced by leading on their Troops with Skill and Courage to charge the Enemy, than by leading a Lady in a Dance!” See *Ibid.*, 23.

took center stage in many of these sermons, albeit this time with a different tone: God had been pleased with the atonement provided for previous instances of religious failing, and finally deigned to bless the British colonies with the permanent destruction of the Catholic threat. Now that British victory was imminent, British colonial preachers felt free to weave richer and more imaginative comparisons between the current military situation and the apocalyptic visions found in the Book of Revelations – a connection they employed frequently and with gusto.¹⁵

Of the ministers writing in the post-Quebec glow, none quite rivaled the explicitness of this connection in their sermons than Jonathan Mayhew, a Congregational minister at the Old West Church in Boston. Mayhew encouraged his listeners to view the defeat of French forces in Quebec as analogous to the defeat of the Whore of Babylon, the malevolent figure generally identified as the “mother of abominations” in Revelations. In his estimation, this defeat not only provided an opportunity to eject Catholicism from North America (thereby saving the souls of an untold number of converted Native Americans), but the chance to bring the light of Protestantism to other European nations chained to the yoke of “popery,” such as Spain and Portugal. Incorporating the figure of Providence, Mayhew made a point of stressing that Protestant military success could only be attributed to the force of God’s divine will, as part of a greater plan to destroy Catholicism internationally:

It cannot, however, be denied, that the changes thus introduced in religion [by warfare], are sometimes for the better, as well as often for the

¹⁵ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, 2001), 374.

worse. As, for instance, since the time of Oliver Cromwell, at least of William III, the roman catholic religion has, I suppose, been gradually losing, and the protestant gaining ground in Ireland: And this, without persecution, inquisitions and racks; which are abhorrent from the principles of the latter, tho' very consonant to the spirit and temper of too many of its professors. Now, if this be indeed God's world, and in any proper sense under his inspection and government, it is impossible but that he must, in some way or other, order and determine these events of war, by which almost all other things are, in effect, determined; both in the religious and civil state of nations. If we should suppose that success and victory are not owing to the influence and operation, or the providential government of God, we should take a great and most material part of his work out of his hands; leaving him, I had almost said, but very little to do in the administration of this world.

Were French colonial clergyman like Pontbriand to read a sermon like Mayhew's, they would probably be horrified to see their worst suspicions confirmed: the employment of warfare by their Protestant enemies as a means to impose their heresies on the lands that they conquered.¹⁶

The fall of Quebec was a crucial turning point in the Seven Years' War, and in the eyes of colonial Protestants, the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism in North America. British Protestants had faced the forces of darkness in this apocalyptic contest and prevailed, demonstrating that theirs was the religion chosen by God to shape their continent's religious landscape. As Hatch has noted, this development was one of the most important in a long sequence of events originating in Europe that pointed towards Protestantism's ascendancy, including "such acts of divine intervention as the Reformation, the defeat of the Armada, the overthrow of the Stuarts, the founding of New England, and the accession of the Hanoverians." The fact that the longstanding fight

¹⁶ Jonathan Mayhew, *Two Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760. Being the Day Appointed to be Observed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving for the Success of His Majesty's Arms, More Especially in the Intire Reduction of Canada* (Boston, 1760), 13.

against French Catholicism had reached its height on American soil also served to support notions of the British colonies' important and "exceptional" role in global history, and their continued designation as societies under the special protection and guidance of holy Providence.¹⁷

Section 2: French Colonial Clergymen and the North American Counter-Reformation

Describing the state of Catholicism in French Canada in the aftermath of Quebec's fall, Guy Frégault asserted that "The Canadians remained Catholics. Conquest and defeat did not drive them to apostasy. The religion of a people exerts a profound influence on their civilization." More recently, Jacques Mathieu and Sophie Imbeault's work on the Seven Years' War in French Canada described "la Nouvelle-France" as a region where "the Catholic religion framed all of life's actions," and where Catholic burial practices, the administration of the sacraments, and the conflation of political events with intense religious meaning dominated French colonial life. Indeed, despite the small size of their population in comparison to their British counterparts, it is clear that Catholicism was an essential component of French Canadian culture and society – a role that was only highlighted. Commentary by contemporary observers often supported this fact, such as that of Robert Eastburn, a Presbyterian deacon from Philadelphia who was briefly held as a captive of a combined French and Native American raiding party in 1756. Following the fall of Fort Oswego to French forces in August 1756, Eastburn noted that:

¹⁷ Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 42.

Prayers were put up in all the Churches of Canada, and great Processions made, in order to procure Success to their Arms, against poor Oswego...[when] the dismal News came, that the French had taken one of the Oswego Forts...great Joy appeared in all their [his French captors'] Faces, which they expressed by loud Shouts, firing of Cannon, and returning Thanks in their Churches.

To French Canadians, religious appeals were as important as military preparations for securing success against their enemies in North America.¹⁸

As a religion whose entire administrative structure rested on deference to a hierarchical priesthood, Catholicism lent French colonial clergymen a considerable degree of political power. French colonial clergymen were “at the same time lords, priests, missionaries, and educators,” and “they enjoyed considerable temporal and spiritual power” in French Canada. However, unlike their Protestant counterparts, individual French priests were typically only disseminators of religious and political messages. It was colonial bishops that crafted the religious instructions and talking points that they expected their priests to transmit to their congregations, often after conferring with the French government and their religious superiors in Paris and Rome.¹⁹

As the bishop of Quebec, the largest and most important diocese in French Canada, the “métropole”-born Pontbriand wielded considerable religious

¹⁸ Guy Frégault, “La guerre de Sept ans et la civilisation canadienne,” *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (September 1953), 206; Jacques Mathieu and Sophie Imbeault, *La Guerre des Canadiens, 1756-1763* (Québec, 2013), 40; Robert Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative of the Many Dangers and Sufferings, as well as Wonderful and Surprising Deliverances of Robert Eastburn, During his Late Captivity Among the Indians: Together with Some Remarks upon the Country of Canada, and the Religion and Policy of its Inhabitants; the Whole Intermixed with Devout Reflections* (Philadelphia, 1758), 23. It is also interesting to note that in this same passage, Eastburn compared British religious zeal unfavorably to that of the French, citing a lack of “earnest Application (both in private and public)...to the God of Battle” as a reason for British failures during the war’s early stages.

¹⁹ Simon Décary, “Le Roi, L’Eglise et la Guerre: La Prédiction à Montréal au Moment de la Conquête (1750-1766)” (MA thesis, Université de Montréal, 2008) 1, 20.

influence. Pontbriand made a reputation for himself as both an able administrator and dedicated pastor, making personal visits to many of the parishes and religious communities in the colony to personally evaluate and care for their spiritual wellbeing as Catholics. One of these visits resulted either in the detection or at least suspicion of unwanted Protestant immigrants, a discovery that led Pontbriand to chastise the colonial government as “the spiritual welfare of my diocese requires that [no Protestants] should be accepted....I even believe I can add that the good of the state is consistent with this view.” This comment in particular reflected an important, albeit recent conflation between French national identity and Catholicism. Unlike the longstanding connection between “Britishness” and Protestantism, by the early eighteenth century French nationalism was treated rather separately from Catholicism, particularly given Catholicism’s principle as a “universal” religion that was theoretically not restricted to any particular nation or geographic area. Nevertheless, the Seven Years’ War encouraged what David A. Bell has called as “something of a ‘medievalist’ revival,” and the protection of French interests were tied more intrinsically to the protection of Catholicism. As a result, it is not surprising that when the Seven Years’ War arrived to Pontbriand’s doorstep, he was quick to frame it as a fight to preserve both Catholicism in the New World and the security of the French monarchy.²⁰

²⁰ Jean-Guy Lavallée, “Dubreil de Pontbriand, Henri-Marie,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 - , accessed December 10, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dubreil_de_pontbriand_henri_m; David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, M.A., 2001), 44-47.

Like their Protestant counterparts, the French colonial clergy viewed the Seven Years' War as an inherently apocalyptic struggle. Using language that evoked the starkness of authors like Morrill, Davies, and Tennent, the leaders of the French colonial clergy viewed the conflict as a fight between "the people of God and the forces of evil." More specifically, French reactions to the war demonstrate that not only were French colonials terrified of the possibilities that British success posed for the survival of Catholicism in North America, they viewed the war as an opportunity to roll back some of Protestantism's gains over the past century – a sort of "Counter-Reformation," but on new soil. An important tool for pursuing this "Counter-Reformation" was conversion. This was a practice particularly associated with Catholic orders such as the Jesuits and the Sulpicians, who operated missions amongst Native American communities in French Canada, particularly in the St. Lawrence Valley. In a commentary that demonstrated the confluence of the various fears and war aims articulated by French colonial Catholics, Antoine Déat, a priest from the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Montreal, wrote in 1753:

From the moment that the standard of the cross was displayed in Canada and that a new people [Native Americans] [became] the conquest of [Jesus Christ], the demon [Satan], jealous of God's glory and in despair of seeing the empire that he had over so many centuries in this vast continent over so many poor idolatrous savages end...the demon I say subsequently [had] the scheme to overturn these happy projects, and after...many attempts, he produced an impious, truth-deserting people....The Englishman became a deserter of the religion of his fathers and miserably delivered to the spirit of error that was the instrument that the demon helped himself to dethrone the true Solomon [Jesus Christ].

Just as British colonial ministers painted Catholicism as a tool of the Devil, so did French colonial clergymen view Protestantism as a force in the service of the

Prince of Darkness. Protestantism was a religion designed to undermine Catholic projects in the New World, and therefore Catholics were duty-bound by their religion to struggle against such an anti-Christian power – a discourse that echoed similar instructions from British colonial ministers to their Protestant congregations.²¹

In addition to sharing their opponent's language regarding the arrival of Armageddon in North America, the French colonial clergy also demonstrated strong providentialist undercurrents in their wartime discourse. To perhaps an even greater extent than his British counterparts, the pastoral letters produced by Pontbriand over the course of the war stressed the fact that the war against the British could not be won without God's aid, and that God's will directed all of the war's developments. As a result, news of success was typically met not just with secular festivities, but with "solemn masses, processions, *Te Deum* [a formal prayer of thanksgiving to God]...enthusiastic sermons, bell ringing, enemy flags hung in the cathedral," and so forth. Defeat, on the other hand, was a sign of God's anger with French Catholic impiety, and the need for French colonial Catholics to redouble their expressions of religious devotion. Pontbriand clearly expressed this sentiment in a pastoral letter published on July 12, 1755 ordering "Public Prayers for the Temporal and Spiritual Needs of the Colony." Pontbriand argued that "signs of [God's] wrath," manifested primarily through British military incursions in French territory, were often sent in order to inspire higher levels of religious ardor amongst French Catholics – zeal that was often impossible to

²¹ Décarry, "Le Roi, L'Eglise et la Guerre," 20.

inspire through the dispensation of blessings alone. This emphasis on suffering as a means to become closer to God was a theme that, although shared by some strains of Protestantism, represented a truly Catholic worldview, which stressed the inherent sinfulness of human nature and the material world.²²

Nothing demonstrated both the consequences of living in a fallen world and the fundamental evil of British Protestantism more than the Acadian Crisis of 1755. Known as the “grand derangement” to much of the Francophone world – a term meaning “upheaval,” “disorder,” or more generally “trouble” – the forced removal of thousands of French colonists from the region of Nova Scotia known as Acadia stunned, shocked, and infuriated their fellow French colonists in the rest of Canada. Although Acadia had once been a French colony, it fell under British control in 1710 during the course of Queen Anne’s War. In order to save their religious rights and possessions, the resident Acadians promised to remain neutral in any future Anglo-French conflicts; however, this did not prevent the British from suspecting Acadian loyalties as conflict between the French and British intensified in the 1740s and 1750s. This paranoia was particularly fueled by the fact that the French government had been encouraging Acadian migrations to the banks of the Missaguash River, a move that the British interpreted as the first step to encouraging French incursions into British territory.²³

²² Ibid., 11; Pontbriand, “Mandement Ordonnant des Prieres Publiques pour les Besoins Temporels et Spirituels de la Colonie,” in *Mandements*, 103.

²³ Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (New York, 2012), 4; Shannon, *The Seven Years’ War in North America*, 14; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 20.

By 1745, Jean-Paul Mascarene, the acting governor of Nova Scotia and the son of a French Huguenot family that had been expelled from France following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, advised the British government to remove the Acadians from his province and “replace” them with “good Protestant subjects.” Ten years later, this advice was fully acted upon, as “a combined force of British regulars and Massachusetts volunteers stormed through the Bay of Fundy’s settlements, executing orders to capture and deport every last Acadian they could lay hands on.” In a display of defiance steeped in Catholicism, the day that the residents of Louisbourg, one of the most important and populous French Acadian settlements, spotted a British military fleet approaching their town, they responded by calmly carrying out the usual processions and religious festivities associated with the Catholic *fête-Dieu* (feast of Corpus Christi). This was coupled with “marrying all the girls of the place to the first that would have them for fear that they should fall into the hands of heretics.”²⁴

To French colonial clergymen like Pontbriand, the horrific events in Acadia portended the potential disaster that could face the rest of North America’s Catholic inhabitants should the British succeed in the Seven Years’ War. In a pastoral letter that he published on February 15, 1756, Pontbriand lamented the fate of the Acadians, recounting how they had been disarmed and called under false pretenses by their British rulers to various forts in Nova Scotia, where they were imprisoned and transported to “strange and faraway lands.” In particular, Pontbriand highlighted the suffering experienced by Acadian women and

²⁴ Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 38, 4; A.J.B. Johnston, *Life and Religion at Louisbourg, 1713-1758* (Montreal, 1996), 64, 109-110.

children, whom he described as having “withdrawn...into the woods, exposed to the injury of the weather, and to gruesome developments...without help and without aid, evils that they preferred to the danger of losing their faith.” In referencing these individuals’ fate (who were also lauded for their willingness to suffer for the sake of their religion), Pontbriand also subtly established a foundation for the righteousness of the French cause against the British, in line with Catholic teachings on just war theory. In engaging with the British militarily, the French colonists were carrying out a defensive war to protect their lives, families, and the purity of their Catholic faith.²⁵

It was particularly the defense of Catholicism that Pontbriand naturally highlighted as the most important of these “just” causes. Warning his readers that the Acadian dispersion demonstrated that Great Britain could not be trusted to keep any promises that it might make to a conquered population – such as neutrality against France and the protection of the Catholic religion – Pontbriand emphasized the urgency of recruiting adequate forces to fight the British threat. Lacking a strong defense, French colonists could expect to have “the pain of seeing introduced in this diocese, where the Faith has always been so pure, the detestable errors of Luther and of Calvin. You will then fight in this year, not only for your property, but also to preserve these vast lands [French Canada] from heresy and the monsters of sin that that it gives birth to at every moment.” As a result, the French colonists had a religious duty as Catholics to support the war effort, whether it be through volunteering for military service, or through taking on

²⁵ Pontbriand, “Mandement pour des Prières Publiques – Dispersion des Acadiens,” in *Mandements*, 106.

additional agricultural/manufacturing/domestic tasks at home, thereby allowing other members of the family to join the military. This latter instruction was implicitly directed towards women, children, and those too old or infirm to fight, and explicitly directed towards priests, who were given permission to spend Sundays and holidays helping to reap harvests and fulfill other tasks that would otherwise depend on now-absent husbands and sons. To Pontbriand, “nothing could conform more with charity, gratitude, and justice; nothing could be more necessary for the wellbeing of the colony” than supporting the war effort against the British in any of the various fashions he had outlined. Conversely, nothing could be more sinful than to be a “useless member, an indifferent patriot, a bad neighbor,” willing to apathetically stand by as those “most cruel enemies of [the] adorable Sacrament [the Eucharist]” brought their heretical tyranny to the French colonies.²⁶

French military successes between 1756 and 1757 seemed to demonstrate that God was on Catholicism’s side, at least to those who adhered to Pontbriand’s line of Catholic providential thinking. In a pastoral letter issued in August 1756, Pontbriand applauded the French colonists in his diocese, attributing the fall of Fort Bull, the “desolation” wrought in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and the limited number of French casualties to a surge in Catholic piety:

More than ever before have our churches been frequented...the people have acted with a saintly ardor; the military corps has given the example through a [spiritual] retreat and a public procession; the Clergy has [increased their presence in public life] and many times offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to gain the blessings of Heaven; in a word the

²⁶ Ibid., 107.

whole diocese, full of confidence in the Majestic [St.] Mary and in the Patron Saints whose holy relics we have exposed, has not stopped for a single day to redouble their [holy] vows and prayers. May it be consoling for you and for us, our Most Dear Brothers, to have the occasion of attributing today to your piety and your religion the success that we have had up till the present!

Moreover, Pontbriand credited God with ordering other political events in French favor, such as “the neutrality of the five Iroquois nations, and the cooperation of all the others [Native American tribes in Canada]” this being additionally the product of “negotiations undertaken with prudence, arranged with art, executed with success, even though they dealt with savage, shady, and fickle peoples.” So long as the French colonists maintained their religious zeal, they could expect to see a continuation of “humiliating” British defeats, “so glorious to our army, so useful for commerce, so advantageous for the colony, and I dare to say, so favorable to Religion.”²⁷

This optimistic providentialism continued to characterize Pontbriand’s pastoral letters through the taking of Forts George and William Henry, and the decisive Battle of Carillon in 1758; however, this optimism promptly faded following the siege and fall of Quebec in late 1759. Not only did change in the tides of war prove to Pontbriand that the French colonists had lost divine favor, his fears of the apocalyptic destruction of French Canada were realized as the British unleashed destruction “unprecedented in North American military campaigns.” In a letter written to his superiors in France asking for material and spiritual support, Pontbriand detailed the horrors and violence endured by

²⁷ Pontbriand, “Mandement Pour Faire Chanter Dans Toutes Les Paroisses un Te Deum en Action de Graces des Succès des Armes du Roi Arrivés Depuis L’Ouverture de la Campagne,” in *Mandements*, 111-112.

Quebec's inhabitants. In particular, he described the loss of 180 houses to "fire-pots" (incendiary bombs), while "riddl[ing] by shot and shell" rendered other structures practically useless, in addition to the destruction of four farms and three mills that provided Quebec with necessary foodstuffs and income. Most distressing was the destruction of Quebec's Cathedral, along with almost all the churches in the surrounding area. Pontbriand wrote with particular sorrow about the ransacking of the Franciscan mission to the Abenakis by "a party of English and Indians, who have stolen all the vestments and sacred vessels, have thrown the consecrated Hosts on the ground, have killed some thirty persons, more than 20 of whom were women and children." The renewed alliance between British Protestants and Native Americans in particular seemed to seal the pessimistic fate of Catholicism in North America. Apostasy reigned victor, and all that the French colonists could do was wait until their churches and homes were as sullied as the Hosts that had been crushed in the ground of the Abenaki mission by English heels.²⁸

Section 3: Native Americans – Pious Allies, or Barbaric Neophytes?

Native Americans played an essential role in the religious discourse produced by British colonial ministers and French colonial clergymen during the Seven Years' War. While the war provided the impetus for Native Americans to engage in a "Great Awakening" of their own based on their traditional religions – one that would contribute to Pontiac's War against the British in 1763 – this was little discussed by the British or the French, and will not be the subject of this

²⁸ "The Bishop of Quebec Describes the Suffering of the City," in Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, 147, 149.

section. Rather, this section investigates how British and French religious authors used Native Americans as vectors upon which to map out their goals and fears regarding the advancement of their respective religions in North America.²⁹

Possibilities of a Franco-Native alliance cemented by the bond of religion generally terrified British colonials, who were concerned that the two groups' natural adherence to "superstition" and emphasis on the use of rituals in worship facilitated Native conversion to Catholicism. Beyond detailing the general suffering that he endured at the hands of his French and Native captors, Robert Eastburn's captivity narrative served as a polemic against what he believed to be the consequence of weak Protestant proselytization. Observing the destruction of Fort Bull, Eastburn noted how four hundred French and three hundred Native soldiers "fell on their Knees, and returned Thanks for their Victory" to the Catholic God, "an Example which may make prophane pretended Protestants blush...who instead of acknowledging a God, or Providence, in their military Undertakings are continually reproaching him with Oaths and Curses; is it any Wonder, that the Attempts of such are blasted with Disappointment." Indeed, Eastburn blamed British losses squarely on his belief that the French were succeeding in the contest for God's favor, exclaiming:

I MAY, with Justice and Truth observe, That our enemies leave no Stone unturned to pass our ruin; they pray, work, and travel to bring it about, and are unwearied in the Pursuit, while many among us sleep in a Storm, that has laid a good Part of our Country desolate and threatens the While with Destruction: O that we may be of good Courage and play the Man, for our People, and the Cities of our God!³⁰

²⁹ Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York, 2012), 11.

³⁰ Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative*, 7, 10. Amusingly enough, Eastburn was not just impressed by expressions of French colonial piety, as he noted in his description of how the French and Native

According to Eastburn, a combination of Catholic missionary zeal and the natural idolatry of Native religious practice was what had brought the French and their Native allies closer together over the past few decades. During his brief stay at Conasadauga, a town near the St. Lawrence River, Eastburn described how Conasadauga maintained a collection of buildings that housed paintings of “the Sufferings of our Saviour” (likely a reference to the Stations of the Cross), “with Design to draw the Indians to the Papist’s Religion.” Eastburn was also impressed with the number of processions and rituals that his Native captors forced him to witness that related to the Mass or other Catholic demonstrations of faith, connecting them with the apparent Native preference for religious spectacles. Cadwallader Colden, a noted New York physician, echoed these observations in the 1755 edition of his *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*. In it, he recounted a British officer’s description of the care with which a pair of Native American parents burned the body of their dead son upon a funeral pyre, waiting until the body had been reduced to ashes before “with many Tears, put[ting] them into a Box, and carr[y]ing] them away with them.” Colden concluded that it was thanks to “this Inclination, which all ignorant People have to Superstition and amusing Ceremonies, [which] gives the Popish Priests a great

soldiers handled their wounded in the aftermath of the attack: “The French carried several of their wounded Men all the Way upon their Backs; many of them wore no Breeches in their Travels in this cold Season, being strong, hardy Men. The Indians had three of their Party wounded, which they likewise carried on their Backs, I wish there was more of this Hardness, so necessary for War, in our Nation, which would open a more encouraging Scene than appears present!” see *Ibid.*, 9.

Advantage in recommending their Religion, beyond what the Regularity of the Protestant Doctrine allows.”³¹

Both Colden and Eastburn blamed Protestantism’s emphasis on “reason” as an important factor in its supposed lack of appeal to Native Americans – a virtue that ultimately served as a weakness when considering the political ramifications of Native American conversions to Catholicism. Whereas Pontbriand had thanked God alone for the “neutrality” of the Five Iroquois Nations in the Seven Years’ War, Colden placed the blame squarely on the machinations of French Catholic missionaries:

[The French] sent some of their wisest Priests and Jesuits to reside among [the Iroquois], and the Governors of New-York were ordered, by the Duke of York, to give these Priests all the Encouragement in their Power. The chief View of these Priests was, to give the Indians the highest Opinion of the French Power and Wisdom, and to render the English as suspected and as mean as possible in their Eyes. They waited likewise for every Opportunity to breed a Quarrel between the English and the Indians, and to withdraw the Five Nations from fighting with those Nations that traded to Canada. For these Purposes these Priests were instrumental in turning the Resentment of the Five Nations against the Indians, that were in Friendship with Virginia and Maryland.

For Colden, Catholicism was not just a religion, but a political tool, and its priests were not just religious leaders, but highly skilled and dangerous political actors.

Eastburn’s captivity narrative confirmed this perception, particularly through the

³¹ Ibid., 16; Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 19-20; Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, which are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America, and are the Barrier Between the English and French in that Part of the World. With Particular Accounts of Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, and Forms of Government; Their Several Battles and Treaties with the European Nations; their Wars with the Other Indians; and a True Account of the Present State of Our Trade with Them. In Which Are Shewn, the Great Advantage of their Trade and Alliance to the British Nation, and the Intrigues and Attempts of the French to Engage Them from Us, and Highly Meriting the Attention of the British Nation at this Juncture. To Which Are Added, Accounts of the Several Other Nations of Indians in North-America, Their Numbers, Strength, &c. and the Treaties Which Have Been Lately Made with Them.* (London, 1755), I:17-18.

way in which he described the role that French Catholic priests played in military affairs. Writing about the scenes that he witnessed once his raiding party had arrived in Montreal, Eastburn pointed out specifically how General Montcalm had “a number of Officers to attend him in Council, where a noted Priest, called Picket, sat at his Right-Hand, who understands the Indian Tongue well, and does more Hurt to the English than any other of his Order in Canada.” In keeping with the apocalyptic vision maintained by many British colonial ministers, Catholicism and its agents were a force to be feared precisely because of how the French were using religion as a means to secure Native American cooperation in political and military affairs.³²

Although British Protestants were quick to paint the French and Native Americans as natural allies, and Catholic conversion efforts as overwhelmingly successful, the reality from the French perspective was far more complex. It is true that thanks to the strictly hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church and its longstanding tradition of proselytization in foreign lands, Catholic orders were generally more organized and successful in establishing missions amongst Native Americans than their Protestant counterparts. For example, in 1694 there was both a French Jesuit and a Protestant minister attending to the “spiritual needs” of the Abenakis of Narantsouak (present-day Maine), with the Jesuit (Sébastien Rale) eventually winning the Abenakis to Catholic conversion. However, while these missions had been considered a crucial component of both French *and* papal religious ambitions in the New World during the early

³² Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*, 37; Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative*, 19.

seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century the energy directed by the various Catholic orders toward Native conversions in New France had substantially dwindled. Furthermore, as many historians and anthropologists of Native Americans have pointed out, the “success” of these conversion efforts remained highly debatable. Carla Pestana has argued that “native tradition may have been especially syncretic, peculiarly open to and able to absorb new influences and ideas” – an assertion that also implies a high level of fluidity when it came to adhering perfectly to the strictures of Christian conversion. The eighteenth-century decline in missionary work was very much associated with the realization that many colonial Church leaders - such as Francis-Xavier de Montmorency-Laval, the first Catholic bishop of Quebec appointed in 1658 - had regarding the dubious nature of their work’s “success.” As a result, those priests that continued to man missions during the eighteenth century had a strong understanding that Native conversions required a significant degree of time and work – efforts that could easily be undermined through major political disruptions such as war.³³

Even if British colonials had heard of the difficulties regarding Native conversions to Catholicism, it is likely that they would have barely registered

³³ Patrick Houde, “Le massacre de la mission de Saint-François: mécanismes de domination et allégeance des Abénaquis à l’autorité coloniale britannique (1754-1814)” (MA thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 2012), 54; Luca Codignola, “The Holy See and the Conversion of the Indians in French and British North America, 1486-1760,” in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 204-208; Nick Griffiths, “Review: *The Spice of Popery: Converging Christianities on an Early American Frontier*, by Laura M. Chmielewski, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*, by Linford D. Fisher, and *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America*, by Tracy Neal Leavelle,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 71, No. 2 (April 2014), 281-286; Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 210; Codignola, “The Holy See,” 209-211.

them. Instead, it is more likely that Protestant ministers such as Eastburn would have focused intensely on descriptions of Native displays of Catholic piety, such as that found in a letter from Father Pierre-Joseph-Antoine Roubaud. In 1756 Roubaud, who was born in France and had spent much of his Jesuit novitiate teaching in Jesuit colleges in Europe, was assigned by his order to the Abenaki mission at Saint-François-de-Sales (modern-day Odanak). During the summer of that year he accompanied the Abenaki as they joined French forces to conduct military expeditions against the British, during which time he observed the following scene:

We embarked after having put our journey under the special protection of the Lord by a Mass, chanted solemnly, and with more precision and devotion than you could imagine; the Savages always outdo themselves at this spectacle of Religion. The tediousness of the way was alleviated by the privilege that I had every day of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass, — sometimes on an island, sometimes on the bank of a river, but always in a spot sufficiently open to favor the devotion of our little army. It was no slight consolation to the Ministers of the Lord to hear his praises sung in as many different tongues as there were Tribes assembled. Every day each Tribe would choose a suitable place, where it encamped by itself. Religious services were held as regularly as in their Villages; so that the satisfaction of the Missionaries would have been complete if all the days of this campaign had been as innocent as were the days of our journey.

Roubaud noted that his Native charges were especially diligent in keeping daily Mass, in addition to the other devotional rituals common to Catholic practice – sometimes even besting French Catholics in their “earnestness.” These were tendencies that would not have surprised British Protestants, and perhaps even subtly pointed to an aspect of Catholicism that made it more amenable to Native

Americans, given the important role that ritual *did* play in various tribes' religious practices.³⁴

What would have been even more terrifying to the hypothetical Protestant reader was the fact that Father Roubaud and the Abenakis were on their way to join French forces for the siege of Fort William Henry – an assault that resulted in the war's infamous Native-led “massacre” of English soldiers. Following the fort's surrender in August 1757, the victorious French army under General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm attempted to take a large body of English prisoners back to the British Fort Edward as agreed upon in the terms of surrender. However, this decision ran contrary to the expectations of various Native American warriors, who wanted to seize the prisoners for themselves in order to claim a combination of scalps and captives to take with them when they returned to their respective villages. When the French seemed unwilling to hand over their prisoners, Roubaud recounted how a few Native fighters began to seize and slaughter the English prisoners one-by-one as they began their march to Fort Edward. What began as the work of “only a few Savages” quickly “was the signal which made nearly all of them so many ferocious beasts.” Although Roubaud was thankful that few of his Abenaki neophytes chose to jump into the fray, he shared the horror that he felt as he witnessed the sanguinary scene. This was a horror shared by General Montcalm and his officers, who did their best to save the English prisoners from their attackers. To Roubaud, the massacre was proof that

³⁴ Auguste Vachon, “Roubaud, Pierre-Joseph-Antoine,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol.4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed December 13, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/roubaud_pierre_joseph_antoine_; Roubaud, “Lettre du Père ***,” 100-109.

the rest of North America's native inhabitants were in dire need of conversion, for both the sake of their souls and their future relationship with French colonists.³⁵

While there is scant evidence to suggest that Native Americans themselves were moved by the religious fears and apocalyptic narrative espoused by French and British colonials, that did not prevent these colonials from fixating these concerns onto Native figures. To a Protestant deacon like Eastburn, the Seven Years' War in North America illustrated Catholicism's force as a political tool, given its apparent ability to cement alliances between the French and Native tribes. While French clergymen did not respond with fears that were as strong or developed, missionaries in particular worried that Protestant expansion in North America could undermine the already tenuous inroads Catholicism had made within Native communities. Although the reality of Native conversion was far more complicated than perceived by men like Eastburn and Roubaud, their experiences demonstrate further the strength of the religious concerns exacerbated by the Seven Years' War.

Conclusion

The terms of the 1763 Treaty of Paris fell short of the apocalyptic predictions made by both British colonial ministers and French colonial clergymen at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Although Great Britain assumed control of the French colonies in North America, some of the most important stipulations of the peace treaty was that all French colonists would be

³⁵ Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (New York, 1990), 110-111; "A French View of the Fort William Henry Massacre," in Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, 129.

allowed to preserve ownership of their property, continue practicing the French language and French civil law, and most importantly, the worship of the Catholic faith. The last provision was guaranteed as early as in the 1759 Articles of Capitulation agreed upon between General George Townshend and Jean-Baptiste Nicolas Roch de Ramezay following the fall of Quebec. In its sixth article, the document explicitly promised:

That the exercise of the Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion shall be preserved, and that safe-guards shall be granted to the houses of the clergy, and to the monasteries, particularly to the Bishop of Quebec, who animated with zeal for religion, and charity for the people of his diocese [*sic*], desires to reside constantly in it, to exercise freely and with that decency which his character and the sacred mysteries of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion require, his episcopal authority in the town of Quebec, wherever he shall think it proper, until the possession of Canada shall have been decided by a treaty between their most Christian and Britannic majesties.

Far from serving as agents of the Devil, determined to introduce the “errors” of “Luther and Calvin” into the French colonies, the military officers and diplomats responsible for negotiating the terms of peace as the French defense evaporated proved to be reasonable and arguably benevolent conquerors. Moreover, “the Catholic Church weathered the storm quite nicely, quietly developing a working relationship with a succession of British governors and discovering, for the rest, the benefits of ecclesiastical independence beyond the reach of their Most Catholic Majesties of France.”³⁶

³⁶ Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, 24; ³⁶ T. Jeffreys, *The Natural and Civil History of the French Dominions in North and South America with an Historical detail of the Acquisitions and Conquests Made by British Arms in Those Parts. Giving a Particular Account of the Climate, Soil, Minerals, Animals, Vegetables, Manufactures, Trade, Commerce, and Languages. Together with the Religion, Government, Genius, Character, Manners, and Customs of the Indians and other Inhabitants. Illustrated by Maps and Plans of the Principle Places* (London, 1761), I: 136; Allen Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto, 1997), 117.

Had the Protestant ministers who issued sermons calling for the absolute destruction of Catholicism in North America at the beginning of the war been put in charge of these negotiations, there is no doubt that the Pontbriand's apocalyptic fears would have been realized. To these ministers, the Articles of Capitulation and Treaty of Paris undoubtedly came as a disappointment, and a sign that the British government was not taking its duty as the leader of the Protestant world seriously. While the Catholic threat had been significantly quarantined by the war's conclusion, it had not been obliterated, as men like Davies and Tennent had hoped. This difference in outcome betrayed one of the many important fissures that had developed between the branches of colonial and mainland English Protestantism by the middle of the eighteenth century. The aggression of what would eventually develop into a unique branch of American evangelicalism had found new life through the Seven Years' War in North America, and would contribute to the development of a unique American identity that would reach its fruition in the revolutionary age of the 1770s. In particular, the Quebec Act of 1774, which formally "reinstated the principles of the French legal system" in Canada, led British colonials to accuse the British government of conspiring with Catholic powers, and to paint the Act "as the most abominable violation of English law yet put forth by Parliament."³⁷

To the religious commentators of the Seven Years' War in North America, this conflict represented a critical point in the international struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. In many ways, it was the culmination of decades

³⁷ Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York, 2010), 67.

of religious struggle in Europe, manifested primarily through contests between France and Great Britain. To British colonial ministers, French Canada remained a bastion of Catholicism that threatened to overrun the Protestant sanctuary British colonials had carved out for themselves in the New World. French colonial clergymen, on the other hand, viewed their North American colony as an important check on the spread of Protestant “heresy,” and a land where they could practice Catholicism unobstructed. The role of Native Americans in this religious conflict differed in the perspective of both groups of European colonials, with Protestants viewing them as the natural allies of Catholic “superstition,” while French Catholics worried their conversion efforts could be upset if their colony was lost to the British. In the end, the war’s conclusion did not culminate in any of the apocalyptic outcomes envisioned by these religious commentators, although it did pave the way for an intensification of British colonial anti-Catholicism, contributing to the increase in tensions between colonials and the British metropole until the former’s rebellion in 1776.

“The English Establishment Is, Itself, Of a *Beastly Nature*”: Catholicizing Great Britain in Pro-War American Discourse During the War of 1812

Walking through the streets and squares of Boston in late 1812, it is possible that one would have been directly handed (if not already seen lining some gutter or lingering in an alleyway) an anonymous broadside titled *The Bulwarks of Religion*, published by broadside enthusiast Nathaniel Coverly. Using a line from Isaiah 26 as its subtitle (“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah – we have a strong city: Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks”), the rest of the broadside’s text focused on lambasting recent statements from Caleb Strong, Massachusetts’ governor and a prominent member of the Federalist Party. In a proclamation setting July 23 as a statewide fast day in response to the recent outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States, Governor Strong “pleaded for protection from an alliance with infidel France” and “begged pardon for the country’s many sins” – evidence of the antiwar sentiments inherent to his party that he topped off with an appeal to respect Great Britain as “the bulwark” of Protestantism. Little did he perhaps realize, as he drafted this pious proclamation in the summer of 1812, the extent to which that phrase alone would ignite a pro-war response dedicated to recasting Great Britain not as Protestantism’s “bulwark,” but as an adversary as corrupt and malevolent as the Roman Catholic Church itself.³⁸

³⁸ *The Bulwarks of Religion: [two Lines from Isaiah]: Much Is Said at This Day, of the Bulwark of Religion; Particularly in Massachusetts, Where Some Consider the English Government the Bulwark of Our Religion* ([Boston]: Printed by Nathaniel Coverly, 1812); William Gribbin, *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 20.

To say that the War of 1812 was a decidedly partisan affair that pitted pro-war Republicans against antiwar Federalists is to some extent a historiographical truism. Employing the recent slate of British impressments of “American” sailors (a sometimes controversial and dubious designation), in addition to claims that the British were inciting Native Americans to slaughter and scalping out west, as justification for a resort to arms, President James Madison gave his signature to the official declaration of war on June 18, 1812. The debates preceding this decision usually fell along regional lines, and as Gordon Wood has noted, “Congressmen who voted for war were overwhelmingly from the South and West, farthest removed from ocean traffic, least involved in shipping and least affected by the violations of maritime rights and the impressments that were the professed reasons for declaring war.” Conversely, antiwar congressmen typically hailed from New England, a region that stood to lose the most from any disruption of the valuable maritime commerce that an intimate economic relationship with Great Britain fostered.³⁹

Nevertheless, to chalk up the American debate over the War of 1812 to a mere contest of wills over economic concerns is to miss an essential ideological struggle undergirding the conflict. In many ways, the War of 1812 was a follow-up to the American Revolution, as a contest that proved to both Great Britain and the rest of the international community that the American democratic experiment

³⁹ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 137; Jeff Broadwater, *James Madison: A Son of Virginia and a Founder of the Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 161; Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 659.

was here to stay and had enough military muscle to back up its claims to independence and sovereignty. More importantly, however, the war also helped to bring an important national debate to the fore, one that was essential for helping Americans to shape their own sense of identity and separation from their former metropole. Timothy Bickham captures one side of this debate well by concluding that for pro-war ideologues, the War of 1812 served as an event that “would purge the United States of the last vestiges of toryism and Anglophilia” – elements that these individuals treated as insidious contagions threatening American civil and cultural institutions. Nevertheless, this proved to be a difficult endeavor, given the manner in which New England Federalists especially looked to Great Britain, in the wake of a decade marked by “Napoleonic tyranny and...democratic rumblings at their feet,” as “a rock of stability in a revolutionary world gone mad.” In order to combat what was perceived by many in the Northeast as a strong and beneficial link to the former motherland, pro-war writers hearkened back to a rhetorical device that had once served their Revolutionary antecedents: the recasting of Great Britain as Protestantism’s avowed, unrelenting, and practically Catholic enemy.⁴⁰

The practice of “Catholicizing” Great Britain during the War of 1812 owed its roots to pro-war discourse produced forty years earlier during the Revolutionary era. One of the additional historiographical truisms surrounding the War of 1812 involves the parallels that it shared with the Revolutionary War,

⁴⁰ Troy O. Bickham, *The Weight of Vengeance: The United States, the British Empire, and the War of 1812* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 668.

which encouraged its characterization by contemporaries and historians alike as a “second war for independence.” Part of the grievances that pro-war writers expounded during the War of 1812 included the insufferably cozy relationship that Great Britain seemed to maintain with the Roman Catholic Church, a complaint that was almost directly connected to similar critiques that pro-war writers produced in the 1770s. As James P. Byrd notes, many colonists viewed the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774 by the British Parliament sanctioning the protection of Catholicism in Canada as confirmation that Britain had “allied itself with the diabolical evil represented by the Catholic Church,” and furthermore that England “was in danger of a complete reversal, turning from combating Catholic tyranny in the Seven Years’ War to aligning with *Catholic* powers in the 1770s.” Henry S. Stout has provided further evidence of these fears in *The New England Soul*, concluding that “word that England had allowed Quebec to retain a Roman Catholic bishop revived apocalyptic fears of a papal army coming out of the North and fed early suspicions of a conspiracy by highly placed British officials to extinguish New England’s civil and religious liberties.” As a result, characterizations of Great Britain as the aid of an “antichristian” power certainly existed during the Revolutionary period, with the most radical pro-war authors borrowing language from the Bible’s Book of Revelation in order to portray the American struggle against Great Britain as the earthly manifestation of Christ’s struggle against the Antichrist. For example, Connecticut minister Samuel Sherwood described the American situation in 1776 in explicitly millenarian terms, arguing that “great numbers of angels, no doubt, are encamping round our

coast, for our defense and protection,” while “Michael [a mighty angel of God] stands ready; with all the artillery of heaven, to encounter the dragon [Great Britain], and to vanquish this black host.”⁴¹

Another important parallel between the Revolutionary period and the War of 1812 in terms of their religious discourses can be found in the groups that opposed this treatment of Great Britain as a Protestant apostate. As Melvin B. Endy, Jr. argues in his article on “Just War, Holy War, and Millennialism in Revolutionary America,” there were still important segments of the colonial population during the Revolutionary War that, despite being in favor of independence, were reluctant to renounce Great Britain’s role as Protestantism’s international defender. Specifically, Endy singles out “Congregational and Presbyterian ministers” as groups that were “unable to regard Protestant England as the agent of the traditionally Catholic Antichrist.” These denominations were largely the same groups that endured an onslaught of vitriolic condemnation by pro-war voices during the War of 1812, who lambasted them for their continued support of Great Britain as Protestantism’s bastion. Nevertheless, a difference of circumstances between these two periods can explain a marked deepening in the viciousness and specificity of pro-war assaults on Great Britain’s moral and religious character during the War of 1812 in comparison to the Revolutionary War. During the Revolutionary War, the U.S. entered a formal alliance with the explicitly Catholic France, a partnership that Endy has argued encouraged

⁴¹ Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 669; James P. Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38; Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 261; Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*, 1.

religious leaders to mute “whatever tendency there had been to make the struggle a cosmic one against a demonic enemy,” lest the U.S. itself receive charges of religious hypocrisy. As a result, although millenarian sentiments like the ones proclaimed by Reverend Sherwood certainly existed, they were not necessarily ubiquitous, and even Stout has conceded that “the central focus of millennial rhetoric in the Revolution was less the attack on Antichrist than the actual shape of the coming kingdom.” During the War of 1812, however, the U.S. was not bound by a formal alliance to a Catholic power, and furthermore viewed Napoleon himself as an essential check on the Catholic Church. As a result, pro-war writers during this period had considerably more leeway to intensify the rhetoric that they employed to “Catholicize” Great Britain than had their forbearers.⁴²

In addition to a circumstance of differing alliances, the rise of a certain cultural movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was also essential for the intensification of pro-war language denouncing Great Britain as Protestantism’s “bulwark.” Despite its characterization as a “proverbial patchwork quilt” of nationalities and ethnic groups, by 1812 the U.S. remained a decidedly religious nation, in fact caught in the throes of a religious development broadly defined as the “Second Great Awakening.” Understood as a “bottom-up” movement that depended on charismatic popular preachers and theatrical, open-air revivals, some historians argue that the Second Great Awakening encouraged a highly American, “democratic” approach to Protestantism that was skeptical of

⁴² Melvin B. Endy, “Just War, Holy War, and Millennialism in Revolutionary America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1985), 21; Stout, *The New England Soul*, 307.

hierarchy and organized ritual. In fact, it was around the outbreak of the War of 1812 that Methodist and Baptist congregations in particular were swelling in number – two sects that had grown as suspicious of Anglicanism as they were of the typical Protestant bogeyman, Roman Catholicism. Moreover, although anti-Catholicism in the U.S. had ebbed slightly at the turn of the nineteenth century in comparison to previous decades, as Jason K. Duncan has argued “in politics, there was still a price to be paid for being a Catholic” – or, by extension, displaying Catholic attributes. Combined, these elements created an atmosphere during the early nineteenth century in which religion was arguably inseparable from politics, and furthermore where pro-war Americans might interpret the struggle against Great Britain as a religious contest against a force of antichristian evil.⁴³

In a war where one symbolic aim was to cement the break between Great Britain and its former colonies, the redevelopment of a discourse denying Great Britain’s role as Protestantism’s “bulwark” was essential for the war’s advocates. After centuries of having viewed Great Britain very much as Protestantism’s prime defender, this was no small order, as it had been for their Revolutionary predecessors. Although William Gribbin has addressed the anti-Catholic rhetoric used in pro-war religious discourse in *The Churches Militant*, he failed to cohesively analyze the rhetorical strategies that pro-war writers employed to achieve Great Britain’s “Catholicization” – a subject that has not been singly

⁴³ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 1; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 608; Jason K. Duncan, *Citizens or Papists? The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 162.

explored by any historian of the period since. Studying pro-war newspaper articles and published sermons from across the American states between 1812 and 1815 demonstrates the manner in which both secular and religious authors deftly swapped the papacy for monarchy, Anglican ritual for “superstition,” and London for Rome. Not only do they illustrate the transference of language usually used to insult Roman Catholicism – including renewed, intensified references to the Book of Revelation - they also point to how these writers lobbed the claims of corruption, oppression, and despotism on the basis of religion traditionally reserved for Catholicism against their cousins across the Atlantic. In re-popularizing this conception of Great Britain as the new “Man of Sin,” pro-war authors contributed to what they understood as a “purge” of “the remaining monarchical and hierarchical systems in America,” thereby bringing the seeds of the American Revolution to full fruition.⁴⁴

While their antiwar counterparts lambasted “Mr. Madison’s War” as little more than divine punishment for American sins and a sign of impending apocalypse, pro-war writers took it upon themselves to match “antiwar Christians prophecy for prophecy, apocalypse for apocalypse, as both parties awaited the imminent Armageddon in Europe.” This strategy involved enveloping Great Britain with language derived specifically from the New Testament’s Book of Revelation, which depicted the end times as a struggle between hosts of nefarious characters that usually stood as metaphors for political entities. Until the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church had usually been assigned

⁴⁴ Bickham, *The Weight of Vengeance*, 18.

competing roles as the Whore of Babylon, the seven-headed Dragon, or the beast from the Sea (this was in fact rhetoric that colonial Americans had used to describe Catholic France during the Seven Years' War). However, the American Revolution offered an opportunity for certain radical pro-war authors to apply such vibrant designations explicitly to the British monarchy and Anglican Church. Samuel Sherwood serves as a prime example in this regard, as someone who believed that the English monarchy "appears to have many of the features, and much of the temper and character of the image of the beast." This was a torch that their successors during the War of 1812 carried with gusto. Furthermore, many pro-war authors from this period reignited the Revolutionary-era tradition of inserting Americans into the Biblical narrative essentially as the "chosen people contained in Hebrew scriptures" that had succeeded in opposing various tyrannical figures in the Bible - a symbol that also enjoyed a revitalization during this "Second War of Independence."⁴⁵

Writing in the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, a religious newspaper published in Portsmouth, New Hampshire under the direction of Elias Smith, one of the founders of the biblically literalist "Christian Connexion" movement, an author under the pseudonym "ELIHU" opened an invective against the Anglican Church with lines from 2 Peter: "*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*" Characterizing the Anglican Church as an institution that had taken up the heretical habits that it had once purged from its Roman

⁴⁵ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 64; Stout, *The New England Soul*, 309; Paul A. Baglyos, "American Lutherans at the Dawn of the Republic," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999), 54.

Catholic origins, “ELIHU” went on to drive the metaphor home with elements derived from current political events:

[The church of England’s] laws were once very rigid against her Roman Catholic subjects; and great pains were taken by her preachers, to render the church of Rome odious and abominable in the eyes of their people. The writer of the Independent Whig, Vol. 2. p. 196. says, “For some time after the reformation, a due horror was kept up amongst the people by our preachers, against the church of Rome - But when our clergy began to contend for equal dominion and wealth, they found that they could not consistently rail at the church of Rome, and yet follow her example. And so far altered was their stile at last, that instead of painting and reviling her as an old withered harlot, &c. it became fashionable to defend her - and even to punish such as exposed her.” Nothing is now more evident than that the church of England is turned to her own vomit again, or is drenching the fields of Germany, Spain, and Portugal, with the blood of her subjects, to revenge the cause of the church of Rome on the French nation, for abolishing her bloody, persecuting, abominable religion in France.”

Specifically, “ELIHU” was referencing Napoleon’s invasion of the Papal States between 1808 and 1809, which had culminated in the confinement of the Pope as Napoleon’s prisoner, in addition to the abolishment of the Spanish Inquisition. For pro-war authors like “ELIHU,” the fact that a ruthless despot like Napoleon was making significant headway in the timeless Protestant project to finally bleed the Catholic Church to inconsequentiality reflected very poorly on Great Britain. Worse, instead of destroying the “old withered harlot,” in recent decades Great Britain seemed determined to act as her defender, taking on many of her attributes in the process.⁴⁶

One of the most important conduits allowing for this religious “contagion” was Great Britain’s political designation as a constitutional monarchy. In a

⁴⁶ ELIHU, “For the Herald of Gospel Liberty,” *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, March 18, 1814, 578-579; Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 56.

sermon on “The Moral Character of the Two Belligerents” given while New York was still under a British blockade, Reverend Alexander McLeod, a Reformed Presbyterian minister, went to great pains to point out that “prophecy excludes the idea, of considering the British empire as removed from the *Latin Earth*: and, the character of its *government*...demonstrates its *antichristianism*.... An unhallowed connexion between church and state, in which civil liberty suffers, and true religion is prostituted, can never be reconciled with that *liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*.” For McLeod, a devout Jeffersonian, the British government’s failure to adhere to the separation of church and state was in itself a mark of Revelation’s “beast,” confirmed by centuries of the persecution of other Protestant sects under Henry VIII and the “Popish tyrants” Charles II and James I. Not even the ascension of the pious William and Mary of Orange to the throne via the Glorious Revolution was enough to dissuade McLeod from viewing the current incarnation of the British Government as “one of the ten horns of the apocalyptic beast...the dragon.”⁴⁷

Although pro-war writers seemed initially indiscriminate in their classification of Great Britain in the pantheon of villains found in Revelation, the continued survival of the Roman Catholic Church seemed to encourage them to cast Great Britain increasingly as Revelation’s “sea beast” rather than its “harlot.” In an instance where Great Britain and the Catholic Church were given separate, but equally essential roles as villains in Revelation’s drama, Smith clarified

⁴⁷ Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 287; Alexander McLeod, *A Scriptural View of the Character, Causes, and Ends of the Present War*, 2nd ed. (New-York: Eastburn, Kirk and Co., 1815), 76; Watts, *The Republic Reborn*, 74-75.

through the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* that “monarchies are called Beasts for their strength and cruelty where they can overpower – the Papel [sic] power [in contrast] is called a gay, bad woman, on a seven headed beast, intoxicating the nations, and committing fornication with the kings of the earth.” This was a particularly strong and specific image, because of the way in which Revelation painted the “harlot” as literally sitting astride the “beast” – an image that emphasized the malevolent relationship that Smith believed existed between Great Britain and the Catholic Church. It is also worth noting that although the “bad woman” had influence over “the kings of the earth,” this power did not extend to the earth’s federal republics.⁴⁸

It is worth noting that conceptions of Great Britain as Revelation’s “beast” did not just exist as products of the printed word. In October 1813, the Baltimore-based Hezekiah Niles published in his furiously pro-war *Weekly Register* reports of “the late splendid illuminations at Charleston,” held to celebrate Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry’s naval victory over the British at the Battle of Lake Erie. Part of these “illuminations” included the display of some “very elegant and appropriate transparencies,” including one in the window of lawyer J.B. White’s home demonstrating “the genius of America, in bold and brilliant colors, trampling a lion under her feet. Motto, ‘crush the monster.’” In the end, notions of Great Britain’s “bestial” nature had even manifested themselves in the political art and technology of the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Elias Smith, “Peace!! Peace!!” *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, March 3, 1815, 661.

⁴⁹ H. Niles, “The Late Illuminations,” *The Weekly Register*, October 30, 1813, 145.

Having secured Great Britain's identity as the new Beast, pro-war writers often carried out the metaphor of Revelation to its logical conclusion: the Beast's eventual destruction at the hands of Christ, personified by the U.S. Examples of this conclusion stem from as early as 1812, when *The Bulwarks of Religion* broadside claimed that "This bulwark of religion [the British government] appears evidently to be given up of God to destroy itself and the nation whose wretched fate is to be under its control." Reverend McLeod offered an even more explicit connection between Great Britain, the U.S., and Revelation's end, focusing particularly on Revelation's reference to the "Seven Vials" that would be poured into the earth to bring about the end of the world's corrupt kingdoms:

We have shown, that this, the object of the sixth vial, began to be accomplished in the American revolution; and that the waters of Euphrates, thus diverted from their channel through the midst of Babylon, will continue to flow more and more in another course, until the channel is dry, and the corrupt establishments of Europe become a more easy prey to 'the kings of the east,' the agents of their ruin. Of this vial the present war is a part....

McLeod took this symbolism a step further, suggesting that the American Revolution had essentially redirected the metaphorical, life-giving waters of the biblical Euphrates to the new republic, which as a result was growing stronger as the monarchies of the Old World weakened.⁵⁰

This formulation in many ways reflected the providential thinking common to American culture, which singled out the U.S. as a nation under God's divine favor. Nevertheless, this special designation represented both a blessing and a responsibility. As the war reached its height in 1813, Niles' *Weekly Register*

⁵⁰ *The Bulwarks of Religion*; McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 207.

characterized the conflict as a project “to ‘REND ASUNDER FOREVER’ the many *guilty* ties which have fastened us to the Harpy of the earth and sea, who fills remotest nations with her filth and destroys all that she touches” (emphasis added). Similarly using Great Britain’s maritime prowess and geographical status as an island nation as indicators of its role as Revelation’s “sea beast” (another rhetorical holdover from the Revolutionary period), Smith’s *Herald of Gospel Liberty* likewise argued that “the work of righteousness” was “to throw of [*sic*] the yoke of tyrants....This work the Americans begun July 4th, [1776], when they threw off the tyrannical yoke of England, by declaring to them and the nations of the earth, that they were by right a nation independent from that Sea Monster.”⁵¹

Reverend Daniel Merrill of the Baptist Church of Christ in Nottingham-West, New Hampshire, also echoed these sentiments in a “Thanksgiving Sermon” that he gave following the war’s conclusion in 1815. In it, he lauded President Madison for having “vindicated the inestimable rights of our own nation against the tyranny and cruelty of that government which may, for the present, be styled the bulwark of national religion; that bane of christianity, and principal support of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.” Employing language that underscored a rather sinister tone of gender violence, Merrill continued by presenting the “prevalency of religious liberty” in the U.S. as “the work of God,” which was “the bane of the Mother of harlots and of her daughters, and will increase till it shall strip them naked, and the nations

⁵¹ H. Niles, “Reasons against the War!” *The Weekly Register*, October 30, 1813, 143; According to Henry Stout, American revolutionaries were also wont to reference Great Britain as a “sea monster” - see *The New England Soul*, 293; *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, March 3, 1815, 661.

shall see their shame.” Altogether, it was clear to Merrill and similar pro-war writers that Great Britain was no other than the monster from Revelation, whose destruction was necessary for the salvation of democratic society.⁵²

The establishment of Great Britain as Revelation’s “beast” depended on a variety of justifications, one of the most important being the apparent decadence of its spiritual and civil organizations – criticisms that had often been levelled against Catholic powers in previous centuries. In a grand judgment of the British system of governance, Reverend McLeod argued that “THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, as it now exists, is a despotic usurpation – A superstitious combination of civil and ecclesiastical power – A branch of the grand antichristian apostacy...and Cruel in its policy. It is, therefore, a throne of iniquity, of which neither God, nor godly men, who understand it, can approve.” By singling out Britain’s government as a “despotic usurpation,” McLeod tapped into one of the most important sources of difference that pro-war writers used to deepen the cultural separation between the U.S. and Great Britain. After nearly forty years of successfully living under a democratic system, most Americans in the early nineteenth century had little institutional memory of monarchy, and outside of Massachusetts there was no obligation for individuals to pay “church taxes” for state-sponsored denominations – a separation between civil and ecclesiastical power that was also cemented with respect to the federal government thanks to the First Amendment. As a result, most Americans viewed the British monarchy

⁵² Daniel Merrill, *Balaam Disappointed: A Thanksgiving Sermon, delivered at Nottingham-West, April 13, 1815: A Day Recommended by the National Government, in Which to Rehearse God's Mighty Acts, and Praise His Name* (Concord [N.H.]: Printed by Isaac & W.R. Hill, 1815), 9-10.

and its ecclesiastical system with as much suspicion and disgust as they did the Catholic papacy. The manner in which monarchy and papacy encouraged a legal conflation of civil and religious power was deeply disturbing to Americans, who viewed such arrangements as detrimental to both religious and political liberty and morality.⁵³

As Gribbin notes, another issue that pro-war Americans used to expose the dangers and hypocrisy of Anglicanism was the belief that British monarchs “made exceptionally poor bulwarks for any system of religion.” Since the Revolutionary period, the American press had made a comfortable living regaling its readers with tales of the iniquity and foolishness of the British nobility, ranging from sex scandals to everyday gaffs. In a nation that had largely rejected mere birth as a basis for the conferral of spiritual or political power, it was frankly ludicrous that a whole religious system would use hereditary methods to determine the line of succession for its spiritual head. In June 1813, the *Rutland Vermont Herald* published an opinion piece by an unnamed “Christian Politician” who, after reminding their readers that in monarchy “an establishment makes the king the head of the church,” mused that “the [British] Prince Regent would make an odd figure here, while he remains the greatest debauchee and spendthrift in the nation.” Niles’ *Weekly Register* elevated this criticism to even greater extremes following the war’s end. “The fact is, that the rule of conduct for the honest part of society will never govern the ‘legimates,’” he noted, after

⁵³ McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 60; Jon Butler, “Why Revolutionary America Wasn’t a ‘Christian Nation,’” in James H. Huston, ed., *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 194, 198.

lambasting certain members of the royal families of Europe for their connections to prostitution, adultery, and general debauchery. “When moral law or social order is received from the example of kings and princes,” he continued, “we shall be compelled to suppose that every thing which is of God or godly has left the earth – the Omnipotent, for some all-wise purpose, [has] loosed the chains of the ‘great dragon’ and given him ‘legitimate authority’ to rule mankind ‘for a season.’” Once again drawing connections to Revelation, the “Christian Politician” understood the European failure to separate church and state establishments as demonstrative proof of monarchy’s inherent evil.⁵⁴

Other pro-war writers used their critique of monarchy to create more explicit parallels between Great Britain and the Catholic Church. “How frail a thing is man!” exclaimed Reverend McLeod, after enumerating the immense list of spiritual powers given to the British king within the Anglican Church, including the right to call “at pleasure his clergy together,” fill “up vacancies among his bishops,” and most perniciously, confer “the character of truth to his own faithful subjects upon articles of faith.” In McLeod’s estimation, these were powers that were fit for no mortal, and reeked of the pretension and “superstition” commonly associated with the Catholic pontiff. In “cast[ing] off the authority of the See of Rome” to “assume to himself all that power in his dominions, which the Pope formerly claimed,” Henry VIII had merely established an “Antichristian

⁵⁴ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 65; Christian Politician, “For the Herald,” *Rutland Vermont Herald*, June 9, 1813, 2; H. Niles, “‘Legitimate’ Morals,” *The Weekly Register*, July 15, 1815, 337-338.

Supremacy” as a crucial component of “the English constitution,” no less corrupt than the papal authority Henry VIII had supplanted.⁵⁵

The fact that Anglicanism owed its birth to a contest over political power rather than spiritual truth was proof enough of the faith’s corruption in pro-war eyes. Smith’s *Herald of Gospel Liberty* made this criticism clear enough in an analysis of Great Britain’s “righteousness”:

Where can this *Righteousness*; or such a government be found? Is it on the island of *Britain*, the world’s last hope, as some have called it? “The bulwark of the religion” they profess? No it is not there; it never was there. A *power* where “*his Majesty*” is above all law. - A *power* where “*my Lords*” are hereditary; where *Lords temporal* and *spiritual*, are placed out of sight of the common people; - A *power* where the *right reverend father in God* - *Lord arch Bishop of Canterbury, Vicar, Prebend, Rector, &c. &c.* are upheld and supported for their *titles*, and not their usefulness; where men pretend to rule by strength instead of right. - Such a power is not, cannot be a righteous government. Can such a government be found in *Rome*, under his pretended holiness, who with all his *power* and *infallibility* may be dragged about in chains like a dog? No. This righteousness can be found only in the *United States of America*.

Linking the British monarchy to the chastened papacy that was being held hostage by Napoleon’s forces, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* succeeded in undermining both Great Britain’s morality and its status as Protestantism’s champion in one fell swoop. In many ways, this particular assault upon the moral legitimacy of both the British government and Anglicanism was inherited from the days of the American Revolution and its aftermath, when American preachers had issued similar warnings against the political and ecclesiastical structures inherent to English society. For example, in 1791 the Presbyterian reverend William Linn cautioned his audiences that “human establishments have always

⁵⁵ McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 69-70, 89.

been made engines of state policy: they have promoted hypocrisy and infidelity....the great evil has been in the civil magistrate usurping the throne of Christ and exercising spiritual dominion.”⁵⁶

Although Great Britain’s monarchy was an important indicator of its fundamental religious and civil corruption, this was not the “beast’s” only mark. Pro-war writers also fixated on examples of British policy demonstrating its corrupt nature. Between reports of the British East India Company profiting from pagan rituals through a “Juggernaut tax” in India and Britain’s continued protection and toleration of Catholicism in Canada (a relic of the settlement made with France in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War), pro-war American authors concluded that Britain could not be counted on to act as Protestantism’s defender and advocate. Once again, the particular concerns regarding British policy towards Catholicism in Canada were very much a holdover from the Revolutionary period, when Americans revolted against the Quebec Act *en masse*, with future revolutionary leaders like Alexander Hamilton arguing that the Act left Protestantism “entirely destitute and unfriended in Canada” and demonstrated that the British “have formed a systematic project of absolute power.” The *Rutland Vermont Herald’s* “Christian Politician” echoed many of these sentiments in 1813 in a detailed denunciation of British policy in Canada:

But when we cross the Atlantic to Lower Canada, there we find the [British] government, not only tolerating, but establishing Popery as the religion of the province of Quebec; This is the more extraordinary, in as much as the learned and pious fathers of all Protestant denominations in

⁵⁶ *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, March 3, 1815, 661; William Linn, *The Blessings of America: A Sermon, Preached in the Middle Dutch Church, On the Fourth July, 1791, Being the Anniversary of the Independence of America: At the Request of the Tammany Society, or Columbian Order* (New-York: Printed by Thomas Greenleaf, 1791), 19-20.

England, have generally agreed to pronounce the Romish Church to be mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. But the pious cabinet of St. James finds no difficulty in this case, so long as this “mother of harlots” will nurse their political frauds, and prove an engine of their ambitious & overbearing state.

In addition to detailing British religious hypocrisy, the “Christian Politician” was also using the British protection of Catholicism in Canada as an opportunity to underscore the foolishness and naiveté of those New England ministers that continued to view Great Britain as Protestantism’s “bulwark.”⁵⁷

British protection of Catholicism was perceived as even more indefensible during the War of 1812 when contrasted with Napoleon’s success in muzzling the Catholic Church, and the “slaughter” he was perpetuating within “popish countries.” Pro-war authors ridiculed the “embarrassing predicament” facing their antiwar counterparts, as “Britain’s armies fought for the monarchy in Spain and sheltered the Portuguese royal family in their flight to Brazil” while Napoleon finally seemed to succeed in an enterprise that had been eluding Great Britain for centuries. While antiwar writers frequently denounced the conflict against Great Britain as evidence that the U.S. had informally allied itself with “Napoleonic absolutism,” pro-war writers countered that this was preferable to British hypocrisy. As Niles pointed out in brackets in an October 1813 article published in *The Weekly Register* that sarcastically cited an antiwar article from “a *Boston paper*”:

“It must however be acknowledged, that *England is not very particular about her alliances in this matter. While she is at war with Saxony, Denmark, Bavaria, &c. &c. she is allied to Spain, Portugal, Russia, &c. so that France may be considered nearly as favorable to the*

⁵⁷ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 44-45; Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War*, 40; Rutland *Vermont Herald*, June 9, 1813, 2.

Protestants as the English, while it must be lamented that the nations appear at present to be leaving religion out of their calculations; such has been the progress of Deism and Atheism. *Still all this does not alter what England HAS BEEN: she HAS BEEN for ages the bulwark of the Protestant religion; for no nation ever entered more lively into the Protestant interest than SHE DID!*" [True - that she might make bishops for herself, and have a state church of her own.]

Even if the U.S. was indirectly helping a power that was ostensibly "Catholic," Niles argued, it was one that had done the most to curtail the extent of the Catholic Church's political influence, unlike Great Britain, which only seemed to profit from it. Furthermore, although many pro-war writers would gladly "thrust a dagger into the vitals of the Corsican tyrant for the preservation of their rights," few had any direct quarrel with Napoleon in light of British atrocities committed on American soil. In a reprint of a report from the *Georgetown Federal Republican*, the Republican *New-Hampshire Patriot*, published by brothers Isaac and Walter Hill, noted that "to the disgrace of the British nation, the force under Capt. [James] Gordon continues rifling Alexandria," committing acts of "licentious and unprincipled robbery....Bonaparte never committed depredations to be compared...."⁵⁸

In addition to denouncing Great Britain's failure in defending Protestantism abroad, pro-war writers also used examples of Great Britain's wartime brutality as evidence of the government's corrupt and unholy nature. Underlining two of the main complaints that had pushed the United States to war with Great Britain

⁵⁸ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 56; Carl Benn and Daniel Marston, *Liberty or Death: Wars that Forged a Nation* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2006), 259; *The Weekly Register*, October 30, 1813, 144; Isaac and Walter Hill, "Sullivan on French Influence," *New-Hampshire Patriot*, October 6, 1812, 3; "COMMENT. From the Georgetown Federal Republican," *New-Hampshire Patriot*, September 27, 1814, 1.

in the first place, Reverend Joshua Lacy Wilson of the First Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio denounced the English in 1812 as manifesting “all the infernal principles of devils incarnate” through their impressments of American sailors and their incitement of Native Americans to violence on the frontier. Carrying the emphasis on Native American butchery further, Reverend John H. Stevens expressed horror in a sermon on *The Duty of Union in a Just War* given in Stoneham, Massachusetts in 1813, at news that Great Britain had “armed and excited the barbarians of the wilderness to make war upon us, lay waste to our frontiers, to butcher and scalp men, women, and children; and the scalp reeking in blood, I have understood they have been in the habit of purchasing at six dollars a piece – but am I stating the horrid conduct of a Christian nation, or that of Turks and Arabs?” Answering himself, Reverend Stevens bluntly stated that these atrocities were those “of a Christian nation towards a Christian nation,” and concluding further that “there is not a more corrupt and wicked government on earth than the British government; they have, in my opinion, caused more wars, bloodshed, misery, and desolation in the earth, than any other government.” Offering similarly rhetorical postulations following the war’s conclusion, Niles emotionally demanded to know why “British influence [led] the deluded savage to extermination? In the south, as well as the west, it appears that the war in which the Indians were involved on British account is not yet closed....What murders has the ‘bulwark of religion’ to account for!!”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Watts, *The Republic Reborn*, 159; John H. Stevens, *The Duty of Union in a Just War: A Discourse, delivered in Stoneham, (Mass.) April 8, 1813, Being the Day of the State Fast* (New Haven: Printed by J. Barber, 1813), 12-13; H. Niles, “British Allies,” *The Weekly Register*, July 15, 1815, 348.

Tales of British destruction of holy property only incensed pro-war belief in the hypocritical and antichristian nature of Great Britain's government. In January 1814, Niles' *Weekly Register* reported news of British Admiral John Warren's raids in the Chesapeake Bay, where "several defenceless towns were wantonly burnt...one church was battered with stones and another plundered...sick persons were murdered and women violated." Ten months later, the *New Hampshire Patriot* ran a damning piece on the violence enacted by a similar British raiding party in the Maryland town of Chaptico in August of the same year. Quoting a letter that had been sent to the newspaper by one of the town's young men, the *Patriot* horrified its readers with lurid details of how the British "entered [the town's] church, turned over the communion table, and then ate upon it their unhallowed meal. Still, as though not satisfied with polluting the mansions of the living...they then broke open the church vault, ript up several coffins, tore the grave clothes from a lady lately buried, and departed leaving them hanging out at the clefts." The *Patriot* further clarified that the officer in charge of such depredations was no other than Admiral George Cockburn, the naval commander that was responsible for the burning of Washington during that same time period. Undermining the moral credibility of British military personnel was an important project for pro-war writers, especially given that many British commanders during the War of 1812 held strong Anglican ties. For example, in his note on Warren's activities in the Chesapeake, Niles made sure to add with incredulity that Warren had been elected as "one of the vice-presidents of a Bible

society at Halifax” – a connection that in his estimation only further demonstrated the idiocy of those that viewed Great Britain as Protestantism’s “bulwark.”⁶⁰

Just as they inserted the United States into their reformulation of the Book of Revelation as a Christ-like figure, pro-war authors countered images of Great Britain’s moral failings with examples of American virtue. In a “Thanksgiving Sermon” published in *The Baltimore Patriot*, John Hargrove, a minister of the New Jerusalem Church in Baltimore, noted that “in comparison with the nations of Europe, America may be said to be young and virtuous...I trust that the cup of our national depravity is far from being full, while that of Europe, in general, now seems to be *running over*.” Moving away from Revelation and loosely into the Old Testament, Reverend McLeod concurred, comparing the American contest against Great Britain to the one held between David and Goliath:

Did you see a youth of mild demeanour, and of known integrity, engaged with an experienced and long practised boxer, who made a trade of boasting and of battle, you would instinctively wish that this youth might escape unhurt, or come off victorious. The inference I draw is, that, in the present contest, between the belligerents described in this discourse, humanity wishes success to our own country.

For pro-war writers, America’s youth and inviolable ideals were a check against immorality, unlike Great Britain, whose advanced age had weakened its ability to counter its inclination to “depravity” – not unlike the withered old harlot herself, the thousand-year-old Catholic Church.⁶¹

⁶⁰ H. Niles, “A ‘Bulwark,’” *The Weekly Register*, January 8, 1814, 312; *New Hampshire Patriot*, November 1, 1814, 3; *The Weekly Register*, January 8, 1814, 312.

⁶¹ Jno. Hargrove, “Thanksgiving Sermon. For the Baltimore Patriot,” *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, November 5, 1814, 2; McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 99.

In addition to markers of moral decay found within Great Britain's religious and political institutions, pro-war authors had centuries of British injury against a variety of Protestant sects to employ in their quest to align Great Britain with Roman Catholicism. For example, the opening lines of *The Bulwarks of Religion* used this very issue as its opening invective:

Much is said at this day, of the bulwark of religion; particularly in Massachusetts, where some consider the English government the bulwark of our religion. That government has for ages past been a BULL against true religion, and so it remains to this day. It is one of the bulls mentioned by David, Psalm xxii. 12, "*Many bulls have compassed me; STRONG BULLS of Bashan have beset me round.*" This all dissenters from that hierarchy know. That *Bull* with his horns pushed the Baptists into prisons, and the Quakers into exile; it pushed the dissenters to Geneva, and then to the wilderness of America. Instead of a defence of the religion of Christ, it has been a persecutor; while at the same time it has defended the Pagan religion established there by the Roman Emperor, many hundred years ago, which still remains protected by it, under the name of christianity.

In referencing "that hierarchy," the broadside's anonymous author was clearly referencing the Anglican church, whose history demonstrated little more love or toleration for dissenting Protestant branches than the Catholic Church had for Protestantism in general. Reverend Merrill seized upon this ignoble memory in his "Thanksgiving Sermon," linking Anglican abuses specifically with American history and symbolism from Revelation: "For notwithstanding it was the religious tyranny of the mother of harlots, or of one of her eldest daughters, which drove the first English settlers into this good land." In reminding his audience of that history and joining Anglicanism and Catholicism together as members of a common antichristian family, Merrill rendered Anglicanism as much as Protestantism's foe as Catholicism. In certain respects, it was a more insidious

one, given its unwillingness to support and protect its fellow Protestants around the world.⁶²

Examples of British religious persecution in both mainland Britain and beyond abounded in pro-war discourse during the War of 1812. Northern Baptists circulated rumors that Canadian children were considered illegitimate unless their parents had been married in the Anglican or Catholic Church, while institutional memory of imprisonment and political disenfranchisement remained very much alive for Quakers in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Even Irish Catholics were allotted some degree of tempered, cautionary empathy. “In Ireland, for reasons of state, [Great Britain] persecutes the Catholics,” asserted Reverend McLeod, albeit “not on account of their religion; for this she has always supported on the continent; but for their dissent from the English hierarchy.” This statement in itself offers a peculiar reinforcement of the Anglican-Catholic tie, by employing abuses against the Irish as evidence for English political despotism *in addition* to their perceived support for Roman Catholicism.⁶³

Beyond individual instances of English suppression of alternative Protestant faiths, pro-war American writers were especially offended by the manner in which British law required a public profession of adherence to Anglicanism in order to serve in government – symbolized primarily through partaking in Anglican communion. To them, not only this was no better than the hierarchical system of bishops, cardinals, and pontiffs that dominated the Vatican’s political structure, the “sacramental test” was itself representative of

⁶² *The Bulwarks of Religion*; Merrill, *Balaam Disappointed*, 8.

⁶³ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 69, 72; McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 94.

one of the worst dregs of Catholic ritual and “superstition” that Anglicanism had failed to disinherit. In order to magnify the horror of such a political system, a contributor to the *New-Hampshire Patriot* identified solely as “Hillsborough” painted a hypothetical picture of its application in the United States:

...should we be separated from the Union and connected with England, every thing would be revolutionized....all must be Episcopalians; the clergy must be paid out of the national chest; and then they will be so perfectly independent of the people, that they may ride in riot deal out their anathemas against every one who may dare to differ in political or religious sentiment from them, or the Crown.

Reverend McLeod offered a similarly terrifying vision in his sermon on “The Moral Character of the Belligerents.” “What would you think of an ordinance from the congress of the United States, requiring all officers upon the civil and military list...to take the sacrament?” he asked his listeners. “What would you say to a demand upon Presbyterians, and Independents, and Baptists, &c. to forego their own religious profession, and take the communion from Episcopal hands?” Such evidence of the hypothetical “prostitution” of religion for political ends was essential in widening the cultural gap between Great Britain and the United States, whilst it closed it between Great Britain and the Vatican.⁶⁴

In the same manner that Americans viewed Catholicism as one of the corrupt forces frustrating the development of democracy in Europe, pro-war voices during the War of 1812 used the English cultural dependence on monarchy and Anglicanism as a reason to view Great Britain as a fundamental enemy of the American republic. In contrast, they held up American democracy

⁶⁴ Gribbin, *The Churches Militant*, 68; Hillsborough, “Proofs of the Existence of a Conspiracy to Dissolve the Union. No. 2,” *New-Hampshire Patriot*, October 20, 1812, 1; McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 72.

not only as a normative good, but a religious necessity, thanks to its lack of official governmental religious affiliation. “And where can we expect the light of the glorious gospel of our salvation to shine so resplendently, as in this land of civil and religious freedom?” asked Reverend Hargrove in his “Thanksgiving Sermon,” “Where no Inquisition, or religious procription [sic] can possibly exist, together with our sacred charter or *Bill of rights*. Turn your eyes, my favoured hearers, towards the eastern continent, or *Old world*, and what do you see?” In playing upon this contrast between divine republicanism and antichristian despotism, pro-war writers during the War of 1812 were in fact reviving an old set of Anglo-American distinctions that had developed during the days of the Revolution – albeit with a few nineteenth-century twists.⁶⁵

In many cases, pro-war writers viewed the British abuses that had helped to engender the War of 1812 as attempts to stifle American democracy, which they in turn translated into a religious struggle between the forces of good and evil. Envisioning Americans as “sheep” (an image with strong biblical meaning), Smith’s *Herald of Gospel Liberty* gave this interpretation of the War of 1812’s origins a few months after its conclusion:

The work of righteousness is to prevent tyrants from putting their yokes on again. Not long after peace was settled between England and America, they found the sheep they had given up, not only bore large and good fleeces, but that their meat also was very pleasant to the taste of an Englishman; which lead them to carry off now and then one, when they strayed from the fold; till at last, they came after them to the very door of the sheepfold. Republicanism bore long with it, and at last declared they should be driven far from the fold. As soon as this was done, England declared by her actions that the sheep, pasture and shepherds were what she was after, and was determined to have it by force. This was the cause of the declaration of war against England, in June 1812, and a just cause,

⁶⁵ *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, November 5, 1814, 2.

as it is now proved by their making peace with us, on such terms as is acceptable to the nation at large.

Having secured this “work of righteousness,” Smith assured his readers that they could rest comfortably knowing that the U.S. had succeeded in carrying out its divine directive to combat British political-religious apostasy through the War of 1812.⁶⁶

In addition to explaining how the U.S. furthered God’s work, pro-war writers always reminded their audiences that the American system of governance was the only divinely-sanctioned form of government currently in existence. Using full capitalization to stress the importance of his point, Reverend McLeod boomed that “a REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IS THE ORDINANCE OF GOD” to his New York audience in 1814. It is possible that he added this emphasis to counter some of the predilections for monarchy and hierarchy that he may have suspected of existing amongst his congregants, in addition to deprecate the sanctity of Britain’s government. In a separate sermon on “The Present War,” McLeod developed this idea further by reminding his listeners that “the religion, which is from God, lays the loftiness of man, the pride of royalty, and the claims of noble blood, in the dust. It assures us that God hath made of one blood all the nations of men....that all are by nature in a like sinful and dependent state. There is nothing in the bone, or the blood, or the head, or the heart of a king’s son, to distinguish him from the infant peasant.” This reminder of the radical equality that McLeod believed American political and social institutions encouraged was a sharp rebuke to the pretensions that monarchy

⁶⁶ *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, March 3, 1815, 661.

encouraged in Great Britain. It was also a rebuke to the pretensions of all hierarchical organizations in the world, not the least of which included the Catholic Church – an institution that in McLeod’s estimation had become practically indistinguishable from the British government by the war’s end in 1815.⁶⁷

Walking through the streets and squares of Boston once again in 1813, it is possible that one may have come across scattered copies of a slightly different broadside than the one denouncing Governor Strong from the year prior. In the wake of news of the USS *Constitution*’s victory over the HMS *Java* at the turn of the new year, Coverly took it upon himself to print copies of *Yankee Chronology, or Huzza for the American Navy*, a song derived from a play by William Dunlap that dramatized a separate successful battle between the USS *Constitution* and the HMS *Guerriere* in August 1812. Although most of the piece is dedicated to celebrating the history and exploits of the American Navy, the sixth stanza stands out as moment of singularly religious feeling:

Ye sons of Columbia, with an honest pride remember,
That the blessing then bought, now depend upon you.
May her sons of this city, each return of his day, sirs,
When Washington led home their brave sires by the hand
On the *altar of freedom* swear forever and aye, sirs,
That a foreign foe shall never rest his foot on this land.

The notion of the sacrificial “altar of freedom” was not a new conception, and would remain a long-revered trope in American political and religious rhetoric. Nevertheless, its resurgence during the War of 1812 in a popular song like *Yankee Chronology* demonstrates the resonance that religious interpretations of

⁶⁷ McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 61, 167.

American democracy and civil liberties continued to hold with Americans. This resurgence in use also contributed to the pro-war project of deepening the cultural rift between Americans and Britons by insinuating that Great Britain was the malevolent, antichristian force whose threat demanded sacrifice upon the American “altar of freedom.”⁶⁸

Despite the sacrifice that many Americans made upon this altar over the course of the War of 1812, the manner in which the war’s conclusion secured a *status quo ante bellum* met with mixed reviews from pro-war writers. On one hand, most of these individuals were exceedingly proud of their nation’s ability to successfully fend off what they had interpreted as Great Britain’s attempt to reclaim their lost colonies and end the divinely ordained American democratic experiment. Nevertheless, many of these writers also saw the return to stability in the western world as an indicator that Great Britain’s malevolent work on earth – and the malevolent work of her fellow antichristian tyrants – remained unfinished. Specifically lamenting Napoleon’s demise in 1814, Reverend McLeod commented ominously:

[Napoleon] fell; and France is fallen with him. The Bourbons are restored. The Pope has reassumed his mitre. The Inquisition has seized the instruments of torture in its gloomy caverns. In the restoration of the Germanic empire, the last head of the beast is more conspicuously revealed to view; and in the adjustment of the balance of power among the antichristian nations, the ten horns may again be more distinctly displayed before the last vial [of the Apocalypse] is poured out by the angel of destruction.

⁶⁸ William Dunlap and Nathaniel Coverly, *Yankee Chronology: Or Huzza for the American Navy* (Boston: Printed by Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., 1813) (emphasis has been added).

Not only does this passage illustrate the extent to which pro-war writers viewed Napoleon as an essential force countering the Catholic Church's strength in Europe, it also illustrates more broadly how pro-war writers generally conflated monarchy and Catholicism under the banner of the Antichrist. In this particular reference to Revelation, the European nobility that had been restored to power at the end of the Napoleonic wars represented the many heads of Revelation's "beast." There must have been no doubt in McLeod's mind that one of those heads was an anglicized protrusion.⁶⁹

The War of 1812's end also did little to change the accusations of heresy that pro-war writers hurled against Great Britain. In his post-war "Thanksgiving Sermon," Reverend Merrill warned his listeners that the U.S. could not be content to rest on the laurels that it had gained in the latest contest against England. "Notwithstanding this glorious triumph which reason, truth and righteousness have gained over superstition, the prolific mother of abominations," he thundered, "she is to be carefully watched and guarded against; for like famed Anteus of old, she has often revived, after being, apparently, knocked lifeless to the ground." In this case, Merrill was referencing both Great Britain and the groups in the United States that had insisted on supporting Great Britain's claim to Protestant orthodoxy throughout the course of the war. Like McLeod, Merrill did not believe that the War of 1812 had succeeded in bringing about the "end times" described in Revelation, even if it had succeeded in sustaining a significant blow against Revelation's "beast." Nevertheless, in his view that did not matter, so long as "the

⁶⁹ McLeod, *A Scriptural View*, 230.

true David” – a symbol encompassing both Christ and the U.S. – was able to retain the strength and resolve necessary to oppose it.⁷⁰

The War of 1812 offered an opportunity for pro-war Americans to both carry on and intensify a rhetorical tradition that had been handed down to them by their Revolutionary forbearers. In order to draw their fellow citizens to their cause, pro-war writers in both eras focused on emphasizing the cultural distinctions that separated Great Britain from the United States – a tactic that required underlining their religious differences. By recasting Great Britain as Protestantism’s enemy rather than its ally, as some Revolutionaries had done forty years earlier, pro-war writers appealed to a concern that resonated well in a society dominated by a religious and political discourse that conflated Protestantism with democratic institutions. By specifically associating Great Britain with many of the traits and denigrations traditionally applied to Roman Catholicism, pro-war writers were employing a powerful rhetorical tool to combat what they perceived as an excess of pro-British affection in certain segments of American society – particularly those that viewed a salubrious relationship with Great Britain as essential to Protestantism’s wellbeing. In many ways, conflation of Great Britain and the Catholic Church were almost more intense during the War of 1812 than they had been during the Revolution, as demonstrated by their consistent existence over the war’s development, the geographic range of their authors, and the fact that, unlike during the Revolution, the United States did not owe its salvation to a Catholic power (in fact, Napoleon was actually seen as a

⁷⁰ Merrill, *Balaam Disappointed*, 21.

force contributing to Catholicism's demise). Although American perceptions of Great Britain would gradually change as the nineteenth century progressed, the power that "Catholicization" offered as a rhetorical invective would only grow over the succeeding decades – especially as the U.S. moved into one of its most anti-Catholic eras yet.