PAPISTS IN A PROTESTANT WORLD: THE CATHOLIC ANGLO-ATLANTIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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PAPISTS IN A PROTESTANT WORLD: THE CATHOLIC ANGLO-ATLANTIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of English expansion have rightly located the roots of the English Atlantic world in the turmoil and transitions of the seventeenth century, but they have too often concentrated on the narrow and premature definition of early modern England as a Protestant nation and empire. While the seventeenth-century Anglo-Atlantic remained predominantly populated and ruled by Protestants, it was not a Protestant empire. This dissertation focuses on identifying individual Catholic inhabitants—broadly envisioned to encompass migrants from the British Isles, other European settlers, enslaved Africans, and American converts—to shed light on the diverse religious constitution of the English Atlantic world. It asks what happened to those migrants and settlers who contradicted the dominant religious and political identity of England and English global expansion and seeks to better understand how England and the English colonies became a Protestant world over the course of the seventeenth century.

Five thematic chapters stitch together evidence from a range of interdisciplinary sources—from narrative accounts to colonial records and archaeological evidence—to recover and reconstruct the lived experience of Catholic inhabitants of the English colonies. Key topics include the demographic diversity of the Catholic Anglo-Atlantic; the religious missions and material culture that facilitated and sustained Catholic practice; the question of Catholic loyalty
to a Protestant kingdom; and how changing ideas of religious tolerance affected the lives of Catholics in the colonies.

This dissertation challenges how historians typically think and write about religious and political identity in the early modern Atlantic world. Rather than starkly divided into separate Protestant and Catholic spheres of influence, historians should instead understand the Atlantic as an intricate web of entangled empires and Atlantic worlds that crossed religious and political boundaries. Both Catholic and Protestant migrants contributed to the formation and growth of the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century. Documenting the lives of Catholics and their interactions with Protestants in the early English Atlantic demonstrates that religious diversity underlay the formation of a Protestant empire and shows the inadequacy of using essentialized binaries—such as Catholic and Protestant—to understand early modern imperial expansion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is, first and foremost, a product of the intellectual environment fostered by the staff, faculty, and graduate students in the Department of History at Georgetown. The department’s emphasis on global and transnational history inspired me to think beyond the traditional national, political, and cultural boundaries that frame early American history and to adopt an Atlantic approach to the study of early modern colonial expansion. Both the department and the Graduate School provided fellowship funding that allowed me to develop as a teacher, a researcher, and a scholar. Special thanks must go to the faculty members who I had the opportunity to work with both as a student and also as a teaching assistant. John Tutino taught me everything I know about Latin America and encouraged me to integrate both North and South America into my thinking on early modern colonization and Atlantic history. Jo Ann Moran Cruz offered initial guidance on situating my dissertation in the context of early modern England and events in Reformation Europe. David Collins introduced me to teaching European Civilization and kindly provided comments on early drafts of my chapters. My dissertation committee members Adam Rothman and Amy Leonard provided crucial help and support during the writing phase of the dissertation. Adam also served as a second advisor and taught me how to teach Atlantic history. But my most sincere thanks go to my advisor, Alison Games, who never doubted my ability to write this dissertation—even when I did—and whose own work served as an inspiration and a model as to how to approach the study of the early modern period from a global perspective.

The broad geographical scope of my dissertation and the dispersed nature of my subjects, and their sources, necessitated research in a wide range of repositories and archives themselves
scattered across the English Atlantic. There is insufficient space to individually thank the staff at each of the many libraries and archives I have visited over the last five years of research and writing. Needless to say my dissertation has been immensely enriched by the knowledge and expertise of the archivists, librarians, and reading room staff I have encountered along the way as I attempted to hunt down and extract the tiniest scraps of information on otherwise forgotten colonial inhabitants. Several institutions provided crucial financial support, which granted me the luxury of time to spend digging through manuscript and book collections in New England, the Chesapeake, and the Caribbean in search of Catholics.

My archival research started out in Boston searching through the rich seventeenth-century accounts of Puritan New England. A W. B. H. Dowse Fellowship supported a month of research in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society and allowed me to make use of resources at the Boston Public Library and the Massachusetts State Archives. In the Chesapeake, a Mellon Research Fellowship from the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond made possible a week spent digging through their collections for references to the Catholic Brent family. My thanks also to Ted Polk at the Library of Virginia, who helped me to interlibrary loan microfilm copies of Virginia county court records. An Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship funded a month of research in Philadelphia at the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Particular thanks must go to Jim Green at the Library Company who, in the space of a few minutes, miraculously located three surviving texts from the library of John Tatham. The reading room staff at the Historical Society also searched diligently for an alleged manuscript map of Tatham’s land in Burlington, but to no avail. A Research Travel Grant from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown funded several weeks of
vital research at the National Archives in Kew, as well as shorter visits to Cambridge University Library and the British Library. The same funding also enabled a two-week research trip to Barbados to view seventeenth-century records preserved in the Barbados Department of Archives and Barbados Public Library. Sylvia Reynolds at the Barbados Public Library kindly arranged for me to view the Lucas Manuscripts at the Archives during the library’s closure. I concluded my archival research back in New England with two-months at the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island, supported by a Charles H. Watts Memorial Fellowship.

In addition to receiving research support from a variety of institutions, I benefitted immensely from two year-long dissertation fellowships that allowed me to complete my research and begin the task of weaving my many archival scraps and fragments into a coherent argument. The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation supported a year-long fellowship in 2008-09 at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies, University of Pennsylvania. I am especially thankful to Dan Richter for the opportunity to be a part of the McNeil Center community. The McNeil Center would not be the place it is without Dan, who works tirelessly to bring together an amazing group of early American scholars. During my year at the McNeil Center, I forged friendships that will remain with me long after the term of my fellowship. From my fellowship cohort I thank Megan Walsh, Jeff Edwards, Laura Keenan Spero, Marie Basile McDaniel, Justin Pope, Jason Sharples, Brian Connolly, and Christina Snyder, each of whom offered advice, comments, and much needed distractions from the tasks of writing and thinking. I am especially grateful to Jeff who dragged me to yoga one evening and got me hooked for life! The McNeil Center is so much more than simply the community created by each year’s group of fellows. I also thank fellow early American travelers Jeff Kaja, Emily Pawley, Michelle and Roderick
McDonald, and Zara Bernhardt for their comments, support, and friendship during my time in Philadelphia and since. As an international student, I carried with me some administrative burdens I could not solve alone. Amy Baxter-Bellamy at the McNeil Center and Kathy Gallagher at Georgetown deserve special credit for ironing out all the administrative wrinkles created by my relocation to Philadelphia for the year. Lastly, a Dissertation Completion Fellowship, part of the Andrew W. Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies Early Career Fellowship Program, supported an additional year of writing back in D.C.

Over the last few years, I have presented sections of my dissertation at conferences sponsored by the American Historical Association, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, the Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction, and the British Association of American Studies. My writing and argument benefitted immensely from the comments and questions of unknown conference participants. I also thank participants in the McNeil Center seminar series and the Early Modern Global History Seminar at the Georgetown Institute for Global History, who read versions of chapters two and three and provided insightful criticism and feedback. My appreciation goes to James Henretta and Ronald Hoffman for their kind words of encouragement after the Georgetown seminar. I thank the many Georgetown graduate students who read portions of this dissertation for various reading groups and seminars over the last few years and offered substantive suggestions and comments. In particular, I thank my fellow graduate students in Atlantic and British imperial history--Danny Noorlander, Jess Simmon Hower, and Mike Hill--and wish them all the best with their own research in the future.

I have been fortunate during my university career to have a family that nurtured and encouraged academic pursuits. I am deeply grateful to my parents--Gwyneth and Bryan--who...
have always supported my dreams and wished the best for me. I thank my sister Laura for her love and support, and my niece Olivia, who arrived at just the right time to provide the perfect motivation in the final stretch. I look forward to being able to spend more time with all of them now that my dissertation is complete. Most especially I thank David, who has shared alike the torments and elations of Graduate School along with me over the last eight years. I would not have made it to the end without his love, support, and copy editing skills! Thank you.

Lastly, this dissertation exists because of the many seventeenth-century inhabitants--Catholics and Protestants alike--who, for a variety of reasons, chose to migrate across the Atlantic ocean to seek their fortune and stake their future in the colonies. Having experienced my own Atlantic migration and settlement, I feel a certain affinity to these stories of relocation. Many of the characters in this dissertation are long forgotten by their descendants and unremarked by historians. I hope the ensuing pages go some way to placing them back into the history of the English Atlantic world.
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INTRODUCTION

PAPISTS IN A PROTESTANT WORLD

Characterized by continued religious upheaval, political turmoil, and unprecedented global expansion, the seventeenth century, even more than the sixteenth century, represented a period of crisis, uncertainty, and transition for the people of Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, France had replaced Spain as the pre-eminent Catholic power and England had positioned itself as the dominant Protestant force in the early modern world. Scholars of English expansion have rightly located the roots of English imperial development in the turmoil and transitions of the seventeenth century, but they have too often focused on a narrow and premature definition of England as a Protestant nation and empire. This dissertation identifies Catholic inhabitants of the seventeenth-century Anglo-Atlantic and reconstructs their contribution to the development of English colonial society. By focusing on the many Catholics who traveled in and around the English Atlantic world, it challenges the dominant historical interpretation of English colonization in the Atlantic that privileges Protestant colonies and colonists. While the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century remained predominantly populated and ruled by Protestants, this dissertation argues that it was not solely a Protestant world. It rejects the prevailing historiographical model of a starkly dichotomous Atlantic world divided into separate Protestant and Catholic enclaves and instead stresses the interactions across religious and political boundaries at the heart of early modern expansion.1

1 The terms “English Atlantic world” and “Anglo-Atlantic” are used here to describe English colonial activity in and around the Atlantic basin focused on the fluid movement of people and ideas beyond traditional national and colonial boundaries. “Atlantic world” is used to refer to the broader colonial world created by the interaction of Europeans, Africans, and Americans around the Atlantic basin. See David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800, 2nd ed., ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2009), 13-29; Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” AHR Forum: Oceans of History, American Historical Review 111 (2006): 741-57.
Traditionally, historical interpretations of religion in the English colonies, particularly those of North America, emphasize the beginning of England as a Protestant empire in the seventeenth century, one shaped by conscious opposition to Catholic Spain and, later, Catholic France. While few historians still hold the view that Puritan New England served as the archetype of American religious and political development in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the vestiges of such a focus on Protestant supremacy remain powerfully present in colonial American historiography. Although Patricia Bonomi’s and Jon Butler’s synthetic treatments of religion in early America have largely displaced the Puritan school of religious history with one that emphasizes inclusivity and diversity, the field remains almost exclusively focused on Protestantism in its varied forms.\(^2\) For the most part, the Caribbean is wholly excluded from these studies of religion in the English colonies.\(^3\) The recent historiographical shift toward Atlantic history has broadened the field of colonial studies to include English encounters and expansion throughout the Americas, Africa, and Europe, but still, in terms of religious identity, the English Atlantic world remains staunchly Protestant.\(^4\) A related historiographical imperative emphasizes the central role of anti-Catholicism to English colonial identity and ideology. It argues that English colonists united not simply as Protestants, but as

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\(^3\) Historians of the English Caribbean colonies have long lamented the erroneous assumption that the Anglo-Caribbean was a godless place when compared to English colonies in North America. See, for example, Larry Gragg, “The Pious and the Profane: The Religious Life of Early Barbados Planters,” *The Historian* 62 (2000): 282.

\(^4\) The most recent reiteration of this historiographical model is Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Pestana acknowledges the existence of non-Protestant inhabitants in the English colonies, but stresses the centrality of a Protestant identity to understanding British colonial expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
Protestants fearful of Catholic invasion. The combined effect of these two related schools of thought is the creation of an English colonial world peopled by Protestants and framed in conscious opposition to an external Catholic world.

Though the study of religion and colonial expansion in Atlantic history is dominated by historians of the English colonies, scholars of the Iberian and French Atlantic have recently called for the formulation of a Catholic Atlantic model centered on the Catholic empires of the Atlantic world and emphasizing the imperial characteristics of global Catholic expansion. While the idea of a Catholic Atlantic is a welcome addition to the historiography of Atlantic religious expansion, it continues to frame the study of the early modern world through the dichotomy of a self-contained Catholic world in constant opposition to a similarly insular Protestant one. Even works which purport to integrate and entangle these separate zones of Atlantic development do so in a purely comparative framework that perpetuates the concept of separate Catholic and

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Protestant spheres of influence. As this dissertation shows, the expansion of European religions in this period did not take place within clearly defined doctrinal enclaves. To fully understand the seventeenth-century world as inhabited by Catholics, Protestants, and non-Christian religious communities, scholars must examine the many overlapping religious, national, and colonial worlds that comprised the early modern Atlantic.

Historians’ neglect of religious minorities has further divided the Atlantic world into self-contained Protestant and Catholic zones of development. This omission of religious minorities is particularly true for the historiography of the English Atlantic world, where the Protestant-centric focus of traditional colonial history has carried through into broader Atlantic studies. Scholars of the English Atlantic world have eagerly pursued religious plurality within a Protestant framework, producing colonial and Atlantic studies of Quakers, Baptists, and

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8 Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008). Schwartz demonstrates aptly, in the context of the Iberian Atlantic world, the vital importance of studying religious minorities to understand the larger colonial society of which they were a part. As such, *All Can Be Saved* proves a rare exception to the general trend towards separate Protestant and Catholic worlds, and stands as an important model for future studies of religion in the Atlantic world. See also “Critical Forum on Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved*,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 66 (2009): 409-33.
Moravians, to name but a few. But colonial American and Anglo-Atlantic historians alike have so far been much more reluctant to examine minorities outside the traditional framework of Protestantism, with Judaism and Catholicism notable in their absence. Though comparatively small in number, members of both religious groups played an active part in the social, political, and economic development of the English Atlantic world, and, as such, are deserving of study.

Although of equal importance, the Jewish merchant communities that thrived in port towns throughout the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English Atlantic world are beyond the scope of this study. This dissertation is instead focused on recovering and reconstructing the minority Catholic population of the English Atlantic world so long ignored by historians of the English colonies.

Part of the reason for the exclusion of Catholics from the religious history of the colonies is the insular nature of American Catholic historiography. For a long time, Catholic history in

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10 Work has begun to uncover the role of Jewish communities in Atlantic development, although it is heavily focused towards the Iberian and Dutch Atlantic. See Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, eds., Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500-1800 (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). Of particular significance for the study of the English Atlantic world is Holly Snyder’s article, “English Markets, Jewish Merchants, and Atlantic Endeavors: Jews and the Making of British Transatlantic Commercial Culture, 1650-1800,” in Ibid., 50-74. There is also a growing interest in Islam and the early modern Atlantic see, for example, Sylvanie Diouf, Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas (New York: New York University Press, 1998). Catholics, as yet, are still considered largely outside the purview of English Atlantic history.
English North America has been the preserve of Catholic historians and they have viewed it as little more than a prequel to the development of the Catholic Church in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Early studies of colonial Catholicism centered on the institutional foundation of the Catholic Church in the form of clerical and missionary establishments largely outside the English sphere of influence. John Gilmary Shea’s *The History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, published in the late nineteenth century, shaped the parameters of American Catholic history well into the twentieth century. Shea’s focus on institutional history, rather than on actual Catholics, restricted Catholic history almost exclusively to narrowly defined “Catholic” regions of early America, such as Spanish Florida, New France, or the Jesuit missions in Maryland. In the 1960s, John Tracy Ellis reaffirmed this essential focus on Catholicism as an institutional religion by studying colonial American Catholics through the lens of the missionary system. Ellis divided his work into three regions of study, “The Spanish Missions,” “The French Missions,” and “The English Missions,” with the intention of illuminating the “indelible mark of the Christian faith left on the souls of countless Indians,” and, thus, shaping “the national heritage of all Americans.” While these institutional histories are vital to understanding the colonial foundations of the Catholic Church in North America.

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America, the blinkered focus on religious institutions restricts our understanding of Catholicism in the colonies to the tiny minority of Catholics who had easy access to mission churches.

Beginning in the 1980s, a new wave of Catholic historians sought to apply the lessons of social history to the study of Catholicism in the United States. Buoyed by the pronouncement of the Second Vatican Council that the Catholic church was made up of “the people of God,” which included both clergy and laity, these new Catholic historians focused on the Catholics who peopled the Church. Turning away from the study of church institutions and hierarchies, they examined instead the religion of ordinary people. Though such studies broadened the scope of Catholic historiography and expanded the examination of the colonial period to include frontier mission zones such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, they continued to append the colonial period to the post-colonial history of American Catholicism. Catholic histories, then, have failed to study colonial Catholics in their own historical context and, subsequently, have provided little incentive to historians of the colonial period to broaden their concept of religious and political identity to accommodate Catholic settlers. There remains a potent disconnect between historians working on the history of Catholicism in America and those studying the religious history of the Anglo-colonies.

Early American and Atlantic historians have largely confined consideration of colonial Catholics to the Catholic colony of Maryland. Historians of colonial Maryland have studied the subject of Catholic inhabitants and their influence on the social, economic, political, and even

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cultural development of the colony, but only within the confines of Maryland itself.\textsuperscript{14} The rise of Atlantic history has encouraged a number of works that seek to situate Catholic Maryland within the larger transatlantic context of English religious and political transformation.\textsuperscript{15} Though these studies go some considerable way to inserting Catholic settlers into the story of the English Atlantic world, they are still fundamentally focused on the idea that Maryland--as the Catholic colony--stands out from its Protestant neighbors. Catholic migration and settlement, then, continues to be an atypical characteristic, rather than an inherent component, of English colonial development. This perception of Catholic migration as anomalous is clearly demonstrated in the historiography of other English colonies in the seventeenth century. Outside of Maryland, the study of Catholic migration to, and settlement in, colonial North America is confined to genealogists and local historians. As such, it is largely overlooked by historians of colonial


religion. In the Caribbean, colonial historians associate Catholicism with Irish migration and treat it as a distinct, ethnic component of the English Atlantic disconnected from other Catholic migrants.

With a few noted exceptions, then, Catholics in the English Atlantic world are, quite literally, relegated to the footnotes of history. When historians discuss Catholic residents of the English colonies they tend to frame and explain them as anomalies or exceptions that prove the dominant narrative of the English Atlantic world as a Protestant zone of development and expansion. Put simply, Protestantism is English; Catholicism is not. Catholics, according to the standard historiographical model for the seventeenth-century English colonies, are always out of place. This dissertation takes the opposite view. Although always a minority, Catholics appear in the colonial records with such persistence that their presence must have been an inherent part of life in the English Atlantic world, as it was in the British Isles. By focusing on Catholic inhabitants as the central unit of study, this dissertation explores not just how England emerged

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17 Recent studies of the Irish Caribbean include Donald Akenson, If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); Jenny Shaw, “Island Purgatory: Irish Catholics and the Reconfiguring of the English Caribbean, 1650-1700” (Ph.D. diss, New York University, 2009). While there is considerable value to examining the unique characteristics and contributions of Irish Catholic migrants to the English Atlantic world, it is also true that Irish settlers in the Caribbean formed just one aspect of a diverse Catholic migration in the seventeenth century. This broader Catholic migration is also worthy of study in its entirety.

18 Richard Dunn, for example, spends seven pages describing the exploits of Sir Henry Colt in the early English Caribbean, but his identity as a Catholic is relegated to a brief footnote, Richard Dunn, Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 3-9, footnote on 7.
by the end of the seventeenth century as the dominant Protestant force in the Atlantic, and around
the globe, but also the religious difference and ongoing religious diversity that underlay this
transformation.

In order to bring Catholic inhabitants to the foreground, historians of the English Atlantic
world must look to developments in the study of religion and society in early modern England.
The classic historiographical interpretation of early modern England long viewed the Anglican
ascension in the sixteenth century as the death knell of Catholicism in England and as a trigger
for the wider international battle between Protestantism and Catholicism that propelled European
powers into a quest for Atlantic empire during the early modern period. In keeping with this
paradigm, traditional studies of the post-Reformation Catholic community in England viewed it
largely as an imported religious culture brought to England by missionary enterprise in the late
sixteenth century and disconnected from its medieval foundations. Over the last thirty years,
scholars of post-Reformation England have begun to reinterpret English Catholicism as an
integral part of England’s cultural and political development that remained constant before and
after the Reformation.

Inherent in this revisionism is a redefinition of what constituted English Catholicism that moves away from the strict parameters of the Counter-Reformation mission to a

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Aveling, The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation (London:
Blond and Briggs, 1976). For a classic interpretation of the English Reformation see A. G. Dickens, The English

20 The earliest iterations of this revisionist trend are Christopher Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the
English Reformation,” Past and Present 93 (1981): 37-69; Christopher Haigh, “Revisionism, the Reformation and
the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992). These
ever revisionist works stress the continuity between medieval and post-Reformation Catholic culture, and
encouraged a broad definition of Catholicism that applied to both Catholic and Protestant practice. For the
application of this shifting interpretation of English Catholicism to our historical understanding of the progress of
religious reformation in England see J.J. Scarisbrick, The Reformation and the English People (Oxford: Blackwell,
1984); Christopher Haigh, English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1993); Ethan H. Shagan, Popular Politics and the English Reformation (New York:
mode of analysis shaped around the actions of English Catholics themselves as they struggled to maintain their faith and their relationship to the Protestant state. Viewing post-Reformation English Catholicism as “vital, popular, innovative, flexible, [and] responsive,” recent historical studies have uncovered a persistent Catholic subculture in England that adapted and modified religious ritual to meet the conditions of the new religious environment; developed underground networks to support Catholic clerics, educate the faithful, and expand congregations; periodically conformed to avoid legal sanctions; and redefined political loyalties along non-religious lines. Historians are not alone in rethinking the significance of Catholicism to post-Reformation culture and society. Literary scholars have also spent the last decade realigning the textual relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism and studying the significance of pro-Catholic and anti-Catholic texts to English cultural development. Together this new scholarship shows that a


more nuanced understanding of the question of Catholicism in the English world, and English religious identity more generally, is required.

A dramatic shift in the way historians interpret and portray religious belief in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has accompanied this renewed focus on Catholicism in the history of early modern England. Individual changes in religious belief were not teleological, permanent, or indeed progressive. Catholics became Protestants, Protestants became Catholics, and families moved backwards and forwards along a broad spectrum of faith and practice that ranged from traditional Catholicism through to radical Protestantism. Some of these people considered themselves to be devout Catholics. Others displayed a distinct leaning towards Catholic practice, but conformed for political and economic reasons. More still demonstrated the continuing proximity between Catholic and Protestant beliefs, particularly in the realm of popular religion, that marked the seventeenth century not as a Protestant era, but one of religious transition. Historians of early modern England, then, increasingly view religious identity in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century on a sliding scale, not as oppositional and separate positions. To understand the ascendancy of Protestantism as a political, national, and colonial identity in both England and its overseas possessions over the course of the seventeenth century, we must also understand its interaction, entanglement, and overlap with Catholicism.

These recent developments in the study of religion in early modern England have substantial implications for how we study the same religious communities in the colonies. Modern historians have undervalued the extent to which seventeenth-century migrants carried a

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24 This same religious fluidity is also apparent in seventeenth-century Ireland, see Raymond Gillespie, Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).
fluid understanding of religious faith with them to the colonies. While some historians of Protestantism in the colonies elucidate this fluidity within certain limits (namely the relationship between doctrinal and popular religious practice), most have not expanded their scope to include the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism.²⁵ It is implausible that the Catholic sub-culture that historians and literary scholars have documented among English Catholics did not transfer to English possessions in the Atlantic. English Catholics migrating across the Atlantic carried with them adaptive methods and tools, developed at home, that allowed them to function in a religious world in transition. In the colonies, they encountered a diversity of Catholics from the British Isles, Europe, Africa, and the Americas who brought their own local variations of Counter-Reformation Catholicism into the mix. Just as in the British Isles, Catholic settlers and their Protestant neighbors in the English Atlantic colonies embraced a fluid concept of religion that blended Protestant and Catholic belief, doctrinal and popular interpretations, and local religious variations.

This dissertation adopts a broad definition of religious identity in order to examine and explain the many Catholics who appear in colonial records from all over the English Atlantic world. It is focused not on traditional areas of Catholic expansion, but on locating individual Catholics who chose to seek their fortunes in, or were forcibly transported to, the English colonies. Similarly, my research is not confined to Catholics from England, but broadly envisioned to encompass other inhabitants of the British Isles, European migrants, Africans, and American converts who ended up living under English rule. An Atlantic-wide approach towards

finding and identifying Catholic inhabitants in the English colonies moves beyond the continued focus on particular “Catholic” colonies in isolation from broader historical connections, a practice that obscures rather than clarifies the nature and significance of Catholicism across the Anglo-Atlantic world. The Catholic inhabitants at the core of this dissertation did not live in a world constrained by the arbitrary religious, political, and colonial boundaries that historians have constructed around them. By taking the Atlantic as my central unit of analysis and directing my focus towards the many Catholics who settled within, and traveled around, this English colonial world, this study avoids the continued privileging of Protestant colonies and inhabitants that dominates historical interpretation of seventeenth-century English expansion.

In addition to ranging across an expansive geographical space, this dissertation adopts an equally broad time frame. It is interested in the development of English colonial expansion in the long seventeenth century, a vital transitional period in which the English state established itself as a global power and emerged from the throes of the Reformation as an ostensibly Protestant nation. English global expansion began in earnest in the late sixteenth century with exploratory forays into North and South America, trade enterprises in the Mediterranean and along the West African coast, and expansion into the lucrative commercial world of the Indian Ocean and the East Indies. Catholics were intimately involved in English expansion into the Atlantic in the late sixteenth century. In 1582, over fifty years before the founding of Maryland, Sir George Peckham and Sir Humphrey Gilbert promoted private colonization efforts in North America as a potential refuge for English Catholics. English and Irish Catholics joined Sir Walter Raleigh in his attempts to establish an English presence on the Amazon River in the 1590s. In 1605, English

Catholics again sponsored initiatives to establish a colony in Maine peopled with Catholic military veterans from the Spanish army. The establishment of Jamestown, in 1607, shifted the focus of English colonization towards settlements intended to advance English national trade, security, and territorial interests. Over the next thirty years, the founding of additional colonies in New England, the Chesapeake, and the Caribbean expanded English Atlantic possessions in conscious opposition to Catholic imperial rivals in the region. By the end of the seventeenth century, these fledgling English settlements had consolidated to form an English Atlantic world that increasingly dominated Atlantic and global trade. That century of colonial foundation, expansion, and consolidation provides the chronological framework of this study of Catholics in the English Atlantic world.

An equally tumultuous religious and political climate accompanied this era of colonial beginnings. Far from being a steady progression towards Protestant uniformity, the seventeenth century proved an era of chaotic transformation and transition for the English state. The idea of a modern Protestant nation and empire, overseen by a state-sponsored Church of England, remained uncertain even as late as the 1680s. The ebb and flow of religious and political fortunes over the course of the seventeenth century provide a crucial historical context for any consideration of English global expansion. English colonization took off in the first decades of the seventeenth century as the early Stuart monarchs struggled to assert their authority in the

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28 Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 7-9. Pincus observes, “James’s regime may look brief and fragile in retrospect, but from the perspective of the late seventeenth century he had created a powerful edifice,” one that threatened to successfully re-Catholicize England and its overseas possessions. (Ibid., 7)
British Isles and in Europe. Private and royal colonial ventures in North America and the Caribbean offered individual venturers, as well as the English state, an opportunity to attack Catholic Spain in the Atlantic. At home, the growing demand for religious conformity heightened domestic tensions. Catholics struggled to support their monarch and their faith, while the conservative religious reforms of Archbishop William Laud alienated radical Protestants from the Stuart crown. Both of these groups took the opportunity to flee to the Continent and the colonies. By the 1640s, infighting between Protestant sects in England contributed to civil war, a revolution in parliament, and the rise of the Puritan faction under Oliver Cromwell. In the Atlantic, Cromwell’s Western Design attempted to remove Spanish influence from the Caribbean and resulted in the seizure of Jamaica for the English crown. But just as this military expedition asserted anti-Catholicism as the dominant thread in English expansion, Cromwell’s military activities in the British Isles forced his political and religious opponents into exile overseas, flooding the colonies with Catholics.

The death of Cromwell in 1658 facilitated the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. With the return of Charles II in 1660, the English state entered an extensive period of expansion and consolidation aimed at asserting monarchical control over the patchwork of English colonial enterprises. Attempts to rein in colonial and provincial autonomy reached their apogee in 1685 with the ascendance of James II to the throne of England. Openly Catholic, James II favored his own supporters for political office and a new wave of zealous Catholics, often recent converts, sought power and influence at home and in the colonies. James II’s Declaration of Indulgence, repealing the laws against religious non-conformity, meanwhile, encouraged Catholics to practice their faith openly for the first time in over a century. This brief period of indulgence
came to an end in December 1688, when Protestant opponents of James II’s rule joined forces to establish a new and permanent Protestant monarchy in England and its colonies. The Act of Toleration of 1689 mandated the exclusion of Catholics from public office and religious life, and assured the dominance of a Protestant identity to future colonial and imperial expansion.

Beginning in 1607, then, and ending in roughly 1700, this dissertation seeks to understand the role that Catholic inhabitants played in forging the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century. Five thematic chapters stitch together a range of sources drawn from across the English Atlantic to reveal the extent and significance of Catholic involvement in English colonial expansion and the formation of an English Protestant identity. Chapter one opens with an assessment of the problems and challenges facing historians examining a religious minority who remained determinedly well-hidden for most of the seventeenth century. It provides an overview of the source material available to historians of Catholicism in the colonies, and asserts that the prevailing emphasis on enumerating Catholic populations in the British Isles and the English colonies loses sight of the significance of minority religious groups to shaping domestic and colonial development over the course of the seventeenth century. The chapter instead proposes a methodology focused on identifying individual Catholic inhabitants and reconstructing their lives to shed light on the diverse religious constitution of the English Atlantic world. It concludes by introducing the variety of Catholics who resided in the English colonies, from English gentleman to Irish indentured servants, skilled artisans to enslaved Africans, as well as the occasional foreign Catholic in the form of French missionary priests, Spanish sailors, and Dutch merchants.
The second and third chapters examine the mechanisms and methods by which colonial Catholics sustained a sense of religious identity and actively practiced their Catholic faith. Chapter two addresses the essential role of the priesthood to the Catholic religion and asks how Catholicism could survive in a colonial world largely devoid of clerical institutions. Far from being a simple study of the institutional framework of Catholicism in the English colonies, the chapter instead connects the established missions in Maryland, New York, and the Caribbean to the many itinerant and temporary priests who moved in and out of the English colonies. This chapter brings a new focus to the unofficial, ad-hoc, and often unintentional, missionary projects that provided crucial pastoral care to Catholics living under Protestant rule. Tied to a global web of Catholic expansion and the economic connections of the emerging English Atlantic world, these visiting missionary priests demonstrate the degree to which Catholic and Protestant spheres of political influence remained persistently entangled. In tracing the connection of English and Irish missions with other Catholic migrations, this chapter illuminates the links between the English Atlantic and the broader Atlantic world. The chapter concludes by examining how these connections affected the lives of Catholics living in the English colonies as they struggled to sustain their faith.

But, still, even with itinerant missionary priests moving in and out of the English colonies, access to the sacraments, clerical guidance, and pastoral support remained fragmentary and intermittent for most Catholics throughout the seventeenth century. In the absence of priests, Catholics turned instead to the potent symbolism of Catholic artifacts and sacred texts to assert their religious identity and sustain their Catholicism. Using references to Catholic material culture in the documentary record and archaeological evidence, chapter three reconstructs the
methods used by Catholics to express popular Catholic beliefs and to recreate Catholic ritual practice even though they lacked the spiritual guidance of the clergy. Examining the presence and use of “popish things”—such as beads, crucifixes, and religious medallions—and “popish books” in the English Atlantic, the chapter emphasizes the fluidity between Protestant and Catholic practice in the colonies. It argues that the persistence of Catholic rituals and artifacts in Protestant popular religious beliefs and the similarity between Catholic and Protestant uses of religious books further facilitated the survival of Catholic practice in the English Atlantic world.

Having established the presence of actively practicing Catholics in the English Atlantic, the last two chapters of the dissertation focus on the implications a study of this minority population bring to bear on scholarly interpretations of the development of a Protestant identity by the end of the seventeenth century. Chapter four addresses the inherent duality of Catholic inhabitants as both temporal subjects of a Protestant monarch and spiritual subjects of the Catholic Church. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the English state increasingly viewed Catholicism as antithetical to the political interests of the Protestant nation. But an examination of political loyalties in the English colonies makes clear that mass betrayal by Catholic subjects was more often an ideological fiction than a factual reality. Focusing on four specific moments when the loyalty of Catholic inhabitants of the English Atlantic proved of paramount concern, chapter four asserts that Catholics could be, and often were, simultaneously loyal and treacherous, and that this paradox could be both a limitation and an advantage to Catholics living in the English Atlantic world. In fact, Catholics possessed a multitude of interacting loyalties—religious, political, economic—that enabled them to be both feared and accepted by their Protestant neighbors. The English Atlantic world did not move towards a homogenous religious and political identity over the course of the seventeenth century, but,
rather, allegiance and loyalty—and through them national and colonial identity—were subject to continual redefinition on a local and global scale as the nation expanded and an English empire formed.

Chapter five further explores the acceptance of Catholic inhabitants by Protestants in the English Atlantic world, through the lens of toleration. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Catholics suffered persecution at the hands of an English state determined to prohibit Catholic involvement in the public and civic life of the British Isles and the colonies. A brief respite in the late 1680s ended with the institution of the Act of Toleration, which excluded Catholics entirely from any consideration of liberty of conscience and participation in the politics of the English nation and its colonies. But intolerance in the realm of English law did not mean Catholics living in the colonies over the course of the seventeenth century suffered from active persecution on account of their faith. Focused on the Catholics who peopled, planted, governed and secured the English Atlantic world and the Protestant neighbors who accepted and tolerated these Catholics, chapter five argues that religious toleration in the English Atlantic was not a simple dichotomy between religious persecution and religious freedom. Before, during, and after the Revolution of 1688/89, local colonial authorities accepted individual Catholic inhabitants as a valued part of colonial life and tolerated Catholic practice on an individual basis. Such actions co-existed with the broader ideological rejection of Catholicism as a political identity in the English Atlantic world.

This study of Catholic inhabitants in the English Atlantic colonies transforms how we understand and write about the early modern Atlantic world. It documents the existence of a minority Catholic population throughout the English colonies and uncovers the methods
employed by Protestant settlers and authorities to live peaceably with their Catholic neighbors. In so doing, this dissertation reinterprets the role of religion in the formation of political, national, and, ultimately, imperial identities. As much as the English Atlantic world expanded in the seventeenth century in overt opposition to Catholic enemies, it remained populated by a diversity of religious groups. Among this diverse religious population were Catholics, people whom Protestant colonists continued to deem ideologically dangerous to English expansion even as they accepted them as colonial inhabitants. Overly focused on the emergence of a Protestant empire, historians of the English Atlantic have excluded Catholics from their interpretation of English expansion and inadvertently perpetuated the myth of a Protestant colonial world first fostered by Protestant contemporaries in the seventeenth century. Closer examination of those Catholics who lived and thrived in the English colonies raises doubts about historians’ neglect of Catholicism as a component part of the Anglo-Atlantic in the early modern period. Focusing on individual Catholics reveals interaction across religious and political boundaries, sometimes in the form of conflict, but just as often through exchange and cooperation. By studying papists in the Protestant English colonies we can begin to reassess the levels of religious and political entanglement throughout the Atlantic world in the early modern period. Recognizing how the seventeenth-century English Atlantic world continued to be a religious world in transition fundamentally changes how scholars should understand the development of English global expansion and the interaction between Protestant and Catholic rivals in the early modern period.
As a result of the religious transformations of the late sixteenth century, Catholicism ceased to be the dominant religious expression in most regions of the British Isles. But during the seventeenth century, Catholicism did not die out as an active faith. Narrative and legal sources point to the existence and survival of Catholic households in many parts of the British Isles over the course of the seventeenth century. Catholicism remained stronger in some regions than others. Ireland, the Scottish Highlands and Northern England remained centers of recusant, church-papist, and missionary activity throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. Even outside these avowedly papist regions, Catholics continued to live throughout the British Isles and practice their faith alongside Anglican conformists and dissenting Protestants. A religious census conducted by the Bishop of London in 1676 documented Catholic habitation in at least one-fifth of all parishes in England and Wales.¹ Not all parishes returned data, but of those that did, two-thirds contained Catholic residents living side-by-side with dissenting Protestants, as well as adherents to the state church. As the English monarchy began to expand its influence across the Atlantic and around the globe in the seventeenth century, Catholics joined their Protestant neighbors as colonial settlers. In the Americas, English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish

Catholics merged with continental Europeans, Africans, and indigenous converts to form a sub-community of Catholics within the English Atlantic world.

Historians of early modern Britain and Ireland rely on legal records generated by the anti-Catholic penal laws and recusancy statutes to reconstruct Catholic populations after the Reformation. English statutes defined recusancy as a measure of religious conformity to the state religion. Proof of conformity usually consisted of observed attendance at communion services in local parish churches. Recusancy laws, in theory, applied equally to Catholic and Protestant subjects who failed to conform to the state-sanctioned religion. But most applications of the recusancy laws in the seventeenth century concerned those who professed the Catholic faith, and, as a result, the terms recusant and Catholic became synonymous. Throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland only those convicted of the crime of recusancy by local parish authorities appeared on the official lists of “Catholics” or “papists” compiled by local and state authorities. For example, the religious census conducted in 1676 assigned parish residents a religious identity of “Conformist,” “Non-Conformist,” or “Papist” based on their attendance at parish services. The 1676 census measured conformist behavior, not actual religious belief. Conformists such as church papists, who attended Protestant services but maintained a private attachment to Catholicism, did not usually appear in recusancy cases. Further, the application of recusancy laws varied greatly from parish to parish dependent on the sympathies of local authorities to minority religious neighbors and to central government. Population figures calculated from legal records only begin to scratch the surface of Catholic survival in the seventeenth century, but it is
the best place to start any consideration of Catholicism in England or the larger English Atlantic world.²

The demographic estimates compiled by John Bossy in his classic study *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* remain the foundation of any consideration of Catholicism in the seventeenth-century English world. Bossy defined membership in the community as meaning “habitual, though in view of physical difficulties not necessarily very frequent, resort to the services of a priest and, from at least the later seventeenth century, a degree of continuous congregational participation.” His definition allowed for a degree of conformity to the state church but, crucially, excluded any Catholic who regularly attended Anglican services, such as church papists. Bossy considered conforming Catholics to express a mere remnant of traditional Catholic belief mixed in with Protestantism. Bossy left no room for spiritual expediency, adaptation, or flexibility in his definition of post-Reformation Catholicism.³ Using official “head-counting operations,” such as the recusancy rolls, to provide a reliable count, Bossy calculated the Catholic population of England and Wales at 40,000 people in 1603, rising to 60,000 by 1640, and holding steady at that number through the end of the seventeenth century.⁴

Defined as “countable” Catholics, Bossy’s figure of 60,000 is difficult to contest, but it remains an educated guess and in all probability a low one. Bossy’s estimates provide only a

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restricted picture of the most devout adherents to the Catholic faith in England and Wales, the
group that Bossy defines as the core of the English Catholic community. Temporary conformists
are represented in Bossy’s calculation, but the fluctuating religious population of church papists,
sometime Catholic sympathizers, and hybrid religious believers, remain beyond the scope of
recusancy lists. This narrow definition of the English Catholic community has proven
controversial among scholars of post-Reformation England. Christopher Haigh considers post-
Reformation English Catholicism to have been “a varied and amorphous phenomenon,”
observing that “individuals drifted in and out of formal recusancy while always regarding
themselves as Catholics and retaining Catholic habits.” 5 Another historian aptly notes, “The
church-papist must have thought of himself as a Catholic and that is how I shall regard him.” 6 In
recent years, historical studies of the form, practice, and socio-economic character of
Catholicism in England have expanded the bounds of the Catholic community. 7 Although
“church papists and fellow travellers” remain “essentially incalculable,” historians cannot simply
exclude them when considering the religious construction of society in early modern Britain and
Ireland, or indeed the colonies. 8


8 Marie B. Rowlands, “Hidden People: Catholic Commoners, 1558-1625,” in Rowlands, English Catholics of Parish and Town, 22.
Of course, any study of Catholicism in the English Atlantic world must take into consideration not just Catholicism in England and Wales, but also the potential settler and servant populations in Scotland and Ireland. Both regions of the British Isles underwent their own Reformation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, triggered by events in England and elsewhere in Europe. In Scotland, the institution of a Calvinist state church and the destruction of Scottish monasteries led to a full-scale dismantling of the Catholic Church by the late sixteenth century. Catholicism in Scotland survived as a regionalized religion in the Gaelic-speaking Highlands, supported by an active missionary enterprise begun in the 1610s. Catholicism in seventeenth-century Scotland remained even more hampered and isolated than the church in England and Wales. Ireland proved the one exception to the model of Protestant ascendancy in the seventeenth-century British Isles. Attempts by the English in the sixteenth century to impose Protestantism on the Irish population provoked a Catholic revival linked integrally to political opposition to English rule. But though the Catholic faith prevailed as the religion of the majority of Irish people throughout the seventeenth century, Ireland remained subject to the English crown and the threat of religious persecution. Irish Catholicism was as much a “hidden” religion as its English, Welsh, and Scottish counterparts in the seventeenth century. Irish Catholics, in particular, played a crucial role in the religious development of the English Atlantic world.

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9 Michael A. Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland*, 36-54.

As we track Catholic migration to the English colonies in the seventeenth century, the problems of counting Catholics become even more apparent. The recusancy records so central to historians of Catholicism in the British Isles offer little hope for the study of colonial Catholicism. The crime of recusancy does appear to have crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Laws ordering the identification of recusant behavior and restricting the activities of those convicted of recusancy appear on the statute books of a number of colonies. In 1622, the assembly in Bermuda ordered churchwardens to monitor church attendance as a means of identifying papist as well as non-conformist behavior.11 In 1641, the Virginia assembly enacted anti-Catholic penalties then in force in England for all colonial residents convicted of recusancy. The new statute specified that “no popist [sic] recusant” could hold any public office in Virginia, on penalty of incurring a fine of 1,000 pounds of tobacco.12 In 1662, Virginian lawmakers allowed the statute to lapse and replaced it with a monthly fine of £20 for recusant behavior.13 In New England, colonial officials targeted priests as a means to prevent recusancy and force colony-wide conformity to Protestantism. In 1647, the Massachusetts legislature passed a law banning “all and every Jesuit, seminary priest, missionary or other spiritual or ecclesiastical person made or ordained by . . . the pope or see of Rome.” If caught, a Catholic cleric faced imprisonment or death.14 Similar laws appeared on the statute books of English colonies in the Caribbean.


1679, for example, lawmakers in Barbados passed a law “for preventing dangers which may happen from Popish recusants.” Like its counterparts in the other English colonies, the Barbados Assembly modeled its recusancy law on anti-Catholic legislation passed in England. But even though laws governing recusant and Catholic activity existed in the colonies, actual application of the legal category of recusancy to identify and punish Catholic residents is almost non-existent in colonial records. In Stafford County, Virginia, for example, attempts to use the recusancy statutes against Giles and George Brent failed because neither man could be positively identified as recusant, even though they openly professed Catholicism.

The absence of recusancy as a legal category in the colonies is unsurprising. More so than in the British Isles, colonial religious institutions lacked the means to monitor conformity. Newly formed parishes, fluctuating and highly mobile colonial populations, and the opportunistic nature of church-attendance for most colonial inhabitants made constant vigilance on the part of local ministers difficult. Even in New England, where ministers feared the damage Quaker, Anabaptist or Catholic interlopers could cause among their Puritan flocks, large segments of the colonial population remained outside the bounds of Puritan congregations. Local governments carefully monitored non-church members as “strangers,” but their religious views and practices remained largely unrecorded as long as their activities did nothing to threaten Puritan social control.

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16 Henry R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia, 1622-1632, 1670-1676 (Richmond, Va.: The Colonial Press, 1924), 511; May 18, 1693, Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 7--Court Records [Orders] 1689-1693, fol. 351-2.

Throughout the English Atlantic world the frequency of non-attendance at the established parish church, whether through illness, distance, free choice, or non-conformity, surely made it difficult to distinguish the papists from the godless. The recusant law passed by the Bermuda Assembly in 1622, for example, ordered that the churchwardens “shall psent all popishe recusants whether men women or children aboue the age of 13 yeares,” as well as “all such as refuse to be present and joyne wth the congregation in divine seruice, or in receivinge the Sacramt of the Lords supper at the least once a yeare.” The law contained no provision to separate Catholic recusancy from either Protestant non-conformity or immorality. In 1630, in accordance with the Bermudan law, churchwardens presented Thomas Higgs and his wife for failing to have their child baptized and “not coming to the communion.” The surviving records, unfortunately, do not elaborate on the couple’s religious faith or their punishment. Although the Bermuda courts monitored attendance at church there appears to have been no systematic attempt to distinguish “popishe recusants” from non-conformists.

The plethora of religions available in the colonies further complicated the spiritual landscape. Colonial inhabitants sometimes attended church services outside their chosen faith, but the decision to cross doctrinal lines did not necessarily require full conversion. Rather, attendance at a new or different church could simply indicate curiosity, a conscious attempt to suggest religious openness or, more commonly, spiritual expediency. The religious options available to colonists differed greatly from colony to colony and over time. In 1643, for example, John Winthrop recorded in his journal that visiting Frenchmen “though they were papists, yet

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18 Lefroy, Memorials of Bermuda, 1:319.

19 Lefroy, Memorials of Bermuda, 1:499.
they came to our church meeting.”20 Meanwhile, the scarcity of Anglican ministers in Maryland
during the seventeenth century encouraged many colonists to seek spiritual consolation from
Catholic or Quaker alternatives. In 1676, a Church of England minister in Maryland wrote with
care to the Archbishop of Canterbury that “many fall away Dayly . . . to Popery, Quakerism
or Phanaticisme” for want of Anglican services.21 A governor of the Leeward Island colonies
observed in 1677 that the population entertained “as many Various Religions as at home, but as
all, or most doe frequent the Churches when they like the parson, or when a fitt of Devotion
Comes vpon them . . . ; I Cannot tell the Variety of their Religions.”22 In 1687, a Huguenot
visitor to Boston reported that French papists residing in the city attended French-language
services at the Huguenot church.23 Throughout the colonial world Puritans, Quakers, Anglicans,
and Catholics, as well as the many other religious groups who migrated to the English colonies,
sought and found spiritual comfort where and when they could. Seventeenth-century
contemporaries and modern historians alike have struggled to quantify and label such decidedly
irregular religious behavior.

In this fluid and diverse religious environment, the absence of legal proceedings against
recusants did not equate to an absence of Catholics in the colonies. The identifiers “Roman
Catholic,” “Catholick,” “papist,” and “popish,” appear in a variety of historical sources from

20 Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle, eds., The Journal of John Winthrop 1630-1649

National Archives, Kew, London [hereafter TNA], No. 38i, fol. 122; John D. Krugler, “‘With promise of Liberty in
Religion’: The Catholic Lords Baltimore and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Maryland, 1634-1692,” Maryland
Historical Magazine 79 (1984): 38; Michael Graham, “Meetinghouse and Chapel: Religion and Community in
Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” in Colonial Chesapeake Society, ed. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan and Jean

22 Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton, Governor of the Leeward Islands, Nov 22, 1677, CO 1/38 Privy
Council 1676 Oct-Dec, TNA, No. 65, fol. 167.

across the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century. A keyword search of the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* demonstrates the frequency with which colonial correspondence resorted to such labels. The terms “Catholic” or “Catholics” appear in 132 entries, “Catholick(s)” appear 61 times, and there are 5 instances of “Catholique(s).” By far the most common occurrence is “papist(s),” which appears in 305 entries. “Popish” appears 87 times, “Roman” 122, and “romish” 41. The term “recusant(s)” appears in only 15 entries. Examination of the original manuscript volumes housed at The National Archives in Kew, London, reveal further instances of Catholic identifiers not noted in the calendars. Of course not all these keywords concern individuals in the colonies. Some refer to the Catholic monarchies of France and Spain, and others to the threat of invasion from outside. But still, an overwhelming number of references to Catholicism appear to describe individuals or groups living within English colonial jurisdiction. The use of these identifiers is replicated in colonial sources from across the English Atlantic world, including local court records, assembly minutes, private correspondence, and

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24 I purposely chose to use the term “identifier” here to indicate the active process of identification occurring in colonial sources. The author of these sources is ascribing an identity to the subject, but it is not necessarily an identity claimed by the subject themselves. Although in many cases it may be. The historian must be careful to place these actions in a historical and individual context to ascertain the meaning of such terms for both the identifier and the identified. On the problems of identity in historical study see, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47. It is also interesting to note the similarity between these Catholic identifiers and terms such as “negro,” “mulatto,” or “slave,” used in colonial sources to ascribe racial identity to colonial inhabitants.

25 The figures are drawn from keyword searches of Karen Ordahl Kupperman, John C. Appleby, and Mandy Banton, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial: North America and the West Indies, 1574-1739*, CD-Rom version 1.0 (New York: Routledge, 2000). The CD-Rom keyword search utilizes the original indices produced in CSPC, not a full-text search of the abstracts and transcriptions, or indeed of the original manuscripts themselves. The CD-Rom keyword search is therefore subject to the same late nineteenth-century editorial bias present in the published edition. The more recent Chadwyck/Proquest online database, which provides digitized images of the Privy Council records (CO 1/--), also bases its keyword search on the CSPC indices. See *Colonial State Papers*, [http://colonial.chadwyck.com/marketing/about.jsp](http://colonial.chadwyck.com/marketing/about.jsp), accessed October 22, 2010.
The task, then, is to reconcile these scattered references to Catholic inhabitants with the staunchly Protestant world constructed by historians of the English Atlantic colonies. To whom do these Catholic identifiers refer, why do they appear in the historical record, and how extensive was Catholic residence in the English colonial world in the seventeenth century?

As many historians of the colonial period have lamented, estimating colonial populations before the second half of the seventeenth century is difficult at best. Concerned primarily with recording heads of household, the seventeenth-century sources used by historians to estimate colonial populations rarely offer demographic information beyond white land-holding males. Even after 1660, when the restored monarchy instituted new layers of bureaucracy and control into colonial rule, counting the colonial population remained inexact and subject to the interpretations of local collators. Identifying colonial populations by religion can be fraught with difficulties. The colony of Maryland perfectly demonstrates the challenges of estimating colonial populations based on religious persuasion. Though the Maryland Act of Religion in 1649 allowed open worship for all Christian denominations, few official population estimates of Maryland Catholics, or indeed any religious group, exist for the seventeenth century. Historians of Catholic Maryland have instead resorted to a variety of methods to recreate population figures for the seventeenth century. On the whole, their estimates seem remarkably low and reveal the

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26 My methodology of searching for Catholics in a broad range of colonial sources is influenced by the work of early modern historians studying the experience of non-gentry Catholics in seventeenth-century England. Marie Rowlands asserts that historians must “bring together fragments of evidence from the widest possible range of sources, including those not primarily concerned with religion” in order to reconstruct the experience of Catholics of all social ranks, see Marie B. Rowlands, “Introduction,” in Rowlands, English Catholics of Parish and Town, 5-6.

minority status of Catholics throughout the English Atlantic world, as much as the difficulties encountered in reconstructing colonial populations based on religious affiliation.

In his study of mid-seventeenth-century Catholic belief, for example, Edward Terrar extrapolated an estimate of the Catholic population in Maryland based on the relative percentage of Catholics in the English population. Using a lower range of 10% and an upper range of 25%, Terrar calculated a population of 55 to 138 Catholics in 1640, 68 to 171 Catholics in 1650, and a definitive 386 Catholics in 1660.28 These estimates remain subject to the same inaccuracies encountered by historians of seventeenth-century English Catholicism discussed above. Terrar’s calculations exclude conforming Catholics, converted Catholics, and Catholics who migrated from Ireland, continental Europe, or Africa.29 An alternative method for calculating the Catholic population of Maryland requires individually identifying Catholic inhabitants from a thorough and intensive search of colonial records. Using identifications in local Maryland records and evidence from wills, Michael Graham positively identified 276 Catholics in Maryland between 1634 and 1720. But, as Graham himself noted, it is near impossible to estimate a general population from these figures. The sources provide no means to assess what percentage of the Catholic population remained unrecorded in local court and testamentary business. The poor, non-whites, and women are particularly prone to exclusion using this method of identification.30

28 Edward F. Terrar, Social, Economic, and Religious Beliefs among Maryland Catholic People During the Period of the English War 1639-1660 (San Francisco, Calif.: Catholic Scholars Press, 1996), 91-3, figures drawn from Table 2-1, p. 92. Terrar based the figure of 10% on an expansion of Bossy’s Catholic community to include church papists and other sympathizers. The Jesuits themselves, reported a Maryland population in the region of 25% Catholic in the 1630s.

29 Maryland records indicate at least a small minority of Catholic migrants came from Ireland, continental Europe, and Africa. Terrar himself accepts this point, but makes no attempt to include them in his estimates. Terrar, Social, Economic, and Religious Belief among Maryland Catholics, 17.

Clearly, if an estimate of the Catholic population remains so elusive in a colony that openly welcomed Catholics for most of the seventeenth century, we can begin to grasp the difficulties of counting Catholics accurately in the wider English Atlantic world.

Contemporary reports from Catholic missionaries and Protestant colonial officials provide some general estimates from which to begin a survey of the Catholic population of the English Atlantic world. Neither group of sources is particularly reliable. Catholic missionaries tended to embellish their achievements in the Americas and we can assume their discussions of white congregants suffered from a similar degree of exaggeration as their more famous enumerations of indigenous converts. For their part, English colonial officials seem to have ignored all but the most threatening expressions of religious dissent. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, the Committee for Trade and Plantations in London requested detailed reports from colonial governors on the state of colonial society, including the religious composition of the population. The minimal information provided on Catholic populations in these reports stands in sharp contrast to the optimism of Catholic accounts and belies the persistent presence of Catholics in other colonial correspondence preserved in the National Archives. Examined together, the reports of Catholic missionaries and Protestant colonial officials give some idea of the parameters of Catholic migration to the colonies in terms of numbers, geographical spread, and character. It should be noted that estimates by both Catholic missionaries and Protestant officials appear to refer solely to white Catholic inhabitants and offer little insight into African and indigenous Catholicism in the English colonies.31

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31 The problems of identifying and counting Catholics of African origin are discussed further below.
Over the course of the seventeenth century, Catholic missionaries and priests active in the English colonies submitted reports to Catholic authorities in the British Isles, France, and Rome detailing the number of potential parishioners they encountered on their travels. Missionary reports are strongest for the Caribbean. The intermittent presence of English, French, and Irish priests in the English Leeward Islands and Barbados over the entirety of the seventeenth century resulted in a steady flow of information back to Europe. Unlike the extant missionary reports for seventeenth-century Maryland, which detailed conversions, baptisms, and marriages, the accounts submitted for the Caribbean provided total population estimates in an attempt to encourage further missionary enterprise in the region. Using these missionary estimates we can begin to develop an upper estimate of the number of Catholics in at least the Caribbean sector. Figures for the Caribbean suggest the extent to which Catholic populations have been overlooked by historians of the English Atlantic world.

In 1639, Catholic officials involved in providing pastoral and missionary care for the English Caribbean estimated “that the number of Irish Catholics in those regions exceeds three thousand.” The figure, provided by the Archbishop of Tuam, Malachy O’Queeley, included Irish migrants “living on St. Christopher Island and on other adjacent islands in the West Indies subject to the King of Great Britain.”32 By the late 1630s, settled English possessions in the West Indies included St. Christopher, Antigua, Nevis, Montserrat and Barbados, and contemporary estimates suggested a total white population of “20,000 planters.”33 The actual population was probably considerably higher based on adjustments for underrepresentation of poorer inhabitants.


Modern estimates suggest white colonial populations of 14,000 on Barbados, around 12,000 in the English sections of St. Christopher, 3,000 on Nevis, and less than 900 on Montserrat and Antigua respectively. This equals a total white population in the English Caribbean of roughly 30,000 people by 1640.\textsuperscript{34} Accepting the broadest reading of O’Queeley’s estimate to refer to the whole of the English West Indies, it would mean at least 10% of the white population may have been Catholic.

Certainly we cannot say for sure that O’Queeley’s estimate referred to the entire Anglo-Caribbean in 1639. He may have been describing St. Christopher alone, in which case the percentage would be closer to 25%. If O’Queeley referred only to the Leeward Islands as a coherent region that percentage would be closer to 18%. What is clear is that these percentages are not grossly inconsistent with Catholic population estimates in the British Isles or Maryland, especially when we consider the dominance of Irish migration in the Caribbean. The island of Montserrat probably accounted for a large chunk of this population. An English report from 1634 described the island as containing a “noble plantation of Irish Catholiques” allegedly exiled from Virginia.\textsuperscript{35} With an estimated population of less than 900 by 1650, however, Montserrat could not possibly contain 3,000 Catholics in 1639. It is, moreover, inaccurate to suggest that Montserrat was the only location for Catholic migration in the early years of Caribbean colonization or in fact that all these Catholics were Irish. The same 1634 report noted Catholic

\textsuperscript{34} Henry A. Gemery, “Emigration from the British Isles to the New World,” Tables B.1 p. 219, B.5-7 pp. 223-4. The figures for Montserrat and Antigua refer to the 1650 population and are probably a little high. The total figure of 30,000 is based on rounding down to account for slight over-estimation.

\textsuperscript{35} Andrew White, “A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto Maryland, by Father Andrew White, 1634,” in Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1910), 38. On the possible origins of the first settlers on Montserrat see Martin I. J. Griffin, “Catholics in Colonial Virginia,” Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia 22 (1911): 84-100. Griffin concludes that White’s description of the Montserrat settlers as exiles from Virginia referred to the colony’s administration of the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy to all arrivals. The Irish may never have set foot in Virginia, but felt themselves “excluded” from that region by virtue of their religion (p. 100).
habitation in Barbados and St. Christopher, as well as Montserrat, in this early period. Unfortunately the report provides little quantitative evidence beyond naming notable Catholic residents, usually English planters, or offering a descriptive enumeration such as “some few.” Other sources, however, indicate a comparable Catholic population on St. Christopher at least. In a letter of 1638, O’Queeley informed authorities in Rome that “six hundred Irish of both sexes, all Catholics” had sailed for “Saint Christopher Island and parts of Virginia in the West Indies.”

A 1640 report described 400 Irish Catholics eager to transport themselves from English St. Christopher to Portuguese territory on the Amazon. Further speculation on the relative Catholic population of each individual colony in the 1640s is impossible due to the limitations of source material. But we can conclude that an estimate of 10% for the Catholic population of the Anglo-Caribbean in 1639 is not implausible.

Missionary accounts from the 1650s provide us with more specific information on the Catholic population in the Anglo-Caribbean. Between 1650 and 1655, French Jesuits on St. Christopher estimated the Catholic population of the English Leeward Islands at 3,000 souls.


37 Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 188. The reference to Virginia is probably a misnomer for Montserrat based on the widely reported, but erroneous, information that Irish exiles from the Chesapeake settled the island.

38 “Proposals to Transfer Irish Colonists from St Christopher’s to the Amazon, 164[0]-1646,” in English and Irish Settlements on the River Amazon 1550-1646, ed. Joyce Lorimer (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1989), 446-59. In 1646, the Portuguese received a second proposal to transport a further 130 Irish Catholics from St. Christopher to Brazil. Lorimer, English and Irish Settlements, 122.

39 Pierre Pelleprat, Relation des missions des PP. De la Compagnie de Iesus dans les isles, et dans la terre ferme de l’Amerique Meridionale (Paris, 1655), 39. The account states specifically that “the Father having, in very little time, gathered his sheep, found that his Church was composed of close to 3,000 people.” Given the lack of further estimates for other parts of the Leeward Islands visited by Stritch, I think it is fair to conclude that by “his Church” Pelleprat referred to the entirety of the mission area, including all four of the major Leeward Islands. Based on my own translation of the French text.
This figure did not include French-speaking Catholics resident in the French or English Leeward Islands served by the French clergy, or French slaves who had a dedicated Jesuit mission. In the same period the total white population of the English Leeward Islands grew only marginally to 18,800. The French estimate would put the Catholic population in the English Leeward Islands at roughly 16% of the total white population. A second French clerical account provides a separate estimate for the island of Barbados of 2,000 Catholic residents in 1654. Based on modern estimates of the island’s population in the mid-seventeenth century, the Catholic cohort represented between 8% and 10% of the total white population on Barbados. If we add the two estimates together we get an upper figure for the Catholic population of the English Caribbean in the 1650s of roughly 13%. Catholics transported from Ireland by the forces of Oliver Cromwell probably dominated this population. The French account of the Leeward Islands specifically describes the dominance of Irish Catholics in the mission population, but the Barbados account does little to delineate the ethnic, racial or national identity of the population as a whole. We do know that roughly 3,000 Irish prisoners of war resided in Barbados in 1655, alongside 300 Irish “Planters and free servants” described as being “of fforigne Principles.” Some of these Irish freedmen may have been remnants of the Catholic population observed in 1634 or new migrants. Wherever they originated from, it is clear that in the 1650s Catholics remained a persistent

40 Based on the estimates made by Gemery, “Emigration from the British Isles to the New World,” Tables B.5-7 pp. 223-4. By individual island, this total amounted to 12,000 people in St. Christopher, 5,000 in Nevis 1650, and 900 each in Montserrat and Antigua.


42 Richard Dunn suggests a population of 23,000 white people in 1655, while Henry Gemery produced a revised estimate of 20,000 for the same period. See Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, 87; Gemery, “Emigration from the British Isles to the New World,” Table B.1, p. 219.

43 “The humble Ouertures of Dieurs persons neerely concerned in the present posture and condition of the Island of Barbados,” [1655], CO 1/69 Privy Council Addenda 1634-1757, TNA, loose sheets.
minority in all the English Caribbean colonies and, in fact, their numbers grew as Irish Catholics escaped across the Atlantic to avoid persecution.

In the 1660s, John Grace, an Irish Jesuit serving the English- and Irish-speaking population in the Greater Caribbean, filed the most substantive report of any Catholic missionary in the seventeenth-century Anglo-Caribbean. Having spent three years traveling throughout the English and French Caribbean, in 1669 Grace wrote to his Irish superior in Paris detailing the “great multitude of Catholics” to be found living under English rule in the West Indies. Grace cautioned that “one or two men do not suffice for the undertaking of that journey because of the distance and the large number of catholics [sic], which is not less than 12,000.” Of this total, Grace detailed 8,000 Catholics on Barbados, 2,000 on Monserrat (including the then deputy-governor of Montserrat, William Stapleton), 600 on St. Christopher, and 400 on Antigua. According to Grace, a further 200 and 800 Catholic refugees from English colonies resided on the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe respectively.

In 1668, Barbados contained a white population of roughly 20,000 people. Assuming Grace’s estimate is accurate, Catholics in Barbados constituted 40% of the colony’s population. This figure represents a substantial increase on missionary estimates recorded earlier in the century and, Montserrat excepted, is much larger than Catholic figures calculated for any other

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44 A Letter of John Grace, July 5, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 256. Based on a translation provided by Timothy Kearns.


46 The Barbados figure appears in A Letter of John Grace, July 5, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 257. The other estimates are detailed in Narrative of John Grace, July 5, 1669, in Ibid., 258-9. Grace provided no estimate for the island of Nevis.

47 “Notes in the handwriting of Williamson relating to Barbadoes and the Caribbee Islands,” 1668, CO 1/23 Privy Council 1668 Jul-Dec, TNA, fol. 212. Williamson noted a total population of 60,000 on the island, including 40,000 slaves. Five years later, the Barbados census recorded 21,309 white residents. Gemery, “Emigration from the British Isles to the New World,” Table B.1 p. 219.
area of the English Atlantic in the late seventeenth century. In September 1667, Lord Willoughby, governor of Barbados, reported to the king that the population of Barbados contained “a strange composition of blacks, Irish, and servants” of whom he could rely on only 2-3,000 of them.\(^{48}\) Willoughby’s mistrust was almost certainly due to the Catholic faith of many of the island’s militiamen, whom the governor described as refusing to fight “without a Crucifix about his neck.”\(^{49}\) An anonymous account written the same year reported a militia capability of 8,000 men in Barbados, “of which two-thirds are of no reputation and little courage, and a very great part Irish.”\(^{50}\) Though they seem to confirm the presence of large numbers of Catholics on the island, these military assessments, unfortunately, offer no further insight into the accuracy of Grace’s estimate.

Despite the dramatic upheavals of the Leeward Islands in the late 1660s, as France and England warred for control of the region, Grace’s estimates for the Leeward Island colonies are much easier to evaluate. In his report, Grace clearly accounted for the mass exodus of people from islands like St. Christopher during the war with the French in 1666 and 1667. The 1,000 Catholic refugees located on Martinique and Guadeloupe, for example, fled the English colonies as a result of the war. Assuming Grace’s figures represent a post-war calculation of the Catholic population, we can compare them with the population figures compiled in the 1678 census of the Leeward Islands. Uniquely, the 1678 census calculated the colonial population by race and ethnicity. Historians use the census to gain a rough idea of the number of English, Irish, Scotch, Welsh, French, and Dutch inhabitants living under English rule, as well as an accurate count of

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\(^{50}\) “Some observations on the island of Barbados,” 1667, CSPC, 5:529.
the enslaved population.\textsuperscript{51} The census, therefore, provides a crucial point of comparison for the figures reported by Grace. In particular, the census provides an opportunity to compare the number of Catholics with the Irish population in the colonies. [See Column 1 and Column 3 of Table 1.] The similarity between the Catholic population reported by Grace and the number of Irish reported by the census less than 10 years later suggests that Grace’s estimates can be taken as a relatively accurate count of the Catholic population of the English Caribbean. Granted, not all Catholics were Irish nor, indeed, all Irishmen Catholic, but this fact combined with natural demographic changes due to births, deaths, departures, and new arrivals more than accounts for the discrepancies between the Grace’s estimate and Irish population reported in the 1678 census.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{51} The original census lists can be found in “Answer to Enquiries by the Lords of Trade and Plantations about the Leeward Islands,” June 29, 1678, CO 1/42 Privy Council 1678, TNA, No. 98i, fols. 195-239v. Of course, not even this census provides an accurate count. The 1678 census of the Leeward Islands provides a prime example of the inaccuracies and variables that crept in with local idiosyncrasies. The Committee for Trade and Plantations ordered the governor of the Leeward Islands to provide population statistics for each of the islands under his jurisdiction including information on race and ethnicity. The documents preserved in the National Archives reveal the many ways local officials choose to interpret this order. St. Christopher, for example, compiled lists of inhabitants for all, or most, parishes with an ethnic label beside each male name, delineating between Irish, French, and English inhabitants. Montserrat and Nevis provided ethnic totals at the end of each parish listing, but furnished no means to ascertain individual identities. Antigua submitted the least amount of information, including only an island-wide accounting of the numbers of English and Irish. On the problems of using the 1678 census to collate ethnic information see Donald Akenson, \textit{If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 189-200.
Table 1. Catholic Population Estimates in the English Leeward Islands, 1669-1678.  

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>2308</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2307</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>2682</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevis</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>3604</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Christopher</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeward Islands Total</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3323</td>
<td>3783</td>
<td>10491</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further corroboration of Grace’s calculation appears in a written report submitted to the Committee for Trade and Plantations by the governor of the Leeward Islands, William Stapleton, in 1677. Asked to provide information on the religious make-up of the Leeward Island population, Stapleton reported that “the Protestant Tenett or p[er]swasion is most prevalent” but noted “some few Quakers” on Antigua and Nevis, and “Romane Catholiques” on Montserrat. According to Stapleton, on the islands of Antigua, St. Christopher, and Nevis, conforming Protestants, meaning those of the Anglican faith, outnumbered both Quakers and Catholics eight times.

52 Column 1: Narrative of John Grace, July 5, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 258-59. Grace alluded to the island of Nevis, but did not provide a Catholic population figure for the island. Column 2: “Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton, Governor of the Leeward Islands,” Nov 22, 1677, CO 1/38, TNA, No. 65, fol. 167-167v. Figures calculated by translating Stapleton’s ratios into percentages and applying that to the white population recorded in 1678. Although the ratios for Antigua, Nevis, and St. Christopher included both Quakers and Catholics, Stapleton notes that “in Nevis, there are some few Quakers & in Antegua to the number of 60 in both Islands.” (fol. 167) I have therefore assumed that Quakers constituted only a small fraction of the total of both groups. Column 3 and 4: The Irish and the white population totals are my own calculations drawn from the information supplied in the original 1678 census lists, “Answer to Enquiries by the Lords of Trade and Plantations about the Leeward Islands,” June 29, 1678, CO 1/42, TNA, No. 98i, fols. 195-239v. Column 5: Percentages calculated using the 1678 white population. Column 6: Percentages based on Stapleton’s ratios. Column 7: Percentages calculated from the figures in columns 3 and 4.

53 “Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton, Governor of the Leeward Islands,” Nov 22, 1677, CO 1/38, TNA, No. 65, fol. 167.
to one. On Montserrat, however, Stapleton observed six Catholic inhabitants for every Protestant
one, and no Quakers.54 Figured as a percentages, Stapleton’s and Grace’s estimates are
remarkably similar. [See Column 5 and Column 6 of Table 1.] The only obvious divergence is
the reported Catholic population on St. Christopher, which can be explained by the ongoing
upheavals caused by the Anglo-French war in 1666-67. The English sectors on the island of St.
Christopher remained under French control until 1671. Continued French occupation explains
why Grace’s estimate in 1669 differed so much from Stapleton’s estimate eight years later. Grace
reported in 1669 that “the French and English are now mingled together” on St. Christopher, and
that the English and Irish Catholic population frequented the French churches.55 Many of the
Catholics counted by Grace in 1669 left the island when the colony reverted to English rule in
1671, and so do not appear in Stapleton’s calculations. Catholic missionary estimates should not
be discounted as purely Catholic propaganda that offer nothing of value to colonial historians.
Carefully compared to extant Protestant reports from the English colonies, Catholic-produced
data provides useful clues to the extent and character of Catholic residence in the English
Atlantic world.

Stapleton was not the only government official ordered to provide detailed information
on the religious composition of the colonial population. Between 1677 and 1681, governors
across the English Atlantic world submitted reports to London in response to enquiries as to the
state of colonial governance and the current colonial population. These enquiries formed part of a
broader initiative on the part of the English state to regain control of the governance of the nation

54 “Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton, Governor of the Leeward Islands,” Nov 22, 1677, CO 1/38, TNA,
No. 65, fol. 167v.

55 Narrative of John Grace, July 5, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 259. On the complications on St.
Christopher after the war see Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, 124-5.
and the colonies. The orders sent by the Committee for Trade and Plantations in London all included a version of the following question: “What persuasion in Religious matters is most prevalent, & amongst the varieties which you are to expresse, what proportion in number & quality of people, the one holds to the other.”

Responses varied greatly from colony to colony. As seen above, Governor William Stapleton provided an exact accounting of the three major religious groups in his jurisdiction, including Catholics. But most governors claimed very few or no Catholics resident in their colonies. The governor of New York, for example, observed “Religions of all sorts.” Although the governor accounted for Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Anabaptists, and Jews, he made no specific mention of Catholics. In response to a second request for information in 1687, the new governor, Thomas Dongan, reported “in short of all sorts of opinions there are some,” including “[a] few Roman Catholicks.” It helped that Dongan himself, like Stapleton in the Caribbean, professed Catholicism. The governor of Barbados reported the dominance of the “true Christian Religion” in the form of the established Church of England alongside a small number of Quakers, “a parcell of Anabaptists,” and “some Jews about two hundred and sixty in number.” The Catholic population of Barbados, documented in other sources, went unrecorded. In New England, the governor described the bulk of the population as “Church members,” excluding only the Quakers

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56 “Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton, Governor of the Leeward Islands,” Nov 22, 1677, CO 1/38, TNA, No. 65, fol. 167. The Compton census of 1676 formed part of the same attempt to reform English state control at home and overseas. Rowlands, “The Catholics of 1676 as Recorded in the Compton Census,” 80.

57 Answers to the Enquiries of the Council for Trade and Plantations about New York, Apr 16, 1678, CO 1/42, TNA, No. 54, fol. 110.


59 Answer to enquiries made by the Committee for Trade and Plantations, June 11, 1681, CO 29/3 Barbados Colonial Entry Book Jul 5, 1680-Apr 25, 1688, TNA, fol. 83.
in Rhode Island. Rhode Island submitted its own answer to the enquiries, stressing the religious
tolerance that allowed the dominant Quaker and Baptist congregations to co-exist alongside
“divers perswasions & principles.” But as to Catholics, Rhode Island’s governor reported, “wee
know of none amongst vs.” Virginia, meanwhile, identified one sole papist in the colony. Most surprisingly, the governor of Maryland reported that “Presbiterians, Independants,
Anabaptists, and Quakers” dominated the colony’s religious culture. Those displaying
sympathies for the Anglican and Catholic faiths made-up only 25% of the population.

Based solely on the reports submitted by colonial governors in the late 1670s and early
1680s, it would be fair to conclude that Catholicism mattered little to the development of the
English colonies. But if we move beyond the quest for numbers and focus instead on tracing and
identifying actual Catholic inhabitants it becomes clear that official reports from both Protestant
and Catholic sources tell only part of the story. The briefest reference to colonial persons as
“Catholic,” “papist,” or “popish” presents the opportunity to reconstruct an otherwise hidden
population. By using these identifiers to compile a list of potential Catholic inhabitants and, in
turn, using these names to generate further information on the lives of Catholic colonists, we can
reveal a Catholic world within the English colonies ignored by contemporary observers and
modern historians alike. Take, for example, Lord Culpepper’s 1681 statement to the Committee

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60 Answers to the Enquiries of the Council for Trade and Plantations about New England, Apr 9, 1678, CO 1/42, TNA, No. 52, fol. 106.
61 Letter, Governor Peleg Sanford to William Blathwayt, May 8, 1680, CO 1/44 Privy Council 1680 Jan-May, TNA, No. 58, fol. 403.
63 Minutes of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, Jul 19, 1677, CO 1/41 Privy Council 1677 Jul-Dec, TNA, No. 27, fol. 61v.
for Trade and Plantations that “there is but one Papist in Virginia.” The phrase sheds little light on the significance of that one papist. The “one” referred to George Brent, a prominent landowner in Stafford County, the male head of the Virginia branch of the Brent family, and a known Catholic. The Brents established themselves on the Virginian side of the Potomac River in the late 1640s, when Giles Brent, George’s uncle, migrated from Maryland. By 1681, the family included members in Maryland, Virginia, and England. The Virginian branch grew steadily for the next twenty years and played a substantial role in the social and economic development of Northern Virginia.

Moreover, in the ten years immediately following Culpepper’s statement in 1681, several other “reputed papists” appeared in Virginia’s court records. The Westmoreland County court records for 1682 contain information on one Thomas Blundell and his wife who, as “Popish recusants,” the court considered unfit guardians for an orphan child. George Nicholas Hack and Daniel Jennifer, both suspected of adhering to the Catholic faith, appeared frequently in the records of Accomack and Northampton counties in the 1680s. Despite refusing to swear the Oath of Supremacy, Governor William Berkeley appointed Jenifer to the position of county justice and high sheriff. In 1689, Hack defended himself in the county court from accusations of recusancy.

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64 Minutes of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, November 26, 1681, CO 391/3, TNA, fol. 156v.


Catholics in Virginia did not confine their activity to the counties and settlements bordering Maryland. In Lower Norfolk County, in 1687, a visiting priest married John Brockwell and Mary Bustian according to the Catholic rites. A further three residents of Norfolk County received visits from the same priest at their homes. In neighboring Nansemond County, local residents filed a petition against Peter Blake for being “a Professed Papist & contemner & slighter of ye Publick worship of God.”

Clearly, there was more than one Catholic in Virginia in the 1680s. Why then did Lord Culpepper report only one Catholic to the Committee for Trade and Plantations? It is unlikely that Culpepper overlooked or ignored the existence of other Catholics in Virginia. Nor should we conclude from this statement that Culpepper purposely attempted to mislead the authorities in London by excluding known Catholics from his report. Rather, Culpepper’s statement reveals the highly selective nature of the information presented to authorities in London and, subsequently, preserved for posterity. As a substantial landowner and office-holder, George Brent appeared on the governor’s radar in a way that small landholders and freedmen such as Thomas Blundell or Peter Blake did not. Perhaps it would have been more accurate for Culpepper to report only one Catholic worthy of his attention as governor and of interest to the authorities in London. Culpepper was not alone in selectively reporting only wealthy, powerful Catholics. Thomas Dongan’s report of “[a] few Roman Catholicks” in New York, for example, undoubtedly counted the tax collector, Matthew Plowman, Gervais Baxter and Anthony Brockholes, officers in the colonial militia, and Dongan himself. But did it include men like James Emott, Thomas Stevens,


and Daniel Whitehead, who, in 1689, swore an oath before an English Jesuit to remain loyal to James II? Following such fragmentary leads in local records, historians can reconstruct a Catholic population that remained beyond the scope and concern of the colonial governments.

The instances of Catholics preserved in the fragmentary court records for seventeenth-century Virginia all appear to refer to free and propertied men. These are exactly the type of people most likely to be preserved in colonial court records and also the socio-economic group at the core of the English Catholic community as defined by Bossy. It would be wrong to conclude from such evidence, however, that only Catholics possessed of middling to large-scale wealth resided in the colonies. As historians have speculated over the years, Catholics undoubtedly existed among the indentured servant population. Richard Dunn makes several references to the servant population being predominantly Catholic in the seventeenth-century Caribbean. Edward Terrar asserts that, due to the large numbers of Irish servants flooding the colonies, both Virginia and the West Indies absorbed more Catholic migrants than Maryland in the mid-seventeenth century. Both statements are almost impossible to verify given the paucity of demographic sources available to historians, but contemporary seventeenth-century accounts provide some anecdotal evidence of poorer Catholic migrants. Documents from the colonial period confirm


71 Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, 69, 103, 133-34, 161; Hilary McD. Beckles, “A “riotous and unruly lot”: Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, 47 (1990): 506, 508 repeats Dunn’s assertions; Terrar, Social, Economic, and Religious Beliefs Among Maryland Catholic People, 93. Both Dunn and Beckles base their assertion on the predominance of people of Irish extraction in the indentured servant population. Most estimates of the servant population in the English Atlantic world do not distinguish between those of Irish and those of English origin. Further, even when an estimate specifically refers to Irish servants, it is virtually impossible to ascertain accurate figures as to the relative numbers of Protestant Irish and Catholic Irish in the English colonies. The same holds for the relative number of English Protestant servants to English Catholic servants. Any attempt to calculate the percentage of Catholic servants in the colonial population therefore is highly speculative. Terrar’s statement is an intriguing and probably accurate assumption given the small size of the Maryland population for most of the seventeenth century in comparison to Virginia or Barbados. But, again, Terrar offers no substantive evidence to support this assumption beyond the oft repeated and unqualified statement about Irish indentured migrants being predominantly Catholic.
that an unknown number of Irish people, usually poor and indentured, migrated to the colonies from the 1640s onwards. In 1653, for example, John Winthrop received word of the arrival of “A shipp from Ireland with Servants.” Knowing Winthrop to be in need of servants, his correspondent had acquired four passengers for Winthrop’s use, “A man and his wyfe and two other wemen.” At the European end, Oliver Cromwell ordered that all “vagrants and idle persons, who can give no good account of their living, nor have friends nor means to maintain them” should be apprehended in Ireland and sent to English merchants for shipment to the colonies. Given the higher rates of Catholic survival in seventeenth-century Ireland, it is probably fair to conclude that many, although not all, such servants considered themselves to be Catholic.

A description of someone as Irish, however, did not positively identify them as Catholic. Conversely, Catholics probably also existed among the poor English, Scots, and Welsh migrants who flooded the colonies as indentured servants during the same period. Poor Catholics did not tend to appear in court records, prepare wills, come to the attention of colonial officials, or leave a written record of their activities. It therefore becomes more difficult to positively ascertain religious identity lower down the socio-economic scale. The case of Eleanor Stephenson illustrates the problems of identifying the religious persuasion of servants. In his study of seventeenth-century Maryland Catholics, Edward Terrar refers to Stephenson as Catholic, but much of the evidence in support of this identification is fragmentary and anecdotal at best. Stephenson appears in the colonial records of Maryland only four times. She first appeared in the


74 Terrar, Social, Economic, and Religious Beliefs Among Maryland Catholic People, 107, 266, 312.
records in 1643, as the subject of a suit filed by her former master, Sir Edmund Plowden, for recovery of his property, namely Eleanor and her sister, Jane.\textsuperscript{75} Later that same year, Robert Ellyson filed suit against both Plowden and Stephenson for an unpaid medical bill.\textsuperscript{76} Stephenson’s last appearance in the documentary record came in 1649, when John Greeneway testified to her marriage five years after it occurred. No record of the actual marriage itself survives.\textsuperscript{77} None of these fragments shed any light on Stephenson’s religion. The case for Stephenson’s Catholicism instead hangs on her associations with known Catholics. She arrived in Virginia in 1642 as the servant of Sir Edmund Plowden, the Catholic proprietor of New Albion.\textsuperscript{78} Stephenson, along with several other servants, ran away to Maryland at the first available opportunity after arriving in Virginia. Running away to Maryland could be interpreted as either a religious choice or simply a bid for freedom. Whether Stephenson shared the religion of her master or not, in 1644 she chose to marry another known Catholic, William Brainthwaite. There is, therefore, no evidence that positively identifies Stephenson as a Catholic, but her actions certainly seem to suggest she expressed a sympathy towards the Catholic faith. We will never know for sure.

Local Protestant authorities often presumed that, deprived of Catholic institutions and surrounded by Protestant masters and neighbors, Catholic servants would rapidly cease to be Catholic.\textsuperscript{79} Seventeenth-century documents confirm that many migrants experienced extreme

\textsuperscript{75} William Hand Browne, et al., eds., \textit{Archives of Maryland}, 72 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1883-1972) [hereafter \textit{Archives of Maryland}], 4: 210.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Archives of Maryland}, 4: 215-26, 220.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Archives of Maryland}, 4: 524.


\textsuperscript{79} William H. J. Kennedy, “Catholics in Massachusetts Before 1750,” \textit{Catholic Historical Review} 17 (1931): 11-12, 16.
pressure to conform. In 1633, for example, Edward Howes wrote to inform John Winthrop Jr. of the imminent arrival of a young Irish boy, destined for a life of servitude in Massachusetts. The boy had lived among Puritans in England for some time, and had already encountered the Protestant faith. At first, Howes explained, the boy “would not goe to church; nor come to prayers; but first we gatt him vp to prayers and then on the lords day to catachise, and afterwards very willingly he hath bin at church 4 or 5 tymes.” Despite the constant pressure to convert, however, the boy remained stubbornly bound to his Catholicism according to Howe’s report. He “as yet makes conscience of fridayes fast from flesh,” Howes lamented, and “doth not loue to heare the Romish rel[igion] spoken against.” Howes urged Winthrop Jr. to take on the task of educating the boy, and observed that “with gods grace he will become a good convert.”

Winthrop’s father, the governor, noted the boy’s arrival in his journal, but provided no further information on his fate. Elizabeth Clarke faced similar pressures in Bermuda in the 1670s. Clarke traveled to Bermuda from Barbados as the servant of John Somerall. Examined by the court in 1672, Clarke admitted to being “a Roman Catholique . . . when she came into ye Islands.” However, “sence she had bin at Capt John Somersalls, being acquainted with ye Scriptures: wch had bin kept from her, now shee was of ye Church of England.” Clarke’s explanation of her conversion experience did not convince the justices of the court in Bermuda. The court ordered Clarke to “take [the] oathes of Allegiance and Supremacie & goe to Church” or suffer transportation back to Barbados.

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80 Letter, Edward Howes to John Winthrop, Jr., August 5, 1633, in Winthrop Papers, 3:134.


82 Lefroy, Memorials of Bermuda, 2:367.
Catholic missionaries also expressed concern that Catholic servants sent to the colonies to serve Protestant masters risked losing their faith. In 1631, Simon Stock mourned the collapse of his mission in Newfoundland and expressed particular fears for the fate of “two or three Catholic women,” abandoned there among the heretics “with no priest or minister.” In 1634, English Jesuits bound for Maryland claimed to have rescued a Catholic man “from the very jaws of hell.” Having refused to swear the oath of allegiance, the man had been placed “in the charge of a certain heretical merchant, to be sold at his will in some heretical colony.” The Jesuits bought the man’s indenture and transported him to Maryland to serve a Catholic master instead of a Protestant one. Once established in Maryland, the Jesuits continued to show concern for the poor Catholics transported to both Maryland and Virginia. They encouraged other Catholic settlers to purchase servants from neighboring Virginia that they might be nurtured in the Catholic Church. The Maryland clergy feared that “living among men of the worst example and being destitute of all spiritual aid,” such servants would “generally make shipwreck of their souls.” The conviction, held by both Protestant and Catholic observers, that poor Catholics lacked the means to preserve and sustain their faith, also goes some way to explaining why many governors reported no Catholics among the colonial population. The poor simply did not register as a religious threat.

The pressures placed on servants to conform to the religion of their masters does not mean that all poor Catholics ceased to consider themselves Catholics. Elizabeth Clarke, the


young Irish boy, the women left in Newfoundland, and the Maryland servants all disappeared from the records as abruptly as they first appeared, so we cannot confirm what happened to them. But references to other servants indicate some, at least, sustained a sense of their Catholicism even without the daily presence of priests, a church, or a stable religious community.\footnote{The intermittent presence of priests and the methods employed by lay Catholics to sustain their faith in the English colonies is discussed in greater detail in Chaps. 2 and 3.} In his description of the island of Barbados in 1668, John Scott alluded to 2,017 acres of Land in the north of island where “are thrust together ye poore Catholiques.”\footnote{John Scott, “Description of Barbados,” Sloane MSS 3662, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London, fol. 55.} The area described by Scott constituted the bulk of the parish of St. Lucy, which, along with St. Philip in the south, contained the least fertile land on the island and also held a substantial number of residents identified as Catholic. In 1688, for example, a Catholic vagrant named William Kelley attacked the minister of St. Lucy parish, John Wilson, and accused him of threatening to have “all the Roman Catholicks whipped out of the parish.” Kelley claimed to have been in communication with two priests who had visited Bridgetown.\footnote{The incident between Kelley and Wilson is detailed in a series of depositions given before the St. Lucy parish justices, see Letter, Edwyn Stede to the Committee for Trade and Plantations, Oct 5, 1688, CO 1/65 Privy Council 1688 Jun-Dec, TNA, No. 65, fol. 253va-253b, and the attached documents No. 65xxi-xxxi, fols. 287-299v. The quotation is taken from Deposition of William Kelley, Oct 4, 1688, CO 1/65, TNA, No 65xxii, fol. 289. Kelley’s alleged meeting with two priests is described in the Deposition of Thomas Ebourne, Oct 5, 1688, CO 1/65, TNA, No. 65xxv, fol. 292-92v.} Elsewhere in the English Atlantic, poor Catholics held onto their faith even in the greatest adversity. During his travels in the Caribbean, John Grace encountered a poor Catholic woman named Margaret Riordan, a refugee from St. Christopher. Riordan sought out Grace to give confession and receive consolation before she died.\footnote{A Letter of John Grace, Mar 11, 1667, in Gwynn, “The Irish in the West Indies,” 254.} In New England in 1688, Cotton Mather became involved in the case of Goody Glover, an Irish woman accused of witchcraft. Mather noted that, despite several years living in Boston, Glover “own’d
her self a Roman Catholick; and could recite her Pater Noster in Latin very readily.”

Kelley, Riordan, and Glover did not lose their faith as a result of migrating to Protestant-controlled colonies. These examples suggest that, to fully understand the extent of Catholicism in the English Atlantic world, historians must consider the varied experiences of Catholics across the economic spectrum.

Nor should we automatically assume that propertied Catholics and poor indentured Catholics existed as separate, marginal groups within a predominantly Protestant world. Two lists of Catholic names collected in 1689 by Edwyn Stede, lieutenant-governor of Barbados, offer a tantalizing glimpse of a thriving Catholic community in the seventeenth-century English Atlantic. Like Culpepper, Stede dismissed the 55 Catholics listed as “being none of any account,” with two notable exceptions, the island’s attorney general, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and Willoughby Chamberlaine, a member of the assembly representing St. Philip parish. Stede described the rest as “originally bred vp in the Popish Relegion and most of them of the Irish Nation & were bought & sold for servants.” A search for the names in the extant colonial records reveals that at least some of the men attending Mass occupied a status much higher than poor servants. Several of the men listed in 1689 owned land. Capt. Edward Skeete, for example, owned 100 acres in St. Philip as well as 60 slaves. Edward Burke arrived in Barbados “a

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91 The lists and accompanying testimony are preserved in A collection of papers relating to Sir Thomas Montgomerie and Willoughby Chamberlayne, enclosed with the foregoing dispatch, May 30, 1689, CO 28/37 Barbados Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1700, TNA, No. 7i-lxxv.

92 The figure of 55 men is drawn from a comparison of the two separate lists of people seen attending Mass at Chamberlaine’s house. A list of the Psons sawne att Mass, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxx, fol. 55-55v; Deposition of Michaell Poore, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxxvi, fol. 61-62v. Quotations from Stede’s annotation, No. 7xxx, fol. 55v.

93 Acct of Inhabitts in the parish of St Philips, Dec 16, 1679, CO 1/44, TNA, No. 47x, fol. 184v.
bought servant,” but by 1688 had used his guardianship of his deceased master’s son to acquire substantial property. By 1696, according to the report of Governor Francis Russell, Edward Burke had “acquired a Pretty Estate & lives very well upon it.” Other Catholics possessed more modest property. Walter Rice, Samuel Northey, and Thomas Wakely all mentioned small landholdings in their wills and described themselves as planters. At least two men on the list described themselves in colonial records as doctors. Several men appear to have been merchants and held strong trading interests in the Caribbean and Ireland. The Lynch family, for example, had members in Barbados, Martinique, and Galway, Ireland. Pierce Lynch attended Mass on a number of occasions along with his brother Marcus Lynch. Andrew Lynch, a resident of Martinique (and a possible third brother), was instrumental in bringing a French Jesuit from Martinique to Barbados to serve the Catholic population. Other men on the list were skilled laborers. Michael Poore and Thomas Butler, for example, recorded themselves in land

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94 Michael Poore testified to witnessing “Edmond Burke” at Mass. Based on the description given in later documents referring to “Edward Burke,” Edmond would appear to be a misnomer. Memorandum as to the appointment of Capt. Edward Bourke to the Council of Barbados, June 19, 1698, CO 28/3 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade 1696-1699, TNA, No. 67, fol. 165; Deed, Tobias Frere, Jr. to Edward Burke, July 2, 1686, RB 3/14 Deeds, Department of Archives, Lazaretto, Barbados [hereafter Barbados Archives], fol. 523-25; Deed, Margaret Jeames to Edward Burke, April 25, 1687, RB 3/25 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 187-8.

95 Extract of Russells letter to the Duke of Shrewsbury, July 26, 1696, CO 28/3 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade 1693-95, TNA, No. 5A, fol. 23.

96 Will of Walter Rice, RB 6/11 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 232-235; Will of Samuel Northey, RB 6/7 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 61-3; Will of Thomas Wakely, RB 6/43, Barbados Archives, fol. 289-91.


98 May 11-12, 1686, Barbados Minutes, Reel 2 1682-1696, Vol. 4, fol. 184; May 3, 1689, Ibid., fol. 513; Letter, Andrew Lynch to Sir Thomas Montgomery, Feb 10, 1688/89 [N.S.], CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7ii, fol. 20-21v. Stede described Andrew Lynch as “a violent papist,” see Stede’s annotation Ibid., fol. 21v. The Barbados Lynches may also have been related to Nicholas Lynch in Montserrat, see Jennifer Shaw, “Island Purgatory: Irish Catholics and the Reconfiguring of the English Caribbean, 1650-1700,” (Ph.D. diss.: New York University, 2009), 70-1.
transactions as carpenters. Samuel Northey described himself as a cordwinder. At Mass in 1688, these men intermingled with indentured servants and poor laborers, such as “the oversier at Mrs Jacks” and Edmund and David “att Majr. Dempsters.” In Barbados, at least, Catholics existed at every social strata and associated together as a Catholic community.

The religion of enslaved Africans and free blacks can be even harder to ascertain than that of white migrants. Some basic assumptions can be made based, however, on the origin of slaves in the English Atlantic world. As historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood assert, at least prior to 1660 and the creation of the Royal African Company, most inhabitants of African-origin in the English colonies came from the Iberian Atlantic world. Portuguese trading posts in Angola and Kongo provided a steady supply of slaves for Anglo-Dutch pirates and traders throughout the seventeenth century. The earliest African arrivals in the English Atlantic, such as the “20. and odd negroes” delivered to Virginia in 1619, probably originated in Angola and the Kongo. Anglo-Dutch pirates patrolling the Caribbean seized Portuguese slave ships and re-exported the human cargo to the English colonies. The Dutch, then, became an important conduit for transferring slaves from the Iberian to the English Atlantic world. It is these early African migrants that Ira Berlin describes as the charter generation, a select group of African migrants whose prior exposure to European cultures, languages, and religions in Africa and the Caribbean facilitated their integration into English colonial society. Christianity in particular became an important marker for charter generations to assert freedom and status in the seventeenth-century


100 Deposition of Michaell Poore, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxxvi, fol. 62; A list of the Psons sawne att Mass, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxx, fol. 55.

101 The composition of this Catholic community, and the Protestant response to it, is discussed in greater detail in Chaps. 4 and 5.
English colonial world. Importantly, as Thornton and Heywood suggest, these migrants from West Central Africa understood Christianity through a Catholic world view, not the Protestantism of their new masters.102

The few documentary fragments mentioning African inhabitants and Catholicism support Thornton and Heywood’s conclusions. Africans of Portuguese origin tended to be associated, or to associate with, other Catholic inhabitants. The colonial records of Maryland contain brief glimpses of a man named Mathias de Sousa, a man of Portuguese-African descent who lived as a servant in the colony in the 1630s and 1640s. De Sousa arrived as the servant of Andrew White in 1634 and served the Jesuits at their mission in St. Mary’s City. Bound to the Jesuits, de Sousa was almost certainly Catholic.103 Even beyond Catholic Maryland, Afro-Portuguese Catholics found ways to remain constant to their faith. When a French priest named Antoine Biet arrived in Barbados in 1654, he observed Christian practices among the slave population on the island despite the fact that English masters neglected the religious education of their slaves. Some slaves, he noted, “content themselves by baptizing their children in the house.” Further, Biet

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103 The life of Mathias de Sousa is carefully reconstructed in David S. Bogen, “Mathias de Sousa: Maryland’s First Colonist of African Descent,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 96 (2001): 68-85; see also Terrar, *Social, Economic, and Religious Beliefs among Maryland Catholics*, 109, 117, 279-80. Terrar refers to a naturalization petition by de Sousa in 1671, but I have been unable to discover any further information on this.
believed many of the slaves in Barbados to be Catholics, having been raised among the Portuguese and Spanish. “If any of them have any tinge of the Catholic religion,” he observed “they kept it the best they can, doing their prayers and worshipping God in their hearts.” In 1688, the Barbados Minutes of Council recorded the presence of three “Portuguese Negroes,” who, being “free borne, and Christians” chose to migrate to Barbados “for the better Improvement of themselves.” The men, having been tricked and sold into slavery by the captain who transported them, presented themselves to the council for restitution. They used their Christianity to assert their status as free men. The council agreed, pronouncing that “they be free and at liberty to dispose of themselves as they shall soe meete.” Freed from enslavement, the men attended Catholic Mass, conversed with a French Jesuit, and “openly profess[ed] themselves Roman Catholick,” actions that subsequently led the court to revoke their free status.

African Catholics also arrived in the English colonies through connections with the French Atlantic world. As well as observing the fate of Catholic slaves of Portuguese origin, Antoine Biet grew concerned for the French slaves brought to Barbados by his countrymen. During his time on Barbados, Biet shared a plantation with French colonists and slaves who fled the failed colony of Cayenne. To raise capital to return to France, the stranded Frenchmen decided to sell “six Negroes and their wives with their children” to English planters. Biet described the chosen slaves as “all very good Catholics, who were extremely sorrowed to see themselves sold as slaves in an island of heretics.” No records survive on the ultimate fate of

105 April 19-20, 1688, Barbados Minutes, Reel 2, Vol 4, fol. 383. It is unclear why the three men chose Barbados as their destination. It may simply have been that the ship to Barbados provided the first opportunity to escape their current situation. Their point of origin is listed as “the Island of Stt Yangee.” The original document is nearly illegible at this point, and I have been unable to identify what island this name refers to.
106 March 11, 1688/89, Barbados Minutes, Reel 2, Vol. 4, fol. 497.
107 Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 61.
the French slaves, but we can assume they, like their Portuguese counterparts, continued to practice a form of Catholicism and worship “God in their hearts.” This was certainly the case in the Leeward Islands in the late seventeenth century. As a result of ongoing global disputes between England and France, 6,000 French slaves from French St. Christopher, “all Catholics,” found themselves in the hands of the English in 1690. Dispersed among English planters in Antigua and St. Christopher, the slaves lived “deprived of the sacraments and the other succors of Religion.” Yet they did not desert their faith, at least according to the report of a local Jesuit missionary. Several years after their capture, 22 French slaves successfully fled to the Jesuit mission in Guadeloupe. Once safely out of the hands of the English, the slaves explained to the Jesuits how they sustained their Catholicism. The slaves, reported the Jesuits, prayed every Sunday as a group, recited Catholic prayers in front of a crucifix, and baptized their children according to the customs taught them by French missionaries. While still in English St. Christopher, two of the slaves “got married in the presence of their Catholic friends, performing the ceremonies that they remembered having seen in [Catholic] weddings.” Of course, we have only the word of these fugitive slaves as to the veracity of their religious beliefs. The missionaries who preserved the slaves’ story proved more than eager to accept the account as proof of the effectiveness of the Jesuit mission. But viewed alongside other accounts of European and African Catholics living in the English colonies, the story of these 22 slaves can become part of a broader Atlantic story. Though these French slaves ultimately sought to return to the Catholic world, the brief glimpse of their life in the English colonies reveals the ability of not

just European migrants but also African arrivals to sustain their Catholic faith and to self-identify as Catholic even though they lived among the Protestants.

Catholics from continental Europe also represented a small, but significant group within the English colonies. According to John Winthrop’s journal, for example, two Spanish sailors resided in Boston for a month in 1642 after being carried there by a Dutch ship. Two years later, a group of Portuguese sailors became caught up in disputes between Boston locals and visitors from New France.109 Catholic visitors from New France appear to have been a regular occurrence in seventeenth-century Boston. In 1650, Gabriel Druilettes, a Jesuit attached to the French missions in Maine, recorded his reception in Boston on a diplomatic mission. His host, Druilettes noted, “gave me the key of a room in his house where I might in all liberty pray and perform the other exercises of my religion, and he besought me to take no other lodgings while I remained at Boston.”110 During his stay in Boston, Druilettes encountered another Frenchman called Pierre Thibaud, “a good Catholic” employed by the English to serve as an interpreter and pilot for colonial trade from New England to Virginia. Having been granted leave by his master to travel to Canada, Druilettes arranged for the young man to transfer his services to the merchant fleet at Quebec.111 In 1687, a Huguenot visitor to Boston reported “eight or ten” papists in the town, “three of whom are French and come to our Church, and the others are Irish; with the Exception of the Surgeon who has a Family, the others are here only in Passage.”112


Whether through choice or necessity, some foreign Catholics opted to make the English colonial world their home. The Brandts, a family of German Catholics, established a merchant business in Barbados before moving on to the Chesapeake. In 1681, the colonial government in Maryland instructed Randolph Brandt to treat with the Susquehannock on their behalf. George Nicholas Hack, the Accomack County resident accused of recusancy, also migrated to the Chesapeake from Germany, by way of Dutch New York. Other Catholics found themselves incorporated into the English Atlantic world as it expanded around them. Jan van Loon, a Dutch Catholic living in Albany, first migrated to the fur trading settlement in 1673 when the Dutch invaded. He remained in Albany when the colony of New York reverted to English rule a year later. According to the report of Robert Livingston, Van Loon still lived in Albany in 1690. French Catholics also chose to settle in the English colonies. Traveling through East Jersey in 1679, Labadist preachers encountered French Catholics living side-by-side with English settlers of many different religions. The presence of French Catholics in the English colonies explains why, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, some English residents treated French Huguenot migrants with suspicion. The colonial assembly in Massachusetts, for example, ordered that all French residents be investigated and oaths administered to ensure their loyalty. Protestants in

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114 *Archives of Maryland*, 25:384.


Massachusetts feared, “that amongst the many French Gent. & others that reside amongst vs who pretend to bee protestants there may bee sundrie of them that are papist.”

The colonial authorities were not unwise to take such precautions since it could be difficult to discern a French Huguenot from a French Catholic, as the case of Francis LeBaron makes clear. In 1694, in the midst of war with France, a French ship sank off the New England coast. Residents of Plymouth rescued a group of survivors, including LeBaron. The town authorities immediately transported the French sailors to jail in Boston, but allowed LeBaron, a doctor, to remain in Plymouth. During his stay, LeBaron performed surgery on a local woman and, due to his skills as a medical doctor, was “permitted to tarry in the town of Plymouth.” Genealogists differ on Francis LeBaron’s religious identity. Some claim he was Catholic, others a Huguenot. His acceptance in the town of Plymouth would seem to rule out Catholic sympathies. But, according to family tradition, when LeBaron died in 1704 his wife buried him in Plymouth churchyard with a cross at his breast, a decidedly un-Protestant practice.

LeBaron avoided becoming involved with the Protestant community that became his adopted home and the larger Protestant society of Massachusetts. During his life and at his death, LeBaron made no effort to join or support the established Huguenot church in Boston. He married a local woman, but never became a member of the Plymouth church. He appeared only once in the town records during his ten year residence, listed as receiving five pounds from the

118 Order of the Representatives of theire Majties Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England being Assembled in Genll Court, undated, Massachusetts Archives Collection (microfilm), Volume 11--Ecclesiastical 1679-1739, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, fol. 65.
town elders for his services as a doctor.\footnote{William T. Davis, ed., \textit{Records of the Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts} (Plymouth, Mass.: Avery and Doten, 1889), 1:246.} Francis Le Baron’s absence in the upper echelons of Plymouth society suggests that, despite the town’s willingness to allow a Frenchman to reside in their community, Le Baron’s religious identity meant he remained a social outsider to his dying day. A bequest to the poor of Plymouth in his will proved the one exception to LeBaron’s isolated existence.\footnote{The will of Francis Le Baron is transcribed in Stockwell, \textit{Descendants of Francis LeBaron}, 10-2.} LeBaron’s descendant and biographer, Mary LeBaron Stockwell, concluded LeBaron may well have been both a Huguenot and a Catholic. In seventeenth-century France, Catholic families adopted Huguenot children and forcibly raised them as Catholics. Whether Catholic or Protestant, the liminal religious identity of inhabitants like LeBaron fed Protestant confusion surrounding the influx of French Huguenot refugees to the English colonies and the persistent dangers of Catholic subversion. LeBaron’s residence in Plymouth then, stands out as yet another reminder of the complexities of religion in the seventeenth-century English world, and the importance of counting both Protestant and Catholic inhabitants as a vital part of its development.

This brief overview of the source material graphically demonstrates the problems of trying to accurately count Catholics in the English world. We can only speculate as to the possible numbers of Catholics in the English Atlantic world based on the fragmentary information supplied by missionaries and colonial officials. References to Catholic inhabitants in the plethora of correspondence, colonial records, and narrative accounts that are the stock-in-trade of colonial historians further indicate that alleged “official” summations of the Catholic
population can only reveal so much about the extent and character of Catholic migration to the English colonies in the seventeenth century. What remains clear from seventeenth-century sources is the geographic and social breadth of Catholic residence in the English Atlantic world. We may not be able to accurately count Catholic inhabitants but we can certainly document them.

Whether Irish servants, colonial traders, gentlemen planters, or enslaved Africans, Catholics constituted a small, but important part of the English Atlantic world. Historians have long used the question of numbers to avoid engaging with the larger issues that Catholic habitation in the English colonies raises about the structure and development of the English Atlantic world as a Protestant entity. It seems that the more pertinent question in the colonies is not how many Catholics lived alongside the Protestant majority, but who they were, how they sustained a Catholic identity, how they interacted with their Protestant neighbors, and what role they played in the political and religious development of colonial society. By focusing on these questions we can begin to unravel the relationship between “Catholic” and “Protestant” within the English Atlantic world and better understand England’s interaction with religious and political rivals on the global stage.

122 Marie B. Rowlands makes a similar point for the study of Catholics in post-Reformation England, arguing that the obsession with ascertaining numbers obscures the more important questions of who Catholics were and what role they played in seventeenth-century society. See Rowlands, “Introduction,” 5.
By the seventeenth century, the Catholic faith no longer functioned as a parish-based, institutionalized religion in the British Isles. Under the reign of Elizabeth and throughout the seventeenth century, anti-Catholic penal laws attacked the institution of the Catholic Church by restricting access to priests, prohibiting the administration of the sacraments, and preventing the transmission of religious belief from one generation to the next through the control of education, baptism and inheritance. The application of these laws, however, varied greatly over time and jurisdiction, and did little to counteract the development of secret missionary networks that provided comfort to Catholics living under English rule. A lack of permanent institutions did not mean a lack of priests. Instead, Catholicism in the British Isles turned into a missionary church, whose priests traveled from place to place administering the sacraments according to the Roman rites and reviving the spiritual allegiance of the faithful. Catholic priests remained an essential part of the Catholic faith, but the institutional structures, sacred spaces, and quotidian parish interactions that bound priest and congregation before the Reformation gave way to more flexible pastoral and spiritual rituals, and de-emphasized regular participation in favor of zealous devotion. It was this missionary Catholicism that English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish Catholics carried with them to the English Atlantic colonies.

Colonial records and contemporary accounts from across the English Atlantic in the seventeenth century contain scattered, and in some cases substantial, descriptions of Catholic clerical activity in the English colonies. Viewed in an Atlantic context, these sources reveal a persistent tradition of itinerant activity that provided settlers with intermittent access to priests, and supported a missionary program to propagate the Catholic faith in the heart of English expansion in the Americas. English, Irish and other, foreign priests crossed the boundaries between Catholic and Protestant colonies and pushed the limits of Protestant notions concerning religious freedom and toleration. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the ability of priests to travel to and through the English colonies fluctuated with the ebb and flow of European political conflict. War with Spain and France, and internal upheavals within the English polity itself, disrupted itinerant activity, but throughout the century, priests succeeded in reaching out to Catholics living under Protestant rule in the English Atlantic world. Though missionary and clerical enterprises in the English colonies were not always physically connected to their counterparts elsewhere in the Atlantic world, those involved in extending and receiving spiritual aid shared motives and expectations that bound them into a larger global web of Catholic activity that stretched far beyond the Atlantic.

Heathens, Heretics, and Catholics: Missionary Purpose in the Seventeenth-Century Catholic World

Our chief concern and commission from heaven is the propagation of the orthodox faith, the increase of the Christian religion, the salvation of barbarian nations, and the repression of the infidels and their conversion to the faith.

Pope Innocent VIII, *Orthodoxe fidei propagationem* (1486)²

Promoted by, although not mentioned in, the Council of Trent reforms, missionary expansion became a central feature of the spirit of renewal sweeping Catholic Europe in the late sixteenth century. New and revitalized religious orders, such as the Society of Jesus or the Franciscans, served as “spiritual fighters” of the Counter-Reformation, reforming and renewing the Church as Catholics, and their faith, spread across the globe. Driven chiefly by European exploration and colonization, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the missionary goals of the Catholic Church developed into a three-pronged attack that targeted heathens, heretics, and Catholics alike. European expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia in the early modern period brought European Christians into contact with large populations of non-Christians or “heathens.” After the Reformation, competition with Protestant churches made gaining access to the souls of heathen populations a paramount concern for the Catholic Church. Missions to indigenous populations around the globe became the centerpiece of Catholic missionary endeavors. Equally important, the Catholic Church targeted “heretic” populations in Europe and overseas. Starting in the late sixteenth century, the religious orders established militant missions in Protestant nations to recover Protestant heretics to the Catholic faith and counter the spread of the Protestant heresy. Catholic reformers even considered Catholic populations to be within the scope of the Church’s missionary vision. Alongside the conversion of heretics, missionaries in Protestant-controlled regions served Catholic populations in need of pastoral care. The post-Reformation Church also sought to reform the irregular practices of bad, lapsed, lukewarm, and

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3 On the importance of religious orders and religious missions to the Counter-Reformation and the renewal of early modern Catholicism see R. Po-Chia Hsia, The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27-33; John W. O’Malley, Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 67-9. The phrase “spiritual fighters” is taken from Hsia, World of Catholic Renewal, 30. Increasingly by the end of the sixteenth century, the category of “heathen” replaced that of “infidel” as the focus of the Catholic Church shifted away from the Islamic world and towards the new, non-Christian lands, such as Asia and the Americas, opened by European exploration and trade.
confused Catholics by establishing missions even within Catholic Europe.\(^4\) For early modern missionaries, the categories of heathen, heretic, and bad Catholic overlapped within a religious worldview that considered the salvation of souls and the reform of Catholic practice to be essential for the advancement of the Catholic faith.\(^5\)

In 1622, Gregory XV established the *Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide*, a Vatican committee tasked with promoting the global mission of the Catholic Church. *Propaganda* claimed to oversee all Catholic missionary ventures around the globe, including those of existing religious orders, and instigated new apostolic missions, which operated under the direct control of the Church. Encapsulating the three targets of the Catholic mission, *Propaganda* sought “to spread the True Faith among the infidels, to protect it where Catholics lived side by side with non-Catholics, and ultimately to achieve union with the Protestant and Orthodox churches” by bringing all missionary endeavors around the globe under one authority.\(^6\)

Through the creation of *Propaganda*, the Vatican attempted to assert a unified global mission philosophy, but this endeavor should not be mistaken for a global missionary approach. Despite the creation of *Propaganda*, the semi-autonomous religious orders continued to dominate Catholic missionary enterprises around the globe and operated largely outside the control of the new committee. With well-established hierarchies that utilized connections to Rome and royal

\(^4\) See, for example, Dominique Deslandres’s examination of the “missions intérieures” that targeted France’s rural, ostensibly Catholic, population in the early seventeenth century and served as a contemporary model for the indigenous missions in New France, Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et Faire Croire: Les missions françaises au XVIIème siècle (1600-1650)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), esp. 108-200.


courts, the religious orders continued to ignore and undermine *Propaganda* oversight. They sought to use their political power and connections to the pope to secure access to new mission fields, prevent competition from rival orders, and stall apostolic enterprises sanctioned by *Propaganda* that threatened to interfere with their own projects.⁷ Throughout the seventeenth century, then, missionary organizations competed with each other and *Propaganda* for missionary monopolies, often to the detriment of the mission itself. For example, missionary initiatives in the French Antilles in the 1640s stalled due to conflict between the Society of Jesus and the Capuchins over control of the missions on St. Christopher, Martinique and Guadeloupe.⁸ Even within the religious orders, national and provincial interests battled against each other for control of missionary zones and for preference from the hierarchy in Rome.⁹ If a Catholic Missionary Atlantic existed in the seventeenth century, it was as much about a shared philosophy of salvation through missionary activity as it was about a physical international missionary approach.

Historians attempting to understand Catholic clerical activity in the English colonies within a larger Atlantic or global Catholic context have focused heavily on the tradition of Indian missions. The successful Indian missions in New France, with the rich source base provided by the *Jesuit Relations*, dominate discussions of missionary activity in North America. When

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⁷ J. Gabriel Martínez-Serna, “Procurators and the Making of the Jesuits’ Atlantic Network,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 181-209, describes the complex workings of such hierarchies within the Jesuit organization. Jesuit provincials relied on support from civil rulers, as much as the Vatican, to gain access to new colonial regions and secure missionary monopolies.


considered at all, studies of Catholic clerical activity in English North America focus on the Jesuits in Maryland, discussing them within a comparative context that contrasts their failure among the Indians of the Chesapeake with the success of the French Jesuits in Canada.\textsuperscript{10} Catholic missionary endeavors to slaves, Caribs, and colonists in the French Antilles and the English Caribbean have been substantially overlooked.\textsuperscript{11} Viewed from the perspective of Indian converts, Catholic missionary activity in the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century amounted to very little. But considering missions in the English colonies to encompass European Catholics and European heretics, as well as indigenous populations, suggests much broader clerical activity that spanned the English Atlantic and connected into “the global context of European missionary phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{12}

Catholic officials in Europe who promoted and organized missionary endeavors to the Americas in the seventeenth century were no doubt interested in the conversion of indigenous


\textsuperscript{11} Sue Peabody, ““A Dangerous Zeal”: Catholic Missions to Slaves in the French Antilles, 1635-1800,” French Historical Studies 25 (2002): 55-6; Boucher, France and the American Tropics, 1-2. Catholic missionaries in the English Caribbean are rarely studied in great detail beyond brief references in works devoted to the Irish in the Caribbean, Donald Akenson, If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 43-5; Jenny Shaw, “Island Purgatory: Irish Catholics and the Reconfiguring of the English Caribbean, 1650-1700” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2009), 139-49. Thomas Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus in North America, remains the most comprehensive narrative account of Catholic clergy in both North America and the Caribbean during the seventeenth century. It presents a solid, institutional view of the Jesuit missions based on Vatican archives, but is concerned primarily with explaining the internal political workings of the Society of Jesus and the Catholic Church, not the larger significance of Atlantic missionary activity.

\textsuperscript{12} Deslandres, “Exemplo aequus ut verbo,” 259. In both North America and the Caribbean, missionaries in the English colonies showed very little interest in the enslaved population, preferring instead to focus on Indians and Europeans. This stands in sharp contrast to the French Caribbean, where the Jesuits established missions targeted solely at African slaves. See Peabody, ““A Dangerous Zeal,” 53-90; Boucher, France and the American Tropics, 283-4.
populations in territories falling under English control. But the needs and demands of those Catholics already resident in the Atlantic World also shaped the focus and purpose of missionary ventures to the English colonies. In 1625, Gregorio Bolivar, a Franciscan missionary active in Peru, requested friars who spoke English to “proclaim the true doctrine to one and all” in Virginia and stem the Protestant advance in North America.13 Simon Stock’s vision for the mission in Newfoundland in the 1620s focused on the conversion of the local indigenous population to act as a counter to Protestant English settlements in the region.14 In 1634, the Franciscan Alonso Benavides urged the establishment of an Irish mission in Virginia to “convert not only the Gentiles of those countries to the Catholic faith, but also the heretics.” Further, these missionaries “may also bring back the Gentiles already perverted, and prevent the heresy from spreading” from English and Dutch settlements into Spanish America.15

Neither Bolivar, Stock, nor Benavides ever set foot in the English colonies and relied almost wholly on reports and narratives circulating through European communication networks. The Catholic priests who established the first missions in the English colonies discovered that the needs of European Catholics and the opportunity to convert European heretics proved as fruitful an endeavor as the proposed missions to indigenous populations. In the first annual report sent from Maryland in 1634, the missionaries noted their purpose in Maryland as “not only to work among the colonists, but also to devote themselves to procuring the conversion and salvation of


the barbarians.” But missionary operations among the indigenous populations of the English Atlantic world were scattered, opportunistic, and fleeting. By 1638, the Jesuits in Maryland had still made little headway with the local Indian population but hoped to “shortly secure a station among the barbarians.” In 1640, the mission reported that Thomas Copley longed “to labor in the Indian harvest,” but his duties kept him based at the chapel in St. Mary’s where the European settlers “could not do without his services.” Irish missionaries in the Caribbean in 1637 and 1650 showed little interest in the Carib population of the West Indies, preferring to focus their attention on the sustenance of the faithful and the reclamation of heretics in the English colonies.

By the 1650s, Catholic missions throughout the English Atlantic were almost wholly devoted to white populations. Missionary priests provided pastoral care for those Catholics who struggled to maintain their faith under Protestant rule and, when possible, sought to swell the church’s members by converting heretics back to the Catholic faith. In this request, the Catholic missions to the English colonies replicated the model of missionary activity in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Seventeenth-century Catholicism in the British Isles and the larger Anglo-Atlantic, then, was fundamentally a “mission” religion in which the movement of missionary personnel and the establishment of missionary circuits served as a vital tool in the Church’s battle to defend the Catholic faith from heresy and apostasy, and combat Protestant expansion into new territories and populations.


18 Annual Letter of 1640, in Hall, Narratives of Early Maryland, 133.

19 See discussion of these missions below.
Maryland and Beyond: Planting the Catholic Faith in English North America

For much of the seventeenth century, the colony of Maryland served as the center of Catholic clerical activity in English North America. The Catholic faith of the Calvert family and the substantial minority population of Catholic planters and servants provided a profitable environment for the acquirement of converts and the sustenance of the faithful. But the Maryland mission should not be viewed as a stationary endeavor bounded by the borders of the Catholic colony. The missionaries who ventured to Maryland in the seventeenth century aimed to move far beyond Maryland and viewed the colony as a foothold from which to prevent the Protestant faith corrupting the whole of English North America. Though they ultimately failed in their endeavor to limit Protestant expansion, Catholic missionaries traveled far beyond the borders of Maryland, bringing comfort and solace to Catholic residents throughout English North America.

In 1625, Simon Stock wrote to Propaganda concerning George Calvert’s plans to establish a colony for Catholics on his newly acquired land in Avalon, Newfoundland. Avalon, Stock explained, “lies midway between England and Virginia, and when the Faith is spread to Avalon, with greater ease may we extend it to Virginia, New England, New Scotland and amongst the Canadians.” To this end, Stock urged Propaganda to send missionaries to accompany Calvert’s Catholic colonists and to establish communication with the indigenous people who would, Stock assured his superiors, “make excellent missionaries and priests” should the pope be willing to commit missionaries to teach them. Calvert made two ventures to Avalon

20 Letter, Simon Stock to [Propaganda, in Rome], Sept 13, 1625, in Codignola, Coldest Harbour, 86.
21 Letter, Simon Stock to [Propaganda, in Rome], Mar 7, 1626, in Codignola, Coldest Harbour, 95.
between 1627 and 1629, transporting at least 40 Catholic settlers, including his own family, and five Catholic priests--three secular priests and two Jesuit missionaries.\footnote{Examination of Erasmus Stourton, Oct 9, 1628, CO 1/4 Privy Council 1626-1628, The National Archives, Kew, London, [hereafter TNA] No. 59, fol. 144. For further details on the Catholic clergy in Newfoundland see R. J. Lahey, “The Role of Religion in Lord Baltimore’s Colonial Enterprise,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 72 (1977): 492-511; Codignola, *Coldest Harbour*, 6-68. The term “secular priest” refers to a member of the clergy ordained by a bishop, but not subject to a religious rule or member of a monastic order. It is used throughout to distinguish missionary ventures organized by church officials from those initiated by the missionary orders themselves. Secular missions were almost always initiated under the auspices of Propaganda.} Though short-lived, the mission in Avalon established an enduring relationship between the Calvert family and the Society of Jesus and shaped the form of future Catholic missionary activity throughout English North America. George Calvert’s abandonment of Newfoundland for the Chesapeake in 1629 shifted the focal point of Catholic activity to Maryland, which became the new foothold from which to counter the Protestant heresy and advance the Catholic faith.

Newtown received regular pastoral care from the priests stationed at St. Mary’s. Despite the absence of a chapel in the Newtown community, the homes of prominent Catholics Luke Gardiner and William Bretton served as mission stations for the visiting priests.\textsuperscript{24} The annual report of 1642, submitted by the Maryland mission, described a typical missionary circuit. The missionary priest, with an interpreter and servant, set off by boat carrying provisions for the journey, objects for sacred functions, and trade goods for the Indians. If lucky, the group would reach an “English house” by nightfall. Alternatively they relied on the hospitality of local Indians or camped in the woods.\textsuperscript{25} In this way, over several days, one Jesuit could reach out to a number of European and Indian communities.

Traveling the circuits worked both ways. When the priests could not travel out into the rural settlements, eager congregants traveled to them at the mission plantations and chapels. In 1639, the mission provincial recorded that “Our people cease not daily to engage in their divine employment, and to dispense the sacraments to those that come, as often as circumstances demand.”\textsuperscript{26} In 1642, three priests resided in the colony. One was recorded as too sick to perform his clerical duties. As a result, Copley remained at the main chapel in St. Mary’s City attending to local colonists and Indians in addition to “those going and coming backwards and forwards.”\textsuperscript{27}

Missionary circuits were the function of a small number of priests serving a widely dispersed lay community. On average, no more than four or five Jesuits resided in the colony at any one time during the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{28} In most years the number of active priests in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Beitzell, \textit{Jesuit Missions}, 26
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Annual Letter of 1642, in Hall, \textit{Narratives of Early Maryland}, 136-7
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Annual Letter of 1639, in Hall, \textit{Narratives of Early Maryland}, 130-1
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Annual Letter of 1642, in Hall, \textit{Narratives of Early Maryland}, 134-5
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Graham, “Meeting House and Chapel,” 246.
\end{itemize}
Maryland was considerably lower. Before 1645 fourteen Jesuit priests served on the Maryland mission.\textsuperscript{29} Of this figure some, like John Knowles, died within months of arriving. Others, such as Thomas Copley, served many years in the mission, establishing a loyal congregation of European and Indian Catholics.\textsuperscript{30} From 1642 to 1645, two secular priests arrived in Maryland to supplement the Jesuit mission. Sent by Propaganda at the request of Lord Baltimore, the seculars provided additional support for the settler population.\textsuperscript{31} In 1645, Ingle’s Rebellion forced the five Jesuits, then resident in the colony, into exile. The Jesuits lost all of their plantations and the bulk of their property. Three Jesuits died in Virginia, while Andrew White and Thomas Copley were forcibly transported back to England by the Protestant rebels.\textsuperscript{32} Copley, accompanied by Lawrence Starkey, returned to the Chesapeake in 1649 and revived the mission. But the Jesuits were again driven out by Protestant rebels in 1655. A permanent mission was finally re-established in 1658 by Francis Fitzherbert. Fitzherbert arrived in the Chesapeake in 1653; he remained in Virginia during the Protestant governorship and returned to Maryland in 1658.\textsuperscript{33} Over the next thirty years, a further 22 Jesuit missionaries left England for Maryland.\textsuperscript{34} In 1661, though, the annual letter reported the presence of only one missionary “deprived of all

\textsuperscript{29} For the names and dates of missionaries sent to Maryland before 1645 see Hughes, \textit{History of the Society of Jesus}, Text 2:678-83; Codignola, “Ecclesiastics in English North America,” Table 2, p. 120.


\textsuperscript{32} Hughes, \textit{History of the Society of Jesus}, Text 1:562-3.


\textsuperscript{34} Based on missionary lists in Hughes, \textit{History of the Society of Jesus}, Text 2: 680-3. Between 1658 and 1688 two novices joined the order from the Maryland population, but were subsequently sent to serve the mission in England.
consolation and oppressed by poverty.” Subsequent letters, however, indicate a steady flow of missionary personnel to the region.\(^{35}\) In 1672, two Franciscan missionaries joined the Jesuits in Maryland to share “the labours of the mission.” The Jesuits welcomed the arrival of the Franciscans, noting that “fraternal charity and offices of mutual friendship are exercised, to the common good of the Catholic cause.”\(^{36}\) The mission suffered disruption once again during John Coode’s Protestant rebellion in 1689, but despite “great difficulties” the Jesuits remained “to render what consolation they can to the distressed Catholics.”\(^{37}\) By 1698, the county sheriffs reported three priests, two chapels, and two places of worship in the dwellings of priests in Charles County, and two priests, a brick chapel, and three wooden chapels in St. Mary’s County.\(^{38}\)

Even as the provision of missionary personnel stabilized and the number of permanent chapels and mission sites grew after 1660, the mission in Maryland remained drastically understaffed when faced with a small, but scattered, colonial population. The annual letter of 1671 cautioned that the mission’s “fruit would be still greater were the labourers more in number.”\(^{39}\) Rather than increase the number of priests, the Society instead curtailed the activities

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\(^{38}\) Reports of the Sheriffs as to the numbers of priests and dissenting Ministers in Maryland, May 24, 1698, CO 5/714 Maryland Correspondence Board of Trade 1696-1699, TNA, fol. 209v, 210. In Charles County, the sheriff noted the chapels as 20 and 16-18 years old respectively (fol. 209v). The Annual Letter of 1701 recorded five priests and four lay brothers in the mission, Foley, *Records of the English Province*, 3:395.

of its missionaries. By the 1670s, mission reports indicate the Jesuits focused much of their attention on the European population and restricted activity among the indigenous population to the converted. In 1672, the missionaries “laboured diligently in the conversion of heretics and in strengthening and instructing Catholics.”

A year later, the mission reported that “the Fathers devoted their labours chiefly to confirming the Catholics in their faith and instilling into them the principles and practices of piety.”

The Jesuits in Maryland also continued to operate itinerant circuits to serve as wide a community as possible. Travelers visiting the colony in 1679 observed, “there are priests and ecclesiastics who travel and disperse themselves everywhere, and neglect nothing which serves for their profit and purpose.”

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Jesuit mission in Maryland remained an off-shot of the English Province. The supplementary mission personnel provided by Propaganda and the Franciscans also drew from the English clerical and exile community. Despite the existence of a thriving mission of French Jesuits in New France there was almost no contact between the two groups. In 1674, John Pierron, a French Jesuit, traveled “through the whole of New England, Maryland and Virginia.” In Maryland, Pierron encountered “two of our Fathers and a Brother, who are English.” “These two Fathers alone do not suffice,” Pierron observed, and “cheerfully offer[ed] to go and assist them.” But “many obstacles” prevented Pierron from collaborating with his fellow Jesuits in Maryland. As “a Mission belonging to our English Father[s],” Pierron could not provide aid to Maryland unless specifically asked to do so by the English Province. Even if requested, the provision of aid was further complicated by the Jesuit provincial system. The

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English Province, including Maryland, fell “within another Assistancy” and Pierron was required to transfer out of the French Province in order to aid the Maryland mission. Although Protestant ministers traveling through Maryland in 1679 reported that “the priests of Canada take care of this region, and hold correspondence with those here,” in reality no such connection existed.

Though isolated from the activities of non-English Catholic clerics in North America, the Maryland mission actively pursued the global Catholic mission by seeking to expand their ministry beyond the bounds of the Maryland colony into Protestant-controlled English colonies. The annual letter of 1638 reported that “one of Ours, going out of the colony, found two Frenchmen, one of whom had been without the sacraments of the Catholic Church for three entire years.” From the start of the Maryland venture, the Jesuits considered Virginia part of their mission and sought to expand their scope into the Protestant colony. The same letter in 1638 recorded the purchase and subsequent conversion of several Protestant servants from Virginia. We have only the zealous missionaries word for these conversions, but in the same year the Maryland mission purchased a further two servants from Virginia. This time the servants were Catholics, rescued from a Protestant master. The missionaries noted that “others [in Maryland] have performed the same duty of charity, buying thence Catholic servants, who are very


44 Franklin and James, Journal of Jasper Danckerts, 137. Luca Codignola similarly observes a lack of collaboration between English and French clerics in North America, noting that “projects were conceived and protected as secrets within individual groups,” Codignola, “Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in English North America,” 117. But in the case of Pierron, Jesuit bureaucracy prevented collaboration as much as group self-interest. As will be seen below, Irish and French Jesuits, who shared an Assistancy, co-operated successfully in the English Caribbean.
numerous in [Virginia].”⁴⁵ In 1644, the General of the Society of Jesus wrote to congratulate Copley on his exemplary service to the missionary project, singling out his work in Virginia for particular praise.⁴⁶

After their brief exile during the upheaval of Ingle’s Rebellion in 1645, the Jesuit missionaries returned to the Chesapeake in 1649. Rather than return directly to Maryland, the Jesuits opted to establish a mission base in northern Virginia from which to survey the political situation. Thomas Copley, the mission provincial, then traveled from Virginia into Maryland in search of his former congregants.⁴⁷ He noted with interest that “A road by land, through the forest, has just been opened from Maryland to Virginia; this will make it but a two days journey, and both countries can now be united in one Mission.”⁴⁸ Copley remained in Maryland, establishing a base of operations at the Jesuit chapel in St. Mary’s City. From there he maintained a missionary parish that encompassed St. Mary’s and Charles counties, the most heavily Catholic region of the colony. He also made regular visits to Virginia using the safe haven of the Brent family plantation in Stafford County to conduct missionary work among the Catholic and

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⁴⁵ Annual Letter of 1638, in Hall, Narratives of Early Maryland, 120.

⁴⁶ Letter, General of the Society of Jesus to Thomas Copley, July 16, 1644, in Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus, Text 1:559-60.


⁴⁸ Campbell, “Early Christian Missions,” 315
Protestant population.\textsuperscript{49} When the colony suffered further political upheavals in 1655, Lawrence Starkey and Francis Fitzherbert fled, once again, to northern Virginia and continued their missionary work. Although living “in the greatest want of necessities,” and without the aid of a servant or pilot, the two priests traveled alone into “unknown and suspected places” crossing over “spacious and vast rivers.”\textsuperscript{50}

During the Restoration and throughout the period of Protestant rebellion in the late 1680s, the Brent plantation in northern Virginia continued to provide a mission station for itinerant missionary activity in the region. The annual letter from Maryland in 1664 reported the continuing success of missionary activities “even beyond the boundaries of Maryland.”\textsuperscript{51} In the 1680s, George Brent was reported to maintain a Jesuit priest as a tutor at his plantation. John Coode, in 1690, demanded the return of the priest Francis Hobart who resided “at his Popish Patrons Mr: Brents in Stafford County.”\textsuperscript{52} Coode also reported to the governor of Virginia that “One Gulick a Jesuit likewise fled for treasonable words against their Majties.” He demanded that Hobart and Gulick, along with several other Catholics under warrant for arrest, be forcibly

\textsuperscript{49} William Hand Browne, et al., eds., \textit{Archives of Maryland}, 72 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1883-1972) [hereafter \textit{Archives of Maryland}], 10:104, July 22, 1650; Beitzell, \textit{Jesuit Missions}, 14. Originally Catholic migrants to Maryland, the Brent family moved to the southern side of the Potomac sometime between 1647 and 1650 following disagreements with the Calvert family over the treatment of the Society of Jesus. They became prominent landholders in northern Virginia, despite their continued adherence to the Catholic faith, and maintained close ties with the Society of Jesus in Maryland. Bruce E. Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia: An Instance of Practical Toleration,” \textit{Virginia Magazine of History and Biography} 70 (1962), 393-94. In 1644, Giles Brent married the daughter of the chief of the Piscataways. The continuing connections between the Brents and the Piscataways no doubt attracted the Jesuits to their plantation where the missionaries could combine services to Indians, European Catholics, and European heretics. For more on the Brent family see Chap. 5.


\textsuperscript{52} Letter, John Coode to Nathaniel Bacon, Feb 8, 1689/90, CO 5/718/1 Maryland Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1696, TNA, fol. 83. Francis Hobart was a member of the Franciscan order working with the Jesuits in Maryland.
returned to Maryland. At least one of the two priests remained in Virginia. It was only in 1696 that the annual letter reported the withdrawal of a missionary from Virginia where “he had been conducting a mission under the pretext of teaching the sons of a very rich merchant, who was not averse to the Catholic religion.” Despite periods of disruption and staffing shortage, throughout the seventeenth century the Maryland mission maintained and sought to expand the missionary project into neighboring Virginia. Beyond the protection of the Calvert’s territory, the Jesuits could not build chapels or establish permanent missions. Instead they used the houses of wealthy Catholics and planters amenable to Catholicism to enable their missionary project, expanding and adapting the missionary circuits adopted in both Maryland and England.

Colonial records also contain details of additional visits by priests to the colony of Virginia that did not stem from the Jesuit mission in Maryland. A “father Edmonds” appears in court records for Lower Norfolk County, Virginia, in 1687. Edmonds, according to the court, “pretends himself a papist priest” and admitted to attending several houses in the county to “Celebrate the mass” and, in one instance, a marriage. Less than eighteen months later, Catholics in Barbados received a letter written by Alexander Plunkett, a Capuchin priest, who

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53 Letter, John Coode to Nathaniel Bacon, Jan 10, 1689/90, CO 5/718/1, TNA, fol. 82.

54 Annual Letter of 1696, quoted in Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus, Text 2:156. The Latin letter is published in full in ibid., Documents 1:139-40. This is most likely a reference to George Brent, who in the past had sheltered Jesuit missionaries at his plantation in Stafford County and was rumored to employ a Jesuit tutor. Other wealthy planters in northern Virginia such as Ralph Worneley and William Fitzhugh also showed themselves “not averse” to Catholicism. Though Worneley and Fitzhugh remained Anglican, they may have appreciated the quality of a Jesuit education.

described himself as engaged in “Labours” for the Catholic faith in “parts of Virginia.”\textsuperscript{56} Both Edmonds and Plunkett no doubt benefited from the greater freedoms accorded Catholics under the reign of James II, although in the case of Edmonds the activities of priests continued to be closely monitored by colonial authorities. The activity of Alexander Plunkett, at least, stemmed from a longer interest of the Capuchins in the Virginia territory. At the request of Henrietta Maria, the queen mother, the French Province of the Capuchins agreed to send missionaries to Virginia in 1650, “for the conversion and spiritual welfare of those people.”\textsuperscript{57} Little is known of the mission beyond its inception and Plunkett is the only Capuchin to appear in English colonial records in North America. Certainly the involvement of the French Province of the Capuchins explains the connection between Plunkett and the Caribbean. French clerics in the Caribbean maintained stronger ties with Catholics in English colonies than their counterparts in North America and could easily have supplied Plunkett with information about Barbados. Such a connection stands in sharp contrast to the inability of John Pierron to co-operate with English Jesuits fifteen years earlier.\textsuperscript{58} Though disconnected from the larger Jesuit mission, both Edmonds and Plunkett support the general picture of the Chesapeake as a thriving zone of Catholic missionary activity.

The Jesuits in Maryland also turned their attention north of Maryland. In 1644, Thomas Copley proposed “an excursion of some months’ duration into New England.” Copley hoped

\textsuperscript{56} Letter, Alexander Plunkett to Thomas Montgomery, Feb 28, 1688/89, CO 28/37 Barbados Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1700, TNA, No. 7vii, fol. 26. Beatriz Betancourt Hardy records that an Alexander Plunkett (also known as Christopher Plunkett), a Capuchin priest, served the Maryland mission from 1698 until 1699. Beatriz Betancourt Hardy, “Papists in a Protestant Age: The Catholic Gentry and Community in Colonial Maryland, 1689-1776” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1993), 620.


\textsuperscript{58} Plunkett’s letter is one of the few instances of a direct connection between clerical activity in English North America and the Caribbean. See also the mission of John Skerrett discussed below.
such a mission would provide “no small fruit” in the form of Indian converts to the Catholic faith.\textsuperscript{59} By “New England,” Copley almost certainly meant the territory to the immediate north of Maryland encompassing New Sweden and New Netherland, as well as the English colonies to the north. Indeed in 1663, the Vicar Apostolic of Quebec noted that a deserted mission in New Sweden “is said to be tended by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who work among the English Catholics living in Maryland.”\textsuperscript{60} And in 1683, a Jesuit from Maryland allegedly traveled into East Jersey and baptized Robert of Poitiers, possibly a European convert.\textsuperscript{61} These journeys into the northern colonies appear to have been the projects of individual Jesuit missionaries, rather than an institutional effort to expand the scope of the Maryland mission. But in 1683, the English Province solidified these forays northwards by creating a new mission in New York. Envisioned from its initiation as “an appendage to the old Maryland mission,” the Jesuits considered New York to be the next step in spreading the Catholic faith in English North America.\textsuperscript{62} Thomas Dongan, the new Catholic governor of New York, received an annual payment of sixty pounds to support the residence of “two Romish Priests” in the colony.\textsuperscript{63} In fact, between 1683 and 1689 the mission in New York housed three Jesuits, who attended on the governor at a chapel in the fort, provided Latin education for the sons of wealthy New York merchants at “a Jesuite College,” and traveled to Albany to minister to local Catholics and negotiate entrance into the


\textsuperscript{60} Quoted in Hughes, \textit{History of the Society of Jesus}, Text 2:65.


\textsuperscript{63} Minutes of Council for New York, Apr 18, 1691, CO 5/1183 New York Council Minutes 1687-1694, TNA, fol. 125.
Iroquois missions. However, plans to expand the New York mission and establish a provincial seat in the colony were thwarted by the rebellion of Jacob Leisler in 1689.

At the time of the Glorious Revolution, only two Jesuits--John Harvey and Henry Harrison--remained in New York. Harrison escaped to sea in 1689 and was captured by Dutch pirates before arriving safely in France. Harvey at first sought refuge in the home of William Pinhorne, a member of the council and prominent Jacobite, where he remained “above three weeks or a month.” Still in New York in March 1689 and living aboard a ship moored in the Hudson River, Harvey issued an oath in support of James II to several residents of New York and East Jersey. He subsequently fled south “on foot” through Jersey, Pennsylvania, and finally into Maryland. Harvey remained there until his death in 1696, serving the Catholics of Talbot County under the name of John Smith. During his seven years in Maryland, Harvey continued to push the boundaries of the mission northwards. He developed ties with Pennsylvanian Catholics

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67 Deposition of Thomas Masters, Feb 27, 1689/90, in Christoph, Leisler Papers, 66-67.

68 Annual Letter of 1685-1690, in Foley, Records of the English Province, 3:395. According to Peter Christoph, John Harvey sailed for England before Leisler’s takeover. But the presence of a John Smith, an alias used by Harvey, in Talbot County, Maryland in the early 1690s suggests Harvey escaped on foot as the annual letter describes. Christoph, “The Time and Place of Jan van Loon: Part II,” 10.
and also returned to New York for a brief period in 1692 and 1693.\textsuperscript{69} From this small beginning would grow the Pennsylvania mission that by the mid-eighteenth century became a flourishing center for Catholic migration. But in the seventeenth century, forays into Pennsylvania, like those to Virginia and to the northern colonies, remained piecemeal and reliant on the initiative of individual missionaries and congregants. For most of the seventeenth century, the Maryland mission could be characterized as insular and restricted, but in the English island colonies of the Caribbean missionary activity proved considerably more diverse as priests of all nations sought to establish a missionary foothold.

**Priests of All Nations: Missionary Activity in the English Caribbean**

The seventeenth-century Caribbean was a contested space, where English and Irish colonists shared trade routes, and often the same island, with imperial rivals and religious enemies. When the English began colonial expansion into the Caribbean in the late 1620s, they discovered the Catholic Church already well-established in Spanish and French settlements.\textsuperscript{70} In the first half of the seventeenth century, the English Caribbean colonies faced the constant threat of Spanish invasion. By the 1660s, fear of the Spanish transitioned into conflict with the French. Martinique was the nearest European settlement to Barbados and the Leewards Islands of Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua were ringed in by Dutch and French territory to the north and south. For

\textsuperscript{69} Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus*, Text 2:151. On John Harvey’s activity in Talbot County, Pennsylvania, and New York see “Peter Dubuc,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 14 (1897): 177-81; Martin I. J. Griffin, “Father Smith of Talbot County Maryland, 1683-1693,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 15 (1898), 50-4; E. I. Devitt, “Who was Father Smith of Talbot County, MD 1693?,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 15 (1898), 65-8. I am inclined to agree with Griffin that the most likely identity of Father Smith is Harvey, not Harrison who appears in Europe in the early 1690s.

most of the seventeenth century, the French and English shared or contested the island of St. Christopher. The close proximity of foreign settlements, and the ever-changing political landscape, provided safe havens for priests to travel through English territory on missionary circuits, and missions in the Caribbean further benefited from close collaboration between national groups, which facilitated the overlap of mission fields and mutually beneficial ventures. In sharp contrast to the dominance of English Jesuits in North America, the constant presence of Catholic colonies and foreign Catholic missions in the Caribbean provided an eclectic mix of clerical encounters in the English island colonies in the seventeenth century.

For all the close proximity of foreign settlements, missions, and priests, the first Catholic clerics to visit the English colonies in the Caribbean were English and Irish in origin. In January 1634, the *Ark* and the *Dove*, en route to the Chesapeake with Maryland’s first settlers, stopped off in the Caribbean to re-supply and acquire trade goods for the return journey to England. The English Jesuits Andrew White and John Altham, along with other passengers on board the *Ark*, ventured ashore first at Barbados and later St. Christopher. White and Altham became the first priests to formally observe and record the presence of practicing Catholics in the English colonies.71

The Maryland party stayed three weeks on the island of Barbados. During this time, White visited much of the island and commented on the manner of living, the flora, and the fauna. He also noted that “Some few Catholiques there be both English and Irish.”72 It is unclear

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72 White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 37.
how White acquired this information or whether the priest had direct contact with Catholic inhabitants on the island. Indeed, White’s reference to the Catholic population of Barbados is noticeably absent from the Latin version of his report sent to the General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. This exclusion may have been a mere oversight on the part of White in the process of copying and editing multiple versions of his journal. The reference in the English manuscripts occurs after a prolonged discussion of the produce of Barbados, a section White largely excluded from his Latin report. Yet this type of demographic data was precisely the information the Society hoped to gain from missionary reports and White would surely have eagerly recorded interactions with the Catholic population of Barbados if they had occurred.

Local conditions in Barbados at the time of the arrival of the Ark and the Dove offer some explanation for White’s cautious treatment of the Catholic population. The Barbados government had recently thwarted an attempted uprising by indentured servants and the arrival of a group of Catholic strangers in the colony did little to ease tensions. The rebels planned “to kill their masters and make themselves free,” to commandeer the first ship to arrive at port in Barbados, and, thus, make their escape from the island. As the first ship to arrive, the Ark “had been marked for their prey,” but, White reported, the timely discovery of the plot by the authorities on Barbados prevented disaster. The involvement of the Ark and the Dove, unintended or not, in the planned rebellion only accentuated the government’s wariness towards the Maryland

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73 The description of Barbados White submitted to his superiors in Rome is considerably less detailed than the one written to Lord Baltimore, compare White, “Relatio itinerias in Marylandiam,” 346-8 to White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 34-7.

74 White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 34.

75 White, “Relatio itinerias in Marylandiam,” 347.
colonists and did little to endear the Marylanders to the local populace.\textsuperscript{76} The presence of Catholic priests among the Maryland contingent no doubt heightened local suspicions and may explain why White and Altham were reticent to fully interact with the Catholic population, many of whom were Irish servants, during their stay on the island.\textsuperscript{77}

Having met with high prices, “poor passages,” and general suspicion at Barbados, the passengers aboard the \textit{Ark} and the \textit{Dove} hoped for better treatment in the English colonies of the Leeward Islands. The ships left Barbados on January 24, 1634, heading for the island of Martinique. Reaching anchor off Martinique on the evening of January 25, the ships paused to trade with the local Carib Indians. Observing the indigenous inhabitants’ potential as Catholic converts, White wrote to Rome, “Some one, I hope, will hereafter have compassion on this foresaken people.”\textsuperscript{78} The island of Montserrat was sighted at noon the following day and White recorded the presence of “a noble plantation of Irish Catholiques whome the virginians would not suffer to live with them because of their religion.”\textsuperscript{79} The \textit{Ark} and the \textit{Dove} paused briefly at Montserrat to gather intelligence on the Spanish war fleet before sailing for Nevis where they “staied a day.” They eventually arrived at St. Christopher on the morning of January 28 and stayed ten days.\textsuperscript{80} The brief stops at Martinique, Montserrat, and Nevis allowed White and

\textsuperscript{76} Most grueling to the Maryland contingent, the lieutenant-governor, Richard Peers, ordered the price of seed-corn doubled from 1s to 2s a bushel shortly after their arrival. White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 34.


\textsuperscript{78} White, “Relatio itinerias in Marylandiam,” 349. The sentiment is missing from the English version. This observation concerning the missionary potential of Martinique makes the lack of similar commentary on the Catholic population of Barbados earlier in the account more conspicuous in its absence.

\textsuperscript{79} White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 38.

\textsuperscript{80} White, “Relatio itinerias in Marylandiam,” 349; quotation taken from White, “Relation of a Voyage unto Maryland,” 39.
Altham only a fleeting glimpse of the European and Carib populations. It is unlikely the two priests even set foot on any of these islands; they certainly had little time to inquire after or communicate with any Catholics residing there. At St. Christopher, however, White and Altham had ample opportunity to interact and minister to Catholic inhabitants of the island.

The reception of the Maryland settlers on St. Christopher, and in particular the two priests, stands in sharp contrast to that accorded them on the island of Barbados. White recorded that the passengers “received a friendly invitation” and were “nobly entertained” by the leading planters including the English governor, Thomas Warner. Two Catholic residents of the English sector, Captain Caverley and Captain Pellam, were among those who encouraged the two priests and other Catholics aboard the *Ark* and the *Dove* to partake of the proffered hospitality. The presence of a dominant Catholic gentry provided White and Altham with an immediate connection to the Catholic community on the island. The arrival of the Jesuits even came to the attention of the French residents, whose governor, White noted, “received me with especial courtesy.”

White and Altham, however, were only visitors on the islands and any comfort they offered to the Catholics they encountered was temporary.

The Catholic inhabitants of St. Christopher did not wait long for dedicated attention from the Catholic clergy. Within three years of White and Altham’s visit to Barbados and St. Christopher, Malachy O’Queely, the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam in Galway, Ireland, initiated the first permanent Catholic mission to the English Caribbean. In March 1637, Ferdinandus McFarssey and David O’Neill, secular clergy from the arch-diocese of Tuam, set sail for the

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Caribbean with a group of 600 Irish migrants. Reporting to his superiors in Rome, O’Queely described the two priests as “men full of the zeal for religion and charity.” O’Queely charged McFarssey and O’Neill with bringing comfort to the Catholic population living under English rule whom he believed to be “destitute of spiritual aid” and “in great danger of being perverted from the faith” for lack of clerical guidance. Two years after founding the mission on St. Christopher, O’Queely reported that the Catholic population in the Leeward Islands had joyfully received the arrival of McFarssey and O’Neill as resident priests.

It is difficult not to see a direct connection between the information on Caribbean Catholics provided by Andrew White and the founding of the Irish mission in 1637. The choice of St. Christopher, not Barbados, as a missionary base fits with White’s more favorable report of the English and French response to his own presence on that island. O’Queely, like Simon Stock writing on Newfoundland, had no first-hand knowledge of the region he hoped to missionize and relied heavily on published reports and rumors. O’Queely is unlikely to have had direct access to copies of White’s manuscript reports, but accounts of Maryland’s founding and the voyage of the Ark and the Dove could easily have reached O’Queely in Galway via the Irish trade. In his reports to Rome, O’Queely identified his enterprise as a “mission in those parts of Virginia,  

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82 The details of this early missionary enterprise are based on Archbishop O’Queeley’s reports to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, 1637-1639, published in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 185-92. All references and direct quotations are drawn from an English translation provided by Timothy Kears. No published English translation of these documents exists, but English summaries of the reports are provided in Aubrey Gwynn, “The First Irish Priests in the New World,” Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review 21 (1932): 221-5.

83 Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 188, 186, 190.
namely on St. Christopher Island,” a common confusion repeated in several early seventeenth-century accounts of English settlements in the Caribbean and North America.\footnote{Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 188. The contemporaneous report of Alonso Benavides, presented to the pope in February 1634, may also have contributed to O’Queely’s choice of the Caribbean for his mission and his false assumption that the region constituted part of Virginia. Benavides prefaced his request for “a mission of Irish Fathers who know the English language” with concern at the spread of heresy in “Virginia and other places and islands of North America.” The spread of English colonization, according to Benavides, threatened Spanish holdings in the Caribbean and New Mexico, and endangered the spread of Catholicism in the Americas. Memorial of Alonso Benavides, (Frans.) to Pope Urban VIII, in Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus in America, Text 1:321-2.}

St. Christopher also represented a very practical choice. As O’Queely noted in his first report, “a safe enough trade route has recently been discovered” and “Irish of both sexes have been making the journey there in great numbers.”\footnote{Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 186.} Many Irish servants destined for the English colonies in the 1630s expressed a preference for the Caribbean. Within that regional preference, most servants hoped to end up on the island of St. Christopher, having heard rumors of fair treatment and good wages.\footnote{Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, 57; Akenson, If the Irish Ran the World, 52-3.} The Leeward Islands also represented a manageable operational of operation zone for a small missionary undertaking. St. Christopher, in particular, provided a ready-made congregation of English and Irish Catholics, as well as access to external Catholic support from the French settlers.

To ensure the archdiocese of Tuam remained in control of the mission, O’Queely sought the support and oversight of the \textit{Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide} rather than one of the dedicated missionary orders active in Ireland. The poverty of the Irish Church, and of the diocese of Tuam in particular, meant McFarssey and O’Neill arrived in the Caribbean with little in the way of financial support, provisions, or spiritual necessities such as “ornaments, spiritual books, and other needed things.” O’Queely used his “meager resources” as best he could to equip and send out his mission in the hope that such actions would persuade the \textit{Propaganda} of the
enterprise’s merit and lead to subsequent financial, logistical, and spiritual support.\textsuperscript{87} Unfortunately for O’Queely, by the end of 1639 both McFarssey and O’Neill were dead, having succumbed to the “intemperance of the air,” or, perhaps, the “ferocity” of the indigenous inhabitants. Undaunted, O’Queely wrote again to \textit{Propaganda} to explain that “this does not so terrify us that we will not order others sent there, and the sooner the better.” He renewed his call for assistance, noting that “while some go out on that mission, may you provide carefully and in a timely fashion both a fitting stipend and the necessary resources.” On April 23, 1640, \textit{Propaganda} ordered O’Queely to send out two new missionaries, providing them with 60 scudo each as a stipend and a 50 scudo travel allowance between them, and supplying the archbishop with faculties to be conferred on those priests chosen for the mission allowing them to perform consecrations and blessings.\textsuperscript{88} The historical record provides no indication that a second group of secular priests departed for St. Christopher and deteriorating relations between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland may have prevented any further attempts to send missionaries across the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{89}

Despite the failure to replace the two dead missionaries, the mission to St. Christopher was, like its apostolic counterpart in Newfoundland, considerably more successful in the long-term. O’Queely succeeded in sending out secular priests to serve the Catholic population of the English Caribbean and his transmission of the mission reports to the \textit{Propaganda} provided further information on the character and needs of Catholics living under Protestant rule. Most

\textsuperscript{87} Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 188-9.

\textsuperscript{88} Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 191, 192. O’Queely’s letter to \textit{Propaganda} is frustratingly vague on the fate of the two missionaries. His reference to the “ferocity” of the local inhabitants almost certainly refers to the Carib Indians and suggests McFarssey and O’Neill may have been murdered during a Carib attack, but there is no way to verify this assertion. Scudo refers to the large silver coins used as currency in the Italian states.

\textsuperscript{89} Gwynn, “First Irish Priests in the New World,” 225.
importantly, the reports transmitted by Archbishop O’Queely spurred Propaganda to establish a precedent for Irish clerical activity in the English Caribbean that would shape future Jesuit ventures in the region.

Though encountering much discomfort, White, Altham, McFarssey, and O’Neil experienced little persecution because of their identity as priests. Not all clerical visitors to the English Caribbean met with such good fortune. In 1635, the English survivors on the small island of Tortuga reported rumors that “their Governor had hanged an Irish priest.” The persistent threat of Spanish invasion loomed over the small Protestant outpost and no doubt contributed greatly to the governor’s decision. The execution, witnesses confirmed, occurred in January 1635, shortly “before the Spaniards arrived.” Meanwhile in Barbados, the council arrested and convicted an unnamed priest “for dispersing Popish books, & seducing the people, & delivering scandalous words of the Bishoppes.” The release of this “Romish priest” by Governor Henry Hawley proved highly controversial and contributed to the governor’s downfall in 1639. The same year on Providence Island, Governor Nathaniel Butler ordered the imprisonment of two Spanish Dominicans to prevent them betraying the colony to their Spanish masters. Butler met with the friars on several occasions during their imprisonment, once to address reports that the Dominicans intended to escape with the aid of “Spanish Negroes and

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90 Bernard O’Brien’s Account, in Lorimer, Settlement on the River Amazon, 420. Known by the English as Association Island and lying off the north coast of Hispaniola, now Haiti, in 1635 Tortuga was occupied by both English and French buccaneers who claimed shared settlement of the island. The English inhabitants lived under the protection and government of the Providence Island Company. Karen Kupperman, Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 85; Alison Games, Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 86-8.

91 Thirteen articles against Captain Henry Hawley, undated, CO 1/10 Privy Council 1639-1643, TNA, No. 28i, fol. 78. Thomas Hughes suggests that Hawley’s priest is most probably one of the two sent to St. Christopher by Malachy O’Queely. I find this highly unlikely as O’Queely makes no reference to Barbados in his account of the mission and the specific charge of “dispersing Popish bookes” jars with the impoverished description of the Irish mission. I opt instead to count the priest in Barbados in 1639 as an additional clerical visitation. Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Text 1:315.
some others” and two more times over the Easter Holy period. Despite rumors of an escape, Butler took part in Catholic sacraments on Easter Saturday and invited the Dominicans to dine with him on Easter Sunday, actions intended to provoke his Puritan enemies on the island as much as promote religious tolerance.92 All three of these cases demonstrate the degree to which local conditions shaped Protestant reactions to the arrival of Catholic clerics in individual English colonies. The treatment of priests provided a valuable political tool for besieged colonial elites to attack rivals or to shore up support, but in many cases it remained easier to avoid confrontation.

By 1640 at least eight priests had visited English colonies in the Caribbean. Five of these priests had definite contact with the colonial population, interacting with Catholics and Protestants alike, and promoting the practice of the Catholic faith over the Protestant one. The character, length, and situation of Catholic clerical sojourns in the English islands varied greatly, but the earliest encounters with priests in the English Caribbean established the basic patterns of Catholic missionary activity in the region for the next 50 years. The response of Protestant authorities to Catholic clerics varied widely and stemmed primarily from local concerns, not colonial policy. While some priests became immediate targets of repression at the hands of zealous colonial officials, others came and went with almost no reaction from local Protestant authorities. Priests and missionaries moved constantly and rarely out-stayed their welcome. Though initially focused on the provision of English and Irish priests to the Catholic population in the 1630s and 1640s, clerical activity in the English Caribbean after 1650 increasingly relied

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92 Mar 21, Apr 13-14, 1639, Diary of Nathaniel Butler, in Papers Relating to Providence Island Company and Colony 1630-1641, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Wakefield, U.K.: Microform Academic Publishers, 1987) microfilm, Reel 2. See also Kupperman, Providence Island, 262; Games, Migration, 208. Company correspondence indicates the Dominicans were still in custody on the island in 1641 when it was suggested they be sent to New England for safe-keeping, Kupperman, Providence Island, 335.
on connections with foreign colonial powers and foreign Catholic missions for protection, supplies, and, sometimes, even personnel. Such collaboration across national borders bound the English colonies into a web of Catholic missionary activity that spanned the circum-Caribbean world and beyond.

In 1643, the plight of Catholic populations in the English Caribbean reached the attention of the Society of Jesus. Letters from Catholics in St. Christopher, delivered by the French trading fleet to Irish Jesuits in Paris, urged the Jesuits to send Irish missionaries “to guide those who are deprived of their pastors and to strengthen them with the Christian sacraments.”\textsuperscript{93} The same year, the Portuguese crown received communication from a group of “true catholics” who, having “suffered great persecutions and travails” at the hands of their fellow English colonists on St Christopher, sought permission to move their plantations to the province of Maranhão in Brazil. The petitioners hoped “to settle another province in which they could profess freely the holy Catholic Faith.”\textsuperscript{94} Such pleas encouraged the revival of the Leeward Island mission as a Jesuit enterprise. Although initiated, supported, and promoted by the French Province, the new enterprise in the Leeward Islands, modeled on its apostolic predecessor, was to be an independent Irish mission. In September 1650, John Stritch, an Irish Jesuit living in exile in Paris, sailed alone for St. Christopher.\textsuperscript{95} Upon arrival on the island, Stritch “raised a chapel at Sable Point, in the French


\textsuperscript{94} Grant and donation of settlement to Pedro Setmão, Irishman and 400 companions in the Grão Pará, September 2, 1643, in Lorimer, \textit{Settlement on the River Amazon}, 452.

\textsuperscript{95} The General of the Society of Jesus directed a letter to John Stritch shortly before he was due to depart from Bordeaux, Gwynn, “First Irish Priests in the West Indies,” 227.
quarter, sufficiently close to the English territory” to minister to the Catholics living under English rule.96 The chapel proved immediately popular. According to the French Jesuits on the island, the Irish mission counted 3,000 members within three months of Stritch’s arrival. Of this number, the Jesuits claimed “several who were already committed in heresy,” but “got back on the good path” by the efforts of Stritch.97 The French attributed such astounding success to the decision to establish a mission dedicated to the English and Irish population, and staffed by a missionary who spoke their languages. Yet Stritch could not serve such a large community alone and missionary personnel from the French establishment on the island provided vital assistance, taking part in Mass and other sacred devotions.98

The presence of French substitutes may explain why after only three months Stritch felt able to leave the chapel on St. Christopher, having “provided for the most urgent necessities” of his new-found flock, and seek to expand his mission to the surrounding English colonies. The neighboring island of Montserrat, with its heavily Irish population, provided an obvious location for an additional missionary station. But unlike St. Christopher, Stritch could not establish a permanent residence on Monserrat as it was governed solely by the English. Instead, he “disguised himself as a merchant” and traveled to Montserrat “under excuse of wanting to buy wood.”99 The disguise of a wood merchant allowed Stritch to contact Catholics in Montserrat


97 Pelleprat, Relation, 39. For more on Catholic population figures in the English Atlantic world see Chap. 1.

98 Pelleprat, Relation, 43. Pierre Pelleprat, the author of the account, appears to have been one of the French Jesuits sent to assist Stritch with his pastoral duties.

99 Pelleprat, Relation, 39. In addition, Stritch may have used the name Bathe to travel to Montserrat. The catalogues of the Irish Province record that around this time an Irish Jesuit named Bathe was sent to the mission in St. Christopher. Hughes, History of the Society of Jesus, Text 1:680. This is probably an alias for Stritch as no additional priest arrived in the islands according to the French accounts of the mission.
and provided the cover necessary to conduct pastoral services. To perpetuate the ruse, Stritch “chose a place in the woods” to serve as an open-air chapel and after daily services spent the afternoon chopping wood with his congregants to further allay English suspicions of his actual purpose. Despite the elaborate subterfuge, Stritch’s activities on the island appear to have been common knowledge. A witness, testifying in an 1655 dispute, reported, “That there was a priest in ye sd Island, called ffather John.” Another referred merely to “a Romish priest.” A third deponent noted “a Romish preist [sic] was often in ye island,” and “might stay there as long as he would” without restraint from the island’s Protestant governor. This last deponent drew an important distinction concerning Stritch’s activities. While Stritch had visited the island of Montserrat on several occasions, and other deponents indicated he performed Mass, this last deponent testified “he knows not of publique mass said in ye Island.” Stritch’s disguise as a wood merchant clearly did not fool Protestant authorities and residents, but it did allow him to conduct his mission in private, making his presence non-threatening and acceptable for all concerned.

For three years, Stritch split his time between the chapel on St. Christopher and his itinerant mission to Montserrat, seemingly immune from persecution by the ruling Protestant elite. But in 1653, the English Protestant authorities in the Leewards, “unable to suffer that the Catholic religion there make so much progress,” determined to ruin the church. The presence of the missionary chapel on St. Christopher provided the English with an obvious target. The

100 Pelleprat, Relation, 39-40.

101 Examinations of Henry and Rich. Waad and Henry Wheeler, Feb 9, 1654/5, CO 1/12 Privy Council 1653-1656, TNA, No. 31iii, fol. 79-82, quotations from fol. 81, 79v, 82.

102 Shaw, “Island Purgatory,” 142-5. Shaw makes a similar point about the importance of secrecy and disguise to provide plausible deniability for Protestant English authorities, who willingly allowed priests to travel in and out of the English colonies providing they acted discreetly.
English governor on St. Christopher prohibited travel to the French part of the island in an attempt to discourage the practice of Catholicism among those of the lower classes. When this restriction failed to illicit the desired response in the Catholic population, the governor commanded that “the most fervent and significant” Catholic adherents be rounded up and shipped to the uninhabited Isle of Crabs to suffer “the last degree of poverty.” He ordered the remaining Catholics under his rule to attend the Protestant churches or face harsh punishments for resisting. In one instance a young Irish girl, refusing to attend a Protestant sermon, was “pulled there by the hair and treated with so much cruelty.” Such “evil excesses” served only to prevent the open practice of Catholicism. Stritch and his congregants became more secretive and discreet. Many Catholics “obeyed at least on the surface and went to the heretics’ meeting,” while continuing to attend Mass “secretly and surreptitiously” at the chapel in the French quarter. 103 Stritch eventually transferred his chapel to the island of Guadeloupe, taking with him several Irish Catholics. But he continued to serve those Catholics remaining in the English colonies, traveling “from time to time to the other islands,” always “in disguise,” providing pastoral care for the faithful until he finally returned to Ireland in 1660. 104

Stritch was not the only priest in the English Caribbean in the 1650s. The contemporaneous three-month stay of Antoine Biet, a French priest, on Barbados provides an interesting counterpoint to Stritch’s experience in the Leeward Islands. Arriving in Barbados less than a year after Protestant authorities in St. Christopher forced Stritch’s mission to relocate to Guadeloupe, Biet encountered considerably less hostility from the Protestant governor and council. Biet arrived in Barbados in February, 1654, as part of a group of survivors from the

103 Pelleprat, Relation, 41-3.
104 Pelleprat, Relation, 47-8, quotation from 48; Gwynn, “First Irish Priests in the West Indies,” 228.
failed French colony of Cayenne. The French party was clearly aware that priests were not welcome in the English colonies. One of Biet’s fellow travelers, a man of “dissolute life,” attempted to alert the population to Biet’s identity. Upon disembarkation, Biet related, the man called out “‘A priest, a priest,’ by his shouts wanting to excite the English, who abhor priests, into throwing me into the sea or harming me in some other way.” As Biet himself observed, “I do not know what would have happened if most of the people on the roadstead had been able to understand French.” This almost comical event paints a picture of Biet as an endangered cleric, barely avoiding a possibly terrible fate through the mercy of the language barrier. In reality, the authorities seemed little concerned with the presence of a French priest. The French survivors purchased a plantation on the island “where they lived peacefully in the practice of our Holy Religion.” “Provided that one does not carry out religious exercises in public,” Biet noted, “no one bothers with what one is doing.” This arrangement seems far removed from the brutal repression of Stritch’s congregation on St. Christopher the year before, or indeed, the response Biet expected from the crowd at the dock in Barbados. Of course, Biet was a French priest living amongst French refugees with permission from the Barbados governor to “land and live in the island as if they were in France.” He spoke only French and “dressed in the clothing of a gentleman.”105 Biet was the very model of discretion and could not be accused of rousing the Catholic rabble against English Protestant rule. Yet during Biet’s stay on the island of Barbados he encountered a number of Catholic residents and, according to his own report, actively sought to comfort and sustain those Catholics he discovered. Biet hoped to “stay here with them for their solace and to care for the health of

their souls.” According to Biet’s observations, even English and Irish Catholics were “given freedom of belief, provided that they do nothing to be conspicuous in public.” Though it seems vastly different to the situation in the Leeward Islands, Biet’s perception of religious freedom in Barbados was not that far removed from Stritch’s experience. Stritch operated a successful mission for three years before the Protestant authorities on St. Christopher responded, and continued to do so for another seven years after his move to Guadeloupe. Much of Stritch’s success stemmed from his ability, like Biet, to avoid confrontation and conduct his clerical business in private. On Montserrat, Stritch did little to disturb the status quo and appeared only to encourage private expressions of Catholicism. But the chapel on St. Christopher represented a long-term and more substantive political threat than Stritch’s activities on Montserrat and his later itinerant visits. The chapel “created suspicion in the mind of the English.” It served as a constant reproof to the Protestant leadership on St. Christopher of their failure to suppress Catholic activity, and it became a potent symbol of the successful integration of a Catholic community on the island that endangered Protestant rule.

The increased hostility towards Stritch, and the Catholic population more generally, coincided with the ratcheting up of anti-Catholic and anti-Irish activities in the English Atlantic world during the reign of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell’s policy of forced migration for prisoners of war and political rivals, in particular, increased the transportation of Catholics to the

106 Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 63.
107 Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 69.
108 Pelleprat, Relation, 41.
Caribbean in the middle of the 1650s. Irish priests captured by Cromwell’s forces in Ireland joined their co-religionists as indentured servants bound for the Caribbean. A year after Biet’s stay in Barbados and less than two years after Stritch fled St. Christopher, the Barbados Council reported the arrival of “three Irish Priests” at Speightstown on the island’s west coast. The governor of Barbados received orders that the three priests “be so employed as they may not be at liberty to return again into this nation [of Ireland.]” They were followed in May 1656 by four more priests, “Richard Shelton, James Tuite, Robert Egan & Redmond Moore,” whom the council gave “15 days liberty to seeke passage for their departure.” By their mere presence these seven priests almost certainly offered some spiritual solace to the Catholics who traveled with them. But their status as political exiles restricted their movements upon arrival in the colonies and prohibited the type of interaction with the Catholic community that Antoine Biet and John Stritch experienced. The Irish exiles possessed neither the means nor the connections to replicate Stritch’s success in the Leeward Islands and lacked the neutrality that protected Biet from the most virulent anti-Catholic activities. The involvement of French interests proved crucial to envisioning a consistent and effective pastoral mission in the English colonies. The French facilitated movement, provided safe-havens and mission personnel, and increasingly


111 Jan 2, 1654/55, Minutes of the Council of Barbados, Lucas Manuscripts (Microfilm), Barbados Public Library [hereafter Barbados Minutes], Reel 1 1653-1693, Vol. 1, fol. 79.


113 May 21 1656, Barbados Minutes, Reel 1 1653-1693, Vol. 1, fol. 211.
made Catholic missionary activity in the English Caribbean a viable and successful enterprise that steered a fine line between serving the needs of the Catholic population and respecting the power of Protestant authorities.  

When John Stritch returned to Ireland in 1660, his mission post lay vacant for six years before a fellow Irish Jesuit, John Grace, arrived in the Caribbean to resume the project. For three years, from early 1666 to the spring of 1669, Grace served a disparate congregation that stretched from Barbados to the Leeward Islands. Expanding upon the circuits established by John Stritch, Grace attended English and Irish Catholics wherever he could find them including the English colonies, French Martinique and Guadeloupe, and even Dutch St. Eustace. But more than Stritch, Grace found it increasingly difficult to travel throughout the Caribbean and “lend aid to these people without danger to his life.” Throughout his time in the Caribbean, Grace struggled to negotiate the increasingly fractious relations between the French and English. Grace noted that “the English pour out against Irish Catholics and especially against me . . . all the losses they have suffered.” In 1667, Grace delayed his departure from Martinique “for fear of the English who were sailing about” and had only recently lost St. Christopher to the French. To survive, Grace relied heavily on the protection and support of French missionaries in the Caribbean. For example, in 1667, having expended the small annual funds supplied by the Vatican for his upkeep, Grace found respite and accommodation on St. Christopher from a

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114 Shaw, “Island Purgatory,” 141-5. Shaw draws a similar comparison between the experience of John Stritch, Antoine Biet, and the Irish exiles. But focused as her dissertation is on the Irish Catholic community, I believe Shaw underplays the importance of the evolving relationship between Irish missionary ventures, the French, and the English in this period that formed a Catholic world within and without existing political borders. It is not simply a question of discretion, but about how to effectively serve the Catholic community in the English colonies--both Irish and English--and remain discreet.

115 Letter of John Grace, July 5, 1669 in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 256-8, quotation from 257.

“certain hermit here who aids me very much.” A deed from the late seventeenth century locates the “Father Hermits” in the Cayan quarter, an area of the south-eastern French sector close to English territory. Like John Stritch then, Grace continued to use French territory and French clerics to enable his mission to residents of the English colonies. But still the political environment of the Caribbean in the late 1660s made itinerant preaching a dangerous pastime. Grace eventually abandoned his mission in 1669, but hoped for an opportunity “to return to those wretched islands” accompanied by “suitable companions” to continue his missionary work.

The fluctuating political situation and, for the most part, all-out war in the eastern Caribbean continued to disrupt attempts to send priests into the English colonies throughout the 1670s and 1680s. Between 1669, when Grace departed the Caribbean, and the ascension of James II to the English crown in 1685, few priests appear in surviving colonial records, and those who did were invariably on the wrong side of the law. During this period, French Jesuits from local missions on Martinique and St. Christopher attempted to continue pre-existing associations with Catholics in English territory by clandestine means. On March 4, 1672/73, Jacques Du Bois was arraigned before the council on Barbados for “being a Romish Priest & a dangerous person,” a charge to which he promptly confessed. The secrecy that surrounded the visit of Du Bois provided further damning evidence against the priest. Du Bois “neuer applied himself to His Excellency; nor did His Excellency euer see, or hear of him, until he was sent to him for

117 A Letter of John Grace, March 11, 1667 in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 253-4. On Martinique, Grace also sought the aid of “a certain priest who was serving there.” (Ibid., 254)


seducing the People.” In his defense Du Bois noted that having observed the “Diversities of factions & Divisions” that abounded on Barbados “in point of religion,” he had arrived “to settle the minds of the People, & bring them to a Conformity to the Roman Religion.” The case of Du Bois demonstrates the disintegration of relations between Catholic and Protestant neighbors in the Caribbean. The suggestion that Du Bois acquire authorization from the Protestant governor implied the same potential for religious freedom that Biet and Stritch encountered in the 1650s, but also evidenced the desire of Protestant authorities for greater control over the activities of those of the Catholic faith. The unacknowledged “secrecy” that had previously protected priests like Biet and Stritch now indicated conspiracy. For his part, Du Bois exhibited little concern that his clerical activities might upset Protestant locals instead actively courting attack and persecution with his interference in English religious disputes on the island.

By the early 1680s, any pretense that an unspoken agreement existed between English authorities and the Catholic clerics who plied their trade in the English Caribbean had disappeared entirely. Word of the Popish Plot in England reached the colonies rapidly and triggered a prolonged crackdown on Catholic inhabitants and specifically those Catholic priests who imprudently continued to serve the Catholic population under English rule. In 1680, John Skerrett, an Irish Augustinian missionary, was “forced to withdraw” from the Windward Islands in the Caribbean and seek the safety of the Spanish dominions. Skerrett had spent the last six


121 Letter, Fr. John Esqueret [Skerrett], OSA, to the governor of Puerto Rico, c. July 1680, published in F. X. Martin, “‘Obstinate’ Skerret, Missionary in Virginia, the West Indies and England, (c. 1674-c. 1688),” Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society 35 (1976): 46. Skerrett does not identify the English colony he escaped from, but Diego de Valdes, a member of the Inquisition in Puerto Rico ordered to verify Skerrett’s identify, states the Irishman sailed from a colony in the Windward Islands. Barbados, as the only populated English possession among the Windward Islands at the time, seems the most likely location. See Testimony of Don Diego de Valdes, prebendary of the Cathedral Church of St. John at Puerto Rico, commissary of the Holy Office and of the General Inquisition . . ., April 20, 1681, published in ibid., 49.
years traveling through the English colonies in North America and the Caribbean bringing
“assistance by his preaching and virtue to the few Catholics who were to be found there.”\textsuperscript{122} Throughout his travels Skerrett had suffered constantly at the hands of the heretics, but
“particularly so after the last plot . . . which the heretics falsely attributed to the poor afflicted
Catholics.”\textsuperscript{123} Encompassing the entirety of the English Atlantic, Skerret’s activity stands out
among missionary accounts for its geographical scope, but he was not alone in the harsh
treatment he received at the hands of the Protestant English fearful of an Atlantic-wide popish
conspiracy. In 1683, the assembly on Antigua ordered the arrest of “one Doctor Port a Roman
Priest” after Protestants on the island “informed against the said Port to the Gouvernor for his
saying Mass.”\textsuperscript{124}

As it did throughout the English Atlantic world, the reign of James II brought renewed
toleration for Catholic practice in the Caribbean and the hope of increased numbers of priests. In
April 1687, James II issued a declaration on liberty of conscience that removed restrictions on
Catholic activity and allowed public attendance at Mass in all English territory. Surprisingly little
attempt appears to have been made to take advantage of the declaration by renewing missionary
endeavors to the Caribbean in the model of Stritch or Grace. Instead, local Catholics took
advantage of the indulgence to petition Protestant governors for “free exercise of their religion”

\textsuperscript{122} Testimony of Matheo Guerra, provincila of the province of the Canary Islands, Apr 2, 1685, published in Martin,
“‘Obstinate’ Skerret,” 50. In 1675 John Skerrett requested the “faculties of a missionary” in order to conduct work in
“the countries of the Indies subject to the King of England, especially in the kingdom of Maryland.” Quoted in

\textsuperscript{123} Letter, Fr. John Esqueret [Skerrett], OSA, to the governor of Puerto Rico, c. July 1680, published in Martin,
“‘Obstinate’ Skerret,” 46.

\textsuperscript{124} Oct, 1683, Journal of Council and Assembly of Antigua, CO 1/49 Privy Council 1682 Jul-Sept, TNA, No. 81,
and to legitimate existing connections with priests already resident in the Caribbean.\footnote{Letter, Governor Sir Nathaniel Johnson to Lords of Trade and Plantation, March 3, 1688, in Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 44 vols., ed. William Noel Sainsbury, et al. (London: H.M.O., 1860-1969) [hereafter CSPC], 12:513.} On St. Christopher, “the Roman Catholiks” requested license from Thomas Hill, the lieutenant-governor of the island, “to enjoy the sd toleration by making use of such Priests as offered their Service.”\footnote{Deposition of John Barry, May 22, 1688, CO 1/64 Privy Council 1688 Jan-Jun, TNA, No. 71iii, fol. 340. See also Deposition of John Martin and Deposition of Andrew Bodkin, May 22, 1688, CO 1/64, No. 71iv, fol. 342-3.} Refused by Hill, who feared persecution should the indulgence be revoked, the Catholic residents traveled to Nevis and procured a license from the governor of the Leeward Islands, Nathaniel Johnson, “for the celebration of Masse in the English ground” which they carried back to St. Christopher.\footnote{Deposition of Andrew Bodkin, May 22, 1688, CO 1/64, No. 71iv, fol. 343.} Meanwhile, on the island of Montserrat, the Catholic population petitioned Johnson for exemption from the tithes that financed Protestant ministers that they “may be Enabled to provide for those guides and pastors” of the Catholic faith who visited the island.\footnote{Petition of Nicholas Lynch and others of Montserrat to Sir Nathaniel Johnson, November 23, 1687, CO 1/63 Privy Council 1687 Aug-Dec, TNA, No. 70, fol. 305v.} In March 1688, Johnson wrote to London that the work of “building and decorating chapels” for Catholic worship had begun on both St. Christopher and Montserrat.\footnote{Letter, Governor Sir Nathaniel Johnson to Lords of Trade and Plantation, March 3, 1688, CSPC, 12:513.}

Just over a year later, after the Protestant revolution in England, Johnson defended his actions:

> I have always owned myself a Protestant and never during the late indulgence went, as out of curiosity so many Protestants did, to hear Mass. Since I came here I do not rememeber [sic] that any Roman Catholic priests has been in my company above three or four times, and then always in public.\footnote{Letter, Governor Sir Nathaniel Johnson to Lords of Trade and Plantation, July 15, 1689, CSPC, 13:88.}

Given the frequency of visitations by French priests in previous years, those cited by Johnson probably traveled from the French Antilles.
On the island of Barbados, the French played a key role in supplying priests and supporting the open practice of Catholicism under James II. In June 1688, Father Michael, a French Jesuit stationed at Martinique, arrived in Barbados to minister to local Catholics. Lieutenant-Governor Edwyn Stede noted, “I have not thought fitt to Command his going off, or to forbid his giving spirituall assistance to those of his Religion that desire it.” Michael remained for six months, during which time he performed Mass on at least three occasions, interacted with local Catholics including colonial officials, plantation owners, servants and freed slaves, and facilitated communication between Catholics in Barbados, Virginia, Martinique and London. Like the initiatives on St. Christopher and Montserrat, Catholics in Barbados turned first to local sources, not Catholic powers at home, for a supply of priests to take advantage of the new religious freedoms. They similarly sought permission from local Protestant authorities to avoid unnecessary scrutiny. As in North America then, the reign of James II merely revealed and legitimated long-standing missionary patterns rather than initiating new opportunities.

A brief examination of clerical activity on the island of Jamaica further illustrates the local networks that governed missionary enterprise in the English Caribbean in the late seventeenth century. Due to its position far to the west of the other English colonies, Catholics in Jamaica did not benefit from the missionary circuits that traversed the eastern Caribbean throughout the seventeenth century. Even after its capture by the English in 1655, Jamaica remained oriented towards Spanish America, especially in the matter of clerical jurisdiction. It


132 The events of Michael’s visit to Barbados are extensively detailed in a series of documents collected by Edwyn Stede and sent to London after the Protestant revolution as evidence of a Catholic plot. See Documents relating to Montgomery and Chamberlaine, May 30, 1689, CO 28/37, No.7i-lxv. On the larger Catholic community revealed by Michael’s visit and the issues of loyalty that engulfed them see Chaps. 4 and 5.
was Spanish priests, not French ones, who provided spiritual aid to Jamaica’s small Catholic population. Despite the disconnect between Jamaica and the other English colonies in the Caribbean, the experience of priests on the island during the 1680s replicates the same difficulties faced by Catholic residents elsewhere in Anglo-Caribbean as they tried to reconcile the priorities of a newly revived English Catholic polity with pre-existing Catholic networks.

During the reign of James II, at least four Catholic clerics appear in the colonial records. Antonio del la Pas, “ffryer of the Order of Mercy’s for the Redemption of Captives,” and Don Juan Baptista Dempsy served the Spanish chapel established by St. Jago Del Castillo, a naturalized Spaniard. In January 1688, the Spanish clerics were joined by an English priest, Thomas Churchill, whom James II appointed “Cheife Pastor” over all the Catholics in Jamaica. To the annoyance of the existing clergy, Churchill lost no time in reordering the provision of Catholic services on the island:

> in some short time after ye said father having setled himself, he thought it meet and necessary, to convene together those of his congregation, as well ye Laity as Clergy, in order to ye setling and establishing of such rules & orders amongst them as should be most consonant and agreeable to ye Canons & doctrine of his Church

The Spanish Catholics refused to accept Churchill’s authority. They procured from the Bishop of Cuba a letter confirming “the King of Great Brittaine had no Jurisdiction ecclesiasticall here: and that ye said ffather Churchills power was void & insignificant & therefore his proceedings erroneous.” This jurisdicitional quarrel did little to aid the spiritual needs of Catholics on the

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133 May 9, 1688, Minutes of the Council of Jamaica, CO 140/4 Jamaica Minutes of the Council 1682-1690, TNA, fol. 228. See also May 7, 1688, ibid., fol. 227.

134 Additional instruction to the Duke of Albemarle, Aug 15, 1687, CO 1/63, TNA, No. 16, fol. 334. For the date of Churchill’s arrival see The Case of Smith Kelly and St. Jago del Castillo stated, May 1688, CO 1/64, No. 65, fol. 307.

135 The Case of Smith Kelly and St. Jago del Castillo stated, May 1688, CO 1/64, No. 65, fol. 307.
island and indeed endangered the religious freedom granted by James II.\textsuperscript{136} The dispute, however, fizzled out with the death of the governor, the flight of both St. Jago del Castillo and Thomas Churchill, and news of the imminent revolution in England. The needs of Jamaica’s Catholics were better met by the arrival in December 1688, of Thomas Offlin, “an Irish Popish Priest of ye Order of St. Dominick,” who received £20 from the council “towards a Roome or Chappell for his Popish flock to meet in.”\textsuperscript{137} Though somewhat isolated from the rest of the English Caribbean, then, Jamaica nonetheless exhibited the same eclectic and, often accidental, blend of pastoral service that characterized missionary enterprises in Barbados and the Leeward Islands throughout the seventeenth century.

**The Cultivation of Souls: The Clergy, the Laity and the Sustenance of the Catholic Faith in the English Colonies**

There can be no question that for much of the seventeenth century priests moved through the English colonies on a frequent basis. This frequency did not, however, automatically ensure regular access to priests for the many Catholics who inhabited the English Atlantic world. The laity viewed priests as an essential element of their faith. They administered the sacraments, oversaw major life events such as births, deaths, and marriages, provided education and instruction, and offered spiritual consolation. With few exceptions, the missionary circuits that spanned North America and the Caribbean relied on discretion and mobility, and lacked the

\textsuperscript{136} The quarrel was not simply a jurisdictional dispute between rival Catholic clerics. Spaniards attending Mass at Castillo’s chapel testified that Castillo had been encouraged to attack Churchill by the Duke of Albemarle, governor of Jamaica, who thought “father Churchill was too great And Hee must Clipp his Wings.” May 9, 1688, Minutes of the Council of Jamaica, CO 140/4 Jamaica Minutes of the Council 1682-1690, TNA, fol. 228.

\textsuperscript{137} Articles of high treason and other great Crimes and Misdemeanors against Roger Elleston, May 1690, CO 137/2 Jamaica Correspondence Board of Trade 1689-1692 No. 70i, fol. 104v. See also June 12, 1690, Minutes of the Council of Jamaica, CO 140/4, TNA, fol. 307v.
stable institutional establishments that facilitated such pastoral relationships with the laity. Even in Maryland, where the Jesuits openly established missionary plantations, built public chapels, and developed congregational communities, the Catholic Church still lacked a parish system that could provide regular and daily pastoral care. In practical terms, the lack of a reliable and persistent source of clerical guidance undermined the foundations of lay Catholicism. Yet throughout the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century, Catholics held on to their faith and flocked to priests and missionaries when they appeared. The detailed mission reports and writings of the Catholic clergy that remain from Maryland, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands reveal what the laity expected from visiting priests, how they responded to the irregular availability of Catholic clerics in the English colonies, and how the laity and clergy worked together to sustain and adapt Catholicism to the strictures of living under Protestant rule.

Traveling through the English colonies of North America in 1679-80, the Labadists Jasper Danckaerts and Peter Sluyter found themselves frequently mistaken for Catholic priests. Danckaerts wrote in his journal that: “The papists believed we were priests and we could not get rid of them; they would have us confess them, baptize their children, and perform Mass; and they continued in this opinion.” 138 Danckaerts and Sluyter were not priests, but their experience illuminates the most pressing religious needs of the Catholics they encountered. The Catholic laity in the English colonies, in common with their co-religionists throughout the known world, relied on priests to conduct the sacramental services of the Catholic Church that accessed the divine and affected the salvation of participants. Without the sacraments the laity risked spiritual desolation and, accordingly, the provision of Catholic Mass, baptism, death rites, confession, and absolution lay at the center of much of the missionary activity in the English Atlantic world in

138 Franklin and James, Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 250; see also journal entries on 75, 268.
the seventeenth century. Andrew White and John Altham’s first action after arriving safely in Maryland was to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. They then took possession of the land with the planting of a cross and the recitation of “the Litanies of the Holy Cross with great emotion.”

On St. Christopher, John Stritch worked “every day at the chapel to administer the sacraments.” From “the break of day until an hour after noon,” he offered confession, gave communion, baptized children and provided religious instruction. When on Montserrat Stritch appeared daily at the open-air chapel “to say the Mass and to confer the sacraments,” laboring from daybreak until noon, and “devoting himself to the cultivation of souls.” Similarly, John Grace “began at once to catechize, to hear confessions, to administer the sacraments of Eucharist and Extreme Unction, [and] to bury the dead” upon his arrival in the Caribbean in 1666.

The celebration of Mass and the other Catholic sacraments required more than simply a priest to perform the necessary rituals. Alongside provisions for the journey, Jesuits traveling the missionary circuits in Maryland carried with them a chest “for carrying bottles, one of which contains wine for religious purposes, six others holy water for the purpose of baptism,” as well as “a box with the sacred vessels, and a slab as an altar for the sacred function.” Not all priests in the English colonies were as well-supplied as these Maryland Jesuits. The frontier nature of missionary ventures throughout the English Atlantic world made re-supply of vital ritual tools, such as holy water, holy oil, and Eucharistic tablets, difficult. Many priests sent to the English colonies lacked missionary faculties issued by the pope that authorized them to transform the

139 “Relatio itinerias in Marylandiam,” 351.
140 Pelleprat, Relation, 39, 40.
Eucharistic bread, apply ritual blessings, and consecrate altars. The secular clergy Malachy O’Queely sent to the Caribbean in 1637 could not reproduce their own supplies of “holy oil, ornaments, or other things necessary for performing the Sacrifice and the Sacraments.” Yet it did not greatly inhibit their ability to perform their spiritual functions. The priests chosen for the journey were, according to O’Queely, “well instructed in conducting the rites,” and though the mission lacked the basic building blocks of a church, the priests were still received “with joy by all the Catholics.” Even in Maryland, a lack of basic supplies sometimes disrupted the operations of the mission. Exiled to Virginia in 1655, the Jesuits complained “there is not a supply of wine, which is sufficient to perform the sacred mysteries of the altar.”

In addition to daily or weekly performances of Mass, missionaries and priests in the English Atlantic world also conducted marriages, baptized children and converts, and offered absolution to the dying. Such events could not be timed to the unscheduled arrival of a visiting priest, but both the laity and the clergy took advantage of opportunities when they arose. In particular, the rites of baptism and extreme unction confirmed the laity in their faith and, for the clergy, assured the Church of additional souls. Jesuits in Maryland visited both Catholics and Protestants on their death-beds. In one instance, receiving a dying man into the Catholic faith, the visiting missionary “absolved him from his sins and anointed him with the sacred oil.” Another missionary encountered a French Catholic who had “spent fifteen whole years among heretics, [and] had lived just as they do.” As the man was “already near death,” the priest

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143 Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 188, 190.

144 Annual Letter of 1655 and 1656, in Hall, Narratives of Early Maryland, 142.

145 Annual Letter of 1638, in Hall, Narratives of Early Maryland, 121. See also the translation in Foley, Records of the English Province, 3:369, which specifically states “he gave him absolution together with the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.”
“restored [him] to the Catholic Church, and administering all the sacraments, prepared him for
dying happily.”146 Similarly, on Martinique, John Grace encountered Margaret Riordan, an Irish
Catholic, who had recently fled English St. Christopher and had been without the solace of a
priest for many years. Grace provided comfort to Riordan in her final days, taking her confession
and restoring her “to Holy Communion.”147 More controversial to local Protestants, visiting
clerics also baptized the young. In 1628, Protestant settlers in Newfoundland complained that
“the childe of one William Poole a P[ro]testant was baptized according to the orders and
customes of the church of Rome . . . contrary to the will of the sayd Poole.”148 Father Pierron
reported in 1674, that during his travels through the English colonies “he administered that
sacrament [of baptism] and others to but few persons, on account of their obstinacy.”149

The priests who traveled to the English colonies in the seventeenth century included both
natives of the British Isles and foreigners. Many of the sacred devotions of the Church and ritual
sacraments were performed in Latin regardless of the vernacular language of the participants.
But confession, absolution, and catechismal instruction required communication between the
clergy and the laity. Antoine Biet struggled to communicate with the English and Irish Catholics
he encountered in Barbados. A local Catholic offered his skills as an interpreter, but Biet found
himself “unable to console them, for I could neither address them nor understand what they were
asking me.” As a result, Biet determined “to apply myself entirely to learning their language in

146 Annual Letter of 1638, in Hall, Narratives of Early Maryland, 122.
148 Examination of Erasmus Stourtan, Oct 9, 1628, CO 1/4 Privy Council 1626-1628, TNA, No. 59, fol. 144.
149 Letter, Claude Dublon, Superior of the Missions of Canada, to Rev. Father Pinette, Provincial of France, Oct 24,
1674, in Jesuit Relations, 59:73.
order to render them assistance.”150 In 1689, even though a Jesuit had lived with them for six months, Catholics on Barbados argued that his lack of English prevented any substantive interaction with the laity. Catholics gathered for the performance of Mass, but “the sacramts. were never administred for that he [the Jesuit] could not be vnderstood nor vnderstand others.” Indeed, if a Jesuit “could not speake English what damage was [it] possible for him to doe in the perversion of any.”151

Language skills, then, proved a primary concern for those in control of missionary endeavors and for the priests they sent to the colonies. In requesting assignment to the English Caribbean in 1643, Martin O’Hartigan listed as one of his qualities that, “I am more than usually well acquainted with three languages, French, English and Irish, all of which are used freely in that part of the world.”152 The French Jesuits who sponsored John Stritch’s mission insisted on “one of our Fathers of the same nation [as the Irish] to assist them,” not least because of the benefit of Irish language skills.153 In New York, the three Jesuits chosen for the mission spoke English, French, and Dutch, the most common languages spoken in the colony.154 Still, in extreme circumstances, the shared knowledge of symbol and ritual stood in for vernacular communication. John Grace noted that, “even though they do not have a language in common,”

150 Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 63.
151 The Humble Petition of Sir Thomas Montgomery, Mar 7, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xx, fol. 44.
152 Letter, Matthew O’Hartegan to Mutius Vitelleschi, General, Society of Jesus, Rome, March 30, 1643, in Gwynn, “Early Irish Emigration to the West Indies (1612-1643),” 654
153 Pelleprat, Relation, 37.
Irish Catholics forced to live among the French used “nods and gestures in order to receive the Sacraments from the churchmen there.”

More than just a means to instruct and guide, the ability to communicate with the laity proved necessary for the effective operation of a mission. Whether natives of the British Isles or foreigners, priests rarely possessed local knowledge of colonial geography or society. They relied on local Catholic communities to provide suitable sites to conduct Mass, to offer shelter, and to spread the word. Upon arrival on Montserrat John Stritch, the French Jesuits reported, “made himself known to some Irish, and by them to all the others.” Local Catholics also chose a suitable place in the woods to conduct services. On St. Christopher, Stritch communicated with Catholic servants to ascertain “the times and means most suitable for them to help” to avoid arousing the suspicion of English masters. Antoine Biet, despite his language problems, used chance meetings with Irish Catholics on Barbados to avoid detection by the authorities and communicate with the larger Catholic population. His fellow Frenchman, the Jesuit Father Michael, lodged with prominent Catholics in 1688 who used their Catholic and Protestant servants to communicate word of the arrival of a priest and invite others to join them at Mass.

Given the volatile nature of Catholic-Protestant relations throughout the seventeenth century, priests rarely traveled without some form of disguise. It could, therefore, be a tricky and dangerous business to identify and approach an actual priest. The mistaken identification of Danckaerts and Sluyter as Jesuits reveals some of the characteristics that both Catholics and

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155 Narrative of John Grace, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 258.
156 Pelleprat, Relation, 39, 38.
157 Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 59, 61, 63.
158 See Deposition of Thomas White, Deposition of John Griffen, CO 28/37, No. 7xlix-l.
Protestants used to identify visiting priests. French Catholics in East Jersey “took us to be priests” and would not be convinced otherwise, remaining convinced “because we spoke French, and they were French people.” Meanwhile Protestants in Boston believed the Labadists to be priests because:

we were quiet and modest, and entirely different sort of people from themselves; that we could speak several languages, were cunning and subtle of mind and judgment, had come there without carrying on any traffic or any other business, except only to see the place and country.\(^\text{159}\)

“Quiet and modest” and multi-lingual were exactly the characteristics many priests hoped to exhibit, particularly those working in the Caribbean colonies. The description of the Labadists could easily be applied to John Stritch, Antoine Biet, or John Grace. So how then could a lay Catholic identify a priest? Further, how could a priest, unfamiliar with local conditions, identify a parishioner?

Antoine Biet’s encounter with a Catholic on the island of Barbados provides some clues to the process of identification. Walking alone on the island of Barbados, Antoine Biet was approached by an Irish man who communicated with him in the “corrupt language” of Mediterranean sailors. The man identified himself as “a servant of your Lady” and made “the sign of the cross to let me know he was Catholic.” Still fearful of exposure to the Protestant authorities, Biet denied his identity. Undeterred, the Irish man pressed his case:

He almost fell to his knees in front of me, once again making the sign of the cross, and recited the Lord's Prayer in Latin, the Hail Mary, and Credo and the De Profundis to certify that he believed in the prayer for the dead, and he told me he was Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman.

Catholic prayers and symbols, then, transcended language, disguise, and suspicion. For his part the Irish man identified Biet by his own prayers and, having correctly identified a priest,

\(^{159}\) Franklin and James, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*, 75, 268.
“considered himself happy, not only for his solace, but also for the solace of many other good Catholics” on the island.\textsuperscript{160}

Having successfully made contact with a priest, Catholics in the English colonies frequently expressed great joy at the prospect of receiving aid and salvation, which the priests interpreted as piety and devotion. Upon being introduced to a community of Catholics in Bridgetown, Barbados, Biet recalled that “people kissed my hands and threw themselves at my feet, crying with joy to find themselves so close to a priest.”\textsuperscript{161} In St. Christopher, a multitude of Irish Catholics greeted John Stritch, “Some took his hands to kiss, the others threw themselves at his feet to receive his blessing, all as well as the Father were sent into raptures.”\textsuperscript{162} Encountering Catholics in Barbados in 1667 who had been without the comfort of a priest for many years, John Grace observed “their constancy in the faith is wonderful, even miraculous.”\textsuperscript{163}

Such zeal carried over into the laity’s commitment to attendance at church and their performance of the devotions. Pierre Pelleprat, the French Jesuit assisting John Stritch on St. Christopher, observed the piety and devotion of two old Irish men, who continued, even after the English crack-down in 1653, to travel frequently to Stritch’s chapel from the English quarter. The two men traveled “with some incredible inconveniences” to arrive first at the chapel where “they assisted with the service and replaced their devotional practices.” They exhibited “an attention and a spiritual fervour” that Pelleprat believed lacking among many Catholics in Europe.\textsuperscript{164} Statements such as these must be taken with a pinch of salt. They often served as rhetorical

\textsuperscript{160} Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 60-1.

\textsuperscript{161} Handler, “Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 63.

\textsuperscript{162} Pelleprat, \textit{Relation}, 38.

\textsuperscript{163} Narrative of John Grace, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 258.

\textsuperscript{164} Pelleprat, \textit{Relation}, 43-4.
flourishes to admonish the Catholic readership in Europe, rather than accurate descriptions of the zealotry and piety of those involved in the mission. It is clear, however, that Catholics in the English colonies welcomed visiting priests and, given the unpredictable nature of such visits, made full use of their services while they could.

Even when priests were not available in the English colonies, resident Catholics continued to seek access to the sacraments and the guidance of the clergy. In the Chesapeake, Catholics in Virginia traveled north to Maryland for special masses at Easter and Christmas.\(^{165}\) In the Caribbean, the proximity of French colonies offered access to more regular church services for those who could make the journey. John Grace noted that when he was not in residence on St. Christopher, Catholics “go to the French churches to hear Mass on the feast days or to have their children baptized.”\(^{166}\) While on Antigua in the 1689, a Catholic avoided scrutiny by going “to Church at Antego, & to Mass at St Christophers with the ffrench.”\(^{167}\) Clearly, though often temporary and unpredictable, the itinerant activities of the Catholic clergy in the English Atlantic world contributed to the sustenance of the Catholic faith. Just the mere presence of a priest served to unite Catholic populations and by providing access to the basic sacraments of the Catholic Church missionary priests confirmed the faithful in their religious beliefs. More than providing temporary spiritual comfort, the eager response of the laity to the arrival of priests encouraged further missionary endeavors, enabled connections across imperial and religious lines, and ensured the expansion of the Catholic faith into the English Atlantic.

\(^{165}\) Gilbert Chiraud, trans. *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia or Voyages of a Frenchman exiled for his Religion with a description of Virginia & Maryland* (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1934), 159-60.

\(^{166}\) Narrative of John Grace, 1669, in Gwynn, “Irish in the West Indies,” 259.

\(^{167}\) Copy of John Burrowe’s narrative sent to Lord Nottingham by Mr Henley of Britstol, June 22, 1689, CO 152/37 Leeward Islands Correspondence Board of Trade 1689-1690, TNA, No. 12, fol. 47v.
The missionary circuits that spanned the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century showed little regard for religious, national, and colonial boundaries in the Atlantic and, as such, bound the clergy and the laity into a global web of Catholic expansion. In North America, missionary activity expanded from missionary programs in England. Centered on the Catholic colony of Maryland, the Jesuit mission thrived as both an indigenous and a pastoral venture, and remained isolated from neighboring Catholic enterprises, such as the French in Canada. But the English Jesuits did not confine themselves to Maryland. Using the greater religious freedoms accorded Catholics in Maryland as a base for operations, priests moved beyond the confines of the Catholic colony to serve a dispersed Catholic population throughout the larger Chesapeake region and even expanded into new English territories to the north. In the Caribbean, local conditions necessitated patterns of missionary activity that relied on international Catholic collaboration and more easily fit into a model of a missionary or Catholic Atlantic zone of interaction. The very nature of the island geography required a mobile and itinerant mission that minimized conflict with Protestant authorities. Further, the proximity of foreign colonial enterprises enabled the continued presence of priests even during times of heightened conflict.

Despite the distinct differences in the nature, mode, and origin of missionary initiatives in Anglo-North America and the Caribbean, Catholic clerics in all regions of the English Atlantic situated their missionary endeavors within a global ideology that considered the salvation of all souls as the utmost priority for the sustenance and expansion of the Catholic faith. This shared philosophy bound missionaries and priests in the English Atlantic into a larger missionary world
that encompassed all Catholic activity across the globe, whether the expansion of pastoral care to new areas of colonization, the conversion of “new” peoples to Catholicism, or the battle against heresy at home and overseas. On the ground in the English colonies, this global mission translated into an effective means of sustaining and expanding the Catholic faith. Necessitated by the hostility of Protestant colonial authorities, the mobile and discreet nature of missionary endeavors ensured their survival and, in turn, encouraged the laity to adopt private, rather than public, means of practicing their faith.
CHAPTER THREE

“ALL THE POPES TRINKETS”: CATHOLIC ARTIFACTS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Not all the Popes Trinkets, which here are brought forth,
Can balance the Bible for weight, and true worth:
Your Bells, Beads and Crosses, you see will not doo’t,
Or pull downe your Scale, with the Diuell to boot.

Anon., *A New-Yeeres-Gift for the Pope*¹

Maintaining Catholicism in the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century required a constant balance between the abstract dictates of the Catholic Church regarding religious doctrine and the reality of practicing an outlawed religion in a colonial setting. The Counter-Reformation movement in late sixteenth-century Europe did much to re-emphasize the essential role of the clergy as the central mediators of Catholic belief and practice. In the seventeenth century, as before and during the Reformation, the Catholic clergy remained solely responsible for the performance of the sacraments and controlled the interaction of the laity with the divine through the dissemination of ritual blessings.² But in the Protestant-dominated regions of Europe, where anti-Catholic statutes restricted lay access to the Catholic clergy, necessity drove Catholics to develop alternative forms of practice that did not rely on constant access to clerical supervision and guidance. As Lisa McClain’s study of seventeenth-century English Catholicism notes:

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² As Robert Scribner has argued, the essential distinction between the Catholic Church and Protestantism in the post-Reformation period lay not in the secularization of religion through the purging of magical ritual and popular belief, but in the degree to which such religious practice attempted to effect human manipulation of the divine. The centrality of the clergy to Catholic religious practice represented, for Protestants, the false belief that humanity could command and direct the divine power of God. Robert Scribner, “The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World,”” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 482-7. The clerical reforms instituted by the Council of Trent to improve the performance of the clergy are detailed in R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 114-21.
Catholicism practiced illegally within a Protestant nation cannot be expected to recreate the religious experiences possible within the state-sponsored, sacramentally based Catholicism of late medieval England, nor to conform to the uniform standards insisted upon by the Council of Trent. . . . Catholic laypeople and clergy modified rituals and accepted a diversity of beliefs and practices too.  

Many Catholics in the British Isles and the colonies thus sought ways of expressing their religious faith that remained within pre-existing Catholic structures of lay practice and clerical ritual.

The “trinkets” of popery became essential tools for preserving Catholic belief under Protestant rule. In the British Isles, sacred or blessed objects and Catholic religious texts continued to circulate among the Catholic population. These material artifacts provided British and Irish Catholics with the means to sustain their Catholic beliefs despite the infrequent availability of missionary priests. References to the ownership and application of crucifixes, beads, popish images, and popish books in colonial records suggest that reliance on material objects, and lay interpretations of such objects, crossed the Atlantic and continued to be a vital means by which Catholics in the English colonies expressed their Catholicism. An examination of Catholic material culture—in the form of both Catholic objects and Catholic books—offers a way to reconstruct colonial Catholic practice as both a clerically transmitted doctrine and a religion of everyday life.


4 I use the terms popular and lay to refer to non-clerical religious practice that was primarily concerned with applying divine power to the secular world, i.e. the everyday concerns of the laity. This is in contrast to clerical rituals, such as the sacraments, that focused on the application of divine power for sacred purposes, i.e. salvation of the soul. In both pre- and post-Reformation Catholicism, popular belief and sacred practice operated within a doctrinal system that viewed secular applications of divine power as an extension of clerical ritual practice. See Scribben, “The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World,”” 477-81; Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 8.
Popish Things: Catholic Objects, Popular Belief and Religious Practice

In 1997 the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) excavation team at Jamestown Island in Virginia reported the unexpected discovery of a collection of assorted Catholic objects at the site of the original Jamestown settlement. The artifacts included one cast lead crucifix decorated with the figures of Christ and Mary, one jet crucifix, two jet rosary beads, and a number of religious medallions featuring Catholic saints and personages. Similar items have been recovered from English colonial sites specifically associated with Catholic habitation. Archaeologists recovered an iron cross with gold gilt, rosary beads, and religious medallions at the site of George Calvert’s Avalon colony in Newfoundland. Religious finds unearthed at the ongoing excavation of Historic St. Mary’s City in Maryland include a number of Catholic religious medallions dating from the seventeenth century.

We can never definitively identify the owner, or owners, of the Jamestown objects, but there are several candidates who exhibited Catholic sympathies. Foreign Catholic visitors to early Jamestown ranged from skilled laborers—including French silk experts, Polish tar workers, and German glassmakers—to Catholic enemies captured in defense of the Jamestown settlement or in preemptive raids on rival settlements. In 1611 Diego de Molina, a Spanish commander,
and Francis Limbreck, an English pilot, both Catholics, found themselves incarcerated at the Jamestown fort after their Spanish reconnaissance ship stranded them on the Chesapeake shore.9 Two years later Samuel Argall led a Virginian raid on the French outposts in Maine carrying French captives back to Jamestown, including the Jesuit missionary Pierre Biard.10 The artifacts could also have belonged to English or Irish crypto-Catholics living in the settlement at Jamestown. In 1610 Francis Magnel, an Irish sailor, testified to Spanish, and later English authorities, that he had resided in Jamestown for eight months in 1607.11 Magnel’s testimony not only confirmed that he himself professed Catholicism, but also implied that George Kendall, a member of the Virginia council, had been executed in Jamestown for being a Catholic and a Spanish spy.12 Any number of these Catholic visitors and inhabitants could have carried religious artifacts to Jamestown closely hidden on their person or among their belongings.

While the origin and ownership of such physical remnants is ambiguous, it remains even more difficult to reconstruct the uses and practices such objects served from reference to the archeological record alone. References to Catholic objects in the documentary record provide a means to interpret the physical evidence of Catholic artifacts unearthed by archaeologists. Ranging from descriptions of Irish Catholic funeral rites in mid-seventeenth-century Montserrat

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to elite estate inventories in late seventeenth-century West Jersey, written references to Catholic artifacts are fleeting and dispersed over a wide chronological and geographical spread. Only by interpreting these scattered references as part of a larger early modern religious world can we begin to understand the relation of Catholic artifacts and Catholic rituals to the religious beliefs practiced in the English Atlantic world. The fragmentary nature of such evidence makes it difficult to distinguish change in practice over time and place, but it is possible to reconstruct the methods employed by Catholic inhabitants of the English Atlantic—both lay and clerical—to sustain their Catholic beliefs and to practice their faith.

The Catholic rituals and beliefs replicated in the English Atlantic world drew on pre-existing understandings of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in early modern Europe and in the British Isles in particular. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant attacks on medieval Catholicism focused especially on the clergy’s use of material artifacts and ritual practice to channel and apply the power of the divine. Protestant reformers dismissed such practice as popish magic that corrupted the true message and power of God. Despite these attacks, the Catholic Church in the seventeenth century remained firmly wedded to belief in the spiritual power of sacred objects as both ritual tools and popular devotional aids designed to facilitate access to the divine. It is perhaps not surprising that the religious artifacts found at seventeenth-century colonial sites are overwhelmingly Catholic in nature given the centrality of physical objects to Catholic practice.

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13 Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1971), 51-77. See also Scribner, “Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World,”” 475-94 who argues that this classic division between Catholic “magic” and Protestant “religion” misses the degree to which post-Reformation Protestantism continued to perpetuate forms of sacred magic that served both secular and sacred purposes, see esp. 482-7.
In the pre-Reformation Catholic Church, the clergy controlled access to the divine through the ritual performance of the sacraments. By virtue of being used in the performance of the sacraments, the laity perceived objects such as crosses and holy water as imbued with the spiritual power of the priest at the moment of purification. Lay belief in the spiritual merit of ritual objects gave rise to the church practice of creating sacramentals, items blessed by priests for distribution to the laity—such as *agnus dei* or rosaries—that carried with them the same transference of spiritual power from the priest to the blessed object. Ostentatiously displayed as a public marker of faith or worn in secret as a private protection or devotion, small decorative crucifixes, blessed religious medallions, and prayer beads became important lay Catholic tools that replicated the spiritual and sacred applications of crosses, the saints, and prayer in ritual worship.¹⁴

Throughout the seventeenth-century Catholic world the popular application of sacred artifacts to secular woes remained within the tenets of Church teaching as it had before the Reformation. For Catholics, the application of blessed objects to secular concerns and the use of objects for ritual purposes remained closely connected to one another. That connection functioned within a religious worldview that stressed continuity between the sacred and the secular, and between clerical and lay methods of accessing the divine. The employment of Catholic objects for secular purposes—to heal, protect, and enchant—increased as the Protestant Reformation weakened the institutional structure of the Catholic Church in Protestant-dominated areas of Europe, restricting access to clerical ritual and the performance of the sacraments for

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some Catholic populations. Sacred artifacts, employed for both secular and sacred purposes, became a vital means by which Catholics in Protestant-controlled areas of Europe sustained their Catholicism in the seventeenth century.

European Catholics carried a popular belief in the spiritual merits of sacred artifacts with them to the English colonies. One such Catholic, known only as Mr. Chanterton, came to the attention of Jamestown’s government in 1620 due to his “attempts to worke myracles wth his Crucyfixe.” Chanterton’s religious sympathies were not unknown to the governor of Virginia. Previously employed by “ye Colonnessi” in Rome, the Virginia Company had hired Chanterton for his expertise as a winemaker. But Protestants in Jamestown viewed Chanterton’s ownership and use of a crucifix as evidence of unwelcome Catholic practice in the colony. John Pory, the secretary of the colony, wrote to the Virginia Company in London, that Chanterton “smells too much of Roome” and exhibits “as much Zeale in maytaining his senles religion as he doth professe yt wth blindness.”

To Protestant eyes, Chanterton not only professed Catholicism but also brought superstitious practice to the colony in the form of the Catholic objects he carried with him from Rome. On Chanterton’s part, the application of the crucifix to “worke myracles” followed popular Catholic belief regarding the spiritual power of consecrated objects to tap into the divine power of the Catholic Church. In this instance, Chanterton applied his crucifix as a healing object. In the chaotic environment of early seventeenth-century Virginia, where death by violent means or from disease was rife, Catholic inhabitants such as Chanterton resorted to the material remedies provided by the Church to counter the misfortune surrounding them.

15 On the methods employed by English and Irish Catholics to adapt their Catholic beliefs to life under Protestant rule in the seventeenth century, see Gillespie, Devoted People, 8, 63-83; McClain, Lest We Be Damned, 4-13, chaps. 3-4.

Sources from Barbados later in the seventeenth century suggest Catholic visitors and inhabitants of the Caribbean colony similarly invoked the miraculous properties of consecrated artifacts for protection against the hardships of colonial life. In 1667, William Willoughby expressed a preference for Scottish—and by this he meant Protestant—militia men “who I am certaine will fight without a Crucifix about his neck.” Willoughby’s comment implied a tendency among Irish Catholic inhabitants, at least, to carry Catholic religious artifacts on their person as protective amulets. This was a common phenomenon throughout Catholic Europe, which Catholic migrants carried with them to the colonies. Protestants in Maryland reported that Catholic soldiers at the Battle of the Severn in 1655 possessed “great store of relics and trash they trusted in.” Contemporary Protestant commentators interpreted such activities as “senles” superstition and as outward professions of the Catholic faith. For Willoughby, the wearing of a crucifix identified the Irish militia in Barbados as men of dubious loyalty that he, personally, could not trust to defend the island.

In 1668, in an altogether more private act, Arthur Hall made provision in his will for “a crucifix of silver” to be given to his sister-in-law Marram Honning. In so doing, Hall honored the wishes of his deceased wife Katharine, who had originally purchased the crucifix with the intent of sending it to her sister in Holland. The will provides no further indication of the religion of the Hall family, but the combination of the crucifix, the familial connections to Holland, and


the fact that the family had previously resided in Brazil, strongly suggest Catholic sympathies. As a silver object, the crucifix carried a high monetary value, but Hall’s determination to bequeath it to Marram endowed the object with significance beyond inherited wealth. For Katharine and Marram, at least, like the Irish militiamen, the crucifix served a popular, perhaps spiritual, purpose.

Despite ongoing concern on the part of Protestant authorities that allowing such material expressions of Catholic popular practice endangered the English empire, the documentary record reveals that Catholics continued to acquire and use sacred objects across the English Atlantic world during the seventeenth century. In line with Church teaching on the use of blessed objects in popular belief, these fragmentary references provide some explanation of the presence of such items in the archaeological record at English colonial sites. But a popular attachment to the perceived spiritual powers of Catholic artifacts was not restricted to those with known Catholic sympathies. The documentary record also contains evidence of Protestants owning and using Catholic artifacts to access supernatural powers and influence secular life.

In 1639 on Virginia’s eastern shore, the Accomack-Northampton County court recorded an on-going dispute concerning the purchase of a “silver Crucifix.” Reynold Fleete, a resident of Maryland, claimed to have purchased the object from Stephen Charlton who was selling it for John Stringar. While Reynold Fleete may have been a practicing Catholic, Stephen Charlton and John Stringar displayed little inclination towards the Catholic faith. Both left substantial gifts

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20 Susie Ames, ed., County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia 1632-1640 (Washington, D. C.: American Historical Association, 1954), 144-5. Reynold Fleete served on the Maryland Assembly in 1637 and was one of the “Governor’s men” who seized Palmers Island from William Claiborne that same year, see William Hand Browne, et al., eds., Archives of Maryland, 72 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1883-1972) [hereafter Archives of Maryland], 1:14-22; 5:231-2, 234.
to local churchwardens to facilitate the building and suitable decoration of their Anglican parish churches.\footnote{Stephen Charlton made provision, in the event of his daughter’s death, that his lands “bee imployed wholly unto the use of an orthodoxe Devyne” to enable “his Laboure in preachinge the word of the Lord,” see Susan Stitt, “The Will of Stephen Charlton and Hungars Parish Glebe,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 77 (1969): 261. In 1688, John Stringar bequeathed 1000 lbs of tobacco “towards the purchasing of the Lords prayer a tenor [sic] commandments” for the new church building, see Frank V. Walczyk, Northampton County Order Book 1689-1698 Vol. 1, 1689-1693 (New York: Peter’s Row, 2001), 4-7, quotation from 7.} What then were these two devout Protestants doing with a silver crucifix?

John Stringar’s occupation as a “Pracktitioner in Phisicke” in the county suggests similarities to Chanterton’s use of his crucifix to “worke myracles.”\footnote{Susie Ames, ed., County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia, 1640-1645, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1973), 397.} As a doctor, Stringar came in close proximity to those in fear for their lives and who sought any means to affect a cure. In keeping with popular uses of Catholic objects as ‘magical’ curatives, it is possible Stringar used this crucifix to augment his medical practice. Other patients of John Stringar displayed evidence of exposure to Catholic practices. Stringar provided medical care to Nicholas Harwood shortly before he died, and, as an attendee at Harwood’s deathbed, Stringar witnessed the production of Harwood’s will. Harwood, despite professing Protestantism, requested “that Mr Cotton may make a sermon for me and soe I leave this worlde desiringe all good people to pray for my soules helth.”\footnote{Ames, County Court Records, 1632-1640, 145-6, quotation from 145.} It was not uncommon for Protestants to request a funeral sermon. But the Protestant church taught that prayers for the dead were a popish superstition that provided no benefit to the state of a deceased person’s soul. Neither the crucifix nor prayers for the dead positively indicate Stringar, or his patients, considered themselves practicing Catholics, but it does suggest the degree to which Catholic rituals and artifacts served both Protestant and Catholic forms of popular religious practice in the English colonies. That the crucifix ended up in Maryland only
confirms the extent to which it was seen as both a sacred artifact and a popular curative, in addition to being a valuable and tradable commodity.

Edward Bond suggests that dalliances with Catholic beliefs in Anglican Virginia indicate the colony’s looser anxiety about religious freedom in comparison to neighboring colonies and the English metropole. But Protestant reliance on Catholic prayers and rituals as perceived curatives extended beyond the Chesapeake region. Increase Mather was dismayed to discover that even in Puritan New England in the 1650s, “where the Gospel hath shined with great power and glory,” the population appropriated Catholic prayers and ritual artifacts as a means to affect popular cures and remedies. In Boston, the Latin words “*In Nomine Patris Filii, & Spiritus Sancti*” accompanied by “several confused Characters” written on a piece of paper and treated as an amulet were claimed, by local inhabitants, to have brought relief from toothache. Similarly, the consumption of bread inscribed with a sequence of letters and words was offered as a “Cure for the Ague.” The transformative power associated with the application of certain words invoked the Catholic belief that the priest, by repeating certain words in the process of consecrating an object, accessed the divine and endowed the object with the same spiritual powers. Increase Mather condemned such actions as popish magic, but for the perpetrators they provided a magical means to access a Protestant “world of wonders.”

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David Hall and Richard Godbeer have rightly used such examples of Protestant magic to stress the extent to which superstitious belief and popular religion co-existed with Protestant doctrinal belief even in Puritan New England. But these studies are grounded in a strict division between Protestant and Catholic spheres of influence, and ignore the extent to which Protestant and Catholic ideas about the relationship between the sacred and the secular occupied the same terrain, both physically and metaphysically, in the English Atlantic world. As Robert Scribner has argued for Reformation studies more generally, “Protestantism was as caught up as Catholicism in the same dilemmas about the instrumental application of sacred power to secular life because it was positioned in the same force-field of sacrality.” Placed in the context of a larger religious Atlantic world, one in which the threat from disease and violent action necessitated a broad understanding of the spiritual tools available, these examples of Catholic artifacts demonstrate the entangled relationship between sacred and secular applications of religious practice for Protestant and Catholic believers alike, and stress the overlap and entwinement of Protestant understandings of popular magic and Catholic ones. The proximity between both Protestant and Catholic understandings of the supernatural—whether encapsulated in doctrinal belief, as in the case of Catholics, or confined to the realm of popular religion for Protestants—created a space and opportunity for Catholic practice in the English Atlantic world. In a world in which Protestants appropriated Catholic practices to access the healing power of the divine within a Protestant popular framework, it is unsurprising that Catholics maintained a sense of Catholic ritual that also sought popular access to the divine powers claimed by the Catholic Church.

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For Catholics, popular belief in the sanctity of blessed objects stemmed from the centrality of such objects to Church rituals. A focus on Catholic artifacts, then, can shed light not just on the expansion of popular Catholic belief to the colonies, but also the ability of Catholic inhabitants to reconstruct sacred rituals in the English colonial world. Catholic artifacts were essential tools for the replication of sacred and ceremonial ritual practice in the English Atlantic, whether performed by the clergy or the laity, and experienced in either public or private settings. Catholic inhabitants, from the very poor to wealthy planters, made use of a variety of materials—both acquired from clerical sources or self-constructed—to replicate Catholic ritual practice as best they could. The practitioners of Catholic religion examined below attempted to stay within the bounds of Church teaching on the related roles of the clergy and the laity in ritual practice, but sometimes necessity required a more flexible understanding of the intent and performance of religious ceremonies. In doing so, colonial Catholics acted much like their counterparts in the British Isles who adapted ritual practice to sustain the essence of Catholic belief, if not the strict institutional structure of the Catholic Church.29

While visiting Barbados in 1654, Father Antoine Biet, a French secular priest, was pleasantly surprised to discover the island’s Catholic inhabitants celebrating the Easter holiday in Catholic fashion.30 On entering a merchant’s house in Bridgetown, Biet saw “a very large room which was decorated with a great number of palm leaves.” The palm leaves “led [Biet] to believe that this was the house of some Catholics who were observing the solemnity of Easter as much as they could.” A group of at least “ten or twelve persons” had gathered at the house to celebrate

29 McClain, Lest We Be Damned, 4-5, 47, 138, 271-2.

30 Father Antoine Biet’s visit to the island of Barbados is discussed in greater detail in Chap. 2.
Easter. For the Catholics of Barbados, the use of symbolic decoration and the gathering in celebration stood in for more substantive clerical services. Despite Biet’s presence in the house, he noted that his lack of English language skills prevented him from either participating fully at the gathering or offering religious comfort to the attendees.

Biet’s account of this Catholic gathering stood in sharp contrast to his perception of the Protestant Easter celebrations on the island. He noted that in the parish of St. George, “there were not more than four hundred . . . who had taken Holy Communion at Easter,” despite Protestant services being openly and widely available on the island. Biet recorded that in addition to St. George parish, the island of Barbados had only three other parishes to serve a population of “twenty thousand souls.” Although four hundred Protestant communicants seems considerably more substantial than ten to twelve Catholics, for Biet it was a question of religious enthusiasm.

The Catholic inhabitants of Barbados were not alone in replicating Catholic sacred rituals under the noses of Protestant authorities in the Caribbean. To the horror of Protestant observers on the island of Montserrat in 1654, “one Andrews caryed a Cross before his wiue body when she was Caryed to her burial.” The bearing of the cross before funeral processions was a commonly practiced ritual in the Catholic world, although increasingly less common in Protestant-controlled regions in the seventeenth century. Such a public display of Catholic practice in Montserrat demonstrates a conspicuous fashioning of a Catholic identity by members

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33 Examinations of Henry and Rich. Waad and Henry Wheeler, Feb 9, 1654/5, CO 1/12 Privy Council 1653-1656, TNA, No. 31iii, fol. 79v.
of the island’s Irish community through the enactment and practice of common Catholic funereal rituals.

The substantial number of Irish Catholic inhabitants on the island of Montserrat and their greater representation among the wealthier landholders encouraged increased leniency towards them by the island’s Protestant authorities. But in the 1650s, hostility between Irish and English inhabitants on the island led to accusations, by English Protestant inhabitants, that Governor Roger Osborne, a Protestant Irishman, had overstepped his authority by allowing Catholic religious practice on the island. In the 1650s, however, Catholic religious services on Montserrat, like Barbados, were typically conducted in private. This particular incident stands out for its overtly public character, a fact attributable to the religious significance of death rites and the necessarily public activity of burial.

As Raymond Gillespie notes, at no moment was the issue of religion more important than at the time of death: “Death was tamed by the rituals of religion which transformed the unknown into certainties and hence reduced the overwhelming power of death.”

Between 1650 and 1655, the Irish community on Montserrat had received regular visits from Father John Stritch, a Jesuit missionary stationed on St. Christopher. During these visits Stritch performed Mass, received confession, and provided instruction in the appropriate rituals and teachings of the Catholic Church. But death could not be conveniently scheduled to accommodate an itinerant priest, and Andrews’s wife probably passed away without the consolation of the last rites or the ministration of a priest at her burial. Instead, Andrews replicated Catholic rituals as best he could with the

34 Gillespie, Devoted People, 32.

materials available to him and the religious latitude permitted him by the Protestant governor. The ritual act of carrying a cross before the corpse offered religious comfort to the mourners at least, if not the deceased, and lent a materially Catholic character to an otherwise commonplace event. Excavations at the site of the early seventeenth-century English settlement in Ferryland, Newfoundland, recovered an iron cross that once slotted onto a wooden shaft suggesting it too was used for ceremonial purposes such as funeral processions. While Andrews used “a wooden Cross” rather than a metal one, the similarity between the described action in Montserrat and the physical artifact in Newfoundland is striking. It indicates that, while rare, Catholic funeral rituals may have been practiced throughout the English Atlantic alongside other Catholic religious ceremonies and popular Catholic beliefs.

Not all attempts to perform Catholic religious rituals so obviously replicated the precise teachings and instructions of the Catholic Church. The case of Goody Glover in 1688 in Boston demonstrates the degree to which lay attempts to reconstruct Catholic ritual practice may have been written out of the history of religion in the English Atlantic world as superstitious practice and witchcraft, by contemporaries and historians alike. Goody Glover, a Gaelic-speaking Catholic washerwoman, was arrested, condemned, and executed for causing the demonic possession of the Goodwin children, a family of devout Puritans who belonged to Cotton Mather’s Boston congregation. Glover’s guilt hinged on her alleged confession, though she spoke only Gaelic, and a collection of “Images” recovered from her home.

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37 Examinations of Henry and Rich. Waad and Henry Wheeler, February 9, 1654/5, CO 1/12, No. 31iii, fol. 81.
In his account of the Glover case in *Memorable Providences*, Cotton Mather described the damning evidence that condemned the alleged witch: “Order was given to search the old woman’s house, from whence there were brought into the Court, several small Images, or Puppets, or Babies, made of Raggs, and stuff’t with Goat’s hair, and other such Ingredients.”

The “Raggs . . . stuff’t with Goat’s hair” have caused much debate over the nature of Glover’s crime. Modern Catholic biographers have been quick to identify the images discovered in Glover’s home as long treasured statues of the saints, crucifixes, rosaries, or religious medallions purposely misrepresented by anxious anti-Catholic Puritans as proof of the devilry inherent in popish artifacts.

In Protestant terms, Mather’s description of the “images” found at Glover’s home was a textbook depiction of a witch’s “poppets,” the tools of “image magic” recognized by Protestant witch-hunters across Europe in the seventeenth century. The similarity between a witch’s poppets and a Catholic’s idols had long been understood as an implicit connection of

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39 Harold Dijon, “A Forgotten Heroine,” *Ave Maria* 40 (1905): 269; George Francis O’Dwyer, “Ann Glover, First Martyr to the Faith in New England,” *Historical Records and Studies* 15 (1921): 70-8; Doran Hurley, “God Bless Her,” *The Sign* 29, no. 11 (1950): 50-2; Lapomarda, “A Catholic in a Puritan Society,” 192-208. The later accounts rely heavily on information presented by Harold Dijon. I have been unable to verify any of his sources. Rather these accounts construct Glover’s persecution and execution in the mode of a classic martyrology including forgiveness for her persecutors and a death day testament to “die a Catholic” (Dijon, p. 269).

popish practice with witchcraft. But, given Mather’s Puritan worldview, historians should not assume that he consciously saw anything in the “Raggs . . . stuff’t with Goats hair” other than witchcraft. In Mather’s opinion, the presence of “poppets,” combined with Glover’s confession, was “Proof of Witchcraft” and her conviction thus “ungaynsayable.” It was an opinion that held great weight in a Puritan society besieged by the devil and fearful of popish enemies. But, to see these “images” as “poppets” or obvious Catholic artifacts is to continue to read the narrative through the lens of either Glover’s Puritan accusers or her modern Catholic biographers. Placing these “images” in the context of Glover’s Catholic upbringing in Ireland suggests the ways in which Glover herself may have understood these items as attempts to recreate Catholic religious practices as she understood them and how such attempts at popular devotion led to accusations of witchcraft.

In a later summary of the Glover case Mather offered the following description of her “poppets”: “Her Magical Images were found, and shee actually showed the whole Court by what Caeremonies used unto them, shee Directed her Familiar Spirits, how and where to torment the Objects of her malice.” In Puritan terms, Catholic religious practice, particularly the use of images or idols, was tantamount to witchcraft. But the phrase “Magical Images” is also a fair description of how Glover, as a lay Catholic, understood the application of sacred objects, both as part of divine worship and as a means to intercede with the divine on the laity’s behalf. In constructing images and directing them, Glover replicated Church teaching on the role of saints as conduits to the divine. Further, Glover’s ceremonies involved “wetting her Finger with her

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41 “Thoughts on the Storms of Trouble from ye invisible world of witchcraft,” 265.

42 “Thoughts on the Storms of Trouble from ye invisible world of witchcraft,” 264-5, emphasis in the original.
Spittle, and stroking of those little Images” in a confused mimicry of the activities of Catholic priests during religious worship.  

We know that Goody Glover had received Catholic catechism at some point in her life. She readily professed herself a “Roman Catholick.” This was a profession backed by some degree of religious training. Mather notes she “could recite her Pater Noster in Latin very readily,” although she struggled to recite the Lord’s Prayer in English even “tho clause after clause was most carefully repeated unto her . . . she could not possibly avoid making Nonsense of it, with some ridiculous Depravations.” It is not surprising that a Gaelic-speaking Catholic would struggle to repeat the Lord’s Prayer in English given that she most likely learned the prayer in Latin or Gaelic. In seventeenth-century Ireland, Catholic catechesis focused almost wholly on rote learning of prayers to enable lay believers to participate in church services, not on comprehension as Protestant denominations favored. The question and answer form adopted by most Protestant denominations, and used by Mather in his conversations with Glover, would have baffled the Irish woman. Mather questioned Glover on “What she thought would become of her soul,” a standard catechistical question in the Puritan mode. Glover replied, according to Mather’s account, “You ask me a very solemn Question, and I cannot well tell what to say to it.” In this she failed to meet the requirements of a Christian education as understood by Mather. For

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43 Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences, 104.

44 Mather, Memorable Providences, 104-5 (pater noster), 103 (Lord’s Prayer). Referencing the trial transcript Robert Calef notes “the generality of her Answers, were Nonsense” a fact he attributes to her distractedness, but equally applicable to the problems of converting her Gaelic answers into English short-hand, Calef, More Wonders, 151-2.

Glover, it was simply enough that she pronounced herself a Catholic and continued to recite the prayers taught to her to receive salvation.\textsuperscript{46}

Filtered as it was through the lens of the court-appointed translators and Mather’s narrative, Glover’s actions and testimony emphasizes the cultural markers of the Puritan worldview. Mather himself noted the inherent problems of translating her Gaelic testimony into English noting the confusion between the words “Spirit” and “Saints,” “for they say,” Mather wrote, “the same word in Irish signifies both.”\textsuperscript{47} For the Puritan audience, artifacts created to affect saintly intervention with God became tools to communicate with spirits, evil or otherwise. Similarly, Glover’s linguistic problems with the Lord’s Prayer became evidence of her pact with the Devil. For Glover, the “Raggs . . . stuff”t with Goats hair” replicated the religious rituals she experienced in Ireland and that she perceived as a path to salvation. Faced with a family of demonically possessed children, Cotton Mather interpreted these artifacts and actions as concrete evidence of Glover’s demonic associations, whether the tools of witchcraft or the self-constructed trinkets of popery. Historians should not, however, let this dominant cultural reading define the varied religious experiences—both Catholic and Protestant—practiced in the English Atlantic world.

At the same time as Goody Glover struggled to distinguish her Catholic rituals from witchcraft, Catholics elsewhere in the English colonies were using Catholic artifacts to practice their faith in the privacy of their own homes. The story of John Tatham—known also as John Gray—a Catholic resident of Pennsylvania and West Jersey, stands in sharp contrast to that of

\textsuperscript{46} Mather, \textit{Memorable Providences}, 104.

\textsuperscript{47} Mather, \textit{Memorable Providences}, 106.
Goody Glover. Tatham’s early biographer Thomas Middleton described Tatham as “an Englishman by birth, a Roman Catholic by religion, and a staunch adherent of the Stuart cause.” During his fifteen-year residence in the colonies, John Tatham proved himself a successful merchant and a litigious troublemaker whose religious preferences and dubious past had little effect on his meteoric rise through colonial society. Tatham’s wealth gave him protections and access to material means that Goody Glover lacked. But both acted as devout Catholics and sought, if in very different ways, to use material artifacts to sustain their faith in a Protestant world.

Tatham arrived in Pennsylvania in 1685 with the support, if not the liking, of William Penn. In May 1685, William Penn informed his agent, Thomas Lloyd, of the imminent arrival of “one Gray, a Rom. Cath. Gent.…” Penn cautioned his agent to be on guard, describing Tatham as “subtile & prying & lowly,” and a potential troublemaker as “he is a Scholar, & avers [sic] to ye Calvanists.” Reflecting the complicated nature of political and religious allegiance during the

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48 John Tatham appears in the records of Pennsylvania as John Gray (sometimes spelt Grey), which caused much confusion among early historians as to his identity. See Martin I. J. Griffin, “John Gray als John Tatham,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 7 (1890): 108-9; Thomas C. Middleton, “John and Elizabeth Tatham, of Burlington, N.J. A.D. 1681-1700,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 6 (1895): 62. There can be no doubt Tatham and Gray were in fact the same person as several documents refer to “John Grey, als Tatham.” See, for example, the royal arrest warrant issued in November 1686, in *Pennsylvania Colonial Records: Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Theophilus Fenn, 1838), 1:156-7, quotation from 157. Here, the name Tatham will be used throughout except in the case of direct quotations from sources using the name John Gray.


Jacobite reign, however, Penn ordered that Lloyd “be sure please him [Tatham] in his land.” 51 To James Harrison in December 1685, Penn requested “Remember me . . . to J. Gray ye R.C.” and again encouraged his agents to “keep things well with such persons, for our Genll credit.” 52 It is unclear why Penn acted so favorably towards Tatham, but it is possible Tatham had strong ties to Penn’s benefactor, James II.

By 1686, as Tatham became embroiled in a series of boundary disputes with his Protestant neighbors, Penn’s agents in Pennsylvania became suspicious of Tatham’s origins and his honesty as a gentleman. 53 William Markham requested Penn dig deeper into Tatham’s past in London, noting the unseemly rumors that swirled around Tatham and his wife: “People taulks of it here strangely and I have been privately Informed that she is a Coachmans Wife in London (she may be so for her Breading [breeding]).” 54 Penn responded in September 1686 with the information he had gleaned from informants: “Gray is a Benedictine monck of St. James’s, left them and his vows, is married there, the congregation has spoak to the King about him.” 55 Tatham was not simply a lay Catholic but a former monk and missionary.

The scandal did not end there. In May 1687, the Council of Pennsylvania received a copy of a royal warrant, issued the previous November, demanding “John Grey, als Tatham” be

51 Letter, William Penn to Thomas Lloyd, May 16, 1685 (typescript), Cadwalader Collection, Series 3 (General Thomas Cadwalader Papers), Historical Society of Pennsylvania [hereafter HSP], Box 55, Folder 16, fol. 1-2.
immediately transported to England “to answer to severall Misdemeanors alliged there agt him.”\textsuperscript{56} These few snippets of gossip have enabled genealogists to piece together some of Tatham’s early life story. Born in Yorkshire, Tatham received a Catholic education at the English Benedictine College at Douai. While finishing his education, he joined the Benedictine order and adopted the name Father Bede Tatham. In 1678, shortly before the Titus Oates Plot, Tatham returned to England to take up a position as a missionary priest in London. He most likely served at the Benedictine monastery attached to St. James’s Palace, whose priests served Queen Catherine of Braganza, Charles II’s Catholic wife. Having served the mission for seven years, in 1685 the Benedictine monks of St. James’s Palace accused Father Tatham of embezzling church funds.\textsuperscript{57} By this time, however, Tatham had forsaken his vows and successfully migrated to the colonies with his new wife, Elizabeth.\textsuperscript{58}

Tatham may have left the Benedictine order, but he did not abandon his attachment to the Catholic faith. Tatham’s private possessions, recorded in great detail at the time of his death, reveal a man who remained devoutly Catholic throughout his time in the colonies. When John Tatham died in 1700, hidden among the luxury accoutrements of a wealthy colonial merchant the estate inventory included “1 round large Silver Crucifix 1 ps plate St. Dominique 1 Small Silver box wth Reliques, 1 wooden Cross wth ye Image of Christ,” valued at £1. 12s. The inventory also listed under the title of church plate: “1 handle Cupp[,] 1 small plate[,] 1 box” and “1 Silver

\textsuperscript{56} Pennsylvania Colonial Records, 1:156-7, quotation from 157.

\textsuperscript{57} The biography of Tatham’s early life is based on Henry Bisbee, “John Tatham, alias Gray,” 261-4.

\textsuperscript{58} Tatham subsequently relocated to Burlington in West Jersey, where he established himself as a successful merchant and prominent member of the town’s wealthy elite. Tatham’s colonial career in West Jersey is explored in Chap. 5.
universal dial”. These religious artifacts resemble the typical possessions of a wealthy Catholic family and confirm Tatham practiced his Catholicism in the privacy of his Burlington mansion.

Tatham’s church plate closely resembled the decorative and ritual items required to maintain an altar or house chapel in the homes of the wealthy in the British Isles. The large decorative cross, the wooden crucifix, and the image of St. Dominic most likely served as the rich adornments on a Catholic altar. In the English Atlantic World such impromptu chapels could be constructed in private homes or in public places when the discretion of colonial authorities allowed. The estate of Leonard Calvert, inventoried at his death in 1647, contained the items necessary to construct a private altar or shrine in his Maryland home. The “gold Reliquary case” worth £150, “A kneeling desk, & a picture of Paules” valued at £50, “A bone Crosse,” and “3 small bitts of Syluer plate” bear a striking resemblance to religious property owned by Tatham. In New York in the 1680s, Thomas Dongan, the Catholic governor, permitted the Jesuits to construct a chapel within the city fort. Descriptions of the chapel by local Protestant inhabitants emphasized the images used to decorate the altar. In 1683, Maria van Rensselaer observed, “the image maker is making an altar—they intend to build a popish church over it.”

In New York residents complained to Jacob Leisler that “Images Erected by Co:ll Thomas Dongan”

59 The Tatham estate was inventoried on September 26-27, 1700 shortly after John Tatham’s death in July that year and valued at £3765. 18s. 3d. The estate was inventoried again in greater detail on January 31, 1700/01 following the death of Elizabeth Tatham during childbirth the previous October and valued at £3407. 2s. Copies of the inventories can be found in “Will and Inventory of John Tatham, 1700 [Photostat],” Society Misc. Collection, HSP; “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham, 1700/01 [Photostat],” Society Misc. Collection, HSP. The inventories have also been published in Middleton, “John and Elizabeth Tatham,” 82-9, 96-113, 117-33. [Hereafter “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham” and “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” page numbers refer to the published version.] For an overview of the Tatham’s possessions see also Lois Given, “The Great and Stately Palace,” 265-70. Quotations from “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 98-9.

60 An Inventory of Lands, goods, & Chattells belonging to mr Leonard Caluert Esqr., June 30, 1647, Archives of Maryland, 4:320-1.

remained in use during Francis Nicholson’s governorship. Far from removing the chapel and the images, Nicholson ordered local workman to help Father John Smith transfer the images to a “better Rome [room]” and ordered the workers “to Erect all things as he [Smith] Ordered.”

Besides the decorative objects, Tatham’s estate list also included the tools required to perform Mass. The plate and cup listed as church plate resemble the items used to serve the wine and wafers to communicants along with a box to hold and protect the Eucharist wafers. The Anglican Church used similar items to serve Holy Communion, but, combined with the altar decorations, Tatham’s dishes take on a particularly Catholic character associated with the ritual performance of Mass. At the performance of Mass in Barbados in 1688, Protestant observers reported the passing of a plate between participants. James Pennoyer, a Protestant servant of Willoughby Chamberlaine, a Catholic, reported seeing “a Plate in his said Masters hand in Mass time but what was on it or how he made use of it he cannot tell.”

Collectively then, Tatham’s church plate not only allowed him to construct an altar in the privacy of his own home, but to use that altar for the performance of Mass. Of course, the altar in New York and the religious ceremonies on Barbados both included a priest as an essential requirement of the rituals being performed. There is no definite indication that a priest ever visited Tatham’s house in Burlington. The house was well situated near the main route between Maryland and New York, and historians have speculated that Jesuits traveling along this road could have visited with Tatham. The will of Peter Dubuc, a resident of Philadelphia in 1693,

62 Deposition of Andries and Jan Meyer, September 26, 1689, CO 5/1081 New York Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-90, TNA, No. 63, fol. 166.

63 Deposition of James Pennoyer, March 18, 1688/89, CO 28/37 Barbados Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1700, TNA, No. 7lii, fol. 78.

includes provision for Father Smith in Talbot County, Maryland, indicating some contact between the Maryland Jesuits and Catholic residents of Pennsylvania. The most likely explanation, however, is that Tatham used the objects to administer the rituals of the church himself. The placement of the objects in “a Travelling case” reminds us that Tatham was also once a missionary priest whose task included the provision of Mass to his congregants. As a former missionary priest Tatham knew how to perform the necessary rituals of Mass. In the absence of regular clerical visits then, Tatham pushed the boundaries of Church doctrine by continuing to act as a priest even though he no longer possessed the proper authority. Like Glover, Tatham’s case further suggests the negotiation of religious practice forced upon Catholic inhabitants of a Protestant colonial world.

The cases examined above demonstrate the range of practices employed by Catholics in the English Atlantic world to express their faith. They all indicate that material objects played a vital role in facilitating Catholic practice in the English colonies, whether by means of popular belief in the efficacy of blessed objects or through the replication of sacred rituals by the laity and clergy alike. But how these Catholics acquired and kept Catholic objects under Protestant rule remains to be considered.

The archaeological record provides a clear picture of the point of production for most Catholic religious artifacts in the English Atlantic. At Jamestown, the jet crucifix and jet rosary beads are comparable to items found in seventeenth-century Dutch shipwrecks and Spanish

65 “Peter Dubuc,” American Catholic Historical Researches 14 (1897): 177-81.

66 The “Travelling case” is referenced in “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 82. Both inventories list a large number of plate items. The descriptions do not match exactly and there is a degree of devaluation from John’s to Elizabeth’s inventory, but comparing cost and number of items the traveling case plate matches that listed as Church plate in the later inventory.
colonial sites in Florida.  Archaeologists working on seventeenth-century sites in Maryland have identified the religious medallions unearthed there as having been mass-produced in Italy and Germany. The continental origin of the items discovered at Jamestown and in Maryland does not necessarily mean these objects arrived in the colony in the possession of foreign Catholic visitors. The vigorous trade in Catholic artifacts during the seventeenth century, particularly between the Low Countries and the British Isles, indicates that these archaeological finds could just have easily belonged to English or Irish Catholic colonists who acquired them either at home or abroad.

In most cases, it is near impossible to ascertain whether objects were purchased in the colonies or before immigration. But the documentary evidence suggests a number of ways by which Catholic artifacts reached the Atlantic colonies. The most probable source of sacred artifacts in the English colonies remains transportation by devout individuals. Neither Chanterton nor Tatham could have acquired the Catholic objects in their possession in the colonial world. Chanterton most likely obtained his crucifix while resident in Rome. Tatham’s time as a Benedictine in Belgium and England provided ample opportunity to collect the objects that adorned his altar. Poorer Catholics like Andrews in Montserrat or Goody Glover in Boston used artifacts constructed of wood and cloth that may have been created from the materials around them to replicate the sacred tools they could not otherwise possess.


69 McClain, Lest We Be Damned, 86-7.
References to John Stringar’s crucifix in Virginia or that of Arthur Hall in Barbados in 1668 suggest that sacred artifacts may also have traveled along existing Atlantic trade routes, particularly through Anglo-Dutch connections. Both John Stringar and Stephen Charlton traded with the Dutch in New Netherland. Even more directly connected to the Dutch, Arthur Hall and his family had recently migrated to Barbados from Brazil. The Hall family maintained close ties in the Anglo-Dutch trade through family in Holland and possibly Brazil. In both cases, the religious item in question—a silver crucifix—held a palpable monetary value in addition to its perceived spiritual or magical worth. For Catholics and Protestants alike, crucifixes were goods to be traded as well as devoutly cherished, and the overlap between Dutch, Portuguese, and even Spanish trade routes in the Atlantic zone provided access to Catholic goods in the English colonies.

The movement of itinerant missionary priests through the English colonies provided another crucial source for Catholic goods. In Albany in 1690, commissioners working on behalf of the revolutionary government in New York discovered a parcel of goods left in the town by a visiting priest. Mixed in among Indian trade goods and carpentry tools, the commissioners listed “1 priest’s white surplice,” “12 little Patrenoster Chains,” “2 little paintings,” “27 little books,” and “11 painted pictures.” A second description included “Indian Categisms,” written lessons, and a crucifix. There is some confusion over exactly who left the items in Albany. The commissioners described the property as belonging to a Canadian Jesuit who visited Albany in

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70 “St Michael’s Cathedral, Barbados,” 104.

71 Minutes of Proceedings of the Commissioners and City and County Officials at Albany, April 1, 1690, in The Leisler Papers, ed. Peter Christoph (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 111-2, quotation from 111. The significance of the textual items in the Albany package is discussed below.

72 Letter, Jacob Leisler to the Governor of Boston, April 7, 1690, in Christoph, Leisler Papers, 273.
1688 during Indian treaty negotiations. But the historian Peter Christoph argues that Father Harrison, an English Jesuit stationed in New York, imported the items and had left them in the care of a local Catholic, Jan van Loon. The presence of Indian trade goods and catechisms suggests the items were intended for an Indian mission, whether French or English remains unclear. For the English Jesuits at least, ministering to European Catholics in the colonies remained as important an objective as converting Indians, and these goods served both purposes. The transport and distribution of such sacred objects by missionary priests further amplifies the degree to which Catholic material culture served both lay and clerical needs in the English colonies.

**Popish Books: John Tatham’s Library, Religious Text and Catholic Practice**

The inclusion of “27 little books” among the goods transported by a Jesuit missionary for the use of the Indian and European Catholics living in and around Albany in the 1680s illuminates a second source of material comfort for Catholics in the English Atlantic world. Catholic books, like Catholic objects, provided access to church ritual and practice in the form of both sacred text and as sacred objects. Books were by far the most common religious objects in the English Atlantic world in the seventeenth century. But the study of colonial books has focused almost wholly on Protestant texts. Historians of colonial print culture have long emphasized the prevalence of religious texts among the belongings of even the lowliest migrants.

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73 Christoph, “The Time and Place of Jan van Loon: Part II,” 11.
to the English colonies as an indicator of Protestant religiosity.\textsuperscript{74} In terms of numbers, the book culture of the colonies was overwhelmingly Protestant. The classic religious trio found in most probate records included the \textit{Book of Common Prayer}, the \textit{Whole Duty of Man}, and a copy of the Bible in English. These three works varied slightly depending on the denomination or sect, but the combination of Bible, prayer book, and devotional guide held out for most areas of the English Atlantic. Even in the Caribbean, so long excluded from library studies and the history of the book, references to books, when listed, almost always included such religious texts.\textsuperscript{75}

While colonial historians have remained firmly wedded to the notion that only Protestant believers used books, historians and literary scholars of early modern Europe have, in recent years, begun to reassess the parallel, and often overlapping, existence of a Protestant and a Catholic print culture in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. As Alexandra Walsham notes, the “myth of Protestant bibliocentricity” that dominated historical interpretations of post-Reformation religious print culture needs extensive revision.\textsuperscript{76} Post-reformation studies have


\textsuperscript{75} Dunn, \textit{Sugar and Slaves}, 268-9, 270-1. The Jamaican inventory of Thomas Craddock, Port Royal merchant, Jan 1684/5, for example, included “4 New gilt Bibles” and “6 New Common prayer Books 3 with Psalms \textit{[sic]} 3 without,” see \url{http://nautarch.tamu.edu/portroyal/archives/Inventories/Vol2/2-78.htm} accessed Mar 10, 2009.

begun to reassess the starkly dichotomous model that contrasts Protestant emphasis on vernacular translation of biblical text and self-interpretation of the word of God with Catholicism’s characterization as “an intractable enemy of the press” concerned primarily with the consolidation of power through control of Holy Scripture. While Catholic liturgy continued to be predominantly in Latin, the Catholic Church was not adverse to the publication of lay Catholic texts in both Latin and European vernaculars. Traditionally designed to give literate Catholics more access to clerical ritual, Catholic books opened up a world of private devotion within the confines of church doctrine. Like the artifacts discussed above, books too became sacred objects that served to connect Catholics to ritual practice through the text, prayers, and images within their pages. Increasingly in the post-Reformation world, books enabled Catholics to practice their faith with or without access to a priest through the dissemination of traditional Church canon in the form of sanctioned lay prayers and devotional practice.

The anti-Catholic penal laws, in force in the British Isles for most of the seventeenth century, specifically prohibited the publication, importation, sale, and ownership of “popish” books. But these laws did not prevent a vibrant trade in old and new Catholic publications

77 Walsham, “‘Domme Preachers?’,” 113. I do not mean to suggest here that the print revolution was not an essential part of the Protestant Reformation movement in the early sixteenth century and the post-Reformation Protestant world, merely that Catholicism too benefited and utilized the emergence of print to expand and defend its ground in the post-Reformation period. The connection between Counter-Reformation Catholicism and print has been long overlooked particularly in the English world of the seventeenth century. The work of Alexandra Walsham on post-Reformation English Catholic publications has been central to realigning religion and text in the English-speaking world. Other studies dealing with the connection between Catholicism and print culture in England include Eamon Duffy, Stripping of the Altars, 77-87, 209-65; Alison Shell, Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-20; Frances Dolan, Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth Century Print Culture (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Arthur Marotti, Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

78 See James I [3 Jac. I cap. 5] 1605, which made it an offence to “bring from beyond Sea, Print, Sell or Buy any Popish primers, Ladies Psalters, Manuals, Rosaries, Portals, Legends, or Lives of Saints in what language soever they shall be printed or written” quoted in J. M. Blom, The Post-Tridentine English Primer (London: Catholic Record Society, 1982), 37. See also Charles II [14 Car. II cap. 33] 1674.
throughout the British Isles. From the 1560s, Catholic exile presses housed within the English and Irish colleges in the Low Countries and France produced a vast array of books for the British market. Under papal license, the press at Rheims produced the first English Catholic Bible in 1582 and Antwerp published the first English translation of the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* in 1599.\(^79\) Books published by continental printers were smuggled into the British Isles by foreign ambassadors and merchants, or simply procured and imported by Catholic individuals returning from sojourns at the colleges.\(^80\)

Secret presses located in England further supplemented the continental trade. Catholic printers and booksellers set up shop in Holborn and Clerkenwell, areas of London with substantial Catholic populations. Presses also appeared in York and Oxford, supporting more rural Catholic populations. For most of the seventeenth century these presses remained highly secretive operations and subject to harsh penalties should local Protestant authorities choose to enforce them. It was not until the reign of James II that Catholic publishers enjoyed the freedom to publish openly. Occasionally, though rarely, mainstream presses in the British Isles published works in support of the Catholic religion. Such texts were generally published for the purposes of refutation by Protestant polemicists or adapted for use by Protestant readers.\(^81\)

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Between 1558 and 1640, Catholic presses produced 932 titles for the British market in English, Irish, Welsh, and Scots Gaelic.\textsuperscript{82} From 1641 until the end of the seventeenth century a further 1,144 Catholic books were produced in the languages of the British Isles. That figure represented 2\% of the “English” books published in the period. Placed in the context of the entirety of English-language publishing in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Catholic output appears miniscule. But it continued to outnumber religious texts from Quaker and Baptist sources during the same period.\textsuperscript{83} Catholic imprints ranged from devotional prayer books to political polemics. Catholic theologians on the continent authored polemical texts specifically for the British market, countering the attacks of Protestant theologians. Other texts targeted the Catholic laity, providing vernacular translations of Latin prayers and clerical devotions, as well as prayers composed specifically for the population of the British Isles. Such purely devotional works were accompanied by the writings of British saints, exiles, and missionaries that offered advice and solace to those Catholics struggling to sustain their faith in the British Isles.

Catholic texts found their way onto the shelves of wealthy, literate Catholics, were carried by itinerant priests, sold along with Catholic sacred artifacts by street-sellers in London,

\textsuperscript{82} This figure is drawn from the excellent bibliography of Catholic books provided in A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers, \textit{The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640}, 2 vols. (Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing, 1989-1994). During this same period, 1,619 works concerning Catholicism in the British Isles appeared in Latin or other European languages. These figures include all texts in English or another language printed, “either for the spiritual benefit of English Catholics, or in the furtherance of the Catholic cause” (2:viii).

\textsuperscript{83} Clancy, \textit{English Catholic Books}, x, xiv, xvi. Clancy, like Allison and Rogers, defines an “English” book as encompassing any of the four language groups of the British Isles, see vii.
and even turned up in the libraries of Protestant ministers.\textsuperscript{84} They also crossed the Atlantic in the possession of the Catholic laity and missionary priests. The evidence of Catholic books in the Atlantic colonies, like Catholic objects, is scattered and most often takes the form of an oblique and tantalizing reference to “popish books” that provides little insight into the use or context of the artifact. The library catalog of John Tatham provides a starting point from which to analyze these fragmentary references to “popish books” throughout the colonies.\textsuperscript{85} Little remains of the library today except the list of books compiled as part of Tatham’s estate inventory and three surviving books at the Library Company of Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{86} Examination of the texts Tatham maintained in his library reveals much about Tatham’s own religious practice and highlights the larger significance of “popish books” as text-based devotional guides and as sacred objects for Catholics living in the English colonies.

At his death in 1700, Tatham owned 554 individually titled works.\textsuperscript{87} Compared to the massive libraries collected by the Mather family in New England or James Logan of


\textsuperscript{85} A catalog of John Tatham’s library compiled in 1700 is appended to “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham, 1700/01 [Photostat];” see also Middleton, “John and Elizabeth Tatham,” 114-33. [Hereafter the catalog numbers in the printed version will be used to reference books in the Tatham library.]

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis Sixti V Pont (Douai, 1605 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia); William Camden, Britannia Sive Florentissimorum . . . (London, 1587 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia); Louis Maimbourg, The History of the League, translated by John Dryden (London, 1684 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia). I am grateful to Jim Green, librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia, for bringing to my attention the survival of these books.

\textsuperscript{87} The library catalogue appended to Elizabeth Tatham’s Inventory includes only a short title description of the books. Books have been identified using Clancy, \textit{English Catholic Books}; Alison and Rogers, \textit{Contemporary Printed Literature}; English Short Title Catalog, \url{http://estc.bl.uk}; Early English Books Online, \url{http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home}. Tatham’s library catalog provides no indication of the year of publication making it impossible to ascertain the exact edition of multi-edition works. For the purposes of this study identifications are based on first editions unless variant titles suggest a later edition.
Philadelphia, Tatham’s library is relatively compact. Both numbering more than a thousand books, the Mathers and Logan compiled the bulk of their libraries in the colonies and their collecting continued long into the eighteenth century.\(^8^8\) Tatham’s library compares more favorably to the library of Daniel Pastorius in Pennsylvania and the book collection of Ralph Wormeley, a merchant in Virginia.\(^8^9\) Such libraries were the preserve of the wealthy. Few colonists beyond the colonial elite, clergy, lawyers, and merchants could afford to amass such large collections of books.\(^9^0\) Tatham’s library, then, is one of the earliest large libraries in the North American colonies, but has been almost wholly ignored by historians due to its location in West Jersey, an understudied colony, and its overwhelmingly Catholic character.\(^9^1\)

Tatham acquired the bulk of his library prior to traveling to the colonies. Most of the books identified in Tatham’s library were published prior to his departure from England in 1685. Only 10 of his books have a date of publication after his arrival in Pennsylvania.\(^9^2\) A pre-1685 publication does not unequivocally indicate Tatham acquired the book prior to departure, but the

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\(^8^9\) Pastorius and Wormeley’s wealth and status corresponded roughly to that of Tatham. On Daniel Pastorius’ library see Wolf, *Book Culture of a Colonial City*, 6-8. Wolf claims Pastorius, who migrated in 1683, owned the largest library in early Philadelphia. He provides no numbers, but when Pastorius died in 1720 the library was valued at £35. 10s. (p. 8) approximately the same value as Tatham’s library. Ralph Wormeley’s library contained 386 books when it was inventoried in 1701, see “Libraries of Colonial Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, 2 (1894): 169-74.

\(^9^0\) On book ownership and literacy in the seventeenth century see Wolf, *Book Culture of a Colonial City*, 1-2; Hall, *Cultures of Print*, 83.

\(^9^1\) Edwin Wolf makes no mention of Tatham in his study of Philadelphian books see Wolf, *Book Culture of a Colonial City*.

\(^9^2\) Of the 554 books listed, 262 have been verified as published before, during, or after Tatham’s migration to Pennsylvania in 1685—241 were available in some form before 1685, 5 were published in 1685, 10 were published after 1685, and 6 are described as manuscripts.
rare character of many of the texts seems to forego the possibility he purchased them through colonial booksellers. The shipment of more than 500 books from London to Pennsylvania in 1685 was no easy task and the undertaking bears witness to the importance Tatham placed on the specific works in his library.

When Tatham left England, restrictions on Catholics, including the possession of Catholic books, were falling away. A Protestant observer during the reign of James II described the newly open market for religious books with apprehension:

Books and Pamphlets prejudicial to the Church are sold on every stall, cryed about by hawkers in the streets as commonly as Gazetts, thrown or brought into houses, or sent by penny post bundles, such as; The Touchstone of the reformed Gospel: The Translation of the Mass: The Papist misrepresented: The Exposition of the Bishop of Meniv.93

In this increasingly tolerant atmosphere Tatham could have had no trouble acquiring or selling Catholic books whether second-hand or newly published. It has been suggested that Tatham acquired the library by theft from the Benedictine mission.94 He had, after all, seemingly stolen money from the monks. The high cost of transporting books to the colonies would seem to work against such a proposition. Liquidizing the library into ready cash would certainly have been more useful in the colonial context than a library of books. Money crossed the Atlantic with greater ease than crates of books. Further, had Tatham wanted to sell his library he could have made more money in London than in the colonies. Quaker Pennsylvania, in particular, seems an unlikely potential market for rare Catholic texts. The survival of books bearing Tatham’s signature, date of acquirement, and, in at least one case, extensive marginalia would also seem to

93 “Audacious attempts of Popish Seducers in King James’s Reign,” reprinted in John Gutch, Collectanea curiosa: or, miscellaneous tracts, relating to the history and antiquities of England and Ireland, . . . and a variety of other subjects. Chiefly collected, and now first published, from the manuscripts of Archbishop Sancroft (Oxford, 1781), 1:326, No. XLIII. Tatham’s library included a copy of John Heigham’s The Touch-Stone of the Reformed Gospell (___, 1634) see Catalog No. 450.

work against the conclusion that the books were in fact stolen from the library of the Benedictine monks.95

John Tatham clearly held books in high esteem and relied on published knowledge in many aspects of his life. The categories of books in Tatham’s library reflect the various stages of his life.96 The library included books published at continental presses, at London publishing houses, and even a few American imprints, tracking his development from Catholic scholar to missionary priest and, eventually, to colonial planter. Like other gentleman planters, Tatham acquired a number of works relevant to colonial living. Twenty-three of the books concerned household and agricultural management, with multiple popular guides by Thomas Tryon on economic success, household cookbooks, and several texts on medical practice including *The American Physitian*, a recent publication on medicinal plants in the English plantations.97 The 23 law books provided much needed knowledge on English legal precedent, a vital skill for any colonist who required constant recourse to the law or hoped to rise to political office. Among the 20 scientific books were a number of works detailing mathematical techniques used in navigation and surveying, both useful skills in the colonies. The scientific works also reflect the

95 *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis Sixti V Pont* (Douai, 1605 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia) now part of the library of James Logan, includes Tatham’s signature and the date 1668, as well as a handwritten epigraph; William Camden, *Britannia Sive Florentissimorum* . . . (London, 1587 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia) includes a signature and extensive marginalia in what appears to be Tatham’s hand; Louis Maimbourg, *The History of the League*, translated by John Dryden (London, 1684 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia) also includes a title page signature and indicates Tatham continued to acquire books with a Catholic character throughout his time in London and beyond.

96 Of the 554 works in Tatham’s library, I have been able to assign a category—religious, history/politics/philosophy, household manual, dictionary, scientific, legal, or manuscript—to 416 books listed in the catalog. In most cases the categorization was based on a positive identification of the title, but in some instances the short-title provided sufficient indication of the type of book even though I was unable to identify its published title. For example, Catalog No. 262 “History of ye Cosacks & Tartars” is clearly a historical work, but I have been unable to identify a corresponding title in the English short-title catalogs. A further 138 entries in the catalog remain unidentified or are too vague to be categorized, such as Catalog No. 183 “a Greek Book.”

97 William Hughes, *The American physitian, or, A treatise of the roots, plants, trees, shrubs, fruit herbs, etc growing in the English plantations in America* . . . (London, 1672), Catalog No. 521.
scholarly nature of Tatham’s library, which included 64 works on modern and classical history, politics, and philosophy, 12 dictionaries and works of grammar, and six manuscript volumes. These works, in Latin, French, and English, were markers of Tatham’s social position. Books like William Camden’s *Britannia* and Alexandre Exquemelin’s *Bucaniers of America* proved popular among many colonial readers for their pro-English rhetoric and served to display the loyal patriotism of colonial owners.\(^98\)

Like its colonial Protestant counterparts, the bulk of Tatham’s library—at least 268 books—concerned religion. But Tatham’s library stands out for its singularly Catholic character. Of those texts categorized as religious, 203 were by Catholic authors or pro-Catholic in subject.\(^99\) Tatham’s Catholic books ranged from lay devotional texts and prayer books to Catholic controversialist writing, liturgical texts, and monastical breviaries, and represented all facets of Catholic life. It is the presence of these Catholic books in seventeenth-century West Jersey that make Tatham’s library catalog invaluable to the study of religious practice in the English Atlantic world.

By far the most significant texts for understanding lay Catholic practice in the English Atlantic world were the works that fell under the rubric of private devotional exercises, lay instructional guides, or lay prayer books. Post-Reformation Catholic prayer books stemmed from the medieval Book of Hours, a lay text designed to incorporate aspects of monastic piety, particularly the performance of devotional offices such as the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.


\(^{99}\) Only 28 of the religious works concerned the Protestant religion; a further 13 were described in the catalog as bibles. The doctrinal character of the remaining 24 religious works is unclear from the catalog description.
and the Office of the Dead, into the daily rituals of the laity. As Eamon Duffy argues, the Book of Hours, and its post-Reformation reiterations, was not a precursor to Protestant individualization, but rather a reinvigoration of the connections between lay devotion and ritual practice. As the Counter-Reformation took hold in the late sixteenth century it was the medieval Book of Hours that became the model for official Catholic devotional texts, such as the Latin Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis and its various sanctioned vernacular translations. By the seventeenth century, a series of English language books based, in large part, on the Trent-sanctioned Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis became the religious texts of choice among lay Catholics in the British Isles.

The most popular English language text was The Primer, or The Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary first published in 1599. Designed for the highly educated laity, the Primer provided an extensive devotional regiment based on the Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis and other monastic offices. Bibliographic scholars estimate that at any one time in the seventeenth century, 9-10,000 copies of the Primer alone circulated among the English-speaking Catholic community in Europe. Shorter and simplified, A Manual of Devout Prayers targeted a wider audience with its weekly structure of devotional prayers drawn from the longer Primer. The popularity of these two texts in the British Isles is reflected in the multiple editions in Tatham’s library. Tatham’s bookshelves held three editions of the Primer—one each in French, Latin, and English.

100 Eamon Duffy, Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240-1570 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 145. See also Duffy, Stripping the Altars, 209-65; Lisa McClain, Lest we Be Damned, 49-53.

101 Blom, English Primer, 3.

102 Blom, English Primer, 44-5.

103 Catalog Nos. 131 (French), 280 (Latin), and 361 (English).
Manual appears five times in the library catalog as both “a Manual of devout Prayers” and “a Manual of Prayers and Litanies.”

For colonial Catholics, the Primer and the Manual provided a variety of textual tools to sustain a sense of Catholic practice. Tatham’s multiple devotional texts facilitated private individual devotion and group devotion. Both the Primer and the Manual provided examples of prayers and psalms that could be recited alone or in the company of other worshippers. The Primer, for example, contained a range of prayers to the Virgin Mary and various saints, as well as litanies for special occasions or extreme circumstances, appropriate to private or public devotion. Both works also contained instructional text and prayers designed to accompany the clerical services of the church. The Manual, in particular, offered comprehensive instruction on all aspects of Catholic worship including guides to Confession, receiving the Sacrament, hearing Mass, the correct use of sacred objects, and how to live a life of Christian piety. Such texts provided much of the information lay Catholics traditionally received from the clergy. Devotional works, importantly, did not contain church liturgy nor were Catholics encouraged to attempt to replicate church ritual. But even in the absence of church services, repetition of these prayers designed for use in church, combined with the proliferation of Catholic objects in the English Atlantic world, created the semblance of Catholic ritual practice and belief, at least for literate Catholics.

Tatham was not alone in possessing such books of private devotion. In 1631, the Protestant authorities in Massachusetts ordered the capture of Sir Christopher Gardiner “for some

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105 On the standard contents of the Primer see Blom, English Primer, 14-5.

miscarriages” committed in the colony. A troublesome resident of both Plymouth and Massachusetts, Gardiner had long been suspected of holding popish sympathies. The fears of leading Protestants were confirmed when, after his capture, a search of his home revealed “a little notebook” near his bed containing “a memorial [of] what day he was reconciled to the Pope and Church of Rome,” as well as “what university he took his scapula, and such and such degrees.” More than a diary or journal, the book prompted John Winthrop to praise “a special providence of God to bring those notes of his [Gardiner] to our hands.” For Winthrop, the “notebook” identified Gardiner as religiously subversive and a threat to the Puritan church.

The size of the book found among Gardiner’s belongings indicates it was probably one of the devotional works described above. The book’s discoverers represented it as “a little notebook that by accident had slipped out of his pocket or some private place.” In the British Isles, publishers often produced Catholic prayer books in small formats to enable conforming Catholics to recite devotions surreptitiously during Protestant worship. Gardiner had professed a desire “to live a private life in a godly course” and “to join the churches” in Plymouth. This did not, however, preclude continued Catholic devotion. The carrying of a prayer book in a

107 The leaders of the Massachusetts Bay colony believed Christopher Gardiner to be an agent for Sir Ferdinando Gorges. Gorges hoped to establish a lucrative colony in northern New England in direct competition with the interests of the Bay colony. After his capture, Gardiner ultimately returned to England where, along with Gorges, he continued to challenge the extent of the Massachusetts Bay charter. See Charles Francis Adams, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892), 1:250-8.


110 Bradford, Of Plymouth, 248.

111 Seventeenth-century Protestants referred to such conforming Catholics who chose to attend Anglican services and practice Catholicism in private as “church-papists.” On the practice and acceptance of church papistry in seventeenth century England see Blom, English Primer, 47; Alexandra Walsham, Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England (New York: Boydell Press, 1993); McClain, Lest We Be Damned, 7, 246.

112 Bradford, Of Plymouth, 247.
pocket bore striking similarity to the wearing of a crucifix or medallion around the neck. The sacred nature of the religious text endowed the book with the properties of a sacred object much as the Bible served as both sacred text and sacred object for Protestants.\footnote{On the physical and cultural significance of books as objects, not simply textual items see David Cressy, “Books as Totems in Seventeenth-Century England and New England,” \textit{The Journal of Library History} 21 (1986): 92-3; David Hall, \textit{World of Wonders, Days of Judgment}, 23-31.}

Maryland Catholics similarly emphasized the role of sacred text in their concept of Catholic practice and belief. Leonard Calvert’s estate in 1647 included “13 Bookes” valued at £160. In addition, Calvert’s estate inventory listed “A Table Book & a Discipline,” presumably to be used for religious devotions along with the “kneeling desk,” “bone Crosse,” and “gold Reliquary case.”\footnote{An Inventory of Lands, goods, & Chattells belonging to mr Leonard Caluert Esqr., June 30, 1647, \textit{Archives of Maryland}, 4:320-1.} When he died in 1663, Robert Cole left a small library of books, “Seaven bookes in a chest, Six other bookes left out for the children to read in.”\footnote{Plantation account of Robert Cole, in Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena Walsh, \textit{Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 182.} Cole expressed a dying wish that “my Children bee brought [up] and taught in the Roman Catholique Religion.” Cole’s books were to be part of this religious education.\footnote{Will of Robert Cole, in Carr, Menard, and Walsh, \textit{Robert Cole’s World}, 173.}

As in the case of Gardiner’s pocket book, Robert Cole’s books included personal commemorations of significant events. Of the works in the chest, one, “the biggest,” contained a note of “the birth Dayes of my children.”\footnote{Plantation account of Robert Cole, in Carr, Menard, and Walsh, \textit{Robert Cole’s World}, 182.} Both the \textit{Primer} and the \textit{Manual} structured the prayers within their pages around a strict sense of sacred time, including copies of the sanctioned religious calendar marking out the various feast and holy days, and organizing the year into a series of spiritual devotions. This calendar could be personalized and surviving copies of
seventeenth-century prayer books often include personal remembrances, added to the calendars by hand, commemorating births, deaths, and significant events. Such notes, inscribed in a Primer or Catholic Bible, added a personal dimension to the standardized devotions of the text.\textsuperscript{118}

The instructional elements of the Primer and the Manual made them equally as vital to the sustenance of Catholic practice as the material objects they frequently accompanied and provided instruction on the use of. Like Tatham, Robert Cole probably owned at least one prayer book among his library that served a dual function as a tool for private Catholic devotion and the religious education of his children. The laity and the clergy both recognized the educational value of prayer books to the maintenance and expansion of the Catholic faith in English dominions. In Barbados in 1639, the Protestant governor arrested two Catholic priests who, in addition to proselytizing the Catholic faith, were accused of “dispersing Popish books.”\textsuperscript{119}

Similarly in Maryland in 1645, Thomas Copley, the superior of the Jesuit mission, noted among the £2,000 worth of property seized during Ingle’s Rebellion, “a ffaire Library of Bookes” valued at £150.\textsuperscript{120} In 1690, Jacob Leisler described the Jesuit property recovered at Albany as including “the lesson to learne to make their God before they eat them.”\textsuperscript{121} Destined for European use and for the Indian missions, these missionary books, accompanied by crucifixes and rosary beads, demonstrate the centrality of both material and textual tools to Catholic practice in the English Atlantic world. Literate Catholics in the English colonies then, like their counterparts in the

\textsuperscript{118} On the importance of sacred time to Catholics see Duffy, \textit{Stripping the Altars}, 11-52; Gillespie, \textit{Devoted People}, 85-7.

\textsuperscript{119} Thirteen articles against Captain Henry Hawley, CO 1/10 Privy Council 1639-1643, TNA, No. 28i, fol. 78.

\textsuperscript{120} Libel of Thomas Copley and the Brents against the \textit{Reformation}, in “Richard Ingle in Maryland,” \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} 1 (1906): 136-40, quotation from 140. The mission property also included jewels, rings, plate, and drapery belonging to the Catholic chapel and mission at St. Mary’s. See also Edwin W. Beitzell, “Thomas Copley, Gentleman,” \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} 47 (1952): 209-23.

\textsuperscript{121} Letter, Jacob Leisler to the Governor of Boston, April 7, 1690, in Christoph, \textit{Leisler Papers}, 273.
British Isles, continued to position church doctrine at the heart of their faith through the popular use of prayer books that served as both sacred text and sacred tools of devotion and education.

The ownership of Catholic instructional and devotional texts was not always so easily associated with Catholic sympathies. The library of Ralph Wormeley, cataloged after his death in 1701, contained a range of religious works. Popular Anglican texts, such as the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Whole Duty of Man*, and Andrew Lancelot, *Patterne of Catechistical Discourse* (London, 1650) appeared on Wormeley’s bookshelves. But next to these texts sat a copy of the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, “1 Latin book for the sacremt in fol.,” “A Sacred Dialogue in Latin,” and Anthony Errington, *A Catacasticall Discourse* (Paris, 1654), equally popular Catholic devotional works. Meanwhile, Wormeley showed an interest in traveling to see the Jesuits in Maryland and associated with those of both the Anglican and Catholic faiths in Virginia. Whether he was an Anglican, a church papist, an openly practicing Catholic, or simply unsure and curious as to his spiritual options, Ralph Wormeley’s possession of Catholic and Protestant devotional texts suggests that an overly strict reliance on the doctrinal definition of Catholicism overlooks the extent to which Catholicism continued to permeate the spiritual life of this Protestant world. Religious text, like sacred objects, served a variety of functions in the English Atlantic world reflecting the interaction and exchange of Protestant and Catholic forms of both ritual and popular practice.

The eclectic religious character of Ralph Wormeley’s library highlights the problems inherent in separating Catholic works from Protestant ones. As Alexandra Walsham rightly notes,

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123 Gilbert Chiraud, trans., *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia or Voyages of a Frenchman exiled for his Religion with a description of Virginia & Maryland* (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1934), 159-60.
we should not assume “that the worlds of Catholic and Protestant publishing were mutually exclusive and that their readers belonged to rigidly segregated denominational groups.”

As noted above, John Tatham’s library included at least 28 works by Protestant authors, ranging from Anglican devotional texts such as Joseph Hall, *The Balm of Gilead* to classic theological works by Protestant authors such as Edward Stillingfleet, Henry Hammond, and George Keith. Likewise, works published for the purposes of lay Catholic instruction resonated with both Catholic and Protestant readers.

Tatham’s library contained a number of texts that, in the British Isles, served a broad religious audience. The works of Francis de Sales proved particularly popular among readers in the British Isles. Sales’s classic work, *An Introduction to a Devout Life*, first appeared in English translation in 1613, for the Catholic market. By 1616 a London version was available with the offensive papist sentiments removed. Tatham owned four copies of *An Introduction to a Devout Life*, one in the original French and three in English translation. He owned another two copies of *Delicious Entertainments for the Soule*, also authored by de Sales. Similarly, the work of Luis de Granada found its way into Protestant writing, but only with the most stringent cleansing of the text. The popularity of Sales and Granada among Protestant readers in the

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124 Walsham, “‘Domme Preachers?’” 108.

125 See “Balm of Gilead” Catalog No. 227. For examples of Protestant controversial works in Tatham’s library see “Stillingfleit,” Catalog No. 381; “Doctor Hamman on Schism,” Catalog No. 323; “Quakerism no Popery,” Catalog No. 342 and “New Engld churches brought to Test,” Catalog No. 366, both works by George Keith.


127 Francis de Sales, *An Introduction to a Devout Life* (London, 1616), Catalog Nos. 353 (French), 181, 365, 372 (English); Frances de Sale, *Delicious Entertainments for the Soule* (Douai, 1632), Catalog Nos. 322 and 426.

British Isles, however, does not seem to have crossed the Atlantic. The surviving book lists of Protestant owned libraries in the seventeenth-century colonies contain no copies of either author.\textsuperscript{129}

At least one work—Thomas á Kempis, \textit{The Imitation of Christ}—appeared in Catholic and Protestant libraries on both sides of the Atlantic. In both Latin and English á Kempis proved a universal spiritual text. Nine English editions of á Kempis appeared during the seventeenth century; six translated by Catholics and three by Protestants.\textsuperscript{130} Tatham owned six copies of á Kempis’s foundational text in both English and Latin versions.\textsuperscript{131} The library of Richard Lee of Virginia contained a copy of “Thos A Kempis de Xto imitando,” alongside several Protestant devotional works.\textsuperscript{132} Daniel Pastorius owned several copies of \textit{The Imitation of Christ} in English, Latin, and French.\textsuperscript{133}

Even in New England, publishers considered á Kempis’s text a suitable product for Puritan consumption. In May 1669, the Massachusetts court received notification “that there is now in the presse, reprinting, a booke, tit Imitacons of Christ.” Fearing that the work “conteyned

\textsuperscript{129} This is based on an examination of the Virginia library catalogs published in “Libraries in Colonial Virginia,” \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, 1st series, 2-8 and the surveys of library content in Wolf, \textit{Book Culture of a Colonial American City}; Hall, \textit{Cultures of Print}. While Sales and Granada appear to have been the preserve of colonial Catholics in the seventeenth century, Tatham’s copies of these works did, however, make their way into Protestant hands in the early eighteenth century, see discussion of the fate of Tatham’s library below.


\textsuperscript{131} Two copies appeared as “The Following of Christ” and “The following Xt.,” Catalog No. 92 and 316. These were most likely Catholic translations as only Catholic authors used this variant title. Another two appeared listed under the Latin title as “de Imitation Christi,” or “Imitatione Xti.,” Catalog No. 122 and 470. A further two were listed as “Imitation of Xt.,” Catalog No. 123 and 524. These could have been the Anglican edition of 1639, but given Tatham’s connection to the Benedictine order were most likely the Benedictine version published in 1657. See Crane, “English Translations of the \textit{Imitatio Christi},” 97-8.


\textsuperscript{133} Wolf, \textit{Book Culture of a Colonial American City}, 7.
some things that are less safe to be infused among the people of this place,” the court ordered a halt to publication until it could affect a “more full revisal thereof.”\textsuperscript{134} No subsequent copy of the work appeared in Massachusetts during the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{135} But, like Protestant readers of \textit{á Kempis} across the English Atlantic, the Massachusetts court did not order a de facto ban of the text merely a careful revision for Protestant consumption. While copies of \textit{á Kempis} did not appear in New England libraries, several unidentified Catholic books did. John Harvard claimed to own “books by Jesuit authors” among the many religious texts on his bookshelves.\textsuperscript{136} Cotton Mather used a “popish Book,” along with Quaker texts and books of jest, to investigate the possession of Martha Goodwin in 1688.\textsuperscript{137} Meanwhile, his father, Increase Mather, owned theological works by the Catholic priests Thomas Stapleton and Robert Bellarmine.\textsuperscript{138} Like Tatham’s ownership of works by Protestant theologians and controversialists, Increase Mather most likely used Stapleton and Bellarmine for the purpose of refutation.

The fate of John Tatham’s library after his death in 1700 provides further evidence of the multiple and cross-doctrinal uses of religious text in the English Atlantic world. Even before his death, Tatham’s library appears to have served as a central repository of books in Jersey and Pennsylvania, replicating patterns of book ownership and library circulation in the British Isles. Evidence presented to the court in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, reveals that John Tatham lent


\textsuperscript{135} William Stetson Merrill, “Catholic Authorship in the American Colonies before 1784,” \textit{Catholic Historical Review} 3 (1918): 310. \textit{The Imitation of Christ} was not published in America until 1749 when a Menonite press in Germantown, Pennsylvania, produced an abridged version. A full English edition was finally published in Philadelphia in 1783.


\textsuperscript{137} Mather, \textit{Memorable Providences}, 112-3, quotation from 113.

\textsuperscript{138} Tuttle, “The Libraries of the Mathers,” 281, 287.
books to his Protestant neighbors. In 1699, Tatham entered an account in the court record for “foure books value foure pounds.” Joseph Growden, a neighbor of Tatham’s, borrowed the books in 1685 and “promised Shortly to restore” them to their owner, Tatham.\textsuperscript{139} There is no indication of the type of books Tatham lent, but it confirms Tatham’s library circulated among the local literate population.

After the death of Tatham and his wife, the library, with the rest of Tatham’s estate, descended to the Tatham’s eldest son, also named John Tatham. Of the younger John Tatham little is known. He died in New York in 1714, but before his death appears to have liquidated much of the estate. At least some texts found their way into Protestant libraries in the Philadelphia area. One, an ornate copy of the Vulgate Bible published in 1605 at Douai, for example, found a home first on the shelves of the Shippen family, wealthy Philadelphia merchants, before being sold to James Logan, a ferocious collector of all sorts of rare and valuable books.\textsuperscript{140} Bound in vellum with religious engravings and held shut by engraved metal clasps, Tatham’s Vulgate Bible was a rich material object as well as a treasured religious text. The pristine condition of the book suggests it served Tatham primarily as a sacred object rather than an everyday religious text. These same attributes made the Bible equally valuable to Protestant book collectors, despite its Catholic characteristics.

In 1712, Tatham Jr. arranged for the governor of New York to sell the remaining property in Burlington to The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), an

\textsuperscript{139} Buckenham, \textit{Bucks County Court Records}, 402.

\textsuperscript{140} In addition to John Tatham’s name, date and epigraph, the Vulgate Bible includes the names of Joseph Shippen and James Logan. \textit{Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis Sixti V Pont} (Douai, 1605 original copy owned by John Tatham in the Library Company of Philadelphia). See also Wolf, \textit{Library of James Logan}.
Anglican missionary organization.\footnote{See letters concerning the Tatham House in George Morgan Hills, \textit{History of the Church in Burlington, New Jersey} (Trenton, N. J.; W. S. Sharp, 1876), 100, 105, 106, 107-8, 169, 265. The SPG began negotiations for the house in 1710 (p. 100) and became owners in 1712 (pp. 105-6). The house was already in poor repair and, in Dec 1712, a fire caused severe damage to the roof (pp. 107-8). By 1714, the house was described as being in “perfect repair,” (p. 113) but, by 1722, the mansion was again in terrible condition for want of an occupant (pp. 169-71). The house sadly burnt to the ground in 1748 (p. 265). Will of John Tatham, Jr, in \textit{Archives of the State of New Jersey, First Series: Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey}, ed. William A. Whitehead, et al. (Newark, N.J.: Daily Advertiser Printing House, 1901), 23:453.} It appears the SPG also acquired at least some of the library books remaining on the estate. In 1719, John Talbot, an SPG missionary stationed in Burlington, cataloged a collection of 197 books known as the Burlington Library. The collection contained several titles matching those in the Tatham library, including works published by continental presses that could only have arrived in the English colonies by means of someone with an interest in the practice of Catholicism. Works by \ae Kempis, de Sale, and Granada were among those acquired by the SPG from Tatham’s book collections and presumably favored by the SPG for their character as universal Christian texts. The Burlington Library also contained several works unlikely to be used by Protestants for spiritual purposes such as Bartholome Caranza, \textit{Summa Conciliorum} (Douai, 1648) and Thomas Stapleton, \textit{Promptuarium Catholicum} (Paris, 1589).\footnote{For the 1719 catalog of Burlington Library see Hills, \textit{Church in Burlington}, 157-59. The library also included several books not listed in Tatham’s catalog.} Such books, in the hands of an educated minister, could be used for the purpose of attacking the Catholic faith.

Yet for Catholic inhabitants, the reading of religious texts, and the use of reading as a means of replicating ritual practice, remained a preserve of the educated and wealthy. While poorer Catholics recognized the power of sacred text and ritual prayer, they continued to view the reading of books by the Protestant laity as an indicator of heresy. English Bibles and Protestant English prayer books proved a particular focus of Catholic attack. In some cases, Catholic attacks on Protestant books stemmed from the anti-Catholic rhetoric of Protestant
works. In 1638, the provincial court in Maryland recorded a dispute between a Catholic master, William Lewis, and his Protestant servants concerning the use of Protestant books. Lewis considered their books to be “the instruments of the divell,” the servants complained. Several further testified that Lewis ordered them to neither “keepe nor read any booke wch doth apperteine to our religion [Protestantism]” within his house. Lewis’s defence, however, indicates his attack on the book was not simply a rejection of the use of reading in religious devotion, but the specific anti-Catholicism of the text in question. Lewis stated to the court that, arriving at the door of his servants’ room,

they were reading of a book, they read it aloud to the end he [Lewis] should heare it, and that the matter being much reproachfull to his religion, vizt that the Pope was Antichrist, and the Jesuits, antixpian minsters &c. he told them that it was a falsehood, & came from the Devill, as all lies did, & that he that writt it was an instrumt of the divell.

Nevertheless, the Maryland court “found him to have exceede [sic] in forbidding them to read a booke otherwise allowed & lawfull to be read by the state of England.” Similarly, in Barbados in 1688, when challenged by a Protestant brandishing a book that discouraged the worship of images, a young Catholic, Cock Farley, responded angrily “that Bibles where [sic] Bookes that Caused a great Deall of Differences.”

While Cock Farley, like William Lewis, seemingly reacted to a specific textual attack on the tenets of his religion, many of his fellow Catholics in Barbados considered all forms of vernacular text to be inherently heretical and a provocation. In September 1688, justices

143 Maryland Provincial Court and Testamentary Business, 1638, Archives of Maryland, 4:35-6.

144 Maryland Provincial Court and Testamentary Business, 1638, Archives of Maryland, 4:37.

145 Maryland Provincial Court and Testamentary Business, 1638, Archives of Maryland, 4:38.

recording the deposition of William Kelley, an Irish Catholic, asked Kelley, “if he knew one book from another, or if he knew a bible when he did see it.” Kelley responded: “he did not, & yt ye bible did not [sic] to his profession.” As Kelley claimed to be able to read and write, his response was not a question of literacy, but a rejection of the significance of the English Bible used in the Barbados courts. In December that same year, another Catholic, James Jordan, viciously attacked the devotional act of reading the Bible and English prayers. John Thompson, a fellow servant, reported to the court that while reading his Bible on a Sunday morning he was interrupted by James Jordan. Jordan cursed Thompson saying: “Dam you, yu English Dogg or protestant Dogg . . . what doe you read the Devills prayers, I have a good mind to Cut of [sic] your head.” Jordan proceeded to rush at Thompson with a “Rustey sword,” cutting him on the cheek. Witnesses testified that Jordan was heard to proclaim, “he hoped to see all ye Bibles Burnt & all ye protestants hanged.” Evidently, many Catholics in the English Atlantic world continued to associate prayer books, and the act of reading as a method of religious devotion, with Protestant religious practices.

It is clear that throughout the seventeenth century Catholic inhabitants of the English Atlantic found means to engage in a variety of forms of Catholic practice. The methods employed ranged widely from place to place, and varied according to the socio-economic status of the individual, or individuals, in question. But all took advantage of the flexibility between

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147 Declaration of Henry Quinten concerning Mr Wilson, October 1688, CO 1/65 Privy Council Jun 6-Dec 1688, TNA, No. 65 xxxi, fol. 299-299v.

148 Deposition of John Thompson, Feb 23, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7v, fol. 24.

149 Depositions of John Kelly and John Bowen, Feb 23, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7vi, fol. 25.

150 Deposition of John Thompson, Feb 23, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7v, fol. 24.
sacred and secular, and between clerical and lay expressions of religious belief, that Church teaching facilitated. Catholic objects proved crucial in replicating popular beliefs and sacred ritual in the English colonies, providing Catholic inhabitants with a means to reconstruct Catholic practice even though their access to clerical guidance fluctuated and remained unreliable. Lay use of Catholic objects did not negate the necessity of the clergy, but instead emphasized the role of the Church and its priests as the central intermediaries between the laity and the divine. Similarly, Catholic books, like Protestant ones, circulated around the English Atlantic world and colonial libraries contained both Catholic and Protestant books. Such books not only provided textual support for literate Catholics, but, as with Protestant books, Catholic texts served a material role as physical symbols of faith, albeit to a restricted group of educated and wealthy Catholics. Both books and sacred objects contributed to the sustenance of Catholic religious practice in the English colonies.
CHAPTER FOUR

“GOOD SUBJECTS” OR “UNFAITHFUL TRAITORS”: CATHOLIC LOYALTY AND PROTESTANT FEARS

a forme of Oath . . . to make a separation between so many of his Maisties Subjects, who although they were otherwise Popishly affected, yet retained in their hearts the print of naturall duetie to their Soueraigne; and those who being carried away with the like Fanaticall zeale that the Powder Traitors were, could not conteine themselves within the bounds of their naturall Allegiance, but thought diuersitie of Religion a safe pretext for all kinde of Treasons, and rebellions against their Soueraigne.

James I, Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus

Since Elizabeth I’s passage of the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity in 1559, Catholicism had maintained a precarious relationship with the English monarchy. Most commonly issued to those who hoped to assume positions of state, civic, or ecclesiastical importance, the Oath of Supremacy and the Oath of Allegiance demanded the swearer recognize the supreme political and spiritual authority of the English monarch and renounce that of the pope in Rome. Subsequent legislation against recusancy in 1581 and 1593 ordered the oaths administered to those accused of recusancy. Most Catholics avoided the oaths altogether by staying out of public life, practicing their religion in private, and adopting an outward display of religious conformity. Only the wealthiest Catholics, with the means to do so, paid the fines and suffered the consequences of maintaining their nonconformity. By the time James I ascended to the throne in 1603, the Catholic community in England had developed a delicate balance between faith and political allegiance, which they hoped James would recognize by adopting a

more tolerant approach to Catholic conformity.\textsuperscript{2} But in 1606, in response to the attempt by Catholic conspirators to destroy the Protestant government in the Gunpowder Plot, James I reinstated an Oath of Allegiance as a means to test and ensure the fidelity of his subjects. Based in part on the Elizabethan oaths, but in consultation with Catholic priests amenable to compromise, the 1606 oath required all citizens to swear allegiance to the king but contained no mention of spiritual allegiance. James I’s oath, for the first time, split political allegiance to a monarch from spiritual allegiance to a church. It did, however, require oath-takers to reject the right of the pope to depose any monarch on spiritual grounds or to absolve subjects from their allegiance to deposed monarchs. The Catholic world lost no time in responding. In September 1606, Pope Paul V proclaimed that no Catholic could in good faith perform the Oath of Allegiance without compromising their spiritual conscience. Catholics in England found themselves caught between church and monarch.\textsuperscript{3}

In his defense of the Oath of Allegiance in 1607, James I countered that the intent of the oath had been to distinguish “good subjects” from “unfaithfull traitors” and thus to draw a line between “naturall Allegiance” to a sovereign and spiritual obedience. Historians often present James I’s defense of the Oath of Allegiance as evidence of the king’s continued dedication to


\textsuperscript{3} On the creation of the 1606 oath of allegiance and the subsequent controversy see W. B. Patterson, \textit{King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-123. The rejection of the Oath of Allegiance by the pope, and James I’s subsequent defense of the Oath, triggered a polemical controversy that raged throughout England and Europe. Many Catholics in England, including secular priests, supported the Oath, but others, led by the English Jesuits, rejected it entirely. Patterson, \textit{James VI and I}, 82-97.
moderate treatment of the minority Catholic population. By distinguishing between political allegiance and religious allegiance—effectively divorcing church from state—James I claimed to be offering English Catholics an opportunity to be both loyal subjects and faithful Catholics. But as Michael Questier has argued, James purposely worded the oath to divide the Catholic population under his rule and fracture the relationship between English Catholics and Rome. The ultimate goal, Questier concludes, was to destroy Catholicism through gradual conformity to the supremacy of the English king in temporal and, subsequently, spiritual matters.⁴

Whatever the ultimate intention of the 1606 Oath of Allegiance, the rhetorical separation of spiritual conscience from political allegiance contradicted the close connection between church and state that had emerged during the English Reformation. In England, the position of the monarch as head of a Protestant Church solidified the connection between monarchical rule, religious leadership, and civil allegiance. Under a Protestant monarch and a state-sanctioned Protestant religion, a Catholic subject became inherently suspect. For how could a subject remain loyal if the interest of the soul required the betrayal of the monarch? As James I later observed, Catholic subjects “have an eye to me one way and to the Pope another way. The Pope is your father in spiritualibus and I in temporalibus only, and so have your bodies turn one way, and your souls drawn another way.”⁵ Temporal and spiritual allegiance were theoretically deemed separable, but, in reality, the spiritual requirements of the Catholic faith clashed with the loyalty demanded by the monarchy from English subjects. Nevertheless, Catholics remained a persistent

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minority throughout the British Isles, and wherever the English kingdom expanded. The issue of Catholic loyalty remained of paramount concern to the English monarchy and required constant reconsideration as political conflict rose and fell, European kingdoms expanded across the globe, and Protestant England defined the limits of its influence in opposition to Catholic rivals in Europe.

Loyalty remains an equally problematic concept for historians studying the nascent nations and empires of the early modern and modern worlds. The process of forming empires, and later nation-states, required a means to assert membership in (or exclusion from) such polities. This process began in the early modern era as Europeans encountered new peoples abroad and faced greater cultural diversity at home. Loyalty, or allegiance, served to distinguish those who belonged from those who endangered the polity. As David Sartorius notes in his study of loyalty in nineteenth-century Spanish Cuba, “loyalty, when it expressed public relationships between individuals and governing institutions, was a concept that stood as a contrast to rebellion, revolution, conspiracy, and sedition.”6 Inherent in this binary definition of loyalty is a notion of belonging—to be loyal is to belong, to display disloyalty means exile.7 Applied to the English world, in the abstract, Catholics remained apart from the English polity because their commitment to Rome prevented full and unquestioned allegiance to the English monarchy. A Catholic identity equaled disloyalty and thus exclusion.

The definition of loyalty as a binary concept, however, disguises the paradox inherent in asserting or labeling a person’s loyalty. Loyalties, like identities, are multiple, contextual, and


7 In addition to Sartorius, my understanding of loyalty is based on George Fletcher, Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-23.
ever-changing. This flexibility becomes increasingly important when we consider an early modern Atlantic world in which the constant overlap and disjuncture between religious belief and political allegiance frequently complicated the binary of loyalty or treachery. In the early modern Atlantic world, loyalty, and thus political belonging, was flexible, often contradictory, and almost never constant. As political fortunes ebbed and flowed over the course of the seventeenth century, Catholics and Protestants alike changed religion, shifted political allegiance, forged new economic partnerships, and, in some cases, switched nationality. In the case of Catholic subjects of the Protestant English monarch, loyalty was not an oppositional binary, but an ever-shifting balance between competing allegiances and personal interests. They simultaneously belonged and did not belong to the English state.

What did this flexibility mean in a colonial context in which the territorial limits of “England” and English sovereignty constantly expanded but remained threatened by the close proximity of European rivals? How did English colonial authorities interpret the presence of Catholic inhabitants if they could be both traitors and/or loyal subjects? Similarly, how did Catholic inhabitants of, or visitors to, the English colonies understand, define, and, ultimately, demonstrate their loyalty to Protestant authorities? Throughout the seventeenth century, fears of imminent popish invasion plagued the Protestant inhabitants of the English Atlantic world, but

8 On the need to incorporate the flexibility of ‘identity’ into analytical uses of the term, see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” Theory and Society 29 (2000): 1-47. Here I take a similar view of ‘loyalty.’ To impose ‘loyalties’ on historical subjects is to misrepresent the flexible nature of loyalty. I instead examine the active use and application of loyalties by both Catholics and Protestants to understand the mechanisms of imperial defining and belonging in the English Atlantic world.

9 On the subject of ‘belonging’ and transnationalism see Stuart Hall, “Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities,” in Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice, eds. Steven Vertovec and Rodin Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25-31. Halls’s focus is the modern world, but his assessment of the theory of understanding ‘belonging’ in a world of multiple identities is equally applicable to the early modern period. As Hall notes, “The moment you get into how these societies actually operate to hold the allegiances of their citizens together, you get into the complexity of their particularities” (p. 29).
during the same period colonial authorities allowed Catholics to trade, work, and settle under English colonial rule. While some Catholics in the English Atlantic actively sought out enemies of the English state and conspired to overthrow Protestant leadership, others consistently sought to affirm their loyalty to the English monarch, even though the sovereign remained firmly Protestant for all but a brief period in the seventeenth century. An examination of incidents when the loyalty of Catholic inhabitants was called into question or affirmed reveals that loyalty in the colonial world was never simply defined by distinguishing between political allegiance and religious conscience. Instead, factors such as economic status, political power, and access to the means of betrayal influenced how Protestant authorities responded to, and regarded, the papists in their midst.

**Negotiating Loyalty: Catholic Traders in the Early English Atlantic**

English territorial expansion into the Atlantic in the early seventeenth century grew out of the political and religious conflict of the Reformation. For much of the early Stuart period Anglo-Spanish relations remained cordial if strained. Under the Treaty of London signed in 1604 Spain and England remained ostensibly at peace until 1625. During this time, James I actively sought to encourage Anglo-Spanish relations, even proposing a marriage match between his son, Charles, and the Spanish Infanta. But despite this diplomacy, the long-standing animosity between Spaniards and Englishmen continued. Large sections of the English court remained fundamentally opposed to Spain on religious grounds and took every opportunity to derail attempts to establish closer relations with the Catholic kingdom.\(^{10}\) In the Caribbean, open naval

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war continued unabated between the Spanish fleet and English pirates, while English inroads in North America threatened Spain’s near monopoly on Atlantic settlement. The disastrous Cadiz Expedition of 1625 heralded a new period of hostility between the two nations that lasted until 1630, when peace was renegotiated in the Treaty of Madrid. The Treaty ostensibly permitted English settlement on any “unoccupied” territory and opened trade between England and Spain throughout the Atlantic world. But the Spanish continued to consider the whole of the West Indies to be Spanish territory, whether settled or not. For their part, the English purposely chose locations for their colonies that threatened Spanish shipping. Though at peace again, both sides regarded each other with hostility.¹¹

As the work of Karen Kupperman has shown, anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic rhetoric dominated the justification for, and design of, early English ventures in the Caribbean and North America. The foundation of the first successful English settlement in the Americas at Jamestown in 1607, just two years after the Gunpowder Treason Plot and one year after James I’s Oath of Allegiance, firmly tied the rationale for English colonization to rivalry with Spain. In 1609, the second Virginia Company charter listed the expansion of Protestantism as a colonization goal and ordered the administration of the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Supremacy to all settlers. English colonists in the Caribbean in the 1620s and 1630s likewise viewed their settlements as a direct attack on Spanish and Catholic dominance of the region.¹²


The potential for English and Irish Catholics to betray the Protestant kingdom to the Spanish loomed large in the imagination of Protestant leaders. The early history of Virginia is littered with examples of Catholics whom Protestant authorities deemed threatening to the safety of the colony. In 1607, the Council of Virginia executed Capt. George Kendall for reasons unknown. It was, however, widely rumored that Kendall was a Catholic and a Spanish spy. In the same year, the sailor Frances Magnel, an Irish Catholic, resided in Virginia for several months without arousing a hostile response from the Virginian authorities. While Catholics were all theoretically suspected, they were not all automatically disloyal or unwelcome. The cases of Simon Tuchin, an English merchant-mariner, and Henry Colt, an aristocratic adventurer, reveal the multiple expressions of “loyalty” at work in the early English Atlantic and the means used, by Catholic and Protestant colonists, to define the parameters of loyalty in the colonial world.

In 1624, two brothers, Edward and Simon Tuchin, prepared a trading venture for Virginia in their ship, the Due Return. The two brothers were experienced Atlantic traders. An Englishman by birth, but a Catholic in faith, Simon Tuchin considered himself “nowe a stranger in his Country” having spent much of his adult life outside the British Isles. His abandonment of his homeland and near statelessness, as much as his religion, characterized Tuchin as potentially suspect. For the last twenty years, Simon had “frequented the Seas,” and, in

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15 Petition of Simon Tuchin, June 4, 1625, SP 16/3 Secretaries of State, State Papers Domestic, Charles I, Letters and Papers 1625 June, TNA, No. 32, fol. 44.
particular, “made sundry voyages into the Dominions of Spaine and Portugall.”\textsuperscript{16} Simon’s familiarity with the Iberian Atlantic was verified by his fellow crew members on the \textit{Due Return} who noted, when questioned, “he was very well acquainted and respected in ye \textit{Maderas}.”\textsuperscript{17} While Simon possessed knowledge of the Spanish and Portuguese trading zones, Edward Tuchin’s expertise lay in the English world.\textsuperscript{18} The 1624 voyage was not Edward’s first trip to the Chesapeake. Accounts filed with the court at Jamestown included unpaid debts between Virginians and Edward Tuchin that predated the \textit{Due Return}’s arrival in 1624, suggesting Edward’s prior involvement with the colony.\textsuperscript{19} Edward, then, would supply the knowledge required to navigate the \textit{Due Return} up the James River and negotiate the sale of merchandise in Virginia. Together the two brothers displayed a breadth of knowledge crucial to navigating the religiously and politically complex world of Atlantic trade.

Despite the wealth of experience on board and in support of the \textit{Due Return}, Atlantic trading was always a risky venture. Edward Tuchin died before the ship left Europe and his brother Simon completed the voyage to Virginia alone. Simon successfully navigated the ship across the Atlantic, through the Caribbean, and into the James River, arriving at Jamestown sometime in November 1624.\textsuperscript{20} Although an experienced mariner, Simon had never sailed the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{16} Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2 Secretaries of State, State Papers Domestic, Charles I, Letters and Papers 1625 May, TNA, No. 122i, fol. 240.
\item\textsuperscript{17} H. R. McIlwaine, ed., \textit{Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia 1622-1632, 1670-1676} (Richmond, Va.: The Colonial Press, 1924), 34.
\item\textsuperscript{18} This is not to suggest that knowledge of the Iberian world precluded or prevented knowledge of the English world. Ships of all nations frequented the Madeira Islands, in particular, en route to the Americas. As will be seen, like many Atlantic ventures, it was the combined knowledge of the two brothers that made the enterprise an economically credible one.
\item\textsuperscript{19} See discussion in the Virginia courts concerning previous debts and accounts between Edward Tuchin and various inhabitants of the colony, McIlwaine, \textit{Virginia Council and General Court}, 39-40.
\item\textsuperscript{20} There is no exact date for the arrival of the \textit{Due Return} in Virginia. Simon Tuchin is mentioned in Virginia court records from November 30, 1624, suggesting the \textit{Due Return} had docked sometime earlier that month. McIlwaine, \textit{Virginia Council and General Court}, 33.
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rivers and coasts of Virginia so he approached the Jamestown settlement cautiously. As he navigated the James River towards Jamestown Island, “he did sound . . . so far as his Ship went vp” and, further, “did enquire as diligently as he could of the depth and scituation of the other out-lets in case he should be driuen by tempest to seeke any other harbor.”21 These were the actions, Simon believed, of a vigilant captain acting to safeguard his merchandise, the ship, and the people on board.22 The governor and council in Virginia thought otherwise. On Jan 20, 1624/5, the governor of Virginia, Francis Wyatt, and the Virginia Council, sent word to the Earl of Southampton in London that Simon Tuchin had been detained as “a person Dangerous to this Colony.” In particular, “beinge affected to Popery,” the council feared Tuchin could be part of a larger Spanish plot. Citing the Due Return’s careful mapping of the James River, the council claimed Tuchin intended to serve as “Pylott to a fforren Enymie” and betray the colony to his true master, the Spanish. The case was referred to the Privy Council in London for judgment, and Simon Tuchin found himself transported back to England as a suspected traitor.23

The Virginia Company’s case focused on ascertaining if Tuchin, as a Catholic, could be trusted. Tuchin himself admitted that six years before his arrival in Virginia, he had been exiled from Ireland “for refusing to take the oath of Alleageance.” In the eyes of members of the Virginia Company, this admission indicated Tuchin’s intent to betray the colony and his

21 Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 241.
22 Petition of Simon Tuchin, June 4, 1625, SP 16/3, No. 32, fol. 44.
23 Letter, Governor Francis Wyatt and Council and Company of Virginia to the Earl of Southampton and Council and Company of Virginia, Jan 20, 1624/5, CO 1/3 Privy Council 1624-1625, TNA, No. 34, fol. 112. The letter from Wyatt is dated Jan 10, 1624/5 in the Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 44 vols., ed. William Noel Sainsbury, et al. (London: H.M.O., 1860-1969) [hereafter CSPC], 1:71-2 and a later transcription in Aubrey Gwynn, “Documents Relating to the Irish in the West Indies,” Analecta Hibernica, No. 4 (1932): 167. It is clear from a consultation of the original manuscript, however, that the date should read Jan 20, 1624/5.
monarch. Further, at least one witness in Virginia, a black sailor named John Phillip, testified that Tuchin had been employed by “a spanishe ladye.” The women, held captive at Marmora on the Barbary Coast, commissioned Tuchin to transport her ransom money from Spain. Such testimony, the Virginia Council claimed, proved not only Tuchin’s frequent dalliance with the Spanish, but also his willingness to serve Spanish interests. Tuchin, it would appear, no longer honored any allegiance to his country of birth.

Tuchin’s loyalty, however, was not so simply decided. Tuchin denied that “he was charged with any other crime” in Ireland beyond refusing to submit to the oath of allegiance on religious grounds. He produced letters written by Irish Catholic priests confirming “he was not banished for Treason, but for the Catholique Religion.” Further, on December 29, 1624, “Symon Tutchine of the good Shipp Caled the Dew retourne did take the oath of Allegiance before ye Govrnor and Counsell” in Virginia. Tuchin could therefore produce evidence to counter the case against him, but did such evidence confirm in the minds of Protestant authorities that he could be trusted?

The Oath of Allegiance was used in both Ireland and England to test the fealty of Catholic populations, but Protestants and Catholics alike contested its application and merit as a means to distinguish “good” Catholics from dangerous ones. For Catholics in the British Isles in the 1620s, the acceptance of the oath was a fiercely debated topic. The requirement that the oath

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24 Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 240.

25 McIlwaine, *Virginia Council and General Court*, 33. The Spanish lady had been captured “aboute Cape Sct Mary” (p. 33).

26 Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 240.

27 Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 241.

28 McIlwaine, *Virginia Council and General Court*, 37. Emphasis in original.
include a rejection of the pope’s power to depose Protestant monarchs caused many Catholics to refuse the oath for religious reasons, but such rejection did not reflect temporal loyalties.\(^{29}\) Certainly in Tuchin’s case, his initial refusal and subsequent acceptance of the Oath of Allegiance suggests the degree to which the assertion of loyalty and the protection of religious conscience on the part of Catholics did not remain constant. In 1624, Tuchin’s economic interests outweighed any religious scruples raised by the strict language of the Oath of Allegiance.

Of course, despite Tuchin swearing the Oath of Allegiance, there remained the question of his alleged ties to Spain. Tuchin vehemently denied any involvement with the Spanish on the Barbary coast and, crucially, contested the assertion that “he did ever serue the king of Spaine.”\(^{30}\) He also pointed to the fact that during the entire voyage he neither “sawe, [n]or spake wth anie Spaniards” to demonstrate the lack of inclination, and opportunity, he had to commit the treason of which he stood accused.\(^{31}\) The investigation in Virginia, nonetheless, revealed a second set of papers, in addition to those from Ireland, which prejudiced the account Tuchin presented of his ties to Spain. Described as “Certificates from the English Benedictins in St Malos,” the letters contained:

\begin{verbatim}

testimonie, that hee [Tuchin] was a Roman Catholique, and had suffered much for his Religion, and that hee had now ynder taken this Viyage to Virginia onely for traffeique sake, without intension of wrong to the King of Spaines Countries or Subiects which Lres he said he did take to serue him for a Commendacon and Protecon in case the Ship should be taken by the Spaniards.\(^{32}\)
\end{verbatim}

\(^{29}\) On the additional problems faced by the English sovereign in applying the Oath of Allegiance to the majority Catholic population in Ireland see Alan Ford, “‘Firm Catholics’ or ‘Loyal Subjects’?” It is noticeable that on neither occasion, in Ireland nor in Virginia, does the Oath of Supremacy appear to have been administered to Simon Tuchin. The absence of this oath, particularly in Virginia where it was administered alongside the Oath of Allegiance, suggests at least some moderation on the part of colonial authorities to the needs of Catholic inhabitants. As noted below, the council offered no such leeway to George Calvert.

\(^{30}\) Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 240.

\(^{31}\) Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 240v.

\(^{32}\) Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122i, fol. 240v.
Tuchin intended the letters to insure the safe passage of the *Due Return* through the Caribbean. But, to the Protestant authorities in Virginia, the letters demonstrated Tuchin’s communication with the Spanish and his ability, if not outright intent, to betray the colony. The characterization of Tuchin as disloyal, then, stemmed not simply from his religion, but from his active connection to a foreign power. But the letters from the Benedictines also portray Tuchin as a man desperate to achieve economic success at any cost. “For traffique sake,” Tuchin could adopt whichever political loyalty required of him and he almost succeeded.

The Privy Council in London remained unconvinced of the imminent danger posed by Tuchin. Although they concluded that the letters “might well serue [Tuchin] . . . for his peculiar benefit if his intencon were to put his person or peradventure the Shipp into the hands of the Spanyards in the West Indies,” they made no attempt to prosecute Tuchin as a traitor. Instead, Tuchin was ordered to provide bond and never travel to Virginia again. The utter failure of the trading venture was a cost that Tuchin could ill-afford. Tuchin had undertaken the voyage out of economic necessity. His three-month imprisonment in England further stretched his limited financial resources. Petitioning for release from prison in June, 1625, Tuchin cited “his distressed estate” which was “like soe to contynue to the vtter vndoing of himselfe his wife and children.”

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33 Examination of Simon Tuchin, May 1625, SP 16/2, No. 122, fol. 239.
After this pitiful plea Simon Tuchin disappears from the records, having failed to protect his own, or his family’s, interests.  

Simon Tuchin was not alone in attempting to navigate the dangerous waters of the Atlantic and negotiate the political intricacies of Anglo-Spanish relations in the early seventeenth century. Tuchin’s case bears striking similarity to the negotiations of conscience and allegiance displayed in the journal of Sir Henry Colt. The journal, written between May 22, 1631, and August 20, 1631, recounts Colt’s journey across the Atlantic from Weymouth to St. Christopher, where Colt intended to establish a plantation. Unlike Tuchin, Colt’s loyalty to the English monarch was never openly called into question. But Colt’s experiences in the early seventeenth-century Caribbean led him to ponder the same multiple applications and expressions of loyalty that, ultimately, destroyed Tuchin’s trading venture in Virginia. While there is no evidence that Colt ever sought to act upon the musings in his journal, his speculative manipulation of ties to

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34 Petition of Simon Tuchin, June 4, 1625, SP 16/3, No. 32, fol. 44. In a letter written in September, 1625, Simon Stock, the Catholic priest involved in the Newfoundland mission in the 1620s, makes an intriguing reference to a “Catholic pilot” who may well have been Tuchin. Stock wrote that the pilot provided information on the navigation of rivers in North America that led to the Pacific Ocean. A second letter by Stock described the pilot as “brought up to that trade with his elder brother.” The pilot’s brother had recently died. Stock encountered the pilot in an English prison, “accused of spying.” He gained his freedom “upon payment of a great sum of money, the obligation of another [and the promise] not to return ever to those coasts.” Both the unnamed pilot and Tuchin resided in the port of St. Malos in France. In July 1628, Stock reported that the pilot had returned to his home in France, but had since been taken up by the Spanish and “was alive and travelling with His Catholic majesty’s fleet of the West Indies.” Letter, Simon Stock to [Propaganda, in Rome], Sept 13, 1625, in Luca Codignola, The Coldest Harbour in the Land: Simon Stock and Lord Baltimore’s Colony in Newfoundland, 1621-1649 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 86; Letter, Simon Stock to [Propaganda, in Rome], Mar 7, 1626, in Ibid., 94-6; Letter, Simon Stock to [Propaganda, in Rome], Jul 28, 1628, in Ibid., 112.

both the English crown and Spain highlight the multi-faceted character of Catholic loyalty in the early colonial world.

Like the crew of the *Due Return*, Colt fully expected his ship, the *Alexander*, to face trouble with the Spanish in the Caribbean.\(^{36}\) Colt noted that the *Alexander’s* captain lost no time in prepping the ship and crew for potential encounters. The captain’s first task was to arrange the ship’s ordinance for defense and organize the passengers into companies, “yt noe occasion might breed confusion.”\(^{37}\) Such precise preparations on the part of the captain proved astute. On July 16, 1631, the *Alexander*, having just passed the island of Guadeloupe, experienced an “vnexpected accident” that nearly brought Colt’s venture to a premature end.\(^{38}\) On the morning of the sixteenth, while the passengers and crew engaged in their daily prayer, the sound of cannon-fire disrupted the service. Investigation of the sound quickly revealed that it had originated from a Spanish fleet, “.20. sayle of great shipps moor al wth swolne sayles in ye persuit, to ye ruine & destruction of ye poor & distressed *Alexander.*”\(^{39}\) Fleeing the Spanish fleet, the *Alexander* faced off against two smaller Spanish ships that had broken from the main group in pursuit. Despite peace between the two nations, Colt noted that Spanish and English alike prepared for battle. On the *Alexander*, “without any demonstration of fear evry man [took] his place.”\(^{40}\) The Spanish

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\(^{38}\) Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 77. The following details of the “accident” are based on Colt’s detailed narrative of the encounter, see Ibid., 77-82.

\(^{39}\) Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 78.

\(^{40}\) Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 79.
ships drew close, answering the English hale with “Amayna pêrros, amayna pêrros, strike sayle doggs, strike sayle doggs.” A barrage of shot from the Alexander forced the two Spanish vessels into retreat. Fearing the larger fleet, the Alexander’s captain prudently chose not to pursue the fleeing ships.

For Colt, the encounter with the Spanish momentarily raised the dilemma of his duty as an Englishman and his loyalties as a Catholic. While the proximity of the larger Spanish fleet contributed to the Alexander’s failure to pursue victory, Colt noted in himself an unwillingness to proceed “against a nation wch I did hitherto loue and honour farr beyond any other in Europe.” It is unclear exactly how many of Colt’s fellow passengers shared this opinion. At least one other passenger on the voyage, Captain Pellam, was identified in later sources as “a popish Recusante,” and another Colt referred to simply as the Spaniard. We have only Colt’s word that his own crisis of loyalty was widely shared on board the Alexander.

While Colt’s sympathy for the Catholic kingdom gave him pause for thought, it did not wholly govern his response to the attack. Colt wrote that both he and his shipmates experienced the encounter first and foremost as an insult to English sovereignty that required restitution. Despite the “maruaylous perplexitye” the Spanish attack evoked, Colt quickly identified the potential advantage provided by the insult and injury caused to the Alexander, the crew, and, by proxy, England. In his subsequent outrage and demands, which he requested be “printed or els

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43 Deposition of Mr. Astree, 1647, in Harlow, Colonising Expeditions, 27; Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 70. Colt frequently used the plural “we” when discussing the practice of Catholicism or service to Spain, but this may have been a rhetorical flourish as much as an acknowledgement that his fellow passengers were also Catholic.
published to all, yt ye Spaniards might take notice therof.” Colt sketched a course of action that took full advantage of his loyalties to both crowns and advanced his own economic interests.\textsuperscript{44}

Colt characterized the attack by the Spanish as unprovoked and, therefore, justly worthy of compensation or vengeance. In his journal, Colt noted, “soe noble & soe Just a prince,” as the King of Spain, “will out of his royall disposition recompence in some sort these wrongs his subject hath done vs without any cause or merit of ours.”\textsuperscript{45} Despite his faith in the justness of the Spanish king, Colt feared that the “Iniuryes in words & actions strike to[o] deep to be concealed in ye heart, ye desyer of reuenge I know not whatt itt might work.”\textsuperscript{46} Fully aware that such an address might compromise his primary loyalty to England, Colt continued to muse that “I dare nott displease ye King of England, for doubt yt at my returne he makes me shorter by ye head. Yett I doubt nott butt he will excuse me, if I search for reparations of honour for ye Iniurious words I haue receyued.”\textsuperscript{47} Colt thus concluded that the appropriate course of action should be to offer deference to both England and Spain that he “might know in whatt estate we stand in, whether ye two Kinges league & Amitye stretcheth itself byond ye Tropick, whether we might defend ourselues or offend ye opposer.”\textsuperscript{48} Rhetorically, Colt positioned himself as a citizen of the world forced, by the scandalous action of a few errant Spanish mariners, to the brink of disaster and now, in his imagination, seeking justice on the global stage.

\textsuperscript{44} Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 91. The quotation refers to the passage on pp. 88-9 in which Colt debates the political significance of the attack on the \textit{Alexander}, addressing both the Spanish and English monarchies. This passage is the only part of the journal Colt explicitly requested to be published. There is no indication it ever was.

\textsuperscript{45} Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 88.


\textsuperscript{47} Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 89.

\textsuperscript{48} Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 89. The “two Kinges league & Amitye” was a direct reference to the language of the Treaty of Madrid.
Colt also proposed that his Catholic faith and his long-maintained ties to Spain should warrant further consideration on the part of the Spanish crown. As Colt pondered:

Haue we nott in ye equitye of his [the King of Spain’s] cause in Flanders serued & ventured our liues vnder his ensigns, vpon our owne proper cost & charges . . . ? Are not we Catholicks? Why then might not this Kinge in recompence of this Inurye gratiously to graunt vs for .3. yeers libertye & licence to trade in his dominions of America, wth ye same men & ye same shipp, yt ye world might take notice of his goodnesse towards vs; & we shall allwayes be readye to pray to ye Almighty God, for ye long prosperitye & happinesse of his Catholick maiestye.\(^49\)

This was an astute and careful consideration of events by Colt. With the Treaty of Madrid now in place, English traders could openly trade with Spanish ports in the Americas and Colt hoped to use the alleged “insult” to secure such access.\(^50\) As Richard Dunn notes, Colt was “a free-spirited gambler” and the Americas offered a wealth of opportunities for those traders who dared.\(^51\) The plantation in St. Christopher provided an ideal base for operations in the Spanish Main. Colt noted in his journal “yt we might proceed to greater exploits” there, especially in “trade amongst ye Indians vpon ye Mayne.”\(^52\) But, despite the treaty, the right of free trade in Spanish America was not guaranteed. Colt determined, in his journal, to use his personal service to Spain and his identity as a Catholic to secure the relevant protections, even though he sailed as an Englishman.

Though Colt failed to act upon the musings in his journal, they, nonetheless, reveal a similar outlook to that expressed in the actions of Simon Tuchin. Both men prioritized their own economic interest and adapted their political and religious allegiance to suit. They understood their “loyalty” as flexible and changeable. It reflected not simply a religious or political identity,


\(^{50}\) “Articles of Peace with Spain, 1630,” Article VII.


\(^{52}\) Colt, “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 91.
but concerned the manipulation of economic status, political power, and foreign connections for personal, commercial, and even national agendas. The outcome of such flexibility for Tuchin was to further jeopardize a risky trade venture. As a middling merchant, Tuchin lacked the means to adequately convince the Virginian authorities of his loyalty to England and compensate for his documented ties to the Spanish. Had his brother Edward survived the journey, leaving Simon in the position of second-in-command, it is possible the Virginia Council would have accepted Simon Tuchin’s Oath of Allegiance and disregarded his Catholicism. There is, after all, strong evidence that not all Catholics in early Virginia faced arrest and exile. Instead, Simon’s position as captain of an unknown vessel necessitated further investigation and his Catholicism became a problem. For Colt, the expression of multiple loyalties remained speculative. But Colt’s contemplations suggest the potential opportunities available to those who chose to pursue, and maintained the means to protect, multiple loyalties, and multiple agendas, in the early English Atlantic world.

**Asserting Loyalty: Catholic Proprietors and the Problems of Allegiance**

Tuchin and Colt pursued multiple loyalties that spanned both Iberian and English spheres of influence. The Calvert family, in contrast, sought to define the parameters of loyalty within a wholly English context. In pursuing and defending their colonial enterprises, the Calverts constructed an identity as loyal Englishmen despite their open profession of Catholicism and the numerous accusations of disloyalty they faced as a consequence. Sir George Calvert, the founder of Avalon in Newfoundland, met with limited success when he attempted to avoid the Oath of

Allegiance and remain faithful both to his religious beliefs and to the English monarchy. In contrast, his son, Cecil Calvert, fully grasped the importance of manipulating the definition of loyalty to construct a political allegiance that transcended confessional identity. In defending the Maryland colony, Cecil used accusations of treachery against his Protestant opponents and availed himself of every opportunity to declare his allegiance to England and the English monarch. But, even so, both George’s and Cecil’s wealth, status, and royal connections and, in particular, Cecil’s extensive proprietary powers in Maryland, made the Calvert family constant targets for accusations of disloyalty that nearly destroyed their colonial aspirations.

The Calvert family’s forays into North American colonization began in the Newfoundland fisheries. Sir George Calvert, then Secretary of State, acquired land in Newfoundland in 1620 and used his connections at court to receive a royal charter to begin settlement of the Avalon colony in 1623. Between 1623 and 1628, Calvert financed a series of settlement and trade ventures to Avalon and became increasingly involved in the colony’s business after his resignation from the Privy Council in 1625. In 1627, Calvert summered in Avalon and resolved to move his entire family to Newfoundland the following year. George Calvert, his second wife Joan, and several of his children, sailed for Avalon in May 1628, accompanied by 40 Catholic settlers and at least one Catholic priest. Just one year later, Calvert abandoned Newfoundland, citing competition with fishermen, the French, and the harsh


55 See the account of Calvert’s year in Newfoundland in Examination of Erasmus Stourton, Oct 9, 1628, CO 1/4 Privy Council 1626-1628, TNA, No. 59, fol. 144.
Newfoundland climate as the causes of Avalon’s failure. Calvert sent word to England of his intention to desert “this wofull country” and relocate south to Virginia before another “intolerable wynter” could utterly destroy his colony.56

Calvert, along with his wife and several Newfoundland settlers, arrived in Virginia in October 1629, with the intention of establishing tobacco plantations in the south of the colony. The Virginia Council, suspicious of Calvert’s unannounced arrival, “interrogated him [as to] what his purpose or intention” was in the colony.57 Satisfied that Calvert sought only to establish a plantation in the region, the council welcomed him, “being of that eminence and degree whose preserue and affection might giue greate advancemte to this Plantation.”58 But, according to “the vsuall course held in this place,” the Virginia Council expected Calvert to swear the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy, “a thing wee could not haue doubted in him whose former imploymts vnder his late Maty might haue indeared to vs a pswation, hee would not haue made denyall of that.”59 To the contrary, Calvert and his followers, “making profession of the Romish Religion, vtterly refused” to take the oaths.60 Calvert instead offered a revised version of the Oath of Allegiance to prove his loyalty as an Englishman. There is no record of Calvert’s revised oath, but he had been allowed to forego the Oath of Supremacy and use a revised version of the

56 Letter, Calvert to [Sir Francis Cottington], Aug 18, 1629, in Cell, Newfoundland Discovered, 292. See also Letter, Calvert to Charles I, Aug 19, 1629, in Ibid., 295-6.


60 Letter, Gov. John Pott, Samuel Mathews, Roger Smyth, and William Claybourne to the Privy Council, Nov 30, 1629, CO 1/5, No. 40, fol. 101. See also Letter, Rev. Joseph Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville, Jan 23, 1629/30, in Birch, Court and Times of Charles I, 53, which states, “they propounded to him [Calvert] the oath of allegiance to him which he presently took, but refused to swear that of supremacy” (p. 53).
Oath of Allegiance, removing statements referencing the papal powers, in his duties to both James I and Charles I. In 1625, for example, Charles recalled George Calvert to the Privy Council, “resolving to dispence with his takeing the oath of supremacy” to do so.\(^{61}\) When Calvert requested permission to relocate to his colonial settlement in Newfoundland, Charles licensed Calvert’s removal to Avalon without oaths, “being well assured by a long experience of the loyall fidelity of the said Lord Baltimore.”\(^{62}\) The Virginia Council in 1629, however, refused to accept any avoidance of or revision to the wording of the oaths, noting: “wee could not imagine that soe much latitude was left for vs to decline from the prescribed forme, soe strictly exacted.”\(^{63}\)

As John Krugler argues, Calvert’s religious principles were as much about private conscience as they were about upholding monarchical authority.\(^{64}\) Calvert had refused to swear an oath to the King himself; he was not about to acquiesce to former members of the Virginia Company. The Virginia Council had no intention of subverting its shaky hold on colonial authority by allowing a known Catholic to circumscribe Virginian law. Similarly framing themselves as the defenders of monarchical supremacy, the Virginia councilors refused to “admit any man into their society which would not acknowledge all preeminences belonging to his majesty.”\(^{65}\) The two sides had reached an impasse, and Calvert was ordered to leave the colony at the first opportunity.

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\(^{64}\) Krugler, *English and Catholic*, 105.

Prior to his visit to Virginia, George Calvert launched his colonial enterprises using his ties to the king and his connections in the Privy Council. These political connections had largely protected Calvert from the political restrictions placed on his fellow Catholics in the British Isles. The hard line taken by the Virginia Council on the issue of the oaths contradicted the more accommodating response to Catholic allegiance George Calvert had grown accustomed to in the British Isles. Such accommodation had stemmed from Calvert’s personal relationship with the king, but that could not be relied upon in the colonial world where royal authority faced strong opposition from private interest and local necessity. If Calvert and his family hoped to establish plantations in Virginia, they would have to devise a way to assert their superior loyalty to the English kingdom in spite of their continued Catholicism.

On his return to England, George Calvert immediately proceeded to undermine the Virginia Council by seeking a royal grant to settle in Virginia that would override the oath issue. In 1631, the Virginia Council narrowly defeated a proposed patent for land to the south of the James River on the grounds that plans were well underway for a Virginian-led venture to establish sugar plantations in the southern region. Undeterred, Calvert continued to press for land in the region, refocusing his attention to the northern regions of Virginia. George Calvert died before he could see the fruition of his plans, but in June, 1632, Cecil Calvert, his son, received a royal patent for a new colony in Maryland. The patent stretched west and north from the Potomac to the Delaware. In the east, it included all of the Eastern Shore, with the exception

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67 On the details of the 1631 patent, see “The humble declaration of the Lord Baltemores proceedings in the procuring & passing of his pattent of the Province of Maryland adioyning to Virginea,” in *The Calvert Papers*, 3 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: John Murphy Printers, 1889-1899), 1:222.
of Accomack and Northampton counties in the south. Like the Avalon charter, the Maryland patent contained no provision for the compulsory administration of the Oath of Allegiance or Oath of Supremacy to settlers in the colony, a last accommodation made by the king in recognition of his loyal Catholic servant, George Calvert. It was Cecil Calvert, though, not his father, who would defend the Maryland charter from Virginian attack and Cecil opted to make securing English expansion a key feature of the Maryland enterprise.

The Maryland patent encompassed a large territory previously considered part of Virginia, including a Virginian trading post on Kent Island in Chesapeake Bay. The Virginians—led by Samuel Mathews and William Claiborne—lost no time responding to this affront to their authority. The same day the king signed and sealed the Maryland patent, a list of Virginian grievances appeared before the Privy Council. Though they made no explicit mention of the Calvert family’s Catholicism, the Virginia Council’s objections to the Maryland grant clearly stemmed from the issues of allegiance raised by George Calvert’s refusal of the oath and the family’s continued profession of the Catholic faith. The Virginia Council believed the Maryland Charter granted powers far in excess of their own authority in Virginia. In particular, the grant of “free, full, and absolute” powers to Cecil Calvert in the realm of settlement, government, and defense seemed, to the members of the Virginia Council, to undermine their own leadership and weaken Virginia. The Virginians objected that such powers “will be in short tyme an Occasion

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69 Both men had political and economic reasons for vehemently objecting to the Maryland Charter. William Claiborne had established the settlement on Kent Island and stood to lose out if the trading post fell under Maryland jurisdiction. As long-standing members of the Virginia Company, Mathews and Claiborne resented the royal takeover of the colony that had curbed their political power. Both had also been members of the Virginia Council that administered the oath to George Calvert in 1629.

70 “Relation of Maryland,” 102.
to dispeople the King’s Colonie and to people his [Calvert’s] with persons of all sorts whatsoever different from the other Colonies in Religion Assertion or otherwise.” Further, “Royall and Imperiall Power which is granted in all things of Sovraignty saveing only Allegiance to the Kings Majestie . . . in Places soe remote and where the Kings Subjects are soe neere Neighbours may prove very dangerous by exalting the One and decreasing the other.” 71 The Crown may not have considered Calvert’s Catholicism a risk, but Virginia’s precarious position at the edge of the English zone of expansion made a Catholic colony especially threatening. In the eyes of Protestant Virginians, who already feared foreign invasion by the Spanish or French, a colony to the north peopled with Catholics of untested loyalty—be they English or not—threatened the safety of English settlements abroad, and compromised the power of the monarchy at home.

Cecil Calvert countered the Virginian grievances head-on with his own defense of the Maryland Charter in 1633. Making no attempt to deny his religion, Calvert focused on the connection between Catholicism and foreign invasion. The Virginians objected to the Maryland Charter, Calvert wrote, on the grounds that “It may prove dangerous to Virginea and New England, . . . Maryland being scituated betweene them both, because it may be suspected that the said Roman Catholiques will bring in the Spaniards or some other forraigne enemy to supresses the Protestants.” Calvert vehemently denied the assumption that English Catholic inhabitants threatened the safety of the English colonies. Protestants in England and America greatly outnumbered Catholics, he argued, and any Catholic-led uprising in Maryland would be unlikely to succeed. If it did, “England would by this meanes be freed of so many suspected persons.” But Calvert offered this only as an extreme possibility. He sought, rather, to assure the Privy Council

that “it were notwithstanding more for the honour of the English Nation, that English men, although Roman Catholiques, . . . should posesse that country then forraigners.”

Calvert thus emphasized the English character of Maryland over its Catholic identity and suggested that even Catholic Englishmen were, first and foremost, Englishmen.

In July 1633, the Privy Council found in favor of upholding the Maryland Charter. Their decision, purposely vague, effectively left the right of protest open to Virginia, but allowed Calvert to proceed with his planned settlement that year. But still, opponents in the Virginia Council sought to prevent the founding of Maryland. A planned departure of the first settlers in September 1633, was obstructed by accusations that passengers on board the Maryland-bound Ark and the Dove had failed to perform the Oath of Allegiance. The resulting delay, while the Privy Council investigated such accusations, prevented the ships from sailing until November 22, 1633, and caused Cecil Calvert to remain in England to continue to defend the settlement from further attack.

The postponement of departure provided Calvert with an opportunity to assert Maryland’s loyalty. On November 13, 1633, Cecil Calvert provided his governor, Leonard Calvert, and his commissioners, instructions concerning the establishment of Maryland in his absence. Cecil sought to establish fair relations with Virginia and encouraged his government to seek the help of John Harvey, governor of Virginia, to counter the animosity of members of the Virginia Council. The commissioners were also ordered to begin negotiations with William Claiborne to settle Kent Island under Maryland authority, in the hope that an amicable settlement

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73 Order of the Lords Commissioners for Foreign Plantations, July 3, 1633, in Archives of Maryland, 3:22. On delays to the founding of Maryland see Krugler, English and Catholic, 120-1.
could be reached. To prevent open hostility to Catholicism, Calvert commanded his commissioners to “suffer no scandall nor offence to be giuen to any of the Protestants” and ordered “all Acts of Romane catholique Religion to be done as priuately as may be.”

Calvert also ordered that the Oath of Allegiance be administered to all the settlers in a public ceremony at the first available opportunity, “to testify to the world that none should enjoy the benefitt of his Maiesties gratious grant vnto his Lopp of that place, but such as should giue a publique assurance of their fidelity & allegeance to his Maiestie.” This instruction was designed to silence opponents who sought to use allegiance as a means to attack the Maryland Charter. But like his father before him, Cecil’s version of the oath excluded any renunciation of the papal deposing power.

Unlike his father, however, Cecil Calvert chose to rein in his religious principles in favor of asserting his political allegiance. A public display of administering the oath characterized Maryland, and the Calvert family, as English first, Catholic second.

Calvert pursued this objective further in a “humble declaration” to the Privy Council in 1634. Seeking to silence the opponents of the Maryland Charter once and for all, Calvert suggested that it was in fact the loyalty of Protestant Virginians that should concern the Crown. Calvert noted that his opponents displayed a dangerous level of factionalism, which threatened the stability of royal government in Virginia. William Claiborne in particular displayed a desire “to remove himself farr from all government, being ever observed to be a man of a factious

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74 Instructions to Mr. Leonard Calvert Mr. Jerom Hawley & Mr. Thomas Cornwaleys, Nov 13, 1633, in The Calvert Papers (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1973), microfilm [hereafter Calvert Papers Microfilm], Roll 25, article 1.

75 Instructions to Mr. Leonard Calvert Mr. Jerom Hawley & Mr. Thomas Cornwaleys, Nov 13, 1633, Calvert Papers Microfilm, Roll 25, article 6. This order would be enshrined in Maryland law with the 1639 Act for Swearing Allegiance that required all settlers to swear allegiance to the king, but did not demand a renunciation of the power of the pope to depose Protestant monarchs. See Krugler, English and Catholic, 158-9, 185-6.
Claiborne had defied the King’s authority by settling Kent Island without permission, an act that allowed Calvert to characterize Claiborne as a disloyal subject. Claiborne’s factionalism provided Calvert with an effective counter-argument to the Virginians assertion that Calvert himself, as a Catholic, was by definition disloyal.

Virginian opponents of the Maryland Charter did little to disabuse the Privy Council of Calvert’s characterization of them. In 1635, a council faction led by Samuel Mathews arrested Governor John Harvey for treason. The charges leveled at Harvey included failing to administer the Oath of Allegiance and favoring the popish religion. Meanwhile, in Maryland, Kent Islanders and Calvert supporters engaged in pitched battles in the Chesapeake. The Kent Islanders claimed that Maryland had illegally suppressed their trading rights. Maryland responded by accusing several islanders of “crimes of sedition, pyracie and murther.” Ignoring calls to submit to Maryland’s authority, in 1637 the Kent Island settlement expanded to a new trading post on Palmer Island close to the Susquehannock. Fearing this new alliance might have

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77 Letter, Governor Harvey to Secretary Windebank, July 14, 1635, in Archives of Maryland, 3:38-9. Harvey had expressed concern that Mathews and Claiborne held too much power in the council in December 1634, and feared that the faction sought to overthrow Maryland. See Letter, Governor Harvey to Secretary Windebank, Dec 16, 1634, in Archives of Maryland, 3:29-30. On Harvey’s difficult tenure as royal governor see Roper, English Empire in America, 108-15.

78 Notes by Nicholas of a meeting of the Privy Council, Dec 11, 1635, CSPC, 1:216.

79 Mr. Thomas Smith’s relation of his voyage, 1635, in Calvert Papers Microfilm, Roll 6; Relation of Henry Ewbanck, April 5, 1635, in Calvert Papers Microfilm, Roll 6; Letter, Captain Cleyborne to Secretary Cole, May 23, 1635, in Archives of Maryland, 3:30-1; Letter, Captain Mathews to Sir John Wolstenholme, May 25, 1635, in Archives of Maryland, 3:33-7.

led to a Susquehannock attack on Maryland, Leonard Calvert moved to seize Kent Island and suppress the illegal settlement permanently.81

The invasion of Kent Island in February 1638, was followed shortly thereafter by a Privy Council decision ruling that the island fell within the bounds of the Maryland patent.82 For the time being, the animosity between Claiborne and Cecil Calvert was decided. But the rivalries that had developed between Virginian settlers of Kent Island and the Maryland Charter supporters continued to fester below the surface. The outbreak of Civil War in England, in 1642, provided a new outlet for the same antagonisms over Maryland’s Catholic identity and its control of Protestant inhabitants. With the overthrow of the monarchy in England and the basis for allegiance removed, both sides in the Chesapeake now sought to reground arguments for and against the Calvert proprietorship of Maryland in the rhetoric of arbitrary government, popish tyranny, and religious freedom that characterized the revolutionary cause.83 Hostilities in the Chesapeake increased as the implications of the war in England crossed the Atlantic. The local dispute over colonial boundaries and authority became entangled in the larger complications of revolutionary rule in far-flung colonies.

In 1645, in an act known as Ingle’s Rebellion, the Virginian faction—led by Richard Ingle and William Claiborne—invaded Maryland, seized control, and proclaimed an end to arbitrary “popish” government. Ingle and Claiborne used the rhetoric of revolution to justify their

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82 Menard, “Maryland’s “Time of Troubles”,” 131.

own private purposes and showed little interest in reforming Maryland’s government. For two years, the colony existed in near anarchy. In 1647, an invasion led by supporters of the Calvert proprietorship and aided by royalists in Virginia restored order to the colony. For Cecil Calvert, Ingle’s Rebellion made obvious the need to insure parliamentary support for proprietary rule. Calvert appointed a Protestant, William Stone, as governor of Maryland and, in 1649, Stone introduced the Act Concerning Religion to protect Puritan, as well as Catholic, worship in Maryland. The Act countenanced the open practice of any expression of the Christian faith in the colony. In passing the Act, Calvert and Stone hoped to attract Puritan migrants to the colony, as well as to reassure the Puritan parliament in England that the Calvert family supported the revolutionary cause.

Though Calvert’s actions convinced the parliament in England of his reliability, his Catholicism continued to provide opponents in the Chesapeake a potent tool to attack Maryland’s right to exist. After the arrival of parliamentary commissioners—including William Claiborne—in the Chesapeake in 1650, Stone continued to govern Maryland on the condition that proprietary rule be administered in the name of the English government, not the Catholic proprietor. But relations between the commissioners and supporters of the Calvert family remained strained. In 1655, open warfare occurred once again in the Chesapeake between supporters of Calvert and his Virginian opponents. At the Battle of the Severn, forces led by the parliamentary commissioners from Virginia overthrew Stone’s government and demanded an end to proprietary rule in Maryland. By this time, however, the commissioners were increasingly at odds with the English parliament, who saw the Calvert family as loyal Englishmen, despite their Catholicism, and preferable to the private interests of Claiborne and his supporters. In 1657, the Virginian
commissioners agreed to restore the Maryland government to the Calvert family. William Claiborne continued, until his death in 1677, to contest the validity of Maryland’s seizure of his Kent Island territory, but to no avail.\textsuperscript{84}

As Carla Pestana notes, the hostilities in Maryland in the 1640s and 1650s were “a battle over religion.”\textsuperscript{85} To Virginia’s Protestants, the excessive political power placed in the hands of Maryland’s Catholic ruling elite posed a threat to English colonial expansion and provided opportunity for private interests to continually undermine the authority of the Maryland government. The same issues of political power had shaped the attacks on both George and Cecil Calvert in the 1620s and 1630s. As with the cases of Tuchin and Colt, it was not simply a question of the Calvert family being inherently disloyal as a result of their Catholicism. By definition being Catholics made them suspect, but the sustained attacks on the Maryland patent throughout the colony’s early years were concerned chiefly with the Calvert family’s preponderance of political power in the Chesapeake. Being elite and politically powerful opened the Calvert family to accusations of disloyalty that poorer Catholics avoided. These same factors of economic status and access to political power shaped the response of Protestant authorities to Catholic populations throughout the English Atlantic world in the late seventeenth century and complicated the simple dichotomy between “good subjects” and “unfaithful traitors.”

Redefining Loyalty: Popish Plots and Catholic Political Power in Barbados

With the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the basis of political loyalty in the English Atlantic world shifted once again. France had replaced Spain as the dominant Catholic

\textsuperscript{84} Jonas, “Claiborne-Calvert Controversy,” 249-50.

\textsuperscript{85} Pestana, \textit{Age of Revolution}, 153.
threat to English ambitions. The Protestant Dutch also emerged as dangerous rivals to English expansion in the Atlantic. In internal English politics, the period from 1660 to 1685 saw the re-establishment of the monarchy as the central pillar of the English state and the defender of English Protestantism. The ascension of James II, a Catholic, to the throne of England in 1685 and the subsequent monarchical revolution of 1688-89, however, once again raised the specter of Catholic allegiance to the Protestant state. Too often the centrality of anti-Catholicism to the supporters of the Glorious Revolution—particularly in the colonies where rebels in New England, New York, and Maryland eagerly overthrew the colonial regime on the grounds that it was infiltrated and controlled by tyrannical Catholics—overshadows the ways in which historians understand the actions of Catholics and Protestants during this period of heightened tensions. An examination of the Catholic population in Barbados in the 1680s suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the relative merits and dangers of accommodating a Catholic population took place in the English Atlantic world. Barbados authorities imagined Catholics as simultaneously both loyal and treacherous, but only considered Catholic inhabitants a danger to the safety of the colony when Catholicism coincided with economic status, political power, and heightened tensions with the French.

On Christmas Day in 1688, 55 men gathered at the house of Willoughby Chamberlaine in St. Philip parish in Barbados to hear Mass.\footnote{The following account is based on letters and depositions gathered as evidence by Lieut.-Governor Edwyn Stede in 1689 and sent to the Committee for Trade and Plantations in London. A collection of papers relating to Sir Thomas Montgomerie and Willoughby Chamberlayne, enclosed with the foregoing dispatch, May 30, 1689, CO 28/37 Barbados Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1700, TNA, No. 7i-lxv. The figure of 55 men is drawn from a comparison of two separate lists of people seen attending Mass at Chamberlaine’s house. A list of the Psons sawne att Mass, CO 28/37, No. 7xxx, fol. 55-55v; Deposition of Michaell Poore, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxvi, fol. 61-62v. All other figures are drawn from witness testimony.} This was not the first time such a gathering had occurred on the island that year. On November 1, Chamberlaine had ordered his servants to
prepare food and drink for an expected 200 attendees at Mass the following evening. Sir Thomas Montgomery recorded that services conducted at his house in St. Michael parish between June, 1688, and January 1689, drew anywhere from four to 50 attendees. On each of these occasions, a priest from the Jesuit mission on the French island of Martinique officiated at the performance of Mass according to the rites of the Catholic Church. Witnesses testified to the erection of an altar, the reading of “acertain devotion” believed by witnesses to be Mass, the raising and serving of a plate (most likely indicating the transformation of the Eucharist), the presence of Latin papers believed to be “Renounceing the Protestant Religion,” and swearing to such papers on the Bible. Afterwards, attendees reported receiving food and drink and swearing good health to James II, his son, the Prince of Wales, and the government of the island of Barbados.

In April 1687, James II issued a declaration of indulgence protecting the rights of all—dissenters and Catholics—to publicly practice their faith and not conform to the state-sanctioned Anglican Church. That proclamation officially extended only to the British Isles, but was clearly honored in the English Atlantic colonies by 1688. The Catholics attending Mass in St. Philip parish did so with the permission and full knowledge of the local Protestant authorities. The presence of a French Jesuit caused some concern within the Barbados population, not least because of his lack of royal recommendations and his overtly French character—sent by the governor of Martinique, the Jesuit claimed to speak only French and Latin. But Lieutenant-Governor Edwyn Stede reassured doubters that the Jesuit posed no threat to the island and reported that he had “not thought fit to order him away or to forbid him from giving spiritual

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87 Deposition of James Pennoyer, Mar 18, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7lii, fol. 78; Deposition of Thomas Hogan, Mar 11, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxvii, fol. 63.

88 Deposition of Dominick Rice, Mar 10, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxiv; Deposition of John Rowe, Mar 18, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7li.
help to those that desire it.” Stede did, however, caution of the need for Catholics “to act with sobriety and discretion” to prevent accusations of treason by the wider population. But Stede stopped well short of prohibiting public Mass. With the support of the Barbados authorities, and under the umbrella of James II’s “Gratious liberty & indulgence,” gathering to hear Mass in 1688 did not constitute a betrayal of the Protestant state.

But these were dangerous and uncertain times. The invasion of England by the Prince of Orange in December, 1688, and James II’s subsequent flight from London, threw the status of religious minorities in the English colonies into chaos. In late February, 1689, the Council of Barbados issued the first of a series of arrest warrants targeting local Catholics. The warrants accused the suspects of plotting to betray the island to the French and overthrow the Protestant religion. By definition, meeting with a Jesuit from the French island of Martinique fell within the bounds of such a charge of treachery. A number of the Catholics attending Mass gave depositions to the council, but subsequently the council ordered arrest warrants for only a handful of the participants.

In ordering those arrests, Edwyn Stede responded to an Atlantic world in turmoil. Throughout English America supporters of the Prince of Orange had seized control of colonial governments and begun preparing for war with France. In New York, Jacob Leisler took control of the government of the colony from Governor Francis Nicholson, arrested leading Catholic officials (including Gervais Baxter, captain of the fort, and Mathew Plowman, the collector of customs), and accused his opponents of favoring popery. In Maryland, John Coode vehemently defended his “taking up arms against our late Papist governors in defence of the Protestant

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89 Letter, Lieutenant-Governor Stede to the Earl of Sunderland, Jul 12, 1688, CSPC, 13: 569.

90 Petition of Thomas Montgomery, undated, CO 28/37, No. 7lix, fol. 87.
religion, which we thought would be undermined by the encouragement the Papists received from the French."  

91 Jacob Leisler, John Coode, and Edwyn Stede remained in constant communication during 1689, exchanging information, assistance, and paranoia. The three men imagined themselves to constitute a united Protestant force established to defend against an international Catholic conspiracy. In November 1689, Coode informed Leisler, “I believe our great men of this province, some of yours and New England were a cabal and held a great Correspondency against the protestant [sic] interest, as it was and is the endeavours of all the popish world.”  

92 Catholics throughout the English Atlantic world found themselves accused, rightly or wrongly, of collaborating with England’s Catholic enemies to destroy the Protestant nation.  

Events closer to home confirmed the worst fears of Protestant authorities in Barbados. In St. Christopher, Stede learned, “bloody Papists and Irish assembled suddenly, and declaring themselves for King James, kill, burn, and destroy all that belongs to the Protestant interest.” The French claimed no involvement in the uprising, but the involvement of “several French mulattos, mustees, and negroes” confirmed Protestant fears that slaves and French alike had betrayed the Protestant inhabitants.  

93 In Barbados, the authorities had already moved to curtail any possible collaboration between Catholics and slaves. In March 1689, the council ordered the arrest and deportation of three “Portuguese Negroes,” who it believed to be part of a larger Catholic plot.  


91 Letter, John Coode to the Earl of Shrewsbury, Sept 22, 1689, CSPC, 14:10. See also Declaration of the reasons and motives for appearing in arms on behalf of the Protestant subjects of Maryland, July 25, 1689, CSPC, 13:103-5.

These same men had been declared “free and at liberty” by the Barbados Council in 1688 after they proved themselves to be “free borne, and Christians.”95 The council now ordered the men “sold or transported and sent off this Island to be sold accordingly.” This change of heart centered on the discovery that the men “doe openly profess themselves Roman Catholick having in the time of the Jesuits being here often seen at Mass.” Their Catholicism, the council believed, “may tend and prove (if they should be permitted to stay here) of ill consiquence to this place by theire seduceing and drawing of the Negroes and other slaves of this Island to that Religion as well as other wicked attempts and designes might follow thereon.”96 Foiled slave conspiracies in 1675 and 1686 generated an atmosphere of suspicion amongst white planters on the island, but it was the Catholic identity of free blacks that drove the council to respond on this occasion.97 No other actions appear to have been taken against the black community, free or enslaved, in 1689.

The bulk of arrests in 1689 focused on the white Catholic community. A comparison between those accused of conspiracy and those who escaped scrutiny reveals the multiple identities applied to and expressed by Catholics even in the midst of a religiously-motivated rebellion. Thomas Montgomery and Willoughby Chamberlaine, suspected ringleaders, topped the list of white conspirators. The son of a wealthy Barbadian planter, Chamberlaine had recently returned to the island after receiving an education at Oxford University. Recommending him for a position on the assembly in 1687, Edwyn Stede described Chamberlaine as “a yong gent of about four or five and twenty yeares of age, Very Loyall, and a good Scholler of Sober and...
honest Principles, a man free from Incumbrances and of a good estate.” But within a year, Stede had ample reason to regret his praise of the “yong gent.” In October 1688, Stede removed Chamberlaine from his position in the assembly citing his “Riottous and long ill behaviour,” which included “obstructing justice by threatening & beating the Kings Officers,” as well as “other misdoeings, breach of the Peace and misbehaviours.” Further, Stede reported to London, “Soe vngovernable was hee [Chamberlaine] growne that all the Island was troubled with his Debauchery and ill Carriage.” Sir Thomas Montgomery, meanwhile, was a stranger to the island. He had arrived in 1687 to take up a royal appointment as attorney general for Barbados. Montgomery immediately became embroiled in a number of high profile disputes that pitted him against the local elite. In July 1688, Stede wrote to London concerned that Montgomery “is very uneasy to himself and everybody else . . . much to his own detriment.” In particular, Stede reported, Montgomery “has borne himself towards me with unusual unkindness.”

Beyond their reputations as avid troublemakers, Chamberlaine and Montgomery also shared an identity as “zealous converts” to Catholicism. According to depositions made in


99 Letter, Edwyn Stede to the Committee for Trade and Plantations, Oct 5, 1688, CO 1/65 Privy Council June 6-Dec 1688, TNA, No. 65, fol. 253av.

100 Edwyn Stede described Montgomery as “a stranger to persons and things here,” shortly after his arrival in May 1687. Letter, Edwyn Stede to the Lord President, May 27, 1687, CO29/3, p. 422. The king appointed Montgomery to the post of attorney general in August, 1686, see Copy of Patent to Thomas Montgomery as Attorney General of Barbados, Aug, 1686, CO 28/3 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade, TNA, No. 85, fol. 222.


102 The phrase “zealous converts” is drawn from Stede’s own description of Willoughby Chamberlaine in the packet of evidence sent to London in May 1689. See, for example, Stede’s notations, Letter, Father La Forest to Willoughby Chamberlayne, Feb 11, 1689 [N.S.], CO 28/37, No. 7iv, fol. 23v.
1689, Chamberlaine claimed to have been converted to the popish faith as a scholar at Oxford. Thomas Montgomery argued “he was borne and bred a Protestant,” but witnesses against him testified to seeing him assist at Mass. Like many young men in the 1680s, both Montgomery and Chamberlaine saw conversion to Catholicism as a path to political advancement. Chamberlaine, deponents testified, frequently declared “that the Reason of his beinge of the Papish Religion was onely for his Interest sake.” As recently converted and politically powerful Catholics then, Montgomery and Chamberlaine fitted the classic Protestant stereotype of a papist conspirator. The council considered the two men “very insolent and troublesome in their new faith, trying to persuade others to their superstitions and idolatrous opinions.”

Evidence that Chamberlaine and Montgomery received regular communications from the French Jesuits in Martinique and the Catholic advisors of King James further persuaded the council that the two men posed a real and imminent threat to the island.

103 Deposition of Peter Evans, Mar 10, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxiii, fol. 58, who testified that Chamberlaine claimed to have been papist “since he was twelve yeares of age.” Deposition of Thomas Hogan, Mar 11, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxvii, fol. 63, recorded that Chamberlaine “went to Schoole in England where was a Papist Vsher that did satisfy and convert him.” See also Deposition of Benjamin Cryer, Mar 18, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7liii, fol. 80-81v.

104 Petition of Sir Thomas Montgomery, Mar 7, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xx, fols. 42v-43. Numerous deponents witnessed Montgomery’s attendance at Mass and insisted he was Catholic. See, for example, Deposition of James Pennoyer, Mar 18, 1688/89, No. 7lii, fol. 78, who saw Montgomery pass the plate containing the Eucharist to a Jesuit during Mass. Dominick Rice testified to witnessing Montgomery officiate Mass, Deposition of Dominick Rice, Mar 10, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxxiv, fol. 59.

105 Deposition of Robert Webb, Mar 10, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7xxx, fol. 56. See also Deposition of Benjamin Cryer, Mar 18, 1688/89, CO 28/37, No. 7liii, fol. 80-80v, who testified that Chamberlaine admitted, after his arrest, to becoming Catholic in order “to countermine Sr. John Witham who endeavoured to ruine him.”


107 Stede intercepted letters from a range of people deemed dangerous to the Protestant cause, including Father Peters, James II’s Jesuit advisor, the Earl of Tyrconnell, his commander in Ireland, the Superior of the Jesuit mission in Martinique, as well as various other Catholic and Jacobite supporters located across the Atlantic world. Examples of intercepted letters can be found in CO 28/37, No. 7i-iv, vii, lviii, lx; see also Letter, Father de la Forest to Sir Thomas Montgomery, undated, CO 28/1 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade 1689-1692, TNA, No. 3, fols. 4-5v. In May 1689, the council reported the interception of more than six letters to “four Roman Catholicks” on the island, including Montgomery, Chamberlaine, John Strech, and Nicholas Welsh, May 3, 1689, Barbados Minutes, Reel 2 1682-1696, Vol. 4, fol. 519.
Their connections to the French in Martinique and the Jacobite court in England led to the issuance of arrest warrants for other troublesome Irish residents and visitors to Barbados. Stede ordered the arrest of Pierce Lynch, an Irish trader involved in Anglo-French trade in the Caribbean, “for his holding correspondency contrary to Law” and “high misdeamours [sic].” Lynch evaded capture and escaped to Martinique. Several other Irishmen under warrant for arrest fled with Lynch, among them John Conner, who was accused of “treasonable words spoken;” Patrick Henly who “lay undr contempt of the Governmtt;” and Nicholas Welsh, whose exact crime remains unclear but probably related to intercepted letters sent to him from the King’s Jesuit councilor, Father Peters. Henly and Welsh proved themselves exceptionally skilled at evading capture and particularly troublesome to Protestant rebels. Having arrived in New York November 3, 1689, the two Irishmen aroused the suspicion of Jacob Leisler, who, upon discovering suspicious letters in their luggage, ordered the two transported back to Barbados. Unfortunately, Stede informed Leisler, the ship’s captain had “suffered ye said traitors to escape” to West Jersey. From there, Henly and Welsh made their way to Maryland where, John Coode having them “very lately in custody under suspitione being strangers Irishmen papists,” they


111 Letter, Edwyn Stede to Jacob Leisler, Jan 27, 1689/90, Massachusetts Archives Collection (Microfilm), Vol. 35 Inter-Charter, 1689-1690, Massachusetts State Archives, fol. 163. On Henly and Welsh’s destination being West Jersey see Minutes of Council of Virginia, August 16, 1690, CO 5/1405 Virginia Minutes of the Council, 1680-1695, TNA, fol. 179.
again escaped to Pennsylvania.\footnote{Letter, Jacob Leisler to Edwyn Stede, May 17, 1690, in Christoph, \textit{Leisler Papers}, 279.} By August 1690, Henly resided in North Carolina and Nicholas Welsh in Virginia.\footnote{Minutes of Council of Virginia, August 16, 1690, CO 5/1405, fol. 179-179v.}

At least some of the Catholics caught up in the political maelstrom of 1688-89 were willing to side with the French, if it meant the ascendancy of Catholicism in the English colonies. The willingness of some Catholics to join the battle against English Protestantism did not, however, characterize the response of all Catholics to the Protestant revolution. Historians have overlooked the many Catholics who avoided accusations of disloyalty and continued to be residents of the English colonies before, during, and after the revolution. Largely due to Stede’s painstaking diligence in documenting the Catholic plot in 1688-89, the Barbados case offers historians the rare opportunity to examine the Catholic community on the island in greater detail. The men arrested and prosecuted in 1689 as an imminent threat to the safety and peace of the island formed part of this community, but they did not wholly dominate its character. The bulk of the Catholic population in Barbados, as far as we know, escaped arrest and prosecution. This segment of the Catholic community was dismissed by Stede and the council as “being none of any account,” “of Little Estate or Interest,” and “of low estate, being chiefly poor Irish servants.”\footnote{Stede’s annotation, A list of the Psons sawne att Mass, CO 28/37, No. 7xxx, fol. 55v; Letter, Council of Barbados to the Prince of Orange, Mar 11, 1688/89, CSPC, 13:12.} Close examination of the Catholic community on the island suggests that the application of the terms “poor” and “Irish” represented a conscious framing of the community as non-threatening by Protestant leaders. It highlights how colonial authorities construed some Catholics as loyal inhabitants, yet simultaneously judged others to be an inherent danger to the Protestant state.
There were in fact two distinct communities of Catholics in Barbados in 1688-89. Those arrested in the foiled plot appear to have been recent arrivals, often zealous converts, and maintained strong external ties. The rest formed part of a community of Catholics centered in St. Philip parish that dated from the 1660s and who remained on the island long after the dust of 1689 settled. Both cohorts contained their fair share of Irishmen. The definition of the bulk of the Catholic community in Barbados in 1688-89 as non-threatening hinged on the issue of political power encapsulated in the term “poor.” Certainly some of the men attending Mass in St. Philip parish in 1688 shared a social status with Montgomery and Chamberlaine. Edward Skeete, Edward Burke, and Edward Turvill, for example, owned a large amount of land and slaves, or commanded social respect by virtue of their occupation as captains or doctors.115 But a substantial portion of the colony’s small landowners, including poor Catholics, clustered in the parish of St. Philip. Most of the men attending Mass in 1688 owned less than ten acres, if any. In the 1679 census, Walter Rice owned six acres of land and seven slaves. In neighboring Christchurch parish, James Burke owned eight and a half acres, while Daniel Cockran possessed seven acres and nine slaves.116 Importantly, the ownership of less than ten acres excluded most of the Catholic community from participation in assembly elections. The lack of freeholder status also meant most of these men were never subjected to the Test Act or the Oath of Allegiance.

115 For more information on these three men see Chap. 1. Skeete appears in the Barbados census of 1680 with 100 acres and 60 slaves, Act of Inhabitits in the parish of St Philips, Dec 16, 1679, CO 1/44 Privy Council 1680 Jan-May, TNA, No. 47x, fol. 184v. Burke acquired a substantial landholding through his guardianship of Tobias Frere, Deed, Tobias Frere, Jr. to Edward Burke, Jul 2, 1686, RB 3/14 Deeds, Department of Archives, Lazaretto, Barbados [hereafter Barbados Archives], fol. 523-5. RB 3/15 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 276, names Edward Turvill as a “Doctor of Physick.”

required of public office holders. Moreover, St. Philip parish in the southeast of Barbados, along with St. Lucy parish in the north, held the least desirable land on the island for sugar cultivation. Most sugar cultivation in the parish occurred on a small scale and offered little competition to the larger plantations. Measured against the large land-holding elite dominated by Protestants, these Catholics had little economic power and even less political power.\textsuperscript{117}

The historian Raymond Gillespie has observed that in seventeenth-century Ireland “it was possible for a series of religious accommodations, though not compromises, to be made at the local level to ensure that religion was not a disruptive force.”\textsuperscript{118} Just such an accommodation existed in late seventeenth-century Barbados between the Catholic community and the Protestant authorities. The agitation of Thomas Montgomery, the public practice of Catholicism, and the upheaval of the Glorious Revolution momentarily disturbed this accommodation, but ultimately the Barbadian authorities delineated between political threats and manageable populations. If those Catholics arrested in 1689 represented a threat due to their ties to external political enemies, those who escaped arrest appear to have constructed their community predominantly through internal networks that pre-dated the arrival of politicized Catholics, like Thomas Montgomery, in the late 1680s. The two communities layered over each other in the records of the conspiracy in 1688-89. The pre-existing community had proven themselves trouble-free, if not fully loyal, to the Protestant state. Crucially, they had shown themselves to be uninterested in, or unable to acquire, political power. Edwyn Stede reflected upon such a distinction and emphasized the issue of perceived power and leadership in May 1689:

\textsuperscript{117} Richard Dunn, \textit{Sugar and Slaves}, 92-103.

the Irish papist wishing the French would come to invade this Island which they doe the best they could to deliver into their hands; though that was is & euer will be out of their power Especially since their 2 contriuers & ring leaders in mischiefe are taken off & putt in Custody.\footnote{Stede’s annotation, Deposition of Mary Richardson, Apr 22, 1689, CO 28/37, No. 7lxi, fol. 91v.}

If the betrayal of the Protestant colony to the French “was is & euer will be out of their power,” what then was the inherent danger of a minority population of Catholics? It was only with the arrival of Catholics with status, power, and the necessary foreign connections that the Protestant authorities in Barbados questioned the loyalties of the Catholics in their midst. Even at the height of fears of French invasion in 1689, the Barbados government distinguished between individuals identified as powerful threats and the rest of the Catholic population.

By virtue of remaining external to the sphere of politics, the Catholic community in Barbados avoided the suspicion of the island’s majority Protestant population. This is not to say that Protestant authorities ever fully trusted the Catholic population in Barbados. In September 1689, after the confusion surrounding the change in royal government had subsided, Stede reported, “People here are taking the oaths cheerfully, Papists as well as others, but I fear the Irish Papists are still not to be trusted.”\footnote{Letter, Lieutenant-Governor Stede to the Earl of Shrewsbury, Sept. 2, 1689, CSPC, 13:138.} But who exactly were these “Irish papists,” and how did they differ from the other “papists”? Stede surely did not mean the Catholic residents of St. Philip parish who continued to live, trade, and expand on the margins of the colony’s plantation infrastructure.\footnote{The Catholic community in St. Philip parish is further discussed in Chap. 5.}

\footnote{Opponents of Burke cited his prior involvement with Montgomery and Chamberlaine, his low breeding, and his reputation as a “Loose scandoluss Liuer,” Memorandum as to the appointment of Capt. Edward Bourke to the Council of Barbados, June 19, 1698, CO 28/3, No. 67, fol. 165.}

\footnote{The governor of Barbados in 1696 attempted to quell the complaint against Burke. He wrote to London that Burke had “behaved himself very well,” noting, in particular, that he had “taken ye Oaths & Test upon severall Occasions.” Extract of Russells letter to the Duke of Shrewsbury, July 26, 1696, CO 28/3 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade 1696-1699, TNA, No. 5a, fol. 23.} For Stede, it
seems, untrustworthiness did not mean an imminent or palpable threat, but mostly served as a rhetorical flourish, a reminder of the potential for danger. In the abstract, Catholic inhabitants would forever be antithetical to the Protestant colonial enterprise, particularly those of Irish extraction, but individual Catholic communities could be accepted as loyal inhabitants of that world. The figure of the “poor Irish papist,” then, served not only to evoke the ideological danger of Catholicism, but also to accommodate those same Catholics into the English Atlantic world. In the process of accommodating Catholic populations, colonial elites redefined the meanings of loyalty and allegiance, thus allowing Catholics to be simultaneously “good subjects” and “unfaithful traitors.”

Swearing Allegiance: Catholic Loyalty in the 1690s

The contradictory sentiment expressed by Stede in the aftermath of the 1688-89 Revolution characterized the attitude of most English colonial governments towards the issue of Catholic loyalty in the 1690s. Following the establishment of the Dutch House of Orange on the English throne in 1689, the English monarchy reaffirmed its dedication to being wholly Protestant kingdom. Once again, swearing allegiance to the king carried with it an assumption of allegiance to Protestantism. Failure to perform the required acts of loyalty on the part of Catholics—including a denunciation of the tenets of their faith—indicated the potential for betrayal and that Catholics who refused the oath were not to be trusted. Yet, Catholic inhabitants continued to remain a substantive part of colonial life throughout the English Atlantic world in the 1690s. Catholic loyalty continued to be understood on the basis of economic status, political power, and foreign threats. As England challenged France for dominance of the Atlantic,
Catholic colonists continued to find ways to be loyal subjects of the Protestant crown even though this contradicted their supposed religious allegiance to England’s enemies.

On the island of Jamaica in 1694, St. Jago del Castillo, a Spanish Catholic and former agent for the trade in English slaves to the Spanish colonies, requested permission to fortify his house in St. Andrew parish “for the preservation of his family from privateers.” Further, Castillo sought “a commission as captain” to enable him to command the soon to be constructed fort. The Jamaican government shared Castillo’s concern over the French privateers who persistently threatened the island’s outlying settlements and welcomed any private enterprise to further secure the colony from attack. Although Castillo remained a Catholic and was a former subject of the King of Spain, the council agreed to allow him to build the fort and grant him the commission. The commission required “the usual oaths to the King,” which Castillo performed, but as a Catholic he refused to sign the Test Act. The governor, Sir William Beeston, however, saw fit to allow this deviation “knowing that his [Castillo’s] all was here” and “he looked upon himself as the King’s subject.”¹²³ Four years later, in 1698, the Chief Justice of Jamaica, having a personal vendetta with Castillo and the governor, sought to use the incident against them. The Justice raised the issue of Castillo’s failure to sign the Test Act and demanded that the irregularity be reported to the Crown. The governor’s narration of Castillo’s response to the controversy is telling: “he thought I held him to have behaved as a good subject.”¹²⁴ The governor proposed to the King’s councilors in London that Castillo’s loyal actions countered the presumption of disloyalty inherent in Castillo’s Catholic identity. The authorities in London

¹²³ Letter, Governor Sir William Beeston to Council of Trade and Plantations, June 4, 1698, CSPC, 16:262.

¹²⁴ Letter, Governor Sir William Beeston to Council of Trade and Plantations, June 4, 1698, CSPC, 16:263.
apparently agreed. No action appears to have been taken against either Beeston or St. Jago del Castillo. In 1701, Castillo was still in possession of his fort.125

A similar compromise between Catholic inhabitants and Protestant colonial governments unfolded in late seventeenth-century New York. In 1696, the authorities in England uncovered an alleged Catholic plot to assassinate William III. In response to the plot, the Crown ordered all citizens of the colonies to sign the Association Oath, swear allegiance to William, and denounce the claim of James II to the throne of England. Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York reported to the Duke of Shrewsbury the signing of copies of the oath “by all Officers Civill and military freeholders and Inhabitants whatsoever.” In the city of New York, “but one Gent . . . refused,” reported Fletcher, “he is a Roman Catholick and had made application” to forego signing the oath.126 In a second report to William Blathwayt, written the same day, Fletcher recorded “wee have not ten papists in it [New York] and those of no Ranke or fortune.”127 Like Stede, Fletcher sought to dismiss the danger posed by Catholic inhabitants of New York by emphasizing their distance from the levers of power and their subordination to Protestant authorities.

Of those ten Catholics identified by Fletcher, however, two had in fact refused to sign the Association Oath. On June 2, 1696, Maj. Anthony Brockholes submitted a written petition to Fletcher stating that, although he refused to sign the oath, “he was willing and ready to enter into

125 Letter, Brigadier Selwyn to the Council of Trade and Plantations, July 23, 1701, CSPC, 19:375. The brigadier complained that “Sir James Castille, a Papist and a Spaniard, is possessed of a Fort situated upon an important pass in Jamaica.”

126 Letter, Governor Fletcher to the Duke of Shrewsbury, May 30, 1696, CO 5/1039 New York Correspondence Board of Trade, 1695-96, TNA, No. 40, fol. 117.

127 Letter, Governor Fletcher to William Blathwayt, May 30, 1696, CO 5/1039, No. 42, fol. 159. See also List of Roman Catholics in the City of New York, June 13, 1696, CO 5/1039, No. 44xii, fol. 194, which named the ten papists residing in New York. Of these ten men, one was listed as a major and two others as Mr.
bond that he would be true and faithful to the present Government.” He further noted that, should his bond be unacceptable, he desired “3 or 4 months liberty to remove out of the Government to a Plantation which he is now settling in one of the neighbouring Colonies.”

Anthony Brockholes had been one of the Catholic officials caught up in Leisler’s rebellion six years earlier, but had remained in the colonies acquiring land in New York and East Jersey. In his petition he made no reference to Catholicism as a deciding factor in his rejection of the oath, but still sought an alternative means to prove his loyalty. A second petitioner, John Cooley, described himself as “an old inhabitant” of the city of New York who had “always behaved himselfe quietly & peaceably.” Even though he admitted to professing Catholicism, Cooley hoped that his previous trouble-free residence in the city would counter his refusal to accept the oath. In addition, Cooley also offered to provide a bond and security that he would faithfully serve the English monarch.

Fletcher, it appears, concurred with this compromise solution. In a letter to London, he wrote that the ten “roman Catholicks & reputed papists in Newyorke . . . are all disarmed and obleiged to give bond with surety for their good behaviour or be confined in prison.” They were, after all, “of no Ranke or fortune,” and, therefore, unlikely to endanger Protestant rule. Ultimately, the names of only two of the Catholics listed in New York appear on the Association Oath rolls—that of John Cooley and John Caveleir.

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128 Petition of Anthony Brockholes to Governor Fletcher, June 2, 1696, CO 5/1039, No. 42ix, fol. 171.
129 Petition of John Cooley to Governor Fletcher, June 2, 1696, CO 5/1039, No. 42x, fol. 172.
130 Letter, Governor Fletcher to Lords of Trade and Plantations, June 10, 1696, CO 5/1039, No. 43, fol. 174.
131 Wallace Gandy, ed., *The Association Oath Rolls of the British Plantations, A. D. 1696* (London: privately published, 1922), 38, 42, 45. John Cooley’s name appears as “John Coolley” (p. 38). A “Franceys Cooley” (p. 42) also signed the association, who may have been a relative. Either “John Canelier Senior” (p. 38) or “John le Chevalier” (p. 45) could be the signature of John Caveleir.
Once again, in the 1690s, Protestant colonial authorities showed themselves to be able and willing to redefine the terms of Catholic allegiance to the Protestant colonial state. What emerged over the course of the seventeenth century, then, was an English Atlantic world whose inhabitants—Protestant and Catholic—continually reinterpreted the limits of political allegiance based on perceived external threats and the relationship of marginal populations, such as Catholics, to the colonial government. Catholics continued to be inherently suspicious, but this did not prevent Protestant authorities accepting Catholic inhabitants as “good subjects” when their allegiance could be guaranteed by their exclusion from political power and their subordination to Protestant governance. For their part, Catholic inhabitants expressed a multitude of identities that reflected private interests, as well as political and religious loyalties. Inherent in this nuanced understanding of Catholic allegiance was an acceptance not just of Catholics as viable subjects, but also a tacit recognition of the Catholic faith as an integral part of the Protestant world.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOLERATING CATHOLICS IN THE ENGLISH ATLANTIC WORLD

there being many of these Collonyes wherein Papists are most Numerous and it being the interest of these places at this distance to be peopled it would never be without liberty of theire religion.

Sir Thomas Montgomery, Attorney General of Barbados, 1689

The Act of Toleration, passed in 1689, brought to an end over a century of conflict between rival religious groups in England. Faced with the prospect of a Catholic revival under the guise of James II’s religious indulgence, Anglicans and Dissenters put aside their differences to forge a new tolerant state that recognized the rights of a variety of Protestant beliefs. The Act upheld the Church of England as the state church, but allowed non-conforming Protestants to practice their faith under license. Worshippers at licensed churches were excluded from prosecution under the penal laws relating to recusancy. The state continued to demand that all political, civic, and church officials submit to the Oath of Allegiance, the Oath of Supremacy, and subscribe to the Test Act, affirming their rejection of the powers of transubstantiation. The new law allowed Quakers to substitute a declaration of allegiance to the monarch in place of the oaths. More than a statement of Protestant unity, the Act of Toleration represented an outright rejection of Catholicism as an accepted English religious practice. In the process of tolerating Protestant diversity, the Act explicitly persecuted Catholics.

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1 The Humble Petition of Sir Thomas Montgomery, CO 28/37 Barbados Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1700, The National Archives, Kew, London [hereafter TNA], No. 7xx, fol. 43.

Championed by classic Whig historians, the notion that 1689 represented a defining moment in British history, in which the Protestant nation emerged from the chaos of the Reformation and charged full pelt into the Enlightenment, has dominated the historical study of toleration in early modern England. Though this teleological interpretation of the rise of tolerance has been considerably revised in recent years, 1689 continues to determine the terms of the debate.\(^3\) Most importantly, historians’ focus on 1689 continues to emphasize a false dichotomy between the fortunes of Protestantism versus that of Catholicism. Viewed from the Protestant perspective, the Act of Toleration signaled the flourishing of toleration and the demise of persecution. For Catholics, and other religious minorities excluded from the Act, the opposite seemed true: a rise in persecution and the failure of toleration. This interpretation inherently viewed toleration and persecution as polar opposites; as one increased the other must decrease. But, crucially, seventeenth-century Englishmen did not view liberty of conscience, whereby the state recognized the rights of its subjects to be free from persecution and to chose their own religion, as synonymous with toleration. “Toleration,” the historian Alexandra Walsham argues, emphatically did not mean religious freedom. Nor did it proceed from indifference or neutrality. To tolerate was not to recognise or to grant equal rights to a rival system of belief; it was to permit or license something of which one emphatically disapproved, to make a magnanimous concession to the adherents of an inherently false religion. . . . It was an act of forebearance, long-suffering and also indulgence, a conscious decision to refrain from persecuting something one knew to be wicked and wrong.\(^4\)

Englishmen, no matter where in the world they resided, possessed the ability to despise and proscribe Catholicism ideologically and yet still accept the Catholicism of their neighbors, friends, and business associates. The Act of Toleration of 1689 fundamentally changed English

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\(^4\) Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 4. This is not to say that liberty of conscience was not a form of toleration, but that toleration itself did not inherently have to include liberty of conscience. Thus, toleration could coexist with persecution.
discourse on the subject of toleration, but it did not necessarily change the way that Protestants and Catholics, whether they lived in the British Isles or the colonies, interacted and coexisted on a local and a personal level.

The experience of Catholic migrants and settlers over the course of the seventeenth century demonstrates that tolerance of religious difference in the English Atlantic world was never simply a question of rejecting religious persecution in favor of religious freedom. With the exception of James II’s brief period of indulgence in 1687 and 1688, when Catholics and non-conforming Protestants alike received permission to exercise their faith publicly, the practice of Catholicism remained outlawed for most of the century. Yet before and after 1689, colonial records contain examples of known Catholics living and thriving in the English Atlantic world. In almost every English colony, Protestant settlers hired, traded with, and lived alongside Catholics. These Catholics experienced very little religious freedom, but neither did they find themselves persecuted. A “practical toleration” operated in the English Atlantic world, which weighed the realities of colonial life against the ideological rhetoric of the English state that demanded religious conformity.\(^5\) Indeed, such ideas existed at the level of political rhetoric. “The kingdom is under a great decay both of people and trade,” William Penn wrote in 1680, “does [persecution] lessen the imperial crown and dignity of this realm, if it ruins trade, lessens and impoverishes the people, and increases beggary?”\(^6\) Similarly, in his declaration of indulgence in


1687, James II observed, “that conscience ought not to be constrained nor people forced in matters of mere religion” for “it destroys [the interests of government] by spoiling trade, depopulating countries, and discouraging strangers, and finally, that it never obtained the end for which it was employed.”

On the ground in the colonies, colonial officials and Protestant settlers tolerated individual Catholic inhabitants to ensure colonial stability and expansion without negating their own beliefs in the centrality of Protestantism to their own English identities. Although such local acts of toleration seemed antithetical to the broader rhetoric of English Protestant expansion, the two imperatives did in fact coexist as individual colonies thrived and formed the foundation of an English Atlantic dominated by Protestantism.

The Brent Family of Virginia and the Idea of Practical Toleration

Successive generations of the Brent family proved that being Catholic in the colonies did not necessarily require seclusion from public life, impoverishment, or, indeed, an outward denial of faith. A long-standing English Catholic family, the American wing of the Brent family began in colonial Maryland. Four siblings, Fulke, Mary, Margaret, and Giles Brent, migrated to Maryland in 1638. As might be expected of a Catholic family closely associated with the Calverts, the Brent family rapidly became “persons of consequence.” Fulke returned to England sometime after 1639, but his three remaining siblings thrived in the Chesapeake. Mary confined

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8 For an overview of the English heritage of the Brent family see Chester Horton Brent, The Descendants of Collo Giles Brent Capt George Brent and Robert Brent, Gent Immigrants to Maryland and Virginia (Rutland, Vt.: privately published, 1946), 13-41.

9 The following account of the Brent family is heavily indebted to Bruce Steiner’s detailed reconstruction of the family’s activities in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia. Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” quotation from 393.
her activity in the colony to the quiet accumulation of property and wealth. In contrast, Margaret and Giles became intimately involved in the business of the colony and the Calvert family. Leonard Calvert, the first governor of Maryland, appointed Margaret Brent executor of his estate. As an unmarried woman, Maryland law barred Margaret from participating in the public affairs of the colony, but she, nevertheless, pursued the state business entrusted to her by Leonard Calvert. The Maryland provincial court recognized Margaret’s appointment as Leonard Calvert’s attorney and allowed “Margaret Brent, Gent.” to sue for the recovery of the governor’s property.\(^\text{10}\) Margaret took her appointment very seriously. In an extraordinary incident recorded by the provincial court in January 1648, Margaret “requested to have vote in the howse for her selfe and voyce allso” in her role as “his Lps Attorney.” Unfortunately, the governor and council disagreed and denied Margaret’s request. Undaunted, “mrs brent protested agst all proceedings in this pfit [sic] Assembly, unlesse shee may be pnt. and have vote as aforesd.” The council again declined her request.\(^\text{11}\) Meanwhile, Margaret’s brother Giles established himself as a prominent member of the proprietor’s government and a respected resident of Kent Island in the Chesapeake. In 1641 and again in 1642, the residents of Kent Island elected Giles as their representative to the colonial assembly.\(^\text{12}\) He further served the colony as treasurer and deputy-governor during Leonard Calvert’s absence from Maryland in 1643 and 1644.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^\text{12}\) Archives of Maryland, 1:104; Chilton, “The Brent Family,” VMHB 15 (1908): 325.

Outside the realm of colonial politics, the Brents keenly and publicly supported the Jesuit mission, a luxury afforded them by the relative freedom of religion enshrined in the Maryland charter. Margaret, Giles, and Mary Brent all became involved in the conversion of the Piscataway Indians, a crucial target of the Jesuit mission.\footnote{Jesuit activity among the Piscataway is described in Andrew White’s narrative, “A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto Maryland, by Father Andrew White, 1634,” in \textit{Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684}, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1910), 41-2.} The Brent family agreed to educate the daughter of the Piscataway chief in return for her father’s conversion to Catholicism. In 1644, Giles married the young woman after her own baptism into the Catholic faith.\footnote{Laurence Mitchell, “The Brent Family of Colonial Virginia,” \textit{Historical Society of Fairfax, County, Virginia} 13 (1973-5): 29; Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 393.} Largely as a result of this marriage, and despite the family’s fractious and exploitative relations with many local indigenous groups, the Brent family secured a reputation as close allies of the Chesapeake tribes.\footnote{Giles Brent considered the marriage to be an opportunity to claim ownership of Piscataway lands, which Brent generously defined as the whole of Maryland. In Virginia, Giles continued his exploitative relationship with Indian groups and became involved in a legal dispute with the Potomacs in an attempt to claim their land in Stafford County. H. R. McIlwaine, ed., \textit{Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1659/60-1693} (Richmond, Va.: The Colonial Press, 1914), 14-6; Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 393, 395.} In the 1670s and 1680s, Giles Brent’s son and nephew did little to alter this perception. Both men defended the frontier from attack by hostile indigenous groups and allegedly colluded with friendly Indians to overthrow colonial rule. For his part, in the 1640s, Giles Brent played a decisive role in securing Kent Island for Maryland and advancing the colony’s interests with the Chesapeake Bay Indians. In 1639 and 1640, Giles Brent commanded the governor’s forces on Kent Island, and was authorized by the governor “to train and instruct all the inhabitants of our said colony able to bear arms . . . in the art and discipline of war.”\footnote{Quoted in Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 397.} The position of the Brents on Kent Island drew the ire of Protestant opponents of the Calvert patent.\footnote{W. B. Chilton, “The Brent Family,” \textit{VMHB} 15 (1908): 324. For more on the Kent Island dispute see Chap. 4.} Giles Brent
personally came to blows with Richard Ingle, the belligerent Protestant instigator of Ingle’s Rebellion, whom Brent arrested for treason in 1642. The men crossed paths again in 1645, when Ingle seized goods belonging to the Brents worth £960. That same year, Ingle’s forces seized the government of Maryland for the Protestant interest and transported Giles Brent, along with his friend and priest Thomas Copley, back to London.\(^\text{19}\)

The upheavals of the Civil War era in Maryland proved merely a minor setback for the Brent family. By 1650, Giles, his wife, and his two sisters, Mary and Margaret Brent, had resettled on the southern side of the Potomac River and cast their lot in with Virginia.\(^\text{20}\) Despite the comparative lack of religious freedom in the colony, the wilderness of Virginia’s northern counties provided the ideal location for the Brent family to flourish. The governments of Virginia and Maryland both claimed title to the under-developed frontier territory between the Potomac and the Rappahannock rivers. In this sparsely populated region, the residents turned a blind-eye to the family’s religious interests and instead welcomed the wealthy new additions to the region. Although Catholic, the Brents recognized the right of Virginia to the territory and proved strong promoters of migration to the region from both England and Maryland. For the Brents, northern Virginia provided a refuge from prying eyes in both St. Mary’s City and Jamestown, but remained conveniently close to the pastoral ministrations of the Jesuits. From their plantation at Aquia Creek, the Brents established themselves as upstanding members of north Virginian society. Giles Brent and his descendants protected the region from Indian incursions, conducted business in the local courts, formed close-knit ties to prominent Protestant planters, and, for a

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brief period in the 1680s, represented Stafford County in the Virginia House of Burgesses. They did all this while continuing to profess the Catholic faith.21

Despite their removal to Virginia, the Brents did not neglect their ties to the Jesuit mission in Maryland. The family continued to practice Catholicism discreetly within the confines of their Virginia plantation and traveled across the colonial border to worship with the Jesuits at their mission chapels. The close proximity of the Jesuit mission station at Port Tobacco, a short boat-ride down the Potomac River from the Brents’ new Virginian plantation, facilitated pastoral visits. A series of documents recorded in the colonial records of Maryland in 1651 indicate that Margaret Brent received regular visits from Thomas Copley at her Virginia property.22 Evidence from business and testamentary records indicate Giles Brent also maintained a close relationship with the Jesuits and the Catholic Church. In 1654, Giles temporarily deeded his American property to his sister Mary “in trust to educate his children decently and Christianly,” presumably indicating his desire to raise his children as Catholics.23 Further, when Giles died in 1671, he bequeathed “three thousand pounds of good tobacco with cask to be given by them my Executors unto pious use where & to whom they shall see fitt for which doing and how and to whom given I will that to none else but God they shall be accountable.”24 Living in Virginia, Brent could not openly request prayers for the dead or, indeed, use a Catholic formulation in his will as his


22 *Archives of Maryland*, 10:104-8. The letters concern the sale of Margaret’s property in St. Mary’s City to William Stone, the new Protestant governor of Maryland. At least one of the letters states that Thomas Copley delivered several pieces of correspondence concerning the sale to Margaret in Virginia, see Letter, Margaret Brent to William Stone, July 22, 1650 in *Archives of Maryland*, 10:104.


neighbors in Maryland did. But it seems logical to conclude that Brent intended the bequest for
the Jesuits in Maryland or even Catholic establishments in Europe.25

The Brent family’s continued adherence to the Catholic Church did not impede their
integration into north Virginian society. When they arrived in northern Virginia in 1650, the
Bretons immediately became some of the wealthiest landowners there. In his study of the Brent
family in Virginia, Bruce Steiner concludes the three leading members of the family--Giles,
Margaret, and Mary Brent--patented in excess of 10,750 acres of land in northern Virginia
between 1651 and 1666.26 The family owned land in Stafford, Westmoreland, Northumberland,
and Middlesex counties, as well as continuing to maintain an interest in Kent Island and St.
Mary’s County, Maryland. In Virginia, Giles Brent continued to play a central role in colonial
defense. The initial land patents recorded in 1651 describe Giles Brent as lieutenant-colonel,
probably a reference to his previous involvement in the government of Maryland. Subsequent
local records in Stafford County, Virginia, describe Giles as a captain of the militia. Giles passed
on this military office to his son and, later, his nephew.27 Though the people of Stafford had little
cause for armed defense in the 1650s and 1660s, Giles Brent’s military position indicates the
standing of the family in the local area.

The Stafford County records during this period are badly damaged and only fragments
remain, so it is impossible to reconstruct the minutiae of the Brent family’s relations with the
predominantly Protestant community of planters who resided on the Virginian frontier. The

25 Bruce Steiner suggests the bequest may have been intended for the English Abbey of Our Lady of Consolation at
Cambrai, where Giles had three sisters. Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 392, 398.

26 Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 394. Steiner’s estimate is based on an examination of colonial
land records preserved in Nell Marion Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and

27 Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 395. The extant local court records for Stafford County in the
1660s record Giles Brent Sr. as a captain. See, for example, Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of
Virginia, Richmond, Reel 7, Court Records (Orders) 1664-1668, Oct 12, 1664, ff. 7-9.
colonial records do preserve one incident in which the local Stafford court raised the question of the Brents’ Catholicism. The general court at Jamestown, in 1668, reversed a decision made by the local court in Stafford County, noting that the government had “21 years experience of his [Giles Brent’s] fidelity in not seducing any Psons to the Roman Catholic religion.” The Stafford records shed no further light on the background to this case, but future generations of Catholic Brents continued to assert political and economic dominance in the region, suggesting the people of Stafford came to concur with the higher court’s decision or at least took no action to reverse it.

At both the levels of local and colonial government, the Brents received a surprising degree of leeway in practicing their faith and maintaining their position as leading planters in northern Virginia. In 1671, Giles Brent became the last of the original Brent migrants to die. His sisters, Mary and Margaret, had pre-deceased him in 1657 and 1663 respectively. All three left considerable wealth and property to the next generation of Brents, who continued to expand the family’s dominance in northern Virginia and retain the Catholic faith. Giles Brent Jr., the son of Giles and his Piscataway wife, and the first Brent born and raised in America, proved a less dignified and upstanding character than his father. In his short life, he divorced his wife after a brief and abusive marriage, and, most infamously, in 1675, started an Indian war. Despite his scandalous reputation, his mestizo identity, and his Catholicism, Giles Brent Jr. sustained the family’s status amongst the Virginian elite.

Upon his father’s death, Giles Brent Jr., just 20 years old, assumed his prominent position in Stafford society. He served as captain of the militia and in 1674 he became collector of tax on tobacco, an appointed position controlled by the Customs Office in London. By virtue of his


heritage on his maternal side, contemporaries described Giles Brent Jr. as “speaking the Indian
tongue,” a valuable attribute for a frontiersman. Brent’s mestizo identity provided the young
man with easy access to the lucrative Indian trade in the Chesapeake and may have contributed
to his involvement in one of the bloodiest Indian conflicts in Virginian history. In 1675, in his
capacity as a captain of the Stafford County militia, Brent pursued a group of Indians accused of
the murder of a local Stafford man named Robert Hen. The contemporary account of Thomas
Mathew records that Brent, and his commanding officer, Col. George Mason, led their company
into Maryland in pursuit of the culprits. Having surrounded an Indian cabin, Brent “killed ten”
Indians and captured “the kings son.” Mason, meanwhile, shot a further 14 Indians attempting to
flee before he realized that the Indians in question were friendly Susquehannock. Giles Brent
and George Mason’s erroneous attack on this innocent group of Susquehannock triggered the
subsequent Indian war that engulfed the colony in 1675 and, in turn, contributed to Nathaniel
Bacon’s rebellion against the colonial government of Virginia in 1676. Despite his mestizo
status, or perhaps because of it, Brent showed little concern for the havoc he had unleashed on
his indigenous neighbors. In the ensuing unrest, Brent proved more interested in securing his
own precarious position as a member of Stafford County’s white, landed elite. Briefly toying
with the idea of supporting Bacon’s uprising, Brent ultimately sided with the governor. In the
process, Brent assured the colonial government of his own, and his family’s, loyalty, despite their
Catholicism and their indigenous associations. For the remainder of the century, the Brents

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30 Thomas Mathew, “The Beginning Progress and Conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia in the years 1675 &
1676,” transcript by Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Historical Society, fol. 5.

31 The attack on the Susquehannock is recorded in Mathew, “Beginning Progress and Conclusion of Bacon’s
Rebellion,” fol. 5-7. Mathew, a local Stafford County planter, purports to have based his account on eyewitness
testimony from those involved.
would play a valuable role in securing the colonial frontier from external attack and internal unrest.32

Another more domestic event related to the attack on the Susquehannock in 1675 provides further insight into the religious environment of Stafford County. Having captured the son of the Susquehannock king, Col. George Mason carried the boy back to his plantation in Virginia. The boy proved to be sickly; he “lay ten dayes in bed, as one dead, with eyes & mouth shutt, no breath discern’d, but his body continuing warm,” and his hosts feared the boy’s imminent death. Giles Brent, “coming thither on a visit,” and discovering the “little prisoner” to be mortally ill, suggested “perhaps he is pawewawd i.e. bewitch’d.” Having “heard baptism was an effectuall remedy against witchcraft,” Brent suggested the Masons perform a baptism. With no local minister available, Mason ordered his clerk to perform the baptism according to “the church of England liturgy.” Mason and his wife, both Anglicans, served as godparents, as did Giles Brent, the Catholic. The baptism proved an immediate success, the child “open’d the eyes, and breath’d,” whereupon Mrs. Mason “ran for a cordial, which he took from a spoon, gaping for more and so (by degrees) recovered.”33 No doubt Giles Brent had heard of, and most probably witnessed, Jesuit baptisms of dying Indian children. His suggestion of the efficacy of baptism replicates the Indians’ own beliefs in the curing capabilities of the Jesuit priests. But perhaps the most surprising aspect of the incident is the ecumenical nature of the baptism. Although conducted according to the Anglican liturgy, the baptism included an Anglican and a Catholic godparent. This “little prisoner,” who lived on the borders of Catholic Maryland and Protestant Virginia, encapsulated the coexistence of these two faiths in the English Chesapeake.

32 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia 1659/60-1693, 69.

33 Mathew, “Beginning Progress and Conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion,” fol. 7-9.
Giles Brent Jr. had little opportunity to perform his duties as godfather. He died in 1679 on his plantation in Middlesex County. The estate inventory recorded in Stafford County court valued his property at 56,853 pounds of tobacco.\(^3^4\) With the untimely death of Giles Brent, Jr., leadership of the Brent family in Virginia passed to his cousin, George Brent. George had migrated directly to Stafford County from England in the 1650s, leaving behind a country wracked by religious strife to try his luck on the colonial frontier.\(^3^5\) Like his uncle Giles Brent Sr., George Brent established himself as a major landholder in the region, encouraging migration and acquiring over 3,000 acres of land under the headright system.\(^3^6\) George Brent located his main residence, known as Woodstock plantation, on Aquia Creek close to his uncle’s former abode. From there, George Brent continued to emulate, and ultimately exceed, his uncle’s prominent position in Stafford county politics and society. In 1680, Lord Culpepper, the governor of Virginia, “beinge well assured of the abillity and Integrity of Mr george Brent,” authorized him to practice law in the colony. The court license allowed George “to practice as an Attorney in ye Gennll Court and all county courts,” not just his home county of Stafford.\(^3^7\) In his capacity as a lawyer, and recognized as an honest and reputable member of the community, the court called upon Brent to arbitrate a number of local disputes.\(^3^8\) George also performed the office of surveyor for the county of Stafford, a position and appointment recognized by the assembly at

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\(^3^4\) Inventory of Giles Brent Jr., Sept 8, 1680, Stafford County Court Records (microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 5 Court Records 1680, fol. 12v-13v. The first few pages of the inventory are missing from the record book. The property belonging to Giles Brent’s wife is excluded from the inventory.

\(^3^5\) George Brent was also the brother of Giles Brent Jr.’s wife.

\(^3^6\) Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 401.

\(^3^7\) Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 5 Court Records 1680, fol. 2v.

\(^3^8\) In 1685, for example, the court ordered George Brent and George Mason to arbitrate in the case between Charles Baldridge and Hugh French, Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 7a Record Book 1686-1693/94, fol. 5.
In 1683, Lord Culpepper, in his capacity as proprietor for the northern region, appointed George Brent to the prestigious and lucrative post of receiver-general for the northern territories. The position authorized Brent to collect rent payments on all proprietary lands in northern Virginia.

George Brent also played a key role in colonial defense. In the early 1680s, the records of the House of Burgesses reveal that George Brent received payments from the colonial government for his role in supplying and supervising the militia company garrisoned on the Potomac and tasked with defending the frontier region from Indian incursion. In 1684, as captain of the Stafford County militia, George Brent led a series of actions against the local Seneca Indians who threatened Virginian plantations. On this occasion the burgesses singled out Brent for high praise noting, “Capt Geo: brent hath by his prudent Manage & Good Conduct, Pformed Good service for ye Country.” Not only had Brent secured his own and his neighbors interests in Stafford, but, “upon the Honble presedents Command,” Brent had marched to the aid of the people of Rappahannock. In return for his loyal service, and “for ye encouragmt of others to be dilligent & vigilent in ye Pformance of their Duty,” George received a reward of 1,000 pounds of tobacco to be paid from the colonial purse. At this moment, the colonial government had no concern that Brent’s Catholicism would endanger the stability of the frontier, but instead

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39 Stafford County Court Records (microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 5 [Court Records, 1680], fol. 2v, Aug 11, 1680. George Brent served as the surveyor for Stafford County through to at least 1688. In that year, the general court at Jamestown requested Brent’s aid in settling a series of land disputes appealed from the local court of Stafford county. Affidavit of George Brent, Aug 24, 1688, Tayloe Family Papers 1650-1970, Section 2, Virginia Historical Society, Folder 26, no page numbers.

40 Lord Culpepper’s commission of May 2, 1683 appointing George Brent as “receiver-general north of the Rappahannock,” is abstracted in McIlwaine, Minutes of the Assembly and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 523. The original commission does not survive.

41 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1659/60-1693, 171, 255. The journal also records that Brent received similar payments from the surrounding counties for militia services, Ibid., 180-2.

42 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659/60-1693, 218.
welcomed the wealth, leadership, and security that the Brent family continued to provide in the region.

George’s involvement in colonial government in Virginia peaked in the late 1680s after the ascension of James II, a Catholic, to the throne of England in 1685. Courtesy of the rising fortune of Catholic interests throughout the English world, George Brent’s religion no longer confined him to county-level governance. Between 1685 and 1688, he found himself able to assert the social and political position his standing as a member of the colonial elite should have afforded him naturally. In 1686 and 1687, George Brent served as attorney-general in Virginia. Then, in 1688, the people of Stafford County elected him as their county representative to the colonial assembly at Jamestown. As leading planters in the county, the Brent family should have been obvious candidates for this prestigious position since their arrival in Virginia in the early 1650s. George’s cousin, for example, was instrumental in securing Thomas Mathew’s election to the assembly in 1676. But before 1688, no member of the Brent family could legally represent the county at the assembly. Their religious faith prevented the Brents from swearing the oaths of office required by English law: the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. In 1687 and again in 1688, James II circumvented these restrictions by suspending the penal laws and the Test Acts that prevented Catholics from holding political office. Following the letter and tone of James II’s declaration of indulgence, the governor of Virginia declared “that refuseing to take those

43 Mathew, “Beginning Progress and Conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion,” 20-1. Mathew notes that Mason and Brent “invited me to stand a candidate; a matter I little dreamt of, having never had inclinacons to tamper in the precarious intrigues of governt. and my hands being full of my own business; they press’t severall cogent argumts. and I having considerable debts in that county, . . . I held it not (then) discreet to disoblige the rulers of it, so Coll: Mason with myself were elected without objection.”

oaths should be noe barr to any pson from sitting as a member of the Assembly.”45 In April 1688, the journal of the House of Burgesses recorded “the Oath of Allegiance & the Oath of supremacy & the Oath of a Burgesse is administred” to all new representatives. The journal also noted one exception, “to Mr Geo: Brent the Oath of a Burgesse.”46 The brief period of Catholic rule between 1685 and 1688 certainly made life much easier for the Brent family. It allowed them to make full use of their considerable political and economic power they had accrued in Stafford County. It is also significant, however, that George Brent’s public activities in this period were not wholly new, but an extension of the tolerance already afforded the Brent family in local Virginia government since the 1650s.

George Brent’s evolving ties to the planter community in Stafford County matched his expanding involvement in local and colonial government in Virginia. He established strong ties to other local planters, particularly those with royalist sympathies. At some point in the 1670s, Brent formed a legal business with his neighbor William Fitzhugh. The two men forged a close personal bond and a highly successful business relationship.47 When serving as attorney-general in 1686, Brent did all he could to protect his friend from prosecution for alleged illegal activities in Stafford County that included embezzlement of tobacco revenue and election fraud.48 For his

45 Particulars of the Grievances presented by Philip Ludwell, Sept 28, 1689, CO 5/1305 Virginia Correspondence Board of Trade and Secretary of State, TNA, No. 18, fol. 55.
46 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659/60-1693, 290-1. During his time as a representative to the government at Jamestown, Brent continued to hold his county office of surveyor, but was discharged from his post as attorney-general for the colony. Affidavit of George Brent, Aug 24, 1688, Tayloe Family Papers 1650-1970, Section 2, Virginia Historical Society, Folder 26, no page numbers; McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659/60-1693, 300, 303.
48 McIlwaine, Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659/60-1693, 282, 300, 303; Davis, William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 30-1, 192.
part, Fitzhugh described Brent as “my particular friend” and introduced him to the influential patronage of Lord Culpepper. Brent also actively diversified his business associations beyond Stafford. Brent’s legal business brought him into extended contact with the planter elite throughout Virginia and Maryland. What remains of the Stafford County court records show that planters from the eastern shore and Maryland employed Brent as their attorney. In 1689, for example, George Nicholas Hack empowered Brent to handle his business in Stafford County, as did Thomas Hussey of Maryland in 1691. George Brent’s ties to Maryland stretched far beyond mere business connections. In March 1687, Brent married Marie Sewall, the daughter of Henry Sewall and step-daughter of the Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert. Fitzhugh offered Brent his heartfelt congratulations on the upcoming nuptials. Similarly, Brent’s new father-in-law wrote to wish the couple “much joye, & happiness.” Calvert urged Brent to consider relocating to Maryland with his new wife, and promised the lawyer “all ye favour and kindness I were able to shew you.” Though George and his wife remained in Virginia, the marriage revived the close connection between the Brent and Calvert families first established in the 1630s.

George Brent also continued to maintain close ties to the Jesuit establishments in Maryland. Like his aunt before him, George received visits by the Jesuits at his plantation on Aquia Creek. Brent sheltered several priests who fled Maryland during Coode’s Rebellion in

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50 Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 7a Record Book 1686-1693/94, fol. 145, 210.


1689 and was rumored to maintain a Jesuit tutor at his plantation. The relative religious freedom accorded George Brent by his Anglican neighbors may have encouraged him to become a champion for liberty of conscience in the colony. In January 1687, George Brent, along with Robert Bristow, Richard Foote, and Nicholas Hayward, received a patent for 30,000 acres of land in Stafford County on which the partners planned to establish Brenton. The men intended the town to be a land venture that would attract Huguenot refugees to the region. They solicited help from Huguenot communities in England to promote the new town as a suitable location for migrants. One Huguenot visitor to Stafford County wrote favorably that the partners “offer[ed] lands at a reasonable price to any Frenchman wishing to come.” The partners, the Huguenot visitor observed, provided “money to help build houses for those who had no funds,” and supplied “corn for their sustenance during the first year.” To further attract Huguenots, Brent, Bristow, Foote, and Hayward sought and received dispensation from James II that all settlers in Brenton would be allowed “the free exercise of their Religion without being prosecuted or molested upon any penall laws or other account for the same.” As Bruce Steiner notes, the four men intended the petition to ensure religious freedom for the Huguenot refugees they hoped to entice to northern Virginia, but the vagueness of the language in the king’s warrant also solidified

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54 Patent of Land, Lord Culpepper to George Brent, Robert Bristow, Richard Foote, and Nicholas Hayward, Jan 10, 1686/87, Virginia Historical Society. A second copy of the patent can also be found in Stafford County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 7a Record Book 1686-1693/94, fol. 51-53v.

55 Gilbert Chiraud, trans., A Huguenot Exile in Virginia or Voyages of a Frenchman exiled for his Religion with a description of Virginia and Maryland (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1934), 159. See also William Fitzhugh to Nicholas Hayward, May 20, 1686, in Davis, William Fitzhugh and his Chesapeake World, 189-91, which details an earlier version of the Huguenot project.

56 Warrant of James II, published in Chilton, “The Brent Family,” VMHB 17 (1909): 309-10. Chilton erroneously asserts that this confirms the Catholicism of all four of the business partners. It seems much more likely that the grant was intended solely to attract Huguenot exiles, and only secondarily related to the religion of the owners.
the de facto tolerance already accorded George Brent and his Catholic relatives.\textsuperscript{57} Although no Huguenots ever migrated to Brenton, the establishment of the tract represented a watershed moment in the development of Virginia, testifying to the persistent connection between the desire to attract new settlers to the colonies and the practicality of tolerating religious difference.

Bruce Steiner characterizes the situation in seventeenth-century Stafford County, Virginia, as “an instance of practical toleration,” whereby the conditions of the frontier facilitated and, indeed, demanded religious tolerance. But he warns against drawing broader conclusions from the “single, and perhaps signal” experiences of the Brent family.\textsuperscript{58} An examination of other regions of the English Atlantic before 1689 reveals that this attitude of practical toleration existed beyond Virginia and the particular case of the Brent family. Although further examples of colonial tolerance of Catholic inhabitants are even more scant than those in northern Virginia, taken in conjunction with the well-documented Brent family these scraps provide a clearer picture of the extent to which Protestant settlers accepted Catholic colonists as part of life in the colonies. Before 1689, practical toleration existed throughout the English Atlantic world as local colonial governments struggled to populate new settlements, establish new trade routes, cultivate new colonial products, and ensure the profitability of the colonies for both colonists and the English state.

Other Catholics may not have shared the elite wealth and status of the Brent family, but they certainly experienced similar degrees of acceptance in their chosen colonial environments. In 1657, the Council of Bermuda received a complaint against Thomas Lincay “for his being a papist and therefore not fit to stay in this Iland.” Far from immediately exiling Lincay, the

\textsuperscript{57} Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 403.

\textsuperscript{58} Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 409.
council instead carefully weighed his case and noted “that he is a papist he denyeth not, nor hath denied yt from his first arrival in the Hopefull Luck.” 59 The *Hopeful Luck* had been wrecked on the coast of Bermuda in early 1655. 60 Lincay lived in Bermuda for close to two years before being presented to the court on account of his religious beliefs in 1657. As Lincay refrained from acting to “draw on others to his religion” during his two years of residence, in 1657 the council concluded that Lincay could remain on the island. But the councilors warned Lincay to ensure he behaved “as a Christian man ought to doe, void of offence tuching papistry tenets.” 61 In other words, the Council of Bermuda tolerated Lincay’s Catholicism within certain bounds, largely that he kept his religion to himself.

It is unclear why the council chose to show such leniency towards Lincay. Fifteen years later, when Elizabeth Clarke, a Catholic indentured servant from Barbados, appeared before the council, the members proved much less willing to accept Clarke’s testimony on religious matters. Clarke claimed to have converted to Protestantism, but still the council ordered her to “take [the] oathes of Allegiance and Supremacie & goe to Church” to prove the legitimacy of her conversion. 62 The council placed no such strictures on Lincay’s continued residence in Bermuda and he could not even claim to have converted to Protestantism. The council did note that upon Lincay’s initial arrival on the *Hopeful Luck* “yt did appeare that he was vnder bondes for certayne yeeres,” indicating that Lincay too was most likely an indentured servant. But in contrast to Clarke, at the time of his court appearance Lincay was no longer a bound laborer,


“having since freed himselfe with a considerable sum of money.” Lincay, it seems, had proved himself to be an upstanding and valuable member of Bermudan society. He was not merely another bond-servant, but a potential planter and merchant, someone worth the council’s effort to tolerate.

The story of Jan van Loon, a Catholic who arrived in the colony of New York in 1675, provides another example of the willingness of colonial authorities and settlers to tolerate Catholics in their midst. Like the Brents, van Loon settled on the colonial frontier, this time in Albany, New York, where his skills as a smith proved highly useful in the growing settlement. The historian Peter Christoph notes that van Loon’s metalwork business enabled him to acquire several tracts of land in and around Albany. Described as a Frenchman, though almost certainly from the Low Countries, van Loon probably spoke French and Dutch in addition to English, a valuable attribute in the Albany fur trade. He acted as an interpreter for the sale of Indian lands to a group of Dutchmen in 1683 and, over the course of the 1680s, held various local government offices, including juror and coroner. Van Loon had several run-ins with his neighbors regarding religion. In one particularly revealing incident van Loon accused a local apostate from the Church of Rome of having “forsaken God and embraced the devil.” Despite van Loon’s own belligerence towards those of the Protestant faith, during his time in Albany neither the local nor the colonial government attempted to prosecute him on account of his Catholic faith.

Lefroy, Memorials, 2:98. A series of letters from the Somers Islands Company to the governor of Bermuda shed some light on the fate of the Hopeful Luck. In 1655, the Company expressed concern at “the Rudenes of some of the planters . . . in cutting downe the Rigginge of the ship, pretending to be a wrecke And takeinge awaie goodes out of the hould. A year later the Company wrote further “Touchinge the goodes taken out of the ship the ‘Hopeful Luke of London’ fallen upon the rockes and lost.” Lefroy, Memorials, 2:60, 83. It seems more than likely, then, that as a survivor of the wreck Lincay appropriated some of the goods to purchase his freedom and establish himself as a planter in Bermuda.

That practicing Catholics could hold, and frequently did hold, civic and political office reveals the extent of their acceptance into colonial life and the willingness of their Protestant neighbors and colleagues to ignore anti-Catholic laws and sentiments. William Stapleton proved one of the most prominent and successful colonial officials in the Restoration period. In 1668, Stapleton, an Irish Catholic, became governor of Montserrat. Three years later, in 1671, he assumed governorship of all of the Leeward Islands.\textsuperscript{65} That Stapleton started out as governor of Montserrat, mostly populated by Irish Catholics, is perhaps unsurprising. Affirming Stapleton’s appointment as governor of the sugar island, Lord Willoughby described him as “A gentleman of known valour and integrity and born in Ireland, and therefore understands better to govern his countryman.”\textsuperscript{66} The Irish historian Donald Akenson notes that during his governorships Stapleton “engaged in a major piece of social engineering” in the Leeward Islands, transforming the colonial government into an efficient legal system, restructuring colonial trade in the region, and forcing the population of Irish landholders to accept English control of the colonial legislature.\textsuperscript{67} The English state and local Protestants in the colonies accommodated Stapleton’s Catholicism as he served a vital role in regulating and controlling English colonization in the Caribbean. In fact, Stapleton’s faith and Irish heritage made him uniquely suited to governing the Leeward Islands in the eyes of Protestant authorities.

Stapleton remained governor of the Leeward Islands until his death in 1686. During this time, only once did a political rival attempt to call into question Stapleton’s reliability on the

\textsuperscript{65} Donald Akenson, \textit{If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat 1630-1730} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 83.

\textsuperscript{66} Letter, William Lord Willoughby to Lords of the Council, Jul 9, 1668, quoted in Akenson, \textit{If the Irish Ran the World}, 85.

\textsuperscript{67} Akenson, \textit{If the Irish Ran the World}, 92-3, quotation from 92.
grounds of his Catholicism. In 1674, Charles Wheeler wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantation accusing Stapleton of, among many other charges, “being of the Romish Religion.” Stapleton’s response to this accusation exhibits a textbook case of evasion. Never confirming or denying his Catholicism, Stapleton wrote, “when euer the king or my superior calls me to a Religious account I shall freely declare my Tenet in Religion.” Until that time, he continued, “I pray god it may doe me noe good If I doe not venture my life and a thowsand If I had them to deffend my souereign’s Rights and Titles or to kill and destroye all manner of personnel Emperours kings popes and prelates and theirs, Invadeing any part of his Maiesties Territories.”  

Stapleton’s loyalty assured, the Privy Council more than happily continued to support and tolerate their Catholic governor.

In many ways, Lincay, van Loon, and Stapleton can be seen as isolated instances of toleration driven by specific local conditions, rather than Atlantic-wide trends. But all three, along with the Brents, established strong and permanent roots in their respective colonies, and shaped the societies that developed around them. When it came to establishing a permanent and flourishing Catholic community in a Protestant colony, however, Nicholas and George Rice surpassed them all. An uncle and nephew from Limerick, Ireland, Nicholas and George Rice migrated to Barbados in the 1660s as part of an extended family group. The Rice family possessed substantial resources that enabled them to secure the position of middling planters in the poorer parish of St. Philip on the southern tip of the island. The 1679 census of St. Philip

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listed the two men as owning 301 acres of land, 31 slaves, and four servants. Though far from being classed among the colony’s wealthy and powerful elite, the Rices certainly did not migrate or live in the impoverished conditions suffered by their countrymen a decade or two earlier.

Nicholas died in 1677 and George in 1686, so neither man appears in the catalog of Catholics compiled by Edwyn Stede in 1689. A comparison of the beneficiaries named in Nicholas and George’s wills with those accused of attending Mass in 1688, however, reveals several connections between the Rice family and the larger Catholic community that centered on St. Philip parish. Wealthier than most of the St. Philip men attending Mass in 1688, Nicholas and George nonetheless remained connected to poorer Catholics in St. Philip via men like Walter Rice, their cousin, and John Waters, a former servant of George Rice. In 1677, Nicholas Rice bequeathed “to his loveing coyen,” Walter Rice, all “that plantaon at six cross paths in which hee now liveth being about three acres and half of land.” By 1679, Walter had doubled his landholdings to six acres. The bequest became the foundation of Walter’s own landed status in the parish. Nicholas described the plot bequeathed to Walter Rice as “being the same plantaon where the Cort of Quarter Sessions is generally held,” perhaps reflecting the accepted status of

69 Acct of Inhabitts in the parish of St Philips, Dec 16, 1679, CO 1/44 Privy Council 1680 Jan-May, TNA, No. 47x, fol. 191. As Nicholas Rice died in 1677, the 301 acres, at the time of the census, belonged to George Rice alone. Richard Ford’s map of Barbados published in 1676 located two plantations belonging to the Rice family in St. Philip parish. Richard Ford, A New Map of the Island of Barbadoes wherein every Parish, Plantation, Watermill, Windmill & Cattlemill is described with the name of the Present Possessor, and all things els Remarkable according to the Late Exact Survey thereof (London, 1676).

70 See A list of the Psons sawne att Mass, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxx, fol. 55-55v; Deposition of Michaell Poore, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xxxvi, fol. 61-62v.

71 Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Department of Archives, Lazaretto, Barbados, [hereafter Barbados Archives] fol. 398-401; Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40, Barbados Archives, fol. 223-7. I would like to thank Jason Sharples for transcribing these two wills, as well as that of Marcus Rice.

72 Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 399.

73 Acct of Inhabitts in the parish of St Philips, Dec 16, 1679, CO 1/44, No. 47x, fol. 191.
the family in the parish. Nine years later, in his own will, George Rice rewarded John Waters, one of his four servants, with a gift of “all my wearing apparel, Linnen and Wollen, hatts, Shoes.” Such connections expanded beyond the two leading members of the Rice family. Walter, Nicholas, and George, along with Thomas Wakley, for example, were all mentioned in the will of Marcus Rice, who died in 1671. Marcus named Walter and Nicholas, his nephew and cousin respectively, as executors of his will. Meanwhile, George Rice and Thomas Wakley witnessed the signing of the will. Thomas Wakley, also Catholic, lived in St. Philip parish in the 1670s and 1680s, but, according to the 1679 census, owned no land.

The Catholic community that developed around Nicholas and George Rice can be further traced in the surviving Barbados land records. Walter Rice appears to have been resident in St. Philip parish since at least 1667 when he acted as a witness to the sale of land to Nicholas Rice. Similarly, Thomas Wakley and Thomas Haddock, another local Catholic, witnessed St. Philip land transfers involving members of the Rice family in 1668. In the 1680s, the land records reveal a new generation of Catholics entering the community network. In 1682 and 1683, for example, William Meagher and Dominick Rice witnessed land transactions in St. Philip parish, again concerning Rice family property. The Rice family’s influence also stretched beyond St. Philip parish. George gifted his “friend & Countryman” James Vicars, a resident of Bridgetown, £10 and “my best Silver hilted sword and Embroidered Belt with my gray mare and best Sadle

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74 Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 399.
75 Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 224
76 Will of Marcus Rice, 1671, RB 6/8 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 358-9.
77 RB 3/7 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 68-9, 71-2.
78 RB 3/12 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 349-51; RB 3/13 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 88-90, 244-5, 245-7.
and Bridle.\textsuperscript{79} Land records connect Vicars to Thomas Clovan, whose wife, Ann, became involved in Thomas Montgomery’s conspiracy in 1689. Martha Cussley, a Protestant deponent, recalled remarking to Cock Farley, a Catholic, that An Cloven “had beene whipt” by the authorities in Bridgetown. Farley responded aggressively, according to Cussley, that Thomas Montgomery had taken up the case and sent evidence to the Catholic authorities in England for review and redress.\textsuperscript{80}

Beyond specified bequests to their friends and relatives, Nicholas’s and George’s wills exhibit a firm sense of belonging to both their place of birth, Limerick, and their adopted home in St. Philip parish. Both men requested burial in the local parish church, a Protestant establishment, but also the only burial ground in the parish.\textsuperscript{81} Nicholas Rice bequeathed £120 to the “Roman Catholique Clergy of the City of Limmericke were I was borne.” The money was to be paid to Daniel Arthur, in Limerick, “to be disposed and distributed by him . . . to all or the most indigent in the sd Clergy.” Nicholas left a further £100 to the poor of the same city.\textsuperscript{82} George made no specific reference to the Catholic Church, but also bequeathed £50 to the poor

\textsuperscript{79} Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 225.

\textsuperscript{80} RB 3/12 Deeds, Barbados Archives, fol. 179-82; Deposition of Martha Cussley, Mar 4, 1689, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xvii, fol. 39.

\textsuperscript{81} Nicholas requested he “be decently buryed in the Chancell of the Church of St. Phillips,” while George desired “to be decently Interred in St Phillip Church neere the Corpses of my Uncles Nicholas Rice Dcd.” Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 398; Will of George Rice, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, 1686, fol. 223. Jenny Shaw posits several possible reasons for the religious “inconsistency” of burial in a Protestant church: “a Protestant requesting a fitting burial for someone of his status, but who believed that the Catholic clergy in Limerick deserved some financial aid for their good works; a former Catholic who had converted to Protestantism either in Ireland or on arrival in the New World, and who decided to leave money to the clergy who had shaped his faith as a boy; or whether he had been born and remained a Catholic until his death, but did not see a contradiction between his faith and his place of burial.” Jenny Shaw, “Island Purgatory: Irish Catholics and the Reconfiguring of the English Caribbean 1650-1700,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2009), 160. Given the ties the Rice family maintained to other Catholics in St. Philip, the simple fact that no Catholic burial sites existed in seventeenth-century Barbados, and the social status the Rices maintained as prominent landholders in the parish, I think it most likely that both Nicholas and George Rice remained Catholic, but accepted that a Christian burial required interment in a Protestant church.

\textsuperscript{82} Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 400.
of Limerick. In addition to making provisions for the poor of Limerick, both George and Nicholas left bequests to the poor of St. Philip parish. George gave £14 to be distributed “to the poor Irish people” of St. Philip “according to their Several necessityes and the number of their families and considering their age and Infirmitis.”83 Nicholas, in contrast, left detailed instructions for his bequest to the poor. He provided a lump sum of 50,000 pounds of sugar and a further 10,000 pounds of sugar annually, “wishing that this may be soe exemplary to others that there may be soe much bestowed as with this may be sufficient to erect an hospitall in the sd parish.”84

The wills of Nicholas and George Rice exhibit evidence of familial and communal ties reaching into the middling and upper echelons of colonial society comparable to those developed by the Brent family in colonial Virginia. In particular, the Rice family cultivated ties to elite planters in St. Philip and St. Michael parishes who came under suspicion of harboring Catholic sympathies. George Rice, for example, left “to my good Friend doctor Edward Turvill of St Michaels Parish the sum of forty Shillings Sterl: to buy him a Roing immediately after my decease.” George also bequeathed £50 to John Reid and £40 “to his good ladye Madame Sarah Reid.”85 Further, George named Sarah Reid as the god-mother of his daughter, Katherine. She also appeared in Nicholas Rice’s will, receiving the sum of £50.86 Not directly implicated in the

83 Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 224. George’s bequests to the poor of Limerick and St. Philip stand in sharp contrast to his treatment of his immediate family. George left his entire estate to his daughter Katherine Rice, who was under the age of sixteen at the time of his death. (Ibid., fol. 223). But George almost entirely excluded his wife, Elizabeth, noting only, “in Case Elizabeth Rice to whom I was marryed be now or shall hereafter be with child whether with male or Female (for reasons best Known to my self) I bequeath to such child or children onely five shillings sterl.” (Ibid., fol. 226).

84 Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 398-9.

85 Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 224, 225.

86 Will of Nicholas Rice, 1677, RB 6/13 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 400.
1689 conspiracy, Edwyn Stede, the lieutenant-governor, still suspected John Reid of aiding accused traitors to escape the island. Stede also named John Reid, along with Richard Harwood, as “a reputed papist” member of the Council of Barbados. In addition to specific gifts, George named John Reid, along with Samuel Smith, “to be my Executors in trust and guardians of the body and Estate of my said Daughter Katharine Rice.” George entrusted both men, and their wives, “to take care of the learning and Education of my said Daughter beseeming her Estate, and that if possible She be married to one of the name rice being of Birth and education suitable and not within the sins of Consanguinitie.” It appears the executors followed their instructions carefully. Katherine married Dominick Rice in 1688, further binding together the Rice family and solidifying their place at the center of the Catholic community in St. Philip parish. The marriage coincided with the peak of religious freedom in Barbados. By 1688, the Catholic community in St. Philip parish received the ministrations of a Jesuit priest and the protection of the Catholic attorney-general, Thomas Montgomery. A year later, however, Dominick Rice, along with several of his Catholic neighbors, narrowly escaped prosecution as a wave of anti-Catholic fervor swept the English Atlantic world.

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87 Aug 22, 1689, Minutes of the Council of Barbados, Lucas Manuscripts (Microfilm), Barbados Public Library, Reel 2 1682-1696, Vol 4, fol. 553.
88 List of the Council of Barbados, Jul 19, 1689, CO 28/1 Barbados Correspondence Board of Trade 1689-1692, TNA, No. 9, fol. 14.
89 Will of George Rice, 1686, RB 6/40 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 225, 226. Samuel Smith’s religion is unknown, but he is described as a major who lived in St. Philip parish.
90 RL 1/65 Marriage Index, 1643-1768, Barbados Archives; Deposition of James Bradshaw, Apr 22, 1689, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7lxiv, fol. 93.
The Revolution of 1688-89 and the Toleration of Catholics

The Protestant revolutionaries of 1688-89 reacted vehemently against the perceived expansion of toleration towards Catholics under James II. Throughout the colonies, newly assertive Protestant governments threatened anyone known to be Catholic or, indeed, anyone perceived to be too closely aligned with Catholicism. Colonial officials appointed by James II and his council bore the brunt of Protestant anger in the colonies. Some of these officers, such as Matthew Plowman, customs collector in New York, or Thomas Montgomery, attorney-general for Barbados, professed Catholicism, but many more were royalists or Anglicans accused of exhibiting too much sympathy for the Jacobite and the Catholic cause.

The case of Nathaniel Johnson, governor of the Leeward Islands, is a prime example of the political and religious upheavals that spread through the English Atlantic world in 1689. James II confirmed Johnson’s appointment as a replacement for William Stapleton in 1687. Unlike Stapleton, Johnson was a staunch Anglican.91 Like many other governors during the reign of James II, Johnson adopted an open and indulgent attitude towards the practice of Catholicism and the acceptance of Catholics into public office. In 1688, for example, Johnson informed his superiors in London that “Soon after my arrival I was petitioned by the Roman Catholics for the free exercise of their religion, which was granted.”92 But with the Protestant coup in 1689, Johnson rapidly found himself on the wrong side of events. In the summer of 1689, Protestant residents of St. Christopher complained, “Some of the officers, put in by Sr nath: Johnson are


papists,” and jeopardized the security of the islands. They feared, “he is at this time contriving away [sic] how to deliver up the Islands to King James.” Johnson vehemently denied that he favored Catholicism or James II. In his defense he noted:

> If the grant of this Government to me by King James prove me a Roman Catholic, there must be many other good Protestants in the same case; and if the liberties enjoyed by the Papists here conclude me to be of their number, there are many, whom you nowise suspect, who will be equally obnoxious to censure.

Johnson’s protestations amounted to little. In July 1689, he fled to South Carolina, abandoning his office. But Johnson’s words voiced a problem faced by many colonial officials across the English Atlantic world. English officials throughout the Caribbean and North America had welcomed James II’s tolerant sentiments and willingly loosened the restrictions placed on Catholic and non-conforming residents. This placed them in the difficult position of having to defend their support of Catholicism to the new Protestant monarchy. Elsewhere in the English Atlantic in 1689, officials appointed by James II moved swiftly to distance themselves from association with the Catholic regime. In Barbados, for example, Edwyn Stede’s vehement condemnation of Catholic activities in the colony in 1689 stands in sharp contrast to his earlier support for liberty of conscience. Viewed through the lens of a man eager to keep his lucrative position as lieutenant-governor of Barbados, however, Stede’s sudden change of heart appears

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93 The complainants worried, in particular, about “one fforgary Captaine Leift of one of the Companyes, preferred from a Pruite Centenell, agt. the consent of Colonell Hill. as also, one Barry an inconsiderable Irish Papist, put into the Counsell & major Crisp one of the most eminent men on the Island turned out.” Copy of John Burrows narrative sent to Lord Nottingham by Mr Henley of Bristol, Jun 22, 1689, CO 152/37 Leeward Islands Correspondence Board of Trade 1689-1690, TNA, No. 12, fol. 47.

94 Letter, Joseph Crispe to Colonel Bayer, Jun 10, 1689, CO 152/37, TNA, No. 10, fol. 43v.


96 Akenson, If the Irish Ran the World, 135.
chiefly motivated by self-preservation not a strongly-held belief in the rhetoric of the new Protestant state.

The situation became even more problematic for actual Catholics in 1689. In New York, anti-Catholic sentiment led to a full scale revolt against the colonial government, forcing out Jesuit priests and missionaries, and incarcerating, or at least attempting to, any Catholic officials in the region. Gervais Baxter, Anthony Brockholes, and Mathew Plowman fled the colony. Catholics with fewer resources found themselves trapped in an increasingly hostile environment. Jan van Loon described himself, in 1690, as being in “a distressful state” and unable to fulfill his debts.97 Meanwhile, in Virginia, George Brent found himself at the center of an Indian conspiracy that threatened to engulf both Maryland and Virginia. In late March 1689, the Council of Maryland became alarmed by rumors of a “detestable & wicked Conspiracy” afoot in the colony. Protestant residents of Charles and Calvert counties believed the Indians and Catholics planned to slaughter them and seize control of Maryland. The council investigated and found the rumors to be a “feare & Imaginacon ffounded by the Artifice of some ill minded persons who are studious & ready to take all occasions of raising such disturbances for their owne private & malitious interest.” The “originall of all these mischeifs,” the council reported, began across the border in Stafford County.98 The rumors spread to Maryland via a group of Protestants recently arrived from Virginia. These Protestant refugees reported an influx of Maryland Indians into


98 Declaration of Henry Jowles, Mar 27, 1689, CO 5/718/1 Maryland Correspondence Secretary of State 1689-1696, TNA, fol. 7.
Stafford County and that one of them, “a war Captaine,” met with George Brent. In Stafford County itself, an angry mob of Protestant planters forced George Brent to flee his plantation and seek refuge at the house of his good friend William Fitzhugh. Fitzhugh recorded the scale of the uprising to a friend the following year:

I stood in the gap and kept off an approaching rebellion, to my no small charge and trouble, as you fully know, being sending almost every day for five months together and writing with my own above three quire of paper to quash their raised stories and settle their pannick fears, having my house most part of the time constantly thronged and in daily expectation of being plundered by the rabble and once of being treacherously murdered.

Fortunately for Brent, men like Fitzhugh ultimately prevailed upon the minds of local planters and quelled the panic.

Brent had a lucky escape, but overall the situation for Catholics in Virginia was little different from that in the other colonies. The revolution of 1689 rapidly reversed the gains made by Catholic inhabitants like George Brent during James II’s reign. In November 1689, George Nicholas Hack of Accomack County filed suit against Thomas Middleton for defamation of character. Angry that Hack had successfully prosecuted him for operating a tavern without a license, Middleton, the witnesses explained, used “violent and reproachful words and expressions” against Hack. In support of Hack’s claim, witnesses testified to Middleton calling Hack a “papist son of a whore and papist son of a bitch,” and proclaiming “such a person as Mr. Hack was not fit to sit in court as his judge.” Scandalized, Hack sought redress in the Accomack court as befitted a man of his status. In his defense, however, Middleton presented an array of witnesses who testified that Hack was indeed a papist. The case centered on Hack’s ownership of

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99 Minutes of Council of Maryland, Mar 24-26, 1689, CO 5/739 Maryland Minutes of Council 1686-1689, TNA, pp. 211-28. For the testimony regarding George Brent’s involvement in the conspiracy see pp. 227-8. See also Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William, 1:127-42.

a “Papish paper book entitled a Bull from the Pope” that he purchased from England in 1686. The book, according to several witnesses, seemed to be “A pardon for sins.” As one witness concluded, “I think he must needs be a papish or else he would never keep such a thing in his house.” The court agreed, finding in favor of Middleton. Hack’s association with Catholicism now impinged upon his standing in local Accomack society in a way it had not just a few months before.101

George Brent also became the subject of public scrutiny. In September 1689, Philip Ludwell attacked the favoritism shown towards men like Brent during James II’s reign. Ludwell accused Lord Effingham, the current governor, of flouting the colony’s law “by admitting a Papist to sitt” in the House of Burgesses. According to Ludwell, the laws stated “possitively that none shall sitt or act as Burgesses till they haue taken the oaths of Allegiance and supremacy, though Elected.”102 There is no record that Ludwell expressed any concern over Brent’s admission to the House of Burgesses at the time of his election in 1688. In fact, Ludwell himself approved of Brent’s appointment as surveyor for Stafford County in 1679 without any concerns regarding religion or his failure to take the oaths of office.103 Nor did Brent’s election represent the first time a Virginian waived the administration of the oaths for a colonial officer. In December 1676, Governor William Berkeley allowed Daniel Jenifer, who “hath fully approved

101 The details of Hack’s case against Middleton are laid out in a series of depositions for and against Hack, Accomack County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 4, Deeds, Wills Orders, etc 1682-1697, fol. 171-172v. For the earlier dispute concerning Middleton’s ordinary see Ibid., fol. 167, Sept 18, 1689.

102 Particulars of the Grievances presented by Philip Ludwell, Sept 28, 1689, CO 5/1305 Virginia Correspondence Board of Trade and Secretary of State, TNA, No. 18, fol. 54v-55. Philip Ludwell was annoyed that the governor had suspended him from the council and refused to accept his election to the House of Burgesses in 1688. The example of Brent formed one of a number of grievances centering on the advancement of Jacobite inhabitants over men like Ludwell.

103 Stafford County Court Record (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Reel 5 [Court Records 1680], fol. 2v, recorded Aug 11, 1680. Ludwell again showed no such concerns when he appointed Brent proprietary agent and ranger-general for the northern counties in 1690, see discussion of this incident below.
himselfe a good and Loyall subiect to his most sacred Maiesty,” to become Justice of the Peace in Accomack County without taking the Oath of Supremacy.\footnote{Accomack County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Reel 79, Orders 1676-1678, fol. 24. The record states that Jenifer took only the Oath of Allegiance and the oath of office.} The following May, Jenifer became high sheriff of Accomack County. On this occasion, the county court judged that, based on the earlier dispensation by the governor, “the oath of sheriff onely aught to be adminstred to him.” \footnote{Accomack County Court Records (Microfilm), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, Reel 79, Orders 1676-1678, fol. 45. There is no firm evidence that Jenifer, like Brent, professed Catholicism. It does appear, however, that Jenifer objected to the wording or sentiment of specific oaths, rather than the wholesale idea of swearing an oath.} Of course, by September 1689, it had become advantageous to expose colonial officials seen as colluding with local Catholics. The rapidity with which local elites jumped to reveal the Catholic sympathies of their political opponents illustrates how drastically changed the environment in the colonies had become for Catholic residents by 1689.

Yet, even in the midst of this upheaval, remnants of the earlier tolerance remained. In April 1689, as news of the Protestant Revolution in England reached the colonies, William Fitzhugh and George Brent discussed revising the target of the Brenton tract to take advantage of the “sudden turn of times in England.” With rumors rampant of Indian and French attacks all along the border, Brenton no longer held any attraction for Huguenot refugees. But George Brent suggested Brenton might equally be used to accommodate Catholics fleeing the new Protestant regime in England. The proposal subsequently came to nothing, but Fitzhugh’s framing of the revised Brenton project is revealing of an underlying assumption about toleration and the new Protestant order:

\begin{quote}
by being a Refuge & sanctuary for Roman Catholicks, & I dare say let it be encreased by whom it will, our Governmt. will give it all the Indulgences that can be reasonably required, by reason of its convenient Scituation for a watch and Defence agst. Indian Depredations & Excursions, neither
\end{quote}
do I believe that persuasion will be hindered from settling anywhere in this Country, especially there, where being Christian they may secure us against the Heathen.  

Fitzhugh maintained that the security and expansion of Virginia necessitated a certain amount of religious indulgence or, indeed, toleration. He was not alone in aligning the success of his own colonial venture with the need for a degree of toleration. Defending himself against charges of treason and papistry in Barbados in 1689, Thomas Montgomery wrote, “there being many of these Colonies wherein Papists are most Numerous and it being the interest of these places at this distance to be peopled it would never be without liberty of their religion.” Such assertions repeated the rhetoric that defined toleration thinking in the early 1680s and, indeed, shaped the framing of both James II’s Declaration of Indulgence in 1687 and the Act of Toleration in 1689. Both Fitzhugh’s and Montgomery’s statements, however, stood in sharp contrast to the broader demands for religious conformity issued by the English state in 1689. But the vehement persecution of Catholics in 1689 did not set the tone for the remainder of the seventeenth century. It instead served as an aberration or, at most, a realignment of the delicate balance between practical toleration of Catholics and state-enforced religious conformity. Rather than expanding on the anti-Catholic imperative of the 1689 Revolution, the 1690s saw a return to the patterns of toleration practiced before 1685. Local colonial authorities again chose to tolerate Catholic inhabitants on an individual basis without compromising their own concurrence with the anti-Catholic rhetoric that continued to shape English colonial expansion.

106 Letter, William Fitzhugh to Nicholas Hayward, Apr 1, 1689, in Davis, William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 250.

107 The Humble Petition of Sir Thomas Montgomery, CO 28/37, TNA, No. 7xx, fol. 43.
John Tatham and the Fate of Practical Toleration after 1689

As a resident of the mid-Atlantic colonies before, during, and after the upheavals of 1688-89, John Tatham offers a unique opportunity to examine how his experience as a Catholic in a Protestant colony changed over this crucial period. John Tatham arrived in the colonies in 1685 a very wealthy man. He also possessed the political connections and practical skills to flourish. Tatham had strong connections with both William Penn and his patron, James II, that facilitated his relocation to North America. His education as a Benedictine missionary and his extensive library testify to Tatham’s intellect, which he used to great effect in the colonies. Tatham and his wife, Elizabeth, initially migrated to the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. There they acquired a patent for 5,000 acres of land from William Penn himself and chose a plot in the newly-formed township of Bensalem. Bensalem offered relatively easy access to trade routes, but the Tatham’s located their plantation at a sufficient distance from the town to isolate them from prying eyes in the predominantly Quaker community. Colonial records and surveys indicate that Tatham rapidly extended his holdings into surplus land further down the Neshimany Creek and acquired his first residence, Tatham House, somewhere along the creek’s lower banks. Conveniently situated at the mouth of Neshimany Creek with easy access to the bustling

108 For further details on Tatham’s background and his library see Chap. 3.

Delaware River waterway, the house was perfectly suited for a budding colonial merchant. According to the early court records, Tatham and his family resided at Tatham House from July 1685 until sometime in 1688.

Despite, and perhaps because of, Tatham's rapid success in Bensalem, members of Penn’s government became concerned about this mysterious Catholic. The arrival, in 1687, of a royal warrant ordering the arrest and transportation of John Tatham back to England, merely confirmed the fears of the Pennsylvania government. But not all residents of Pennsylvania suspected Tatham. His neighbors in Bucks County, for example, proved instrumental in preventing Pennsylvania’s compliance with the royal warrant. They petitioned the colonial government on Tatham’s behalf and insisted on his innocence of the charges brought against him in London. Defending Tatham’s honor, the petitioners noted that “not any yet haue come to this Province that haue done more good in his calling & to make a Country, of this vast Wilderness which laid wast & fruitless since the Creation.” They described Tatham as “industrious, ingenious & discreet,” a characterization befitting a valued member of colonial society. It seems too that, despite the scandal, William Penn never completely abandoned his friend. In a letter dated December 1687, Penn cautioned the council in Pennsylvania to “let him [Tatham] be Civilly &

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110 Holmes, Mapp of Pensilvania. John Tatham’s original land patent northwest of Bensalem is marked by his alias John Gray. Copy of survey of Tatham land, 1688, in Extracts taken from Deeds produced by M: Wm Rodman, 1773, Penn-Physick Papers, 1676-1804, Volume 4 (Land Grants & Surveys 1676-1801 Miscellaneous), Historical Society of Pennsylvania [hereafter HSP], p1, folio 2. The 1688 plot survey includes the image of a substantial mansion house with two chimneys marked as J. G.’s House. When compared with the plots marked on the Holmes map this drawing is clearly part of the land formerly owned by Claus Johnson and Francis Walker, and subsequently sold to John Tatham. The Neshimany Creek runs through the center of Bensalem before joining the Delaware River just to the north of Philadelphia. The creek, therefore, served to connect Tatham's landholdings to each other and to trade on the Delaware River.

111 Pennsylvania Colonial Records: Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, Pa.: Theophilus Fenn, 1838), 1:156-7. The background to these accusations and the government’s concerns with Tatham is discussed in greater detail in Chap. 3.

112 Testimony concerning John Tatham, 1687, Etting Collection, HSP, Pemberton, Volume 1, p. 23, fol. 1.
kindly used upon all occasions, for he has shown him selfe a frd to the Province.”

Still, Phineas Pemberton’s hastily scratched note concerning “a troublesome Man” on the surviving copy of the Bucks County petition indicates not all Pennsylvanians trusted or tolerated John Tatham.

Given the level of hostility directed at Tatham by leading members of the colonial government, it is no surprise that at this moment in his career Tatham opted to relocate to a new colony. What is surprising is where Tatham chose to go. Sometime in 1688 or 1689, he moved his primary residence to Burlington, West Jersey, and lived there until his death in 1700. West Jersey was not an intuitive move for a man accused of harboring Catholic and royalist sentiments. Quakers in West Jersey tended to be stricter and decidedly more anti-monarchical than their neighbors in Pennsylvania. In the 1690s, two political factions--one Quaker, the other non-Quaker--vied for control of Burlington and the government of West Jersey as a whole.

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113 Letter, William Penn to Wm. Markham, T. Ellis & J. Goodson, Commissioners of Propriety, Dec 4, 1687, Ferdinand J. Dreer Autograph Collection, HSP, Letters & Papers of William Penn, Volume 1, folio 1v. William Penn’s subsequent fall from grace as a result of the political revolution in England in 1688-89 probably prevented him from offering Tatham any further aid.

114 Testimony concerning John Tatham, 1687, Etting Collection, HSP, Pemberton, Volume 1, p. 23, folio 1v superscription.

Tatham, naturally, sided with the anti-Quaker movement, making him a prime target for Quaker opponents.\footnote{Henry Bisbee observes, “It is doubtful that Tatham was very popular in Burlington. He was a wealthy man, a lawyer, and in Quaker eyes an interloper.” Bisbee, “John Tatham, alias Gray,” 255-256. For an overview of the history of West Jersey in the seventeenth-century see John E. Pomfret, The Province of West New Jersey, 1609-1702 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956). Tatham lent his considerably knowledge to the campaign against the Quaker government. In 1699, he co-authored The Case Put and Decided (New York, 1699), a pamphlet in support of the Basse government. See also Unpublished MSS, Samuel Jennings Animadversions on “The Case out etc.,” Mar 28, 1699, Society Misc. Collection, HSP.}

In many ways, however, Burlington suited Tatham perfectly. A bustling port town, it offered plenty of commercial opportunities. Far from hampering Tatham’s social mobility, the persistent religious tension in West Jersey provided a suitable environment in which a man like him could flourish. More concerned with the ongoing and deepening political rift between Quakers and non-Quakers, Tatham’s new neighbors seemed untroubled by the papist in their midst. Tatham’s religious beliefs, then, did little to affect his meteoric rise through West Jersey society. By 1690, Tatham was well-ensconced in Burlington society. In the ensuing decade, he continued to play a prominent, and often contentious role, in West Jersey politics and society.

Nothing signaled Tatham’s success and elite status in Burlington as much as his material wealth. He acquired a second, even more ostentatious, house on the eastern edge of Burlington with access to the Delaware River for trade.\footnote{“March 1689. Surveyed then for John Tatham a lot of Land,” in George Morgan Hills, History of the Church in Burlington, New Jersey (Trenton, N. J.: W. S. Sharp, 1876), 11-2; Daniel Leeds, A Mapp of the Streets and Lotts of Land laid out In the Towne of Burlington Anno 1696, reprinted in William Francis Cregar, Ancestry of the Children of James William White, M.D. (Philadelphia: Patterson and White, 1888); Gabriel Thomas, An Historical and Geographical Account of the Province and Country of Pensilvania; and of West-New-Jersey in America. (London, 1698), Part II, fol. 17-8; Bisbee, “John Tatham, alias Gray,” 256. Today the only remnant of the estate is the name Tatham Street, which runs along the eastern edge of Burlington on the banks of the Assiscunk Creek.} The inventory of Tatham’s estate valued “the mansion house, Buildings, Land & appurtences” at £1000.\footnote{Copies of the inventories can be found in “Will and Inventory of John Tatham, 1700 [Photostat],” Society Misc. Collection, HSP; “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham, 1700/01 [Photostat],” Society Misc. Collection, HSP. The inventories have also been published in Thomas C. Middleton, “John and Elizabeth Tatham of Burlington, N.J., A.D. 1681-1700,” Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia 6 (1895): 78-113. [Hereafter “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham” and “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” page numbers refer to the published version.]}
distinct interior rooms not counting the individual closets and storerooms, a bake house, a carriage house with separate stables, and other outhouses on the property.\textsuperscript{119} Lead tiles protected the roof, the many casement windows were paned with glass, multiple rooms contained hearths and chimneys, and the mansion’s well was equipped with an iron pump handle.\textsuperscript{120} Beyond the building itself, the mansion plot included “a very fine and delightful Garden and Orchard . . . wherein is variety of Fruits, Herbs, and Flowers; as Roses, Tulips. July-Flowers, Sun-Flowers (that open and shut as the Sun Rises and Sets, thence taking their Name) Carnations, and many more.”\textsuperscript{121} In his 1698 account of West Jersey, Gabriel Thomas singled out Tatham’s mansion as the most prominent building in the colony, describing it as a “Great and Stately Palace.”\textsuperscript{122} Even after Tatham’s death the house continued to dominate the Burlington landscape. In 1709, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts described the mansion as “the best house in America for a Bishop’s seat.” Centrally situated at the heart of British North America, the Anglican missionaries also considered the mansion to be “a spacious and convenient house” for their activities.\textsuperscript{123}

As if the house were not impressive enough, John Tatham and his wife’s estate inventories further reveal the high social status the family achieved in Burlington. Lavish furnishings filled every room of the great house, including an array of expensive upholstery,

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[120] Hills, Church in Burlington, 172.
\item[121] Thomas, Historical and Geographical Account, Part II, fol. 17-8.
\item[122] Thomas, Historical and Geographical Account, Part II, fol. 17-8.
\item[123] Hills, Church in Burlington, 92, 100.
\end{enumerate}
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looking glasses in all the public rooms, and furniture made of walnut, cedar, and olive wood. The
“lodging room,” for example, contained furnishings totaling £52. 16s and included:

1 Down bed & bolster 2 pillows wth case, 1 Sett of camlott curtains & double Vallons lin’d wth
Silk Tester & head lind with Silk Vallons below, 1 pr good sheets, 1 blanket 1 silk Quilt 1 Calico
Quilt, 1 good Sacking bottom bedstead wth large wrought head
1 large looking glass
1 Japan looking glass, 1 Japan dressing box 4 Small Japan boxes, 1 Japan Pincushion 3 Japan
broches
1 rich Ollave inlaid Table & 2 Stands
1 Cedar Table & calico Carpett
2 Elbow Camlett Chaires & 4 other ditto worn
4 window Curtains & 2 Iron rodds
1 large horn comb124

The Tathams’ wearing apparel alone amounted to £96. 2s., and included a host of luxurious and
brightly colored items. Elizabeth’s wardrobe contained several silk gowns, but its treasure was
the “rich Silk Gowne faced with blue velvet & a Petticoat of same silk richly laced wth Silver
lace” valued at £14.125 As Lois Given notes in her examination of the inventory, Elizabeth
Tatham “must have cut a conspicuous figure in Quaker Burlington.”126 John’s apparel included
“1 camlet cloak wth a red Cape,” “1 Yellowish Stuft coat vest & breeches,” “1 Camlet Cloak
lin’d wth blew & rent,” and one, slightly less ostentatious, “Brown cloath coat wth 63 plate
buttons.”127 This particular Catholic was certainly not given to hiding away from public view.

Tatham matched his material wealth with active involvement in the civic life of
Burlington. In 1690, the proprietors of East and West Jersey named him deputy-governor of both

124 “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 100-1. Comparison with John Tatham’s inventory indicates the room
changed little between the two listings, “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 87.
125 “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 97.
126 Given, “The “Great and Stately Palace,”” 269.
127 “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 96. As Lois Given notes, the expenditure on clothing is most apparent
when compared to the value of Tatham’s livestock; 20 sheep valued at £9. 10s.; 7 cattle £18. 10s.; 5 horses £16,
Given, “The “Great and Stately Palace,”” 266.
colonies, but the colonists refused to accept his appointment. Undeterred by this setback, Tatham participated at the level of local and colonial government in West Jersey throughout the 1690s. Between 1692 and 1699, Tatham served in a variety of offices on the Burlington County court including town recorder, juror, justice, and president. From 1697 to 1699, at the height of his career in West Jersey, Tatham served in the anti-Quaker government of Governor Jeremiah Basse. Tatham also continued to maintain ties to the colony of East Jersey. In 1698, the government of East Jersey administered an “oath of Secracie” to Tatham enabling him to “Assist them with his Advice.”

Beyond holding public office, Tatham also played an active role in the social and economic development of Burlington as a thriving colonial port. In 1695, he joined fellow non-Quakers to purchase a plot of land for the establishment of a non-Quaker burial ground in the town. Five years later, Tatham used his acquaintance with William Penn to solicit Pennsylvania’s support against the pirates that plagued the Jersey shore in the late 1690s and

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128 Answer of the Proprietors of East Jersey, to the Remonstrance of the Inhabitants referred to them, Dec 9, 1700, in Archives of the State of New Jersey, First Series: Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey, 33 vols., ed. William A. Whitehead, et al. (Newark, N.J.: Daily Advertiser Printing House, 1880-1928) [hereafter New Jersey Archives], 2:349. The Remonstrance stated the colonists refused to accept the authority of the proprietors in London to appoint a deputy-governor on their behalf; it is unclear, therefore, if the colonists rejected to the appointment of Tatham specifically or simply the arbitrary process of government. During this period Tatham, in his capacity as deputy-governor of West Jersey, traded gunpowder to Jacob Leisler in New York. Letter, Jacob Leisler to John Tatham, Oct 30, 1689, in Christoph, Leisler Papers, 276-7; Letter, Jacob Leisler to John Tatham, May 7, 1690, in Christoph, Leisler Papers, 96-7. Leisler was presumably not aware of Tatham’s shaky hold on the governorship or, indeed, his religion.


130 Reed and Miller, Burlington Court Book, xxxv-vi; Bisbee, 258.


132 Deed of Land, Jul 13, 1695, in Hills, Church in Burlington, 15-6.
disrupted Burlington’s trade. Tatham had very personal reasons for requesting aid against the pirates. In February 1700, his eldest daughter, Dorothy, eloped with Robert Hickman, a member of Capt. William Kidd’s pirate gang. At the time of their marriage, Hickman was already under arrest for alleged piracy. Tatham pursued justice in the Burlington court, singling out Elizabeth Basnett, a Quaker tavern-keeper, for punishment. According to the court record, Basnett not only aided the couple by “permitting and countenancing in her house an Illegal and clandestine marriage,” but also in “conniveing and suffering them to go to Bedd together in her house to the great damage grief and affliction of the parents . . ., the Reproach of the Province, and Scandal to the Christian proffession.” The marriage scandalized Burlington society and no doubt contributed to the sudden death of Tatham only a few months later. In his will, Tatham left Dorothy only “one piece of Eight” as a brutal reminder of her “graceless & shameless Rebellion.”

Tatham also had a second, less honorable, grudge with Kidd. The pirate captain’s smuggling activity on the Jersey shore interfered with Tatham’s own successful merchant trade, which may or may not have been legal. It was a common complaint of non-Quaker merchants in West Jersey that Quaker residents aided and abetted the pirates in an attempt to injure the economic interests of their political rivals. In seizing Kidd’s ship in 1699, Col. Robert Quary

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133 Letter, William Penn to John Tatham, March 21, 1699/1700, Penn Papers—Penn, William, the Founder 1644-1718, HSP, Box 3, Folder—Penn, William 1699/1700, fol. 1. West Jersey’s problems with pirates are outlined in Letter, Colonel Quary to the Lords of Trade, Jun 1, 1699, in New Jersey Archives, 2:277-80; Letter, Colonel Quary to the Board, Jun 6, 1699, in Ibid., 280-5; Letter, Gov. Basse to Secretary Popple, Jun 9, 1699, in Ibid., 286-9. For more information on the activities of the Jersey shore pirates see Robert Ritchie, Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).


135 “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 79.

136 Letter, Colonel Quary to the Board, Jun 6, 1699, in New Jersey Archives, 2:280-5. Quary complained fiercely that Quakers in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys showed too much leniency to the pirates. In West Jersey, he reported, the pirates “are at Liberty, for the Quakers there will not suffer the Governor to send them to Goale.” (p. 285)
noted, “She is a very rich Ship all hur Loading is rich East India Baile Goods to a very great vallue.” An examination of Tatham’s estate inventory reveals he was also no stranger to eastern luxury goods. The lodging room furniture, for example, included “camlett covered chairs” and a “calico Carpett,” while Elizabeth owned a “Flowerd persian Silk Gown” and at least four “very fine” ivory combs. By the late seventeenth century such items were not unusual in the house of a wealthy colonist, but Tatham’s inventory indicates he was also trading in eastern goods. His closets contained “Remnants of East India Stuffe,” and “Several p’cells of Musling, Silk, Lining & p’cell of Gold Lace,” as well as “money scales and weights.” Tatham’s trade interest, then, placed him in direct competition with smugglers like William Kidd, and Tatham, it appears, had the social and political connections to do something to protect his business.

All these things seem unlikely for a Catholic chased out of London in 1685 and hounded from Pennsylvania just three years later. Within the context of the Protestant revolution of 1688-89 it would seem almost impossible for Tatham to thrive given his reputation and his religion. Even the Brent family in Virginia, for all their local connections, suffered in the short-term as a result of the political restrictions placed on non-Protestants after the ascension of William and Mary in 1689. But the opposite occurred in Burlington, where Tatham seems to have thrived in the late 1680s and into the 1690s. That he achieved public success despite the circulation of knowledge about his religious faith testifies to the continued tolerance of certain Catholics in the colonies. This is not to suggest that Tatham, on occasion, faced public scrutiny

137 Letter, Colonel Quary to the Lords of Trade, Jun 1, 1699, in New Jersey Archives, 2:277.
138 “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 87; “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 97, 99.
139 “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 82-3. The inventories also include “a p’cell of Iron ware vizt axes Hatchets Howes & other New Tooles,” “22 large Indian Hatchets,” and “17 bunches of Indian beads,” indicating Tatham participated in the Indian trade as well. “Will and Inventory of John Tatham,” 85; “Will and Inventory of Elizabeth Tatham,” 105-6.
on account of his religious faith. As Henry Bisbee rightly concludes in his biography of Tatham, “suspicions of Catholicism, despite seeming denial on Tatham’s part, merely heightened Quaker antagonism toward a successful non-Quaker, particularly one so active in public affairs.”

The rumors and accusations Tatham fought in the Burlington court suggest his Burlington neighbors never wholly overlooked Tatham’s religion. Two cases in particular—one concerning an alleged poisoning and the other an outright accusation of popery—reveal the delicate balance between toleration and persecution that John Tatham had to negotiate. But the handling of these two cases by Tatham’s allies in the Burlington court also demonstrate that at least some members of the town’s ruling elite considered Tatham worth tolerating.

In late 1694, rumors abounded in Burlington that a prominent Quaker, James Budd, had not died “the Comon death of all men.” According to reports abroad in Burlington, Budd’s corpse “Swelled and looked black,” and showed disfigurement “in his Belly and att his mouth.” As far as the gossips of Burlington were concerned, the state of the corpse indicated James Budd had been poisoned. Relatively rare in Burlington, the possibility of a case of poisoning sparked an intrigue. But the alleged perpetrator of the crime provided even more fodder for the town’s gossips. John Budd, the deceased man’s brother, insisted that John Tatham poisoned James. Although cases of poisoning did appear in the court records of the colonies or early modern Britain, wealthy white men did not, on the whole, resort to poisoning their business associates and neighbors. Nor did they find themselves accused of such crimes. In the broader English-speaking world, poisoning was a household crime perpetrated by those of lower status than the

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141 Reed and Miller, Burlington Court Book, 174-5.
victim. In the colonies, poisoning came to be most commonly associated with slavery. Why then would John Budd risk accusing a man like John Tatham of poisoning his brother and how does the case connect to Tatham’s religion and his acceptance by Burlington society?

The case did not appear before the court as an allegation of poisoning, but as a defamation suit filed by Tatham against John Budd. Judging by the “presse of people” in the courtroom, the case attracted considerable attention. The size of the crowd prevented several potential witnesses from presenting their testimony. The evidence filed by the defendant, John Budd, attempted to prove that Tatham had indeed committed the crime of poisoning. The defense presented depositions from residents of Pennsylvania and East Jersey, as well as Burlington locals, confirming that James Budd had indeed been poisoned, that Tatham had business dealings with the deceased, and that Budd feared for his livelihood, if not his life, prior to his untimely death. Both Tatham and Budd served as agents for the colony’s absentee proprietor, Daniel Coxe, and they were both intimately involved in Burlington land transactions. At least one of the deponents, Nicholas Martineau, had been involved in an earlier suit filed against Tatham and Daniel Coxe. The testimony in the case rapidly aligned along political and religious lines, with defendants of the Quaker government queuing up to accuse John Tatham and, by association, the non-Quaker usurpers he represented.

142 On the connection between poisoning and slavery see Alison Games, *Witchcraft in Early North America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littefield, 2010), 52-5.


145 Reed and Miller, *Burlington Court Book*, 105-7, 113-4. The case, first presented in June 1690, originated as a dispute between Daniel Coxe, the absentee proprietor, and a group of French servants who claimed Coxe neglected to pay them for work they performed. Tatham became involved as Coxe’s attorney. The court settled the case in favor of Martineau and his fellow servants, ordering Tatham and Coxe to pay the servants and release them from their current term to seek paid work elsewhere. In 1694, Martineau testified that Budd told him “his heart was almost broke, and said that John Tatham would not pay him money necessary for his businesse,” Reed and Miller, *Burlington Court Book*, 175.
Despite the obvious religious tension in Burlington in the early 1690s, at no point did any of the deponents against John Tatham’s suit mention his religion or draw connections between Tatham’s scandalous past and the current accusations. Put simply, the Quakers who attacked John Tatham had very little to gain from publicly accusing him of being a Catholic. One half of Burlington society already despised him due to his involvement with the non-Quaker political faction. The other half, the non-Quakers, clearly tolerated Tatham’s Catholicism in return for his support against the Quaker government. Jeremiah Basse and John Jewel, both prominent non-Quakers in Burlington, testified on behalf of Tatham’s suit.\textsuperscript{146} With the help of his friends, Tatham won his case easily and, in the process, nullified the political attack against him. The same pattern played out in 1698 when Christopher Wetherill, a political opponent and business rival, accused Tatham of being a papist.\textsuperscript{147} Again Tatham sued his accuser and again the Burlington court, controlled by his political allies, protected Tatham from further scrutiny.

The unique political and religious environment of Burlington in the 1690s provided an opportunity for Tatham to succeed, despite his Catholicism. But he was far from the only Catholic to persevere and thrive in the English Atlantic world after 1689. In Stafford County, Virginia, George Brent slowly, but surely, began to recover his former influence. It began in July 1690, when Philip Ludwell, of all people, appointed Brent deputy-agent and ranger-general for the counties of Stafford, Westmoreland, and Rappahannock in northern Virginia. Ludwell’s commission signaled the shifting political environment, noting that he appointed Brent “out of ye Confidence I have of ye care fidelity and Circumspection of George Brent Gent of Woodstock.”

\textsuperscript{146} Reed and Miller, \textit{Burlington Court Book}, 174.

\textsuperscript{147} Reed and Miller, \textit{Burlington Court Book}, 209, 211. Interestingly, Weatherill, like Elizabeth Basnett, appears to have been Tatham’s neighbor. Weatherill owned land along Assiscunk Creek, which he subsequently sold to Tatham in 1695. See Nelson, \textit{Patents and Deeds}, 370, 473. Tatham had a long-lived reputation for failing to live in peace with his neighbors. He also argued with his neighbor Joseph Growden in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. See discussion of the disputes in Pennsylvania in Chap. 3.
The commission authorized Brent “to range and to take up all unmarked horses, mares, cattle, hogs and other wild game” on behalf of the proprietor, as well as conduct land transactions as the proprietor’s agent. Though not a political office, the positions granted Brent inordinate power over property and security in the region.\textsuperscript{148} Four months later, in November, Governor Francis Nicholson officially confirmed Brent’s appointment in a letter sent to London. In 1694, George Brent replaced Philip Ludwell as proprietary-agent for northern Virginia.\textsuperscript{149}

Like Tatham, George Brent did not lack enemies. Between 1691 and 1693, Richard Gibson launched a series of attacks on George Brent claiming Catholicism prohibited Brent from serving in any official capacity in the county or general courts of Virginia. In October 1691, Gibson demanded that “Mr George Brent and Robert Brent and all other Recusants” appear in the Stafford county court that “the oaths appointed might be Tendered to them.”\textsuperscript{150} The Stafford court took no action or, at the very least, found a legal technicality to delay the case. In April 1693, Gibson again complained that Brent’s status “as a Popish Recusant” should bar him from practicing law. This time the court responded, noting “that considering the said George Brent hath been allowed to Plead at the general Court so he may be admitted at this Barr.”\textsuperscript{151} Undeterred, but increasingly frustrated, in May 1693, Gibson re-presented his case to the county court noting:

\begin{quote}
there seems to be little or no notice Taken, but they suffered to go so that this complainant hath been frustrated & prevented of the due Proceedings . . . and those wholesome Laws made for the
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{148} Copy of Mr Ludwell’s Commission to Mr Brent to be Ranger Generall of the Northern Neck, Jul 10, 1690, CO 5/1305 Virginia Correspondence Board of Trade and Secretary of State 1689-1690, TNA, No. 50vi, fol. 172-173v.

\textsuperscript{149} Steiner, “The Catholic Brents of Colonial Virginia,” 406.

\textsuperscript{150} The court proceedings between Brent and Gibson in 1691 were preserved as part of the ongoing case in 1693, see Stafford County Court Records, Reel 7 [Orders] 1689-1693, May 18, 1693, fol. 351.

\textsuperscript{151} Stafford County Court Records, Reel 7 [Orders] 1689-1693, Apr 6, 1693, fol. 343-4. See also the case of William Bourne vs. Richard Gibson, in which Gibson complained that Brent, acting as Bourne’s attorney, did “aggravate the matter and Increase charges,” Stafford County Court Records, Reel 7 [Orders] 1689-1693, Apr 6, 1693, fol. 342.
Peace and Quiet of their majesties subjects seems Slighted and rendered ineffectual, their majesties Interests wronged their Subjects abused and this Complainant almost brought to Ruin by the base and wicked Practises of the said George Brent and Robert Brent.

As a result of Gibson’s impassioned plea, the court finally ordered that the Brents be “obliged to take the said Oaths and Test” as required by English law.152 Gibson’s success, however, was short lived. The Brent family appealed the Stafford court ruling to the general court and subsequently continued to practice law without taking the oaths. The records of the general court for this period are missing, but the continued presence of the Brents in court suggests the colonial assembly once again defended the family, as it had done in 1668.153 This certainly proved the case in 1696, when the House of Burgesses received a complaint that “several Roman Catholicks are employed by the said Lords Proprietors [in northern Virginia] to bear offices.” In this instance, the House of Burgesses refused to consider the case, concluding “the laws in such cases do provide sufficient remedy.”154 Once again, colonial governments proved more than willing to tolerate Catholics when it served the greater interests of colonial elites.

For all his legal troubles, George Brent died in 1699 a very wealthy man. The only surviving version of George Brent’s will is a draft recorded in 1694. Barring omissions due to the incomplete nature of the manuscript, the draft documents in excess of 15,000 acres of land owned by George Brent in Stafford County alone. The will also describes an unspecified amount of land in Patuxent, Maryland.155 Unfortunately, the sections of the will detailing the bequest of

152 Stafford County Court Records, Reel 7 [Orders] 1689-1693, May 18, 1693, fol. 351-2.
154 Quoted in Harrison, Landmarks, 1:141; See also Henry R. Mcllwaine, ed., The Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1695-1696, 1696-1697, 1698-1699, 1700-1702 (Richmond, Vir: The Colonial Press, 1913), 74.
155 Draft Will of George Brent, April 6, 1694, in Chilton, “The Brent Family,” VMHB 18 (1910): 96-8. Chilton describes the will as containing a number of corrections that indicate it is a draft copy. The total land acreage recorded in the will may have been considerably more as at least two pages of text is missing in this section ofos the will.
personal property are missing so it is impossible to ascertain Brent’s material wealth or his personal connections. He did, however, bequeath at least 25 slaves, his wedding ring, and his wife’s diamond ring.\textsuperscript{156}

The lack of local records from the northern counties of Virginia preclude studying the larger Catholic community around the Brents, but it seems almost certain that such a community existed. The Brandt family, Catholic migrants from Germany, appear in the court records of Stafford County. Thomas Blundell, also Catholic, lived in the neighboring county of Westmoreland.\textsuperscript{157} The Brent family also continued to forge strong ties to the Catholic mission in Maryland in the 1690s and early eighteenth century. Like his uncle before him, George bequeathed 2,000 pounds of tobacco for “pious uses” and “to be disposed of by my Executors as to them shall seem most convenient.”\textsuperscript{158} When George Brent’s daughter Martha died in 1715, she left 1,000 pounds of tobacco “to be distributed among poor Catholics by Mr. William Hunter,” the father provincial of the Society of Jesus in Maryland.\textsuperscript{159}

Elsewhere in the English Atlantic world, Catholic communities continued to build on the foundations established before 1689. In Barbados, the Rice family retained their place as the central focus of an economically and socially diverse Catholic community. The will of Walter Rice, recorded in 1695, provides evidence of a continued familial and community network of Catholics in St Philip parish after 1689. Walter made several bequests to his extended family, including a bequest to his cousins Dominick Rice and Marcus Rice. He left his “loveing friende


\textsuperscript{159} Will of Martha Brent, April 7, 1715, in Chilton, “The Brent Family,” \textit{VMHB} 18 (1910): 447.
Thomas Wakley a gold ring.” All three of these men attended Mass along with Walter in 1688. The will also left instructions for the upkeep of the son of John Waters, revealing a continuing and close connection between Rice and Waters. Daniel Waters and his mother Alice Macdaniell received “a competent maintenance . . . in meate drink and lodging at [Walter’s] dwelling house” and money for the child’s schooling. Walter also bequeathed Timothy Sullivan “all my bodily woolen apparrell,” a charitable gesture to a fellow Catholic less fortunate than himself. Walter Rice, it seems, like his uncle and cousin before him, acted as a benefactor to the larger Catholic community in the parish. Such communities could not exist without being tolerated by the local Protestant settlers and the colonial government.

In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution and the Act of Toleration, the parameters of religious tolerance shifted in the English-speaking world. Catholics found themselves divorced from their dissenting Protestant bedfellows, and alone in their ongoing fight against state-enforced religious conformity. Quakers and Puritans received licenses to practice their faith as their conscience dictated and dispensation from the necessary oaths of political office, while Catholics remained firmly outside the bounds of accepted religious practice and specifically excluded from politics. After the Revolution and the Act of Toleration, the English state and the colonies adopted a new and permanent Protestant identity. But the new Act of Toleration still functioned much like its predecessors, the penal laws, the Test Act, and the Declaration of Indulgence. It worked in theory to force conformity to a new Protestant universalism, but proved problematic in its practical application, particularly in the colonies. After the Revolution of 1688-89, the smooth operation of colonial government required a flexible attitude towards

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160 Will of Walter Rice, 1695, RB 6/11 Wills, Barbados Archives, fol. 232-5.
religious difference as it had before. Colonial officials and Protestant colonists tolerated those Catholics who proved themselves valuable members of local society. Over the course of the seventeenth century, then, Catholics peopled, planted, governed, and secured the English Atlantic world. They traded goods, sued their rivals, formed communities, and, on the whole, thrived in the colonial environment. By the end of the seventeenth century, Protestantism, in its Anglican form, had established itself as the faith of government throughout the English-speaking world. But Catholics continued to be an important, and tolerated, part of this Protestant Atlantic world.
CONCLUSION

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ATLANTIC

As England waged a new and fierce battle with France in the late 1690s and early 1700s, a fresh wave of anti-Catholic legislation swept through the English colonies aimed at discouraging Catholic migration, restricting Catholic avenues to political power, and enforcing the Toleration Act of 1689. Virginia became one of the first colonies to renew legislation specifically worded to discourage Catholic residence in the colony. In 1699, the colonial assembly passed legislation barring Catholic inhabitants not just from holding political office but also from participating in the election of colonial representatives.¹ Colonies elsewhere in the English Atlantic followed suit. Nevis passed an act prohibiting Catholics from holding political office in 1701. Against the wishes of the predominantly Catholic population there, Montserrat passed a similar act excluding Catholics from participating in colonial elections in 1702. Both acts were subsequently voided by the Board of Trade in London for being too lenient.² In Maryland, Protestant legislators targeted the power and influence of the Society of Jesus as a means to circumscribe Catholic practice in the colony. In September 1704, the Maryland Council summoned Robert Brooke and William Hunter, both Jesuit priests, to answer for their conduct in dedicating a Catholic chapel and performing Mass in public. John Seymour, the newly arrived royal governor and a staunch proponent of Protestantism, lost no time in publicly chastising the two priests. In a statement to the assembly, Seymour ordered the priests to confine their


“superstitious vanities” to the privacy of their houses. He further warned the Society, “In plain and few words, Gentlemen, if you intend to live here let me have no more of these things, for if I do, and they are made against you, be assured I’ll chastize [sic] you.” A month later, with the encouragement of the governor, the assembly passed a new law making it illegal to perform the Catholic sacraments.3

But, despite these new restrictions, Catholic inhabitants endured throughout the English Atlantic colonies. Where Catholics proved themselves to be discreet, loyal, and trouble-free subjects of the Protestant monarchy, Protestant settlers and authorities continued to overlook their religious identity and few prosecutions resulted from the new laws. Though considerably proscribed and more constrained than ever before, Catholics and Catholicism continued to co-exist with Protestantism in the English Atlantic world into the eighteenth century. The following examples of Catholicism in the early eighteenth-century English colonies demonstrate the ongoing presence of Catholic inhabitants in the English Atlantic and the continuation of methods of adaptation and acceptance forged in the seventeenth-century world. Catholics in South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Antigua in the early eighteenth century struggled to come to terms with the renewed constraints placed upon their faith. Nonetheless, they found ways to sustain Catholicism practice through Anglican substitutes, missionary priests, or through asserting their identity as loyal, but Catholic, subjects. Their Protestant neighbors, for their part, accepted the presence of Catholic inhabitants in the colonies, choosing to turn a blind eye to discreet Catholic

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practice, facilitating the spread of private chapels, or fighting to protect Catholic settlers who represent valued individuals in specific colonial societies.

South Carolina in the early eighteenth century represented the edge of English expansion in North America, and the focal point for English competition with its Catholic rivals France and Spain. First founded in 1670, the colony attracted migrants from all over the English Atlantic world. South Carolina offered land and new trade opportunities with the Spanish and French. Poorer freedmen from Barbados, Catholics among them, struggled to acquire land on the overcrowded island and took up opportunities in South Carolina in large numbers. In the early 1700s, South Carolina became a fertile ground for the newly founded Anglican missionary organization, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). Founded in 1701 and modeled on the Catholic missionary movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the SPG aimed to advance Anglicanism in English overseas possessions as a bulwark against Catholic expansion. Like its Catholic counterparts, it adopted a three-pronged attack targeting white colonists, indigenous populations, and enslaved Africans. South Carolina presented the SPG with the ideal blend of African, American, and European cultures, a veritable treasure trove of potential converts to the Anglican faith. The close proximity and persistent threat of Spanish settlements in Florida and French settlements in the Mississippi Valley fueled the SPG’s desire to thwart Catholic expansion through the promotion of Protestant missionary

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4 Catholics from Barbados, such as Irishman James Fleming, Thomas Witty, an English servant, or Charles Miller, an English planter, were among the first settlers in South Carolina in the 1670s. All three men subsequently fled to Spanish St. Augustine, where they swore “on the sign of the Cross” to being Catholic. Other English and Irish runaways to St. Augustine, such as John Hash and Edward David, who fled in 1680, testified to being Protestant. José Miguel Gallardo, “The Spaniards and the English Settlement in Charles Town,” *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 37 (1936): 93-9, 131-41; Richard C. Madden, “Catholics in Colonial South Carolina,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 73 (1962): 12-3.

work. One such missionary was Francis Le Jau. Born in La Rochelle, France, Le Jau fled to England after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. He converted to Anglicanism in Ireland in the 1690s and later served as an Anglican minister in St. Christopher between 1700 and 1701. In 1706, he joined the SPG, which sent him to South Carolina and set him to work converting French Huguenot migrants to the Anglican faith. Le Jau served in South Carolina for 11 years until his death in 1717.6

Le Jau’s correspondence, written during his time in South Carolina, provides an intricate picture of the fluid religious environment that prevailed on the colonial frontier. Huguenot, Puritans, Anabaptists, Quakers, and the godless provided diverse challenges for Le Jau’s missionary church. He also exhibited particular concern for the many Catholics he encountered in South Carolina. His correspondence describes Catholics in almost every sector of colonial society, painting a vivid picture of Catholic diversity on the eighteenth-century colonial frontier not dissimilar to that experienced by colonial settlers in the seventeenth century. Given the opportunity to meet with border Indians allied to the Spanish, Le Jau reported that “I found many grown Persons among them had been baptised by Spanish Priests.” The Indians hoped to acquire new priests from the English, though it is unclear whether they understood the distinct difference between Spanish priests and English ministers.7 Among South Carolina’s slave population, Le Jau discovered some “born and baptised among the Portuguese,” whom he described as “well

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6 This biography of Francis Le Jau is based on Frank J. Klingberg, ed., The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 1706-1717 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1909), 1-5.

7 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Aug 5, 1709, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 57. The Indians seemed eager to encourage new clerics to their villages promising “they wou’d use them very well.” (p. 57) See also Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Apr 22, 1708, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 37-40. I would like to thank Christina Snyder for drawing my attention to Le Jau’s accounts.
instructed” in Christianity, albeit the Catholic faith. Le Jau demanded that the Catholic slaves renounce “particular points” of the Roman faith, including “praying to the Saints and that they must not return to the Popish Worship” should they remove to a Catholic country. Having “kept ‘em above two years upon tryall,” Le Jau finally accepted the Portuguese slaves into the Anglican congregation in October 1711.

Of most concern to Le Jau, however, were the white Catholics he encountered. In 1709, Le Jau reported “two Strangers that were Papists come of their accord to our Church and another who is reputed also a Papist . . . is very desirous to do better.” But Le Jau had little success with these European Catholics. One papist, “being a fforeigner and well instructed seems desirous to be admitted to the holy Communion,” Le Jau wrote, “I wou’d willingly perswade him to make a publick Acknowledgment.” But the man proved unwilling to publicly recant his Catholic faith. As Le Jau phrased it, “human regards make that person find some difficulty to Comply.” A letter written two years later sheds some light on Le Jau’s failure. “There is no professed papist in the Parish,” Le Jau reported with confidence, “and few I thank God that I hear of in the Province.” “No professed papist,” however, did not equate to no Catholics. Le Jau wrote further, “some oare suspected to be such in our neighbourhood, but as they come to Cch and behave themselves well there and never mention anything to me in Conversation tending to

8 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Feb 1, 1710, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 69. Le Jau later wrote that he “framed a short Modell of Submission grounded upon some Popish Tenets which they [the slaves] told me of their own Accord,” Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Jun 13, 1710, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 77.

9 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Jun 13, 1710, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 77.

10 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Sept 18, 1711, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 102. In January 1712, Le Jau reported the death of one of the Portuguese slaves who had “abjured Popery in our Church 3 months ago,” Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Jan 4, 1712, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 104.

11 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Feb 18, 1709, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 52.

12 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Aug 5, 1709, in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 57.
that I do not take any further notice.” Le Jau, it appears, chose not to pursue the Catholics living under his nose and worshipping in his own Church, so long as they acted the correct way in public. These Catholics sought spiritual solace at Anglican services, but they did not renounce their Catholicism or seek membership in Le Jau’s church. For his part, Le Jau appeared to accept the religious compromise noting “only if they should present themselves to the Communion, I would do my duty and speak to them of what the world does suspect.”

Anglican missionaries in the colonies to the north, meanwhile, encountered similar levels of religious fluidity among European settlers, but proved much more anxious about its potential threat to Anglican prospects in the colonies. In January 1708, John Talbot, an Anglican missionary in West Jersey, wrote with concern to the Secretary of the SPG in London describing the religious environment he faced in the mid-Atlantic colonies. “There’s an Independancy set up again at Elizabeth Town,” he bemoaned, “Anabaptism at Burlington,” and, worst of all, “the Popish Mass at Philadelphia.”

The SPG hoped to end such religious chaos by promoting the establishment of the Anglican faith throughout the colonies, but it proved no easy task. For Talbot, Pennsylvania posed an especially problematic case. Although Pennsylvania passed legislation in 1705 requiring all government officials to reject Catholic practice and declare their loyalty to the English crown, the same council also allowed free religious worship in the colony of any religious faith deemed to be Christian. The freedom to practice openly extended to all Christians residing in the colony including Catholics. In Talbot’s eyes, such broadly defined

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13 Letter, Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of the SPG, Sept 18, 1711 in Klingberg, Carolina Chronicle, 102.
14 Letter, Mr. Talbot to the Secretary, Jan 10, 1707/08, in George Morgan Hills, History of the Church in Burlington, New Jersey (Trenton, N.J.: W. S. Sharp, 1876), 78.
religious tolerance endangered the Protestant supremacy, for “to tolerate all without control is the way to have none at all.”

Talbot worried not only that the colonial authorities in Pennsylvania allowed the practice of Catholicism, but also that it could be conducted so openly and in a manner so detrimental to the Protestant faith. A month after his initial report, Talbot wrote his fellow missionary George Keith with further details of the situation in Philadelphia. Talbot showed particular concern that “Mass is set up and read publicly [sic] in Philadelphia.” Anglican missionaries such as John Talbot and George Keith believed that any favor shown towards adherents to the Catholic faith led inevitably to the corruption of Protestantism and English governance. The situation in Philadelphia realized their worst fears. “Several people are turned” to the Catholic Church, Talbot wrote Keith, “amongst which Lionel Brittain, the Church-warden, is one, and his son another.” Such reports also troubled William Penn, in London, who in September 1708 wrote to his agent, James Logan, that news had reached him of “a complaint against your government that you suffer public Mass in a scandalous manner.” Penn worried, and rightly so, that his political opponents, particularly the Anglicans, planned to put such reports to “ill use” against him and the Quaker government of Pennsylvania.

Much has been made of this event by Catholic historians as proof of the unique position of eighteenth-century Philadelphia as pioneering religious freedom and, more specifically, as the birthplace of Catholicism in Anglo-America. Historians of anti-Catholicism also cite the incident

16 Letter, Mr. Talbot to the Secretary, Jan 10, 1707/08, in Hills, Church in Burlington, 78.
17 Letter, Rev. Mr. Talbot to Mr. Keith, Feb 14, 1707/08, in Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States of America, ed. Francis L. Hawks and William Stevens Perry (New York: James Pott, 1863), 1:37.
as a key example of the flourishing of anti-Catholic sentiment in the eighteenth-century colonies and the centrality of Protestantism to ensuring colonial expansion. But the performance of Mass in Philadelphia in 1708 and the celebration of a number of converts to the Catholic Church should not be understood in purely eighteenth-century terms. The conversion of Lionel Brittain and the subsequent establishment of a Jesuit mission in Philadelphia shares many similarities with the experience of Catholics throughout the seventeenth-century English Atlantic world. The fluidity of Brittain’s own religious identity and that of his family, the importance of itinerant priests to sustaining and expanding Catholic practice in the colonies, and, ultimately, the centrality of discretion to maintaining a Catholic identity in an overwhelming Protestant world, all had seventeenth-century precedents.

Lionel Brittain, a Quaker, migrated to Pennsylvania in 1680 with his family. They established themselves to the north of Philadelphia in Bucks County, patenting a plot on the Delaware River adjoining William Penn’s Manor of Pennsbury and the governor’s residence. In 1688, the family relocated to the city of Philadelphia where Brittain acquired substantial property. County tax records compiled in 1693 record Brittain as having paid £150 in tax,

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20 This brief account of Lionel Brittain’s life in the colonies is drawn from Griffin, “Pennsylvania’s First Catholic Convert,” 54. See also Martin I. J. Griffin, “The First Mass in Philadelphia,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 12 (1895): 39-43, which reiterates many of the same points. Many sources and genealogies refer to Lionel Brittain with the variant spelling Brittin. For the sake of continuity Brittain will be used throughout.

21 Brittain’s land grant is marked on Thomas Holme’s 1687 map of Pennsylvania. Thomas Holme, *A Mapp of yr Improved part of Pensilvania in America, divided into Countyes, townships and Lotts* (London, 1690). There is no indication that Lionel Brittain ever encountered John Tatham, whose lands lay on the opposite side of the county.
placing him among the moderately wealthy of Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{22} Outside of the usual land records, Brittain’s only other appearance in the documentary record is Talbot’s letter of 1708 identifying him as a Catholic convert. Some genealogists assert Brittain converted to Anglicanism before joining the Catholic Church, but this appears to be a misnomer attributable to Talbot’s use of the phrase “church-warden.”\textsuperscript{23} There are no surviving Catholic records from the early colonial period in Pennsylvania so it is impossible to positively certify that Brittain converted to Catholicism. His death in 1721 also went unrecorded in the other church records of Philadelphia, including the Quaker Meeting and Christ Church, the recently established Anglican congregation. Brittain may have adhered to any one of these religions; we just do not know. The religious choices of Brittain’s descendants, however, offer a glimpse into the family’s diverse affiliations. Brittain’s descendants remained in the Philadelphia area throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and adhered to the Quaker, Anglican, and Catholic faiths.\textsuperscript{24} Though we may never know for certain if Lionel Brittain converted to Catholicism, he and his family shared with colonists throughout the English Atlantic in both the seventeenth and eighteenth century a flexible and ever-changing relationship with religious doctrines and religious identity.


\textsuperscript{23} Griffin, “Pennsylvania’s First Catholic Convert,” 55; “The Conversion of Lionell Brittin, the First Known Pennsylvania Convert,” \textit{American Catholic Historical Researches}, Series 2, 1 (1905): 121-3. As Griffin notes, only the Church of England used “church-wardens,” but the records of Christ Church in Philadelphia contain no mention of Brittain as a church warden.

\textsuperscript{24} See Brittain genealogy in Griffin, “Pennsylvania’s First Catholic Convert,” 64-6. Brittain’s eldest daughter Elizabeth married Michael Kearney of East Jersey; their descendants appear in the records of the Quaker meeting in Burlington. His second daughter Rebecca married Phillip Kearny; some of their descendants remained active members of St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Philadelphia through the late nineteenth century, while others joined the Anglican Church.
The reports circulating in London in 1708 do confirm one vital piece of information: the presence of Catholic priests operating a mission in Philadelphia. As the Catholic historian Martin I. J. Griffin points out, the performance of Mass and the instruction of converts could not be conducted without regular clerical visits to Philadelphia. The Jesuit mission in neighboring Maryland provided the most likely source of any such endeavor.\(^{25}\) The first confirmed contact between Catholics in Philadelphia and missionaries from Maryland occurred in 1693, when Peter Dubuc included “father Smyth now or late of Talbott County, [Maryland]” in his will.\(^{26}\) When the Philadelphia Catholic community established the first permanent church in 1733, it was again with the aid of a Maryland Jesuit. On May 15, 1733, John Dixon conveyed to Joseph Greaton, a Jesuit priest, a small city lot on the south side of Walnut Street for the purpose of providing the priest with lodgings and a site suitable for a chapel.\(^{27}\) On this site, Greaton created the chapel of St. Joseph to serve the small congregation of roughly 40 Catholics then in the city. In 1734, the governor of Pennsylvania described the chapel as “a house lately built in Walnut St.” and, according to the governor’s report, “commonly called the Romish chapel where several persons resorted to on Sundays to hear Mass openly celebrated by a Popish Priest.”\(^{28}\) St. Joseph’s chapel, nestled between the Quaker almshouse and private residences, conformed to the model of

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\(^{26}\) Will of Peter Dubuc, Oct 14, 1693, in “Peter Dubuc,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* 14 (1897): 178.


discreet house chapels built in seventeenth-century Maryland, New York, and elsewhere in the English colonies for the private, but free, expression of the faith.29

The founder of St. Joseph’s, Joseph Greaton, arrived in Maryland in 1720 and served as an itinerant missionary whose circuit encompassed eastern Maryland and south-eastern Pennsylvania. While in Maryland, Greaton resided at a Jesuit residence in Ann Arundel County, but also traveled through Kent and Cecil counties and stayed at the Jesuit plantation at Bohemia, founded in 1706. As an active member of the Jesuit community in Maryland, Greaton had first-hand experience of the essential nature of the service provided by itinerant missionaries such as himself to far-flung Catholic communities. From Bohemia, Greaton could easily travel north to Philadelphia to establish ties with the Catholic community in the city and the surrounding settlements, before permanently relocating there in the early 1730s.30 Greaton traveled a well-worn path first pioneered by Father John Smith of Talbot County, also known as John Harvey. Both men favored itinerant missions as the preferred method for extending pastoral care to the faithful. We can safely conjecture that in the forty years between Smith and Greaton, Maryland Jesuits remained in contact with the Catholic population in Pennsylvania and provided the itinerant personnel who performed Mass in Philadelphia in the winter of 1708. As it had done since its founding in 1634, the Maryland mission continued to provide a pastoral lifeline for Catholic inhabitants not just in Maryland itself, but also in the neighboring colonies.

29 Old St. Joseph’s Church today remains on the same site on the south side of Walnut Street and its location demonstrates the careful seclusion of the original chapel. The current church building is reached via an archway on Willings Alley, which leads to an interior courtyard. The church is built into the surrounding city block with only its entrance door visible. The block is now largely converted into modern apartments, but in the early eighteenth century it was mostly surrounded by the Quaker almshouse, wealthy private mansions, orchards, and vacant lots. Although ostensibly a public chapel, even today St. Joseph’s bears striking similarities with the private house chapels prevalent in the English Atlantic in the seventeenth century. For a description of the locality around St. Joseph’s chapel in the 1730s, see Kirlan, Catholicity in Philadelphia, 34-8.

Not all Catholic residents of the English Atlantic world in the early eighteenth century encountered a colonial legislature so amenable as the one in Pennsylvania. If, as John Talbot believed, the government of Pennsylvania’s broad definition of religious tolerance opened the door to a resurgent Catholic Church, the 1715 anti-Catholic legislation in Antigua represented the complete reverse. First debated in March 1715 and implemented in 1718, the law, entitled An Act to Prevent the Increase of Papists and Nonjurors, seemed to follow the model established throughout the colonies to restrict the political power of Catholic residents. In keeping with the wave of anti-Catholic legislation sweeping across the English Atlantic world in the early eighteenth century, the Antigua act prevented Catholics who refused to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and subscribe to the Test Act, from holding political, ecclesiastical, or military office; it banned them from serving on juries; excluded them from becoming legal administrators or guardians; and made them ineligible to vote in assembly elections. In this respect, the Antigua law reconstituted the same roadblocks Catholic residents had endured in Britain and the colonies since Elizabeth I first instituted anti-Catholic statutes in the sixteenth century.

But the Antigua Assembly intended this new act to go much further. It also severely restricted Catholic economic power through the curtailment of Catholic property rights. No professed Catholic could own land on the island, run or own “any shop, storehouse, Tavern, punch-house or Victualling-house,” or possess livestock valued above £20. Further, the legislation prohibited the population as a whole from hiring or owning “any popish servant or slave.” It specifically intended “to remove all papists out of that Island, & to prevent others from coming there.” To do so, the law required all current Catholic inhabitants to take the Oaths or
give up their property and livelihoods within “a Year & Nine Months & no longer.” The attorney general of Antigua believed there to be “no Law like this” anywhere else in the English colonies and cautioned against its implementation by the island’s assembly “ffor that the same will amount to banish them out of that Colony.”

The attorney general was not alone in opposing the draconian legislation. Opponents of the new act, both Protestants and Catholics, emphasized the longevity of Antigua’s Catholic community, its persistent loyalty to the Protestant government, its vital involvement in trade and commerce, and the danger posed to such a small island by depopulation. In so doing, they advanced and repeated arguments first formulated in the seventeenth century to accommodate Catholics who represented an ideological threat to English colonization, if not a physical one. In January 1718, Ambrose Lynch, a Protestant, wrote to the Committee of Trade and Plantations in support of his Catholic neighbors. Lynch claimed he knew many Catholic residents on the island, and that “some of them have lived there upwards of thirty years.” During that time, Lynch reported, his Catholic neighbors “behaved themselues with all obedience and submission to the Govermt” and “have on all occations aided and assisted the rest of the Inhabitants.” In the recent war with the French, the Catholic inhabitants “were always ready hartily to engage and oppose the enemy,” and many of them sailed to the aid of Montserrat. These Catholics then, in Lynch’s eyes, had proven their loyalty to the Protestant state and, as such, had earned the support of the island’s government.

31 The details of the Act to Prevent the Increase of Papists and Nonjurors can be found in Letter, Attorney General of Antigua to Committee for Trade and Plantations, Jan 4, 1717/18, CO 152/12/2 Leeward Islands Correspondence Board of Trade, 1717-1718, No. 68, fol. 233-234.
32 Deposition of Ambrose Lynch, Jan 3, 1717/18, CO 152/12, No. 68i, fol. 232-32v.
Catholic residents wholeheartedly agreed with Ambrose Lynch’s assessment of the situation and, in a petition submitted just a few days later, they advanced their own arguments for their continued residence in Antigua. Adopting the tried and tested methods of their predecessors throughout the English Atlantic, the Catholics of Antigua in 1718 offered to swear the Oath of Allegiance to George I. But, “being truly scrupulous,” the petitioners refused to submit to the Test Act or swear the Oath of Allegiance. Protestant members of the government rejected the offer on the grounds that residents must submit to all three oaths. Prevented from swearing their loyalty to the king, the Catholics of Antigua sought another way to prove their allegiance and mitigate the harshness of the new law. The petitioners instead struck at the economic sanctions contained in the legislation as detrimental to the security and economic expansion of the colony. The law, they declared, “is not onely prejudiciall” to Catholics but placed restrictions on trade that would “much depopulate and weaken” the island. In particular, the banishment of Catholics to the neighboring Dutch, French and Spanish colonies, where they would receive “all due encouragmt. (with liberty of Conscience),” would serve only to enrich Britain’s enemies and leave Antigua “Impoverished & depopulated.”

Once settled in neighboring colonies, banished Catholics posed a serious threat to the security of Antigua. Stewart Browne, a Protestant resident, believed “several of those Inhabitants soe banished of[f], probably will joyne the Enemy and pilott them into the Creekes and harbours of the said Island with a View of being revenged” upon their former Protestant neighbors. Worse, Browne cautioned, “the Popish Inhabitants now settled all over his majties Colonys in America” would have little reason to stay, “believing that soe soone as any of them

33 Petition of Thomas Skerret, Nicholas Lynch, Cornelius Holleran, Peter Martin, James ffalon, and Henry Browne, Jan 10, 1717/18, CO 152/12/2, No. 69, fol. 238.
will bring his Estate or Plantation to any perfection some Protestant Neighbour of his will haue such an Act passed with a View of makeing this Plantation his owne.”

For the inhabitants of Antigua in 1718, the actions of a select group of colonial officials threatened to destabilize other parts of the English Atlantic world. Overly restrictive anti-Catholic legislation, as it had in the seventeenth century, continued to prove antithetical to the advancement of English colonization in the eyes of many colonial residents. For many of their Protestant neighbors, then, individual Catholic settlers continued to be an accepted part of peopling, securing, and expanding the colonies.

Despite the support of their Protestant neighbors, Catholics living in Antigua experienced straitened circumstances as a result of the new anti-Catholic legislation. Many abandoned the colony and the property they had acquired over several decades of colonial residence. Some, as opponents of the law suspected, fled to the French, Spanish, and Dutch territories forming new exile communities. But most remigrated within the English Atlantic world, removing to new colonial frontiers, such as Jamaica or South Carolina, where colonial authorities, eager to bolster white populations, welcomed all migrants regardless of religion. The pertinent fact is that Catholic inhabitants continued to be a constituent part of the English colonies into the eighteenth century. Catholics and Protestants alike engaged in debates weighing the merits and dangers of allowing Catholic settlement in English colonies. As long as Catholics opted to migrate to the colonies and proved themselves safe and loyal subjects, Protestant settlers attempted to find ways to accommodate and tolerate their presence. Even as a Protestant empire coalesced around them,
its inhabitants lived in a colonial world much more religiously diverse than the anti-Catholic ideology that bound them together.
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