

Note: I provide this essay only as background. My panel talk will summarize Protestant Constitutionalism more generally and also argue for its contemporary relevance. Please contact me with questions: moots@northwood.edu

Samuel Cooper's Old Sermons and New Enemies: Popery and Protestant Constitutionalism

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ABSTRACT

This article reinterprets the role of Protestantism in the American Revolution by examining the unpublished sermon manuscripts of Boston Congregationalist minister Samuel Cooper. Even as late as 1775, Protestant ministers like Cooper identified Protestantism with liberty and Roman Catholicism with tyranny. But these same ministers eagerly allied with Catholic France against Protestant Britain in the Revolution. Cooper even redeployed colonial war sermons against his new British foes in the Revolution. The shifting loyalty of ministers like Cooper cannot be explained by mere expediency or secularization of the political elite. Rather, the explanation lies in the evolving nature of transatlantic Protestant constitutionalism—the ongoing association of Protestantism with liberty and the rule of law—over 2 centuries.

On March 15, 1775, off-duty British soldiers and Loyalists held a mock town meeting outside the British Coffee House in Boston. They played their opponents to type and concluded with a costumed mock oration performed by Loyalist surgeon Dr. Thomas Bolton. Publication of Bolton's oration followed, probably printed by a Loyalist printer outside of Boston. Not coincidentally, March 15 also saw the publication of an oration delivered just 9 days earlier— that year's official annual oration commemorating the Boston Massacre delivered by Dr. Joseph Warren (Akers 1976, 23–25). The roster of commemorative orators since 1771 was a "who's who" of Patriot leaders: John Hancock,

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Dr. Benjamin Church, and James Lovell (Guild 1901).¹ Civic orations were complemented by sermons such as the one preached by Rev. Oliver Noble 7 days earlier at the Fifth Parish Church in Newburyport (Noble 1775). In Samuel Adams's description of the massacre in 1770, for example, he compared the victims to murdered Abel in Genesis 3:10. In a published sermon in 1771, Rev. John Lathrop at the Second Church in Boston used the same allusion as Adams to innocent blood crying out from the ground (Lathrop 1770).

Given such hallowing of the massacre and the support that many ministers provided for the Patriot cause, it is no surprise that Bolton directed some of his scorn at a Boston minister. As part of his costume for the satire, Bolton wore clerical bands. At the end of his oration he charged a "Dr. C" with hypocrisy:

He, prostituting his religion,
Turns a dispenser of sedition; And
to the greedy, gaping million, For
holy writ, deals out rebellion.

Bolton concluded with an ominous threat:

Instead of making an Oration,
Make sermons against fornication;
And with uplifted voice and hand,
Strongly enforce the seventh command
Of your black crimes 'gainst George and heav'n
Repent; you may be yet forgiv'n
Reform the Rebel, Thief, and W[hore]
And mercy suppliantly implore;
Then entertain a ray of hope,
T'escape damnation and a Rope. (Bolton 1775, 7–8)

COOPER'S RECYCLED SERMONS AND THE LONG ARC OF PROTESTANT CONSTITUTIONALISM

Charles W. Akers recalled this clever oration of Bolton's in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* in hopes of summoning scholarly reappraisal of Samuel Cooper's role in the American Revolution. Akers's article was joined the following year by another published in the *New England*

1. Municipal authorities appointed orators in a tradition that continued until 1783 (Guild 1901).

Quarterly by John G. Buchanan about Cooper's revolutionary rhetoric. While this miniature revival of interest in Cooper had its merits, both Akers and Buchanan paid relatively scant attention to a most curious fact about Cooper's career: many of his sermons directed against the British had been previously deployed against the French and Spanish. In fact, many ministers who opposed the British in the Revolution had previously been articulate and passionate defenders of Britain in prior colonial wars against France and Spain; and as with Cooper, the ministers' defense of Britain was wrapped in pious language about defending the rights of Protestants against tyrannical or lawless Catholics. Yet they were now praising alliances with France! What can Cooper's redeployed sermons tell us about the theological-political rhetoric of early American Protestantism?²

Tracing a developing arc of "Protestant constitutionalism," extending almost 2 centuries before Cooper, explains how Americans beginning in 1776 could so readily ally with a former Catholic enemy against a former Protestant ally. This long arc of Protestant constitutionalism demonstrates that political rhetoric against Rome was often as much about rights as it was about religion. When Americans experienced a constitutional crisis in the 1760s that became a struggle for survival and independence in 1776, their Protestant constitutionalism revealed itself to be more constitutionalist than Protestant and enabled them to join with a Catholic ally against a Protestant enemy. Rights had become a holy cause by the time of the Revolution—their elevated status even trumped the ecclesiastical camaraderie and "Protestant interest" of prior wars.

DR. COOPER AND THE BRATTLE STREET CHURCH

Before examining Samuel Cooper's sermons, one must first realize the significance of his ministerial career. The "Dr. C" under attack by Bolton was known as "Dr. Cooper" since receiving his doctorate from the University of Edin-

2. Pulpit exchanges lightened the load of what could be 200 sermons per year. Manuscripts of Cooper and others demonstrate that some sermons were never repeated while others were repeated over a dozen times and across several decades. Cooper's notations on the dates of his sermons demonstrate that he preached particular sermons with particular occasions in mind—often corresponding to proclamations of certain days for thanksgiving or fasting. The same is true for other ministers who repeated sermons. Rev. Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Massachusetts, reused sermons over similar spans and in more than one war. (The example of Parkman's reused wartime sermon is found in Ebenezer Parkman, box 1, folder 5, American Antiquarian Society.) Because of his prominence as a revolutionary leader and friend of France, however, Cooper was chided as a hypocrite in New York's Royal Gazette and the Continental Journal by Loyalist opponents for reusing sermons from the Seven Years' War (Akers 1982, 257, 330, 333).

burgh.³ Almost 30 years before the first shot of the Revolution, Cooper succeeded his father, Rev. William Cooper, to join Dr. Benjamin Colman and become associate pastor of Boston's Brattle Street Church in 1746. Colman died just 15 months after Samuel Cooper's ordination, leaving Cooper the church's only pastor.⁴ During his tenure at Brattle Street from 1699 to 1747, Colman became a leader on matters of church association and evangelism and renowned for his devotion to Britain and the international "Protestant Cause" against Catholic foes (Kidd 2004, 17, 26, 29–50, 161–62).⁵

Pastoring the Brattle Street Church was a position of no small consequence. Brattle Street's congregation was the wealthiest in Boston and included some of its most prominent citizens.⁶ Founded in 1699 by a group of wealthy Bostonians, including Samuel's grandfather, the Brattle Street Church or "Manifesto Church" was the fourth Congregational church in Boston. Josiah Quincy called the church the "first-fruit" of religious liberty introduced after the Glorious Revolution (Quincy 1840, 1:132). The church's dissenting positions on worship were articulated in a "Manifesto" criticized by the Mathers soon after its publication (Quincy 1840, 127–44; Lothrop 1851, 15–19, 26–53). The Mathers did not discern creeping universalism or unitarianism at Brattle Street; Brattle Street's fault lay elsewhere. Its worship was simply less Spartan than the typical Puritan liturgy. The church inched away from the more minimalist style consisting only of a sermon, one prayer, and psalm singing.⁷ Colman's church also adopted the Presbyterian Westminster Confession rather than the more Congregational Savoy Declaration,⁸ it sought mutually supportive relationships with Anglican ministers, and it took a more relaxed approach to the use of conversion narratives.⁹ Difficult to characterize as Old Light or New Light,

3. Cooper received his doctorate in 1767. All such degrees were earned only by recommendation, and Cooper was recommended by Benjamin Franklin. Cooper earned his baccalaureate degree from Harvard in 1743 and then took his master of arts from Yale. Prominent Patriot leaders James Otis Jr., Samuel Adams, and Rev. Jonathan Mayhew were Harvard classmates of Cooper.

4. Cooper was the church's only pastor until his death on December 29, 1783.

5. Colman was no doubt emboldened by forced service aboard a French privateer after capture during the Nine Years' War.

6. Members included John Hancock, Samuel and John Adams, Joseph Warren (whose wedding Cooper performed in 1764), and John Lowell (Akers 1982, 26).

7. Colman included recitation of the Lord's Prayer, a liturgical practice discarded by many Congregational churches.

8. Colman was ordained by the Presbyterian Board at London for the Bath ministry and had preached for 4 years in London, so his adoption of the Westminster Confession is not that surprising.

9. The church's statement can be found as "A Manifesto or Declaration, Set Forth by the Undertakers of the New Church" (Lothrop 1851, 20–26). Rev. Charles Chauncy later adopted the same practice of not requiring a conversion narrative for participation in the Colman invited George Whitefield to preach in several churches in Boston and at Harvard during the Great Awakening (Lothrop 1851, 68–70; Whitefield 1960, 457–63, 468–71; Akers 1982, 15).¹ Samuel Cooper was likewise supportive enough of the revivals to note Whitefield's presence at his church, and Whitefield thought enough of Cooper to sit under his preaching.² Nothing suggests that such controversies put the Brattle Street Church or Samuel Cooper on the margins of Boston Congregationalism, let alone the margins of orthodoxy.³

SAMUEL COOPER'S SEDITION

With the benefit of access to private papers on both sides of the Atlantic, we know that Bolton's charge of "sedition" against Cooper was indeed justified. Cooper was secretly active in Patriot circles and tried to keep such activity largely separate from his public ministerial duties. He was well known to his enemies, however. In a 1773 letter to Israel Mauduit, Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson supposed that Cooper consulted in every Patriot affair and characterized him as a minister praying for him on Sunday but seeking his removal

¹. Whitefield preached in Colman's pulpit many times, sat under Colman's preaching, and assisted him in serving communion as well. Both privately expressed doubts about one another, however. In 1739 and 1740, the young Whitefield thought Colman's sermons "not searching enough," and Colman thought Whitefield's theology unrefined. Despite their differences, they remained collegial (Kidd 2014, 120, 123, 125, 181–82).

². CO 198 (Samuel Cooper Papers, item 198), Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. On this sermon manuscript, Cooper wrote that Whitefield was present when the sermon was preached on February 28, 1764. He also noted in his interleaved almanac/journal that Whitefield was present on March 1 and May 20 (Tuckerman 1901, 145, 146). Weber incorrectly presumed that the Awakening had little effect on Brattle Street, based on the fact that if Whitefield was generally unwelcome in Boston, then he was unwelcome in every Boston church (Weber 1988, 116). Cooper's manuscripts and journal and the friendship of Colman and Whitefield suggest otherwise.

³. Cooper's sermon manuscripts indicate that he frequently swapped sermon duties with many of his local colleagues, including Andrew Eliot (New North Church), Samuel Mather, Charles Chauncy (First Church), Ebenezer Pemberton (New Brick Church), and Samuel Checkley (New South). See CO 35, 84, 89, 99, 105, 110, 117, 179, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Other pulpit exchanges are inferred from the Brattle Street Church diary, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Cooper swapped pulpits with his dear friend and Harvard classmate Jonathan Mayhew at Old West Church in Boston early in his career, but there is little evidence from Cooper's own manuscripts that he and Mayhew swapped pulpits after Mayhew's heterodox theology became more evident in the 1750s. There is only one reference in sermon manuscripts of Cooper having preached in Mayhew's pulpit (1749): CO 104, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Akers suggests other occasions of pulpit exchanges with Mayhew but without documentation.

sacraments. David Weir notes that Colman's church model had been used by English Dissenters since 1662 but had not yet been used in New England (Weir 2005, 215–17).

the other 6 days.¹³ King George III told Hutchinson in July 1774 that he had heard of Cooper's activities but not of those of John Adams (Hutchinson 1884, 1:160–63).¹⁴ Shortly after the Boston Massacre, Rev. Henry Caner at the Anglican King's Chapel in Boston lamented that “the peevish Dr. Chauncy and the insidious Dr. Cooper retain their old influence with the Mobb and rioters” (Caner 1972).¹⁵ Samuel Waterhouse, one of Cooper's former congregants at Brattle Street and a customs officer, thought that Cooper was so influential that he called James Otis Jr. “a Cooper's vessel” (Akers 1982, 64).¹⁶

Cooper was not nearly so inclined to politics in his pulpit, however. He did not publish a political sermon between the death of George II in 1761 and the creation of the constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1780.¹⁷ Nor did he exploit many popular opportunities for political sermons.¹⁸ Cooper did join other Congregational ministers in refusing to read Governor Hutchinson's Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1771, but this would not have earned much Loyalist ire.¹⁹ Nor is there substantial evidence from Cooper's congregants of political sermonizing in the years leading up to the

13. Thomas Hutchinson to Israel Mauduit, September 28, 1773, Massachusetts Archives, 27:546.

14. In 1770, former governor of Massachusetts Thomas Pownall warned Cooper from London that he and James Bowdoin were known in Parliament as “principal springs, managers and conductors” of the Massachusetts opposition. Cooper was even thought by some to have authored the Abingdon Resolves of August 1770 (Griffin 1854, 275). Cooper was also on the enemies list of General Thomas Gage as a “notorious rebel” (Akers, 1982, 195). By the time he received his orders, Gage surmised (incorrectly) that Cooper had fled.

15. This was a May 22, 1770, letter from Caner.

16. Boston Evening Post, May 13, 1765.

17. Cooper did publish his 1774 Dudleian Lecture against the Pope. His 1780 sermon on the new Massachusetts constitution is cited in monographs by Thomas Kidd, Charles Hanson, Ruth Bloch, Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, Gary McDowell, Jonathan Sassi, Barry Shain, John C. Miller, and Sacvan Bercovitch, for example.

18. Unlike Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncy (both political rabble-rousers and theological liberals), Cooper did not use the threat of an Anglican bishop as an occasion to preach a political sermon (Akers 1982, 139). Nor did Cooper exploit other tempting opportunities for political sermonizing, including the death of Mayhew in 1766. And though we know that Cooper opposed the Stamp Act, he did not preach a sermon referencing it until April 1776. We know this last point from Cooper's correspondence with Franklin. Papers of Benjamin Franklin, retrieved July 24, 2013, at <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedVolumes.jsp?jsessionid=85182655BD14ACB41C37FC2E5A5D9CE0>.

19. Only Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton, the governor's pastor at the Old Brick Church, and Rev. John Bacon at Old South Church read the proclamation without modification. Both were scolded by the Boston Gazette for doing so (Love 1895, 333). But Cooper swapped pulpits with

Pemberton as late as 1772 and likely even after that. Brattle Street Church diary, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

Revolution.²⁰ Even John Adams, who sat under Cooper's preaching with some regularity, was forced to speculate about whether Cooper's choice of sermon texts had political significance (Stout 1985, 383n56).

From manuscript sermons kept in archives at the New York Public Library and the Huntington Library, we know that Cooper preached a few unpublished sermons of political relevance between the Stamp Act Crisis and American independence and then during the war. Some of these sermons were on familiar themes of faith in the face of trial—calls to repentance or spiritual encouragement to seek divine help. Ministers often deployed sermons of this type during unpleasant circumstances, but some of these sermons are quite explicit in their political advocacy.

When one carefully examines these manuscript sermons, one is struck by the dates of their use. Cooper's own notations demonstrate that many of them were originally composed before 1765—in the context of colonial wars against France. Like many other ministers in the so-called Black Regiment of the Revolution, and like his predecessor Colman at Brattle Street, Cooper had been a loyal defender of the British constitution against Catholic enemies.²¹ Though anti-Catholic rhetoric was prominent in this Protestant constitutionalism as late as 1775, such strident rhetoric substantially disappeared during the Revolution. What happened to all such rhetoric about saving Protestantism from Catholic tyrants? How did ministers such as Cooper so quickly trade a Catholic enemy for a Protestant enemy and a Protestant ally for a Catholic ally, especially when so much political support for the British constitution was connected to what ministers called the "Protestant Cause" or "Protestant Interest?"

The disappearance of anti-Catholic rhetoric cannot be explained simply by the expediency of the French alliance or a latitudinarian shift. Rather, one must revisit the long argument of Protestant constitutionalism—especially in America—to discern how anti-Catholic rhetoric was more about politics than it was about theology. Arguments of Patriot ministers such as Cooper in the Revolution must be understood as the product of a long-standing theological-political tradition existing long before the Stamp Act Crisis. This tradition maintained a veneer of strident religious rhetoric, but it was more substantially rooted in Anglo-American constitutional liberties than religious dogma.

20. Brattle Street Church diary, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. While the apolitical character of this manuscript diary of a Brattle Street congregant kept

between 1772 and 1775 may reflect the apolitical character of this anonymous diarist, one would think that something would have found its way into the journal.

21. This label comes from Tory Peter Oliver's charge against James Otis Jr. that Otis marshaled the ministers in the cause of rebellion.

Cooper's sermons give us an excellent occasion to trace this tradition backward from the 1750s.

SAMUEL COOPER'S OLD SERMONS AND NEW ENEMIES AS CASE STUDY

Cooper's sermons before the Stamp Act Crisis illustrate the British patriotism of ministers before the Revolution. They wedded Protestantism and political liberty and cast Catholic countries as tyrannical and lawless. Cooper's published sermons after 1751 include many such examples. In a 1753 sermon, Cooper attacked Catholic Italy as idle and blamed tyranny for robbing the fruits of honest diligence (Cooper 1753, 28). In a published Election Day sermon from 1756, Cooper argued that God punished those who "divest themselves of the common sentiments of humanity, and who trample upon the rights of mankind" (Cooper 1756, 7–8). In his 1774 Dupleian Lecture, Cooper attacked Catholicism for subverting free expression (Cooper 1774).

But while Cooper's published sermons have received significant attention, less has been written about manuscripts from which Cooper preached unpublished sermons. Cooper's British patriotism is on full display in these manuscripts, and their reuse during the Revolution is fascinating. On August 28, 1755, Cooper preached a Fasting Day sermon following the disastrous defeat of General Braddock and the launching of subsequent military expeditions. This unpublished sermon from the French and Indian War could easily be mistaken for a Revolutionary War or founding-era sermon; it is filled with rhetoric about the "breasts of Patriots" and the importance of a "happy constitution." God, Cooper argued, gives his people defense from "tyranny" and "foreign oppression" and "breaks the weapons that are formed against them." Cooper encouraged his hearers not to "tamely" surrender their "civil and religious rights" through "base cowardice," "indifference to the honor of God," or "a stupid indifference to those blessings that sweeten human life." Piety and religion must wed "a spirit of liberty and fortitude," Cooper argued, because the Bible condemns those who do not resist invaders. Cooper commended British liberties not only civil but natural, extolling "the liberties of mankind."²² Another unpublished sermon taken from Psalm 60:12 the following month also dwelt on the setback of Braddock's defeat and provided a meditation on just war, liberty, and providence. God, Cooper argued, is the "patron of the oppressed, the friend of righteousness, and the avenger of innocent blood." "Neither reason nor religion," Cooper asserted, "forbids us to

22. CO 150, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

hope for grand success when we are called to action in a righteous cause, and take up arms only to defend our rights and possessions."²³

Cooper's support for British liberties is also evident in an unpublished sermon from November 24, 1748, written for a public Thanksgiving on the heels of King George's War (Shirley 1749). This same sermon was preached again 10 years later on September 14, 1758, after the victory at Louisbourg that broke the will of French Canada and ended a streak of British defeats. Cooper concluded by acknowledging the governing providence that blessed the successful Louisbourg expedition, and he paid respect to those who are the "guardians of our possessions, our liberty, our religion."²⁴

In the years preceding the Stamp Act Crisis, Cooper continued to tie the fate of civil liberty to the fate of Protestantism and cast the defeat of Catholic rulers as the defeat of tyranny. In an unpublished 1762 sermon after the Battle of Havana, Cooper drew a parallel between the "papal persecuting power which has even succeeded Pagan Rome" and the Roman Army's persecution of Jews and Christians. After the defeat of Spain in the Caribbean, Cooper exalted, "But blessed be God, this formidable and Antichristian power is now considerably impaired: Knowledge and liberty we hope are gradually prevailing; the Protestant cause has been signally sustained." Cooper cast Britain as the "bulwark of religious freedom" in the midst of a religious war in which the "Papal Powers are soon to be entirely subdued by Protestant Arms."²⁵

And yet just as troops might quickly turn an enemy cannon against their retreating foes, Cooper turned some of these colonial war sermons against former allies after the Stamp Act Crisis. Many show no evidence of revision before redeployment.²⁶ One prominent example is an unpublished sermon first used for expeditions against the French in 1755 and then preached during the Revolution in 1777. The manuscript's text suggests that Cooper used the 1755 text with only impromptu modification, freely exchanging "French" foes for "British" foes. Cooper cast the colonies as similar to Jehoshaphat and Judah, "meditating no designs upon any of his neighbors, and only endeavoring to . . . the blessings of peace." Suddenly attacked, however, the colonies must defend themselves. Cooper carried that argument forward:

The British interest in this part of the world is now in something of the same circumstances that Judah was in when Jehoshaphat called upon

23. CO 151, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

24. CO 95, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

25. CO 192, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

26. Words are rarely crossed out. There are sometimes inserted revisions, but these are rare as well.

his subjects to ask help of the Lord. In time of profound peace, and without the least provocation given on our part, our territories have been treacherously invaded by our inveterate and powerful enemies the French who seem to aim at nothing. . . than dispossessing us of the fair inheritance left us by our Fathers. This unjust and perfidious conduct of theirs has obliged us to oppose force with force and to exert ourselves in the defense of our privileges and first possessions. . . . An uncommon ardor has appeared among us early to oppose the encroachments of our Anti Christian enemies.²⁷

The lack of any manuscript modification or inserted page suggests that Cooper worked directly from the original 1755 text and did not think it necessary to make substantial modification or addendum in 1777. Cooper therefore saw little difference between the British and French, who, as an antitype of the Assyrians, became unjust, unprovoked, and treacherous enemies of liberty. The British were now the Assyrians coming to “dispossess” the Americans. The (Protestant) British became the “Anti Christian” enemy!

Consider the case of another unpublished sermon first preached in April 1754, twice more during the French and Indian War (1756, 1758), and then repeated 10 times during the early years of the Revolutionary War (between 1776 and 1778). The theme of rights more commonly associated with the Revolution is once again evident. Cooper told his audience of their unique position in the world: “It is entirely with Him [God] to say in what particular ages and of what particular nation men are to be born and what advantages then of a civil or religious nature they shall enjoy . . . a nation that asserts and enjoys the rights of humans while many others are groaning under an abject and miserable vassalage.”²⁸ The implications of repetition here from one war to the next are evident enough, but Cooper combined this sermon with another sermon preached twice during the French and Indian War (1758 and 1762) and repeated three times during the Revolution (in 1776 or 1780).²⁹ The hybrid sermon, preached as a Thanksgiving Day sermon on December 12, 1776, was charged with political content as Cooper extolled the advantages of living in a nation committed to rights and liberty. But there is something more in the 1762 sermon demonstrating how previous wars had habituated both clergy and congregant to the rhetoric of rights. In the 1762 sermon, Cooper yoked Britain and “the magnanimous ally of our Sovereign, the King of Prussia,” as protectors of the “Protestant cause” and the “Liberties of Eu-

27. CO 149, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. 28. CO 141, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

29. CO 170, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

rope." Against them were "the oppressors of mankind" and "those who would impose upon all their subjects a gross and cruel superstition." Cooper yoked France and Spain together as Catholic nations promoting "a superstition that binds the soul in chains, that is a disgrace to the Christian name, and that demands to be supported and propagated by violence, torture, and death." Whereas Britain and Prussia fought to preserve their own possessions and lay a foundation for peace, their enemies aimed to afflict mankind with a "torrent of power." But how did Cooper, in preaching the 1762 sermon again in 1776, overlook the religious affiliations of his new allies and enemies?

Consider another unpublished sermon preached during the French and Indian War in 1759 and again in the crisis year of 1768. A bleak crisis prompted both sermons. The 1759 sermon preceded Britain's first victory at the Plains of Abraham. As noted in Cooper's own hand on the manuscript, the bleak occasion of British soldiers landing in Boston prompted the 1768 use of the sermon. Written below a heading denoting an edit of this later version, Cooper drew on familiar jeremiad themes, but he quickly moved to extolling the virtues of the British constitution. Cooper then moved his audience away from the international Protestant context and toward the cause of the North American colonies: "Do we value the blessings of that Political Constitution which has so long been the glory of our nation; the admiration of its neighbors and the envy of its enemies; are we solicitous not only to enjoy these blessings ourselves in their full extent but also transmit them undiminished to posterity, as the fairest inheritance of a temporal nature, that we can bequeath, or they possess. . . . Let us devoutly implore the divine blessing . . . on the British Nation; and that large part of it that is now planted on this Western Continent."³⁰ Cooper concluded his modification by referring his audience to their rights. Cooper and others had begun to pull rights from their grounding in the British or European context, as well as the Protestant context, in order to replant them in nature and the circumstance of America.

We esteem it our Honor and Felicity to be a Part of the greatest and freest nation upon earth. We only wish I pray that our Brethren separated from us by the ocean would cherish a fellow feeling for us; and allow us to enjoy those rights, of which they justly boast, and for the preservation of which the nation has made such great and successful efforts. . . . Rights, which are not constituted by human compact, but by the immutable Rule of Equity, and the eternal laws of the God of Nature. In every step we take for the preservation of these Rights, may we be calm,

30. CO 140, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.
 prudent, steady, and united—Loyal to our sovereign; obedient to our God;
 observant of His will; and confiding in his Care and Protection. Then we
 may upon the best grounds commit our cause to Heaven.³¹

The main manuscript of 1759 combined both civil and natural constitutionalism with the “Laws of religion,” which make a people “flourishing and happy”: “And how happy is the state of such a community: Internal disorder and confusion is banished. Peace and good order are maintained: the innocent are protected; the injurious are restrained; the daring transgressor is duly punished; Justice everywhere takes place; and every man enjoys his natural rights.” Cooper concluded this passage with a biblical allusion increasingly popular with Americans and used over 50 times by George Washington: “Every man is secure in his person and property; and may sit under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, while there is none to make him afraid.”³²

Surprisingly, very little has been done to gain insight into Cooper’s flexible sermonic rhetoric. How could Cooper so readily discard the rhetoric of a world-historical struggle of Protestants against Catholics? Both Akers and Buchanan did note Cooper’s reuse of sermons, but both emphasize the Revolutionary era (beginning with constitutional crises circa 1764) and pay too little attention to what preceded it. Akers’s monograph on Cooper—the most comprehensive study of Cooper yet published—focuses on Cooper’s career after 1760 and acknowledges the Seven Years’ War only as a “rehearsal for the American Revolution” (Akers 1982, 25–39). Akers refers to “spiritual instruments” (themes of covenant and faithfulness) that Cooper employed during the Revolution as “perfected during the ordeal Bostonians suffered from 1754 to 1760.” Such familiar spiritual themes, Akers argues, were “too useful for a Calvinist minister to discard entirely.” Akers therefore sees the French and Indian War largely in spiritual rather than political terms (Akers 1978, 485, 487). Buchanan analyzes Cooper’s Revolution-era sermons but glosses over the fact that many were composed before the Revolution (Buchanan 1971, 1977).

Donald Weber considers Cooper’s reuse of sermons but also fails to provide insight into Cooper’s about-face from a Catholic to a Protestant enemy.³³ Weber tries to explain Cooper’s reuse of sermons as a Freudian psychological conflict: Cooper found a psychological obstacle to criticizing the British mon-

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid. For Washington’s use, see <http://www.mountvernon.org/research-collections/digital-encyclopedia/article/vine-and-fig-tree/>. Retrieved October 27, 2014. Cooper and Washington knew one another.

33. For Weber, the question is one of rhetorical style, casting Cooper as a latecomer to the rhetoric of the "New Divinity" ministers who turned evangelical revivalist rhetoric to civil purposes.

arch and therefore preached from sermons criticizing the French instead.³⁴ According to Weber, ministers were reluctant to engage in psychological patricide (Weber 1988, 116). This meant that Cooper could not commit the act of symbolic patricide against his monarch by crossing out "France" in his manuscripts and substituting "Britain" (117–18).³⁵

ANTIPOPERY REVISITED: ENLIGHTENED ELITES VERSUS PREJUDICED MASSES?

Weber's puzzling juxtaposition of ministerial styles and psychoanalysis overlooks the fundamental problem. If ministers like Cooper closely associated Protestantism with political liberty, how could they so readily abandon their political cosmology to ally with France? Francis Cogliano accounts for the move away from anti-popery by asserting a divide between the opinions of an enlightened and tolerant "Whig elite" and the opinions of less enlightened, intolerant "common people" (Cogliano 1995, 55). Cogliano's Whig elites are, not surprisingly, authors now most familiar to contemporary scholars and most likely to have written something preserved today. But how can we know the opinions of non-elites with any confidence? Here Cogliano speculates from newspaper accounts about unconvincing and isolated episodes such as fights between French and American sailors in Boston.

The thesis of an enlightened vanguard contending against unenlightened masses would have its appeal if not for the fact that anti-Catholicism was a reflexive instinct among both the elite and the hoi polloi. Many Whig leaders themselves, clerical and civil, associated the Roman Church with tyranny. Rev. Jonathan Mayhew's unitarian theology may qualify him as a member of the enlightened elite, but his theological liberalism made him no more tolerant of Rome. Quite to the contrary, it was Mayhew who viciously criticized "Popish Idolatry" in his 1765 Dudleian Lecture. Mayhew echoed many other ministers in charging the Roman Church with arbitrary government and tyranny when he said, "We ought in reason and prudence to detest the church of Rome, in the same degree that we prize freedom. Her laws, more arbitrary than those of Draco, are, in effect, like his, all written in blood. Popery and

34. Weber's odd thesis is evident in the following: "Cooper struggled in his preaching toward what might be called linguistic-rhetorical autonomy—an effort to utter safely, to name without verbal indirection, the agent of New England's current afflictions" (Weber 1988, 115).

35. Weber attempts a bit of psychoanalysis by suggesting that patriot ministers suffered from "historical and psychic ambiguities of filial affection and parental judgment." By 1778, Weber argues, Cooper began to adopt "the verbal powers of the evangelical preaching mode"

and “to imaginatively dissociate from Britain” (Weber 1988, 130–32). But this does not explain how Cooper overcame the psychological obstacles that Weber earlier asserted. liberty are incompatible; at irreconcilable enmity with each other.” Mayhew continued, “Our controversy. . . is not merely a religious one . . . but a defense of our laws, liberties and civil rights as men, in opposition to the proud claims and encroachments of ecclesiastical persons, who under the pretext of religion, and saving men’s souls, would engross all power and property to themselves and reduce us to the most abject slavery” (Mayhew 1765, 48, 49).³⁶ Similar criticisms are evident in the wordplay of Mayhew’s 1754 Election Day sermon contrasting virtuous Britain with her Catholic foes. The latter, he cleverly asserted, “transubstantiated liberty, property, religion, and happiness” (English rights) into “slavery, poverty, superstition, and wretchedness” (Mayhew 1754). Even increasing latitudinarianism cannot explain the sudden shift of allies and rhetoric. Universalism and unitarianism, on the rise in Cooper’s own time, just as readily inspired more hatred of Rome. Universalism was scorned as creeping Catholicism—the lowest kind of insult. Progressive Ezra Stiles called “Salvation” John Murray (a universalist minister) a “Romanist in disguise.”³⁷ Charles Chauncy’s progressive soteriology was compared to the hated doctrine of purgatory (Hanson 1998, 169, 170).³⁸

If one surveys political leaders rather than clergy, Cogliano’s argument seems weaker still. John Adams in his first essay of *Novanglus* juxtaposed “the Reformation and Protestant religion” against “the worst tyranny that the genius of toryism has ever yet invented; I mean the Roman superstition” (Adams and Sewall 1819, 13). Thomas Jefferson responded to Lord North’s 1777 peace proposal with a complaint that it did not repeal the 1774 Quebec Act’s changes to the “government & [Catholic] religion of Canada” (Zweirlin 1936, 364–65). Likewise, a survey of township leaders and their comments on proposed changes to the Massachusetts constitution demonstrate that anti-popery was far from eradicated among small-town leaders (Cogliano 1995, 113–28). In short, there is no evidence that “elites” readily abandoned anti-popery before the Revolution.

Supposedly “enlightened” Englishmen likewise equated popery with tyranny as well. Paine’s *Common Sense* called monarchy “the popery of governments” and complained of “a low papistical design” against America. A few decades earlier, Cato’s *Letters* argued that the “tricks and juggles of heathen and popish priests” make it impossible for people to exercise independent judgment

36. Given Mayhew’s rhetoric here and in his more famous sermons against “unlimited submission” and “non-resistance” published in 1750 and the Stamp Act in 1765, one can easily

predict that had he lived long enough, he would have embraced the French even more readily than Cooper.

37. "Salvation" John Murray is not to be confused with a more orthodox minister of the same name, known as "Damnation" John Murray.

38. Chauncy first hinted at heterodoxy in 1762, suggesting rejection of the traditional formula of salvation only for the elect and damnation for the rest. (Trenchard and Gordon 1995, 2:573). Trenchard and Gordon summarized the opinions of many in the Anglo-American world: "When people are taught to reverence butchers, robbers, and tyrants, under the reverend name of rulers, to adore the names and persons of men, though their actions be the actions of devils: Then here is a confirmed and accomplished servitude . . . secured by the servitude of the mind, oppression fortified by delusion. This is the height of human slavery. By this, the Turk and the Pope reign" (2:907).

If the Enlightenment mitigated the fear of popery at all, it was not for reasons one might expect. The Enlightenment's muting of religious enthusiasm did not make Americans indifferent to Catholicism. Nor did it make them more tolerant and accepting. If anything, it only gave them hope that rising secularism in Catholic countries would neutralize the persecuting zeal of papists there (Hanson 1998, 132–34).

THE LONG ARC OF PROTESTANT CONSTITUTIONALISM

If it cannot be said that a ready shift from Catholic enemies to Catholic allies was the work of enlightened elites, we must turn elsewhere for our explanation. A better solution obliges us to return to the rhetoric of the "Protestant cause" or "Protestant interest" and ask just how truly "Protestant" it was. During this long argument over 2 centuries, the Roman Church not only represented erroneous metaphysical theology but also was the progenitor of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. Rome's agents promoted lawlessness and subversion against the uniquely Protestant rule of law.

Protestant constitutionalism arguably began with Puritan arguments for the overthrow of Mary Tudor and blossomed in ecclesiastical debates under Elizabeth. Puritan dissenters advocating Presbyterian reforms were considered an implicit threat both to monarchy and to civil authority over the church. Reformers took to legal arguments, countering that they were upholding the law against opponents who were subverting it. William Bradshaw, for example, asserted that it was bishops who had illegally stolen power from the king (Winship 2012, 76–80).³⁹ Protestants coming to America came to speak of civil and ecclesiastical freedom as the same thing. John Cotton defended his 1633 emigration to America with an argument, later echoed in his 1656

39. In his study of Puritans and separatists, Michael Winship argues that a “godly republicanism” (similar to constitutionalism) grew up among dissenters (particularly among separatists). Winship characterizes this republicanism as “fear of tyrannical power,” “the dread of the corrupting effects of power,” “the fear of one-man rule,” “consent of the people,” and “balanced government,” first in the church and later in the state. David D. Hall (2011) also argues persuasively that the political institutions of New England Puritanism reveal a fear of arbitrary, unlimited authority. Stephen Foster (1991) likewise situates the political ideas of New England culture in an English context.

commentary on 1 John, that freedom was the liberty to enjoy the “ordinances of God . . . in purity” (Cotton 1634/2000, 181–88; Cotton 1656/2011, 572). Edward Johnson’s 1653 history of New England characterized New England as an army raised by Christ for “freeing his people from their long servitude under usurping Prelacy . . . because every corner of England was filled with the fury of malignant adversaries” (Johnson 1653/1910, 23). “Usurping” here meant long-feared Catholic plots to subvert civil authority. John Winthrop’s history of New England recounted how Protestant settlers were very troubled by French purchase of a Scottish settlement at Cape Sable. The French were “likely to prove ill neighbors” because they were “Papists.”⁴⁰

Two seventeenth-century crises, one in Britain and the other in North America, would give Protestant anti-Catholic rhetoric a rich constitutional character. During the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, constitutional arguments about law and rights became so intertwined with ecclesiastical debates that scholars began to view the English Civil War as the first modern European revolution.⁴¹ All sides—Puritan, Anglican, Royalist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Scot, or Englishman—accused their opponents of subverting the rule of law and serving as agents of Rome. Presbyterians, for example, were accused of being in league with “Poperie” and “Jesuites” (Aston 1641). Both sides charged the other with “innovation” in church reform and defended their accusations with history and precedent in a common law constitutionalist style. In the background of these debates were contrary understandings of legal supremacy and ancient standing in the Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) or the Act of Supremacy (1559), for example. And though common law did not govern the church as such, both sides claimed rights and liberties using the vernacular traditions of common law (Holder 2003, 231–52). Tools of conformity, such as the Canons of 1640, were cast by opponents as a violation of common law protections of property. The Scottish Kirk fought Archbishop Laud’s reforms not simply as unbiblical worship but as illegal abridgements of liberty. The Kirk’s arguments became what Charles Prior calls “a vital point of orientation” for all critics of episcopal power (Prior 2012, 83). Opponents of bishops charged them with undermining the laws of the realm; hence, opponents of Caroline reforms claimed to defend the liberties of subjects, as well as the constitutional rights of the Crown and Parliament (Kidd 1999, 99–122). Defenders of the bishops reached

back to the ancient constitution of the English church and historic precedents (Stanwood 2011, 172–97). Noted Hebrew scholar John Weemes defended the

40. The threat of “sending divers priests and Jesuits among them” motivated a plan to construct a fort at Natascott (Winthrop 1908, 1:98–99). Later, the General Court proscribed any person ordained by the authority of the Pope from deliberately venturing into the colony.

41. John Morrill retorted that it was instead “the last of the Wars of Religion” (Morrill 1984, 178).

church by searching for legal precedent as far back as the Old Testament (Weemes 1636). Both sides drew from natural law, but this was done mostly when history failed them or existing legal support was weak (Tuck 1979, 82–100; Sampson 1988, 72–118; Mortimer 2011, 192–208). Those accused of subverting the rule of law or constitutional liberties in these debates were declared usurpers and “papists.” Popery was synonymous with tyranny and characterized as the greatest threat to both Protestantism and civil liberty (Purkiss 2006, 76–121; Braddick 2011; Collins 2011; Von Friedeburg 2011). Fear of popery and tyranny as identical twins persisted throughout the British Atlantic in the decades after the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, building to a paranoid frenzy by the time of the Exclusion Crisis and Glorious Revolution. Protestant paranoia is evident in Titus Oates’s 1678 assertion of a Catholic assassination plot, for example. Whitehall’s policies aggravated American paranoia of popery as colonists feared the revocation of their own constitutions (i.e., their charters).

Anti-popery in the colonies was not confined to New England and its Reformed Protestants. The journal of two Labadists traveling throughout the colonies in 1679 and 1680 provides remarkable insight into the breadth of fear (Danckaerts 1687/1934). Maryland’s Protestants feared its Catholic minority and alleged that the Catholic governor was in league with either Canadians (alleged in 1676) or Indians (alleged in 1681). Even Maryland’s Catholic governor expressed his own fear about a league of Jesuits in 1642 (Stanwood 2011, 57–58). Deists also feared popish tyranny (Blount 1679). Attacks by the Spanish on New Providence Island’s Charles-Town in 1684 or Stuart’s Town (a Covenanter community in South Carolina) in 1686 caused understandable concern. Colonies in New England and the Carolinas living in the shadow of Catholicism were doubly afraid.

New England Puritans facing replacement of their original charter with a royal Dominion stretching from New York to Maine were convinced of Catholic schemes and feared for the fate of Protestantism on a cosmic scale. Increase Mather began reading reports from his brother (a dissenting minister in Dublin) in 1678 and requested Whig literature from England (Stanwood 2011, 17). A meeting of ministers called to discuss the delivery of the quo warranto by Edward Randolph in 1683 was so controversial that Rev. Peter Thatcher recorded his observations in cipher. Rev. John Wise, whose sermons are considered an influence on the

American Revolution, cut his rhetorical teeth during the Andros affair.⁴² As a punishment for defending the liberties of

42. The sermon of Wise's most cited as an influence on the Revolution is from 1717, *A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches*. Clinton Rossiter, for example, argued that Wise would have outdone both Paine and Jefferson as a revolutionary (Rossiter 1949, 29). "freeborn English Men" against the Dominion, Wise was briefly deprived of his ministry. Pamphleteers at this time compared Whitehall's policies with Louis XIV's persecution of the Huguenots (*English Gentleman Abroad* 1689; Higginson 1689).

The Glorious Revolution launched the first American revolutions and brought rejoicing over deliverance from "popish plots." Stuart-appointed administrators were attacked, arrested, or jailed in Massachusetts, the West Indies, Barbados, Maryland, and New York. Virginia and Bermuda barely avoided similar troubles. Appeals to "gracious King William" included thanks that he had prevented "Inundation of Slavery and Popery, that had like to overwhelm their Majesties Protestant Subjects in all their Territories and Dominions" (*Declaration of the Reasons* 1689, 6). A century later, Americans recalled these incidents on the eve of their independence. For example, Increase Mather's 1688 attack on the Dominion was republished in Boston in 1775.⁴³ Likewise, *The Revolution in New-England Justified and the People there Vindicated from the Aspirations Cast upon them* (1691), probably written by Increase Mather, Samuel Sewall, or Edward Rawson, was republished in Boston in 1773.

After the Glorious Revolution, colonial ministers became enthusiastic defenders of the British constitution and expressed their love for William and Mary in constitutional terms. Cotton Mather's December 19, 1689, sermon called for unity among Protestants and famously urged "War with none but Hell and Rome" (Mather 1690, 40). But Mather also rejoiced that New England had been freed from the denial of "Common Rights, which all Englishmen justly reckon themselves born unto," and thereby from "slavery" (42–43). In his 1692 election sermon, Cotton Mather returned to the familiar trope of the Exodus, implying that the plight of Massachusetts under James II was akin to the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites under "a cruel Shishak." In Mather's exploitation of ancient history, Egyptian rule apparently not only was cruel but also lacked the rule of law; drawing the Whiggish analogy, Mather condemned the ancient Egyptian government as "arbitrary." Shishak apparently had much in common with James, including the imposition of "hard quitrents," disturbing worship, and imposing taxes and laws without consent (Mather 1692, 33). In his sermon's application, Mather added to the usual pious duties (duly constituted churches, prayer, and

moral reformation) a Whiggish set of civic virtues: taking an interest in the framing of laws, representative government, equal and morally proper taxation, and appropriate laws

43. Mather's attack on the Dominion, *A Narrative of the Miseries of New England by Reason of an Arbitrary Government Erected There*, was first published in Boston in 1688 and in London in 1689.

holding magistrates accountable (60–62). Mather also praised the move toward toleration in the English constitution. Mather extolled "Humane Society" in which "a man has a Right to his Life, his Estate, his Liberty, and his Family" (43–44). Concluding on a constitutional note, Mather argued that the new province had more power than it did as a corporation insofar as judges, justices, and counselors could not be arbitrarily imposed.

In a published version of his 1693 election sermon, Increase Mather likewise sounded constitutionalist notes. He celebrated that every man would still be secure in his property and estate, and that taxes and laws required consent of elected representatives. The old definition of liberty as freedom of worship was echoed but now cast in more progressive terms as freedom of conscience and serving God "with all the freedom which your hearts can desire" (Mather 1693, 22). The new charter, Increase Mather argued, preserved not only the "Blessed Gospel in its Purity and Freedom" but also "Liberty and Property" (5). Liberty and Property, he asserted, were "the fairest Flowers of the Civil State" that preserved New England from "Slavery and Ruin" (5, 8).

COLONIAL WARS AS REHEARSAL FOR REVOLUTION

Such political and religious rhetoric associating constitutional liberties with Protestantism continued well into the eighteenth century and flourished in wartime. Hanson summarizes the situation when he writes, "For eighteenth-century New Englanders, well versed as they were in English history, popery and tyranny were synonymous" (Hanson 1998, 14). In the British Atlantic, the accession of William and Mary preceded almost 25 years of continuous colonial warfare beginning with the Nine Years War/King William's War (1689–97). Like their Protestant cousins back in England, Americans kept a patriotic calendar commemorating Protestant triumphs (e.g., the execution of Charles I, the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, or the sinking of the Spanish Armada) but soon added their own watershed moment—the 1745 conquest of Louisbourg. This expedition to Cape Breton, an American operation with British naval support, was more relevant for the Revolution than the Great Awakening.⁴⁴ Nathan Hatch rightly describes the expedition to Louisbourg as the beginning of an era when ministers across the "entire theological spectrum"

articulated arguments for political liberty. Both Old and New Lights shifted their focus to the French menace (Hatch 1977, 6–8, 40). By 1745, the

44. The connection has been asserted since Henry Levi Osgood, but it was Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* that most famously asserted such a link (Heimert 1966, viii). Kidd retorts, "A direct connection between the two movements remains elusive" (Kidd 2007, 288). The expedition to seize Cape Breton Island had overshadowed the Great Awakening in the public mind and did much more to shape anti-Catholic rhetoric than the Awakening ever did (31–32). Hatch correctly argues that New Englanders in the 1740s and 1750s rooted their collective identity in the idea that popery and slavery struck a bargain to undermine British Protestantism and the British constitution.⁴⁵

Throughout the Seven Years' War, ministers sustained a simultaneous defense of both Protestantism and the British constitution. In a sermon to soldiers in April 1755, Congregationalist minister Isaac Morrill intertwined fears both civil and ecclesiastical: "Are we willing to be bound to the Stake and burnt? This seems to appear from the best Intelligence we have of the Conduct of the French, that their Design is as soon as possible to change the Government of these Provinces; and if they change the Government of this Land, they will the Religion of it too. And are we willing to give up our civil Rights and Privileges, and become subjected to Tyranny and arbitrary Government?" (Morrill 1755, 21). In that same year, Congregationalist John Lowell in Newbury told soldiers that "the Estates, Laws, Liberties, Lives, and Religion of People are to be defended at the utmost Hazard" (Lowell 1755, 10). Eliphalet Williams, congregational minister in Hartford, preached similar themes in his 1760 thanksgiving sermon that defended the war as a contest for "Security and Preservation of its undoubted, valuable Rights, commercial interests, and Properties." Using

45. As valuable as Hatch's study is, it still has notable shortcomings. He argues that it was "only after the Awakening that the myth of the forefathers as stalwarts of liberty became a dominant theme" (Hatch 1977, 45–46). But Thomas Prince, the great transatlantic promoter of the revivals, cast America in political and spiritual terms in his 1736 history of New England. Prince praised the "worthy Fathers" who settled the "plantations" for their concern that "Liberty, both civil and ecclesiastical, might be continued to their successors" (1826, v). One can hardly say that 1736 (or the late 1720s or early 1730s, in which Prince probably wrote those lines) was "post-awakening." Second, Hatch is wrong to suggest that ministers politicized the Pope only after 1745 and the Louisbourg expedition (Hatch 1977, 17). As demonstrated already, the Pope and Rome had long represented oppressive and arbitrary government in the Anglo-American tradition. Third, Hatch makes too much of "civil millennialism." Protestant ministers since the Reformation saw political events having "worldhistorical" significance. If Hatch means that most ministers literally expected some elements of the millennium to appear shortly, however, he is incorrect. James Byrd has rightly argued that only a small minority of ministers at this time believed in an immanent millennium (Byrd 2013, 143–46). Fourth, Hatch is incorrect to characterize the progressive line of argument among New England clergy of "Britain against France, America against Britain" leading

to "Federalism against Democratic Republicans" (Hatch 1977, 6–8). While the first two parts of this line are largely correct, there were exceptions on this last point, such as Rev. Samuel MacClintock's support of Jefferson. Finally, Hatch contradicts himself on exactly when ministers committed themselves to America as the new seat of liberty. At one point he argues that the clergy identified Great Britain before 1765 as the "bastion of freedom and the bulwark against Antichrist" (48). He argues earlier (23), however, that even before the Stamp Act ministers were committed to America as liberty's new champion.

the same language as his ministerial colleagues, Williams argued that the French would drive them from their "heritage" and especially their "Estates, Liberties, Religion." Drawing on familiar legal language, Williams argued that the recent victory over "New France" (Canada) enabled them to secure their "Lives and Properties" and "Immunities and privileges, civil and sacred." Without a British victory, the French would have overthrown the Protestant religion, sold them "for Bondmen and Bondwomen," or even made them outright slaves. From this would have followed "Popery. . . Idolatrous Worship" and Bibles "wrested out of our hands" (Williams 1760, 13, 14, 15, 21, 24, 27–28).

Presbyterian and former revivalist minister Gilbert Tennent in a February 1756 sermon warned soldiers of the "dismal Consequences of a French, a Popish Government, that in such a Situation you must be deprived of your Estates and civil Liberty. . . you must either sin [convert], or suffer the most barbarous Severities." After chronicling Protestant martyrdoms beginning with the Waldensians and ending in contemporary Ireland, Tennent concluded his attack on Roman Catholicism and defense of Protestantism: "It is a Thousand Times better to be under the Government of Turks than Papists, for there we might enjoy some Liberty, but here none at all; there are not such bloody, tyrannical Taskmasters under the whole heaven as the Papists, we have therefore Reason to dread their Government more than Death itself. . . . Should we therefore deserve the Character of Men, of Christians, of Protestants, of Britons, if we sold cheap . . . those precious Privileges which have been committed to us by our Ancestors, as a Sacred Trust" (Tennent 1756, 30–31). In that same year James Lockwood, another Congregational minister, preached a sermon asserting that "there is no Nation in Europe, nor on the Earth whose Civil Government is like that of Great Britain—none that exceeds, perhaps none, that, in all Respects, equals it in Excellency." "Arbitrary rule" in Europe and Asia, Lockwood argued, is "one of the greatest engines of Misery & Desolation to Mankind—the most dreadful Curse that ever blasted and devour'd the Earth" (Lockwood 1759, 11–13, 18, 24–25, 30). In a 1763 thanksgiving sermon Lockwood painted a grim picture of what would have awaited the survivors had their French Catholic enemies succeeded: "the miserable Remnant, stript of their precious privileges, Civil and Religious, would be reduced to a State of the most wretched Slavery" (Lockwood 1763, 18).

This rhetoric was not confined to New England or to Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Anglican minister William Smith (later the provost of the University of Pennsylvania) charged a gathering of soldiers in Philadelphia in 1757 to “cultivate in yourselves and those under you, a noble, manly, and rational Enthusiasm in the glorious cause wherein you are engaged.” That cause, Smith argued, was the cause of “Justice, the Protestant-cause, the cause of Virtue and Freedom on earth” and “an unconquerable passion for Liberty, and the purity of the Protestant faith” that made them “the protectors of the Oppressed; the avengers of Justice, and the scourge of tyrants” (Smith 1762, 92, 93). Bruton Parish Church minister (and future president of the College of William and Mary) James Horrocks in a 1763 sermon urged his audience to reflect on “the Security of our Civil Liberty, a Happiness we justly glory in.” Liberty bounded by the rule of law, Horrocks argued, was the key to all other blessings (Horrocks 1763, 6, 8).

ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

Religiously imbued political rhetoric did not disappear in the constitutional crisis of the Stamp Act in 1765. Rather, the Stamp Act aroused Protestant constitutionalism even more as Americans feared ecclesiastical courts and church establishment. A commissioner of rents in the Carolinas advised against the tax, telling his superiors, “There is not in America any Ecclesiastical Courts, but the people Settled there. . . look upon the above Clause as a prelude to the Establishment of such Courts; and many of them would sooner Forfeit their Lives than pay Obedience to such Establishment.”⁴⁶ Many Americans feared that the next step would be prelacy, ecclesiastical courts, popery, or worse.⁴⁷ England’s satirists understood the American connection between religion and politics: a famous September 1769 engraving from London’s *Political Register* (titled “An Attempt to Land a Bishop in America”) demonstrates how legal and theological rhetoric about liberty remained intertwined. A figure robed in clerical vestments climbs the rigging of a ship, pursued by an angry mob. As the mob in front pushes his ship from shore, someone in the back throws a copy of Calvin’s works at the cleric’s head. Other members of the mob hold works of Algernon Sydney or Locke. One man looks at the reader and says, “No Lords Spiritual or Temporal in New England.” In 1772, freeholders of Boston voted that Catholics should be excluded from voting because “those they call hereticks may be destroyed without mercy; beside their recognizing the Pope in so absolute a manner, in subversion of the Government leading directly to the worst anarchy and confusion, civil discord, war, and bloodshed” (*City of Boston* 1772, 4).

The Quebec Act in 1774 caused a perfect storm of Protestant constitutional rhetoric against popery because it bundled together civil and religious up-

46. MS 1480, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. See also Green (1963).

47. Even some American Anglicans were not yet prepared to weaken lay government by vestries (Ragosta 2010, 41).
heaval in North America. Passed as part of the so-called Intolerable Acts, the Quebec Act removed the Protestant faith from the oath of allegiance in Quebec, enabled the imposition of Catholic tithes and free practice of the Roman Catholic faith, restored French civil law for private matters, and made no provision for a legislature in Quebec. Furthermore, it reassigned to Quebec land previously promised to New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. American Protestants argued that the act nullified every advantage gained by their blood in the French and Indian War. The Continental Congress considered the act an establishment of the “Roman Catholick Religion,” abolition of the “equitable system of English laws,” and the “erecting” of tyranny. In their appeal to the people of Great Britain, Congress argued that European immigrants to Canada would be “fit instruments . . . to reduce the ancient free Protestant Colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves” (Hall 2013, 55–56). Alexander Hamilton echoed the concerns of many Americans when he said that the Quebec Act established the “Popery” that Americans conflated with absolute rule (Davis 2000, 152–54; Creviston 2011, 463–79). In March 1775, New York crowds rallied under a banner proclaiming “George III Rex and the Liberties of America. No Popery” (Duncan 2005, 35).

How quickly things changed, however. Despite a warning sent to the British people about popery in the wake of the Quebec Act, the Continental Congress also appealed to the people of Quebec in letters published in 1774, 1775, and 1776. Those letters promised religious liberty in any ensuing alliance against Britain. George Washington banned Guy Fawkes Day celebrations as commander in chief in November 1775 and enjoined Benedict Arnold to protect free exercise of religion in his army’s expedition to Canada (Cogliano 1995, 38). In a subtle reference to the Quebec Act, the Declaration of Independence ignores the religious association of Romanism and tyranny and merely indicts “abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province.” Even Protestant Bostonians eventually converted their version of Guy Fawkes Day (“Pope’s Day”) into a celebration of the Catholic Alliance (Akers 1982, 323).⁴⁸

CONCLUSION: RHETORIC AND REVOLUTION

Anti-Catholic rhetoric was not mere empty bluster; it resulted in real discrimination against Catholics in America for much of the eighteenth century and would later surface as nativism. So how could Protestant ministers such as

48. Changing “Guy Fawkes Day” into “Pope’s Day” made even sharper the American conflation of popery with legal subversion.

Cooper consider Catholics to be butchers and tyrants but then subsequently invite them to land by the thousands in order to fight their coreligionists and constitutional cousins?

As we have seen, the solution cannot be found in latitudinarian or tolerant opinions among enlightened Whig elites. And while one can never dismiss circumstances and expediency entirely, one cannot explain the disappearance of anti-Catholic rhetoric among the revolutionaries as simply expedient. For example, Francis Cogliano suggests “self-interest” as the explanation for the change (Cogliano 1995, 44) but then adds that it is “too facile an explanation for a tremendous cultural shift” (59–60). Indeed, such an explanation would require not only elites such as Cooper and Adams but also a great many American laymen to forget all that had been charged against popery. Instead, the solution must recall the long-standing argument placing “anti-popery” and Protestant cheerleading alongside a principled defense of constitutional liberties.

A careful reconsideration of the rhetorical nature of anti-popery reveals it to have two characters. On the one hand, 2 centuries of political and military conflict between Protestant and Catholic powers did threaten AngloAmerican liberties. Terms such as “popery,” “papist,” and “Jesuit” as a slur on the lips of Britons therefore had some legitimacy since the reign of Mary Tudor. But anti-Catholicism was also a political trope, such as when Presbyterians, Independents, and Anglicans called one another “Jesuit” or “papist” in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. Used since the Puritan controversies under Elizabeth, anti-Catholic slurs increasingly indicated one who subverted the rule of law or desired tyranny and not simply one who was in communion with the Roman Church.

On the eve of the Revolution, this second use remained a convenient political device for both sides. Boston Loyalist Harrison Gray described Massachusetts delegates to the First Continental Congress as “Jesuitical gentlemen” (Gray 1775, 10). Likewise, Thomas Chandler accused Revolutionaries of acting like Catholics (Hanson 1998, 93). Of course, both Gray and Chandler knew that their opponents had no affinity for the Roman Church. Customs commissioner Henry Hulton likewise called Cooper a “smooth, artful, civil, Jesuitical Priest.”⁴⁹ Tory Peter

Oliver, in his history of the war, said of Cooper, "Never was a Scholar of St. Omers, who was a more Proficient in Jesuitism"

49. Henry Hulton, *Some Account of the Proceedings of the People of New England from the Establishment of a Board of Customs in America to the breaking out of the Rebellion in 1775*, 122–23. Princeton Library Andre de Coppel Collection C0063 (box 18, folder 4). Hulton served from 1767 until 1776. See also Akers (1982, 82).

(Adair and Schultz 1961, 43–45). Did Hulton or Oliver really believe that Cooper was a Jesuit? Hardly. Likewise, it is difficult to believe that when Patriots complained of a "creeping Romanism at court" they believed that papal agents were influencing George III (61–62). Rather, they were complaining about a plot against constitutional liberties.

But the crisis with Britain proved that it was this second use of the antiCatholic rhetoric—trope and not truth—that prevailed by the time of the Revolution. The love of constitutionalism proved itself emancipated from the nurturing of Protestantism. Rev. Eli Forbes of Brookfield, for example, preached in 1766 that the conquest of "New France" (Canada) and preservation of Protestantism were a "small" deliverance when compared with deliverance from the Stamp Act. Whereas American colonists would have been killed or conquered as slaves under the French, the Stamp Act would have made them slaves while they yet had "an undoubted right to freedom." Forbes called the latter a fate "worse than death."⁵⁰ This sort of clerical rhetoric, found throughout the colonies, demonstrates how the favor of constitutional liberty over ecclesiastical like-mindedness paved the way for the French alliance.

Furthermore, when Americans found themselves in a war over constitutional liberties with Protestants, they had to admit that not all Protestants were friends of the rule of law. Concurrently, their direct experience with French Catholics (either during the Canadian expedition or in negotiations with France) taught them that the French were not very "Catholic." This did not mean that the French that Americans encountered were surprisingly impious or religiously unobservant (though some undoubtedly were). Rather, the Americans failed to discover among them a slavish mind-set or a love of tyranny.⁵¹ Such a discovery challenged the long-standing presumption that the ecclesiastical polity of Rome prepared men for slavery or tyranny and precluded them from republicanism.⁵² Protestant ire was directed against not the Catholic faith so much as its "mode of thought and action" (Hanson 1998, 141–43). When Americans found that Catholics were prepared to defend constitutional

50. Eli Forbes, *Sermons 1752–1804*, Mss. Boxes F, American Antiquarian Society.

51. This article complements, contextualizes, and explains the fruit of encounters such as those described in Hanson's *Necessary Virtue* (Hanson 1998) but does not attribute the shift to those encounters. Many Americans did not have those encounters for themselves and yet had to make peace with the French alliance.

52. Catholics were thought by most Americans to be unschooled in the institutions and ideas of constitutional liberty (Hanson 1998, 10, 77–83). This explains why, for example, the Continental Congress felt obliged to lecture inhabitants of Quebec on political theory in 1774. Liberties against the British, as when they joined the Continental Army, for example, they ceased to be “papists” in the political sense. Old loyalties were discarded for new ones, and Americans in the Revolution discarded their religious rhetoric without abandoning the political principle inherent in it. British enemies of liberty, Protestant or not, had become the new “papists.”⁵³ Such a shift explains how Cooper could reuse his sermons with only impromptu modification.

If one thinks of the long thread of Protestant constitutionalism and anti-Catholicism in this way, we gain insight into John Adams's otherwise puzzling identification of John Ponet's *Shorte Treatise of Politike Power* (1556) or the Huguenot *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (1579) as formative for the American Revolution 2 centuries later (Adams 1778, 224–25). Ponet and the anonymous author of the *Vindiciae* wrote their polemics against Catholic monarchs during the Reformation. Were not such works anachronistic by Adams's time, most of all because of the shift to a Catholic ally? Not at all. Because Ponet's *Shorte Treatise* and the *Vindiciae*—along with Milton, Locke, and Sidney—had struck a blow for liberty against unchecked royal power (regardless of religious allegiance of that power), Adams placed them in the canon of seminal works on liberty.⁵⁴

We conclude by returning to where we began—Cooper's opponent and critic, Dr. Bolton. In his satirical verse, Bolton quoted from part 1, canto 1 of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, referring to the “gospel trumpeter” with “pulpit, drum ecclesiastic.” Begun during the English Civil War and published beginning in 1662, *Hudibras* was Butler's Royalist satire of parliamentary forces—those motivated by piety and scripture in their war against Charles I. Cooper reminded Bolton of those same political ministers. Our study, looking backward and forward from Cooper, leads us right back to what Bolton knew in 1775: American understandings of liberty owed much to a long constitutional tradition baptizing political principle with religious polemic.

53. One anonymous writer in the *Providence Gazette* compared the Boston Massacre to the Gunpowder Plot and suggested that the fifth of November (commemoration of the Gunpowder Plot) be replaced by the fifth of March (the Boston Massacre) (Cogliano 1995, 54). The discovery that Catholics could be defenders of liberty was not confined to experience with French or

Canadians. There were Catholics at home as well. As soldier Daniel Barber recounted, New Englanders who once cried "No King, No Popery" were soon fighting alongside southern Catholics in the Continental ranks (Barber 1827, 17–18).

54. Agreement with Adams's implicit association of Protestantism with liberty can be found in examples of Reformation-era texts reprinted during the Stamp Act Crisis and Revolution. For example, a Philadelphia printer republished John Knox's 1558 polemic against royal power (*The First Blast of the Trumpet*) in 1766 (Knox 1571/1766).

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