



“Let Hell and Rome Do Their Worst”:
World News, Anti-Catholicism,
and International Protestantism
in Early-Eighteenth-Century Boston

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ON 26 November 1722, the *Boston News-Letter* directed readers' thoughts across the Atlantic to Europe, where, it seemed, the clouds of war were gathering. The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht had achieved a tenuous peace between the Continent's Protestant and Catholic powers, but world war once again threatened. The *News-Letter* reprinted a guardedly optimistic analysis from London's *Post-Man* of the balance of power between Protestant and Catholic Christianity in the known world. The author of the piece acknowledged that some readers were "Phlegmatick" about Protestant prospects in a war but insisted that they were wrong to think that "Popery is in a formidable flourishing Condition." If the Roman church and her allies were to take up arms against the "Dissenters," the *Post-Man* maintained, they would not be able to "Convert the World" by military might. Rather, "the Protestants would beat the Papists out of the Field, and out of the World." The *Post-Man* had counted eleven states on each side of the contest for world Christianity and argued that, though the Catholic powers might have a slight edge in manpower, the Protestant interest held the advantage on sea and in the trades. "Whilst then the Protes-

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tants have the Trade and the Money, let Hell and Rome do their worst: They will always be beaten."¹

To New Englanders in the 1720s, such an optimistic forecast must have been especially welcome. In the early eighteenth century as never before, the region experienced the effects of the Catholic menace. French Protestant refugees arrived in New England in significant numbers in the decades after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685; New Englanders participated in the ceaseless wars of empire between Britain and France; and Jesuits increased missionary activities in far northern New England after 1689. Reading the news from overseas, New Englanders encountered dissenters with religious and political agendas strikingly similar to their own; like New Englanders, these groups often found themselves threatened by real or suspected agents of the Catholic Church or the Jesuit order.² It would have been increasingly easy to imagine the world as a battleground for opposing Protestant and Catholic armies.³

Certainly it was becoming easier to *read* about the world in those terms. The Puritan movement, of course, had been anti-Catholic and, in a sense, internationalist from the beginning,⁴

¹*Boston News-Letter*, 26 November 1722, no. 983. This sentiment supports David Armitage's argument that Britons imagined their empire to be "Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free." See his *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 8.

²On the comparative affinities among international "orthodox dissenters," see James E. Bradley and Dale Van Kley, eds., *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 27-37.

³The Catholic-versus-Protestant wars that raged across Europe and throughout the world after the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), culminating in the Seven Years War (1756-63), helped create a new, thoroughgoing internationalist sentiment as New Englanders identified with reformed Protestants across confessional, national, and ethnic lines. On the Seven Years War as seen through the framework of apocalyptic history, see Nathan Hatch's "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 31 (1974): 407-30, and his *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). On the ways in which "Atlantic world" history has displaced "colonial British American" history, see Nicholas Canny's "Writing Atlantic History: or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America," *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999): 1105-9.

⁴The movement's roots, of course, lay in Europe, and its international character received further expression through succeeding developments, from the Marian exile on the continent to the Great Migration across the Atlantic, and from the "congregational

and a number of thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic had put pen to paper to espouse a pan-Protestant world view.⁵ In the late seventeenth century, however, the burgeoning print trade and more reliable transatlantic shipping had made information about Protestant causes throughout the world more accessible in Boston and nearby towns.⁶ With the advent of the newspaper

communion" of the English Puritan diaspora throughout the seventeenth century to the sprawling interconnectedness of Samuel Hartlib's circle. See Francis Bremer's *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610–1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994). See also Hartlib's *The necessity of some nearer conjunction and correspondency amongst evangelicall Protestants, for the advancement of the nationall cause, and bringing to passe the effect of the covenant* (London, 1644). I wish to thank David Scott for providing this reference and for discussing the Hartlib circle. Another example of the internationalist sensibility is found in Alexander Shields's *A Hind Let Loose, or a Historical Representation of the Testimonies of the Church of Scotland* (1687), which associated the Scottish reformed churches' struggles against the Restoration English church with the similar struggles of the reformed churches of France, Hungary, and the Piedmont. See Jim Smyth's analysis in *The Making of the United Kingdom, 1660–1800* (New York: Longman, 2001), p. 46.

⁵John Winthrop commended the attitude of the medieval French Waldenses who "use to love any of their owne religion even before they were acquainted with them" (Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, in Perry Miller and Thomas Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of their Writings*, rev. ed. [New York: Harper, 1963], p. 197). On the Waldenses as forerunners of the international Protestant movement, see S. J. Barnett's "Where Was Your Church before Luther?: Claims for the Antiquity of Protestantism Examined," *Church History* 68 (March 1999): 20–21. William Bradford's "Ancient Men" instructed the "Young Men" of his first *Dialogue* that the Separatists held "all the Reformed Churches to be true churches" and that they "know of much intercommunion that divers have held with them reciprocally, not only with the Dutch and French, but even with the Scotch, who are not of the best mould, yea and with the Lutherans also." See "Governor Bradford's Dialogue" (1648), in Nathaniel Morton's *New England's Memorial* (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1855), p. 365. See also Bradford's "A Dialogue, or 3rd Conference. . .," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 11 (1870): 408–28, which begins with a long anti-Catholic treatise. Bradford was deeply concerned with finding a middle way between extreme sectarianism, separatism, and precisionism on the one hand and a corrupting ecumenism on the other. See Mark L. Sargent's "William Bradford's 'Dialogue' with History," *New England Quarterly* 65 (September 1992): 405–6. Perhaps the best example of early pan-Protestant thought comes in the many editions of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which tended to equate anti-papery with fidelity to Christ and to gloss over serious doctrinal differences among Protestants. Despite Foxe's tendency to reinforce English nationalism, the *Book of Martyrs* also celebrated John Hus, Martin Luther, and other non-English figures as great champions of the reformed cause. See John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, ed. G. A. Williamson (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1965), pp. 21, 76–78, 458. On Foxe, English/British nationalism, anti-Catholicism, and Protestant unity, see Barnett's "Where Was Your Church before Luther?" pp. 22–23, and Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 25–28.

⁶Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675–1740: An Exploration of Communication*

age in Boston in 1704, New Englanders were newly able to keep abreast of the fortunes of their reformed brethren overseas. Reports of persecution abroad contributed to New Englanders' growing apprehensions for world Protestantism, a sense of crisis that in time would help turn their religious and political agendas in new directions.

The Newspaper Comes to Boston

As Peter Borsay and others have demonstrated, the late seventeenth century saw an enormous rise in the amount of print in circulation in English provincial towns, and Boston was no exception. In many ways it was just one more provincial town on the outer limits of a small but growing British empire.⁷ Print marketing spiked in Boston immediately after the Glorious Revolution, and though the number of pamphlets, sermons, and books available fell briefly during the mid-1690s, thereafter it began a steady climb that would continue through the American Revolution and beyond. The first proper local newspaper in Boston, printed in 1690 by Benjamin Harris, an anti-Catholic refugee from Jacobean London and an associate of Titus Oates (the inventor of the 1678–79 "Popish Plot" in London), was limited by royal authorities to one issue, mostly because of its impolitic commentary on New England affairs.⁸ Most of what was

and Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 133, 158–59. Ned Landsman argues that between 1680 and 1730, New Englanders became much more integrated into European and British culture because of the improvement and expansion of shipping, communication, and trade. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (New York: Twayne, 1997), pp. 16–18.

⁷Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 128–29. Linda Colley has argued that the expansion of print also had an important role in "unifying Great Britain and shaping [Britain's] inhabitants' view of themselves" (*Britons*, pp. 40–41). See also Charles Clark's *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665–1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 41–42, 59–60. On British newspapers of the period, see Hannah Barker's *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855* (New York: Longman, 2000) and Jeremy Black's *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

⁸Wm. David Sloan, "The Origins of the American Newspaper," in *Media and Religion in American History*, ed. Sloan (Northport, Ala.: Vision Press, 2000), pp. 36–41; Clark, *Public Prints*, pp. 71–72. See also Clark's essay "Boston and the Nurturing of Newspapers: Dimensions of the Cradle, 1690–1741," *New England Quarterly* 64 (June 1991): 243–71.

read in Boston was first published east of the Atlantic. Pamphlets by authors such as the radical Whig Londoner John Partridge dot the print records of these years, bringing news of, among other developments, Jacobite plots to return the Stuarts to the throne.⁹ Through 1704, the leading sources of European news were the London newspapers that came in through the post, while the most common domestically printed sources continued to be sermons and pamphlets by New England ministers.¹⁰

Nicholas Noyes, the teaching pastor at Salem best known for his role as a prosecutor in the 1692 witch trial, set the tone for New Englanders' interpretation of world news and the state of Christianity when he preached *New-England's Duty and Interest* at Boston's General Court on election day in May 1698. In this sermon, which the printer Bartholomew Green later issued as a book, Noyes set out to consider "the RESTAURATIONS, REFORMATIONS, and BENEDICTIONS, Promised to the Church and the World in the latter dayes" and, specifically, New England's part in those developments.¹¹ He told his audience that God would bring about a second and final reformation of the true church before the Second Coming of Christ and the destruction of God's enemies. Noyes encouraged New Englanders to turn their eyes to events across the Atlantic with the idea that "the latter dayes" might be very near.

Noyes advocated a prayer life informed by news from Europe and elsewhere. Just as Elijah watched, waited, and prayed for

⁹See, for instance, *The Present State of the New-English Affairs* (Boston, 1689); John Partridge, *Monthly Observations* (Boston, 1692); and an anonymous broadside, *London, September 27* (Boston, 1697). See also Clark's *Public Prints*, p. 70.

¹⁰Richard Brown, in his *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 33, notes that the public officials and clergy of New England were "not only key transmitters of information, they were also gatekeepers who were broadly responsible for screening the passage of information and its diffusion to the public at large." This was certainly the case for the developing evangelical interest in New England, whose clerical leaders used information such as that which John Campbell's network provided to frame an understanding of the worldwide contest between Catholicism and Protestantism. But publishing decisions were also responsive to the small but growing market for printed information; thus the educated public's demands also played a role in deciding what information was disseminated.

¹¹Nicholas Noyes, *New-England's Duty and Interest* (Boston, 1698), p. 3.

rain in 1 Kings 18, so also New Englanders should “look out seven times, and pray, and pray again . . . believing on and praying to the Lord, till he send Rain on the earth, till he come & rain down righteousness on Asia, Africa, Europe and America.” Though Noyes admitted that the final reformation of the church and ruin of God’s enemies might not appear imminent, he urged New Englanders to maintain confidence in the prophecies that foretold these events. “Though we know not the time just when; yet there are signals given whereby the Church of God may know that their Redemption draws nigh.”

The good words . . . which God hath spoken, give us ground to believe that the Mahometan Imposture and Tyranny will not always last; and that the Remnants and Fragments of the Grecian and African Churches will be gathered up, and restored. . . . It were Infidelity to conclude that God hath done with the Protestant People, and his Witnesses in Germany, Bohemia, Hungarra, France, the Valleys of the Piedmont; and many other places in Europe: where for his Name and Gospel sake they have been Killed all the day long.

Despite persecution by the Turks and the Roman church, God would rescue the Protestant interest and destroy the forces of Antichrist, Noyes insisted. “[T]he Kingdoms of this World shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” Even the Jews, the long-rejected people of God, would return to the fold in the last days. And though he worried about the declension he and his pastoral colleagues discerned within many New England churches, Noyes nevertheless saw reason to hope that God would include New England in the coming revival of the church.¹²

The themes Noyes sounded were soon picked up by Boston’s—and America’s—first successful newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*.¹³ Published beginning 24 April 1704 by

¹²Noyes, *New-England’s Duty and Interest*, pp. 64–65, 67–68, 69–78.

¹³Historians have long debated the significance of the coming of the newspaper to Boston. Brown (*Knowledge Is Power*, pp. 36–37) seems to represent current historiographical convention when he describes the *News-Letter’s* arrival as “not the momentous event that it may seem in retrospect.” Brown emphasizes that the *News-Letter* rarely broke any news, merely reprinting what the most interested observers had already found out through the same channels that the paper’s publisher, John Campbell, used. He also emphasizes that Campbell never enjoyed a very high circulation, usually selling only about three hundred copies. But the fact remains that the Boston print

Boston postmaster John Campbell, the *News-Letter* was modeled on the *London Gazette*, from which it drew much of its content. The paper focused overwhelmingly on news from Europe, with an emphasis on religious news and the balance of power between Catholic and Protestant states. The *News-Letter* was Boston's only newspaper until the founding of the rival *Boston Gazette* in 1719. In 1723, the aging Campbell passed ownership of the *News-Letter* to his printer, Bartholomew Green.¹⁴

The following analysis of the overseas religious news printed in Boston from 1704 through the early 1730s, then, necessarily focuses heavily on the *News-Letter*. Even after the coming of the *Gazette*,¹⁵ the *New-England Courant* (1721–26), the *New-England Weekly Journal* (1727), the *Boston Weekly Rehearsal* (1731), and the *Boston Weekly Post-Boy* (1734), the *News-Letter* remained more focused than any other Boston paper on foreign news items. It was also the most religiously oriented. Perhaps predictably, the Franklins' *Courant* in its brief career displayed the least interest in religious news—or the least serious interest—at times going so far as to make fun of the *News-Letter* for its excruciatingly detailed accounts of matters such as “the Secrets of the Popes Gutts.” But even this paper, long seen as the herald of secularism, was not entirely devoid of politico-religious world news; the Franklins furnished intricate details, for instance, of the Pope's coronation ceremony.¹⁶

After taking over from Campbell, Green oriented the *News-*

market, previously unwilling to accept a domestic weekly, now supported one, just as happened in other British provincial towns during the period. In “I Heare it so Variouslly Reported: News-letters, Newspapers, and the Ministerial Network in New England, 1670–1730” (*New England Quarterly* 71 [December 1998]: 593–614), Sheila McIntyre, too, downplays the significance of the newspaper, arguing that it merely mimicked and complemented a well-established network of clerical correspondence. It is correct to point out the clerical network, which Francis Bremer and others have also analyzed extensively (see Bremer's *Congregational Communion*). Yet there can be no doubt that the newspaper made news from Europe and the world more broadly accessible than before.

¹⁴Clark, “Boston and the Nurturing of Newspapers,” pp. 253–56.

¹⁵The *Gazette* presents special challenges since the copies available to the *Early American Imprints* series, upon which the research for this project is based, are, for many years, in poor condition or nonexistent.

¹⁶“Popes Gutts” quote from *New-England Courant*, 10 June 1723, no. 98; see also 25 January 1725, no. 183.

Letter perhaps even more strongly toward Protestant internationalism.¹⁷ In the face of competition from the *Gazette* and the *Courant*, Green stated in a January 1723 editorial that it was his wish “to make this Paper, as profitable and entertaining to the good People of this Country as I can”; to that end, he pledged to maintain or increase news of religious matters. He offered this news specifically as a guide to prayer, so that those with a concern for “the State of Religion in the World” would know “how to Order their Prayers and Praises to the Great GOD thereupon.” Green then included an excerpt from Anthony Boehm’s *Propagation of the Gospel in the East*. Boehm, the key link between New England’s developing evangelical cohort and the Prussian-based, pietist Halle school, was the model broker of the international Protestant interest;¹⁸ that his work was reprinted in the *News-Letter* demonstrates that news concerning persecution and missions in distant lands had become thoroughly marketable in Boston.¹⁹ And in the early eighteenth century, there was no shortage of that sort of news coming from overseas.

The Catholic Other

Like other British newspapers of this period, Boston’s papers focused a great deal of attention on the activities of the Roman Catholic Church and the machinations of Catholic princes and states, most notably France and Spain.²⁰ There was plenty to report. Any New Englander who read the news had access to de-

¹⁷One expression of the growing pan-Protestant sentiment in the British world at this time was an easing of Anglican-Congregational hostility. As the Catholic threat grew, dissenters and Anglicans found that they had more common ground than they had had in the years after the Restoration. Neither Campbell, an Anglican, nor Green, a Congregationalist, seemed to feel that interdenominational disputes merited much of the *News-Letter*’s attention.

¹⁸See W. R. Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime, 1648–1789* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 81–82.

¹⁹*News-Letter*, 14 January 1723, no. 990.

²⁰See, among others, David Copeland’s *Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), pp. 205–8; Colley’s *Britons*, pp. 23–24; and Jeremy Black’s “The Catholic Threat and the British Press in the 1720s and 1730s,” *Journal of Religious History* 12 (December 1983): 364–81.

tailed accounts of the activities and policies of the Pope, the persecution of European Protestants by Catholic princes, dragons, mobs, and even priests, the threats posed by Jesuit missions, and the unfolding of religious controversies. Boston's newspapers also took every opportunity to present rank-and-file priests, especially Jesuits, in the worst possible light. A 1706 report from Spain told of a group of Franciscans "exorcising" one of their number who had pretended to be possessed by Satan. The priests "fully instructed him in all the Tricks he was to play," and then, before a large crowd, they supposedly cast the demon out of the man. The delivered priest then testified that the devil had wanted him to get the people to revolt against the Duke of Anjou and promote the introduction of the Protestant heresy.²¹

In a similar vein, the *News-Letter* later reported that Catholics in Warsaw had been led to believe that a statue of Christ was issuing blood—but upon investigation the blood turned out to be the "Juice of Cherries."²² Another report, from France, surely had New England readers laughing at the news that a "Gardener's Ass" had wandered into a parish and taken a "hearty Draught" from a basin of holy water and that an inquisitorial committee had immediately seized, tried, and executed the donkey in a church court proceeding.²³ This type of reported buffoonery helped New Englanders define priests as not only evil and predatory but also in some cases unwittingly comic.²⁴

Countless news stories reaffirmed New Englanders' impression that when Catholics ruled, Protestants were treated harshly. A report from Vienna told of the execution of two women, nineteen and twenty years old, who had dared to throw a crucifix to the ground. Though they apparently did not consider themselves Protestants, the women had tried to defend

²¹*News-Letter*, 8 July 1706, no. 117.

²²*News-Letter*, 30 December 1725, no. 1145.

²³*News-Letter*, 6 November 1721, no. 928.

²⁴On the cultural function of satire and comedy, see David Waldstreicher's *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 207–10, 336–42.

themselves with the good Protestant argument that true religion expressly forbade idolatry. Already troubled by a spate of similar actions by laypeople, however, the local priests made an example of the young women, ordering that their heads and their right hands be cut off.²⁵

These stories from overseas provided a backdrop to New England's local problems with French Jesuits and their Indian allies, problems that may have reached their peak during the early newspaper era in Dummer's (or Father Rale's) War, 1722–25. The same issue of the *Boston Gazette* that reported Father Sebastien Rale's execution in 1724 by Massachusetts forces (for stirring up the Wabanakis against English settlers) also reported that the Jesuits seemed to be taking over the court of France and were summarily executing French Protestant preachers, sending men to the prison ships, jailing women and shaving their heads, and taking children from their families and giving them a Roman Catholic upbringing and education. To those familiar with the news, the threat of French Catholicism could look ominously similar on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁶

Among the story lines that appeared again and again as good copy in the *Boston News-Letter* and later papers, none was more significant than the status of religion in France. The papers focused particularly on two aspects of this story: the ongoing persecution of French Protestants and the Jansenist controversy. Both of these episodes helped complicate New Englanders' imagined relationship with the French. While the French government was viewed as the greatest threat to British Protestantism, especially during the reign of Louis XIV, the French people were never seen as unequivocally "papist" or antichristian; indeed, the cause of French Protestants and any Catholics who may have sympathized with them elicited concern and even affection.

²⁵*News-Letter*, 15 December 1712, no. 453.

²⁶*Boston Gazette*, 17 August 1724, no. 248. On Father Rale's War and international Protestantism, see my "'The Devil and Father Rallee': The Narration of Father Rale's War in Provincial Massachusetts," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 30 (Summer 2002): 159–80.

Huguenots

New Englanders and other reformed Protestants watched in fascinated horror as, starting in the 1680s, Catholic France cracked down on its Protestant (or Huguenot) enclaves, quartering dragoons in Protestant homes and trying to force conversions to Catholicism. Eventually Louis XIV's anti-Protestant crusade culminated in the revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes, the 1598 decree that had protected the rights of Protestants. French Protestantism, already desperately weakened by persecution, almost completely collapsed after 1685 save for the Camisards of the Languedoc and Cévennes regions. There, beginning in 1695, war broke out between the Camisards and the French government forces trying to stamp out Protestant resistance once and for all. This conflict proved highly interesting to New Englanders, who saw the French rebels as persecuted martyrs for the world Protestant cause.²⁷

Campbell's *News-Letter* regularly reported on the Camisard revolt and the Huguenot persecutions. In 1704, Campbell printed a letter from a Camisard leader detailing a recent victory over the royal army and demanding that "the Protestant Religion should be re-established in Languedoc, and that those who are in the Gallies or in Prison for that Religion, should be set at Liberty." The letter adopted a providentialist tone, claiming that the reason the Camisards had lost few men in the battle was that "God fought for us; He overthrew our Enemies with all their Devilish Devices."²⁸

²⁷On the Camisard revolt and the Huguenot persecution, especially in their international context, see, among others, Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, pp. 14–20; Marco Sioli, "Huguenot Traditions in the Mountains of Kentucky: Daniel Trabue's Memories," *Journal of American History* 84 (March 1998): 1313–23; Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, *Societies in Upheaval: Insurrections in France, Hungary, and Spain in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 37–60; Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), chap. 1; Clarke Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 15–34; and Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*, reprint ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), chap. 15.

²⁸*News-Letter*, 9 October 1704, no. 10.

A year later, however, the news was not so positive; the revolt had begun to collapse under the weight of French royal arms. Campbell reported that a cowardly Camisard had betrayed several rebel leaders to the French authorities and that the Camisards had been framed as having plotted to massacre the “Catholicks of Nismes.” Nevertheless, the *News-Letter* maintained that the “French are very uneasie and full of Apprehensions of Danger from the poor Camisars, who retir’d to Switzerland, tho’ they have no Arms.”²⁹ As prospects for French Protestants looked increasingly bleak,³⁰ New Englanders also followed accounts of their movements in London and America, including New England.³¹ Pastors regularly called for prayer and sympathy for the Huguenots, warning New Englanders that they easily could be next should the French succeed in their North American ambitions. John Danforth, pastor at Dorchester, for instance, instructed the members of his congregation to thank God that they had not yet met the fate of the French Protestants:

Our ministers are not Banished, nor our Children (excepting a few in Captivity) forced from us, and brought up in Soul-Destroying Popery; Nor our Assemblies broken up, nor Dragoons let in upon us, to Torture us a thousand ways, to Compel us to Blaspheme & Abjure our Holy Religion. . . . Do we Escape the Woful Day, because of our Godliness and Righteousness, that is greater than theirs [the Huguenots’]? No verily.³²

²⁹*News-Letter*, 15 October 1705, no. 79.

³⁰The *News-Letter* reported on 15 April 1706 (no. 105) that the French were suppressing any news about the revolt.

³¹See, for instance, the 1 September 1707 *News-Letter* (no. 177) on Huguenots in London and the 6 March 1709 edition (no. 257) on French Protestants in Oxford, Massachusetts. Sometimes the French Protestant presence in New England could be unsettling; Marco Sioli cites a 1692 Massachusetts General Court resolution that gave voice to a suspicion that some of the refugees only “pretend[ed] to be Protestants” and were actually seditious papists. See Sioli, “Huguenot Traditions,” p. 1322. This sort of concern reflected the larger fear of imposture that went hand-in-hand with the expanding print, transport, and commercial culture. Fear did not always rule the day, however. On the fondness for Huguenot Peter Faneuil in Boston, see Jonathan Beagle’s “Remembering Peter Faneuil: Yankees, Huguenots, and Ethnicity in Boston, 1743–1900,” *New England Quarterly* 75 (September 2002): 388–414.

³²John Danforth, *Judgment Begun at the House of God* (Boston, 1716), pp. 42–43.

Jansenists and Jesuits

Though enormously concerned for the Huguenots' fate, Boston's newspapers demonstrated an equal or greater interest in another issue within French Catholicism itself: the Jansenist controversy. Jansenism was a Catholic reform movement born in the mid-seventeenth century out of the cooperative efforts of the devout at the Port-Royal convent in Paris and the Flemish theologian Cornelius Jansen. Devotees of Jansen tended to be quasi-Calvinistic and spiritually enthusiastic or mystical. Louis XIV made a number of efforts to stamp out the Jansenists, and in 1713 he secured a papal bull, *Unigenitus*, that denounced the propositions of the Jansenist Pasquier Quesnel's *Moral Reflections on the New Testament* (1695). Among the objectionable doctrines promoted by Quesnel were irresistible grace and predestination—beliefs that drew the sympathy of the international reformed community.³³

The *News-Letter* frequently reported on the long-simmering Jansenist controversy. In January 1706, Campbell included news from the Low Countries that trouble was brewing between the Jesuits and the Jansenists. "The Roman Catholicks, who Idolize Jesuits . . . have assaulted and wounded one of their Priests suspected of Jansenism."³⁴ Beginning in 1712 and continuing for many years after, the Boston newspapers closely followed the turmoil over *Unigenitus*.³⁵ Campbell's report on the matter in June 1714 mocked the French clergy who had initially affirmed the orthodoxy of Quesnel's *Moral Reflections* but later labeled him a heretic and ultimately secured *Unigenitus* against him. The report asked how the bishops could have missed the 101 "Capital Errors and Heresies" contained in *Moral Reflections* for so many years after its publication. "This will give a very ill Opinion to the World of the Capacity of the French Bishops, who must needs be guilty of Ignorance, or neglect in their discharge of their Episcopal Functions."³⁶

³³Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 29.

³⁴*News-Letter*, 7 January 1706 (N.S.), no. 91. On Jansenism in the Low Countries, see Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, pp. 32–33.

³⁵See the *News-Letter*, 4 August 1712, no. 434.

³⁶*News-Letter*, 28 June 1714, no. 533.

After 1713, France saw years of conflict between the “appellants” against *Unigenitus* and the “constitutionalists” who supported it, and at times it seemed that the dispute would shatter the French church and state.³⁷ The controversy commanded the entire front page of one *News-Letter* issue in 1718 that reprinted a letter denouncing the opponents of *Unigenitus* as schismatics and inheritors of the Lutheran tradition of heresy and resistance of papal authority.³⁸ Readers in the British Atlantic world would have seen these accusations as a badge of honor. The *News-Letter* also reported in January 1719 that Louis XV and his advisers had ordered absolute censorship and silence concerning *Unigenitus* and that they had expressly forbidden anyone to “speak, write, print or distribute any thing against the Respect due to the Holy Sec & to the Pope.”³⁹ And yet, the *News-Letter* noted in 1721, despite these and other attempts to stifle criticism, a print had surfaced in Paris depicting the recently deceased Clement XI, the pope who had issued *Unigenitus*, and the late Father Quesnel—the former being dragged to hell by the devil and the latter carried by the angels to heaven.⁴⁰

Boston’s newspapers also reported with some bewilderment a number of accounts of Jansenist miracles that occurred with great regularity starting around 1725, not coincidentally one of the high moments of French persecution of the Jansenists and the appellants. The Jesuits’ opposition to the Jansenist miracles alienated them from the French people; the *Weekly Rehearsal* noted in 1733 that two Jesuits had been tossed into the Seine by a group of unruly men and that an arsonist had burned Grenoble’s College of Jesuits.⁴¹ Indeed, it may be that the key to New

³⁷Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 72–74.

³⁸*News-Letter*, 1 December 1718, no. 764. On the other side of the issue, the *News-Letter* on 9 March 1718 (no. 778) reprinted a letter from a French professor denouncing Clement XI and his followers among the constitutionalists as the true “Schismatics and Hereticks.”

³⁹*News-Letter*, 19 January 1719, no. 771.

⁴⁰*News-Letter*, 13 November 1721, no. 929.

⁴¹*Boston Weekly Rehearsal*, 8 January 1733.

Englanders' keen and lasting interest in the Jansenist controversy lay in the threat it posed to the Jesuits. As the *Weekly Rehearsal* noted in an edition full of reports of Jesuit intrigues, "all the World knows that the Drift of these Sons of Ignatius are [*sic*] not easily discovered."⁴²

The Chinese Rites Controversy

New England's newspapers also followed the "Drift of these Sons of Ignatius" to China, where the Jesuits had maintained missions since 1580 but enjoyed their greatest successes between about 1670 and 1720.⁴³ During this period the missions witnessed the "Chinese rites controversy," in which many Jesuits argued that ancestral and Confucian devotions were compatible with Christianity. Although this policy garnered the favor of Emperor Kangxi, it angered papal officials, and soon Rome began sending inspectors to China to monitor the Jesuits' activities. The *News-Letter* noted in 1708 that Charles de Tournon, one such inspector, had been declared a cardinal.⁴⁴ Similarly, the paper reported late the following year that Bishop Charles Maigrot, an ally of de Tournon, had accused the Jesuits of agreeing to worship "Confucius, the great Chinese Saint."⁴⁵ Reports in 1711 suggested that the Jesuits were content to allow their "converts" to continue with non-Christian practices as long as they remained obedient to the Jesuit order. One report held that de Tournon was being so badly "abused" in China that he would soon return to Rome and that Emperor Kangxi was prepared to banish all Catholics but the Jesuits from China.⁴⁶

⁴²*Boston Weekly Rehearsal*, 1 October 1733.

⁴³See R. Po-Chia Hsia's *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 186-93, and Arnold Rowbotham's *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), esp. pp. 119-75. On the European reception of Jesuit accounts of Chinese religion, see P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams's *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 107-8.

⁴⁴*News-Letter*, 1 March 1708 [N.S.], no. 203.

⁴⁵*News-Letter*, 20 December 1708, no. 245.

⁴⁶Kangxi had in fact banished Maigrot and demanded that all Catholics follow the way of the Jesuits or else forfeit their welcome in China. See Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, p. 192.

The pope, the story asserted, was deeply troubled by these reports—and by further accusations that the Jesuits were using “the same Methods to convert the Turks as they do to convert the Chineze, that is, that they allow them to practice, publicly, the Worship and Ceremonies, of the Mahometans.”⁴⁷ Increase Mather, using unknown sources, declared (erroneously) in 1708 that “the Emperor of China, has caused the Pope’s Legat to be put to Death,” one of a number of “Remarkable Providences” in world news that led him to believe that the downfall of the Antichrist (the Roman Catholic Church) might be scheduled for 1716.⁴⁸ Never mind that Mather’s information was false; such news stories bolstered New Englanders’ sense that the Protestants might soon gain the upper hand in the contest for world Christianity.

In 1712 the *News-Letter* reported the death of de Tournon and speculated that it would be difficult to find a replacement for him “after the cruel Treatment he has received there [in China].”⁴⁹ After this death, news of the Chinese rites controversy became less frequent and less dependable, though for many years it remained a periodic item of interest in the *News-Letter*. Because of Rome’s intransigence, the Catholic missions in China went into decline, and Emperor Kangxi and his son Yongzheng became increasingly unfriendly to all but a few Jesuit missionaries. The Boston newspaper accounts, of course, blamed these problems on the Jesuits, speculating that “if they would conform with the Pope’s Orders about Divine Worship, all would be quiet.”⁵⁰ In 1719 word came that the Chinese had “Massacred all the Jesuits and their Proselytes”; although this report, too, was erroneous, it was true that the missions were

⁴⁷*News-Letter*, 10 September 1711, no. 387. See also the 28 May 1711 edition (no. 372).

⁴⁸Increase Mather, *A Dissertation, Wherein the Strange Doctrine Lately Published in a Sermon, the Tendency of Which, is, to Encourage Unsanctified Persons (While Such) to Approach the Holy Table of the Lord, is Examined and Confuted* (Boston, 1708), pp. 91–105, quotations from p. 105.

⁴⁹*News-Letter*, 30 June 1712, no. 429.

⁵⁰*News-Letter*, 11 May 1719, no. 787. See also no. 773, 2 February 1719.

deeply troubled.⁵¹ Even so, a 1720 *News-Letter* article held up the Jesuits as the chief competition in Asia for the Halle school's missionaries.⁵²

Conflict across Europe

It was Europe, however, that remained the focus of New England readers' attention. Although France may have received the most coverage, the papers also regularly reported news of Catholics persecuting Protestants elsewhere on the continent. Among these beleaguered Protestants were those of the Palatinate, a state in southwestern Germany that was a classic example of the war-torn and religiously divided societies of central Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The chief political office of the Palatinate, the Elector Palatine, passed from a Protestant to a Catholic line in 1685, resulting in troubling consequences for Protestant subjects.⁵³ Following the peace at Utrecht (1713), Boston's papers regularly reported on the dismal conditions of the Palatinate's Protestants, especially those of the Calvinist Reformed churches, and expressed the hope that the cooperation of Protestant princes, led especially by the British and Prussian monarchs, could alleviate their suffering. An account in 1714 had Calvinist (almost always referred to as "Protestant" in the accounts) churches at "Nieusteyn" and "Schwasburg" being attacked by Catholic mobs. In one episode, Catholics besieged a Protestant church during worship; they forced open the barred doors, wounded several parishioners, and drove the rest out of the church. The Protestants then took up arms, "retook their Church, and drove away the Papists." The article speculated that more civil unrest might follow and that Queen Anne might protect Protestants' rights and persons.⁵⁴

⁵¹*News-Letter*, 23 November 1719, no. 815.

⁵²*News-Letter*, 15 August 1720, no. 858.

⁵³Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 5.

⁵⁴*News-Letter*, 16 August 1714, no. 540. See also no. 541, 23 August 1714.

In 1720 the *News-Letter* began reporting regularly on happenings at Heidelberg's Church of the Holy Ghost, one of the chief Protestant-Catholic battlegrounds in the early eighteenth century. Since 1685 the burial vault of the church had been used by the Catholic princes of the Palatinate, but Protestants had maintained use of the rest of the building. In 1719, however, Catholics pulled down the separating wall between the two areas and turned the members of the Reformed church out of the building. The Elector Palatine did nothing to ease the tension when he began seizing copies of the anti-Catholic Heidelberg Catechism. Though the elector would eventually relent, this local problem had international ramifications, and as W. R. Ward has noted, among the Protestant and Catholic faithful the controversy at Heidelberg raised again the "spectre of the ultimate Armageddon between Catholic and Protestant," a fear that would obtain through the 1760s according to his reading.⁵⁵

In the summer of 1720, the *News-Letter* was full of news from the Palatinate, often focusing on the Church of the Holy Ghost. According to one report, the Reformed church had been reinstated there and was supposedly preaching on the text "The Dogs shall lick up the Blood of your Enemies." The same report told of a bizarre incident in Heidelberg in which a young Protestant woman was attacked outside a "Popish Church" by a Catholic mob. The crowd carried the woman inside the church and tried to force her to take the Eucharist. When she refused, the host "was cram'd down her Throat," she was badly beaten, and soon thereafter she died.⁵⁶ Similar reports from Heidelberg and elsewhere in the Palatinate reminded New England readers of the plight of their "poor persecuted" brethren overseas.

Easily the most notorious and newsworthy episode of Catholic violence against Protestants during the period was what the papers called the "Massacre at Thorn" [Torún]. Before 1724/25, there had been reports warning of the dangerous

⁵⁵Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 5.

⁵⁶*News-Letter*, 27 June 1720, no. 851.

situation of the “Oppressed Protestants” in Poland and Lithuania, such as a reprinted letter from Frederick William of Prussia to George I of England that complained that the “Evangelical Churches” there “have from some time past been persecuted and oppressed by the Roman Catholick Clergy.” The Prussian king worried that “the total Suppression of the Evangelical Churches will be accomplish’d . . . unless God Almighty sends some extraordinary Assistance to preserve his People from those great Persecutions.” He then appealed to the Hanoverian King George to take pity on these persecuted brethren of “our Communion,” these “Evangelical Inhabitants, or Dissenters,” and to step in on their behalf.⁵⁷

In 1724 these tensions burst into extraordinary violence in Thorn. News came to Boston in April 1725 that in response to a Protestant disturbance against a Catholic devotional procession the previous summer, the Jesuits had brought in a tribunal from Warsaw to prosecute the Protestants of the city for fomenting insurrection; in a show trial seething with anti-Protestant hatred, fourteen burghers had been sentenced to death.⁵⁸ The executions had begun in early December, starting with the “venerable old Magistrate” Mayor Rosner, who had been tempted by the Jesuits to give up Protestantism but who reportedly had told them, “Content your selves with having my Body: As for my Soul that is my Saviour’s.” Rosner had been beheaded and placed on public display “to glut the Revenge of the Nobility and Clergy.” The Jesuits had executed nine other prominent citizens, with a variety of tortures preceding and indignities following their deaths.⁵⁹

⁵⁷*News-Letter*, 1 February 1720, no. 825.

⁵⁸Ten were actually executed; two remained uncaught, one received a secular pardon, and one received a pardon for converting to Catholicism. Stanislaw Salmonowicz, “The Toruń Uproar of 1724,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 47 (1983): 63.

⁵⁹*News-Letter*, 8 April 1725, no. 1107. See also news of Thorn in Philadelphia’s *American Weekly Mercury*, 1 and 22 April 1725, cited in David Copeland’s “Religion and Colonial Newspapers,” in Sloan, *Media and Religion*, p. 61. For accounts of the incident, see, among others, Salmonowicz, “The Toruń Uproar,” pp. 55–79; Richard Butterwick, *Poland’s Last King and English Culture: Stanislaw August Poniatowski, 1732–1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 33; and Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, pp. 215–16.

Follow-up reports discussed the lone pardon issued to one of the Protestant convicts who converted to Catholicism, which proved that “all the Crime of those poor People . . . was of their being of the Protestant Religion” and that if they had renounced the true faith they would have been spared.⁶⁰ The *Boston Gazette* reported with disgust that the Jesuits “are far from thinking that they shall be called to account for their late Barbarities at Thorn” and that to show their contempt they had put on a comedy in which they displayed a number of “Calves-Heads” equal to the number of beheaded Protestants.⁶¹ Other editions reported the efforts of Frederick William and George I to redress the grievances of the Polish Protestants, who, according to one report, “were Non-conformist of this Kingdom.”⁶²

The international Protestant prints painted the Thorn “masacre” as the latest and perhaps worst instance of Jesuit treachery and Catholic fanaticism. “The Jesuits had conformed to the Protestant stereotype” in this episode, Ward has explained, and so from Prussia to Boston the presses seized upon the news as good copy. In Boston it became the single most important news story of 1725.⁶³

World News and the Great Awakening

Much recent work on the Great Awakening,⁶⁴ especially work that focuses on George Whitefield, has examined the religious periodicals’ publicization, even “invention,” of the revivals. Years before Whitefield’s emergence, however, Boston’s newspapers and other printed sources of world news were helping New Englanders imagine themselves as members of a world

⁶⁰*News-Letter*, 15 April 1725, no. 1108. The same issue reported that Catholics across Europe were fearful of a backlash led by George I and also that the Pope had denounced the executions, again demonstrating that the news concerning the Roman prelate was not unequivocally negative.

⁶¹*Boston Gazette*, 26 July 1725, no. 296.

⁶²*News-Letter*, 2 September 1725, no. 1128. See also the same edition’s printing of a letter from Frederick William to Louis XV concerning Thorn.

⁶³Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 216.

⁶⁴This is the name given to the evangelical revivals that swept the Atlantic seaboard in the mid-eighteenth century, beginning in New England in the 1730s.

Protestant community badly in need of revival.⁶⁵ It has frequently been argued that newspapers of this period undermined religious forms of identity and helped usher in the secular age and the era of nationalism.⁶⁶ That argument may be correct for the longer term, but in the first third of the eighteenth century, Boston's newspapers fostered an identification with the Protestant cause worldwide and indirectly contributed to the evangelical revivals of the 1730s and 1740s.⁶⁷

Given such news as was coming out of Poland and the Palatinate, it was no wonder that during the 1720s and 1730s, members of the developing evangelical camp were deeply concerned about the worldwide Protestant interest, which seemed harassed and persecuted on many fronts. Though direct evidence

⁶⁵See Susan O'Brien's "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism," in Mark Noll, David Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 38–57; Harry S. Stout's *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991); and Frank Lambert's *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and "Pedlar in Divinity": *George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737–1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁶⁶See, for instance, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991); C. John Sommerville's *The News Revolution in England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 135–45; and Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Adrian Hastings has complicated any such clear distinction between the secular and the religious, arguing that early modern nationalism, particularly English nationalism, was constructed on biblical discourses. Indeed, the *News-Letter* and other early Boston newspapers illustrate how print in the Atlantic world grew out of the inheritance of reformed Christianity while simultaneously becoming a fixed commodity of mercantile capitalism and helping far-flung residents imagine developing nation-states, in this case Britain. As James Muldoon has noted, early modern European political thought often entertained overlapping ideas of a "medieval," Christian, universal world order and "modern" sovereign states. In provincial New England, these ambiguities of the imagined political order were on full display, as the newspapers helped spread both the notion of a persecuted but eschatologically ascendant Protestant world church and the idea of an imperial British state. See Muldoon's *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800–1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 8, and Hugh Amory and David D. Hall's *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Book in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 2–7.

⁶⁷The *New-England Weekly Journal* eventually became closely associated with the revivals, while the *Boston Evening-Post*, a successor to the *Weekly Rehearsal*, opposed them. See Clark, "Boston and the Nurturing of Newspapers," p. 268.

for how readers interpreted the news is predictably thin, there are indications that at least some New Englanders did use the news as a guide to prayer and saw in it signs of the imminent fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Few were as explicit as Jonathan Edwards, who remembered that in his post-Yale years

I had great longings for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. . . . If I heard the least hint of anything that happened in any part of the world, that appeared to me, in some respect or other, to have a favorable aspect on the interest of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it. . . . I used to be earnest to read public news-letters, mainly for that end; to see if I could not find some news favorable to the interest of religion in the world.

Though he recalled this longing for news from his brief sojourn in New York City in 1722–23, such interest continued to characterize Edwards and other like-minded New Englanders. At his death in 1729, to take another example, the Rev. John Williams was celebrated for having taken care “to inform himself of the Transactions and Affairs of Europe, and to understand the State and Circumstances of this Province, that he might Calculate his Prayers accordingly.”⁶⁸

Cotton Mather asserted in *Suspiria Victorum: Some Account of the Condition to which the Protestant Interest in the World is at This Day Reduced* (a tract that was a direct response to Thorn) that Protestants being persecuted abroad badly needed New Englanders' prayers; prayer, he declared, was the “MARK and WORK of all Sincere CHRISTIANS, That

⁶⁸Jonathan Edwards, *Personal Narrative*, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George Claghorn, vol. 16 (1998) of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 21 vols. to date (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957–), pp. 794–95. Isaac Chauncey, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Funeral of the Reverend John Williams* (Boston, 1729), p. 21, quoted in John Demos's *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994), p. 172. Even the ubiquitous almanacs sometimes directed readers' attention to the news and its implications for the fulfillment of astrological prognostications or biblical prophecies. Samuel Clough's 1707 *Kalendarium Nov-Anglicanum* excitedly noted that “those that have read or heard the News we have had . . . from Foreign parts” would see that his earlier predictions of the downfall of some great person, derived from an eclipse on 25 October 1706, had been largely accomplished in Louis XIV's losses in Queen Anne's War. Clough hopefully suggested that the eclipse of 5 April 1707 might foreshadow “great Controversies about Religion, which perhaps may make way for the downfall of Popery, and liberty of the Protestant Religion throughout Europe.” See Clough's *Kalendarium Nov-Anglicanum* (Boston, 1707).

are not actually under the Romish Oppressions.” The editors of the *New-England Weekly Journal*, including friends of Mather’s such as Samuel Kneeland and Thomas Prince, excerpted *Suspiria Vincitorum* in two of the paper’s first issues in 1727.⁶⁹ The plight of Protestants in Europe was a spiritual call to arms for New England’s churches, Mather insisted, for “The Church of Rome, with the Man of Sin at the Head of it, entirely possessed by Satan, is resolved upon the Extermination of all the Christians upon Earth, who come not into a Combination with her, in her Detestable Idolatries.” He specifically singled out France, the Palatinate, the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary, and especially Poland as appropriate focal points for New Englanders’ prayers. Yet in praying for their overseas brethren, New England Protestants would also be working on their own behalf. Mather exhorted the region’s congregations to pray “That the Glorious GOD of our Life, would Revive Decay’d PIETY among them; and that His Quickning Spirit would not withdraw any further from them. Lord, Revive thy Work in the midst of the Nations. They are called . . . CHRISTIANS; Oh! Leave them not; and let not their Adversaries tread down thy Sanctuary among them.”⁷⁰

By the 1730s, many British Protestants increasingly shared Mather’s sense that world Protestantism was badly in need of revival; Benjamin Hoadly, the bishop of Bangor, for one, worried that “the whole Protestant Power in Europe . . . is little better than a Creature with Pain and Difficulty struggling for Life.”⁷¹ Harking back to Green’s 1722 balance sheet of Catholic versus Protestant power, a similar chart in the 24 December 1733 *Boston Weekly Rehearsal* took an even broader view of world religion, revealing grim statistics for the Protestant church. Based on Patrick Gordon’s hugely successful *Geogra-*

⁶⁹*New-England Weekly Journal*, 27 March 1727, no. 1; 24 April 1727, no. 5. Sloan, “The Origins of the American Newspaper,” pp. 52–53; Clark, *Public Prints*, pp. 143–44.

⁷⁰Cotton Mather, *Suspiria Vincitorum: Some Account of the Condition to which the Protestant Interest in the World is at This Day Reduced* (Boston, 1726), pp. 1–3, 12–15, 20–21.

⁷¹Benjamin Hoadly, *An Enquiry into the Reasons of the Conduct of Great Britain* (Boston, 1727), p. 73.

phy Anatomiz'd; or, The Geographical Grammar,⁷² the chart noted that if the world's population were broken down into thirty parts, nineteen would be "Blind and gross Idolaters," six would be "Jews, Turks, and Saracens," two would be "of the Greek Church," and just three would be left to the Catholic and Protestant churches. Reflecting that "the Christian Religion is of a very small extent" in the world, the *Rehearsal's* editor insisted that the time had come for British Protestants more actively to engage in missions, especially to the Indians and Africans among whom they dwelt.⁷³

Treatises on the world's religious condition in the 1730s shared this sense of a desperate battle, but they maintained an optimistic view of the power of prayer. As John Reynolds's popular book *A Compassionate Address to the Christian World* (published in both London and Boston) warned its Protestant readers, the Roman church seemed to be winning the day:

How many Kingdoms are enslaved to the Pope, and to the Errors and Abominations of Popery! . . . and so are sadly led by the Blind into the Ditch of Death, and Destruction. . . . And do not your Souls pity them? And do you not seriously pray, that God's Kingdom may come among them? If not, why do you pretend to be Protestants?⁷⁴

Paul Dudley's strongly anti-Catholic treatise *An Essay on the Merchandize of Slaves & Souls of Men* went so far as to suggest that the successes of the Catholic Church were perhaps a sign of the biblically foretold Great Tribulation of God's church that would come "immediately before the final Ruine of Antichrist" and the second coming of Christ.⁷⁵

Israel Loring, pastor at Sudbury, Massachusetts, also lamented the state of the world Protestant church in an election sermon in 1737. He pointed to the earlier destruction of the churches of Africa, the apostasy of the Roman, Polish, and Transylvanian

⁷²Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, p. 47.

⁷³*Boston Weekly Rehearsal*, 24 December 1733.

⁷⁴John Reynolds, *A Compassionate Address to the Christian World* (Boston, 1730), p. 88.

⁷⁵Paul Dudley, *An Essay on the Merchandize of Slaves & Souls of Men* (Boston, 1731), pp. ii–iii and passim.

churches, and especially persecutions against Bohemian, Hungarian, and French Protestants as woeful signs of how “the Shadow of Death stretches it self over those once Happy Regions of Light.” Nevertheless, Loring believed that there was hope for the Protestant interest. He pointed to Edwards’s famous revival at Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1735 as a sign of the outpouring of the Spirit, and he encouraged his audience to pray for more of the same. It was time to set aside petty differences among Protestants and “lay out ourselves in promoting the common Interest of Christ’s Kingdom, and the common Salvation of precious and immortal Souls. . . . [L]et us be one with every one, that is one with Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ The time had come, in other words, to close ranks against the Catholic threat.



A few decades later, New Englanders would close ranks with their fellow colonists—and eventually even with Catholic France⁷⁷—against a new threat, the British empire, which they had once seen as their great earthly hope against world Catholicism. Much of the language used in newspapers and pamphlets to confront the British government in the 1760s and 1770s, in fact, sounded a great deal like the fearful language used earlier in the century against Roman Catholicism. Tom Paine, for instance, insisted in *Common Sense* that “monarchy in every instance is the Popery of government.”⁷⁸ Even after the coming of

⁷⁶Israel Loring, *The Duty of an Apostasizing People* (Boston, 1737), pp. 23, 45, 67. Ironically, Loring himself would soon turn against the awakeners and become one of the harshest critics of the evangelical revivals, demonstrating that the evangelical unity that so easily rolled off the tongues of the leading pastors in these years was somewhat more difficult to put into practice. See Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 296–97.

⁷⁷See Charles Hanson’s *Necessary Virtue: The Pragmatic Origins of Religious Liberty in New England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998) and Francis Cogliano’s *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995).

⁷⁸Thomas Paine, *Common Sense and Related Writings*, ed. Thomas Slaughter (Boston: Bedford Books, 2001), p. 82; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*.

the French alliance, however, anti-Catholicism remained alive and well in American culture.⁷⁹

During the Great Awakening, the specifically religious periodical had become more common, and weekly newspapers focused increasingly on nonreligious matters. Massachusetts, of course, became the cradle of a revolution that was largely secular for many of its patriot leaders. Yet that familiar story should not obscure the influential pattern set in an earlier time and an earlier contest. Before the Great Awakening, Boston's newspapers, together with printed religious literature, helped New Englanders imagine that they were on the front lines of a global battle for Christianity—a struggle for the world's souls.

⁷⁹See Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Ray Allen Billington's *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

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