

## ECUMENISM AND IRENICS IN 17th-CENTURY ENGLISH CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS

THOMAS H. CLANCY, S.J.

*[Editor's Note: After the Counter Reformation there occurred a small movement toward irenicism among several English Catholic controversialists of the 17th century. This Note provides some examples of this ecumenical phenomenon, as well as Protestant reaction to it and even the movement's impact on Catholics in the U.S.]*

BY THE 1660s the theological wars between the Catholics and the Protestants of England were a hundred years old. Those polemics had started with "The Great Controversy" following on Bishop John Jewel's "Challenge Sermon" at Paul's Cross in November 1559. Jewel was answered by Thomas Harding, Nicholas Sander, William Allen, Thomas Stapleton, and others.<sup>1</sup> Later on, other Catholic controversialists took up the cudgels: Persons, Broughton, Bristow, Smith, Percy, Floyd, and many more.

But around the middle of the 17th century, a new irenic note appeared in Catholic theological literature. Christopher Davenport, an English Franciscan whose name in religion was Franciscus a Santa Clara (1598–1680), started it off with his *Deus, natura, gratia*, published at Lyons in 1634.<sup>2</sup> In the Appendix to his volume, Davenport put the best construction on the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglicans and showed how the Articles could, for the most part, be reconciled with Catholic doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

Davenport tried in the 1650s to point out that many Protestants had exaggerated notions about what Catholics believed or were bound to be-

THOMAS H. CLANCY, S.J., received his Ph.D. from the London School of Economics. His area of specialization has been English Catholic history from 1570 to 1715, as well as the history of the Society of Jesus. Among his numerous publications are several books, including *Papist Pamphleteers* (Loyola University, 1964) and *English Catholic Books 1641–1700* (Brookfield, Vt.: Scolar, 1996). He is currently archivist of the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> See A. C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose* (London: Sands, 1950) 60–64.

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony F. Allison and David M. Rogers, *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558–1640* (Brookfield, Vt.: Scolar, 1989) vol. 1, nos. 287–89.

<sup>3</sup> See John Berchmans Dockery, *Christopher Davenport, Friar and Diplomat* (London: Burns and Oates, 1960) chap. 4. The Appendix was *Paraphrastica expositio articulorum confessionis anglicanae*; there was an English translation of this section by F. G. Lee (London: John T. Hayes, 1865).

lieve. In his *An Enchiridion of Faith* (1654) he distinguished between the essentials of the Christian faith and other doctrines held by some Catholics which were not essential to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> His *Cleare Vindication of Roman Catholics* (1659) is a short leaflet of four pages in which he tried to clear Catholics of complicity in the execution of Charles I.<sup>5</sup> Davenport also wrote *An Explanation of Roman Catholic Belief*, a short treatise of about a thousand words which treated Church, worship, justification, and civil government. In the fourth section he limited himself to denouncing any power (by the pope or anyone else) to depose a ruler and stressing believers' obligation to obey civil authorities and to keep faith with everyone including even heretics.

This work first appeared as an appendix to John Austin's *Christian Moderator* (1652)<sup>6</sup>—which achieved nine editions—a plea for religious toleration of Catholics. Many such pleas from Catholic and/or non-Conformist sources were published in the 1640s, 50s, and early 60s. Besides Austin's *Christian Moderator*, one can point to some nine other publications written by Catholics in the 1640s in addition to four more published between 1659 and 1661.

During the 1660s an irenic note sounded in some Catholic publications such as those of the Irish Franciscan, Peter Walsh, and the translations of the works of François Veron.<sup>7</sup> These last, plus the translations into English of the works of Lewis Maimbourg in the 1670s and 1680s were attempts to apply to the English scene methods that had been used in France to soften the animosity of the Huguenots towards the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> In the works of Maimbourg and Veron the emphasis had been on what beliefs Catholics absolutely had to hold. They eliminated many things that they considered not part of the Catholic belief system.<sup>9</sup>

Three separate editions of Davenport's *Explanation* appeared in 1656, 1670, and 1673.<sup>10</sup> In 1670 William Penn wrote a sharp reply entitled *A Seasonable Caveat against Popery*, a short piece of 36 pages.<sup>11</sup> Penn, a Quaker who did not believe in government regulation

<sup>4</sup> Donald Goddard Wing, *Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England . . . 1641–1700*, 2nd rev. ed., vol. 1 (1994), vol. 2 (1982), vol. 3 (1988). *Enchiridion* is in vol. 1, D nos. 350 and 350 A. See also Thomas H. Clancy, *English Catholic Books 1641–1700* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1974) nos. 303–4.

<sup>5</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 1, D 351; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* no. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 1, A 4245, A 4242 B, A 4247; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 49, 52, 54.

<sup>7</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 3, V 255–256; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 1001–3.

<sup>8</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 2, M 288–9, M 293–4; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 617–20.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that both Veron (d. 1649) and Maimbourg (d. 1686) were ordained to the priesthood in the Society of Jesus but left the Society in their later years to engage full-time in the work of converting the Huguenots.

<sup>10</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 1, D 352–54; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 305–7.

<sup>11</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 3, P 1359; another edition at P 1360.

of religion, disclaimed any intent to foster government persecution of Catholics, since he was a friend "to an Universal Toleration of Faith & Worship." But he vehemently objected to Catholic doctrine and behavior and remarked that the papists had changed "their ancient fierceness for modesty and kindness." Nevertheless Penn was not able to take the *Explanation* at face value. For him the Catholic Church remained corrupt and unbiblical.<sup>12</sup>

The next attempt at a pithy statement of Catholic beliefs was *Roman Catholick Principles in Reference to God and the King*, written by James Maurus Corker, O.S.B., and published in 1680, the year of Davenport's death. This work was about three times the length of Davenport's *Explanation*. A third of Corker's book was devoted to the Church's spiritual and temporal authority. Corker argued that neither popes or general councils were infallible, nor did either have a right to depose a king. The deposing power was declared to be impious and damnable, "yet not properly heretical."

The reason for this last phrase was to explain why Catholics could not take the Oath of Allegiance, since it obliged them to swear that the deposing power was heretical. Since some reputable Catholic theologians held that the papal deposing power was part of the Catholic faith, it could not be classified by Catholics as heretical. The rest of *Roman Catholick Principles* followed the line of Davenport's *Explanation*, though it absolutely denounces supposed Catholic doctrines such as the erroneous view that Catholics were not obliged to keep their word or tell the truth in dealing with those who were not of their faith.

Corker was an able apologist. He is said to have converted in his lifetime over a thousand persons, the most distinguished of whom was John Dryden.<sup>13</sup> He was also close to a number of victims in the Titus Oates Plot, including Viscount Stafford whose *Memoires* he published. He also recorded the devotions and last speeches of several other victims of this plot. He included *Roman Catholick Principles* in *Stafford's Memoires* and in *A Remonstrance of Piety and Innocence*. There were separate editions of *Roman Catholick Principles* in 1680 and 1683? (undated), and two more undated editions each with multiple settings that probably date from 1687.<sup>14</sup> During the reign of King James II (1685–89), when Catholics were given a measure of toleration, the main thrust of the campaign of Catholic controversialists was to un-

<sup>12</sup> Later on Penn was one of the few non-Catholic allies of King James II in his effort to advance religious toleration to include Catholics. "He was no longer the heated anti-Catholic propagandist he had been" (Vincent Buranelli, *The King and the Quaker* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1962] 113).

<sup>13</sup> T. A. Birrell, "James Maurice Corker and Dryden's Conversion," *English Studies* 54 (1973) 461–69; see also David Lunn, *The English Benedictines, 1540–1688* (London: Burns and Oates, 1980) 133–35.

<sup>14</sup> Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue* 1, C 6302–6305A; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 246–53.

deceive the English reading public as to what Catholics were obliged to believe. Their chief writer during this period was John Gother whose most important work was *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented* which went through at least twelve editions between 1685 and 1687. Six of these editions included the text of *Roman Catholick Principles*.<sup>15</sup> Gother's work grew as the editions multiplied, but the format never varied. After the introduction there followed a series of chapters on topics such as praying to images, worshipping saints, indulgences, the pope's powers, etc. First he listed Protestant misconceptions, then Gother detailed what Catholics were strictly obliged to believe on a topic in hand.<sup>16</sup> Gother's work is thus in the direct line of Davenport's *Explanation* and Corker's *Principles*.<sup>17</sup> The probable reason for the greater success of Corker's work is that he devoted more space to the Church's temporal authority, a subject slighted in Davenport's *Explanation*. Corker declared: "General Councils have no commission from Christ to frame new matters of faith." Nor is it an article of faith to believe that general councils cannot err, or that the pope himself is infallible. The pope has no direct or indirect authority over the temporal power of princes nor can a prince be deposed on account of heresy. Further "the king-killing doctrine . . . is damnable and heretical." Corker was answered by the Protestant Robert T. Hancock who wrote *The Loyalty of Popish Principles* (1686).<sup>18</sup> There was an undated edition of Corker's *Principles* in the 18th century which was reprinted in the 1748 edition of *Somers' Tracts*.<sup>19</sup>

During the greater part of the 18th century there was not much activity on the part of Catholic anti-Protestant controversialists. Bishop Challoner wrote and re-edited many books of piety and controversy, but this was the century when Catholics tried to avoid the spotlight. Then in 1780 the drive began to obtain some concessions from the English government to relieve the Catholics in Great Britain from their civic disabilities. The troubles in Ireland were a catalyst for this movement. Once more it became important to minimize the differences between Catholics and Protestants.

The Reverend Joseph Berington, an English Catholic writer and an ardent Cisalpine, wrote in 1785 a reply to his old friend, John Au-

<sup>15</sup> Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 2, G 1334-1335C; Clancy, *English Catholic Books* nos. 455-459.

<sup>16</sup> There were nine more editions of *The Papist Misrepresented* published in the 18th century and three more were published in America in the 19th century. For the 18th-century editions, see *English Catholic Books, 1701-1800*, compiled by Frans Blom et al. (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996). References to the American editions are in Wilfrid Parsons, *Early Catholic Americana* (New York: Macmillan, 1939).

<sup>17</sup> Curiously all three authors, Davenport, Corker, and Gother, were converts to Catholicism, though they had been reconciled to the old religion in their late teens or early twenties.

<sup>18</sup> There were two editions of this work; see Wing, *Short Title Catalogue* 2, H 643-44.

<sup>19</sup> It was also included in the 1811 and 1815 editions.

gustine Hawkins, who had left the Benedictines and resigned from the priesthood in order to marry.<sup>20</sup> The first 100 pages of *Reflections Addressed to the Rev. John Hawkins* (Birmingham, 1785)<sup>21</sup> dealt with the hopes of Hawkins and Berington for the English Catholic Church. Berington then introduced *Roman Catholick Principles in Reference to God and the Country*. He stated that he does not know the author of the piece or the date of its origin, but it is definitely Corker's text.

In addition to substituting "the Country" for "the King" in the title, Berington made some other changes. He simply deleted the wording in the original version which refused to call the Oath of Allegiance heretical. In section 3 he introduced considerations of the sacraments in paragraph 1. There are other alterations in a Cisalpine and anti-papal sense.<sup>22</sup>

This started a new publishing history for the *Principles*. As Eamon Duffy has written, "the Principles were to become a standard Cisalpine formulary." Duffy has adequately traced the literary history of this Stuart pamphlet in 18th- and 19th-century history. What is not widely known, however, is that an American edition of the *Principles* was published in Bardstown, Kentucky, in 1805 by Stephen Badin, the Apostle of Kentucky. He called it, *The Real Principles of Roman Catholicism in Reference to God and Country*.<sup>23</sup> It included in the beginning an exact reprint of Berington's version followed by an explanation of each paragraph evidently from the hand of Badin himself. In his commentary he pointed out encouraging news from recent ecclesiastical history.

Badin was a native of France who had come to America without having completed his seminary training. In May 1793 he became the first priest ordained in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, he left for the Kentucky frontier. With the exception of nine years spent in France, he remained in that part of the new nation until his death in 1853. In addition to his many labors in Kentucky he was also instrumental in the foundation of the University of Notre Dame in neighboring Indiana, where his remains rest today. *Real Principles* was the first Catholic book published in "the West," that part of the U.S. west of the Appalachian mountains. Evidently it had some success, because in 1835 Badin published a one-page summary of *Principles* in Cincinnati. He called it *Some Protestant Misconceptions*.

<sup>20</sup> Eamon Duffy, "Over the Wall," *Downside Review* 94 (1976) 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> *Roman Catholick Principles* was used earlier by Bishop John Hornihold, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland Region in his *Real Principles* (London: T. Meighan, 1749). Further editions were published in Dublin in 1750 and 1773.

<sup>22</sup> See Eamon Duffy, "Ecclesiastical Democracy," *Recusant History* 10 (1970) 193-209, 309-31; 13 (1975) 123-48.

<sup>23</sup> Parsons, *Early Catholic Americana* no. 265. Three other works by Badin are listed in Parsons at nos. 229, 350, 981. The books listed by Parsons are testimony to the heavy influence of English Catholic works in America in the early 19th century; see also Robert Gorman, *Catholic Apologetic Literature in the USA, 1784-1858* (New York: AMS, 1974; originally published Washington: Catholic University of America, 1939).



#### Copyright and Use:

**As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.**

**No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.**

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

#### About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.