

Excerpts from **Kidd, Colin. 'Integration: Patriotism and Nationalism'. *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Ed. H. T. Dickinson. Cornwall: Blackwell, 2002. 369-380.**

"A growing recognition of the shared Anglo-Scottish values of Protestantism, liberty and constitutional government also emerged out of conflict with an alien, despotic and Roman Catholic France. Catholic Spain was another bugbear. The oppositional and imperialist cult of Admiral Vernon, the victor over the Spaniards at Porto Bello (1739), was to be celebrated across Lowland Scotland as well as throughout England between 1740 and 1742, as Kathleen Wilson has shown. The continent as a whole, with the odd exception, seemed to be a scene of tyranny and superstition, of absolutist kingcraft and popish priestcraft. Scots and English, for all their differences, it seemed, had much more in common with one another than they did with an alien and hostile continent. [...]

But we should not exaggerate the extent to which confessional differences shaped anti-French sentiment. Within the ranks of the Anglican clergy, there was a marked degree of sympathy for Gallicanism, the desire of the Catholic church in France – expressed most forcefully in its Four Articles of 1682 – for a large measure of national autonomy from the temporal claims of the papacy. Indeed, William Wake, archbishop of Canterbury between 1716 and 1737 and a former chaplain to the embassy in Paris (1682–5), engaged in negotiations from 1717 to 1720 for a possible union of the Anglican and Gallican churches, though this plan did not come to fruition. Beyond the immediate sphere of Anglo-French relations, the eighteenth century witnessed – again at the elite level – a marked diminution of the anti-Catholicism that had been such a characteristic feature of British Protestant identities during the seventeenth century. The collapse of Jacobitism after the failure of 1745–6 happened to coincide with a time of obvious tensions within the Catholic world. Britons came to recognize that continental Catholicism – contrary to the image they once held of a doctrinaire Counter-Reformation militancy – encompassed considerable ecclesiastical diversity. In 1763 the Catholic theologian Febronius issued his treatise *De statu ecclesiae*, which advocated a more decentralized church. In practice, Febronianism was held to legitimize a Catholic Erastianism which reached its apogee in the secular utilitarian calculus adopted by Joseph II of Austria to review the church's role in his dominions. No group epitomized the old ways more than the Jesuits, whose star waned with the eclipse of ultramontane confessionalism. Portugal's enlightened minister Pombal expelled the Jesuits in 1759, France quickly followed suit in 1764, and in 1767 Charles III was persuaded of the wisdom of suppressing the order within Spain and throughout his colonial empire. Under considerable international pressure, Pope Clement XIV formally dissolved the Jesuit order in 1773. Papal foreign policy also began to assume a more benign aspect. In 1766 Clement XIII took the opportunity of the death of the Old Pretender to refuse diplomatic recognition to his successor Charles, the Young Pretender. The cold wars of religion were clearly thawing in the sun of the European enlightenment, whose effects were also felt upon British policy making.

Roman Catholic relief legislation for England and Scotland was introduced in 1778–9 (though the Scottish bill was dropped after popular pressure). The Quebec Act (1774) accorded formal recognition to the Roman Catholic religion in that province. Even in Ireland the Protestant ruling classes began to dismantle the anti-Catholic penal laws instituted between 1695 and 1727. As early as the 1720s Archbishop Synge had begun to wrestle with the problem of formulating a test of allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy which would have facilitated a measure of toleration for Catholic clergy and laity in Ireland. The passivity of Irish Catholics in 1715 and 1745 began to dampen the anti-Catholic fears of the Protestant Irish elite. By the 1760s and 1770s the term 'papist' had fallen into disuse among enlightened Irish Protestants. The Irish Catholic community began to reflect the wider divisions of the church, with Archbishop Butler of Cashel emerging in the 1770s as the leader of its Gallican wing. Moreover, by now the moral imperatives of enlightenment had been reinforced by the need to draw upon Irish Catholic manpower to serve the growing military needs of the British empire.

An act of 1771 eased restrictions on Catholic tenancies and the Oath Act of 1774 permitted Catholics to take a new non-papal oath of allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy. Further Irish Catholic relief acts followed in 1778, 1782, 1792 and 1793 which, collectively, gave Catholics the same property rights as Protestants, removed many of the restrictions that had been imposed on Catholic worship, and allowed Catholics to practise law and to vote in elections (though not, of course, the right to sit themselves as MPs). By the end of the century full Catholic emancipation – including Catholic representation – seemed close at hand. Pitt the Younger attempted to make Catholic emancipation a cornerstone of the union with Ireland agreed in 1800, but was frustrated by George III, who judged it a betrayal of the Protestant constitution he had sworn to uphold in his coronation oath.

Anti-Catholicism remained a staple of popular Britishness. There were serious riots in Edinburgh against Roman Catholic relief, targeted against the residence of William Robertson, the principal of Edinburgh University and leader of the liberal Moderates in the kirk. In England a Protestant Association was formed in the spring of 1780, and that summer's Gordon Riots constituted the century's largest explosion of popular violence on mainland Britain. In North America too the Quebec Act seemed to confirm suspicions among British colonists that the motherland was in the grip of a crypto-Catholic absolutist conspiracy, in turn fuelling demands for separation. Moreover, in Ireland the century of enlightenment ended with a renewal of popular sectarianism, with the Catholic Whiteboy and Rightboy movements succeeded by the more intense hostilities of the late 1790s. This disjunction between the liberalism of enlightened elites and the prejudice of the populace has to be taken into account when generalizing about the identities of eighteenth-century Britons. By a similar token, the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 prompted an outpouring of anti-Judaic bigotry and was promptly repealed. Confessional prejudice, while perhaps not the uncomplicated given assumed by Colley, was none the less a major component of popular identities throughout the eighteenth-century British world.

The undoubted strength of these animosities, however, was not matched by an equally powerful positive identification with Britain's family of Protestant churches. If continental Catholicism was not quite the alien monolith that Colley imagines, then neither was British Protestantism as homogeneous or tension-free as the Colley thesis suggests. There was considerable conflict within the Protestant community. Although anti-Catholicism was enshrined at the heart of the Union of 1707 – in Article II, which confirmed the Protestant succession – the acts accompanying union which secured the privileges of the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland were the product of genuine Presbyterian fears of Anglican imperialism. The legislative intrusion of the English Tory ministry of 1710–14 into the reserved area of Scottish church matters served only to exacerbate Presbyterian anxieties. Indeed, the non-Jacobite opposition to union of the 1720s and 1730s has been generally overlooked. Yet, from 1712 through to 1783 the General Assembly of the kirk issued an annual grievance to the British state against the intolerable grievance of lay patronage, and patronage provoked significant secessions from the established kirk in 1733 and 1761. The Seceders were unenthusiastic Britons, critical not only of the abomination of patronage, but also of a union which had at its rotten heart an Erastian multi-confessional arrangement: not only did Anglicans – notionally – recognize the inviolable privileges of the Scots Presbyterian kirk, but Scots reciprocally acknowledged an Episcopal Church of England. This was offensive enough to Presbyterians sensitive to any usurpations on the rights of Christ over his church, but doubly galling was the presence of the bishops in the British House of Lords which involved a breach of the Presbyterian principle of the two kingdoms – a parallel division of spheres between civil and spiritual interests. Indeed, at the extremes of the Scots Presbyterian community, the Cameronian heirs of the radical Covenanters of the seventeenth century openly rejected the Glorious Revolution and the Union of 1707, denouncing the Hanoverians – equally with the Stuarts – for their failure to take the Covenants.

Even in Ireland, where Protestants shared deep-seated fears of Catholic insurrection, the Episcopal Church of Ireland discriminated against Presbyterians in much the same way that it did against Catholics. High church Irish Anglicans – Swift is the most notorious example – despised Presbyterians almost as much as they did Roman Catholics. In 1704 an act – ostensibly directed against popery – included a requirement that officeholders under the crown take communion within the Church of Ireland. Given that Catholics were already effectively excluded from office, this sacramental test was an anti-Presbyterian measure whose main effect was to disqualify Presbyterian burgesses from local government in towns such as Belfast and Derry. The Tory ascendancy at the end of Queen Anne's reign saw a further worsening of the status of Irish Presbyterians. Presbyterians were harassed by the authorities and in 1714 the *regium donum*, a state subsidy to Presbyterian ministers, was suspended, though it was to be restored from 1715 with the accession of George I and the demise of the Tories. Despite the passage of a Toleration Act in 1719, Presbyterians continued to experience certain legal disabilities. An attempt to repeal the sacramental test in 1719 failed, as did a further vote on the measure in the Irish parliament in 1733. Presbyterian marriages were also outlawed. Only by an act of 1737 did marriages conducted by Presbyterian clergymen gain official validity – and only if both parties were themselves Presbyterian. The sacramental test was eventually repealed in 1780, but only after the anti-Catholic penal laws had already begun to be dismantled. The experience of Ireland's Presbyterians – with their strong Scottish connections – sits uneasily with Colley's thesis that Protestantism was a major force of British integration."