

***A SHORT ACCOUNT... OF THE CONSECRATING OF THE
RIGHT REV. DR. JOHN CARROLL (1790): TWO
INTERSECTING ROMAN CATHOLIC STORIES***

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On August 15, 1790, John Carroll was consecrated as the first Roman Catholic bishop of the United States at a private chapel in England. An Account of the event was published in London, marking the importance of the moment for the now-tolerated American Catholic Church, but also serving the purposes of certain English Catholics who hungered for similar signs of toleration. The English Catholic situation included a struggle between pro-Roman, pro-papal sentiments and tendencies more willing to accommodate their church to modern and liberal ideas of authority and personal autonomy. It might be argued that the Account was taking the pro-papal side in the English Catholic discussion, revealing parallel but now intersecting stories of the journey toward complete religious liberty in two English-speaking lands lately separated yet still ironically connected.

Less than two months after the event, *A Short Account of the Establishment of the New See of Baltimore in Maryland, and of Consecrating the Right Rev. Dr. John Carroll first Bishop thereof On the Feast of the Assumption, 1790* was published in London by J. P. Coghlan, No. 37, Duke-Street, Grosvenor-Square. Never too enthused about the publication project, Bishop Carroll, once arrived back in Baltimore late in the year, informed his dear English friend, Charles Plowden, also an ex-Jesuit, that shortly after his return to the United States

I have been obliged to suppress, in great measure the few copies I brought to[sic] Coghlan's account of the ceremony of Aug. 15. The clause of the bull, in which the reservation is made to Rome, of future appointments of the Bishop, occasioned such observations amongst a few of our leading men (Anti-Catholics) who say it, that it was judged best to disseminate no more copies. You know, how much I objected to that publication. But Coghlan's importunity overcame.¹

Always sensitive to his non-Catholic countrymen's historic distaste for "foreign jurisdictions," especially those of the Roman Catholic flavor, Carroll was specifically alluding to the clause in the papal bull authorizing that

the priests who lawfully exercise the sacred ministry and have care of souls in the united States of America, should be empowered to advise together and to determine, first, in what town the episcopal See ought to be erected, and next who of the aforesaid priests appeared the most worthy and proper to be promoted to this important charge, whom We, for this first time only, and by special grace permitted the said priests to elect and to present to this apostolical See.²

Later in 1791, however, Matthew Carey, the Philadelphia Catholic printer, would publish his own version of the London imprint. There is no record of Carroll's reaction. Carroll's obvious unease with publicizing the enduring link between Baltimore and Rome was not shared by his English friends. When the possibility of publishing *A Short Account* was first raised within two weeks of the consecration at Thomas Weld's Lulworth Chapel in Dorset, Charles Plowden, chaplain for the Weld family, had informed Carroll:

Coghlan worries me for a translation of your Bull & an history of your consecration & demonstrates the great advantages which the publishing of it is to procure to catholicity in this kingdom. He has sent me down the Bull to be translated & copied in answer to my letter wherein I had informed him that I could not do it. This is the Irish mode of doing business.³

But, a bit over a week later, Plowden was indicating to Carroll that

Coghlan will not relinquish his scheme of printing something about you. He has sent me a sketch of the title wh[ich] he wished to prefix to it & I think it will be very harmless & inoffensive. Mr. Weld will not oppose his naming Lulworth & if he prints it, I will take care that he insert nothing improper either in the Bull or in other parts.⁴

Indeed, the publication of *A Short Account* may have concerned John Carroll, but the advertising both of papal authority and the religious liberty enjoyed in the United States, pointedly compared to the continuing disabilities suffered by English Catholics, did certainly suggest "great advantages" to certain English Catholics given a current controversy in their own community. The circumstances surrounding the chapbook published on both sides of the Atlantic were rich in irony.

The American side of the story is familiar. Only recently, during the American Revolution, had American Catholics been accorded religious toleration.⁵ While the very public anti-Catholic laws of colonies such as Massachusetts had stood as usually un-exercised expressions of such sentiment, the Catholics in Maryland, always a minority in their own ostensible colony, had suffered persecution almost from the beginnings of the plantation's existence. By the late seventeenth century, anti-Catholic penal laws, mirroring those of the mother country, were on the Maryland statute books, if not always enforced. The wars between Protestant England and its Catholic adversaries, particularly France, beginning in the late seventeenth century, had wonderfully focused the issue for a millennial-minded New England clergy: English liberty and freedom, political and religious, were celebrated as the righteous antitheses of the illiberal and unfree French combination of royal absolutism and papist suppression of religious truth.⁶ While the English had seemingly emerged victorious in this apocalyptic struggle by 1763, the circumstances of American Catholics, located principally in Maryland and Pennsylvania, had not really changed: they were grudgingly allowed to exist, tolerated in practice if not necessarily or legally welcome. With the advent of the American Revolution, a search for potential allies, including prominently France and Spain, along with what Bernard Bailyn has called "the contagion of liberty," resulted in a legal toleration for American Catholics. Disabilities which precluded a complete religious liberty would remain in some states for another generation, but the moment was an auspicious one for the organization and development of the Catholic Church in the new republic. Returning to the colonies in 1774 after approximately twenty-five years in Europe, and a year after the suppression of his Jesuit order, John Carroll embraced the new circumstances for his church, entered fully into pastoral ministry, and quickly assumed a role of leadership among his fellow, ex-Jesuit, priests. By 1784 he had been named Superior of the American Missions by Pius VI and the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith (or the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda) and had submitted a report to Rome on the situation of the church and Catholics in the United States. Fully aware of the heritage of anti-Catholicism in the Anglo-American world, along with the current xenophobia and anti-episcopal attitudes of his neighbors, including some Catholics, Carroll was at the same time eager for his church to enter into the American conversation. The new republic, founded on principles of political and religious freedom, offered an extraordinary opportunity for the growth of "Religion," i.e., the Roman Catholic Church.⁷ Prudence suggested, however, that the unpopular reality of a

“foreign jurisdiction” did not require notoriety. It did not play well either with one’s non-Catholic neighbors or one’s fellow Catholics, including one’s fellow priests.

In an oft-quoted letter to Charles Plowden in early April 1784, Carroll had angrily stated that

no authority derived from the Propagda will ever be admitted here; that the Catholic Clergy & Laity here know that the only connexion they ought to have with Rome is to acknowledge the pope as the Spir[itua]l head of the Church; that no Congregations existing in his states shall be allowed to exercise any share of his Spir[itua]l authority here; that no Bishop Vicar Apostolical shall be admitted; and if we are to have a Bishop, he shall not be *in partibus* but an ordinary national Bishop, in whose appointment Rome shall have no share.⁸

Within a year, however, Carroll would accept his appointment as Superior from that same Congregation. Several points need to be made: surely troubling to Carroll and his fellow priests was the news that the American diplomat, Benjamin Franklin, had recently been approached in Paris by the papal nuncio regarding Catholic matters in the United States. Accustomed to dealing with national governments, and sensing French influence and thus their necessary participation in any establishment of an American Catholic church, the Holy See had turned to Franklin, who had appeared the likely avenue to both American and French officials. At the same time, no immediate approach had been made to the Catholic priests in the United States, a slight magnified for those priests, so many of them ex-Jesuits, by the involvement of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, blamed along with Pope Clement XIV, for the suppression of their order. Some Roman assault on the Society’s properties in the United States must be in the offing! In addition, the prospect of a church in the United States on the traditional English model rankled Carroll and his colleagues. Since the late seventeenth century, vicars apostolic, appointed by Roman authority, more recently by the Propaganda, had exercised this transmitted and subordinate authority in a country with no regular diocesan organization. Catholics in America were under the jurisdiction of the vicar apostolic of the London District. Carroll certainly viewed this situation not only as demeaning to English Catholics but also a situation not now to be accepted in their turn by American Catholics, resident in a newly-independent nation. While Charles Plowden cultivated these anxieties concerning Propaganda and its plans in several letters to

Carroll in the mid-1780s, the truth of the matter was that circumstances were not so dire. Carroll's own efforts; the influence of yet another ex-Jesuit, John Thorpe, a correspondent of Carroll's living in Rome and an effective lobbyist for the Americans; and more friendly and solicitous sensitivities in Rome than perhaps expected; all these elements combined to open a more attractive path for the Americans. As early as the summer of 1786, Carroll was able to report to Plowden that Propaganda had increased Carroll's powers, as he had requested, and had also indicated to him that he should alert them as to when a bishop would be necessary in the United States. The American clergy would be allowed to choose two candidates, one of whom would then be named a bishop. The issue of whether the bishop would be a vicar apostolic or an ordinary was yet open, but the attendant Carroll campaign for an ordinary would be successful within three years.⁹

Throughout this entire episode, Carroll's basic posture was sure: he willingly accepted the idea that Rome, the Holy See, was the "spiritual centre" of Catholicism, of "Roman Catholicism," and that the pope enjoyed a "spiritual supremacy" which must be recognized by all Catholics.¹⁰ At the same time, Carroll was very sensitive to the proper authority of an ordinary bishop. In July 1787, Plowden congratulated Carroll on the campaign to obtain an ordinary bishop for the United States, but observed that Carroll manifested a dread of dependence on "foreign jurisdiction," a situation that would be exacerbated in the event of the appointment of a vicar apostolic. Plowden countered that even an ordinary diocese in a non-Catholic country must always be under some form of dependence on a "foreign jurisdiction." No reasonable person in America could object to dependence on the Holy See, which was essential to Catholic unity. And, any ordinaries in non-Catholic countries would have to be under some direction from Propaganda, whether receiving bulls or regarding extraordinary faculties, for example. In addition, occasional urgencies noticed to the pope were referred to Propaganda. Throughout the world, ordinary dioceses, in Catholic and non-Catholic countries alike, then, were not completely exempted from such dependence on "foreign jurisdiction."¹¹ Ironically, a month earlier Carroll had written to Plowden, noting an inquiry by J. P. Coghlan concerning remarks attributed to Carroll in a book by Joseph Berington, an English priest. Carroll was being quoted in England as in favor both of the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and of the abolition of clerical celibacy. Apparently quite accepting of the involvement of "foreign jurisdiction," in this instance, Carroll replied

Is it really true, that any are so bold, as to avow this latter sentiment; or even assert, that any single Bishop may alter the language of the liturgy, without the approbation of the Holy See, & a general concurrence of at least other national Bishops?¹²

Now, it is surely not clear as to how a defense of the spiritual supremacy of the pope and a recognition of the spiritual center of Catholicism in the Holy See would play out in specific historical circumstances, but John Carroll was in no way interested in creating a completely independent American Catholic church. The difficulties attendant on establishing and organizing the church in the new republic, difficulties variously historical, contemporary, and personal, prompted a caution in Carroll, a naturally prudent and circumspect man.¹³ These considerations were at the heart of his initial lack of enthusiasm for publishing *A Short Account*, and certainly in evidence in his obligation “to suppress, in great measure the few copies I brought [back to Baltimore of]... Coghlan’s account of the ceremony of Aug. 15.” But, what of Coghlan’s (and Plowden’s) considerations regarding “the great advantages which the publishing of it is to procure to catholicity in this kingdom”?

J. P. Coghlan’s edition of *A Short Account* featured four separate sections. The third part, pages 10-19, offered an English translation of Pius VI’s bull authorizing the consecration of John Carroll as the first American Catholic bishop. Two brief pieces preceded the bull, both the work of Charles Plowden, although their authorship was not credited to him. The first few pages were entitled “A Short Account of the Establishment of the New See of Baltimore.” Maryland was described as a colony granted to Lord Baltimore “as a refuge for persons of his religion from the severity of the penal laws.” But, the English Catholic emigrants who had journeyed to the colony were burdened by “the unrelenting spirit of persecution [which] pursued them over the Atlantic.” Soon, these Maryland Catholics had had “enforced against them many of the British penal laws, from the cruelty of which they had fled.” Recent dramatic events had now changed this situation:

Since the peace of 1783 and the settlement of the American constitution, penal laws are no longer known, and Catholics enjoy an equal participation of the rights of human nature with their neighbours of every other religious denomination. The very term of *toleration* is exploded, because it imports a power in one predominant sect to indulge that religious liberty to others, which all claim as an inherent right.

Within this newly-established context of freedom in the United States, the Catholic clergy had petitioned for the regularization of their circumstances: the establishment of an episcopal see and the opportunity to elect their first diocesan bishop. The result had been papal approval, the choice of Baltimore, and the election of John Carroll, who was accordingly consecrated in the chapel of Lulworth Castle on August 15, 1790.¹⁴

In keeping with the dominant meter of *A Short Account* the second section was titled “A Short Adress [sic]...At the Consecration.” Here Plowden had noticed the handiwork of Divine Providence both in the late dismemberment of the British empire and in its calling “into existence a new empire in the Western world, the destinies of which, we trust, are founded in his tenderest mercies.” This event had only seemed “the sport of human passions.” Rather, “the earliest and most precious fruit of it has been the extension of the kingdom of Christ, the propagation of catholic religion, which heretofore fettered by restraining laws, is now enlarged from bondage and is left at liberty to exert the full energy of divine truth.” The “thousands” now seeking instruction in the faith were being served by clergy “all penetrated with reverence for the apostolical See of St. Peter.” How ought Englishmen to view these developments?

But if Britain infected them with error, we have the consolation to know that their catholicity is also derived immediately from us; and as we in former ages received the faith of Rome from the great St. Gregory and our apostle St. Austin, so now at the interval of twelve hundred years, our venerable prelate [Vicar Apostolic Charles Walmsley of the Western District] the heir of the virtues and labours of our apostle, will, this day, by commission from the successor of St. Gregory, consecrate the first Father and Bishop of the new church, destined, as we confide, to inherit those benedictions which the first called have ungratefully rejected.¹⁵

The fourth and final section of the publication was entitled: “Extracts From the Different Bills of Rights and Constitutions of the Thirteen United States of North America; Declaring Liberty of Conscience As the Birth-Right of All Men. With Copies of Their Oaths of Allegiance and of Trust.”¹⁶ Along with the first two parts of *A Short Account*, this recitation of the comparative merits of American religious freedom vis-à-vis English non-freedom for Catholics was not overly subtle. And, within certain limits—for example, the disabilities which

American Catholics still faced in certain states regarding qualifying for government offices—the comparison had much truth to it. Publicizing these differences, then, would appear to offer a definition of “the great advantages” J. P. Coghlan (and Charles Plowden) expected to result from *A Short Account*. Might unease, perhaps even some shame, serve to move Englishmen to continue down the road toward the allowance of more religious freedom for their own countrymen who were Catholics? Might the example of the liberality of her former colonies, now a predominantly Protestant republic, be expected to enlighten the former mother country, resulting in more relief for English Catholics from the penal laws? The obvious stratagem at work here would certainly seem to be the case, but perhaps this was not the entire story. It may be that *A Short Account* was attractive in yet another way to a certain beleaguered segment of the English Catholic population. To read the small publication was to be struck by the utter orthodoxy of the Carroll moment: the explicit recognition and acceptance both of the Holy See in Rome as the “spiritual centre” of Catholicism and the “spiritual supremacy” of the pope. In England in 1790, this was contested ground.

The story of English Catholicism, at least in the beginnings of its post-Reformation difficulties, is also familiar. It is a story of Henry VIII and his marital irregularities, and the consequent break with Rome. It is a story of martyrdoms, the celebrated stories of St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher and the lesser known stories of over 200 executed under Queen Elizabeth I. And it is the story of attempts, both rather short-lived, under Queen Mary and King James II, to return England to its orthodox Roman connection. The story after the Glorious Revolution is not so well known, despite the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, intended to make a Catholic king of James Stuart. The Catholic community in England would continue to exist, particularly in certain areas of the country, but it would not necessarily be a significant presence in an imperial and industrializing Great Britain. In 1778, when the first important legislative effort to ease the situation of English Catholics was passed, and Catholics subscribing to the required oath of loyalty were freed to own and inherit land and while the situation of priests was eased, the number of Catholics was estimated to be but 60,000 in a total population of 7,500,000. As one scholar has suggested, at the moment of the Relief Act of 1778: “Politically, economically, intellectually, socially, Catholics were of no practical importance and certainly posed no threat to the civil government or to the established church in

England.”¹⁷ Religious authority in this Catholic community since the reign of King James I had usually been in the hands of vicars apostolic, appointed since the late seventeenth century by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, established by Gregory XV in 1622, with jurisdiction over mission lands such as England. The ready comparison here was that a vicar apostolic exercised delegated and dependent (on Rome) powers, while an ordinary diocesan bishop, though in communion with Rome, exercised the powers inherent in a duly-consecrated bishop of the Church.¹⁸ One of the results of such a situation was an accent in the English Catholic community on lay leadership, especially that provided at times by the handful of remaining Catholic peers and baronets. Several of these Catholic luminaries, and not the four vicars apostolic nor the Catholic clergy, had been involved in the Relief Act of 1778. This Catholic Committee had continued its efforts for further reform of the penal laws during the 1780s. In their efforts for a continuing Catholic emancipation, the Catholic Committee had begun to push for the replacement of the vicars apostolic, seen as too dependent per se on “foreign jurisdiction,” with a reconstituted English Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy, i.e., ordinary diocesan bishops. While still “connected” to Rome, such ordinaries could more readily be presented to one’s fellow Englishmen as “English” rather than foreign, perhaps even as “Gallican.” The project to make Catholics more acceptable as equally English neighbors was seen also to require yet another, new oath of loyalty or, stated in another way, a “new” public statement distancing English Catholics from the “foreign jurisdiction” of the pope in Rome. In June 1789, this project of the Catholic Committee accordingly occasioned a new oath for Catholics: included now, besides the language of “protestation” against any power in the pope to dispense subjects from their allegiance to their king, was a direct denial not just of papal civil authority in the realm, but also a denial of “any spiritual authority, power, or jurisdiction whatsoever” that might interfere with the independence or sovereignty of the kingdom. In the months leading up to this moment, another document, a literal “Protestation” or “Declaration” had been formulated, and signed by many prominent Catholics, that denied papal infallibility and even the power of pope or priest to forgive sins. By the summer of 1789 and on into 1790, very clear fissures were discernible in the English Catholic community.¹⁹ John Carroll’s consecration took place in the midst of these very serious internal commotions agitating English Catholics.

John Carroll’s involvement was mostly long-distance. Except for his approximately two and one-half months in England in 1790, when he could view (and hear about!) the dispute at first-hand, his

knowledge of what was happening, and what was at stake, came primarily from his correspondence with Charles Plowden. In short, while Plowden, also an ex-Jesuit, was often optimistic regarding the repeal of the Society's papal suppression, his sentiments were yet with Rome and the authority of the pope. Thus, while Plowden could laud the circumstances of Jesuits, still active in Russia because the Tsarina Catherine had refused to suppress the order, and counsel Carroll at length as to the aggrandizing schemes of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, and even hint at the possibility that a Bishop Carroll might himself re-establish the Society in America, despite all of this, Plowden was a defender of the authority of the pope and the Holy See. On the side of the aggrieved English vicars apostolic, Plowden would publish a defense of papal infallibility in 1790 and a critique of the proposed oath in 1791. As cautious and prudent as ever, Carroll listened to Plowden, sympathized often, gently suggested a bit more circumspection in several instances, but certainly agreed with him as to the fundamental reality, and authority, of the pope's "spiritual supremacy" and Rome's position as the "spiritual centre" of Catholicism.²⁰

Throughout the 1780s, a recurring topic of conversation between Carroll and Plowden was the developing situation of the church in the United States, a development that Plowden would eulogize during his participation in Carroll's consecration. By turns, Plowden, armed with the latest news from Rome and the continent, was encouraging and cautionary, often warning of possible unhappy interventions by outsiders into the American story. He offered Carroll updates regarding the efforts in England of the Catholic Committee for relief, but also informed his American correspondent of the increasing evidence of a concurrent disposition to irreligion and to a consequent assault upon papal authority.²¹ In May 1788, Carroll replied:

Your account of the innovating spirit of many English, both Clergy and Laity, is an alarming symptom of the propagation of indocility, and independance [sic] on all authority, however well established. God grant, we may not experience it here! not indeed amongst our own Brethren [ex-Jesuits], nor, I believe, amongst our native R. Catholics: but some specimens of it have appeared amongst the Irish & Germans. Some of the latter, at Philada., have asserted a claim similar to that, which, you say, is countenanced by Mr Berington at Bristol, of nominating their own Pastors. I cannot express, how fatal such a right, if made good, would prove to Religion in this Country.²²

Grounded in his own firm allegiance to the “spiritual centre,” Carroll could also counsel Plowden as to the importance of having ordinary bishops, rather than vicars apostolic, in a March 1789 letter in which he reported that the Americans were to have such bishops:

I do not know, on what principles your respectable V.V.A.A. [vicars apostolic] govern themselves, by opposing the appointment of Ordinaries for England. I think it would remove many plausible objections agst. the Catholic Religion, give a more decided authority to the Prelates, & introduce an Ecclesiastical government more consonant to other churches & the established discipline.²³

Closer to the situation in England, Plowden filled his letters to Carroll in 1788-1790 with denunciations of the “Declaration” or “Protestation,” and the proffered oath, which awkwardly identified Catholics as “protesting Catholic dissenters.” In part blaming the introduction of “bad ideas” from the Continent for the English Catholic conflict, Plowden returned often to the belief that what was really at work was a conspiracy to promote schism in the English church as the church was being moved farther from “the center of unity.”²⁴ Carroll’s reaction in early 1790 to the oath might serve also as a gloss on his own conviction as to the circumstances of Catholics in the United States:

I have not seen the proposed oath: but to me it has always appeared degrading, that Catholics should find it necessary to recommend themselves to Government by renouncing tenets, which form no part of their belief... I am clearly of opinion that the Catholics ought to speak a manly language &, after giving such proof of their attachment to their country, as any government ought in reason to be satisfied with, to demand equal protection *as a right*, & not suppliantly sue for it, *as a favor*. This would be much more respected, than a thousand attendances & cringings, at a minister’s level. Tho I have not seen the proposed oath yet I have met with a declaration in some magazine, which I suppose to be that which was signed so generally. I remember, that, when I read it, I thought it very reprehensible... With you I entirely coincide in your observations on the quaint, mischievous, & dishonourable appellation of *protesting Catholic dissenters*.²⁵

Even as Carroll was in England preparing for his consecration, a worried Plowden continued to alert him as to the conspiratorial intentions of some in the English Catholic conflict:

I greatly fear that there are men in London whose aim is to separate us from the holy see, & that these men at least influence the committee. If these gent[lemen] will persist in making themselves protesting dissenters, a schism among us must ensue and the total defection of many from catholicity will probably be the consequence.²⁶

The commotions in the English Catholic community did not abate for some time, but the immediate issue was resolved shortly after John Carroll had returned to the United States. A compromise was fashioned in which the disputed Committee oath was replaced by the more acceptable Irish Oath of 1774. Subsequently, a second Relief Act was passed in June 1791, including a grant of legal existence to Catholic houses of worship.²⁷ Responding to Plowden's several letters informing him of the good news, Carroll could remark that the new Relief Act, coupled with the encouraging disposition of leading men in England "would lead me to hope for a happy reunion of England with the Catholic Church, if morals were less corrupt, and the belief of the Christian religion more universal, than, I fear, it is." A month later, Carroll included in a letter to Plowden sentiments about the diocesan synod currently meeting in Baltimore, sentiments that Plowden himself had only recently been experiencing. The synod, the bishop explained, was intended to create a uniform discipline in the American church, and to take all necessary measures:

that as little danger, as possible, may remain of a disunion with the holy See. I am very fearful of this event taking place in succeeding time unless it be guarded against by prudential precaution. Our distance, tho not so great, if geometrically measured, as S. America, Goa, and China yet in a political light is much greater. S. America, & the Portuguese possessions in Africa & Asia have, thro' their metropolitan Countries, an intermediate connection with Rome; and the missionaries in China are almost all Europeans. But we have no European metropolis, and our Clergy soon will be neither Europeans, nor have European connexions. Then will be the danger of a propension to a schismatical separation from the centre of unity. But the Founder of the Church sees all these things, and

can provide the remedy. After doing what we can we must commit the rest to his providence.²⁸

In the end, then, irony surrounded the publication of *A Short Account*. The publicizing of the consecration of the first American Catholic bishop was resisted by John Carroll, concerned about reaction in the United States to the revelation of a “foreign jurisdiction,” while a public presentation of the same event was encouraged and welcomed by certain English Catholics. Drawing attention to the disabilities suffered by English Catholics by reciting and celebrating the new freedoms enjoyed by American Catholics was an obvious tactic in the effort for English Catholic relief from the penal laws and the prejudices of their countrymen. Yet, it also appears to have been a card played in an increasingly animated internal English Catholic debate regarding questions of papal and Roman authority, i.e., an issue of “foreign jurisdiction.” The orthodoxy of the John Carroll consecration moment was available to assist an English Catholic orthodoxy beset by a perceived English Catholic latitudinarian initiative, even a bit of an English Gallicanism again ready to distance itself from Rome, the “spiritual centre” of the Catholic Church. While the irony of this moment may have been lost on John Carroll, and perhaps on Charles Plowden, both were surely aware of the unanticipated connection between the Catholic stories of their two nations, a connection revealed through the “importunity” or persistence of an “Irish” publisher.

Notes

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1. Carroll to Plowden, February 3, 22, 1791, in Thomas O'Brien Hanley, ed., *The John Carroll Papers*, 3 vols. (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1976), I: 492. Hereafter cited as JCP.

2. *A Short Account*, 13.

3. Plowden to Carroll, September 5, 1790, John Carroll Papers, Archives of Archdiocese of Baltimore, 6-M10. Hereafter cited as AAB. James Peter Coghlan (c. 1732-1800) was a London bookbinder and stationer from the mid-1750s, and is considered "the leading Catholic printer and publisher in London in the last quarter of the eighteenth century": Howard M. Nixon, "The Memorandum Book of James Coghlan: the Stock of an 18th-Century Printer and Binder," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 6 (1970), 333-52.

4. Plowden to Carroll, September 14, 1790, *ibid.*, 6-M11.

5. See John Tracy Ellis, *Catholics in Colonial America* (Baltimore, 1965), chapter XV; Patrick Carey, *The Roman Catholics* (Westport, Connecticut, 1993), chapter 2; and Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: a History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1988), chapter 4.

6. Cf. Nathan Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31, 3rd ser. (July 1974), 407-430. An example of the Massachusetts aversion to Catholics in one's midst is a 1700 statute calling for the imprisonment of any "Jesuits, priests and popish missionaries" active in the colony. If such a person would escape, and subsequently be re-captured, the penalty was death. Any person assisting such priest would be subject to a heavy fine, the pillory for three days, and probation afterward. See John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History*, 3 vols. (Wilmington, Delaware, 1987), I:118-120; and also other examples of colonial American Catholic legislation, *ibid.*, I: 110-112, 114-115.

7. For an excellent, brief discussion of John Carroll's sense of this opportunity, and his sensitivity as to time and place, see James Hennessey, "The Vision of John Carroll," *Thought*, 54 (September 1979), 322-333. According to Hennessey:

Communion with the Bishop and See of Rome was fundamental in Carroll's vision of the church, but his nuances were not quite those with which the twentieth century Catholic has been familiar. The 'Roman church' meant for him the local church of Rome, not the universal church, although he readily acknowledged that see's prerogatives in relation to the rest of the church. The Roman church was mother and mistress of all churches and obedience was owed its bishop. The spiritual supremacy of the Vicar of Christ was [Carroll wrote in a February 1787 letter to the Congregation of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia] "an essential tenet of our religion... the bond of our union, which cements and keeps together, in the profession of the same faith, and in the celebration of the same solemn and public worship, and under one uniform government, established by Jesus Christ, and perpetuated by succeeding pastors, so many different nations, so distant from each other, and unconnected in every other respect." (331)

Yet, while "Rome was the center of ecclesiastical unity,... in the eighteenth century ecclesiology individual bishops in their dioceses and the body of bishops in the universal church loomed very large." (332) For a more extended discussion of Carroll's "vision," see Jodziewicz, "The Wharton-Carroll Controversy and the Promise of American Life," in Francis R. Swietek and John R. Sommerfeldt, eds., *Studiosorum Speculum: Studies in Honor of Louis J. Lekai, O.Cist.* (Kalamazoo, 1993), 135-154. Carroll did use the terms "Roman Catholic" and "Roman Catholic Church" in referring to his faith community.

8. Carroll to Plowden, April 10, 1784, *JCP*, I:146. In another letter to Plowden (September 18, 1784) Carroll remarked:

I observe that your opinion coincides entirely with my own in believing that the progda adopted the present measure merely thro' fear of our chousing a Bishop, & getting it recommended by the government here to have him made [ind.] To govern the spiritual concerns of this country, as a mission, is absurd, seeing there is a regular Clergy belonging to it; & with Gods

assistance there will be in time, a succession of ministry to supply their places, as they drop off. The progda hope, by appointing a Bp now, to establish the precedent of appointing one hereafter: but little do they know of the jealousy entertained here of foreign jurisdictions. (Ibid., I:151.)

9. Carroll to Plowden, July 11, 1786, *JCP*, I: 212-214. See also Plowden to Carroll: July 3, 1784, AAB, 6-J3; September 2, 1784, *ibid.*, 6-J4; August 26, 1785, *ibid.*, 6-J8; July 29, 1787, *ibid.*, 6-K3; and Carroll to Plowden: December 15, 1785, *JCP*, I: 196-198; January 22, February 28, 1787, *ibid.*, I: 240-247; March 1, 13, 25, 1788, *ibid.*, I:272-276; November 12, 1788, *ibid.*, I: 331-333. For this period, see Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore: Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (New York, 1955), chapters V-IX. For a broader perspective, see Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., "Relations Between the Church in the United States and the Holy See," *The Jurist*, 52 (1992), 210-227.

10. See note 7.

11. Plowden to Carroll, July 29, 1787, AAB, 6-K3.

12. Carroll to Plowden, June 4, 1787, *JCP*, I: 253. See also John Tracy Ellis, "Archbishop Carroll and Liturgy in the Vernacular," in Ellis, *Perspectives in American Catholicism* (Baltimore, 1963), 127-133.

13. Cf. John Tracy Ellis, "John Carroll, Founder of the American Hierarchy (1735-1815)," *ibid.*, 93-100.

14. *A Short Account*, 1-4. Plowden's authorship of this first part is affirmed by several suggested corrections of the text by Carroll: see Carroll to Plowden, October 4, 1790, *JCP*, I: 474-475.

15. *A Short Account*, 5-9.

16. *Ibid.*, 20-32. For some examples of these disabilities (and notices of toleration), see Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History*, I: 137-140. Carroll actually noticed these disabilities to Plowden: February 24, 1790, *JCP*, I:430-432. In this letter, he also indicated that these marks of inequality had been briefly alluded to in the recent *Address of the Roman Catholics to George Washington, Esq., President of the United States*, the newly-elected chief executive. J. P. Coghlan published a 1790 version of the *Address* in London, along with a preface comparing the circumstances of American and English Catholics: *ibid.*, I:409-411.

17. Joan Connell, *The Roman Catholic Church in England, 1780-1850: a Study in Internal Politics* (Philadelphia, 1984), 35. See also John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (New York, 1976); Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England: from the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council* (New York, 1985); and Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), chapter 13: "The English Catholics." In the first federal census (1790), American Catholics also represented less than 1% of the total population.

18. The first English vicar apostolic was appointed in 1623. From 1631 to 1655, there was no resident vicar apostolic in England, and for the next generation there was no appointed vicar apostolic until 1685 with the accession of King James II. From 1631 to 1685, a chapter of canons created by the first vicar apostolic, William Bishop, functioned as the Catholic authority in England recognized by Rome. This Old Chapter, now known as the Old Brotherhood of the Secular Clergy, exists today, involved in social and charitable activities: E.I. Watkin, *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950* (London, 1957), 87-89. Connell, *Roman Catholic Church in England* offers an informative consideration of the English vicars apostolic, highlighting the importance of their internal differences especially in the late eighteenth century. A regular episcopal structure, with ordinary bishops, was re-established in England in 1850.

19. Cf. *ibid.*, 35-74; Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 323-363; Norman, *Roman Catholicism*, 57-80; Rupp, *Religion in England*, 196-203. See also Mark Bence-Jones, *The Catholic Families* (London, 1992), 66-76. A more positive interpretation of the Catholic Committee, and its point of view, is offered in Eamon Duffy, "Ecclesiastical Democracy Detected: I (1779-1787)," *Recusant History*, X (January 1970), 193-209; and "Ecclesiastical Democracy Detected: II (1787-1796)," *ibid.*, (October 1970), 309-331. A larger context for these circumstances is explored in Joseph P. Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment: John Lingard and the Cisalpine Movement, 1780-1850* (Shepherdstown, West Virginia, 1980).

20. For a brief, but informative notice of Plowden, along with a list of his publications, see *Dictionary of National Biography*, 22 vols. (Oxford, 1949-1950), XV: 1312-1313. Plowden is mentioned prominently in Bernard Basset, SJ, *The English Jesuits: from Campion to Martindale* (New York, 1968). See also Bence-Jones, *Catholic Families*. Plowden's *Considerations on the Modern Opinion of the Fallibility of the Holy See in the Decision of Dogmatical Questions. With an Appendix on the*

Appointment of Bishops (London: J. P. Coghlan, 1790) was clearly in favor of the tradition of papal infallibility: before the 1682 declaration of the French Gallican clergy contesting this “it was the general persuasion of Roman Catholics that the solemn decisions of the Holy See on matters of dogmatical and moral import are infallible.” (1) In his conclusion, Plowden asserted:

Hence it appears that the modern opinion which asserts the personal fallibility of the Pope deciding ‘ex cathedra’ on matters of faith, is rather speculative than practical, and if on one side it be possible to be orthodox and yet deny the infallibility of the holy See, on the other side it is impossible to be attached to any condemned error while we believe and support that infallibility, because whatever the chair of Peter proscribes is always erroneous. (113-114)

Carroll’s comments to Plowden regarding his argument in *Considerations* were brief: “I have attentively read over your preceding one [publication] on infallibility &c. It has given me a great deal of information, & to others likewise.” He cautioned Plowden about an apparent mistake in the text regarding the proper, exercised authority of the French hierarchy in the Gallican controversy, suggesting he consult a certain work in French history. In his own 1784 response to the apostate Charles Wharton’s attack on Roman Catholicism, Carroll had argued that infallibility traditionally was understood “to reside in the body of bishops united and agreeing with their head, the bishop of Rome.” As to papal infallibility: “Some divines indeed hold the pope, as Christ’s vicar on earth, to be infallible, even without a council; but with this opinion faith has no concern, every one being at liberty to adopt or reject it, as the reasons for or against may affect him.” Carroll, *An Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America by a Catholic Clergyman* (Baltimore, 1784), in *JCP*, I: 82-144, quotations on 105-106. Given that Carroll subscribed to the validity of the authentic development of doctrine over time, his reaction to Vatican I’s definition of papal infallibility would have been of interest: *ibid.*, 107-108, 120, 125, 138.

21. For example, see Plowden to Carroll: April 4, 1784, AAB, 6-J1; September 2, 1784, *ibid.*, 6-J4; August 26, 1785, *ibid.*, 6-J8; June 3-4, 1787, *ibid.*, 6-K2; September 2, 1787, *ibid.*, 6-K4; March 2, 1788, *ibid.*, 6-K6; June 30, 1788, *ibid.*, 6-K7.

22. Carroll to Plowden, May 26, 1788, *JCP*, I: 311.

23. Carroll to Plowden, March 20, 1789, *ibid.*, I: 351.

24. Plowden to Carroll, May 3, 1789, AAB, 6-L3. Cf. Carroll to Plowden, October 23, 1789, JCP, I: 389-391. The texts of the various oaths in question may be found in Bernard Ward, *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England, 1781-1803*, 2 vols. (London, 1909), II: Appendix E (“Forms of Oath of Allegiance &C. Proposed at Different Times to Catholics), 273-281.

25. Carroll to Plowden, February 24, 1790, JCP, I: 430-432. See also Carroll to John Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, October 3, 1790, *ibid.*, I: 472-473. Now familiar with the contested oath, Carroll wrote more directly about it:

At present I can only say, that the oath, in its present form, appears to me inadmissible; that it implies a renunciation of the pastoral powers of the successor of St. Peter; and that its obvious meaning is different from that which advocates for the oath affix to it. This I have not said to a soul excepting now to your Lordship, and even to you I deliver this opinion, not as one which is founded on much investigation, but as one which forced itself on my mind when I read the oath. (472)

26. Plowden to Carroll, August 3, 1790, AAB, 6-M7.

27. Cf. Connell, *Roman Catholic Church*, 58-74; Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 330-331; Rupp, *Religion in England*, 199-203. In a letter informing Carroll of the imminent passage of the Relief Act (May 4, 1791, AAB, 6-N6), Plowden noted “Insubordination is the great heresy of the age in politics & religion & all London is actually alarmed at the approach of the 14 of July.”

28. Carroll to Plowden, October 12 and November 7, 1791, JCP, I: 522-524.