CHAPTER IX.

"NO POPERY": THE CATHOLIC MENACE AND THE QUEST FOR PROTESTANT UNION

In May 1832 George Bourne, founder and editor of the new American 
Protestant Magazine, wrote to a London correspondent about to come to America.
"I beg to remind you," he urged,
that any books upon Popery, especially the standard authors, would
be invaluable to us here. I am continually at a loss for documents
and books of reference. No present could be more acceptable than
100 volumes of the best works upon Popery and Jesuitism, ancient and
modern, and such books (not to be had here) could be obtained in
London immediately. We have organized a regular public discussion
with the papists in this city, and the priestly foxes are continually
calling upon us for documents, proofs, evidence, &c.--and you know
that in these respects we are most lamentably deficient!

Bourne's plea (which was given wide currency in the London Baptist Magazine)
was important in several respects. It marks the heightened American anxiety
about Catholic advance which blossomed in the 1830s. It signifies the
co-existence of parallel Protestant responses in Britain and America and
Bourne's presumption that the British movement at that time possessed the
greater maturity and resources. And finally, Bourne's letter itself testifies
to the potential for establishing some links between American churchmen and
Nonconformists in an evangelical crusade against a resurgent "popery."

Bourne himself was a transplanted British Dissenter, a product of Homerton
Academy, who emigrated to Virginia about 1808 when he was about thirty years
old. After supplying brief pastorates in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York,
and Quebec, he became editor of The Protestant in 1830. When Bourne left the
post in 1833 to become pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in New York, his
place was taken by William Craig Brownlee, a minister of the Collegiate Church
of New York. Brownlee, another immigrant from British Nonconformity,
represented the Scottish Seceders. He had moved to Pennsylvania shortly after
he received his Master of Arts degree from Glasgow University in 1808.

The careers of these two warriors against Rome emphasize the place of
anti-Catholicism, together with other evangelical concerns, as a fundamental ingredient of the shared ecumenical religious culture of the reform age. In both Britain and America Protestant crusades awakened in the 1830s. The two movements had close parallels but also some important and complicating differences, especially arising from Dissenters' ambiguous relation to evangelicals in the Established Church. On the one hand, they shared with evangelical Anglicans detestation of all "popery," but on the other hand, as voluntarists, they protested against a Protestant state church. This ambivalence made British Protestant unity basically unstable and was long to trouble and confuse Dissenters' role in the anti-Catholic crusade. Nonetheless, in the 1830s transatlantic ties of information, shared literature, and mutual concern over Catholic advances on both sides of the ocean were soon established in the Atlantic fellowship. Then in the 1840s the threatening sense of crisis deepened in both countries, culminating in America in the nativist political movement which peaked in Know-Nothingsim and in England in the anti-Maynooth agitation.

These anxieties over the spread of Catholicism played an important part in preparing for the coming of the Evangelical Alliance. The Alliance was not a simple consequence of increasingly intense transatlantic anti-Catholicism. It rested more fundamentally on an old established longing to visibly demonstrate and experience the common bonds of evangelical religion, transcending the nonessential and subordinate differentials among the denominations and anticipating the promise of perfect Christian unity in the approaching millennium. This aspiration was already abundantly evident in earlier Dissenter history and piety and in the more recent cultivation of Anglo-American fraternity. But in the 1830s and 1840s this persistent quest for Protestant unity was provided with potent new energy by the alarms raised in the anti-Catholic crusade.

Deep concern about the "papist menace" was not significant in either Britain or America before the 1830s. It is true that a traditional hostility to Rome and an abiding sense of conflict with "popish" religion were part of
the inherited culture of both British and American Protestantism. In both
countries the prevailing political-religious myth viewed Catholicism as a
foreign and corrupt clerical autocracy promoting an unspiritual and perverted
Christianity. Abhorrence of such Catholic beliefs and practices as
transubstantiation, monasticism, clerical celibacy, the "incomprehensible"
Latin liturgy, auricular confession, "mariolatry," veneration of saints, and
alleged miracles was a Protestant universal. Politically, also, the Roman
church was often regarded as the stronghold of tyranny, intolerance, and
cruelty. But most Protestants could find comfort in the conviction that
Catholicism was now a creed in decline, broken by the upheaval of the French
Revolution and the expanding light of the gospel, a medieval superstition
lingering chiefly among the uneducated poorer classes, such as the Irish
peasants and backward immigrants to America. Consequently, in the 1820s the
venerable Dudleian lectures at Harvard, established to expose the errors of
Rome, could describe the papal church as weak, decaying, and obsolete.
Moreover, the prevailing post-millennial faith of British Dissent and the
American churches encouraged the expectation that Catholicism could not long
continue.

Yet by the 1830s anti-Catholic alarms were being raised on both sides of
the Atlantic. In America the earlier rather complacent and conventional
condemnations of Catholicism were replaced by more agitated and excited
warnings. Immigration was heavily responsible for the change. Between 1815
and 1830 large numbers of Catholics, many from Ireland and Germany, settled
in the northeastern and middle seaboard areas of the United States. Such
cities as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore were swelled with new
Catholic citizens who made their presence felt politically. Led by a capable
and increasingly assertive episcopate, Catholics challenged the Protestant
assumptions of American education, religion, and politics. By the decade of
the 1830s it appeared that the historic religious tradition and orientation
of America were coming under siege, anxieties forcefully articulated by Samuel
F. B. Morse in several New York Observer articles, later published as Foreign
Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States (1834) and Immigrant.
Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration (1835).

This apprehension was particularly acute with regard to the West. Fear that the raw settlements across the Appalachians could be lost to civilization and Christianity had already seriously troubled eastern denominational leaders, particularly Congregational and Presbyterian statesmen, giving rise to concern for the future role and direction of religion in the nation. The prospect of large Catholic populations in that region strongly increased such anxieties. In the 1830s the correspondence of the American Home Missionary Society was filled with warnings of the danger of "popery" coming to dominate the West. In 1831 Calvin Colton departed for Britain to collect money to frustrate Catholic designs in the West, and in the following year Lyman Beecher accepted the presidency of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati in the same cause. Most importantly, Lyman Beecher's influential Plea for the West in 1835 was an urgent argument stressing the perils of popish domination in the Mississippi Valley and ultimately in the nation.

At the same time controversies broke out in the cities of the Atlantic seaboard. Disputes over the Bible and the religious orientation of the public school racked New York and other centers of immigrant settlement. The founding of the Catholic Tract Society in 1827 and the new aggressive Catholic periodicals—United States Catholic Miscellany of Charleston (1822), Truth Teller of New York (1825), and The Jesuit (later The Pilot) of Boston (1829)—made certain an atmosphere of sustained controversy. The literary debate carried on by John Breckinridge in The Presbyterian and John Hughes in The Catholic Herald in 1833 was merely the first of several famous disputations, many before large excited audiences, through the 1830s. In such an environment violence was probably inevitable. It erupted in the notorious Boston riot of August, 1834 when a mob of men and boys attacked and destroyed the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, an outbreak which Catholics charged had been provoked by Lyman Beecher's oratory in the pulpit the previous Sunday.

It was in this atmosphere that George Bourne, encouraged by a group of alarmed New York evangelicals, undertook to found his new periodical in 1830.
The Protestant differed from earlier anti-Catholic organs such as the Boston Watchman (1819) and the New York Observer (1823) in its specific commitment to wage war every week on the rising tide of "popery." Bourne was an extremist and his paper attained only limited circulation. But the growth of the Catholic danger also provoked worried denominational warnings in the 1830s. The Congregational Associations of both Massachusetts and Maine expressed their alarm at Catholic audacity in 1830, and in 1834 the Massachusetts Association urged all ministers to "labor to save our country from the degrading influence of Popery." The Presbyterian General Assembly showed similar concern. In 1832 it invalidated Catholic baptisms (over the objections of Charles Hodge), and after 1834 it scheduled annual sermons on the Catholic conspiracy against America, texts of which were printed in The Protestant and the New York Observer.12

Across the Atlantic Dissenting correspondents of American evangelicals were also aroused by the new Catholic assertiveness in the 1830s, though with significant modifications. In Britain the Roman church had been small and unobtrusive throughout the eighteenth century, but some natural growth in England, the constitutional Union with Ireland in 1801, and heavy Irish immigration to Britain drastically altered the balance by the end of the 1820s.13 O'Connell's mobilization of Irish Catholics, successful in the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, made certain that Catholicism would play a significant role in British politics in the future. British evangelicals, perturbed at this rapid transformation, were further dismayed by the Oxford Movement's shocking revival of Catholic doctrines and practices in the Established Church in the 1830s.

Yet Dissenters were divided on what their appropriate response might be. Indeed, the position of the Dissenting connexions on the "Catholic question" in the 1820s and 1830s was far more complicated and ambivalent than that of American Protestants. Nonconformity's antagonism toward a powerful state church, its mounting commitment to a combative voluntarism, and the similarity of Catholics' struggle for political recognition to that of Nonconformists placed Dissent in different circumstances from the denominations in the
anti-Catholic crusade in America.

Consequently, the principal energy for the British anti-Catholic agitation in the 1830s came from Anglican evangelicals. The British Society for Promoting the Principles of the Protestant Reformation (1827) and the Protestant Association (1835), though ostensibly seeking broad Protestant allegiance, were viewed by many Dissenters as Tory, Anglican, and unfriendly to the Nonconformist bodies. Their public meetings were dominated by evangelical aristocrats, bishops, and clergy, and their primary concern often seemed to be the defense of the exclusive Establishment from rising Catholic dangers. Ulster Presbyterians and Wesleyans sometimes provided some cooperation, but Congregationalists, Baptists, and Scottish Dissenters were often wary.15

This ambivalence was evident in the public excitement over Catholic Emancipation at the end of the 1820s. Methodists, friendlier to the Church than the Old Dissent and influenced by the strenuous efforts of Irish Methodists to win over Catholics, were more inclined to oppose the legislation of 1829 and to provide Wesleyan chapels for Protestant Reformation Society meetings. Henry Cooke, the Presbyterian chieftain in Belfast, also threw himself into the battle against the Catholic Association.15 But other Dissenters were cautious and sceptical. William Urwick, the Congregational minister at Sligo, was deeply preoccupied all his life with battle against Rome which he had waged from his first arrival in Ireland in 1816. But he was also a strong voluntarist who thought that the state connection destroyed the moral advantage of the Church of Ireland, which in any case was too "popish" to rescue the Irish from error. Accordingly, he could write to James in 1829 that "the Catholic Bill excites comparatively little excitement here . . . . I feel confident Christianity will suffer nothing by their claims being granted. Henceforth the contest will be between the two hierarchies; and ere long, probably the nation will see that the State can do without recognizing either."16

A similar aloofness often tended to prevail in England and Scotland. The Three Denominations Board found it possible to accept Catholic Emancipation,
and James' letters to America even expressed some nonchalance on the issue. "I think the influence of the measure will in several ways be unfriendly to popery, and therefore rejoice in it," he wrote to Patton in New York. The leading Nonconformist journals generally exhibited a like caution. The Congregational Magazine regretted Dissent's inability to join the Church in a common opposition to Rome, but placed the blame on Anglican exclusiveness and privilege. The Baptist Magazine was alarmed by Catholic growth but also distrusted cooperation with the state church, and in the later 1830s it was primarily concerned with the rise of the "popish" Oxford movement within Anglicanism. The Eclectic was sure that the Protestant Association perceived Catholicism as another form of "dissent" and was principally concerned with protecting Anglican domination. It offered the opinion that the greatest blow to the Roman church would be ending all connection between the British state and religion. Only the Wesleyan Magazine appeared friendlier to the efforts of Anglican evangelicals to mount a wide anti-Catholic crusade, though even here the Methodist rule against political involvement dictated cautious expression.  

In Scotland as in England the bitterly divisive issue of voluntarism, at its peak in the 1830s, haunted any anti-Catholic effort. Congregational, Secession, and Baptist churches, despite their abhorrence of "popery," remained fixed on their voluntary witness and could not consider any cooperation with either Scottish or English Establishments. Similarly, evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and after 1843 in the Free Church were divided on Catholic Emancipation but, angered by the venomous voluntary controversy, could not be hospitable to any program requiring fellowship with dissenting radicals.  

Yet despite these different perspectives British Nonconformists and American Protestants were both deeply alarmed at what appeared to be a powerful upsurge of "popery" in the Anglo-American world. Throughout the 1830s on both sides of the Atlantic there was mutual awareness of the dangers and of the need for common vigilance. "In this subject," wrote the New Haven Quarterly Christian Spectator in 1835, "Great Britain and the United States
have a common interest." "Popery is not dead, but alive, and at the doors of
every Protestant community where, masking its more odious features, it
solicits support, while it designs subjugation." Accordingly, pulpit and
religious press in both countries gave careful attention to the rising
Catholic peril as a threat to the entire evangelical Atlantic world.

Certainly, American readers were kept well informed of the progress of a
more assertive Catholicism in Britain. During the 1820s the Watchman and New
York Observer closely followed the efforts of various British societies to win
Catholic converts in Ireland; then at the end of the decade they gave greatest
attention to the mobilization of British opinion against the issue of
Emancipation. The Watchman even lent its voice to the collection of money in
America to aid the English Protestant societies in their struggle. By the
1830s the Protestant, the Christian Spectator, the Downfall of Babylon, the
American Protestant Vindicator, the Western Protestant, and other religious
papers were carefully reporting on the disquieting Catholic strategies for
advantage in Britain and the organized Protestant counter-measures. One of
the most watchful periodicals added to this group in 1835 was Robert J.
Breckinridge's Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine. Breckinridge
launched this monthly just after he returned from extensive travels in Britain
and the Continent. The Magazine published a multitude of articles, not only
on Catholic injustices in Europe and current aggressions in Britain, but also
on Catholic enormities in the remote British past, such as Jesuit plottings
under the Stuarts and the Irish massacres of Protestants in 1641. Catholic
political commotions, Irish immigration to Britain, the government's grants to
the Catholic seminary at Maynooth, and the "popish" issues raised by the
Oxford Tractarians all received detailed attention. Ameri-

Americans were also being warned by private correspondence. James,
Urwick, Wardlaw, and other Nonconformists wrote frequently to American friends
about the mounting dangers of popery in the British kingdoms. Often these
letters found their way into American publications. American visitors to
Britain were also impressed with the growth of popery. [Sprague and Patton,
Breckinridge, Calvin Colton, and John Codman.]
British Dissenters were equally apprehensive about the American battleground in the war against Catholic power, and they did not hesitate to give advice. The Mississippi Valley, James insisted to Sprague in 1832, "should receive the concentrated attention of all the members of the evangelical denominations in the United States. Unless something, and much more still, be done by your churches . . . the Catholics will outstrip you and take possession of that portion of your territory which in half-a-century will form the very heart of your country." The American danger was well publicized in Nonconformist periodicals. The Evangelical Magazine reported the opinion of George Bourne that "Popery" in America threatened to "undermine the foundations of Christianity and to root up the tree of liberty." "Half a million papists," he cautioned, stand "ready at a moment's warning to take up arms in defence of their unhallowed religion." Lyman Beecher's 1827 sermon, "The Resources of the Adversary," was more reasoned and guardedly optimistic. It was reprinted in the Wesleyan Magazine in 1828, and two years later it again appeared as a separate publication in Derby.

Beecher's text did not minimize the terrible dangers to American Protestant culture, but it also reassuringly predicted that "popery" would ultimately be defeated. Throughout the 1830s Nonconformist periodicals continued to publish notices of the disturbing growth of Catholicism in the United States. [Later every incident in the American Catholic contest, such as the destruction of the Ursuline Convent in 1834, received careful British note and comment.] Moreover, the literary war against Catholicism was a shared transatlantic campaign. Just as the American Tract Society made extensive use of classic British arguments against the Roman Church, such as Richard Baxter's Key for Catholicks, renamed Jesuit Juggling and published in New York in 1835, British publishers reproduced Rebecca Reed's sensational Narrative of Six Month's Residence in a Convent and Maria Monk's salacious Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal in London and Glasgow in 1835 and 1836.

By the mid-1830s the sense of identity between Dissent and the American churches in the contest with Rome was taken for granted. Andrew Reed, the
Congregational Union's delegate to America in 1834, made the connection clear in his farewell address in Boston prior to boarding ship to return to England. British and American Protestants, he warned, must be continuously vigilant and active against Catholic aggression. In the following year he again put the case to British and American readers of his travel narrative, published in both London and New York. The pope, he reasoned, fearing expulsion from an increasingly restless Europe, desperately wanted to win control of the New World. Accordingly, he promoted Catholic immigration, schools, and missions funded by such reactionary organizations as the Austrian Leopold Society.

Reed believed that the Catholic campaign would ultimately fail, but insisted on watchful defense against a "foe who, like the tiger-cat, can spring on his prey, when he seems to be moving away." 24

Despite his cautions Reed was still fundamentally optimistic, and in the later 1830s there is evidence that some relaxation of anti-Catholic momentum may have occurred in both countries. But by the 1840s the sense of crisis on both sides of the Atlantic had again intensified. In the United States the Catholic attack on the Protestant orientation of the public school system was deeply resented. New York where Bishop John Hughes was a formidable opponent was the scene of a major political contest involving the city, the state legislature, and the governor. 30 In all the eastern cities the American Education Society raised repeated alarms. Lyman Beecher responded to the crisis with a famous sermon on the danger to the American school in 1841, while the New York Observer published numerous articles on the school question in the following years. 31 Less sensationally but still expressing alarm, the staid and scholarly New Englander devoted unprecedented space in the mid-1840s to a critical assessment of American Catholicism. 32 At the common level, violence was frequently the result of these attentions; the bloody Philadelphia riots of 1844 were precipitated by controversy over the issue of the Bible and the schools. Not surprisingly, the decade also saw the victorious entry of nativist Protestant parties in American politics. 33

By the 1840s the churches too were more deeply agitated. The Old School General Assembly in 1841 warned against "popish schools and seminaries," and
encouraged its people to read "works on the Reformation and Popery" issued by its Board of Publication. These resolutions, forwarded to the Massachusetts Congregational Association, prompted the naming of a committee which produced a comprehensive Report on Popery, warning against all the "arts and efforts of Antichrist." The Methodists in 1844 adopted similar resolutions on the growing popish danger which they conveyed to their brethren in the British Wesleyan Conference.

This enlarged denominational alarm was not prompted solely by Roman Catholic growth in America. By the 1840s the Anglo-Catholic movement, originally English, had made its impact felt in the American Episcopal church. Although bitterly resisted by Charles McIlvain, J. H. Hopkins, and other Episcopal evangelicals, Oxford divinity made its American conquests. To many American Protestants the movement was interpreted as another advance of crypto-papist subversion and an added threat to the nation's religious culture. It is not surprising that Thomas Smyth of Belfast and South Carolina should feel compelled to write counterblasts at this time. His Prelatical Doctrine of Apostolic Succession appeared in 1841 and his Ecclesiastical Republicanism in 1842. Both works were noted and appreciated in Britain.

Surveying the American scene from England, John Angell James sensed the American Protestant mood but also revealed his own English fears in his letter to Patton in June, 1843:

I am not at all surprised at the alarm, or at any rate anxiety, which the present efforts of Romanism and Puseyism are making in your country. It is not only Protestantism but Republicanism that is threatened by these twin systems of mischief. I do not think your constitution would or could remain unchanged if Popery or Prelacy in any form were to gain the ascendency. The genius of a democracy does not suit the priestly combination of Rome or Oxford; and all your senators ought to be alive to this, and all your people too.

In England also the 1840s marked a heightened Protestant anxiety. By the end of the decade approximately half a million Irish had entered Britain since the beginning of the century and were becoming a significant political
force in such cities as Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow. Moreover, the Irish Catholic political bloc under O'Connell's astute leadership had attained a strong bargaining position with the parliamentary parties. Still suffering themselves from some remaining disabilities which they could not yet get abolished, Dissenters looked with dismay on the rapidly maturing influence of the Roman church. And greatly compounding their anxiety was their fear of the "popish" Oxford Movement in the Established Church. Nonconformist periodicals, reviewing works on the Tractarian impact, repeatedly expressed their dread that England might soon cease to be a Protestant country, and after the announced conversion of Newman and some of his followers to Rome in the mid-1840s that concern became acute. From Dublin Urwick wrote to Sprague in 1842 that "Papery and Puseyism are making way and fixing for themselves a firm hold in these kingdoms," and three years later he was certain that the Catholic church was soon to be established. Prominent English Dissenters--Culling Bardley Smith of the Voluntary Church Association, Blackburn, editor of the Congregational Magazine, and Baptist Noel--also expected an Irish Catholic Establishment. Many agreed with Merle d'Aubigne when he told the Free Church Assembly in 1843 that evangelicals were facing a situation where there would soon no longer be any Protestant states in Europe.

In both countries a natural reaction was a strengthening of an earlier and traditional ecumenical longing for Protestant unity, now more urgently needed to combat the crisis. In the United States the most notable speculative proposal came--surprisingly--from Lutheranism. In 1838 Samuel Schmucker delivered the first of a new Lutheran series of annual sermons against Rome and coupled this warning with his famous Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches, with a Plan for Catholic Union on Apostolic Principles. On a practical level the formation of the Foreign Evangelical Society in 1839 and the Christian Alliance in 1842 to mobilize the combined efforts of American Protestants to combat the Roman church in France and Italy may also represent a new appreciation of the need for unity. Efforts to create an aggressive organization of American Protestants soon followed. An attempt to join the evangelical denominations themselves in a grand and militant American
Protestant federation failed; the various churches were unable to compose differences sufficiently to anchor the proposed organization. But in 1842 a union, not of denominations, but of individuals was launched. It issued an address in February, 1843 declaring "Popery to be . . . subversive of civil and religious liberty," and urging evangelicals to "unite for the purpose of defending our Protestant interests against the great exertions now making to propagate that system in the United States."\textsuperscript{42} The Association established numerous local branches and in 1844 began the \textit{Quarterly Review of the American Protestant Association}. After a merger in 1845 the Review was transformed into the influential \textit{American Protestant Magazine}.\textsuperscript{43}

In Britain the quest for Protestant solidarity had a more complex history. The hope for Christian union had been frequently expressed by evangelicals in the 1820s and 1830s, and originally it was not primarily a reflection of anti-Catholic fears. Buoyed by the culture of revivals, reforms, and even voluntarism, Dissenters and even some Low Church Anglicans had speculatively explored the possibilities of a future evangelical union. Andrew Reed, for instance, shortly after his return from America in 1836 proposed first, united prayer meetings, then annual sessions of Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, and Anglican delegates, but this effort broke down on the issue of Anglican exclusiveness and Nonconformist voluntarism.\textsuperscript{44} Other similar proposals routinely met the same fate. Yet Reed, John Leifchild, Francis Augustus Cox, John Angell James, and other Dissenter statesmen continued to raise the issue with Anglican and Nonconformist friends and even with American visitors.\textsuperscript{45} In 1838 James sought to enlist the outstanding evangelical layman, Sir Culling Bardley Smith, in the cause, and in the following year he offered a resolution at the Congregational Union expressing unity with several other denominations, including the American Presbyterians.\textsuperscript{46}

These efforts had small result, but by the 1840s the search for Protestant unity appeared to become more insistent because of the perceived threat of Catholicism in the political arena. Some Dissenters, especially some Congregationalists, sought greater Protestant solidarity and disliked the
newer and more militant voluntarism which developed in the 1830s, partly under American inspiration. Indeed, the London Anti-State Church Conference in 1844 brought division and controversy, boycott by some prominent Dissenters such as James and the active hostility of John Blackburn of the Congregational Magazine. In 1838 the Magazine published alarming statistics of Catholic growth (significantly supplied by the Anglican Reformation Society) and a letter having lingering Dissenter tendency to regard Catholics as partners in the contest for civil rights against the Establishment. Anglicans rightfully accuse us, warned a letter from "J.M.," "of being friendly to Popery, or rather, that our hatred of the Church" leads "us to fraternize with Papists." Stressing the crisis for Protestant England, he urged all evangelicals, Anglicans and Nonconformists, to form a union against the Catholic menace and predicted that Congregationalists would welcome such action.

These anxieties were soon both heightened and given focus when in 1845 Sir Robert Peel's Tory government proposed to triple the state grant to the Irish Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth. The Maynooth question had a long history. In the attempt to conciliate Irish moderates, improve the education of priests, and lessen French influence in the Irish church, the Dublin parliament had inaugurated annual grants to the Maynooth college in 1795, a practice continued by the Westminster parliament after 1801, despite mounting debate and criticism, especially after 1838. Furthermore, by the 1840s the seminary was falling into decay and needed both a massive subsidy for major renovations and a substantial increase in the annual grant if it was to continue. Irish appeals, supported by the Irish executive, became increasingly insistent after 1844. Peel's proposal in 1845 to provide £30,000 for repairs and to increase the annual subvention from £8,250 to £26,360 raised the fearful specter of a practical co-endowment and even co-establishment of the Roman church. For Nonconformists the challenge contained a double affront: the proposed grant both struck at the nation's Protestant constitution and violated Dissenters' growing voluntarist conviction that the British state must ultimately withdraw from all religious patronage and support. Thus the Maynooth excitement intensified both
Dissenter anti-Catholicism and Dissenter voluntarism.

The issue galvanized a furious Protestant response in Britain. Evangelical Anglicans in both the English and Irish Establishments were outraged. Dissenters were no less so. Blackburn informed readers of the Congregational Magazine that both Whigs and Tories had deserted Protestantism, and the faithful had now to unite and make a stand. Other Nonconformist organs echoed similar sentiments. Angry resolutions of various denominational bodies followed. An Anti-Maynooth Central Committee, comprised of thirty-nine Anglicans and thirty-two Dissenters and chaired by Smith, convened a great Anti-Maynooth Conference in London on April 30, 1845. Over eleven hundred delegates attended from every major denomination. But these hopes of solidarity were soon shattered. Some otherwise sympathetic Anglicans held back because of the prominence of Nonconformists in the protest. Far more important was the disastrous schism occasioned by fundamental disagreement among Dissenters about the legitimacy of joining with the Church in opposition to the Catholic grant. While some Dissenters condemned the Maynooth subsidy primarily because it favored Catholicism, others condemned it because they were unalterably opposed to state support for any religion (including the national Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland). Consequently, the former insoluble problem of unifying Protestantism against Catholic "aggression" again made a dramatic appearance. Prevented by the chair from expressing their disruptive convictions at the Conference, the extreme voluntarists, led by the radical Leicester Baptist John Philippo Mursell, angrily withdrew. On May 20 the seceders opened their own rival conference at Crosby Hall.

The schism weakened the anti-Maynooth thrust, and Peel's policy won parliament's approval (though religious bitterness and Corn Law repeal brought about his downfall in the following year). For a time also acrimonious divisions tormented Dissent, evident in the comments in the Nonconformist and the Eclectic Review and in letters to the Patriot. Blackburn was especially pilloried by uncompromising Congregational and Baptist voluntarists; in reply he suggested that his critics were tainted with Chartism. Yet there was also
awareness of the political cost of disunity and some attempt to heal the division. Despite its failure to defeat Peel's Irish policy, the Anti-Maynooth conference had been an impressive and unprecedented exhibition of broad evangelical cohesion. Its managers were determined that the momentum for Protestant unity must not be allowed to slip away. The last resolution of the Anti-Maynooth Conference stated that

it is quite evident to this Meeting, that the Protestant interests of this Empire are put in a state of fearful peril by the course proposed to be pursued by Her Majesty's Government; and that... it becomes their indispensable duty, to arrange for a great Protestant Confederation,—to embrace this Country, the Continent, and the World, that by sympathy, correspondence, and united action, they may be prepared to meet a powerful and united foe.

The Central Anti-Maynooth Committee was requested to remain active and "take charge of the requisite arrangements." 56

Indeed, by 1845 preparation for such an evangelical alliance was already well begun. After the mid-1830s the idea of an international Protestant federation was current in several quarters. In 1834 the Evangelical Magazine, eager for a general Christian union, had thought a beginning might be made in a coalescence of Secession and Congregational churches: 57 In 1835 the Congregationalist Joseph Turnbull had even suggested a "general meeting of the Christian body, by Delegates from the different denominations in Europe and America," such meetings to be "convened in some central spot of Europe and of America alternately." In 1839 John Leifchild, Frederick Augustus Cox, and other denominational statesmen drew up a plan for Christian union. It remained unpublished, though it gave rise to monthly meetings of Dissenters and several Americans for prayer and conference. In Switzerland by 1841 Merle d'Aubigne and Henri Gaussen were beginning to raise the prospect of a general Protestant union among the Genevan clergy. 58

The effective overture came from James in 1842. While he was at prayer, he recalled, "a suggestion came forcibly to my mind to do something to affect [sic] a union of Christians in some visible bond. I rose from my
knees and sketched out a rough draft of a scheme of union." He presented the plan to the Congregational Union in May, arguing that "we have it in our power to raise up a defence against infidelity, Popery, Puseyism, and Plymouth-brethrenism." 61

James' proposal was limited at first. He suggested a union of those denominations of the United Kingdom "holding the voluntary principle," though he also included the emerging Scottish Free Church which he expected to move toward voluntarism in the future. His vision quickly became grander and more inclusive. In July he again made his proposal in the Congregational Magazine, this time suggesting biennial meetings in Exeter Hall which would also include the "pious clergy" of the Churches of England and Scotland and possibly also "Christians of other lands." Such meetings, he thought, "would silence the sneers of infidelity, neutralize the arguments of Papists, refute the objections of the Plymouth Brethren, and strengthen and consolidate us all, against the arrogant assumptions of the Puseyites." 62 The idea instantly created immense interest in all the denominations, inspiring a flood of letters of encouragement, reviews of books on Christian union, and editorial endorsements in the religious press. A few months later at the autumn, 1842 Liverpool meeting of the Congregational Union, James persuaded the body to correspond with other denominations in Britain "and elsewhere" on the proposal. And a year later the Union formally resolved to "assist in a general convention of delegates from evangelical churches in various parts of the world . . . in defence of the essential truths and principles common to them all." 63

A crescendo of enthusiasm marked the year 1843. Momentum was furthered by great interdenominational meetings in London--at Craven Chapel in January, the Wesleyan Centenary Hall in February, and Exeter Hall in June, the last event exciting over eleven thousand participants. 64 Scotland too was aroused. In July the Westminster Assembly bicentenary in Edinburgh attracted more than Presbyterians. There the Congregationalist James Massie won cheers for his remarks on the need for union among all men of evangelical spirit, while Merle d'Aubigné and Frederic Monod promised Continental assistance. An enthusiastic
speech from the Seceder theologian Robert Balmer so moved his co-religionist, John Henderson of Park, that he offered to finance a new volume of Essays on Christian Union.

The book appeared in 1844. The authors were Nonconforming Scots—Balmer, Chalmers, Candlish, Wardlaw and David King were the most notable. The single English exception was James who contributed a chapter on the religious parties of England and also added an important appendix on the Catholic peril in America. "Popery and its new ally, Anglo-Catholicism," he reported, "are rapidly diffusing themselves over the United States" where Protestant ministers were now considering "for the defence of the principles of the Reformation, a general, close, and hearty union among its friends," James then quoted extensively from a recent letter from the New York Presbyterian, William Patton:

... the time cannot be distant when it will be most proper to call a Convention of Delegates from all Evangelical Churches, to meet in London, ... Such an invitation should, with propriety, come from your side of the water. But if you think it desirable to have certain men here unite ... I have no doubt I could procure a goodly list of names to any paper you and your brethren might send over. ... The Convention might be held in July of 1845, in London. Delegates could come from the Evangelical Churches of the Continent, of America, of Scotland, Ireland, etc. etc. etc. The document calling that meeting should be well drawn up, clearly setting forth the object of the Convention, as lifting up a standard against Papal and Prelatical arrogance and assumption, and embodying the great essential doctrines which are held in common by all consistent Protestants.

The effect of Patton's letter was threefold: it announced a parallel American initiative for union, turned the discussion in the practical direction of actually organizing a convention, and made certain that the evangelical membership would be international.

Replying to Patton, James urged Americans to "warm to the idea," warned that "socinians" and "rationalists" must be excluded, and prayed that the broadening movement would generate an effective opposition to "popery."

As this exchange indicates, the project by this time had expanded beyond the British scene, and the American contribution would be large. Indeed, Robert Baird, writing in 1855, asserted that the plan for the Alliancie had in fact originated in America with Leonard Bacon in 1843. Baird reported that he had sent Bacon's proposal to Merle d'Aubigné who then circulated it among Swiss ministers at a St. Gall conference in 1844 and promoted it in Scotland. Baird (who distrusted British leadership in the Alliance) also contended that it was Bacon who had prompted Patton's letter to James in 1845.
Claims were also made that European Protestants came to the idea of a Protestant union independently. Some Continental Reformed churchmen were certainly involved by 1843, with leadership from Geneva evangelicals and from the Monods and Georges Fisch and the Lyons church in France. But the effective action to make the conference a reality came from Scotland with an interdenominational declaration—a declaration which in fact was quietly and discreetly arranged by James. In August, 1845 fifty-five representatives of the Free Kirk, the Seceders, the Relief church, the Scottish Congregationalists and the Scottish Baptists wrote to Eardley Smith, the late chairman of the Anti-Maynooth conference, endorsing a "Meeting of Evangelical Christians, belonging to different Churches and Countries" and suggesting a British planning session in Liverpool in October, 1845. There the delegates would work out the exact proposal for a great London conference to "concentrate the strength of an enlightened Protestantism against the encroachments of Popery and Puseyism, and to promote the interests
of a Scriptural Christianity."  

Although enthusiasm was high, support was not universal. Internationally, German and Scandinavian churches were critical and uncooperative. In England some Anglicans were still unwilling to be mixed with Nonconformists and foreign denominations. Few bishops or leading Anglicans other than Low Church partisans promoted the forthcoming London meetings, and even the evangelical Christian Observer was unfriendly. Dissenters also were not unanimous. The militant voluntarists, expressing their scruples through the Nonconformist, the Eclectic, and the Patriot, were again doubtful about the propriety of joining with representatives of the state churches. John Campbell, publisher of the highly influential Christian Witness, thought the goal of exhibiting Protestant cohesion a impractical and doomed to failure. In Scotland doctrinal uneasiness in the Free Kirk, evident in the Edinburgh Witness, had to be quieted by Chalmers, Candlish, and Cunningham in a conference in March, 1846. Even so, some opposition again surfaced at the Edinburgh General Assembly in May.

Some Americans were also sceptical. Their religious press had followed the Maynooth crisis closely and tended to sympathize with the views of the conscientious Nonconformist voluntarists. Peel had bought a pacified Ireland from the pope, was the New Englander's opinion, and "in return the tiara must be guarded by the British lion." The affair showed the "folly of depending upon civil government for the support of religion." Early in 1846 Horace Bushnell, then in London, was to give classic expression to these American doubts. The Alliance, he thought, had no purpose or program, such as a universal defense of religious liberty, and was merely a pointless demonstration. He underscored his dissatisfaction by writing his Letter to the Pope and then quitting England before the meeting of the Alliance. Baird too, while eager for Protestant unity, felt "great solicitude" about a London setting for the conference. He expressed a preference for Paris or Geneva. The English, he thought, were too parochial, believing England was the whole world, and not genuinely awake to the task of converting Catholic peoples. Nonetheless, American evangelicals were generally stirred by the projected
plans, and by February, 1846 many denominational leaders were announcing their intention to attend.

The Liverpool planning conference met in October, 1845 with James as chairman. Dissenters hugely predominated. Representation from the state churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland supplied less than one-tenth of the membership. Two-thirds of the members were Nonconformists from England (including the several Wesleyan bodies), and most of the remaining delegates were Scottish and Irish Dissenters. English Congregationalists alone comprised an entire quarter of all in attendance. The conference had little difficulty in setting up a provisional committee, comprised of four divisions based on London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Dublin, fixing on August, 1846 for the great London assembly, and providing for a final preparatory session in Birmingham in the preceding April. Yet despite the Dissenting dominance, some disagreements troubled the conference. The Scottish declaration had stressed confrontation with Rome, evident in William Bunting's announcement to the Leeds Wesleyan Conference of the invitation to "a great evangelical anti-Popery meeting to be held in Liverpool." Yet James (among others) was uncomfortable with this negative definition and "regretted the introduction of the Maynooth question into the able statement of the Scottish brethren because it has its political aspects." Furthermore, the attempt to reach a positive consensus in an eight-point doctrinal basis, originally prepared by Candlish, also created difficulties. It provoked objections that by its language some evangelical Protestant bodies were excluded. Another issue, the Anti-Maynooth Conference fiasco and the voluntarist threat to achieving harmony, was clearly in delegates' minds. The evangelical Anglican, Edward Bickersteth, urged Dissenters to abandon any aggression against the Church, but the Baptist, F. A. Cox, answered that he could not compromise his commitment to Christian liberty. Letters to the Patriot debated the issue of which goal had the greater claim, anti-Popery or anti-state churchism. Accordingly, Andrew Reed, after attending
Liverpool and noting that it had "sprung chiefly from the Maynooth affair," confided to his journal that "it is to me a question, whether, at this moment, our banner ought to be 'A United Church' or 'A Free Church.' Many of the men who work for union are a little afraid of such as are earnest for freedom." 61

But there was yet another divisive issue about which--curiously--nothing was said at Liverpool.

The conference had taken the decisive step of broadening the Alliance to include Protestants from throughout the world and of announcing this invitation to churches everywhere. In following this course the organizers seem not to have realized that they invited a new explosion of the already burning issue of Christian communion with American slaveholders. Doubtless, they were influenced by the last twenty years of carefully cultivating the transatlantic relationship. British evangelicals, Dissenters especially, viewed American participation as fundamental to any multinational Protestant alliance, and they apparently trusted that differences concerning slavery could be adjusted or muted. It was notable that James, probably the most prominent antislavery Nonconformist, was also the most active engineer of American participation.

Nevertheless, by the end of 1845 slavery was speedily emerging as a new and menacing problem for the promoters of the Alliance.


7. Colton to UK


10. Billington, Protestant Crusade, pp. 68–76. Robert Baird, Religion in the United States (Glasgow, 1844), pp. 614–615, note: While regretting the Charleston riot in 1834, Baird insisted that Americans were not guilty of religious aggression. He thought "the Romanists have little reason to complain. Let them look at the intolerance with which Protestants are treated in almost all countries, whether in the old or new world, in which their religion is the dominant one." The Ursuline Convent was destroyed under the conviction that it was an immoral institution, not because it was a Roman Catholic one. This note was repeated but in briefer form in the American edition, p. 271.


Ulster Pres. and Methodists


Catholic Chapel at Easky, in the County of Sligo on the 23d and 24th November, 1824 (Dublin, 1825).

17. James to Patton, June 2, 1829, in Dale, James, p. 255.


24. James


Wardlaw
Sprague,
Patton
Breckinridge
Colton
Codman


30. Billington, Protestant Crusade, pp. 142-158.

31. Beecher sermon on school, 1841
   NYO, May 20, 1843; May 23, 1846. Billington, Protestant Crusade, 181-182.

32. New Englander. 1844-1846, passim. The New Englander article, "What are ministers to do in the great controversy of the age?" was reprinted in its entirety in Cong. Mag. 1844, 809-822,

33. Phil riot 1844
   Nativist political parties Billington, Protestant Crusade, pp.

34. Gen'l Ass on reading—Princeton R. (1841)

   Meth resolutions 1844

36. Oxford mvt in U.S. McIlwain
37. Thomas Smyth, Prelatical Doctrine of Apostolic Succession Examined and the Protestant Ministry Defended against the Assumptions of Popery and High-churchism, in a Series of Lectures (Boston, 1841). Ecclesiastical Republicanism; or, The Republicanism, Liberality, and Catholicity of Presbytery, in Contrast with Prelacy and Popery (Boston, 1843).

38. James to Patton, June 27, 1843, in Dale, James, p. 419.


40. Eardley Smith
   Blackburn
   Noel
   Merle

41. Schmucker
   Foreign Evan Soc
   Xn alliance: Gregory XVI denounced the Alliance in an encyclical of May 16, 1844. Cong. Mag., 1845, 841–847 published the Alliance's Address, and Eardley Smith translated the papal encyclical.

42. Prot Address

43. Prot Assn


54. John Blackburn, Three Conferences
   Patriot, May, 1845, has much discussion of the issue. For American comment, see American Protestant, II, 87 (Aug., 1846). Norman, Anti-Catholicism, pp. 43–48.

55. Anger at Blackburn
   Norman, Anti-Catholicism, pp. 45 ff.

56. Massie thought that "the Conference was defeated, but a great moral lesson was gained. Christians learned that they could act together on some things in which they agreed, though they conscientiously differed in others." J. W. Massie, The Evangelical Alliancé; its Origin and Development (London, 1847), pp. 103–104. David King also saw
the bright side: David King, Historical Sketch of the Evangelical Alliance, Consisting of Two Papers Read in Freemasons' Hall, London, August 19, 1846, and August 20, 1851 (Glasgow, 1851), p. 16

57. Evan Mag., 1834, p. 9.


59. Reed, Memoirs of Reed, p. 225. Discussion of the possibility of unity between Baptists and Independents in Patriot 1840, passim.

60. Merle and Swiss plan


66. Essays on Christian Union (Edinburgh, 1845). pp. 223–225. The eight authors were Thomas Chalmers and Robert S. Candlish of the Free Kirk, Robert Balmer and David King of the United Secession, Wardlaw of the Scottish Congregational Church, Gavin Struthers of the Relief Synod, Andrew Symington of the Reformed Presbyterians, and James, the Birmingham Independent.

Dale, James


Leonard Bacon
68. French
   Swiss activity


70. Patriot, Dec. 18, 25, 1805.

71. Dissent opp.


73. New Englander, Jan. 1846, 146–147.


75. Baird elaborated on his misgivings in NYE, July 16, 1846.

76. Conference on Christian Union. Narrative of the Proceedings of the Meetings Held in Liverpool, October, 1845 (London, 1846) (hereafter cited as Liverpool Conference). Patriot, Nov. 6, 1845, printed a complete list of members. See also analysis in Wolfe, Protestant Crusade, p. 140. Wolfe lists 54 Congregationalists, 50 Wesleyans of the several connexions, 48 Scottish Dissenters (including the Free Kirk), 18 English Presbyterians, 6 Irish Presbyterians, and one Quaker. Only 19 Anglicans of the Churches of England and Ireland attended. BAPTISTS???


78. Liverpool Conference, p. 9.

79. Ibid., pp. 34 ff. Monod Hinton

81. Reed, Memoirs of Reed, p. 227.