

A Catholic Spirit and Jacobitism

CHAPTER TWO CONSIDERED THE English Protestant Reformation's influence on the culture of anti-Catholicism. Leading attempts at articulating toleration were analyzed as well as influences on Wesley's consideration of toleration in his sermon, *Catholic Spirit*. This chapter explores events that took place before Wesley's writing of *Catholic Spirit*, when he and the early Methodists faced criticism for suspected Jacobitism at Oxford, and encountered oppression from various antagonists during the "Forty-five," indicating that these events may have influenced the writing of *Catholic Spirit*.¹ Understanding the charges of Jacobitism against Wesley and the early Methodists is essential to the interpretation of *Catholic Spirit* and Wesley's anti-Catholicism.

Rooted in the Latin form of James ("Jacobus"), "Jacobite" referred to any attempt at restoring the exiled Stuarts after the removal of James II and VII during the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689.² The study of Wesley's alleged Jacobitism leads to an assessment of Wesley's political views.³ Evaluating the influence of his family's political sympathies upon

1. This second Jacobite conflict had many labels, including "the '45," and the Second Jacobite Rebellion, see Fremont-Barnes, *The Jacobite Rebellion*. For consistency, in this book, the attempt of James's son, Charles Edward Stuart, the "Young Pretender," to seize the throne and the events thereof in 1745–1746 will be called the "Forty-five."

2. The "Whig account" of the Revolution called it Glorious because limited blood was shed in England, but other accounts tell of battles across Ireland and Scotland, see Ciardha, "A lot done, more to do," in Monod, *Loyalty and Identity*, 57–79.

3. On Wesley's politics, see Maddox, *Political Writings*; Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution*; Hynson, "John Wesley and Political Reality," 37–42; Hynson, "Human Liberty as Divine Right," 57–85; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 370–80; Weber, *Politics*; and Vickers, *Guide*, 60–82.

him, and the setting at Oxford in which he lived will shed light on his political views. To further explore his political leanings, Wesley's reading, published essays and pamphlets, and his associations with known Jacobite sympathizers provide valuable insight. Along with these, the letters and journals of Wesley and his family, the diary of Benjamin Ingham (1712–1772), another Oxford Methodist, will be explored. For the “Forty-five,” the political writings of Wesley such as *A Word in Season, or Advice to an Englishman* (1774), among others, will be analyzed. John Nelson's (bap. 1707, d. 1774) journal provides a perspective of a forcibly conscripted Methodist preacher during the “Forty-five.” Wesley's contemporaries wondered whether he was a Jacobite, and scholars today still debate his exact political affiliation. In this chapter, the religious and political context of Jacobitism in eighteenth-century Great Britain will be provided as context to Wesley's religious and political perspectives.

After this context is explored, and the Jacobite accusations against Wesley and the Methodists are evaluated, it will emerge that these allegations can be included in Wesley's reasons for formulating a method of toleration in his sermon, *Catholic Spirit*, even though there is a lack of written documentation on this. First, Jacobitism and its complex implications in eighteenth-century Britain must be understood in order to place Wesley into his context.

The Religious and Political Context of Jacobitism

The two opposing parties, Whig and Tory, of the English Parliament worked together to bring about the Glorious Revolution, for both agreed that James's Catholicism was not in the best interest of the nation, especially since his wife had given birth to an heir, James Francis Edward Stuart (1688–1766), later called “the Old Pretender,” in June 1688. Wesley acknowledged that the Revolution was “brought about by a coalition of Whigs and Tories.”⁴ The following is a brief description of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Whigs and Tories.

Whigs and Tories were two opposing political parties. They were first used as terms of abuse beginning in 1679 during the clash over the bill to exclude James, Duke of York (James II) from succession. “Whig,” which probably has its origin in Scottish Gaelic, was a word used to refer to horse thieves and then to Scottish Presbyterians. “Tory” has its origin

4. JW, *A Concise History of England*, 4:5.

in Irish Gaelic meaning a papist outlaw. This term was used to refer to those who supported James II.⁵

The two parties had fears that England would become nothing more than a satellite state under the control of the Pope and France. William III and Mary II, James's son-in-law and daughter, who replaced him, ruled together until her death in 1694, with William ruling until he died in 1702. William and Mary left no heir, and Mary's sister Anne ascended the throne in 1702. Although she had multiple pregnancies, no child survived, and again, the sovereign died without issue. From 1688 to 1714, the Tory party remained strong opponents of the Whigs and swapped control through various elections. William and Mary's early government was mostly Tory, and Anne was perceived as a champion of the Tories. Yet, when the Whigs were instrumental in bringing George I (1660–1727) of Hanover to Britain in 1714, the Tories' influence declined. Henry St. John, First Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), Tory leader and Secretary of State, fled to France in 1715, and this has been understood as the end of a period of Tory power.⁶

After the Glorious Revolution, most Tories accepted the Whig view of limited constitutional monarchy rather than promoting only passive obedience to the monarchy. The Whigs focused on constitutional monarchy and opposition to absolute rule, or tyranny, and had control of the British government from 1715 to 1760. In a general sense, Whigs asserted the power of Parliament over the monarchy, and Tories the opposite. Whigs became associated with Protestant Dissent. Tories opposed Whig liberalism and Protestant Dissent. They were usually associated with the High Church party, preservation of the privileges of the Established Church, and conservatism.⁷ However, a movement, an ideology, and an

5. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Whig and Tory," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Whig-Party-England>.

6. For Bolingbroke's life, see MacKnight, *The Life of Henry St. John*.

7. David Hume defined a Tory "as a lover of monarchy, tho' without abandoning liberty; and a partisan of the family of Stuart." A Whig he defined as "a lover of liberty, tho' without renouncing monarchy; a friend to the settlement in the Protestant line," see "Of the Parties of Great Britain," in *Essays, Moral and Political*, 131. Samuel Johnson showed the complexity of the definitions of Whig and Tory. "Tory" he defined as "one who adheres to the ancient constitution of the state, and the apostolical hierarchy of the Church of England, opposed to a Whig." "Whig" he listed as "the name of a faction" after giving explanation of the origin of the word in Scotland he said, "it is now one of our unhappy terms of disunion." Johnson, *Dictionary*, 2: s.v. "Whig."

ethos remained with a group of people who still believed that James II's heirs belonged on the British throne. These were the Jacobites.⁸

There is variance among scholars in their interpretation of Jacobitism as it relates to Toryism.⁹ However, the purpose of this section is not to enter into the debate on the Jacobite-Tory connection. Instead the aim is to provide examples of the varied views of eighteenth-century British politics, even among people who claimed to be of the same political affiliation. The complexion of this diversity is still debated between scholars today as not all agree on the political connections between Tories and Jacobites. One illustration of the Jacobite-Tory relationship comes from a voice of an eighteenth-century Member of Parliament, George Lyttelton (1709–1773). In *A Letter to the Tories* (1747), he declared, “all Jacobites are Tories, tho’ all Tories are not Jacobites. A Jacobite is a Tory and something more, as a Dissenter is a Whig and something more.”¹⁰ Many Tories were High Churchmen, and Wesley was no exception. Yet there remained many politically diverse opinions within the Church of England.

John Walsh and Stephen Taylor noted: “the major schools of Churchmanship—High, liberal, Evangelical existed as identifiable tendencies in the Georgian Church. For the most part their relationship was one of peaceful coexistence.”¹¹ Wesley identified himself as a High Churchman, as he said: “for I am an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance.”¹² Defining “High Church” proves difficult. Chamberlain described High Churchmanship in terms of ethos rather than specific doctrines or practices, with two predominant

8. Clark, *English Society*, 107; and Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People*, 6–12.

9. For example, Cruickshanks asserted that the Tory party had survived forty years of proscription after 1714 by adopting the Old Pretender's cause. Colley disagreed, pointing out that Tories had more options than Jacobitism, that they were never committed to Stuarts as a party, and that the Tory party was predominately Hanoverian after 1714. Andrew Hanham disagreed with Colley's conclusion, as he implied that she founded her case on “British Tory archival material” but did not examine the Jacobite factor systematically. Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament*, 1:62–78; Cruickshanks, *Political Untouchables*, 1–13; Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy*, 36–45; and Andrew Hanham, “So Few Facts,” 233–35.

10. Lyttelton, *A Letter to the Tories*, 12.

11. Walsh and Taylor, “Introduction,” in Walsh et al., *The Church of England*, 45.

12. JW to the Earl of Dartmouth, June 14, 1775, in Telford, 6:156.

principles concerning the High Churchmen: loyalty to the Church of England and to the Crown.¹³

Peter Nockles offered the following characteristics of eighteenth-century High Churchmen. They believed in some form of apostolic succession—that the Church of England was a branch of the universal catholic church. They held to the authority of Scripture but taught that the Bible should be interpreted through the Book of Common Prayer, the creeds, and the catechism. Valuing the writings of the early Church Fathers, they placed vast importance on the sacraments. Therefore, spirituality was based upon sacramental grace rather than a personal conversion experience. They stressed the vitality of the religious establishment alongside the state being divinely ordained. The state existed to uphold the well-being of the Church.¹⁴ During Anne’s reign, “High Church” was delineated politically as synonymous with “Tory.”¹⁵ This lumping together of High Church and Tory was encouraged by Whigs and Dissenters to align High Churchmen with Jacobitism, but just as it is a wrong assumption that all Tories were Jacobites, it is a false conjecture that all High Churchmen were Tories.¹⁶ Early in the eighteenth century it was usually the case that to be a High Churchman was to be a Tory, and vice versa, but Chamberlain provided evidence that later in the century many High Churchmen tended towards Whiggism, in part, for the purpose of survival.¹⁷ High Churchmen were partial to the liturgy of either the 1549 or the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and resisted any further modifications to the version of the book to which they were loyal. They “gloried in the moderation of the Church of England,” and believed that more moderation would be dilution.¹⁸ They were against changes that would bring Dissenters into the Church unless they “repented” of their nonconformity and communicated wholly with the Established Church, for moderation was *not* a virtue when the Church was threatened. High Churchmen were loyal to a specific vision of the Church: episcopal,

13. Chamberlain, *Accommodating High Churchmen*, 14; and Nockles, “Church Parties,” 334.

14. Nockles, “Church Parties,” 335–36.

15. Nockles, “Church Parties,” 336.

16. Nockles, “Church Parties,” 336–37.

17. Chamberlain, *High Churchmen*, 79–105.

18. Chamberlain, *High Churchmen*, 17.

sacramental, liturgical, and uniform. They viewed episcopacy, the governing of the Church by bishops in apostolic succession, as ordained of God.¹⁹

High Church Tories believed in the doctrine of passive obedience to the monarch. They saw themselves as subjects and not citizens. They held tightly to these beliefs because they thought that any alternative would lead to anarchy.²⁰ Wesley's famous claim about his churchmanship is as follows, "I am a Church-of-England man . . . in the Church I will live and die unless I am thrust out."²¹ While he identified himself as a High Church Tory, over time, he relaxed his views that went along with this as indicated in *Catholic Spirit*.²²

The "Fifteen" was the befuddled attempt of James Stuart, the "Old Pretender," at starting an uprising in 1715.²³ Louis XIV (1638–1715) of France had recognized James as James III, *de jure* king of England after his father's passing in 1701. James Stuart arrived in Scotland intending to gather an army, but he fell ill, and ultimately abandoned his retreating army at Montrose. He boarded a ship for France in February 1716, but when he arrived, he found that Louis XIV had died.²⁴ No longer welcome in France, James and his supporters settled in Rome by invitation of Pope Clement XI (1649–1721) in 1717.²⁵ The "Old Pretender" did not give up hope that he would return to what he believed was his right as king of Great Britain. He married Maria Clementina Sobieski (1702–1735) in 1719, and their union produced two sons, Charles Edward (1720–1788) and Henry Benedict (1725–1807).²⁶ Charles Edward would lead his own rebellion against the Crown in 1745–1746, which will be discussed below.

The atmosphere at Oxford during the "Fifteen" had been heated and turbulent.²⁷ There had been riots, which resulted in military occupation of the city as the Whigs of Oxford alleged that the "Old Pretender" had been proclaimed king in Oxford in October 1715.²⁸ John Wesley's 1775

19. Chamberlain, *High Churchmen*, 13–14.

20. Vickers, *Guide*, 62–63.

21. JW to Henry Moore, May 6, 1788, in Telford, 8:58.

22. JW, *Catholic Spirit*, *Works*, 2:86.

23. See Szechi, 1715.

24. Szechi, "Retrieving Captain Le Cocq's Plunder," 98.

25. Szechi, 1715, 215.

26. For the life of Charles Edward Stuart, see McLynn, *Bonnie Prince Charlie*.

27. Langford, "Tories and Jacobites 1714–1751," 5:99–103.

28. Ward, *Georgian Oxford*, 61.

account of the “Fifteen” indicated that the British ambassador to Paris had sent the king all the intelligence he could, yet none of this kept the Pretender from attempted invasion.²⁹ Wesley commented further that the Pretender should have known that the nation would not support him.³⁰ When Wesley went up to Christ Church, Oxford, it had been only five years since the 1715 Jacobite Rising. Even into the 1730s, Oxford’s Tory High Churchmen were labelled Jacobites, and consequently faced criticism. Most of the colleges were predominately controlled by Tories of diverse opinions, and only a few became Whig in complexion.³¹ The heads of houses leaned towards moderation, but the junior members leaned towards Jacobitism. The result was a string of squabbles within and between colleges, worsened by religious fears, personal antipathies, and the environment of senior common rooms where university gossip occurred.³² This is the environment in which Wesley lived and breathed while a student and later as a fellow.

Wesley’s Politics

Unfortunately, not much is known about Wesley’s undergraduate years other than the books he studied as required by Christ Church.³³ We can only deduce what his political views were during this time from what he was reading, his later writings, or assume that he shared the perspectives of one or both of his parents.³⁴ Susanna Wesley possibly maintained her Jacobite views throughout her life. Susanna declared in her journal in 1709 that a king “derives his power from God, so to him only must he answer for using it.”³⁵ However, this was a High Church view and not necessarily Jacobite. When Wesley was a student, he wrote to his mother mentioning the “abdication of King James II.”³⁶ Calling the removal of

29. JW, *Concise History*, 4:126.

30. JW, *Concise History*, 4:128.

31. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 63. The colleges that were predominantly Whig were: Exeter, Jesus, Wadham, and from the 1730s, Christ Church.

32. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 63; and Sutherland, *History of Oxford*, 5:3.

33. English, “John Wesley’s Studies,” 29.

34. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 69–71; and Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 61–83.

35. See Susanna Wesley, Journal entry, 1709, Susanna Wesley, *Complete Writings*, 204.

36. JW to Susanna Wesley, [December 18, 1724], *Works*, 25:154; and Weber, *Politics*, 53.