

Charles II and James II: Two Royal Converts

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In the 17th century, Anglicans who were “reconciled” to the Church of Rome would often reveal their motives were drawn from history, law, or the counsels of perfection. Sometimes all three motives would be intertwined. The motive drawn from history was based on the promise of Jesus Christ to abide with his Church till the end of time, and those with this motive pointed to an unbroken succession of bishops and doctrine since apostolic times. The motive drawn from law was based on Our Lord having left the Apostles a Church government, and those with this motive pointed to the necessity of a court of final appeal against private judgment. Last, the motive drawn from the counsels of perfection was based on the neglect of these counsels among Protestants, and those with this motive referred to recent Catholic saints like Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, Philip Neri, and Charles Borromeo.

But no matter how appealing these motives might be, it was very hard to weigh and consider them dispassionately, never mind act on them at a time when a Roman Catholic priest serving in England was a traitor under the law. A “Puritan Convert” of that era explains that “many are afraid to have a better Opinion of them [Roman Catholics] than they are taught to have, though they even see they are much slandered, lest they should be convinced of the truth of their Religion and then be obliged either to damn their Souls if they would not embrace it, or loose their Estates and Preferments if they did embrace it.”¹

On the other hand, many royalist exiles in the 1640s and 1650s thought the Church of England was dying with the monarchy, and so they were looking around for another Church. One of them even recalled that Richard Hooker had said that the Church of England “was in probability a Church not to continue above fourscore years at most.”²

New converts would often write about the hardships they had to endure when people learned about their change of religion. Hugh-

Paulin de Cressy, former dean of Oxford University, was accused of inconstancy and ingratitude for leaving the Church of England in the time of her “persecution” under Cromwell. He replied, “I made choice of a Church, whose only portion both in war and peace was persecution . . . it was persecution I fled to.” Similarly, Anne Duchess of York, the mother of Queen Mary and Queen Anne, fully expected to be condemned by her friends and to lose her reputation because of her conversion in 1670: “It will be plain enough to every body, that I must lose all the Friends and credit I have here, by it.” She prayed “That the poor Catholicks of this Nation, may not suffer for my being of their Religion.”³ In 1702, Charles Earl of Middleton, minister to the exiled Stuart King at St. Germain, offered his resignation before converting. He said that those who were born Papists or had converted long ago were not hated, “but the first odour of a conversion is so abominable to the English that one must expect to be loaded with all reproach, which witt, malice, Indignation and Zeal can devise.” So he asked to be allowed to enter a monastery, lest he be a “mighty prejudice” to the exiled King.⁴

Charles II

If such was the obloquy awaiting a university dean, a Duchess, and a King’s minister upon converting, it is easy to understand why the conversion of two Stuart Kings in the late 17th century would cause an upheaval that led to the 1688 Revolution and the ensuing Act of Settlement (1701), which still excludes Catholics from the royal succession. It was so dangerous for an English King to convert that Charles II “inched” towards Rome for thirty-four years, from 1651 to 1685, acknowledging during that time—though in private conversations with his Queen and royal brother the Duke of York—that he was determined to become a Catholic. It was a mighty deterrent to him that his royal father had been beheaded in 1649 as a Papist, though the accusation was false. Towards the end of his life, when he thought he might be killed for his religion like his father, Charles slept with a box of gold near his bed, ready for flight.

No doubt his mother, Henrietta Maria of France, had inspired her royal son with favorable thoughts about the Catholic religion, but Charles II’s reconciliation appears rooted in a book he read when he was hiding from Cromwell among English Catholics. In September 1651, after his

defeat at the Battle of Worcester, Charles had a price of £1,000 on his head but could not escape from England because the roads to the coast were strictly guarded. Disguised as a peasant, his skin colored brown with walnut-tree leaves, the King entrusted himself “to the Fidelity of the Pendrells, poor Catholics, and labouring men.” After a day in the woods attended by Richard Pendrell, he went to Boscobel, a place tenanted by Richard’s brother William, and there he was concealed in the thick branches of a pollarded oak in Boscobel wood, while Puritan soldiers searched the house all day from top to bottom. One Pendrell brother was beaten and had his jaw broken under interrogation, but revealed nothing (and to this day the family receives a royal pension for it). That night, the Pendrells put the King in a priest-hole, the only one the Puritans had not found. From September 3 to 7, the King was in continual danger, until John Pendrell, another of the brothers, found a refuge for him with Mr. Whitgrave at Moseley, in Staffordshire. His rustic clothing torn, his nose bleeding, his feet swollen and his shoes wet and full of gravel, the King finally arrived at the chamber of the Benedictine priest John Huddleston, who cleaned his feet and put stockings and slippers on them. Meanwhile, Whitgrave sent his servants away on errands, except for a Catholic cook, and Huddleston set his three students as sentinels in the garret to warn of approaching soldiers or visitors. Some of the King’s own defeated soldiers passed by on their way north begging for help, and Mrs. Whitgrave fed them and dressed their wounds. Thus was the King’s life preserved, as Father Huddleston wrote, by “His Catholic Subjects,” who ferretted him out of England disguised as a servant.⁵

During his stay with Father Huddleston the King visited the chapel, which had an altar and crucifix, and he asked how Catholics were faring under Cromwell. He was told that “they were Persecuted on account both of their Religion and Loyalty.” Then Charles promised, “If it please God I come to my Crown, both you, and all of your perswasion, shall have as much liberty as any of my Subjects.”⁶ This promise he gave to all nonconformists in the Declaration of Breda⁷ just before his Restoration, but it was a promise Parliament would not let him keep.

While in hiding at Moseley the King read in manuscript a book written by Father Huddleston’s uncle Richard, entitled *A Short and Plain Way to the Faith and Church*. After reading it, Huddleston wrote, the King “pronounced this Sentence upon it, (viz.) I have not seen any

thing more Plain and Clear upon this Subject: the Arguments here drawn from Succession are so conclusive, I do not conceive how they can be denied.”⁸ The book was printed in 1688, and in the dedication to the Queen Dowager, Catherine of Braganza, Huddleston stated that this work had been the King’s “faithful Companion, when all the World had deserted Him,” and had sowed the “Seeds,” in “his temporal obscurity,” of his later deathbed conversion.⁹ The same Huddleston who had washed the King’s feet in 1651 was the only priest available on the evening of February 5, 1685, to give him the last rites. Regarding this amazing coincidence, Lord Ailesbury wrote, that when Huddleston approached the deathbed, Charles II cried out, “You that saved my body is [sic] now come to save my soul.”¹⁰

After his death, two papers written in the King’s own hand were found in his strongbox and immediately published by his royal brother, now King James II. These papers, which greatly alarmed the English nation, gave as the chief motive for the late King’s conversion the argument from law. In the first paper, the King argued that in the Church, as in a secular kingdom, it would undermine all law if each individual were the ultimate court of appeal: “It were a very Irrational thing to make Laws for a Country, and leave it to the Inhabitants to be the Interpreters and Judges of those Laws; For then every Man will be his own Judg, and by consequence no such thing as either Right or Wrong. Can we therefore suppose that God Almighty would leave us at those uncertainties, as to give us a Rule to go by, and leave every Man to be his own Judg? ... I would have any Man shew me [i.e., in Scripture], where the Power of deciding matters of Faith is given to every particular Man.” In his second paper, the King made a similar argument from law: “Can there be any Justice done where the Offenders are their own Judges, and equal Interpreters of the Law, with those, who are appointed to administer Justice? This is our case here in England in matters Spiritual...”¹¹

The same argument is found in *Short and Plain Way*, the book which the King read in 1651 and found “conclusive.” There Richard Huddleston had written: “in all well-order’d Commonwealths, besides the Law under which the People live, there must be some external Judge to expound and declare (with irrefragable Authority) the sense and true meaning of the Law; much more in the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ, where the Law is more profound and difficult; the errors more dangerous; subjection, unity, and obedience to the Governors more

necessary.”¹² In short, without an ultimate judge, there is no binding law in Church or State.

In the first paper, the King made yet another argument from law: he asked how the Church, which had the “Power” to judge “even of the Scripture it self” at the First Nicene Council, A.D. 325, had come to “lose” that power. The only reason he ever heard given was that the Church had interpreted Scripture “contrary to the true Sense and meaning of it” and imposed “Articles of Faith” not “warranted by God’s Word.” But who was to be the judge of that, he asked, “the whole Church, the Succession whereof has continued to this day without interruption, or particular Men, who have raised Schisms for their own advantage?”¹³ Thus he intertwined the argument from law with that from history to claim that the unbroken succession of bishops since the apostles proved the Church, not particular men, to be the ultimate judge in doctrine. Similarly, in his *Short and Plain Way*, Richard Huddleston said that while Protestants spoke of a “great alteration” and “Innovation in Faith” that had happened during the 160 years between St. Augustine and St. Gregory, they were not able to cite a single synod or council of the Church at that time, in the East or West, that had charged the Roman Bishop with innovation.¹⁴ Many English converts found this line of argument persuasive and would cite St. Augustine’s *De utilitate credendi* chapter 2, on the necessity of trusting in Church authority: “That we believe any thing, we owe it to authority.” Cressy for one cited Augustine on this point and lamented that those who would not interpret a heathen orator without authorities interpreted Scripture without Fathers and Councils, risking their eternal happiness on their “own single judgment.”¹⁵

Although he was persuaded by the argument from law, King Charles deferred his conversion for more than three decades, because he knew the furor it would provoke. Yet during a journey to Spain in the Interregnum, the Duke of Ormond noticed that Charles was “inclined” to the Church of Rome. This known proclivity was the reason why his Chancellor the Earl of Clarendon and his Parliament would not settle a sufficient revenue on him from the start, for fear he might “bring in” [that is, decriminalize] the Catholic religion if he were “at his ease.” Besides keeping him poor, Parliament opposed Charles II’s Declaration at Breda that promised a limited toleration to both Protestant Dissenters and Catholics. “So the King’s word was broke.”¹⁶

James Duke of York knew of his royal brother's inclination to Rome, and in 1668 asked him privately, as he put it in his memoirs, "if he continued in the same mind, as to his religion; who assured him he did, and desired nothing more than to be reconciled." That same year Parliament urged the King to divorce his barren Catholic Queen, Catherine of Braganza, and marry a Protestant, but Charles retorted with his usual wit, that "if his conscience would allow him to divorce the Queen, it would suffer him to dispatch her out of the world." A few years later, Commons offered him £500,000 for a Protestant wife's dowry if he would only divorce his Queen, but to his credit the King "absolutely rejected" their offer.¹⁷

In January 1669, the Duke of York found his royal brother "resolved to be a Catholic." In a meeting with his ministers Arundel, Clifford and Arlington, King Charles "declared his mind in matters of religion, with great zeal" and they debated how "to advance the Catholic religion." The upshot was that they realized it could not be done without the help of France.¹⁸ Soon after this, in May 1670, the secret Dover Treaty was signed in which Charles undertook to declare himself a Catholic, provided France would help him cope with the public reaction. In October that same year, the Abbot of Monte Cassino came from the Pope to visit Charles, James, and the Queen, and learned of "the good intentions of the King for the relief of the Catholics."¹⁹

Two years later, on March 15, 1672, at a time when Parliament was not in session, King Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence, under which the Protestant dissenters were allowed to meet in their own chapels and Catholics to worship in the privacy of their homes.²⁰ But as soon as Parliament met once again in 1673, there was an uproar over this "Indulgence" to Catholics, especially since it was now suspected that James Duke of York had been converted. This was *inferred* from his abstention from Communion on Christmas day 1672, though he still attended the King at Anglican services. Furious about "the growth of Popery" in the Court, Parliament passed the first Test Act in the Spring of 1673, "for preventing dangers which may happen from Popish recusants." They imposed an oath against Transubstantiation as a prerequisite for every office under the Crown, from lowly messenger to Admiral of the Navy. Then in 1678 they passed the second Test Act, imposing on every member of the House of Lords an oath against the Mass as idolatry.²¹

During the three years of national hysteria over Oates's Plot, 1678–1681, Charles II was unable to stop the imprisonments and executions of Catholics. These victims were surrogates for his Catholic brother, his Queen, and himself. Lord Ailesbury, who knew Charles intimately, wrote, “To my knowledge the king believed not one word of what was called Oats’ plot. It may be asked, why did he sign dead warrants thereupon; The nation, by wicked artifices of a discarded minister, was then half distracted, and God knows what would have been the consequences of denying what they called for then.” Ailesbury heard him say, “Let the blood lie on them that condemned them, for God knows,’ said he, ‘I sign with tears in my eyes.’”²²

In the last five years of his life, the unfortunate King wore a relic of the True Cross near his heart and prayed to the very martyrs who had suffered in his own reign. J. P. Kenyon writes that “There is no reason to disbelieve Queen Catherine’s testimony that in later years, whenever the King entered her boudoir, where the portraits of these martyrs hung in state, he ‘would turn towards them, and kissing their hands would beg their forgiveness in the most humble manner.’” Kenyon adds that on his deathbed Charles II “handed his brother a crucifix containing a piece of the True Cross which he had taken from the iconoclast William Waller in 1679 and worn ever after concealed on his person.”²³ Waller used to plunder Catholic homes in the Plot years while searching for incriminating evidence. Charles survived the Plot by only three and a half years, dying of Bright’s disease (kidney failure) at 55, on February 6, 1685.

During the five days during which the King lay dying, Queen Catherine told James Duke of York to do what he could, because he knew “les sentiments du Roy sur la religion catholique” (the King’s sentiments on the Catholic religion). The Duke replied, “je le scay, je ne pence qu’a cela” (I know, I think only of that). James stayed by his brother’s side from his “apoplexy” on February 1 to his death five days later.²⁵ On the eve of the King’s death, Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, visited him, and Ken urged him twice to receive the Sacrament. The King said “he would think ont,” and “tyme enough.” The Duke then told the company to “stand a little from the bed” and asked his brother “if he would have a Preist [sic], to come and reconcile him and give him the Blessed Sacrament; for God’s sake, answered the king, brother do, and

added will not you expose yourself to much in doing it, to which the Duke answered, Sir if it were to cost me my life I'll get you one, and went out immediately." No priest could be found except John Huddleston, the one who had helped the King after the Battle of Worcester. So the Duke brought him by the back way to a place near the bedchamber and told his brother the priest had come. Immediately Charles asked everyone to leave the room, but the Duke asked that the Earls of Bath and Feversham, though Protestants, might stay because "it was not fit for him to be left quite alone with him [the King] in the condition he was in."²⁶ James had already been accused in Parliament by his nephew the Duke of Monmouth of trying to kill his brother, and would soon be slandered with having poisoned him.

Huddleston arrived at the King's bedside on Thursday evening, February 5th, between 7 and 8 PM, after sending the Portuguese priest Bendo de Lamos to St. James Palace to procure the Sacrament. The King told Huddleston "he desired to die in the Faith and Communion of the holy Roman Catholic church" and expressed sorrow for having "deferr'd his Reconciliation so long." When asked if he wanted to receive the Sacrament, the King tried to climb out of his deathbed to receive it kneeling, saying, "let me meet my Heavenly Lord in a better posture than in my bed."²⁷ When the last rites were concluded and the company was called in, Ailesbury reports that he watched Charles II end "like a true and hearty penitent."²⁸ For a few last hours, he "expressed the greatest kindnesse and tendernesse to the Duke that can be imagined, and died unconcerned as became a good Christian, and with a resolution becoming a king."²⁹

James II

Where King Charles was attracted by the argument from law, his brother James Duke of York and Albany, was drawn to the Church of Rome by the holiness he found there. At the time, this was not an unusual path to Rome. Abraham Woodhead, perhaps the greatest scholar that University College, Oxford, ever produced, wrote in the early 1650s, that the "first motion I receiv'd was from reading Saints lives." Then when he traveled to Europe in the Interregnum and heard about modern saints like Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Teresa of Avila, he was eager "to enquire, and so observe what was taught and done by them who knew and

lived Catholic Religion; and, thus he began to be disabused, and to perceive where the Perfection of Christianity was indeed believed and practised.”³⁰

The Duchess of York, before marrying the Duke, had lived in exile with her family in Flanders. There her maternal grandfather Sir Thomas Ailesbury, heard the chant of the Dominican Friars at midnight, and it prompted him to inquire “in earnest” about the Catholic Faith. Shortly before his death he asked his grand-daughter, the future Duchess, “to procure him a priest secretly; because, his son in law and daughter were inveterately averse to the Catholic Religion. The yong [sic] gentlewoman zealously complied with his desire, kept his secret, and was his sole confidant and consolation in this pious negotiation.” Her friend Lady Tuke told the story after the death of the Duchess of York in 1670, and it was thought that her conversion had its roots in this act of charity.³¹

Living among Catholics in the Interregnum also had a profound effect on the Duke of York. He wrote: “had I always lived in England, where they brought me up in an Aversion for the Catholick Religion, it would have been very difficult to me to discover the Truth, and undo my self of the Prejudices of Infancy.” Yet what triggered his conversion (after his return to England) was reading the history of the English Reformation published in 1662 by the Anglican high-churchman Dr. Peter Heylin. This work led him to conclude that it was not the “Spirit of God” that had “given Birth” to the established church. After he spoke to his royal brother about it, James and Charles began to have “frequent Conferences together upon Matters of Religion, and found themselves both equally prepossess’d in Favour of the Church of Rome.”³²

The first result of this change was that the Duke of York established liberty of conscience in his proprietary colony of New York. In 1664, he instructed his first governor Richard Nicolls to let no Christian be molested, fined, or imprisoned for differing in judgment in matters of religion. Then in 1674 he gave broader instructions to Major Andros, his second governor, and told him to “permit all persons of what Religion soever, quietly to inhabit within the precincts of your jurisdiction, without giving him any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever, for or by reason of their differing opinions in matters of Religion.” After James became King, that second instruction was renewed in the same words on May 26, 1686, and he signed a “Charter” that made

freedom of religion the people's "right." Almost a year later, on April 4, 1687, he issued the Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, proclaimed both in England and America, that gave all his subjects the freedom to "meet and serve God after their own way and manner." Most English historians have seen James II as insincere in his support for liberty of conscience and have suggested he was merely using a strategy to bring in Popery. They completely ignore the fact that for twenty years before he was crowned, he pursued the very same policy in New York, where there were only two dozen Catholics. It is virtually unknown that a synagogue was founded in New York under the aegis of James's governor Thomas Dongan, over the objections of the mayor and aldermen.³³ John Romeyn Brodhead, an eminent historian of colonial New York and a great admirer of William of Orange, declared that "In truth, the American government of James the Second was more tolerant and just than that which it superseded."³⁴ It was also more tolerant than what followed it after 1689.

In England, the Duke of York defended liberty of conscience from as early as 1669, when he "assured Dr. Owen," a Protestant dissenter, "that he had no bitterness against the non-conformists. He was against all persecution, merely for conscience's sake; looking on it as an unchristian thing, and absolutely against his conscience." His friend Lord Ailesbury recalled that James loved to talk about "liberty of conscience," and this principle made him "receive all the French Huguenots that were so inhumanly used and obliged to come out of France" after 1685. He gave the Huguenot exiles "fifteen hundred pounds out of his privy purse" and commanded a door-to-door collection for them.³⁵ It was in 1669 that the Duke first spoke of his desire to become a Catholic with the Jesuit Emmanuel Lobb, who "confirmed him in his disposition; and required him to quit the communion of the Church of England." Upon learning that no "dispensation" was available to dissemble in religion (it was widely believed in England at the time that the Pope gave "dispensations" to dissemble and even to lie under oath), the Duke resolved to "be reconciled on any account." Yet it was only in 1675 that he stopped attending Charles to the royal chapel, and when he did so it was on grounds of liberty of conscience, because a "severe order" had been issued by the Royal Council against "Roman Catholics and non-conformists."³⁶

Despite his success as Grand Admiral in the Second Dutch War of

1665, James became unpopular as soon as it was suspected that “he had chang’d his Religion, or had a Mind to do ’t. The Suspicion they had conceiv’d of him grew the greater when they heard of the Dutchess of York’s Conversion.” It was thought the Duke had played a role in it, and indeed he had. He caused Dr. Heylin’s book, which had made such a deep “Impression” on him, to fall into the Duchess’s hands in November 1669: “she read it, and was touched with her own Reflections which she made as she read it.” In 1685, after he became King, James published his first Duchess’s “Reflections” on Heylin’s history. Among other things she said she had been told that if she had any doubts about her religion, this book would “settle” her, but instead she found in it “the description of the horridest sacriledges in the World.”³⁷

Although reading Heylin loosened the Duke and Duchess from their moorings, it was the love of devotion that set both on the path to Rome. The Duchess wrote that in exile she had seen “much of the Devotion of the Catholicks” and had made it her prayer ever since, “That if I were not, I might before I died, be in the true Religion.” When she began to examine the Catholic Church in 1669, she said she was attracted to the Real Presence, Confession, and Prayer for the Dead. The Duke her husband followed a similar path, reading books like Juan Nieremberg’s *A Treatise of the Difference between Time and Eternity* (a book he used to urge many others to read) and St. Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life*. In a letter dated Christmas 1687, which he sent to his daughter Mary Princess of Orange – “a very long letter of two sheets of paper, written with his own hand” – James recalled his motives for conversion and declared “that the first thing that wrought with him was the holy and exemplary lives and constant devotion of those of the Church of Rome.”³⁸

There were other Englishmen drawn to Rome by the beauty of devotion. In the 1640s, Dean Cressy visited a Carthusian monastery in Paris and reflected that this order of hermits had only grown holier during the past six centuries of its existence, yet the Carthusians had been Henry VIII’s first victims. After that, he read Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, and Charles Borromeo, and came to the conclusion that Protestants had renounced the “evangelical counsels of perfection,” such as voluntary poverty and chastity. He grieved that the “very name of Contemplation” in a “mystical sense” was “unknown” among them. He also began to distinguish the sanctity of the Church from the

imperfections or sins of particular priests.³⁹ Shortly after Cressy wrote, Abraham Woodhead came to the same conclusion in 1652, right before his conversion, declaring, “Devotion is the only cure we have.”⁴⁰

James was received by Emmanuel Lobb, S.J., at age 39, in 1672. As heir to the English crown, he could expect to pay a heavy price for his change. The reaction came swiftly: Parliament met in 1673 and was roused to fury against him. James said that all the “storms now raised” which followed him from 1673 to 1688 “bear their date and origin, from the suspicion they had of his being converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Nor could his private enemies, till then, gain any advantage over him.” From that time on, “Measures were contriv’d and taken to deprive him of his Right to the Crown.” He had been surrounded hitherto by “a Croud of Courtiers,” but he was suddenly “abandon’d by all the World.”⁴¹

Parliament passed the Test Act of 1673 with its oath against Transubstantiation purposely to deprive James of his offices and friends. Samuel Parker, the Anglican bishop of Oxford, lamented that virtually no one in England understood the term *transubstantiation* and that those making the abjuration thought they were renouncing any form of Real Presence, thus separating themselves from all Christendom.⁴² Charles II begged the Duke of York and the Treasurer Lord Clifford to take the Test, but they both refused and instead “quit their employments.” On June 15, 1673, James resigned as “lord admiral, warden of the five ports, general of the army, and governor of Portsmouth.”⁴³ In January 1675, Charles II’s ministers tried in vain to placate Parliament by arranging a marriage between William of Orange and Princess Mary, the daughter of James and his first Duchess Anne Hyde who had been raised as a Protestant.

The vehement opposition to the Duke of York gave birth to the Whig party, which now fomented the last bloody persecution of Catholics in England, the Oates’ Plot of 1678–1681. In order to exclude James from the royal succession, the Whigs tarred all English Catholics with treason in an avalanche of pamphlets, even accusing Queen Catherine of trying to poison the King. Widespread hysteria followed. The King pleaded with James to conform outwardly and keep his “Religion in his own Breast,” but the Duke was “resolv’d to hazard and lose all rather than Dissemble, as they would have had him.”⁴⁴ He agreed to go into temporary exile at this time, and his royal brother wept to see him leave.

During his short reign from 1685 to 1688, James was again besieged by a swarm of pamphlets that instigated the English to rebellion against him. He was accused of having set the Fire of London and poisoned his brother Charles. His declarations for liberty of conscience were said to be traps to bring in Popery. In 1688 the trigger for the Revolution was the absurd charge that he had intruded an illegitimate Prince of Wales into the royal succession and deprived his legitimate Protestant daughters of their inheritance. Although forty persons, nearly all of them Protestants, were present at the birth of the Prince of Wales, born on June 10, 1688, and attested to his legitimacy under oath in the Fall of 1688, the child was alleged to be “suppositious,” a stranger brought into the Queen’s bed in a “warming pan” merely to ensure a Catholic succession. David Hume called the story of the warming-pan baby the great lie at the heart of the 1688 Revolution. He noted that it was a replica of the lie spread during the Oates’ Plot, when the second Duchess of York (Mary of Modena) was pregnant, as seen in Roger L’Estrange’s *Observer* #194, August 23, 1682.⁴⁵

Due to the success of this lie, some grandees invited William of Orange to come and deliver England with a foreign army. The invitation declared that “not one in a thousand here believes” the child to be the Queen’s, and the imposing of this child as Prince of Wales must be “one of the chief causes upon which the declaration of your entering the kingdom in a hostile manner, must be founded on your part.” What helped to spread the lie was that James’s two daughters Mary and Anne gave it countenance, even though Mrs. Dawson, midwife to the Queen, attested that “Princess Anne felt the child leap in the Queen’s belly.”⁴⁶ David Hume, no friend to the Catholic religion, made this memorable statement in his *History of England*:

It is indeed singular that a prince, whose chief blame consisted in imprudences, and misguided principles, should be exposed, from religious antipathy, to such treatment as even Nero, Domitian, or the most enormous tyrants that have disgraced the records of history, never met with from their friends and family.⁴⁷

Indeed James’s two daughters and two sons-in-law supported the invasion that dethroned him, and so did a man he had raised from the ranks, John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough.

John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, a witness to those events, wrote a little-known, but very poignant “Account” of the 1688 Revolution. Although he disapproved of James’s religion and his policy of liberty of conscience, this Duke felt a deep compassion for a King betrayed by his children:

’Tis very remarkable that this Prince was so thoroughly unfortunate, as to be undone by his own children; and the more, by their being bred up most carefully and religiously, and their being endowed with all virtuous inclinations. These being first deceived by the indefatigable industry of some people, drew in a great part of the nation to be deceived also, by the goodness of their dispositions, and the nearness of their relation to the Person accused: for who could suspect such Daughters of wronging their Father? It was infused into them severally, by the properest Instruments that could be found, that their Father was not only resolved to persecute the Protestant Religion, but to stick at nothing in order to it; and therefore at once to prevent his eldest daughter’s succeeding him; and to secure the throne after him to one of his own religion, he had contrived a suppositious son, who was to succeed and settle that which his supposed Father might not live long enough to fix sufficiently.

Buckingham added that the two Princesses, Mary and Anne, ought to have reflected on their father’s character, “the justice of his mind, and the tenderness of his nature,” but instead they “consented to dethrone a most indulgent Father, and to succeed him boldly in their several turns, before an innocent Brother, then a child.”⁴⁸

After William became King of England, he did not investigate the “warming-pan” birth, as he had promised to do in his Declaration before his descent upon England. Why not? The 18th-century Whig historian Lord Dalrymple pointed out that William III knew very well that the Prince of Wales was legitimate, because in 1697 he proposed “that the young son of King James [then eleven years old] should be educated as a protestant in England, and succeed to the crown at the end of the present reign.” Dalrymple castigated King James for his “folly about religion” that prevented him from accepting this proposal.⁴⁹ Like David Hume, Dalrymple had no use for religion, but he saw the myth

of the warming-pan baby as an affront to the 1688 Revolution, which remains the foundation of the present English government.

Living in exile, James acknowledged that he had failed for some years after his conversion to live according to the “Rules of an Evangelick Perfection.” (Like his royal brother, he had kept mistresses.) He still had a lot to learn about virtue because among the English of his day, he said:

“Nothing is minded almost, but to inspire them with an Aversion against what they call Popery and Idolatry. They believe themselves good Protestants as soon as they but hate the Catholicks enough: and for the rest, they trouble their Heads very little with teaching them the Christian Morality.” In his last years in France, James used to recite each day this beautiful penitential prayer he had composed himself: “I give thee, O my God, my most humble Thanks, for that it has pleas’d thee to take from me my Three Kingdoms. Thou has hereby rouz’d me from the Lethargy of Sin and brought me out of a miserable Estate in which, Lord, if I had continu’d, I should have been for ever undone. I also thank thee, O my God, for that it has pleas’d thee out of thine infinite Goodness to banish me into a strange Land, where I have learnt the Duties of Christianity, and done my utmost to perform them.”⁵⁰

When a nun condoled with him over his defeat at the Battle of La Hogue in 1692, saying that their prayers had been unanswered, the King replied, “Whatever God does, is well done: And I may add, there is nothing well done but what He does.” He thought he had deserved all his afflictions, and he even spoke of his enemies as “Ministers of Divine Justice,” refusing to listen to anyone who railed against them, but instead listening to published libels against himself, when they were read to him, with “the same Patience” David heard the curses of Shimei. Even so, he still desired a Restoration, and explained it thus: “I am both a Father and a King; I cannot, and I ought not, to abandon the Interests of my Children, nor of my Subjects; and I will never abandon them.” But if he had thought, he added, that William was fitter to procure “the Happiness of his People, than Himself, he would have deliver’d him up his Three Kingdoms with all his Heart and been

content to have liv'd and dy'd in Oblivion."⁵¹

James II died at age 68, on Sept 16, 1701, at 3 PM on Friday. He had prayed to die on a Friday so the merits of Jesus would be more abundantly applied to him. When he was about to receive the Viaticum, he was asked if he believed in the Real Presence, and he replied, "je le crois de tout mon coeur" (I believe it with all my heart). His last words to his son as he blessed him were: "Ne vous séparez jamais de L'Eglise Catholique; on ne peut trop perdre pour Dieu." (Never separate yourself from the Catholic Church; we cannot lose too much for God."⁵² Thus, despite the loss of his good name—which continues even to this day—and his three kingdoms, he was far from regretting his journey to Rome.

Abraham Woodhead expressed the same heroic stance in this sublime passage:

. . . if yet further, by reason of the persecution of such a religion in the place where he lives, such a convert has an occasion also offered him of leaving father or mother, friends or fortune, and, among the rest not the least, his reputation and good name, in being esteemed a *turncoat*, an *apostate*, a *seducer*, to embrace again in the religion he turns to, nothing by crosses and fastings, confessions and penances, resignation of judgment, strict obedience to the Church's as well as God's laws, and many more hardships set before him, if he purposes to arrive at perfection; for a true enlightened judgement, I say, will here consider, that this is one of the greatest honors that his Divine Majesty could do him upon earth and a happiness next to martyrdom.⁵³

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2. Hugh-Paulin de Cressy, *Exomologesis* (Paris: Jean Billaine, 1653), 438 [mispaginated: vere 455], 474. He cites Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, lib. 5, sec. 79.
3. "A Copy of a Paper Written by the late Dutchess [sic] of York, August 1670," in *Copies of two papers written by the late King Charles II; together with a copy of a paper written by the late Duchess of York* (London: Henry Hills, 1686).
4. "Middleton's Reasons for his Retreat or Withdrawal [in 1702]," in *Papers of Simon Fraser Lord Lovat*, British Museum add ms 31, 249 666 c 24, p 13.
5. A Summary of Occurrences, relating to the miraculous preservation of our late Sovereign Lord King Charles II, after the defeat of his Army at Worcester in the Year 1651. From the testimony of those two worthy Roman Catholics, Thomas Whitgrave of Moseley . . . and Mr. John Huddleston Priest (London: Henry Hills, 1688), 7-25, 33. During a

- visit to Boscobel, I learned about the ongoing pension to the Pendrells from Michael Hodgetts, a member of the Catholic Record Society and author of *Secret Hiding Places, on the priest-holes in England*.
6. A Summary, 28-29, 32.
 7. "Declaration at Breda, 4 April 1660," J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688: Documents and Commentary*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 331.
 8. A Summary, 29.
 9. A Summary, 29; and John Huddleston, two prefaces to his uncle Richard Huddleston's *A Short and Plain Way to the Faith and Church* (London: Henry Hills, 1688).
 10. [Thomas Bruce], *Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury Written by Himself*. 2 vols. (Westminster: Roxburghe Club, 1890), 90.
 11. *Copies of two papers*, 1-2.
 12. *Short and Plain Way*, 11-12.
 13. *Copies of two papers*, 1.
 14. *Short and Plain Way*, 50. Huddleston links his argument, too, with the "perpetual succession" of bishops; see p. 48. This was a common point in apologetics, but Charles II was not much for reading, and it is important to know that he read this book.
 15. *Exomologesis*, 305, 309.
 16. James MacPherson, *Original Papers, Containing the Secret History of Great Britain . . . to Which Are Prefixed Extracts from the Life of James II as Written by Himself*, 2 vols, (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1775), 17-18, 40. Some of these extracts from James II's original memoirs, which were lost in the French Revolution, were made by the antiquarian Thomas Carte.
 17. MacPherson, 48-50, 68.
 18. MacPherson, 50.
 19. John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London: Phoenix Press, 1972), 16.
 20. "Declaration of Indulgence, 15 March 1672," in J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution*, 382-83. This edict allowed "the recusants of the Roman Catholic religion" merely a "share in the common exemption from the execution of the penal laws" and "the exercise of their worship in their private houses only."
 21. Kenyon, *Stuart Constitution*, 385-86.
 22. *Memoirs*, 96. The "discarded minister" was Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, soon to be the founder and leader of the Whig Party.
 23. Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, 189.
 25. "James II's account of Charles's death, told to the Sisters of the Monastery of Chaillot, on September 10, 1692," *Stuart Papers Relating Chiefly to Queen Mary of Modena and the Exiled Court of King James II*, 2 vols. (London: Roxburghe Club, 1889), 258.
 26. James II, "Account of the Death of Charles II," in *Historical Manuscripts Commission: Calendar of Stuart Papers . . . at Windsor Castle*. [HMC], vol 1. (London: Mackie and Co., 1902), 3-4. There are two versions, and I cite from each.
 27. John Huddleston, "A Brief Account of Particulars occurring at the happy death of our late Sovereign . . . Charles II in regard to Religion, faithfully related by his then Assistant," in an appendix to Richard Huddleston, *A Short and Plain Way*, 84-87.
 28. *Memoirs*, 90.
 29. James II, "Account of the Death of Charles II," *HMC*, 3.
 30. Letter of February 21, 1652, among Woodhead's manuscript letters at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds; also, at the same location, Francis Nicolson's manuscript "A Few Particulars relating to Mr. Woodhead's Life an Works," unpaginated. Nicolson adds, that Woodhead's conversion began "from the sanctity of an Archbishop of Milan

[Borromeo].”

31. Nicolson, “A Few Particulars.”
32. Francis Brettonneau, S. J., *An Abridgment of the Life of James II, extracted from an English Manuscript of the Rev. Father Francis Sanders SJ and Confessor to James II* (London: R. Wilson, 1704), 8.
33. C. P. Daly, *The Settlement of Jews in North America*, ed. M. J. Kohler (New York, 1893), 24-27, cited in John H. Kennedy, O. M. I., *Thomas Dongan, Second Earl of Limerick, Governor of New York* (Albany, 1889), 87.
34. John Romeyn Brodhead, Esq., *History of the State of New York*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1871), 2:72, 262, 490. This history is based on the documents Brodhead was authorized to collect and print, by order of the New York State Legislature, on May 2, 1839 See *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York; Procured in Holland, England and France* 15 vols. (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1853). This book contains James’s 1682 commission to his governor (3:328); his 1683 instructions (4:331-34), and his 1686 instructions (4:369-75).
35. MacPherson, *Original Papers*, 51; Ailesbury, *Memoirs*, 103.
36. MacPherson, 52, 81.
37. Francis Brettonneau, S. J., *An Abridgment of the Life of James II, extracted from an English Manuscript of the Rev. Father Francis Sanders SJ and Confessor to James II* (London: R. Wilson, 1704), 8-11..
38. William Stanley, “Letter from The Hague, January 24/ February 3, 1687/88” to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bodleian Library, Tanner MSS 29, 130.
39. *Exomologesis*, 457, 434, 443, 467.
40. A manuscript letter to Dr. Wilby, dated October 13, among his letters at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds.
41. MacPherson, 69; Brettonneau, 15.
42. Samuel Parker *Reasons for Abrogating the Test Imposed upon All Members of Parliament anno 1678 Oct. 30* (London: Henry Bonwicke, 1688), 64-70.
43. MacPherson, 68.
44. Brettonneau, 18.
45. David Hume, *The History of England* 8 vols. (London, 1822), 8:67.
46. Dalrymple, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pt. 1, Appendix to bk. 5, 109; vol. 3, pt. 2, bk. 5, 10.
47. Hume, 8:262.
48. “Some Account of the Revolution,” *the Works of John Sheffield, earl of Mulgrave, Marquis of Normanby, and Duke of Buckingham*, edited by Alexander Pope, 2 vols. (London: J. Barber, 1723), 1:73-75.
49. Dalrymple, *Memoirs*, vol.3, pt. 3, bk. 4, 119.
50. Brettonneau, 158, 163, 40.
51. Brettonneau, 41-43, 62.
52. Michel Toussaint Chrétien Duplessis, *Histoire de Jacques II. Roi de la Grande Bretagne* (Bruxelles, 1740), 321-23.
53. Woodhead, *Considerations on the Council of Trent* (1671), 248.

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