

Unity, Diversity, and Order: National Religion in Berkeley's Works 1735-1752¹

Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska

Abstract: The article discusses Berkeley's idea of how to promote the common good in Ireland in the first half of the 18th century when society differed in respect to religion, political obedience, language, and culture. More specifically, since religion was still the core of Berkeley's vision of human well-being, the article contains a reconstruction of his views on religious diversity and tolerance, as they were discussed in his works published between the 1730s and 1750s, when he was Bishop in Cloyne and published his most practical works. They will be analyzed in order to present the meaning of an evolution in his attitude towards Irish Catholics during the period. My particular aim is to show that the 'Good Bishop' sincerely aimed at the conversion of their hearts to the 'true religion', despite his officially moderate attitude towards them after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745.

“the belief of a God, of a future state, and of moral duties
are the only wise, right, and genuine principles of human conduct,
in case they have a necessary connection with the well-being of mankind.”

George Berkeley, *Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher*, 1732

According to Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (first ed. 1728), practical philosophy in the early decades of the 18th century was understood to be “properly *ethicks* alone, or the method of leading a virtuous and happy life.”² As James Harris notes, this involved learning about “the duties we owe to God, to others, and to ourselves.”³ This definition fits Berkeley's activity in Ireland in the years between 1735 and 1752. For in a letter to Samuel Johnson of 12 March 1735/36 he writes:

I can only say that Ireland contains ten times more objects of charity, whether we consider the souls or bodies of men, than are to be met with in New England. And indeed, there is so much to be done (and so few that care to do it) here at home, that there can be no expectation from hence.⁴

The situation in Ireland, which was plagued by poverty, political dependence on Great Britain, religious feuds and severe weather conditions, could not have provided a better

¹ This article is a revision of a paper presented under the same title at the International Berkeley Society conference on April 4-7, 2016 at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. I express my gratitude to the participants of the conference for their helpful questions and comments, as well as the authors of the blind reviews of the paper for their insightful remarks. The research was financed by the National Science Centre (NCN) in Poland as part of post-doctoral grant DEC-2014/12/S/HS1/00153.

² Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London: J. and J. Knapton [and 18 others], 1728), 2: 803. Cited in the “Introduction” of *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James. A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

³ Harris, “Introduction,” 7.

⁴ Berkeley to Johnson, 12 March 1735/36 in *The Correspondence of George Berkeley*, ed. Mark Hight (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 392. Hereafter: C.

opportunity for Berkeley to fulfill that task. In the Advertisement to *The Querist* (1750s) the philosopher expressly considered himself both a clergyman and a member of the commonwealth whose employment should be care for human happiness, which, as he put it, “supposed to consist in the goods of mind, body and fortune.”⁵ His service as a bishop in Cloyne gave him an opportunity to experience the challenges of religious diversity in the context of care for the common good that he had postulated since *Passive Obedience* (1712).⁶ He was engaged not only in discussions about the welfare of Ireland (which were common among the members of Dublin Society at the time)⁷ but also in practical projects like curing his parishioners with the help of tar-water,⁸ setting-up a spinning-school for children in Cloyne where children were paid money for their work, aiming at building a workhouse for ‘sturdy vagrants’ and employing them to raise hemp.⁹ Joseph Johnston concludes that, “Whether he was studying tar-water or industrial relations or monetary phenomena, Berkeley was always the philosopher as well as the practical philanthropist.”¹⁰ The philosopher’s fundamental concern was instructing people how to be good both as human beings and as subjects. He combined these two aspects in religion, as his main concern was bringing human beings to the knowledge of God and Christ.¹¹ In that way Berkeley was an exemplary figure of the Irish Enlightenment, the leitmotif of which (as Michael Brown claims) was “a concern for the issue of confession, by which is meant the public articulation of faith” (Brown 11) as well as politeness and improvement, especially regarding midcentury Ireland (Brown 170).

This article will discuss Berkeley’s practical philosophy as it was connected with his engagement in bringing well-being to Ireland. In particular, my aim is to present a reconstruction of his views on religion, religious diversity, and tolerance at the time and to explain the meaning of an evolution in his attitude towards Irish Catholics as it appears in his works published in the 1730s and 1750’s. I will argue that although he notably did not use the term “Papists”¹² in his late works, and recognized the Catholic majority as his

⁵ Berkeley, “Advertisement by the Author,” in *The Querist* ed. Bertil Belfrage (manuscript given by the courtesy of the editor): 3.

⁶ When he was in America and later waiting in London for the position in Cloyne, Berkeley was made aware of the situation regarding religious diversity in Ireland in correspondence with Thomas Prior. See his letters to Prior from 7 May 1739 to 19 January 1733/4, C 323–61.

⁷ For further information, see Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 161-209.

⁸ Actually, most were Roman Catholic. In 1744 Berkeley tells Isaac Gervais, Dean of Tuam, that for every Protestant there were eight Catholics. See letter to Gervais, 16 March 1744, C 466.

⁹ See Letter to Thomas Prior, 5 March 1737, in C 398. For a detailed description, see A. A. Luce, *The Life of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992), 189ff.

¹⁰ Joseph Johnston, *Bishop Berkeley’s Querist in Historical Perspective* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press/West Tempest, 1970), 5.

¹¹ See *Anniversary Sermon Before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* (1732) in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* [W], 9 vols., eds. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948-57), 7: 115. Further references to the sermon will be given according to the Luce and Jessop edition as AS, W7, page number. Cf. Crito’s remarks about the belief in future state as a motivation for public service: Alc, III, 16, in W3: 138.

¹² In Berkeley’s definition a Papist was most of all a Roman Catholic who believed in the Pope’s authority. See his letter to John James (LJ), 7 June 1741, C 422-433. In Luce’s *Life* (178), the letter is titled: “On the Roman Controversy to Sir John James, Bart.” Luce claims the letter (which might well

fellow–subjects¹³—most probably because they demonstrated no obedience to the Pope as a foreign power in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745¹⁴—he still did not approve of their religion,¹⁵ and he suggested that they adopt the true (or at least a better) religion.¹⁶ Berkeley was critical of the Catholic subjection to a Pope and their subjectivity to passions [cf. PVC, W7: 162], as well as of their spiritual blindness and belief in superstition. [cf. C 484; PCH, W7: 166] Thus, the change in his attitude to the Catholic majority will be shown to have been only apparent, in contrast to the views of Ellen Leyburn who suggests that it was profound,¹⁷ or Scott Breuninger who claims that Berkeley had become increasingly moderate toward Catholics.¹⁸

The subsequent parts of the article will be devoted to the discussion of the following problems: (i) the role Berkeley assigned to religion in general in a well-governed state and private lives of particular human beings, (ii) his understanding of the established religion and problems resulting from its introduction in the state, and (iii) his attitude to individuals' faith. This analysis will be conducted with reference to the works that Berkeley wrote after his arrival to Ireland in 1735: *The Querist* (editions of the 1730s and 1750s),¹⁹ and *A Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority* (1738).²⁰ Additionally, I will refer to the manuscript work *Primary Visitation Charge*

be a draft) to be the only text in which the problem of “religious issues permanently dividing Protestant from Roman Catholic” is systematically treated. Berkeley discusses the problem earlier in his *Anniversary Sermon*.

¹³ See Berkeley's letter to the Roman Catholics of the Diocese of Cloyne and *A Word to the Wise*, §1. Further references to the two letters written on the occasion of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 will be listed as Berkeley's letter to His Clergy and letter to Roman Catholics, both 15-19 October 1745, C 483, 484. Further references to *A Word to the Wise, or an Exhortation to Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland* will be given according to the latest Manuscript of Bertil Belfrage's critical edition in the following form: WW, paragraph number.

¹⁴ Cf. Patrick Kelly, “Berkeley's *Querist*: ‘Hints ... What Is to Be Done in this Critical State of Our Affairs’ or Proposals for a Hyperborean Eutopia?” in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Richard Brook and Bertil Belfrage (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 208.

¹⁵ Berkeley links popery with slavery in *Alciphron* [cf. Alc Dial. ii, 26, in W3, 110]. Also, in the *Anniversary Sermon* (published both in 1732 and 1752), he speaks in the same breath about popery and infidelity as potential results of a religion in the state of decline. See AS, W7: 117.

¹⁶ Here Berkeley is referring to the Anglican religion. See George Berkeley, *Primary Visitation Charge* [PVC] in W7, 166; and letters to Johnson 31 May 1733 and 11 June 1735, C 352, 385.

¹⁷ Ellen D. Leyburn speaks of a profound change in Berkeley's attitude [“Bishop Berkeley: *The Querist*,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 44 (1937), 83. She adds (87) that as for proselytizing Catholics, all of Berkeley's more violent queries subsequently disappear.

¹⁸ Breuninger speaks of Berkeley's adoption of an increasingly moderate position vis-à-vis Irish Catholics after 1745 and claims that as bishop of Cloyne, Berkeley believed that Catholics needed a regeneration of habits, not a change of confession. See Scott Breuninger, *Recovering Bishop Berkeley. Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 154, 157.

¹⁹ All quotations from *The Querist* are from Bertil Belfrage's newly prepared, critical edition of Berkeley's works, the manuscript of which he was kind to share with me; for that I am very grateful. References will be to Belfrage's edition of the *Works*.

²⁰ References to *A Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority* will be given in the form [D, paragraph number, page number] according to the manuscript of Belfrage's critical edition.

(1735), *A Word to the Wise, or an Exhortation to Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland* (1749), Berkeley's correspondence from the quoted period, for example, *A letter to Sir John James, Bart. On the Roman Controversy* (1741),²¹ and two letters written on the occasion of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745—the first addressed to Berkeley's Clergy and the second to Roman Catholics of the Diocese of Cloyne (1745).²²

1. Religion as a Foundation of the State

Without doubt, considerations of religion and God and their fundamental role in the life of human beings were central in Berkeley's works, from his early sermons (especially *On the Will of God*) to the final editions of *Siris*. The most informative of his works from the years when he served as a bishop of Cloyne (1735-1752) is *A Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority*, where his vision of a role of religion in the state and in the lives of its members may be found. It was first published in 1738 in answer to the appearance of a society of freethinkers called Blasters who were active then in Dublin.²³ Luce notes in his biography of Berkeley that, "This tract is a fine piece of writing; it illustrates the wide sweep of Berkeley's thought, the incisiveness of his language, and (though it was published anonymously) the commanding position in Irish life he had now reached" (*Life* 177).

As Berkeley states at the beginning of the *Discourse*, every civil constitution needs to be supported by a system of salutary notions (also called prejudices), as it helps to keep order both in the life and actions of human beings [D 7, 3] and so makes the very being of a state possible [D 8, 3]. Berkeley describes several rules which are indispensable for living in a society, such as keeping promises, loving neighbors as ourselves, honoring superiors, believing in God's watchful eye, and awareness that being guilty of falsehood or injustice means hurting oneself more than others [D 12, 4]. The last two indicate that the flourishing of a state means not only temporal welfare for the Bishop but also, and more importantly, the appropriate moral condition of its members, based on Modesty, Decency, Justice, and Charity which prevent us from being monsters [D 12, 4].

There are two sources of principles that serve as the foundations of a thriving and flourishing state for Berkeley: human and divine, the law and the gospel [D 17, 6]. As the philosopher claims in paragraph 13, morality that is based on a foundation of human science is not enough: "*you shall find all Men full of Opinions, but Knowledge only in a few*" [D 13, 5]. Opinions or prejudices are true if there are reasons for them,²⁴ and that is

²¹ Cf. note 12.

²² Whenever justified, I will also refer to *Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher* (1732), written by Berkeley between 1729 and 1731 and published again in 1752. A detailed comparison of this work with others written by Berkeley as Bishop of Cloyne goes beyond the scope of this article.

²³ Berkeley's work was first published in 1738. Bertil Belfrage notices in his new critical edition of the work that it appeared seven times more afterwards: 5 more editions were published in 1738 and two in 1752. See: Bertil Belfrage, "Introduction," in George Berkeley, *A Discourse [Addressed to Magistrates], etc.*, ed. Bertil Belfrage (Manuscript given by the courtesy of the author): 1-2.

²⁴ They do not necessarily have to be understood by human beings. Some people cannot use their own reason, think or examine for themselves. See D 8, 3.

the fundamental characteristic of revealed religion in his view. As he notes, “Nothing can add more Strength to a good and righteous Government, than Religion” [D 22, 7]; and he adds that “Obedience to all civil Power is rooted in the religious Fear of God: It is propagated, preserved, and nourished by Religion” [D 25, 8].

In Berkeley’s vision, people are best fit for society when they follow religious principles [D 29, 9], because their actions are motivated by fear and religious principles, which he claims, “have the most Influence, they are the strongest Curb from Vice, and the most effectual Spur to worthy Conduct” [D 21, 7]. Religion regulates human actions on the basis of the stick and carrot approach, which he considered to be most effective [D, 22, 7]. Referring to the legal tradition of Ancient Rome via Machiavelli, he stresses the superiority of an oath over the law: “Romans were more afraid to break an Oath, than to transgress the Laws; and that those Things which even the Love of their Country and Constitution could not bring them to, they were brought to through a Sense of Religion” [D 42, 13]. Following that, the best restraints of human actions are the fear of God and hope of a future life [D 25, 8]. “A religious Awe and Fear of God . . . are the Centre that unites, and the Cement that connects all humane Society” [D 60, 18]. That is why members of the State must acknowledge the existence of God and Providence as the foundations of the State [D 37, 12]. Indeed, Berkeley considers religion to be a source of the only right principles for appropriately instructing human activity in the world. Supported by some examples of ancient and modern states [D 37-45], he considers it to be “the Centre which unites, and the Cement which connects the several Parts or Members of the political Body” [D 29, 9].

The bishop’s considerations upon religion and its treatment as a fundament of a flourishing state presented in the *Discourse* are a continuation of his analyses earlier included in the dialogues of *Alciphron*²⁵ which he wrote before coming to Cloyne. There, in the mouth of Crito, Berkeley claimed that “precepts and oracles from heaven are incomparably better suited to popular improvement and the good of society than the reasonings of philosophers.”²⁶ More importantly, he argued that the only established religion was Christianity “which includes whatever is excellent in the natural, and which is the only means of making those precepts, duties, and notions, so called become revered throughout the world.”²⁷ He concluded that unless an instance of a people who prospered without some religion or a better religion than Christianity could be shown, there was no argument for discrediting its usefulness in bringing about the well-being of a society [cf. Alc VII, 25, in W3, 322-323].

2. Established Religion and the Question of Tolerance

So how did Berkeley apply the above remarks into his consideration upon religious diversity in Ireland? When Berkeley stressed the necessity of a religion in a state and enumerated its benefits, he meant a national (i.e. established) religion. In the 1730s he believed that it was important for one national religion to be established in a state [Cf. D,

²⁵ Berkeley himself mentions the fact in a footnote to para. 27 of the *Discourse*.

²⁶ Alc V, 9, in W3, 182-183.

²⁷ Alc V, 26, in W3, 205.

36: 12]. That involves facing the problems of (i) a justification of a choice of one religion, especially in a situation when members of the state of Ireland differed in respect of the religions they followed—where the majority was Catholic and the ruling minority was Protestant—and (ii) a formulation of rules of tolerance towards other denominations.

The two issues had already been considered in the British tradition in the 17th century, most famously by Locke in *A Letter concerning Toleration* (1685, published 1689).²⁸ There the English philosopher clearly separated civil and religious spheres of human life and claimed that the business of civil government needs to be distinguished from that of religion. He argued:

The Commonwealth seems to me to be a Society of Men constituted *only* [emphasis mine] for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own *Civil Interests*. *Civil Interests* I call Life, Liberty, Health, and Indolency of Body; and the Possession of outward things, such as Money, Lands, Houses, Furniture, and the like. [LcT 38]

Here Locke added that, “The care of Souls cannot belong to the Civil Magistrate, because his Power consists only in outward force: But true and saving Religion consists in the inward perswasion of the Mind; without which nothing can be acceptable to God” [LcT 39]. While the commonwealth was supposed to be focused on the temporal welfare of human beings, for Locke the aim of a religious society was thought to be helping its members acquire eternal life through public worship of God [LcT 42]. In his view affiliation to the latter should not have an influence upon one’s civil life [LcT 43]; and according to Jeremy Waldron, “Locke was very concerned by the fact that if a magistrate or a ruler were to require certain religious beliefs or practices of us, there would be no guarantee that the religion he favored would be correct.”²⁹ Such a view however, did not mean that Locke had to exclude care for religion from a magistrate’s responsibilities, as long as the practical (i.e. moral) commitments of religion are distinguished from speculative articles of faith. The latter were connected with the salvation of souls, and as such they were thought by him not to “be imposed on any church by the law of the land” [LcT 56]. On the other hand, the former regarded moral actions in the temporal life of humans on Earth and were the concern of civil government and individual conscience [LcT 58].

From Berkeley’s perspective, the issue of established vs. private religion differs from the one presented by Locke.³⁰ His main concern, as he addressed magistrates and people in authority, was to remind them of the necessity of considering the religious beliefs of their

²⁸ John Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration*, in John Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration and Other Writings*, ed. Mark Goldie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), cited as LcT page number.

²⁹ See: Jeremy Waldron, “Locke: toleration and the rationality of persecution,” in *Justifying Toleration Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 70.

³⁰ Of course, my aim here is not to compare Berkeley’s ideas on tolerance with ones presented by his contemporaries.

subjects, a position with which Locke would nevertheless have agreed. The Bishop claimed that:

For, although it be admitted, that the Magistrate's peculiar Object, is the temporal Welfare of the State; yet, this will by no Means exclude a proper Care about the prevailing Notions and Opinions of Religion, which influence the Lives and Actions of Men, and have therefore a mighty Effect on the Public. [D 2, 1]

The ability of magistrates to serve as role models was of great importance for Berkeley in showing how religion makes a state successful. In para. 66, for example, he claims: "It is not so much the Execution of the Laws, as the Countenance of those in Authority, that is wanting to the Maintenance of Religion" [D 66, 20]. Indeed, religion in general (specifically Christian religion) needs to be protected by human government [D 34, 11], since nothing "can add more Strength to a good and righteous Government" [D 22, 7]. It needs to be stressed, however, that Berkeley differentiates between respecting the religious principles of human beings and dictating to them what to believe on the basis of a particular private judgment. He observes that "even they who think they have such Reason, have nevertheless no Right of dictating to others," adding in a footnote in the second edition that, "Though a Man's private Judgment be a Rule to himself, it will not thence follow, that he hath any right to set it up for a Rule to others" [D 23, 7]. Legal constitutions are made sacred, he suggests, not because of a private order, but by a commission from Heaven; it is religion which makes it such by "commanding our Submission thereto" [D 24, 8].

In light of such remarks, Berkeley (like Locke) seems to have rejected the idea of *cuius regio eius religio* and supported freedom of thought as "a Quality inherent in the very Nature of a thinking Being" [D 53, 14]. However, he differentiated such freedom from "boundless Freedom of Speech, an open Contempt of Laws, and a [setting up of] private Judgment against public Authority, Things never borne in any well-ordered State; and which make the crying Distemper of our Times" [D 53, 14]. But he did not question the idea of an established religion as such [cf. D 61, 19], and rather considered it to be plain and fundamental [cf. D 46-47, 14]. It seems, then, that for Berkeley, the established religion must have meant human morality³¹ and not one's faith, which actually evokes Locke's position of pushing religion *par excellence* to the sphere of the private life of human beings.

The bishop was clear, then, about the two meanings of religion in paragraph 61 of the *Discourse*, where he differentiates between "religion considered as a System of saving Truths," which was sanctioned in Heaven, and "religion, which was useful and necessary to Society, and as such established by Law; wrought into the very Frame and Principles of Government, and being a Part of the civil Constitution" [D 61, 19]. That explains why the Berkeley of the *Discourse* equates the established religion with Christianity in general but not Protestantism (i.e. the religion of the minority in Ireland at the time).³² Berkeley's

³¹ Nevertheless, for Berkeley, human morality was a prerequisite for one's future situation in eternal life.

³² The same point is made in *Alciphron* and the *Anniversary Sermon*.

main concern, at least as it may be observed in that work, was a preservation of a reverence for the laws which were thought by him to have been the laws of a Christian country [D 61, 19]. Like Locke, he claimed in the *Discourse* that human government was supposed to protect what was primarily the work of God: “the Principles of Piety and Religion, the Things that belong to our Salvation, although originally and primarily the Work of God, yet require the Protection of humane Government, as well as the Furtherance and Aid of all wise and good Men” [D 34: 11]. His main focus was that the right religious prejudices be promoted. Tolerance in the way Locke discussed it in his *Letters* was beyond Berkeley’s interest in the *Discourse*. Still, it was a practical challenge for him, and it was reflected in other works he wrote as Bishop of Cloyne.

Berkeley’s approach to religious diversity, tolerance, and the common good during the time he was the Bishop of Cloyne may be reconstructed on the basis of different editions of *The Querist*, although the issue is not the major focus of his attention there. Indeed, there are only twenty-three queries in the first part of the work that regard the problem directly.³³ What is more, over half of them (thirteen) were removed from the late editions of the work. Although it seems to be of minor importance, the change is quite significant,³⁴ since it reveals his attitude towards compulsion and tolerance. Berkeley’s objective in *The Querist* was care for the common good of Irish society. It is thus important to emphasize how his aims included all inhabitants of Ireland, both “Protestant Gentry and the Bulk of the Natives” [Q 318 (255)]. Accordingly, he claimed that it “would be a poor and ill judg’d Project to attempt to promote the Good of the Community, by invading the Rights of one part thereof, or of one particular order of Men” (Q 334 [520]).

Berkeley’s definition of the good was thus wider than that of the Dublin Society members who generally focused on the economic welfare of the state. For him, the common good included the sphere of our spiritual life, which was strictly connected with the duty of placing them “in the Way that leads to eternal life” [AS, W7: 115], bringing all human beings to the knowledge of God and Christ as revealed by the Gospel.³⁵

Berkeley’s vision of the good of the diversified whole (which Irish society undoubtedly was) differed slightly between the 1730s and 1750s. In the 1730s Berkeley clearly argued for distinguishing between (a) purely religious doctrines and (b) doctrines that affected the state—or as it applied to Catholics, between (a) mere Papists (Catholics by faith alone) and (b) Catholics by institution (Recusants) who obeyed the Pope and not the civil government [Cf. Q 325, 327-329 (1: 295, 297-299), omitted from editions of the 1750s]. In his view, the bishop needs an oath of allegiance only from the latter group, since they

³³ Q 319-341 and Q 343 in Belfrage’s numbering.

³⁴ I further discuss the comparison between the two editions of *The Querist* as regards Berkeley’s views on religion and politics in “Religion and Politics: George Berkeley’s Understanding of Ireland’s Well-being in Early and Late Editions of *The Querist*,” *Ruch Filozoficzny* 7/4 (2015), 113-128.

³⁵ Cf. Berkeley’s *Anniversary Sermon* (W7, 116-17): “every one of us, who hath any Claim to that Title [i.e. a sincere Christian], is indispensably obliged to Duty to God, and in Charity to his Neighbour, to desire and promote, so far as there is Opportunity, the Conversion of Heathens and Infidels, that so they may become Partakers of Life and Immortality.”

had decided not to obey the British King (Q 320, (256)]. As a result, in the 1730s he suggested requiring Irish Catholics to listen to Protestant sermons but did not require that they make a profession of faith or take an active part in worship [Q 324, (1: 294)]. He even considered encouraging them to become such hearers by offering them incentives [Q 326, (1: 296)].

The most important difference in Berkeley's later attitude towards Catholics is that in the 1750s he no longer openly suggested uniting the people of Ireland in the same religion, allegiance and interest [Q 319 (1:289)]. He also no longer referred to Irish Catholics as 'Papists' (an obviously derogatory term). This change in Berkeley's attitude towards Roman Catholics in the later editions of *The Querist* has been interpreted as a sign of the liberality of his later views towards the representatives of the rival religion³⁶ or as proof of "a radical change in spirit, and sometimes even purport" of the late editions (Leyburn 87). But Berkeley's liberalism towards Roman Catholics should not be seen as a shift to a more ecumenical approach. For even though his attitude towards Catholics became less venomous and the 'more violent' queries on proselytizing were subsequently omitted (Leyburn 93), his earlier suggestions of bringing Catholics to the established church [Q 341 (264)] remained in later editions of the work.

Nonetheless, in both early and later editions of *The Querist*, Berkeley consistently was critical of compelling people to a profession of faith.³⁷ He thought it to be "the worst thing in Popery" [Q 323, (1: 293)], and critically presented two examples of Catholic compelling in Query 322 (1: 292) but later omitted in the 1750s. One was the expulsion of the Muslim minority of Moriscos from Catholic Spain in the 17th century; the other, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685. He suggested that in both instances laws of Christianity were transgressed. Moreover, the two incidents were examples of what ruinous effects religious unification has on the economic situation of countries. In the first case, the economic damage mainly affected the Kingdom of Valencia and Aragon where agricultural output dropped and tax collection declined.³⁸ Similarly, depriving French Protestants of all religious and civil liberties caused their

³⁶ Cf. William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 5 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), 1: 301.

³⁷ Similar thoughts were included in the *Primary Visitation Charge*. In this sense, Berkeley was not original in his beliefs. The criticism of compelling Catholics to Protestant religion as ineffective and producing hypocrites rather than sincere converts was already expressed by Berkeley's friend, Anglican clergyman, Edward Synge (1691-1762), later bishop of Elphin in a sermon titled *The case of toleration consider'd with respect both to religion and civil government* in 1725, which was influenced by Locke's *Letter concerning toleration*. Cf. I. McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009), 208-209. However, there is no instance in Berkeley's works where he expressly refers to Synge. As such, the concurrence of their opinions deserves another study.

³⁸ Cf. John Lynch, *Spain under the Habsburgs*, vol. 2 (Oxford, England: Alden Mowbray, 1969), 49, 51.

emigration, which resulted in not only the depopulation but also the pauperization of the country.³⁹

As opposed to openly criticizing someone to compel religious belief (as he had done in *The Querist* of the 1730s), in the 1750s Berkeley focused more on strategies for dealing with religious diversity—particularly regarding his scheme for promoting national prosperity. As Patrick Kelly puts it, “What he now [in *The Querist* of the 1750s] looked to, however, was enlisting middle-class and mercantile Catholic Ireland in the scheme for promoting national prosperity, whereas his previous focus had been on motivating the poorer Catholics” (208). As a result, in the last edition of *The Querist* (1752) we find a suggestion of letting Catholic merchants buy their forfeited lands [cf. Q 343, (265)]. Kelly rightly claims it to be “the most significant addition” to the 1752 edition (208). If we read it as a proposal, the query is a slight to the Penal Laws. A closer look at the justification for the hint in queries 344–346 [266–26] shows that Berkeley’s liberalism, although undoubtedly beneficial for the country’s economy in its intention, could also have been part of a well thought-out strategy for controlling Catholic sympathies toward the foreign power of the Pope and keeping Catholic money in Ireland.⁴⁰ The bishop’s suggestion regarded especially seaport towns like Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford, which were important for Ireland’s trade and inhabited mostly by Catholics. In query 345 [267] he meaningfully asked: “Whether a Merchant cannot more speedily raise a Sum, more easily conceal or transfer his Effects, and engage in any desperate Design with more safety than a landed Man, whose Estate is a Pledge for his Behaviour?”

This same double-intention might also have accompanied Berkeley’s reference to Plato’s *Laws* in the 1750s and the suggestion that the rich should marry the poor to encourage an equal distribution of wealth among people and thus cause the nation to flourish [Q 220, (214)]. Berkeley had already observed some beneficial results of similar intermixing in America where French and Spanish Catholic colonists married Native Americans. He thought that the intermarriages brought “strength, security and increase of their [Catholic] colonies” [AS, W7, 122]. In the Irish context of 1750s, this could refer to marriages either between rich and poor within one religion or between members of different religions, if we remember his picture of poor Catholics and the upper Protestant class.⁴¹

³⁹ Cf. M. Charles Weiss, *History of the French Protestant Refugees from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to Our Own Days*, trans. from French by Henry William Herbert, vol. 1 (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1854).

⁴⁰ It also meshed with the practices of the Dublin Society and Thomas Prior. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

⁴¹ The latter reading of Berkeley has been suggested by Eric Schliesser, and it is based on his reference to the example of mixing Arab and Barb horses [Q 221, (215)]. See Eric Schliesser, “Berkeley’s Racialized Economic Development and Eugenics,” 24 February 2015, *Digressions & Impressions*: <http://digressionsimpressions.typepad.com/digressionsimpressions/2015/02/berkeley-s-racialized-economic-development-and-eugenics.html>. If this interpretation is correct, Berkeley’s proposal would have been revolutionary, since members of the two religious groups were granted permission to marry only by an Act of 1792. See E. Burton, E. D’Alton, and J. Kelley, “Penal Laws,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1911), retrieved March 31, 2016 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11611c.htm>.

Not only does it prove Berkeley's concern for the economic development of Ireland but his hope of converting Catholics though with the help of non-coercive means.

The above remarks concerning double intentions of Berkeley's 'liberal suggestions' in *The Querist* of the 1750s also shed some light on a possible interpretation of Berkeley's letters written on the occasion of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, as well as *A Word to the Wise* (1749), which was appended to *The Querist* in the 1750s. In the letter to his clergy, Berkeley revealed his concerns about the possible ruin of the Protestant clergy in Ireland if power were transferred to a "popish prince."⁴² That may justify his kind tone in the address to Roman Catholics where he stressed the positive side of being governed by the Protestant king and underlined how the change of power would impair their economic situation. Kelly notes that the *Word to the Wise* was "unique in being a call to the Catholic clergy, especially priests in rural parishes, to promote industry among their poorer parishioners and wean them away from idleness" (206). But the Bishop suggested that disputes about faith should not interrupt the duties of civil life [WW 1, 1; 54, 14], and the exhortation received a positive reply from Catholic clergy.⁴³

On the other hand, Kelly suggests that Berkeley's attitude can also be understood as possibly reflecting his "despair over the possibility of motivating the Irish poor to work as much as unwonted religious altruism" (206). Though kind in his tone and aware of the fact that it was not the Catholic religion itself that was responsible for laziness of the Irish [cf. WW 51, 13-14], Berkeley continued his critical attitude towards the supposed Catholic disposition to follow directions of their priests. Nevertheless the influence of the Catholic clergy could have been used to improve the country. As Berkeley comments, "You are known to have great Influence on the Minds of your People, be so good as to use this Influence for their Benefit" [WW 4, 2]. In this way he tried to persuade the clergy that, on the one hand, they should engage in the improvement of Ireland "in Return for the Lenity and Indulgence of the Government" [WW, 41, 11]. On the other hand, he argued that they would only benefit from making their flocks industrious: "it may perhaps be asked, who are to be Gainers? I answer, your Reverences are like to be great Gainers; for every Penny you now gain, you [would] gain a Shilling: you would gain also in your Credit: and your Lives would be more comfortable" [WW, 47, 12]. In the context of his method of conversion (which was based on persuasion and not enforcing beliefs), it seemed to be a rhetorical device by which Berkeley wanted to engage the Catholic clergy in not only a common aim but also, and more importantly, an initial step towards challenging their confession.

It is apparent that problems of morality and controversies regarding faith became less important for Berkeley than those of the economic poverty of Ireland in the 1750s. According to his suggestions from *The Querist* of the 1750s, a wise state cares for the education of its youth (Q 195 [201]), since it generally helps in making good laws (Q 181 [187]) and understanding the real interests of a people (Q 183 [189]). Education was also

⁴² Berkeley to His Clergy, 15–19 Oct 1745, C 483.

⁴³ Cf. *Letter from the Roman Catholic Clergy of the Diocese of Cloyne*, in W 6: 248-49. Tom Jones notes how the Catholic antiquarian Charles O'Connor praised Berkeley's efforts at integrating Catholics and Protestants. Cf. Jones, "George Berkeley's Biography," *Bloomsbury Companion*, 14.

the means for persuading Catholics to convert to Protestantism. In both the 1730s and 1750s,⁴⁴ Berkeley was clearly aware that a conversion of Irish Catholics to Protestantism was only possible with the help of “preaching to them [i.e. the native, Catholic Irish] and instructing them in their own language [i.e. Gaelic]” [Q 337, (260)]. He considered it to be “the most practicable means for converting the natives” [Q 338, (261)].⁴⁵

Some similar suggestions regarding conversion were already included in his *Primary Visitation Charge* of 1735.⁴⁶ There, the bishop openly declared a need for converting people of different communions who were “abounding in numbers, obstinate in their prejudices, backward to acknowledge any merits and ready to remark any defects in those who differ from them” [PVC, W7:161]. He criticized shocking, angering, or shaming Catholics as a wrong way of convincing them to the established religion [PVC, W7: 165]. On the contrary, he claimed that, “We must first win upon their affections, and so having procured a favorable hearing then apply to their reason” [PVC, 7:162]. Rather than compel them to hear sermons, he suggested that it was possible through managing their passions and touching prejudices through free conversations with them: “It is certain that the very same doctrine which a man would never read in a book or hear in a sermon, may sometimes be insinuated in free conversation” [PVC, W7: 164]. Only after they were made sensible of their errors and wrong principles was it possible to “proceed to set the wickedness of their practices and the absurdities of their superstitions in the strongest light and paint them in their true colors” [PVC, W7: 165].

Berkeley also shared a common belief at the time that the conversion of the better sort would facilitate the conversion of the mob, since the mob has “a natural inclination of following their chiefs” [PVC, W7: 163]. As Thomas Power remarks, such a belief referred to the Irish Catholic clergy, whose conversions were of “strategic importance in any attempt to convert the Catholic population as a whole.”⁴⁷ In reality there were nearly 100 cases of such conversion at the time. Less than half (i.e. 17) occurred before 1749 and the rest mainly after mid-century (i.e. after the relaxation of penal laws) (Power 184).

⁴⁴ Kelly seems to claim (208) that queries 337-341 [260-264], in which Berkeley refers to the use of Irish as “the most practicable means for converting the Irish,” were only added in the 1750 *Querist*. The view finds no support either with reference to Belfrage’s or Luce and Jessop’s editions of the work. In the 1730 the queries were numbered: 1:307-1:311 respectively.

⁴⁵ Luce notes in his biography of Berkeley (175) that preaching in Gaelic was of such great importance for Berkeley that “he placed a scheme to that end before the Bishop of London, who approved it in principle, but doubted whether the Roman priests would let their flocks listen to a Protestant service in Irish (9 July 1735).” Jones (14) remarks that turning to Irish as a means for converting Irish Catholics “was part of the ethos at Trinity College in the period immediately prior to Berkeley’s attendance.”

⁴⁶ This was also the basis of his Bermuda Plan.

⁴⁷ Thomas P. Power, “‘A weighty, serious business’: the conversion of Catholic clergy to Anglicanism’,” in *Converts and Conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850*, ed. M. Brown, Ch. I. McGarth, T. P. Power (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 183.

Bu in Berkeley's own 1735 opinion, Protestant preachers in the Irish tongue failed for want of audiences [PVC, W7:166].⁴⁸

3. Individual Faith and Freedom of Conscience

Berkeley was a proud member of the Church of England and a consistent critic of Roman Catholicism in the years of 1735-1752. There are some occasions in his texts that prove his conviction of the superiority of Anglicanism over Catholicism. In *Alciphron* (1732), for example, he openly valued the clergy of the Church of England as lovers of learning and useful knowledge [*Alc*, I, 3], and in the *Anniversary Sermon* (1732), he named Anglicanism a better religion in comparison with Catholicism [*AS*, W 7, 122]. In the *Primary Visitation Charge* (1735), he also termed it the true religion [PVC, W7: 166]. There, he argued that when it comes to the differences between Anglicanism and Catholicism, "we (i.e. Anglicans) innovated nothing, having added only, weeded out and thrown away those superstitions that grew up in the dark and ignorant in the eyes of the Church" [PVC, W7: 163]. Later, in his letter to John James on the Roman Controversy written in 1741, he openly declared that it is "a peculiar blessing to have been educated in the Church of England" [LJ, 432]. Important as it may seem, however, he immediately added the following statement: "My prayer nevertheless and trust in God is, not that I shall live and die in this church, but in the true church" [LJ, 432].

The conception of the true church and true religion seems to be of key importance in understanding Berkeley's vision of the established religion and tolerance. In his letter to James, the bishop was clear that (a) Christ's religion is spiritual and the Christian life supernatural [RC, 424], and (b) "No particular church or congregation of Believers is infallible" since "all mankind is peccable and errable" [LJ, 426]. Thus, the truth of a religion can be understood with Berkeley's distinction between an invisible and a visible church. The former, called universal, is the one of which Christ is the head and members are linked together by faith, hope, and charity [LJ, 424, 426]. It was considered by Berkeley to be militant and triumphant: "the militant dispersed in all parts of Christendom partaking of the same word and sacraments" [LJ, 426]. By contrast, the latter (the visible church) is political, national, established, and it is characterized by its particularity. Berkeley had already noted in the *Anniversary Sermon* that, "Probably there never was, or will be, an established Church in this World, without visible Marks of

⁴⁸ The Irish language was used to convert Catholics to the Established religion in Ireland already in the 17th century. As Taylor Fitzsimon notes, the popularity of appealing to the Irish language depended on historical circumstances: "the 1641 Rising and the events of 1689–91 reinforced resistance to the language, while the relative calm of the 1630s and 1670s encouraged renewed interest in the employment of Irish by the Protestant clergy in their ministry of the word. During the seventeenth century, the publishing history of the Bible in Irish reflected this fluctuating pattern." See B. Taylor Fitzsimon, "Conversion, the Bible and the Irish language: the correspondence of Landy Ranelagh and Bishop Dopping," in *Converts and Conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850*, ed. M. Brown, Ch. I. McGarth, T. P. Power (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 159. See also T. C. Barnard, "Protestants and the Irish Language, c. 1675-1725," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993), 243-72. Although translated in the 16th century by William Daniel, the first New Testament in Irish was published in 1603. William Bedell's work on the Protestant translation of the Old Testament from the 1630s was interrupted by the Irish Rebellion of 1641 and renewed by the effort of Robert Boyle in the mid-1670s. Cf. the *Irish New Testament Project*, retrieved March 31, 2016 from Bible Baptist Church of Ballincollig: http://www.biblebc.com/Irish/IrishBible/odomhnuills_nt.htm.

Humanity upon it,” referring to St. Paul that “ ‘on the Foundation of Jesus Christ, there will be human Superstructures of Hay and Stubble’ (I Cor, 3, 12), things light and trivial, wrong or superstitious, which indeed is a natural Consequence of the Weakness and Ignorance of Men” [AS, W7, 127]. As such, although necessary for the order of the State, the established religion should not pretend to be universal, since “It would be a blunder to say particular universal” [LJ, 426]. Berkeley thought the latter to be the characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church, the truth of which was also wrongly based on the number of its members [LJ, 426]. In his opinion, it is only the universal church that is true, and the truth of Anglicanism could be understood in such a way that as a particular religion it does not pretend to be universal.

Like Locke, then, Berkeley allowed a situation in which people are divided among themselves as members of different visible churches. At the same time, however, he thought it possible that they would also remain loyal to the same monarch—but first and most importantly, to the same Christ [LJ, 427]. In the *Anniversary Sermon* he observed, “The Christian religion was calculated for the Bulk of Mankind, and therefore cannot reasonably be supposed to consist in subtle and nice notions” [AS, W7, 127]. He criticized all the dissensions and controversies that result from making religion a notional thing and measuring its holy mysteries by human reason. Nonetheless, such a position did not undermine his hopes for converting Catholics, which in the proper Christian sense, meant through education and not compulsion. As he tried to convince James, the choice of the established religion was supposed not to be biased by reading some spiritual authors of a certain communion or placing blind trust in the Pope’s authority, but by following the written word of God, the Apostolical traditions, and the internal light of God’s logos. So “light and heat are both found in a religious mind duly disposed. Light in due order goes first. It is dangerous to begin with heat, that is with the affections. . . . [which] should grow from inquiry and deliberation else there is danger of our being superstitious or Enthusiasts” [LJ, 426].

In Query 204 [210] Berkeley inquired, “Whether in any Order a good Building can be made of bad Materials? Or whether any Form of Government can make a happy State out of bad Individuals?” It was human inclination to the following of passions rather than reason, which made people bad for Berkeley. In the *Discourse* (1738) Berkeley pictured humans to be animals that are naturally governed by appetites or passions and, as such, not fit for society. In that vision, however, we are also capable of active reasoning and making our own judgments or passively acquiring knowledge by memorizing according to our abilities.⁴⁹ That could help us bridle our passions, so that living with others could become possible. It is only due to the order among its members [cf. D, 8: 3] that the very being of the state is possible—and that, according to Berkeley, results from the process of civilizing humanity.

So what does he mean by ‘civilizing humanity’? In paragraph 6, Berkeley notices that, “What renders this World habitable are the prevailing Notions of Order, Virtue, [and

⁴⁹ Not everybody is fit for discovering the truth himself: “GOD who knows the Opportunities of every Man, requires Impossibilities from no Man. And where there is a sincere Love of Truth and Virtue, the Grace of God can easily supply the Defect of humane Means” [D, 56: 17].

Duty] and Providence (added from the second Dublin edition 1738 till 1750s)” [D, 6: 2]. Those notions result from education, which he understands as either a process of training human reasoning and making judgments (so that we can form principles or opinions that are suitable for life in a state as they generally move us to act) [D, 11: 4], or providing us with those principles through teaching or inspiration.

Both in the 1730s and 1750s, Berkeley accepted the usefulness of prejudices in tempering human behavior, and he stressed that in order to know how to act, people need to follow rules even if they do not necessarily understand the grounds for them [cf. D 10, 3; e.g. Alc, IV, 23, in W3, 171; Alc VII, 8, 10 in W3, 296, 303]. As in the example that he provided in the *Discourse*, all we needed to know to navigate a ship are proper rules how to do that [cf. D 14: 5] and not necessarily what justifies their appropriateness or how the ship even works. He claimed, “Even so in moral, political, and religious Matters, it is manifest that the Rules and Opinions early imbibed at the first Dawn of Understanding, and without the least Glimpse of Science, may yet produce excellent Effects, and be very useful to the World” [Cf. D, 14: 5]. However, he differentiated between prejudices, on the one hand, and superstitions or errors, on the other. Though both were to be taken upon trust, he accepted the former and thought them to be true and useful, but he despised the latter as being false [cf. D 14-15, 5; Alc VI, 18, in W3, 253]. The distinction helps to understand why Berkeley accepted faith in religion (or religious assent) as such, and at the same time criticized the blindness of it in Catholicism. It was superstition, which he recognized as the main evil of Catholicism, that he wanted to weed out. He argued in the *Primary Visitation Charge* that, “in every Humane Creature there is a ray of common sense, an original light of reason and nature which the worst and most bigoted education, although it may impair it, can never quite extinguish” [PVC, W7: 163]. Thus, he claimed that it was “evidently the duty of the parochial clergy to labor the conversion of those who are infected with Idolatry and Superstition within their several parishes” [PVC, W7: 166].

4. Summing Up

From the 1730s to the 1750s, Berkeley describes the central tension in the relationship between religion and state—especially regarding the temporal order of the state—in terms of intolerance for Roman Catholics who regard their first political allegiance to a foreign power (i.e. the Pope). As such, it is similar to what Locke had expressed earlier in his *Letter concerning Toleration*. There, Locke argued that:

That church can have no right to be tolerated by the Magistrate which is constituted upon such a bottom, that all those who enter into it, do thereby, *ipso facto*, deliver themselves up to the Protection and Service of another Prince. For by this means the Magistrate would give way to the settling of a foreign Jurisdiction in his own Country, and suffer his own People to be listed, as it were, for Soldiers against his own Government. [LcT, 60]

For Berkeley, when he considered human happiness, the care of morality and faith (or to be more precise, the way such care was determined) is equally important with our earthly

welfare. Both morality and faith are thought by the Good Bishop to be the proper care of the state. Irish Catholics proved their loyalty to the Hanoverian monarch when they did not support the Second Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and that may have justified the liberal tone of Berkeley's approach to the majority of the inhabitants of Ireland characteristic of *The Querist* of the 1750s. It does not mean, however, that he no longer required an oath of allegiance from Catholics or that he was not focused on the morality and (more importantly) the salvation of human beings.

Although Berkeley was against compulsion, he believed in educating Catholics, which ultimately was supposed to lead to their conversion of their own will. It is important to stress that his main reason for seeking such conversion was to counter the Catholic belief in tradition and the Pope's authority, rather than to enhance the use of reason or to trust in the word of God as arguments for one's profession of faith. Even though he was a proud member of the Church of Ireland and the Bishop of Cloyne, he did not think about the Anglican Church as the universal one: only the true (invisible) church of Christ is universal. Nevertheless, he seems to have wanted Catholics to go beyond their blind obedience in the authority of the Pope to see that truth. Following that, he hoped that they would make a reasonable choice about their everyday morality and, more importantly, their profession of faith. In doing so, he may have assumed that they would prefer Anglicanism as their natural choice.

As Bishop of Cloyne from the 1730s to the 1750s, Berkeley saw his care for the well-being of the State and the happiness of its members as central in his efforts to remind magistrates and those in authority about their civil and spiritual responsibilities. That concern informed his effort to convert the Roman Catholics of his diocese to the true (i.e. universal) church. I have suggested that that church was not the same as the established Church of England.

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland
martaewa.szymanska@gmail.com