**Why and with what effects did fear of Catholicism's influence increase 1625-88?**

**Introduction**

By 1625 a combination of domestic and foreign developments from the reigns of Elizabeth and James combined to create a widespread intense fear of Catholicism which demanded allegiance to Rome and absolute control of religious life. The period 1625-88 witnessed a growing intensity of anti-catholic sentiment amongst the public and Church of England which intensified when monarchs were suspected of having Catholic sympathy and served to provide opposition to Monarchy throughout the period. It is arguable that anti-Catholicism was in part a significant cause of the civil war and a major cause of the Glorious Revolution.

**1625-49**

During the period there was a growing intensity of anti-Catholicism which became a significant cause of the civil war. Charles's marriage and policies of reforming the church along Armenian lines added fuel to anti-catholic sentiment, who feared the boldness of Catholics at Court and high profile Catholics living in London. Recusancy laws and restrictions on Catholic meetings were only being intermittently enforced throughout the Kingdom despite Charles' Anglicanism. Charles made no attempt to restrict Henrietta Maria and encouraged Laud with appointment and his reforming of the Church of England in the 1630 s. His closeness to Henrietta Maria after Buckingham's death in 1628 reinforced his natural tendency to be reserved and unwilling to explain his actions. In addition his authoritarian behaviour towards Parliament, the crisis over the forced loan and the Petition of Right suggested a desire to replicate the absolutist monarch model practiced in France. To this was added a style of court that elevated the monarchy to a semi religious mystic immortalized in Rubens ceilings, placing the monarchy at the shoulder of God. In 1633 the pomp and ceremony involved in his confirmation of the Scottish crown left the Scottish nobility and Parliament bemused. By the mid 1630's high-profile members of the Privy Council Windebank and Cottington had Catholic wives, courtiers and the King's children worshipped in the Queen's Chapel and the King's closest companion was the papal ambassador George Con.

Puritans were harassed in the 1630s whilst the Catholics will left largely undisturbed. The Soap monopoly was owned by Catholic courtiers, whilst the regional gentry and nobility were ordered to spend time in their localities and away from London. Those who protested were silenced and subjected to brutal punishments by bishops and privy councillors who staffed the Prerogative Courts and the Star Chamber which acted specifically in the king's name. Many loyal Anglicans and Puritans became deeply concerned at the direction of policy and practice of the King, but this unity of opposition quickly disappeared when there was a need to agree on the structures to replace personal rule in 1642. Charles was therefore still able to rally significant support against what was for him the emerging Great Rebellion. In England Catholics were a loyal minority and in both Ireland and western Scotland there were sizeable Catholic armies who supported the king in the civil war. All this was to come at a cost of uniting parliamentary puritan opposition to the King, particularly after the Irish Rebellion of 1641 and the plan to use Irish troops after Naseby in 1645..The period ended with the complete suppression of the catholic rebellion in Ireland and the execution of the King suspected of having sympathy toward catholics.

**1640-60**

The 1640 was the key decade for the development of the tolerationists grounded In radical puritanism. however many were concerned not to extend toleration to Catholicism. in the long Parliament a law of 1643 required all Catholics over the age of 21 to swear an oath of abjuration Denying basic beliefs. failure to do so resulted in estate being confiscated. the toleration act of 1650 offered by the rump removed the requirement to attend Anglican church but excluded Catholics from practicing their own face. the oath of abjuration was reissued with stricter terms in 1656 including closing down of Catholic chapels in foreign embassies. In 1654 Cromwell reasserted the anti-catholic laws enacted under Elizabeth and James. However Cromwell's anti-catholicism was contradictory and sometimes audiences were given and laws enforced only intermittently. Persecution of Catholicism was however clearly widespread 1646-67, but the problem of Catholic influence was not the main focus of the political battles or religious tensions. As long as they remained discreet they could practice their religion but if they were considered a threat they were repressed by the authorities will subdued like the Irish in 1649.

**1660-88**

The restoration of Charles in England gave the Catholics a measure of safety. The restored Parliament in Scotland dominated by Noble's was also primarily concerned with restricting the power of the Kirk and suppressing dissenters, the Church of Ireland was restored leading to persecution of both Catholics and dissenters. Nevertheless there were signs of renewed concern at a growing threat of catholic influence, notably in the perceptions of wars against the Dutch, the Great Fire of London and the influence at Charles's Court and papists within it. Furthermore the groin ascendancy of Catholic France in Europe also provoked concern of an external threat. this was further afield by the appointment of Clifford and Arlington as courtiers in 1669, the signing of the Treaty of Dover with France in 1670 and Charles taking a new French mistress Louise de la Valliere. This caused the Great concern. a secret clause in the Treaty showed that Charles had promised to announce his conversion to Catholicism as soon as it was safe and appropriate to do so although this was not known at the time.

A declaration of indulgence in 1672 permitted Catholics to worship in private and it produced a hostile reaction in parliament and the Church of England who were concerned about Parliament's authority in religious affairs along with the suspicions over the true religion of Charles and James. Charles subsequently withdrew the indulgence in 1673 choosing to ally with Anglicanism let he should suffer the similar site to his father. From 1673 Fear of Catholicism and absolutism increased significantly. James married a Catholic and the King's favourite Danby built up control of Parliament using royal patronage and French subsidies. Many in the political nation saw the old equation of popery and arbitrary government and perceived that Anglican Bishops were promoting the persecution of Protestants under the guise of protecting the Church. The emergence of political divisions, Whigs (protestant and parliamentarians) and Torys ( Church and Monarchy) came into being with the latter being tainted by association with Catholicism and absolutism. This was apparent in the hysteria of the popish plot and the exclusion crisis 1678-83 but which Charles was able to outmaneuver his whig opponents after the discovery of the Rye House plot was able to focus public fears on dissent and away from Catholicism. The period 1682-86 was a second Stuart absolutism in which loyalty to the King and church enabled the Triennial Act to be ignored the Corporations to be brought under Tory control and financial Independence of the Crown to be secured through French subsidies.

James II wanted equality for Catholics by using his power as monarch thus raising concerns about Catholic influence. This came at a time of increased fear of Huguenot persecution in france 1685. In 1686 James forbade Bishops from delivering anti-Catholic sermons and he set up a Court of Ecclesiastical Commission to oversee its enforcement and set up a system of permits for dissenters and confirmed the king's right to exempt individuals from the Test and Corporation Acts. He then began to dismiss Anglican advisors and set about a process or repealing the Test and Corporations Acts. A Declaration of Indulgence 1687 permitted catholics to worship. When 7 Bishops were tried and acquitted for petitioning against the ~Order this was seen as a victory for Anglicanism and a plot to replace james was put into action with the support of all those who feared a Catholic succession resulting in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the installment of William III and Mary on the throne.

**Conclusion**

Fears of Catholicism’s influence in government increased during Charles I’s support for the Laudian reforms and his support for his catholic wife Henrietta Maria in the 1630’s and from 1673 onwards with the influence of Catholics in the Courts of Charles II and James II who even went as far as permitting worship for Catholics and considering the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts culminating in the 1680’s. Even in the period 1646-67 when fear of Catholicism influence in government was not so pronounced there was still widespread anti-catholicism and persecution. The effects were to unify the opponents of Catholicism particularly amongst moderate Anglicans, Presbyterians and dissenters and play a significant part in the emergence of the civil war of the 1640’s and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 with far reaching consequences for the legal status of Catholics and the British political system in the period.