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Rebecca C.M. Jones

"The Church in England and the Effect of the French Revolution upon it, 1789-1830" M. A. in Theology. 1987.

The aim of this thesis is to make clear the effect of the French Revolution on Christianity in England. The principal religious bodies studied in this thesis are: the Established Church; the Anglican Evangelicals; the Methodists; the Nonconformists; and the English and Irish Catholics. Each chapter describes the political and social background of each denomination before 1790, and reports its reactions to the outbreak of revolution in France. The chapter on the Church in France and reactions in England to the French Revolution describes events during the period from 1790-1830 both in England and France. The chapters following this are mainly concerned with the denominations in England, with the exception of the chapter on the Irish Catholics. Each chapter describes the development of the denomination, its political stance and the repressive or supportive measures undertaken by the government towards it. In the case of the English and Irish Catholics, the French Revolution had direct consequences upon them, in the form of the French émigré clergy and the French invasion of Ireland. Each chapter illustrates the political campaigns of the denomination concerned and how far reaching the effects of the events in France were upon their political aspirations. Nearly all the chapters follow the progress of the denominations until the late 1820s when the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts was passed and the Act for Catholic Emancipation.

"THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND THE EFFECT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION UPON IT, 1789 - 1830"

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M.A. in Theology

University of Durham

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1987

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CONTENTS

Page

Introduction 1

Chapter 1
The Church in France during the Revolution and the Reactions to it in England during 1789 - 1801 8

Chapter 2
The Church of England 1790 - 1830 63

Chapter 3
The Evangelicals 1790 - 1830 91

Chapter 4
Methodism from 1790 - 1830 112

Chapter 5
The Protestant Dissenters 137

Chapter 6
The English Catholic Church and the French Émigrés during the years 1790 - 1829 169

Chapter 7
The Irish Catholics 1790 - 1829 199

Bibliography 236

ILLUSTRATIONS

		Page
Plate 47	'The Zenith of French Glory'	80
Plate 65	'Promis'd Horrors of the French Invasion'	82

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INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution and its impact on England in the early nineteenth century have been topics of perennial historical interest, as has the relationship between the French Revolution and the history of Christianity in England. The aim of this thesis is to make clear the effect of the French Revolution on the major denominations which constituted the Church in England, and to discover how these groups withstood the pressures of government upon them. The principal religious bodies included in this thesis are: the Established Church and especially the High Church tradition within it; the Anglican Evangelicals; the Methodists; the Nonconformists; and the English and Irish Catholics. Each chapter describes the political and social background of each denomination before 1790, and reports its reactions to the outbreak of revolution in France. In each case where there was persecution or support for the denomination, there is an attempt to show how this obstructed or quickened the growth of the denomination concerned. Primarily, however, the thesis seeks to define how far the government's reactions to the French Revolution blighted hopes for a reform of State and Church, thus leaving such reforms until the late 1820's.

The political campaigns of the Dissenters, both Protestant and Catholic, have formed a great part of the argument, as they bore the brunt of the increasingly conservative attitude of the Established Church and Government towards all religious

and political reform following the French Revolution. David Hempton in his work Methodism and Politics in British Society[1] points out that it was not from the rising political power of the radical Nonconformists like Price and Priestley that the Church of England was threatened, but from the itinerant Evangelizing societies and the Established Church's own inability to adapt to social and religious change. This argument has been followed in the chapters on the Protestant Dissenters and the Methodists. In all of the chapters there has been an attempt to show that the denominations disagreed with one another, and that within each there were factions which varied in composition and attitude according to social status and geographical position. The congregations of the northern towns were quite different from those of rural areas in the south. Again, a great part of the Nation's reaction to the events of the French Revolution influenced the development of the Church in England. Of course the emigration of large numbers of the French clergy and the French invasion of Ireland did have direct implications for the ecclesiastical situation, and these are also described.

The role of religion in the revolutionary period has always been a matter of lively debate. Across much of Europe the Revolution opened up the gulf between reactionary religiosity and radical irreligion, and the religious character of many of the counter-revolutionary movements provoked by

[1]David Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850 (Hutchinson and Co., 1984), p. 57.

the Revolution have been the subject of recent study. All over Europe, in Poland, the Rhineland, Italy and in parts of France, counter-revolutionary groups were fighting for their faith and fatherland.[2] However, in parts of Italy and Ireland, republicanism meant more than faith, or coalesced with it to stoke the revolutionary flame. Yet while many Irish Catholics rose in 1798, the Irish Catholic Church opposed the rising, and a similar counter-revolutionary mentality can be seen among English Catholics as well as French *émigré* clergy exiled by the Revolution. Moreover, in England the Methodist and Evangelical claims to have prevented revolution impressed French historians like Elie Halévy, who was anxious to discover the secret of that political stability and continuity in England which was lacking in modern France. Halévy thought that 'Methodism was the antidote to Jacobinism'.[3] According to Halévy, Methodism had a great influence over other Dissenters, steering them towards

[2]see T.W. Blanning, 'The role of religion in European Counter-Revolution, 1787-1815', in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (eds.), *History, Society and the Churches*: *Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 195-214; Owen Chadwick, *The Popes and European Revolution* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981), pp. 471-481.

[3]E. Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, *6 vols* (Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1964), p. 591.

conservative views, although the majority of Dissenters were politically Whigs. Halévy praised the Evangelical movement for infusing the working classes with a respect for social order and obedience to the instructions of their superiors. Thus Methodists and Nonconformist Sects effectively blocked any revolutionary activity in England.

Indeed the counter-revolutionary check of Methodism is a reason for radical historiographical hostility towards it, in the writings of Socialist historians like the Hammonds and E.P. Thompson.[4] Both the Hammonds and Thompson regard the contribution of religious groups, especially that of the Methodists, as having a repressive effect on the lower classes, thus turning them into ideal workers for the manufacturers, millowners and landlords, and offering one explanation for the lack of revolutionary action in industrial areas. The Hammonds regarded Methodism as a drug stupefying the labouring classes, by helping a worker to escape from the harsh realities of ordinary everyday life and by giving his life an illusory significance and moment. Both Thompson and the Hammonds saw Methodism as a work discipline, weakening the poor from within, thus making the labourer his own slave driver, working for virtue and salvation's sake. Methodism instilled within the worker 'the psychic component of the work discipline of which manufacturers stood most in need'.[5]

[4] J.L. and B. Hammond, The Town Labourer, 1780-1832: The New Civilization... (Longmans, Green, London, 1917).

[5] E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Penguin Books Ltd., 1984), p. 390.

According to Thompson, Methodism was a means of channelling its members' emotions into itinerancy, meetings and good works. However, Thompson's argument that the Evangelical groups dominated the employer-worker relationship is slightly over-emphasised, as both the Evangelicals and Methodists were only a minority religious group in the industrial working class as in the nation as a whole.

The Irish Catholics, on the other hand, were not a minority, but were under the domination of the Protestants in Ireland. The Catholic struggle in England and Ireland is carefully built up in the two chapters on the Catholics to illustrate the set-backs presented to the Catholic campaigns for emancipation through government reaction to the French Revolution. The French émigré clergy who fled to Britain were a great influence upon these campaigns, and gained the sympathy of the nation, which was in turn reflected upon the English Catholics. The turning for both Irish and English Catholics came after the victory of Daniel O'Connell in County Clare who led the Catholics to emancipation. The Catholics and Protestant Dissenters gained a substantial hold upon parliament and were able to weaken the Established Church and Tory monopoly. The Irish Catholics came the closest to revolution of all the Churches, but it was a rebellion doomed to failure only increasing their subservience to the English government through the passage of the Act of Union.

Albeit for a later period, historians like R.F. Wearmouth[6]

[6] Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England 1800-1850 (The Epworth Press, London, 1937).

have tried to show the Methodist contribution to social and political reform. Wearmouth regards Methodism as revivalist and as preaching personal regeneration. He declares that the Methodists wanted the State to advocate reform and did not agree with individuals breaking away from the main Methodist body to form their own movements for reform. Like E.P. Thompson and the Hammonds, Wearmouth regards the Methodists as apolitical and anti-radical, but also producing 'better rebels' in the form of working class leaders. Eric Hobsbawm in his work Primitive Rebels[7] also illustrates the link between the rise of the Nonconformist sects with that of the industrial working class movements. Hobsbawm, like Thompson and the Hammonds, saw the labouring classes using religion as an opiate to escape from the realities of their society to a better world and so considered themselves morally and spiritually superior to the upper ruling classes. Hobsbawm illustrates the links between the Nonconformist sects like the Primitive Methodists and the trade unions; the trade union representative was in some communities often the lay preacher as well. This link can also be seen in the Protestant and Catholic movements in Ireland and is illustrated to a lesser extent in the political campaigning of the Dissenters.

A further view of Methodism is that of Bernard Semmel in his work The Methodist Revolution[8], that the 'Democratic

[7]E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (Manchester University Press, 1963).

[8]Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (Heinemann, London, 1974).

Revolution' in England was in part a Methodist one. This Revolution ran parallel to the one in France, in that both were movements for reform and called for democratic revolution, but through different levels. However, where the French Revolution was violent and materialistic, the Methodist one was spiritual, progressive and liberal in character. Semmel sees the Methodist revolution as countering the violent attraction of the events in France, by excluding the critical appeal and objective of revolution. He points out another similarity to the French Revolution; the slogans of Liberty and Equality were represented in Methodism by the doctrines of freewill and universal salvation. In the chapters to follow these arguments are considered in the light of events which led to the formation of the Evangelizing societies and the need which they answered: to spread the gospel to counteract fears that the dechristianization in France signalled the beginning of the apocalytic events predicted in the Book of Revelation.

Firstly, however, to assess the importance of the French Revolution, it is necessary to understand what led up to the storming of the Bastille on July 14th 1789, its ensuing consequences, and what effect these had on the Gallican Church and parallel events in England, all of which are discussed in Chapter One. The following chapters describe the reactions to and from the main denominations which constitute the Church in England and how these groups were hampered or helped in their political and social development through the French Revolution.

CHAPTER 1.

THE CHURCH IN FRANCE DURING THE REVOLUTION AND THE REACTIONS TO IT IN ENGLAND DURING 1789-1801.

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, ... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.'[1]

[1] Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), p.35.

The Church in France was the oldest of the three estates, and was intertwined with France at every stage and level of life. Roman Catholicism was the official and favoured faith in France; almost every family of any note at all had a relative or friend in the Church. The power of the Church was dependent on the Crown and then on the Pope. According to the Gallican decrees of 1682, adopted by the French Church, the Pope was not infallible without the consent of an ecumenical council to his decrees and had no authority in France without the royal sanction; any papal documents or orders required the Monarch's approval before publication, and Church matters could be judged by no-one outside of France. The Monarch nominated Bishops and Abbots, and also gave the Church protection. The Church controlled the conscience and morals of the people in its hands.[2]

The Church was connected with every aspect of the life of its parishes from birth to death. The parishioners were dependent upon the Church, and never imagined the Church and State as separate institutions, even less the abolition of the Church. The clergy were the medium by which the government conveyed its policies to the nation. The Church looked after

[2] John McManners, French Ecclesiastical Society under the Ancien Régime: A study of Angers in the Eighteenth Century (Manchester University Press, 1960), pp. 208-219, 220-229, 255-276.

charitable organisations, hospital infirmaries and alms houses. Education was also under ecclesiastical authority. Both educational and charitable establishments came, however, under heavy criticism. The charities were ill-organised and haphazard, although this was not true of all of them, because the government was reluctant to close them. Committees were set up to investigate the school system. Girls were generally sent to convent schools, and the boys to _collèges_. If a boy was poor, then he was usually sent to one of the houses of the _Frères de écoles Chrétiennes_, where subjects such as book-keeping, navigation, and other practical skills were taught. There were also choir schools at the Cathedrals and colleges.

The Church, with such an influence over the country, also gained a large revenue from its privileges. In some provinces such as Picardy and Cambrésis, the Church held large estates and took tithe payments from the rest of the rural population. The clergy were not totally exempt from tax, but they did not pay a large amount of money. Part of the Church's income was to be spent on charity, education, and refugees. The parochial _curé_ lived a very different life from the Bishops and _abbés_, most of whom were aristocrats or with aristocratic connections, and with large incomes from the Church's lands. The _curé_ lived a much harder and poorer life, and it was this difference in living standards that led to a division between the higher and lower levels of clergy. The country parson was often as poor as his parishioners if not poorer. He was worried by tithes and patronage from a rich connection without which he would not keep his position. If a _curé_ owned a _bénéfice_, he could exploit his glebelands, and collect the money himself or hire an agent.

When collecting the money himself, a curé would be exempt from the tax of taille, but was then open to arguments and legal problems from his parishioners. If a clergyman used an agent to collect the rents he could be taxed. A curé with no land received a congrue given by the tithe owner. The rate of this congrue was fixed in 1786 as about thirty five pounds a year. Both types of curé had a parsonage, and out of their money paid collections, fees and masses. They were also expected to contribute according to their means a don gratuit to the Church which the Church gave in the place of a compulsory property tax.

The Church in the second half of the eighteenth century was increasingly in the hands of a powerful aristocratic episcopate which gave patronage to those of high birth, and not to the humble curé. In the Church, theological learning was in decline, and social problems were the order of the day; men of learning, administrators and others were ordained, rather than pious, holy men. There was no longer the great preaching tradition of the past, and the hierarchy was moving further and further away from the lower clergy, losing touch with their needs. The lower clergy were envious of the positions of those higher than them and wanted Church reform.

Monastic fervour was also waning in France, and monastic idealism was under anticlerical attack. Many monks declined into indolence and materialism, and were soon regarded by many secular groups as worthless, shut away from the world by force or choice. Monasticism was held by many to be an example of Church waste and extravagance in a bankrupt nation. Half the revenues held by the large Abbeys went to the titular 'Abbé'

who might not even be an ecclesiastic, but a nobleman with no obligations to the Church. Many parochial clergy were well liked and respected, and it was with them that the monks were compared. The 'cahiers', which were the statements of grievances presented by the deputies to the Estates general, often reported requests for better wages for the clergy. Other accounts ask for the abolition of the monasteries and ecclesiastical money given to help the national debt.

Some middle-class reformers still believed in the Church, even though they criticised it. No-one thought of the State without the Church; Voltaire and Raynal, when criticising and denouncing the Church, could not see the nation without its religion. Many idealists had wanted to reform the Church to end fanaticism, intolerance and superstition as well as greater freedom for the Non-Catholics and for Protestants to worship, which was granted in 1787. It was only through reform that the clergy would have a part to play in the new order. The lower clergy would gain much by reform and agreed with the reformation of the Church. The _curé_ lived with his parishioners and witnessed their suffering and needs, and so wanted to help them. Some of the clerical reformers were men of philosophy, forced into the ministry by relatives, like Charles Talleyrand, later an influential figure during the French Revolution, who spent his life between spiritual and worldly matters, and Emanuel Joseph Sièyes, later a minister under the Directory who, although he did not hear confessions or preach sermons, was a priest at heart. These men were not typical of all the ministry in the 1780's and they wanted a reformed Church to be the basis of the New Order.

The greatest outcry against the Church was directed against its wealth, especially at a time when the country was heavily in debt. The Church made grants to the treasury, but the money was not enough to count, and the Church would give no more. On the eve of the Revolution, Cardinal Loménie de Brienne, the first minister of the King, suggested to other churchmen a sum of money that they should contribute, but only a quarter of this sum was given. The Church was determined to retain its privileges, while wanting to maintain its own monopoly over the religious, charitable and educational services it performed inadequately, much to the outrage of reformers.

The French Revolution was not a sudden occurrence; it had built up over many years and drew much of its inspiration from the Age of Reason. Imprinted upon the Revolution are the images of Rousseau and Voltaire, and many of its leaders wanted a society re-made in the image of the *philosophes*' ideals.

The situation in England[3] before the Revolution was similar in some respects to France, and yet very different in others. There were similarities in the order of society, and the landed gentry gained large incomes from estates and industry. Craftsmen were paid by their contracts, and were aided by their families or journeymen; agricultural workers earned only a few pence daily for a long day's labour and in some areas received payment in kind rather than money. New groups were appearing in society whose money was made abroad and who now took their place amongst

[3]Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), pp. 5-77.

the landed gentry. In competition with the gentry there were the new industrial rich in the large northern towns. Also, unlike in France, the lower orders were not deferential and downtrodden by their betters; a man considered himself as good as his peers, if not sometimes better.

Britain was a monarchy, but unlike France it was not an absolute monarchy. The King appointed his ministers, but only if they had a parliamentary majority. Parliament consisted of two houses: the Lords, made up of Bishops and Peers, and the Commons, with members chosen from an electorate of about 250,000. Every county was allowed to elect two representatives and the electors voted for a chosen individual. Many counties and boroughs were in the hands of patrons, and the government was formed by different groups who joined or left as opportunity, interest and ambition dictated. The greatest fear that the politicians and landed gentry held was that of a popular uprising. The aristocracy were rich, indolent and in every establishment non-residency and corruption were rife. Drinking, gambling, licentiousness and crime were all increasing, and radicals and reformers were working to change society throughout Britain.

In France the King was petitioned in 1788 to summon the Estates General, which had last met in 1614, to discuss reform. The ordinary clergy welcomed the prospect of a meeting of the Estates General, believing that it would be beneficial for all. The _curés_ were allowed to vote individually at the Estates General, whereas a chapter could send only one representative for ten canons, and only one monk was sent from each monastic community. The _curés_ were in sympathy with the reform movement,

but they wanted a clerical order. When the Estates General was summoned, Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulons, decided that the third estate, the Commons, ought to be called. The aristocracy was opposed to this because it would mean they would have two estates against them instead of one. In 1789, Necker replaced Brienne as the King's chief minister, and a change occurred. Before it was the Church and the aristocracy against the King, for it was not only the clergy who had complaints, with the arrival of Necker the bourgeoisie turned against the privileged. Demands were made for a juster society, and for equality and liberty. The question of privilege put the Church at the centre of the dispute because of its wealth and exemptions, even though there were divisions within the Church between the rich and poor clergy. When the Estates General opened on 4th May at Versailles these divisions could be clearly seen. The Bishops, dressed in purple and expensive fabrics, were separated from the ordinary clergy, dressed in simple cassocks, by a group of musicians; the third estate dressed in black were at the rear of the procession, with the finely dressed nobles in front.

The first issue of the Estates General was the 'verification of powers'. The clergy and nobles were in deadlock with the Commons over this question, and declared that the distinction of orders was the fundamental law of the monarchy. Not until 13th June did the situation change when three *curés* joined the Commons. In the next few days others followed their example going to the *Salle des menus-plaisirs*. On June 17th the third estate declared itself the 'National Assembly'. The reason

for the _curés_' defection to the Commons could partly have been because of their grievances against the Bishops and their lack of trust in them. The Bishops were not all against the Commons, and often their opinions and those of the radical _curés_ were the same, especially when it came to loyalty to their order, the Church, and their duty to their country. A vote was taken on June 19th to decide the fate of the Church as a separate estate and many of the clergy joined with the third estate to check election returns rather than for a merger. It was after this vote that events passed quickly, and within a week the orders of the clergy and nobility were dissolved. On June 20th the King was defeated by the 'Oath of the Tennis Court' by the National Assembly, and two days later, the Archbishop of Vienne and one hundred and fifty _curés_ joined the third estate in the Church of St. Louis.

The King had now become little more than a figure-head controlled by the revolutionaries. On June 23rd the 'Séance Royale' took place, and the King tried to order the crowds to depart, but they refused. All but eighty of the clergy left, and they were later called out by the Archbishop of Vienne. The next day the Archbishop led the majority of the clergy to join the National Assembly, and on June 27th Louis XVI declared that the first two estates should join the third.

The clergy did not realise what it meant when they joined the third estate. They only wanted reform, and they thought anti-religious propaganda was to be suppressed, with Sundays and Holy days enforced and education under strict ecclesiastical control. Nevertheless, the more liberal clerics had a greater

ambition for the power that others held, and they wanted a place in the politics of the country. The clergy wanted to keep their influence on the nation for the Church; 'the nobility and bourgeoisie', John McManners observes,'hoped to rule in their generation; the clergy had intended to mould society in centuries to come'. The first outbreak of violence occurred shortly after the King's declaration dissolving the two estates, when the Archbishop of Paris was attacked in his coach.

Poverty, with the shortage of provisions both in the town and country, gave the driving edge to the Parisian uprisings and the storming of the Bastille on 14th July 1789. When the crowds attacked the Bastille, the National Guard was set up, and all over France the militia took up arms to defend the towns. Throughout the summer there were many uprisings, as people were afraid of outlaws as well as starvation and aristocratic reprisals. In Bayeux, many peasants, fearful of reprisals, stormed the houses of the nobles such as the Marquis de St. Vast and the Marquis de Hottot who ran for their lives although innocent. Many others were suspected for their rank, and local authorities were powerless to stop the disturbances. The minor officials were too afraid to help, especially after the directeur des aides was chased and stoned from the town, and only the intervention of Le Roy and a senior officer prevented his death.

Many of the villagers fled to the Cathedral at Bayeux where they were fed by the Sisters of Charity. The villagers

sought the help of the Church out of fear of the uprisings, and because of their respect and love of the Bishop. At the same time in Paris the distribution of Church property was being discussed. It was the decision of the Assembly what happened to the Church. The majority of the Assembly were Catholics with a minority of Jansenists and Protestants. They decided that the great wealth of the Church would have to be redistributed to ease the national debt, and the aristocratic monopoly broken. Many issues were at stake: the power which religion had over men, and demands for freedom of conscience and toleration. Finally the Assembly put three articles concerning the freedom of the individual into their Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. There was still much hesitation over total religious freedom, and only a small reference was added - 'Nul ne doit être inquiéte pour se opinions, même religieuses', which was written by a curé.

On 4th August 1789, tithes were abolished, and on the 5th the Assembly decided that compensation would be given to owners of feudal dues. On 11th August, the clergy renounced their tithes, and the Assembly voted that they should continue until another method could be found. By November 2nd, Church property was declared in the hands of the State to be disposed of as it wished.

In December 1789 and January 1790, a measure had been passed called the 'Surveillance of public education and of political and moral teaching', which took away the control and powers of approbation which had belonged to the Church and to the State.

Chaos had followed, as monks and nuns were told to carry on teaching: otherwise half of their pensions would be lost. There were many problems as to who was to teach and under what authority, and what was to happen about the registration of births and marriages. The State declared that marriage was a civil contract, but this caused such an outcry that it was abandoned. When the Constitutional Church was founded, there were other problems and the orthodox Catholics refused to be married by the Constitutional clergy. The Bishop of Longres told his congregation to follow the edict of 1787 and get married like Protestants. Rome approved of this as long as the parties to the marriage did not say that they were non-Catholics. The State Church was starting to diminish, with both the sceptics and orthodox leaving it. It was left to the municipal officials in the Assembly to read the official decrees which had originally been performed by the *curés*, and later in August 1792, monks and nuns were forbidden to teach.

The news of the uprisings in France were greeted with both revulsion and support in England. Some regarded the Revolution favourably, thinking it would weaken France, Britain's old rival. Others thought of the Revolution in terms of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The storming of the Bastille occurred after centenary celebrations of the 1688 Revolution, and correspondence was set up by these clubs with political clubs in France. Many viewed the Revolution with horror, especially as France was seen as the centre of civilization and had dictated the rules of fashion and society. The Revolution seemed more terrible, because France was a neighbour, and the riots and persecution were more immediate than if they

were occurring in a distant country. Some radicals hoped that they were witnessing a new era, and their general feeling was that 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive'[4]. Those who applauded the Revolution saw the downfall of feudal despotism, and hoped that France would establish a democracy with the Constitutional liberty enjoyed in England. Many leading men in society were in sympathy with France: Charles James Fox, the leader of the Whig party, is said to have declared, after the fall of the Bastille 'How much the greatest event that has ever happened in the world and how much the best!' Many other Whigs saw the Revolution as achieving great things for them, just as their fortunes had been made by the 1688 revolution.

The Revolution also gained supporters amongst the British nobility: Lord Lansdowne, Lord Stanhope and the Royal Duke of Sussex praised it. Some non-conformists such as the Baptist Robert Hall were also active supporters of the Revolution. Hall declared that 'the French Revolution' was to him 'the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history'. He also regarded the Revolution as firmly establishing liberty. Joseph Priestley and other such men thought that logic and enlightenment would prevail. They wanted liberty for all, and aimed for toleration, and saw their ideas realised in the French Revolution, as 'a glorious vindication of truth and justice'.

By 1790 in Britain, demands which had been growing for reform were slowly dropped by the Conservatives when it was

[4]Alec R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, 1789 to the present day: The Pelican History of the Church, 6 vols (Penguin Books, 1980), p.33

heard what reform had led to in France. Reform was now seen as a dangerous measure which would lead to anarchy. A new mentality was formed from the nation's fear of a similar revolution in Britain. Gibbon, in 1790, regarded the revolution as a 'total subversion of all rank, order and government'. He advised his friend Lord Sheffield not to support reform saying 'If you admit the smallest and most specious change in our parliamentary system you are lost... the slightest innovation launches you without rudder or compass on a dark and dangerous ocean of theoretical experiment'.[5] All change was bad and the merest mention of democracy was tantamount to treason.

Many opposed to reform rallied around the Church and King. Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, published in 1790, was the focus for many against all change. It was Burke's writings that gave depth to public feeling and fears of revolutionary change. Burke regarded Fox and his followers, who showed sympathy to France, as wishing to abolish the established order of the Church and Constitution. Fox and his companions tried to give voice to their reasons for supporting the Revolution, but their explanations were ignored. It was only Burke that the majority took notice of, and it was he who helped the 'Church in Danger' plea which was used to suppress any reform bill. Fox and the mass of the Whig party, however, stayed firm and continued to press for reform.[6]

[5] G.R. Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 262-266.

[6] J.H. Overton and Rev. F. Relton, The English Church: From the Accession of George I to the end of the Eighteenth Century (Macmillan and Co., 1924), pp. 218-224.

Edmund Burke himself gave valid reasons why the Revolution would not happen in England. 'We are not' he said 'the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvétius has made no progress amongst us, atheists are not our preachers; madmen are not our lawgivers'. He further remarked that 'we fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility'.[7] Burke firmly believed that the nation as a whole loved the Church and Crown. The Church was 'the foundation of their whole constitution, with which, and with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union'. In England the rich paid taxes and finance was sound, more importantly there was no Bastille. The whole situation in England was different, but the nobility and politicians increasingly looked with fear at the events in France.

By May 1790, the regulations for the confiscations of property in France were put into law. The French clergy tried to fight this decision with various arguments; a priest belonging to the land would surely be more in touch with the people than one on a State salary which could be withdrawn if there was a war. The clergy wanted the State to use the sinecures and the surplus from the sale of Church property to pay for a vast state loan. The Assembly hit back with accusations of unpaid taxes, and what the high clergy failed to pay, the lower clergy made up. It was mostly anticlerical feelings that were behind the arguments against the Church.

[7] S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889; A History of the Church of England from William Wilberforce to 'Lux Mundi' (S.P.C.K., 1959), pp. 1-13.

The Crown had no power over these discussions, and before the monarch could unite or divert money from ecclesiastical benefices, the State had already done it, only on a larger scale. The clergy would no longer be an order in the State. The State still feared an aristocratic counter-revolution, and hoped that selling Church lands to those who supported the Revolution and giving the clergy State salaries would prevent an uprising.

The sale of property was to provide the salaries of the clergy and Church expenses through special taxation. Then the State as paymaster could institute any reform it wished. The Assembly drew up a Church Establishment Bill on 12th July 1790, which was in four parts. The first part concerned the rearrangement of diocese and parishes; before there were parishes of all shapes and sizes, now there would be one parish to every six thousand inhabitants. Unwanted churches would be closed, and altar plate given to the others which needed it. The second part dealt with ecclesiastical elections: all clergy and Bishops were to be elected by local election just as departmental and district officials were elected. Every priest was also to take an oath to 'watch over the faithful of the diocese or parish entrusted to him, to be loyal to the nation, the law, and the King and to uphold by every means in his power the Constitutional decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King'. The third part laid down salaries for Bishops and clergy according to the size of their Cathedral lawn. The final part of the bill concerned itself with the control of the Bishops and clergy. Bishops, <u>curés</u> and other

clergy must not be absent from dioceses or parishes for a long period of time without permission, and could not hold secular offices if they interfered with their work. The Departmental authorities were also given the power to punish those who disregarded the regulations. The clergy were under the total control of the State, without the right to oppose or have a say in any changes imposed upon them.

Not all of the clergy were opposed to this bill, and in some parts of the country propaganda was employed to persuade the clergy how rosy the future would be for them. A pamphlet was released in Angers by Father Chatizel who had been elected to the general assembly of clergy of Anjou. This pamphlet described how a _curé_ would earn the substantial income of 2,000 L a year if not more, and might end his years of service as a Canon. The parishes like Angers would have incomes increased by other benefices and would hold annual synods to elect at least half the Bishop's Vicar-generals. _Curés_ would be assessors in Church courts, and vicars would earn 1,000 L a year, and after fifteen years have priority for a vacancy. This was, of course, a pipe dream as future events were about to prove.

The attack on monasticism was started in the previous year, and was more ideological than theological. It was not until January 13th, 1790, that Treilhard's decree became law, stating that existing monastic vows would no longer receive official recognition, and that those who wanted to give up their vocation could. Those monasteries, educational and charitable institutions were allowed to remain for the moment; the contemplative and mendicant orders were suppressed and religious vows forbidden

in the future. The majority of nuns remained in their convents when given the choice to leave, preferring to follow their religious lives, and those who left were the exceptions. Indeed nuns were also allowed to stay in their own convents, and many who wanted to leave were prevented by the devotion of the other nuns. It was also harder for nuns as single independent women to fit back into society. No family would really wish to have their unmarried daughter back, and be required to put up a dowry for her.

Monks did not have such disadvantages as the nuns or such loyalty. Many took the chance of freedom, and young men especially could rejoin society. Some later became soldiers, even terrorists, and those who had been forced into the monastery by their families took their chance and left. The popular notion was of the monk locked up, away from the world leading a celibate life when he should be free and married. The monks who remained wanted to stay, but this request was usually denied, and so they took their pension and left to take up administrative posts or vacancies left by the secular clergy. The pensions given tempted many as they were very reasonable, and so monastic life dwindled down to one or two orders.

The bill of Church Establishment on July 12th 1790 was not popular. The clergy complained of suppression and the threats to the parson's freehold. The redundant parishes were to be abolished rather than wait for death or retirement, and this meant that aged clergy, after so many years, would now have to start a new life. The lower clergy wanted an election by synods, and the system proposed meant that a _curé_ could be

elected without a single cleric having been present at the election. The Assembly replied to the clergy's complaints by pointing out that this was not dissimilar to the past system, in which a Bishop had been appointed through the intervention of nobles, and benefices given by laymen and Jews; thus there was no essential change of principle under the new system if the vicaires had to seek the patronage of rich farmers. This bill was known as the Civil Constitution of the clergy and although most of them disliked it, some tried to make it acceptable. The worst aspect of this was that the Assembly were instituting changes without consulting the clergy. There were two opinions among the canonists: one party believed that the boundaries of dioceses could be changed without the approval of the spiritual powers, while the other faction wanted a new Bishop to receive institution from his Metropolitan, and send a letter to Rome testifying to their unity of faith. The clergy wanted the Assembly to wait before putting through the bill until they received the approval of the Pope for the whole reform. The Assembly did not see that this was needed as after all in the past only the King's approval had been required.

The Assembly, and many of the clergy, believed that the Pope would approve, and so did not fear to consult him. On previous occasions, as when the government had stopped the payments of Annates to Rome in 1788, the Pope had not resisted, and since he had not objected when the Assembly had taken action against the monasteries and Church property, it did not think it would use blackmail to ensure the Pope's approval; a riot had broken out at Avignon, where the peasants wanted to break away from the

Pope and join France. France as yet had not replied to their requests.

In July 1790, the festival of Federation was held and people came together in every town and hamlet to take the oath of loyalty and to sing the Te Deum. The Champs-de-Mars was often used to hold demonstrations and festivals, much to the distaste of the Church; the field was known as the circus field. A Revolutionary hymn, the Ça ira, was composed, with banqueting and dancing in the streets accepted as an observance of the new era of fraternity. Curé Dolivier encouraged the communal meals as an institution of true equality at which rank could be forgotten and places of honour given to the aged.

There were more cases of anticlericalism with the performance of the play 'Charles IX' on the stage by Marie-Joseph Chénier, which showed the clergy blessing the swords of murderers. The hostility of the revolutionaries was illustrated in the theatre with plays ranging from the sinister to the lewd. At Nîmes fighting broke out between Protestants and Catholics, but the press distorted the news into an account of aristocrats and clergy conspiring together for a counter-revolution. Some also thought that the Church was using the excuse of waiting for Pius VI's answer as a delaying tactic for the sale of land.

The Assembly did postpone its measures until the Abbé Expilly was elected to the bishopric of Finistére in October. The Archbishop of Rennes there refused to confirm his election, and so another decree was issued by the Assembly, stating that any Bishop could act in the place of a metropolitan. Yet in

Bayeux the Bishop was elected mayor by the officials in 1790, as a reward for all his kindness; the line was already emerging between religious conformists and nonconformists to the new laws.

The Assembly was sure the Pope would agree to the reforms, so on November 27th after a debate, the Assembly passed a decree imposing the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Church on all office-holding priests. The King was to negotiate with the Pope for the Assembly. In July when the decree for the establishment of the Civil Constitution of the clergy was issued Louis XVI, on the advice of his two Archbishops, sanctioned the Civil Commission. It was just one day later that the papal briefs arrived in Paris with messages instructing Louis not to sanction the Constitution as it was schismatic. These letters were not made public, and Louis tried to get a compromise from the Pope through Cardinal Bernis, who was the French ambassador in Rome. Louis was caught on all sides, by Avignon wanting independence, the clergy their wages, and the State wanting to sell Church property; so the new policy would have to be irreversible. The King, after delaying as long as he could, gave in and sanctioned the decree on 26th December.

Many were anxious to buy Church property, as the government made the buying terms attractive and gave the purchaser time to complete his instalments at the low prices offered. In some places, canons or benefice holders tried to buy back a small amount of their old property which was dear to them. When the land sales opened in December 1790 there was a rush to buy, and prices went up by a third. As these sales went on, anti-clerical feelings grew over the Civil Constitution of the clergy. Those

who bought most of the property were the bougeoisie and the richer peasants who were the basis of the new order; this materialistic element in the Revolution would survive and increase, but not all the wealthy joined in the plunder of Church property. These groups resisted the government and came to play a part in the Vendéan rising and the guerilla war against the State.

By 2nd January 1791 Talleyrand, Jean Baptiste Gobel, the Bishop of Paris and one hundred and seven priests took the oath to the Civil Constitution: this was about one third of the clerical membership of the Assembly. There were appeals to those who did not take the oath, but only one curé came forward to take the oath and all the others stood firm, while outside the mobs shouted for them to be hung 'à la lanterne'. The roll call was taken and the names of the clergy read out with the demand that they accept or refuse the oath. In the Assembly there was much shouting or cheering from one side or another, but very few clergy took the oath, and some made speeches, but most were shouted down. The clergy who did not take the oath were known as non-jurors or refractories, those who took the oath were jurors.

Outside of Paris, the deadline for taking the oath varied with the 2nd January as the earliest date. Priests were allowed a second chance to take the oath, and often did. During January, every Sunday service was packed with soldiers and people all watching noisily. The result of all this was that only seven out of one hundred and sixty Bishops became jurors, but large numbers of lower clergy took the oath and equally large numbers refused it. It is difficult to calculate the exact number who took the oath or refused it, as many reports are incomplete, destroyed or

untrustworthy. Some clergy took the oath, and not the office. There were also those who took office and did not recognise the new Bishop. Numbers were often made up by those to whom the oath did not apply such as ex-monks, chaplains, private tutors and others who were not 'public officials'.

The oath required a priest to be a faithful pastor, and 'to be loyal to the nation', also the law, the King, and to maintain with all his might the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly which was accepted by the King. He was to accept what the government set forth in the constitution rather than any set laws, and that sovereign power was validly carried out. Every patriot who supported the Revolution would take the oath, and any who would not would be considered a traitor plotting against the State with foreign powers, or the aristocracy for a counter-revolution. The government was partly to blame for the feelings stirred up by the roll call. The oath was to weed out undesirables, and many shared the minister Mirabeau's view that there were too many clergy who were not patriots. Many could think of no reason for the priests to oppose the oath. The clergy observed two points; one that if they accepted the oath a schism might occur forced by the State, and if they refused, their actions might bring one about. It was mainly their consciences as Christians that stopped many of them, and as public officials they could take the oath but as Christians they could not.

The Bishops were biding their time till the papal response to the Civil Constitution should arrive. As they were nobles the Revolution was not to their liking, and they could influence

stragglers in their parishes. Some of the Bishops, who were not as strong-willed as others, emigrated to denounce the Civil Constitution from afar, and left the ordinary clergy to carry on the fight. Nevertheless, some *curés* saw the Civil Constitution with all its defects as giving them what they were waiting for, since the *curé* was now taking the place in the Church hierarchy to which he was entitled. There were materialistic reasons why some took the oath: to prevent starvation and the loss of their land. Often, if a *curé* had not taken the oath, an ambitious vicaire would take it, and the parish too. Men of conscience were often pressurized by their mothers or sisters, who would not leave their homes, or they were threatened by thugs and fishwives filled with Revolutionary zeal. Theological ideas too helped a clergyman to make up his mind as to whether to sign or refuse the oath. In the Moselle twenty eight per cent were Jurors, and in the Meuse seventy eight per cent, a fact which can be explained by the Jansenist-Richerist theology which was taught in the diocese of Verdun adjoining Meuse. Some priests looked up passages in the Bible or theological tracts. Nuns were often scandalised to see a priest take the oath and would accuse him of heresy. In some towns where non-juring was strong, officials would rebuke a *curé* for taking the oath.

The papal letter was delivered by the New Year and many of the French were bewildered, pulled this way and that, not wishing to desert the Revolution or betray the Church. In this confusion, in the large towns where there was a group of clergy who met together, they were often able to stay firm and so reject the oath, as in Bayeux.

Bishop de Cheylus[8] of Bayeux, did not agree with the oath and refused to take it. He declared he would renounce his privileges and revenues, but would not submit to government decrees. The Bishop urged the clergy to stand with him, and to stay united in refusing. At Bayeux there was a large seminary where most of the local clergy were trained, and so it was significant that these learned men issued a document before the oath's deadline, drawn up by the superior and four teachers and signed by eleven of the priests and curates of the town. It stated in plain terms that they should refuse the oath and give their reasons. This document reached most of the diocese, and thirty-two of the forty-two priests in the city became non-jurors. Bayeux was a small town, and could keep a united front; a juror in such a place would have to be strong to survive. About fifty-five percent of the rural clergy took the oath without qualification, and twenty-eight percent with reservations; only seventeen percent refused. This difference in numbers between town and country may have been due to the fact that the Bishop did not have agents in the country, and so was out of touch with the diocese. The Bishop tried to send letters to the deacons to distribute, but this was difficult because of the hostility of the local administrative bodies. Others, of course, did not wish to be reached, with their families around them and flock they shared all their problems.

After Pius VI declared in 1791 the elections of the clergy and the authority of the State in ecclesiastical affairs as

[8] Olwen H. Hufton, Bayeux in the Late Eighteenth Century: A Social Study (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1967) pp. 149-161, 162-177.

non-existent, the ex-Bishop de Cheylus returned to Bayeux and defied the local authorities. The Pope's declaration was a new weapon, and some of those who had taken the oath now retracted. It is interesting to note that although de Cheylus was declared a non-juror, and so no longer was a Bishop in the eyes of the State, he continued to ordain young curés and was expelled on April 3rd, 1791. De Cheylus made a nuisance of himself and published a long series of questions to the new juring Bishop, Fauchet. The Bishop only just escaped imprisonment and fled from France to Jersey. The Church elections took place and the vacancies were filled, and Bayeux carried out the letter of the law but with no enthusiasm.

The clergy also found ingenious ways of taking the oath, but not committing themselves, and they would often surround their acceptances in various restrictions and discourses, and so be both loyal to the Church and Revolution. In some places such as Nancy and Besançon, they would meet together and form a common formula for themselves. Some of these formulas were accepted, but others rejected because of one or two words; references to allegiance to Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion were acceptable, but the Besançon formula, 'as and as much as the Catholic ... Religion permits'[9] was rejected by the local officials because of the 'as much' clause.

A private brief arrived from Rome and was handed to the government condemning the Civil Constitution of the Church and its authority on March 21st, 1791. It was not until May that

[9]John McManners, The French Revolution and the Church: Church History Outlines, vol. 4 (S.P.C.K., London, 1969), p.159.

the Pope made his declaration public, and following it there was a rush of retractions from those who hesitated in accepting the oath and only did so provisionally. The New Constitutional Church was quickly founded. Members of the Constitutional Church were soon put into office, and some met with ridicule from officials. Where the refractory parish clergy were liked and respected the jurors met with violence. Much of this violence was led by mobs of women, but most of the juring Bishops were worthy, and those who were not were the exceptions. There was bitterness at some of the replacements, and there were also examples of the new and old clergy united and living in harmony. At Couteville the former _curé_ and the new _curé_ lived together for twenty years and wanted to be buried together when they died.

Non-jurors were allowed to lead members under the protection of liberty in the Declaration of Rights. On 11th April 1791, the Department of the Seine gave out the regulations for fairness when individuals were allowed to hire church building where non-conformist Roman Catholics could gather. On 7th May this was confirmed by the Assembly. This system did not work everywhere, as non-jurors were regarded as traitors to the Revolution, and riots were led against them by club members.

On 11th July 1791 a procession was held to escort the remains of Voltaire to the Panthéon; he was the first of a number of famous intellects to be buried there. Others were: J.L. David, artist and arranger of many Revolutionary festivals, M.J. Chenier, the writer, and Gossec, the musician. There were no clergy present at this ceremony, and the body was brought in defiance of the Church in which it was originally buried. The State also

did not wish the Church to be there as the ceremonies were to 'preserve the memory of the French Revolution, maintain fraternity among citizens and attach them to it and the laws'.

The Constitutionals who took the oath did not have it very easy for long, and soon fell foul of the Revolution when it swung to the left of the party on 10th August 1792. Too many demands were made on their consciences, such as the civil state, clerical marriage and the execution of the monarch, and as the Civil Constitution failed so the disillusionment grew.

After the Royal family's attempt at freedom in the flight to Varennes in June 1791, the Parisian population was even more anxious. Rumours of invasion and conspiracy were rife, and non-jurors in some departments were jailed for security reasons. Some people wanted all refractionaries to be jailed, but this was seen as an affront to liberty, so the Assembly would not sanction it. The New Assembly from October 1791 was of a different outlook to the previous one. It was made up of new deputies who were fresh from the Departments of District administration with anticlerical feelings. Unlike the Constituent Assembly, the new Assembly contained only twenty clergy, all jurors, who were not very courteous or tactful. Church matters were now subordinate to all else. Some of the clerical deputies, tired of the orthodox degrading them, wanted to cut their pensions or even to withhold them: 'you don't pay your enemies' was their argument.

The religious schism was seen as 'Patriots' on one side and 'aristocrats' on the other. There were calls in the Assembly for

non-jurors to be severed from the rest, and the opposition to the Civil Constitution in the provinces led to a decree passed on November 29th which made non-juring priests 'suspects'. These priests were liable to expulsion from areas of trouble. The King vetoed these decrees, but was as usual overruled.

After the Royal flight to Varennes, a more radical element appeared in the Revolution, and many British political clubs stopped corresponding with France. Others were still sympathetic and continued to advocate reform; some of these were those who participated in the Association Movement. New radical political societies organised were soon set up by and for the lower orders, and some of those who did not have the vote called for radical reforms. The most notable of the radical societies was the London Corresponding Society, which was started by Thomas Hardy, its first speaker, a forty-year-old Scottish shoemaker. In Sheffield, where middle-class Dissenters were the first to welcome the Revolution, the Sheffield Constitutional Society was established, and many cutlery masters and journeymen subscribed to its membership. These societies were widespread and all demanded reform. The Deist writings of Tom Paine became their text, and many local authorities banned their meetings and newspapers. In the Established Church, the monarchy was extolled and democracy condemned in many sermons.[10]

The decree of fraternity issued in 1791 merely confirmed many politicians' belief that the convention wanted to cause disorder in Britain, and as early as September there were reports

[10]Hugh McLeod, Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth Century Britain (Macmillan, 1984), pp. 18-19.

of French spies stirring up trouble. In November and December of 1791, rumours spoke of saboteurs mingling with the *émigrés* from France, and Bow Street runners were sent by the government to carry out investigations from the coast to London. The government did not take these rumours lightly, and many of them came from respected sources. Lord Auckland, the Ambassador at the Hague, received information of 'two hundred or three hundred emissaries from the *Propagande*, with allowances to live in taverns, coffee houses and ale houses to promote disorder'.[11] The *Propagande* was an organisation for causing disorder through its agents. Auckland also reported bulletins which he saw prepared by the French to announce uprisings in London. Pitt ordered, in December, that the Tower of London's fortifications be strengthened. He also brought troops into the capital, and called out a large part of the militia. Parliament sanctioned the government's measures, and it is significant that about two thirds of the Whigs, the opponents of the government, supported it in these measures: a bill was introduced in Parliament and passed by the government to authorise the ejection of any undesirable aliens from the country. An augmentation was also authorised by the government for both the Army and Navy; and grain exports to France were halted. At the end of November 1791, the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers was founded in the Strand in the Crown and Anchor Tavern, to support the laws, suppress any seditious publications and protect the public and property from Jacobinism and French ideas. These Associations were founded

[11]Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.15.

throughout the country, but were not so well organised. Charles James Fox, Pitt's opponent, sat on the Committee of the Associations of St. George's Parish, Hanover Square. The more reactionary Associations launched pamphlets and tracts against the popular societies. Some provincial Associations persecuted local Jacobins, and organised and encouraged demonstrations which concluded by burning Tom Paine's effigy. The popular societies regarded such movements as conservative and reactionary in alliance with the government. For Pitt, these Associations were gathering loyal members, and their opinions were exactly what he wanted.

The second part of Tom Paine's The Rights of Man, published in 1792, contained a proposal for the complete reorganisation of British society, and the conservative politicians and landed gentry heard in horror of farmworkers and servants seen reading it.

In November 1792, fraternal delegates from Britain took congratulatory addresses to the New National Convention in France. The London Corresponding Society declared: 'Frenchmen, you are already free, but the Britons are preparing to do so'.[12] The help these societies gave France was not only verbal: they also sent the French shoes and other supplies. The government was frightened by these societies, and by the actions of the French Convention which seemed to threaten British safety and peace. The French Ambassador to Britain, the Marquis de Chauvelin, was refused acceptance by the foreign secretary, Lord Grenville, partly because Chauvelin mixed with the parliamentary Opposition

[12] Clive Emsley, British Society and the French Wars, p.14

and did not even try to quell the rumours of events in France.

On April 20th, 1792, France declared war with England, and the opposition to non-jurors in France increased. The non-jurors stood firm and were violently accused of treason. Many revolutionaries thought that the non-jurors were conspiring with all sorts of groups including the émigrés and foreign powers. They also feared that the émigrés had entered into alliance with the Pope, and on May 26th, 1792, the Legislative passed a decree declaring that any refractory priest who was denouced by twenty active citizens would be deported. The King again vetoed this, but the arrests of priests was already under way, and restrictions placed on where they lived. The fall of the monarchy came soon after, on August 10th, 1792.

With the decline of the Church many turned to the Revolution for Worship. The anticlerical publicist Cadet de Vaux started the practice of an altar with Roman axes and fasces, a pike crowned with a cap of liberty, a shield with a portrait of La Fayette and verses on panels from Voltaire. This altar was emulated around the country. Imitations set forth the Declaration of Rights instead of the Decalogue. A 'tree of Liberty' planted by curé Poitou was the first of a forest spreading all over the country. Civic baptisms became fashionable as did the wearing of the tricolour cockade, which was red and blue for Paris, and white for royalty. Later a red cap was worn, which symbolised in classical antiquity freedom from slavery.

After the breakdown of Church ceremonies in 1792, State religions sprang up. The leaders of these 'religions' were

sometimes fanatics and eccentrics who built upon anticlerical feelings to humiliate the Catholics and show the State could live without the Church. To replace Christianity, they used Deism; their texts were the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, and they believed man could communicate without any intermediaries except the inspiration of the majestic fecundity and beauty of Nature. These revolutionaries rejected the idea of original sin and believed in the God-given search for happiness on earth. Bounteous Nature was worshipped, with dutiful families held up as an example of this. The revolutionaries also set up a 'Temple of Friendship', where you listed your friends each year stating why some were still not on the list; the fact that they were executed was not seen as a valid reason.

In August 1792 the Tuilleries Palace was attacked and the King taken prisoner. A search was made throughout Paris for priests, and all who were found were imprisoned either in the Church of Carmes in Rue Vaugirard, the Seminary of St. Firmin or in the common prisons of Paris. On August 26th the National Assembly passed a law that all who refused the civic oath were to leave within eight days, and within a fortnight were to leave the country. If they refused to do this they would be deported to French Guiana in South America. Priests could choose their country of exile, providing they informed the Directory of the district of their choice, and then they were given a passport and allowance for travelling. This allowance was about three livres or francs a day for which they were required to travel at least three leagues. Any priest who returned was liable to ten years imprisonment and it was only the sick and those over

sixty who were exempt from the banishment, but they were to assemble at a central house in each district.

Many exiles never left France, as the September massacres swept much of the country. On the evening of September 2nd, at four o'clock the prison massacres began in Paris. Nearly all one hundred and eight priests imprisoned at Carmes were killed in cold blood, and within thirty six hours ninety-two priests at the Seminary of St. Firmin shared the same fate. It was said that in total around one thousand and four hundred persons were murdered in Paris, and similar outbreaks occurred in many districts of the country. Only a few actually did the killing, and these were mostly middle aged traders who wanted to kill the traitors while the volunteers were fighting at the front. These 'traitors' ranged from aristocrats, ecclesiastics and criminals to youths. The first victims were twenty priests who were on their way to prison; their deaths were not accidental, but were not the result of an anticlerical plot. The popular explanation of this was that the death of these priests led to the tribunals with their inquisitions on whether the oath had been taken. This interpretation is unreliable as the priests had not regarded the oath on liberty and equality as a difficulty. The priests were regarded as traitors, which some of them at least were not in a good position to deny.

Priests were afraid to apply for passports for fear of being 'marked men' and many risked the secret journey to the coast or border nearest to their homes. Those in the south of France headed for Italy and Spain; in the east of France, Switzerland or Germany were nearest. Those who came to England

were for the most part from Brittany, Normandy, Picardy or Paris.

Priests were regarded as 'suspects' after a new division was made in January 1793, and the enforcement of the new ecclesiastical policy was taken out of the jurisdiction of ordinary courts and put into the hands of the directories of the Districts and Departments. A person could be jailed for being a 'suspect', and riots again occurred at many of the meeting places of non-jurors. In Paris, four convent chapels were closed because of riots, and the King was unable to leave Paris for Saint-Cloud to receive communion because of the mobs. An effigy of Pius VI was set alight as the mobs regarded religion as the cause of the breakdown of national unity, and feared the King would revive the Ancien Régime.

On January 21st, 1793, King Louis XVI was executed, after making his confessional to a priest. The peasant revolt of the Vendée started soon after, and lasted until the arrival of Bonaparte. The civil war in the Vendée was on five boundaries, Luçon, La Rochelle, Angers, Nantes and Poitiers. The Vendéans were hard, pious people led by Royalist agents and Churchmen. The riots were first started by a fruit and fish vendor and a ruined wigmaker. The clergy were amongst them, and were mostly those who were popular with their congregations. The changing of parish boundaries had been greatly resented, as was the closing down of churches and removal of ecclesiastical ornaments. The Vendéans had another reason for revolt; since 1789 they had been starving and unfairly taxed under the *Ancien Régime*, and now the land tax from the government was just as unfair and was to be paid at once. The new government was disliked as much

as the old, and when the conscription laws of March 15th were announced, they rioted. Their attack was not just against the government, but also the bourgeoisie of the country towns, officials and rich farmers who supported the Revolution.

The deportation decree was again amended on March 23rd, 1793, when deportation became automatic. The new oath was astonishingly ideological, admitting that the Rousseauist General will was right. The oath declared that a person would 'swear to be faithful to the nation' and to maintain with all their might 'Liberty, Equality, the security of persons and property, and to die if need be, for the execution of the law'.

On July 13th, 1793, Jean Paul Marat, the writer, was murdered by Charlotte Corday, the royalist from Normandy. Women swore to bring up their children in the cult of Marat in memory of him. There was a feast on July 18th to celebrate Marat's heart, which was taken to Cordelias Club and hung in an urn from the ceiling; this may have been an attempt to imitate the Catholic cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Revolution was creating ceremonies from everything and everyone. On August 10th, the classical painter, David, directed the ceremony of the New Constitution, which was held on the anniversary of the fall of the monarchy. A new Calendar was formulated with months named after the seasons and weather; each month had thirty days and every tenth day was a day of celebration. Needless to say there were several days left over between the old year and the new. The government also abolished Church festivals, holy days and Saints names, and street names were changed. After Gobel, metropolitan of Paris, renounced his functions, the _décadi_ of 10th November was held

in Notre Dame. The celebrations were a shabby affair, as the day was wet and windy. These celebrations often had a temple of Reason with a goddess of Liberty, and also celebrated 'Law', 'Truth' and 'Nature'. Reason was the theme of many festivals, and the followers of these cults challenged the priests who had hidden the true Deist God of Nature and of Reason from men's eyes. At these ceremonies, young girls played the part of the goddesses, men of good standing were praised, as was an unecclesiastical Jesus.

In Marseille by midsummer, Lyons and sixty other departments of the South and West were up in arms. As the war abroad worsened, food got shorter, and on September 2nd, when Toulon surrendered to the British Fleet, 'Terror' was declared the order of the day. This 'Terror' was enforced and continued for ten months until the execution of Robespierre in July 1794.

The Civil War against the government illustrated a people united with the Church, who did not think they had received either equality or liberty. While fighting, they remembered those who were shot and guillotined by the republican ministry, and those who were fighting for 'Liberty', the liberty of their friends, family and beliefs; to hear mass said by their old priest, and not to fight in the national wars or to pay taxes.

Nevertheless, de-Christianization now took hold on some parts of the country. This did not come directly from the government, but it did not actively try to prevent it. The Committee of Public Safety did not wish for too much severity towards the clergy, as this could be used by foreign propaganda agents. Robespierre opposed de-Christianization from the start,

and looked upon it as a mistake; George Danton also saw the campaign as propaganda for their enemies. The politicians who promoted de-Christianization in Paris were often adventurers on the margins of power, extravagant exhibitionists and those who sought to distract public notice from their own misdeeds and crimes. Robespierre had already detected these men, and was ready to denounce them for indulging in 'aristocracy and tyranny' under the cover of their attack on divinity. Joseph Fauché, the minister, issued a decree against Catholicism on October 10th, declaring that the French people recognised no religion except morality and dogma, but its own sovereignty, and that no longer would the dead be buried in a churchyard, but in a civic cemetery. Wherever de-Christianization took hold, relics were smashed and priests compelled to leave office.

It was not only the politicians who were the ring leaders. Some of those committing sacrilege and blasphemy, destroying Churches, were ex-ecclesiastics, monks, canons and other clergy. People would have been incited by pamphlets and memories of the Ancien Régime as well as the plays at the theatre to demonstrate against the Church[13]. After the destruction of a Church pieces could be seen in second hand shops and some revolutionaries danced and drank in the churchyards. Bells, grilles and railings were confiscated for the War, while whatever silver was left from the beginning of the Revolution was melted down. After churches were emptied, they were often taken over for prisons, storehouses, or military purposes. All symbols of tyranny were removed from

[13] McManners, The French Revolution and the Church, p.88

the outside of churches, such as armorial bearings, the *fleur-de-lys* and crowns, This mostly happened in Paris, and not in the very rural areas of France.

In the rural areas, where iconoclasm was rejected, the militia enforced it. The militia was either specifically called out, or was used as it was passing to the front. There were also the *Sans-Culotte* militias who went about the countryside enforcing the Revolutionary decrees, and their expeditionary forces travelled wherever people tried to riot or rebel against the law. In the villages after the militia went, the anti-clericals encouraged by them would continue the persecution, and where there was a de-Christianizing representative the clergy were often forced to abdicate and even to marry. Temples of reason were also set up.

Some clergy managed to emigrate to other Catholic countries or to England. The majority of these were secular clergy, and the orthodox clergy who had had time to flee or hide. The clergy who remained in France suffered under the 'Terror'. Many were executed, and still more imprisoned; the worst areas of persecution were where the Civil War raged. In November 1793, one hundred and thirty five monks and priests were massacred at Lyons, and eighty three were shot at Champ-de-Martyrs near Angers. There were mass drownings by the republican officials Carriers at Nantes. The hulks at Rochefort claimed more clergy victims than Carrier or the Tribunal. Even nuns were not spared; some were executed on the slenderest of excuses, one perhaps for receiving letters from an *émigré* relative or for having royalist tracts. Neither did the

revolutionaries have any respect for age, murdering those of seventy and eighty years of age. They also executed those who concealed others, or if they were reported as suspicious.

Of the clergy made to renouce their ministry, the constitutionals suffered more than others, because they were more available to be victimised. Most of these abdications were under pressure, especially in the large towns. The young clergy do not seem to have succumbed so easily, perhaps because theological training under the Ancien Régime had improved or because the young were more resilient and able to escape more easily and hide. Of course not all those who abdicated apostasized; some managed to choose their words carefully. There was a distinction between giving up one's vocation and bowing to public will and not practising public worship. Many clergy agreed to write to the authorities and declare that they would cease their public services; other priests handed in their letters of ordination, but gave a common formula they had written. Clergy also resigned, but escaped giving in their letters and signing, and some handed in the wrong registers and so maintained their loyalty to their faith. Not only the clergy abdicated, but doctors too, if they had been given the Royal coat of arms or if they had enjoyed royal or aristocratic patronage. Some abdications were sincere, but most were tactical through fear. Friends and relatives would also influence them, and some of the clergy continued as usual, but attended festivals to disguise their work, while others pursued their religious activities in disguise.

Through December 1792 and January 1793, war seemed imminent,

and the opponents of Reform and the French Revolution looked forward to it. The Times described the War as a struggle for the existence of the British Constitution against freebooters, atheists and levellers. The execution of Louis XVI was greeted with horrified and shocked outbursts, and it added more fuel to the anti-French cause. Theatres throughout Britain were closed, and the Revolution was denounced from thousands of pulpits[14]. There was a national day of mourning, and from some quarters shouts of 'war with France' came from the crowds whenever the King went about in his carriage. Some of the Dissenters also denounced the violence. Fox is said to have called it 'a most revolting act of cruelty and injustice'. Bishop Samuel Horsley, preaching on the anniversary of the execution of Charles I, in Westminster Abbey on January 30th to the House of Lords, condemned the execution saying 'O my country! Read the horror of thy own deed in this recent heightened initiation and lament and weep that the black French treason should have found its example of thy unnatural sin'.

In January 1793, an Alien Act received Royal Assent so that Ships Masters had to list all foreigners on board and any foreigners had to register at the Customs office when they landed and declare any arms. An émigré had to wait for a passport to be issued by the Home Secretary or local magistrate. Any household putting up a foreigner was to give an account of them, and an alien office was set up next to the Home Office. An article in The Times wanted any family with French servants

[14]Alfred Plummer, The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century (Methuen and Co., 1910), pp. 194-204.

to get rid of them, and a bill to tax any family that kept these servants. The article also suggested that French milliners should be repatriated instead of using up supplies meant for British men and women.

Many Dissenters and Reformers were against the war. Williams Frend, a fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and a Unitarian, did not think it was Britain's concern to punish the French for the execution. The Morning Chronicle commented that fighting for the security of the nation was allowable, but in 1793 it did not regard the national security as under threat, and the war might continue until every Frenchman was dead, and French ideals stamped out. The London Corresponding Division 12 thought that the majority did not want war, and would 'consider such an event as a calamity to the human race; however it may gratify a Confederation of foreign Kings'.[15] Every class, claimed The Morning Chronicle, was against war as it would lead to trade losses and unemployment. French privateers were attacking merchant ships, and there were fears of higher taxes. The upsurge of loyalty and the backing of those who feared French principles, encouraged Pitt reluctantly to think of war. Negotiations were made with the Girondins in France but they were not favourable.

There were many demonstrations against the Dissenters, and 'Church and State' mobs disrupted their meetings. When Dr. Priestley held a dinner in 1791 to celebrate the 1688 revolution and the French Revolution, his guests were attacked

[15]Clive Emsley, British Society and the French Wars, p.17.

and his house set on fire as well as other houses; this was the first of a number of attacks on Dissenters. Reform was frowned upon and religion was praised as the uniting force in society, and as 'the only barrier between us and a Revolution'. This was the 'Policeman theory' which helped to alienate many who were in sympathy with what Christianity stood for. 'The tragedy of the Revolution' said S.C. Carpenter, moved the Church to 'pity and terror but it was a too selfish terror and the pity was not on a grand scale'.[16] The clergymen who were criticised before for their non-residency and pluralities were now held in reverence by the Tories. Thomas More wrote that the French Revolution produced 'in the higher classes of England an increased reserve of manner, and of course a proportionate restraint on all within their circle, which have been fatal to convivilaity and humour, and not very propitious to wit, subduing both manners and conversation to a sort of polished level, to rise above what is often thought as vulgar or to sink below it'.[17] Seriousness invaded every level of life, from dress to literature, and Pitt knighted many men for their solid character and worth.

On March 15th, 1793, the Attorney General introduced the Traitorous Correspondence Bill to prevent British subjects assisting France in any way whatsoever. The Bill also prevented the purchase of land in France or the lending of money for such a purpose, and it was declared illegal to travel abroad without a passport. The Bill was passed on 9th April by one vote. Pitt

[16] S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, p.25-33

[17] E. Halévy, England in 1815, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols (Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1964), p.451.

regarded the Decree of Fraternity as a threat to the whole of Europe's social orders, and said it was 'calculated everywhere to sow the seed of rebellion and civil contention, and to spread war from one end of Europe to the other, from one end of the globe to the other'.[18] At the end of 1793, delegates from England met with their Scottish counterparts in Edinburgh to form a convention which employed French procedures. The September massacres shocked and horrified the British nation which was now even more hostile and fearful towards France.

In Paris, changes were taking place in the Revolutionary religions. The cult of reason was gradually taken over and became the cult of the Être Suprême, especially after the leaders of de-Christianization were destroyed by Robespierre. Couthon, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, announced on April 16th 1794 a new creed, that of the dedication to the Éternal. On May 7th Robespierre laid down a creed for the new religion. He wanted to create a more unified and satisfying form of worship, so all could join in the Universal Religion of Nature, declaring that atheism was 'aristocratic', and the worship of the Supreme Being was 'social' and 'republican'. David was in charge of the festival to celebrate this on Whitsunday 20 Praerical or June 8th. Its form was a classical one, with Robespierre leading the procession carrying berries, grain and flowers. The festival was performed in most places, and the change from Reason to Être Suprême made smoothly.

Now de-Christianization had died down, respectable people attended the festivals as well. There was, however, no great

[18]Clive Emsley, British Society and the French Wars, p.22.

enthusiasm for this new religion; people patched up symbols of the cult of Reason or just altered the name and used the same things. It was fifty days later that Robespierre was executed, and even after his death the officials of the cult remained, as did its ceremonies. Some people named their offspring after republicans; extremists took names such as 'Marat', 'Brutus' or 'Peletier', while others took floral names.

Various other new religions sprang up, such as the _Culte Social_ and the _Panthéonists_, but only the _Théophilanthropie_ seemed to take a hold on a large number of people. It appealed to both realists and men of imagination. Their dogmas were those of the _Être Suprême_ of God and the immortality of the soul. By the end of year six, it had sixteen places of worship in Paris but outside it was largely restricted. The leaders of the religion were active in the revolutionary cults. Some clergy joined in as well, since it was a tolerant religion, not hostile to Christianity, but the new faith was not adopted by many and the Directory refused to make it an established one. After the Jacobins were quashed, the government withdrew all support for it, and the new religion faded away like so many before it.

In England in 1794 the London Corresponding Society wanted to hold a Convention in London, but the government stopped it and used spies to infiltrate the societies. These were raided, some weapons were found and arrests were made. Thomas Hardy, the founder of The Corresponding Society, and the radical lecturers Rev. John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall were put on

trial for high treason at the Old Bailey, and were acquitted much to the relief of many. It reminded Pitt and others that England did not employ the methods of Robespierre, and helped to check the course of bloodshed that might have occurred. The anti-Jacobins stood firm that the laws of England would not be changed; France had changed her laws too fast and England would change nothing. In May 1794 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended until July 1795, and so any suspect could be arrested without evidence. The government overreacted to its fears. It was perhaps justified by the popular societies' support for France. Fox and his followers were also pressing for reform, but ordinary men who had no voice in the government and were from the same social group as the ruthless Sans-cullottes were voicing their radical views. In 1794 the government suppressed the societies, acting on documents seized from them, which seemed to support the revolution and to be treasonable. French prisoners in Britain threatened their captors with a repeat of the murders and executions in France if there should be an invasion. Rumours of invasion and the horrors of the executions in France were rife and often exaggerated or propaganda. Those foreigners who had lived in England for many years were now looked upon with suspicion and the only trades that really flourished were those that supplied the Army and the Navy.

After a series of decrees from September 1794 - September 1795, the Convention separated the Church from the State in France. The State refused to pay for any cults, and there was freedom of worship. Since the government could not destroy Catholicism or get Catholics to join them, the State simply tolerated them. After Robespierre's execution on July 28th 1794,

the prisons were opened, and many clergy were now free although still watched. In September 1794, clerical salaries which were not paid for a long time were officially stopped, and on February 21st 1795, a decree was issued against all external signs of religion. Some of the Churches were re-opened, and on March 26th at Sedon, a band of women and a drummer went to the Cathedral to clean it after revolutionary festivals were held in it. Some also started to queue for Confession again. Education was now a free choice, and some parents sent their children to private schools conducted or bought by the clergy. This freedom was not given willingly, and Sunday was still a working day, and the Décadi was celebrated as a holiday. Church services were under surveillance by spies, and priests were liable to spot checks and tests of civic submission. Schools were also watched to make sure that they observed the proper days.

In some places, the Constitutional Church did not have much strength, and did not survive de-Christianization, such as in the Centre region of France. Except for the leadership of one man, Henry Grégoire, the Church would have only existed in a few isolated dioceses. Grégoire was the Constitutional Bishop of Bois, and defied those at the Convention who hated the clergy. He told them he was 'elected by the people to be a bishop, but neither from them nor from you is my mission derived'. The Bishop was republican, and remained so until Bonaparte came into power, and he never retracted his oath to the Civil Constitution. After the decree of Boissy d'anglas he formed a standing council of Bishops at Paris, and they published a profession of faith on March 15th, 1795. Grégoire

denounced the de-Christianized as vicious persecutors egged on by shameless women. On December 13th, 1795, a new system of Church organisation was laid down. Twelve curés of each episcopal town were to set up a Presbytery, which would, if there was no Bishop, organise a new election; there was to be no balloting by the parish and anyone over twenty could vote.

The new Church did not have a philosophical ethos or a practical and theological justification for a separate existence. Some of the clergy did make peace with the refractories as did two of Grégoire's own vicars. There would have been more if they had been better received. There was a great rush to acquire churches, and a declaration was made for the owners of churches to submit to the laws of the republic in May 1795. This declaration was agreed to as long as the churches were not shared, and that laws for religious freedom were introduced to let a clergyman refuse to give the Sacraments to those who were divorced. Missions were also set up to the different towns and villages, and the clergy would wear lay dress as a disguise. They were escorted from place to place by 'Catechists', and the faithful were divided in each place to hear masses in private houses.

The Orthodox Church did not have a leader. There were several reasons for this; many Bishops had emigrated or had remained, but were constantly watched. Some could ordain candidates in secret, like the Bishop of Saint Papoul, M. de Maillé la Tour Lantry. In 1795, some Bishops returned to France at great risk, but even more gave their orders from afar. The theory was that vicars-general would guide those in hiding and

give them direction. This did not work, as the orders they received were often inappropriate and out-of-date. When one vicar died, a few of the Canons of the Cathedral might meet to appoint a capitular vicar to administer the parish, while others applied to the Pope. There was often a great difference in opinion of choice, as after Marbeuf's death at Lyons, when one candidate was chosen by the Canons and another by Rome and the *émigrés*. The *émigré* candidate was chosen.

In England the Whig Charles Grey and the Duke of Bedford were now demanding peace. The war had increased the National Debt and there were corn shortages. In May 1795 Speenhamland fixed the rate of poor relief to the price of bread, and this was taken up by other counties. This system helped to protect the poor from price rises during the war. Reports were made by Lord Muncaster of ships loaded with grain running to France. On June 27th, 1795, England sent a force to France to help the counter-revolution. D'Hervilly's division landed on the Quibéron Penninsula, in Brittany, in English uniforms. Unfortunately the population in the district did not start an uprising, and the invaders were driven back to the sea or captured by General Hoche. Another landing was made at Ile d'yeu which they captured, and were able to aid the war in Vendée.[19]

On 29th June the London Corresponding Society held open-air meetings in London, and wanted George III to dismiss Pitt's ministry and the reform of the electoral system. In October another meeting was held, and this time the Society sent an

[19] G. Lefevre, *The French Revolution from 1793 to 1799* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1964), pp. 155-156.

address to the nation remonstrating with the King. Three days after this, the King was mobbed in his carriage and a window broken by a missile aimed at him. The crowd demanded peace and bread. The government in reaction to this rushed through two bills. The first stated that it was a treasonable offence for anyone to incite people to hate the King or his government, either in writing or speeches. The second bill restricted meetings in public to not more than fifty persons unless a magistrate should be notified. The bills received Royal Assent on 18th December. London and many southern areas were now hosts to many French *émigrés* who had fled from France when the persecution was at its height. These *émigrés* helped to lessen the government's hostility towards the English Catholics and led to greater toleration and minor relief for Catholics. To help finance the war, Pitt was forced to introduce new taxes and levies on wines, spirits, tea and hair powder. In 1796 Pitt raised the Assessed taxes by ten per cent, and put further levies on material, tobacco and sugar and salt; few areas escaped tax. Towards the end of 1796, Lord Malmesbury was sent to Paris to open negotiations for peace with the Directory. Nevertheless, individuals within the Directory, such as General Hoche and Carnot, the Jacobin's 'organiser of victory', wanted revenge for the help which the Vendée had received from the British, and as Malmesbury prepared for another visit to France, a French force was leaving Brest for an invasion of Ireland in December.

In 1797, the elections in France raised many Catholic hopes when they were won by royalists and moderates, and priests

emerged from hiding and bells were rung. This was short-lived, as fears of political reaction coupled with a religious revival brought a _coup d'état_ on September 14th, 1797; the Assemblies were purged and the republican old guard had power once more. Persecution began again, oaths swearing hatred of Royalty were drawn up and thirty Belgian priests,and two hundred from France, were deported to Cayenne where most died of fever. Others were imprisoned at Rochefort or the Islands of Ré and Oléon. Not many were executed, the officials chiefly wanted to make the people hate and distrust the Catholics.

There was a deep rift between the two groups of Catholic clergy. _Émigrés_ now returning accused the Constitutional Church of supplying the regicides with a majority. The Constitutional Church was struggling to survive, as so many were executed or had deserted it. Many priests and clergy who had taken the Oath of the Constitution were disillusioned men. In Paris, lay associations were hiring churches, priests and choristers, but only those who had not abandoned their faith by marrying or singing in theatres.

After General Duphot was killed in Rome on December 28th, 1797, General Berthier marched on Rome, and two months later Italy was proclaimed a Roman republic. The Pope was captured and taken back to France where he died at Valence in 1799. The Pope's death seemed to indicate the dissolution of the papacy. Nevertheless a new Pope, Cardinal Chiaramouti, Pius VII, was elected in Venice on March 14th, 1800, and after two years the Revolution compounded with the papacy in the signing of the Concordat on July 1st, 1801. Two new leaders were in Rome;

Bonaparte, first consul in 1799 and Pius VII. The new Pope and his secretary of state brought in a new and more liberal regime. It was Bonaparte who took the initiative for peace with the Church. Although no Christian, he was a realist in political matters. He saw the hold traditional religion held on a great part of the nation, and believed that it would guarantee social order and reconcile the nation to the inequalities of life. Napoleon needed to unite the nation and so prepare a path for 'French hegemony in Italy'. France would remain Catholic, but would lose none of the gains of the Revolution.

After months of bargaining and diplomatic crisis, the Concordat was signed. The previous Concordat had been signed in 1516, and although the new one resembled the old one in some ways, it also differed greatly in others. The 1516 Concordat had been signed by the Catholic monarch of a Catholic state, and the new Concordat did not create a real spiritual bond between the Church and French Society. The new Church wished to limit the Revolution, but it was not possible; the Church had to fight for its place. There was a limited freedom of worship, as it was under police control. Napoleon nominated Bishops and the clergy prayed for the government, and took an oath of obedience and fidelity to it.

Pius VII did not sympathise with the Revolution, but worked with Bonaparte to form a new episcopate. The Pope was needed to dispense with the old orthodox Bishops, who were out of touch, and elect new ones. The Pope was henceforward to be placed at the centre of the new Catholic faith, and did not bow to Napoleon even after imprisonment, but stayed firm. The State

looked to the Church once more, and especially those who stayed and suffered with them through the hardship and 'Terror' were confirmed in their religious convictions. The New Church would now have to reform its theology and philosophy, as the thinkers of the former age had not made intellectual provision for the new era.

In 1797, the English fears of invasion were verified when a small French force landed in Pembrokeshire, but after three days they surrendered. Many of the coastal towns were alarmed by this and the militia were often called out, after sightings of strange vessels. Mutiny broke out on the ships at Spithead due to bad pay and poor conditions. There were fears for the Channel fleet as the mutiny spread from ship to ship. In the Thames estuary, mutineers were blockading the river but their leaders were caught and executed. Some believed that the mutineers were Jacobins or linked with the Corresponding Societies, but there is no evidence of this. Some Naval officers thought the mutiny was incited by Quota men, who were paid to join the Navy, and were in the past members of popular societies. Pitt once again proposed peace, but the cabinet was split between him and Lord Portland and his followers who wanted the war to continue. In July 1797 Lord Malmesbury was again sent to France as an emissary to open negoations with the French government, and in August it seemed as if peace was possible. However, the coup d'état of Fructidor changed this, and Lord Malmesbury received an ultimatum from the French government and returned to London. Pitt blamed the French for the breakdown of the peace talks. He considered the French to be attacking the essence of liberty, independence and the Constitution itself. Peace was once more

forgotten, and Charles Grey complained that 'the public take no deep interest in our reforms or in any other public measure which does not affect their pockets'.[20] It was in 1797 that the publication the Anti-Jacobin Review first appeared: it was opposed to Jacobinism in all forms and upheld the ministry and Constitution. This paper published patriotic songs and articles as well as cartoons by James Gilray which ridiculed France and the Whig leader, Charles Fox. George Canning, the Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, was the Anti-Jacobin's founder, with other members of the government such as Pitt and Grenville contributing to it. It ran for as long as the parliamentary session and was later published in two volumes.

In 1799 and 1800 there was more rioting against price rises and poor supplies. Some politicans feared Jacobins or the French were stirring up the rioters. French Revolutionary notices were put up declaring 'Bread or Blood; have not Frenchmen shown you a pattern to fight for liberty'. Rural rioters also quoted Revolutionary poems and songs and held meetings at night to discuss attacks upon the government and the replacement of Pitt with Fox.

Britain finally negotiated for peace with Bonaparte in 1801, when the treaty of London was signed on October 1st. Bonaparte had been forced to sue for preace after Abercromby's triumph at Alexandria and sealed this treaty with the Peace of Amiens at the beginning of 1802.

[20]Clive Emsley, British Society and the French Wars, p.64.

Dicey remarked that 'in England the French Revolution worked nothing but evil: it delayed salutary changes for forty years and rendered reforms, when at last they came less beneficial than they might have been if gradually carried out as the natural result of the undisturbed development of ideas suggested by English good sense and English love of justice'. The French Revolution served to frighten the English government into a state of panic and repression which set back many reforms by a generation. Perhaps if the Revolution had been distant or the reactions to it less severe, then reform and democracy would not have been repressed.

To gain a more complete picture of the Church of England's reaction to the French Revolution, it is necessary to look at its actions towards the radicals, and at its defence against the Revolution in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1790-1830

'An essential part of the Constitution.'[1]

'Church and King.'

[1]A. Lincoln, English Dissent 1763-1800 (Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 262, pp. 4-66, 101-182.

The Established Church of England and Wales was coupled with the political system of Britain by the Act of Uniformity, the Corporation and Test Acts. The Corporation Act was passed in 1661 to exclude all those refusing to take the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England from any municipal corporations. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 made compulsory the use in public worship of the Book of Common Prayer. The Test Act, passed in 1673, was directed at the Catholics rather than the Dissenters, who refused to recognise the Act of Uniformity. The Test Act forced every holder of a military or civil office to take the Sacrament in the Church of England, the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance and to make a declaration against transubstantiation. Both the Catholics and Dissenters were barred from choosing burgesses for parliament and from teaching in Universities, schools and private houses.[2] Thus it was impossible for anyone outside the Church of England to be a minister of the Crown, a member of a corporation, an officer in the armed forces or a responsible civil servant. These Acts were regarded as a protective measure for the State, as well as being designed to force some of the Catholics and Dissenters back to the Church of England. These Acts were also known as the Clarendon Code, after Charles II's Chancellor, the Earl of Clarendon,

[2]Bernard Lord Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 1-7, 217-254.

who was responsible for introducing the legislation of the 1660s, but fell from power in 1667 and went into exile in France.

The Toleration Act of 1689 licensed Nonconformist places of worship as well as preachers and teachers. This Act resulted in a distinction between the Established and Non-established churches. It also meant that 'Established' was interpreted as the privileged or official State religion. From 1714 onwards, at the beginning of George I's reign, relief was given to the Nonconformists through the Acts of Indemnity passed by Parliament. Nevertheless these Acts did not relieve the position of the Nonconformists and Catholics to a great extent and they were still bound by the Penal Laws. The position of the Church of England was very different.

The Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church were the direct nominees of the Crown. Parochial clergy were also nominated by the Crown or lay patron, but not by election. The clergy were often noblemen, and most were educated according to their social position. During the eighteenth century, the higher clergy were increasingly of noble or wealthy birth, Tories, mostly connected in some way with the upper classes, and who wished the Church to remain part of the aristocracy. The lower clergy were in the hands of the Archbishop for any appointments, although the Archbishop's clients or relatives often received preference. The whole system of ecclesiastical appointment was based upon patronage. Out of 11,700 benefices in England and Wales in the eighteenth century, the patronage of about 1,500 belonged to the Bishops

or Cathedral chapters. Samuel Johnson had complained that a man could not be made a Bishop through learning or piety, but only by being connected with a person of parliamentary interest. Political patronage and court patronage both provided benefices. Politicians found it useful to nominate Bishops to secure their party's support in the House of Lords. It was well known that Bishoprics were given as rewards for past political favours or as inducements for future ones. Once in power he would be under the control of his political patron and would be expected to give support, to vote and to make speeches. Not all the clergy were politically inclined nor of gentle birth. There was still room in the Church for those of humble origin who were compensated by their literary merit or by performing a service for an influential person. In 1761, George Grenville, an Irish politician, is said to have considered that there were 'bishoprics of two kinds, bishoprics of business for men of abilities and learning, and bishoprics of ease for men of family and fashion'.[3]

Those Bishops who were concerned with politics were compelled to reside in London for the greater part of the year, to discharge their parliamentary duties and so maintain their interest in public affairs. Travel was difficult and journeys to and from a parish were scarce. Many Bishops only visited their Sees in the summer recess of parliament. This meant that there was little contact between the higher and lower clergy and this caused much dissatisfaction to the lower clergy.

[3]N. Ravitch, Sword and Mitre (Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1966), pp. 130-131, 90-133, 195-214.

To gain a better living they had to ingratiate themselves with their patrons or had to earn money by becoming farmers, teachers, or even tradesmen. The lower clergy were often chosen through parochial patronage. These patrons were landowners and about 5,700 of the benefices in England and Wales belonged to them. Thus in about one half of all parishes the position of Vicar was in the hands of the patron. Some benefices were sold by public auction to the highest bidder, who could take the benefice if it were vacant or be the next holder. The age and wages of the present holder were put in the local newspaper advertisements for sale and the bidder was guided by this.[4] Some clergymen were obliged to serve two churches, if not more, on one Sunday. Many services were shortened so the clergymen could ride to the next church, and there were cases of clergymen not turning up to services if the congregation were too small in number or the weather was bad. In this way, many parish duties were neglected, and in some country districts Communion was only given on the festival days of Easter, Christmas, Whitsun and Michaelmas. The curate was the poorest paid and the hardest worked servant of the Church, as the burden of the parish would fall on him.

There were great differences in the wages of the clergy: a wealthy Bishop's living was more than sufficient. In the ten richest Sees, the annual income ranged from £5,435 per annum to £22,305 per annum; the remaining sixteen Sees had an average net income of less than £2,800.[5] The total income

[4]Elie Halévy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century: England in 1815, 6 vols (Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1961), p. 394, pp. 340-401.

[5]Alan D. Gilbert, Religion in Industrial England (Longman Group Limited, London, 1976), pp. 21-38, 75-80.

of the parochial clergy was about £3,250,000. A curate might be living in a parish which paid less than £150 per year, and out of this he would be paid. Until 1716 a curate was paid £30 or £40 per year. Livings were also too few for the numbers of the clergy; one Oxford graduate, Robert Robson, remained a curate for thirty years and obtained a living only five years before his death.[6] There were also not enough churches, as only ten were built out of the grant given by Queen Anne, while due to the Industrial Revolution the population of the Northern towns was increasing daily and the Church could not meet this. In some areas there was a parish with incomes, but without either a parsonage or church. When a new parson was inducted, a tent was erected upon the site. Competition was fierce for the prebends of large Cathedrals, which could carry an annual stipend of £300 to £450. In some places patrons obstructed the building of new churches, for fear that existing livings would be reduced in value. The Duke of Portland forced the parish of Marylebone to be content with only one church of a capacity of two hundred for a population of forty thousand.

As with other professions, a choice of career was made by a man's parents or patron. The prospective clergyman may have chosen the Church as a profession for the prospects it offered, and not because of his commitments to religion. Patronage was just the same in all the other professions, but seemed more pronounced in the case of the clergy and subject to a greater abuse because they were men of the Church. At

[6]Stuart Andrews, Methodism and Society (Longmans, 1970), pp. 10-21.

Oxford and Cambridge it was not necessary to prove any theological knowledge, and on the Oxford papers there was only one theological question. Once a student had passed his examinations, he could pass to clerical status. Even the examination by a Bishop or chaplain to assess intellectual and moral qualities was only a formality. Some candidates, who had led a dissolute life, used the Church as a means of regaining their respectability, while continuing their past lifestyle. All these abuses, which had been looked upon with disgust and had been the object of attack by critics of the Church, were, with the news of the French Revolution, transformed into sacred traditions against the threat from France.

In 1789 the French Revolution shattered the calm and peace of the Established Church's hold on the religion of England. The Established Church, like the Church of France, was a pillar of a monarchical and autocratic Ancien régime. With its overthrow of French society, the Church of England feared a similar fate in England for the Crown, the Church and the Aristocracy. The first news of the Revolution was greeted by reformists and radicals like Charles Fox and Tom Paine as a wondrous event and congratulations were sent to France on the advent of a new era, after tyranny, as the French King led the liberated people forward. The High Church party led the Established Church at this time and were mainly Tory and orthodox. High Churchmen and members of the laity disliked and mistrusted all innovation, and rested upon a dogmatical and historical view embodying the ideal of a state Church. To them, the Church and State were inseparable and

as they heard how France was forming a separate Church and State their fears grew into panic that the same would happen in England. A policy of no change was advocated by the Church and they spread the alarmist cry of the 'Church in danger' throughout the country. Conservatism now took on a religious character, from which one could not deviate without seeming to be a traitor to one's faith.

The radical Dissenters frightened the Church by their support for the French Revolution, and their debates about whether an Established Church should be allowed to continue to exist. The Dissenters had also in the past tried to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts, but without success. High Churchmen regarded the Dissenters as enemies to all religion, and generally blamed them for all past disturbances, from the murder of Charles I to the Gordon Riots. Not all the Dissenters were radicals; many wished to be accepted as Whigs loyal to the King and Church. The less radical Dissenters, like John Rippon, published their own Protestant Dissenters' Magazine in 1794, to display their loyalty and their opposition to radical extremists like Joseph Priestley. The Dissenting groups were to be found in Whig societies sympathetic to the Revolution throughout the country. The Dissenters had increased in wealth and power since the revolution of 1688 and after 1770, were again growing in membership with the expansion of the middle classes. The Dissenters were conspicuous in the Revolution Society and the London Corresponding Society, which supported liberty and the rights of men. Indeed members of these clubs had been in contact with France before the Revolution,

and sent congratulatory Addresses to them after the storming of the Bastille. They founded reviews and newspapers to express their opinions such as The Monthly Review and Critical Review as well as manifestos and propaganda in The Gentleman's Magazine and The New Annual Register. It was the reaction of the radical Dissenters which enabled the Anti-Jacobin Review to describe the Dissenting attitudes to the French Revolution as 'enthusiasm bordering upon frenzy'.[7]

The Rev. Dr. Richard Price, a Protestant Dissenting minister, was most outspoken in his enthusiasm for the Revolution. At a dinner in 1789, to celebrate the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, Price made a speech drawing a parallel between France and England, and hoped that the Dissenters might be freed as the people in France were. His speech congratulating the French Assembly was published later in November 1789. Price also advocated 'Liberty', 'Equality' and 'Fraternity' and thought that everyone should have the right to question their superiors' actions. The radical Dissenters applauded the new order in France, the reforms of the Gallican Church and the formation of a representative system with elections at national and local levels.

The Dissenters strongly opposed the use of the reception of the Sacrament as a qualification for secular office, and in 1789 attempted to gain a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. This attempt failed, but the Dissenters were encouraged since they lost by only 122 votes to 102. In 1790, they again

[7]Lincoln, English Dissent, p. 51.

tried to repeal the Acts in the wake of the Revolution and on the eve of a general election. After a meeting in 1790 at Leicester, the radical Dissenters resolved that no magistrates had a right or say on religion, and that 'all subjects of a State have a right to eligibility to civil honours'.[8] Their spokesman was Charles Fox, leader of the Whig party. Their last defeat had only been by 102 votes to 122, and the Dissenters were full of confidence. They took their demands further wanting a repeal of the penal statutes on religion and an abolition of ecclesiastical tithes and Church rates. One group from Wakefield, West Yorkshire, had been so rash as to claim the Church of England supported them, and this led to a general outcry and the clergy of Leeds formed a Counter-Association which soon spread to other districts. The Church held firm to its view that the State had a right to test its servants and an alliance between the Church and State. On 1st February 1790, the governing committee of the S.P.C.K. met in Bartlett's Buildings in London and published its resolution that they feared for the safety of the Church if repeal went through, and they thanked those who had refused the last abolition petition. The laity associated with the S.P.C.K. followed this example with a public meeting in Warwick on 2nd February, at which the Established Church was declared to be essential to the British nation. The Rev. C.E. de Coetlogon, Chaplain to the Lord Mayor, preached an alarmist sermon on 11th February, 1790, to the City Council

[8]Lincoln, English Dissent, p. 260.

against repeal. Panic spread through the countryside with the aid of pamphlets and sermons that repeal should be refused and that the Dissenters were a danger to the safety of the nation. In the past, the Dissenters had been branded as 'republicans' by the Church and State. Anglican churchmen now saw them even more clearly in their true light, through their support for France, as Jacobins. It was this view that was used to arouse the passions of the nation. The Dissenters became the victims of provincial persecution.

On March 2nd Fox introduced the bill of repeal, and his speech lasted three hours. He felt that he was speaking on behalf of all who believed in the rights of man. He regarded the tests as absurd and thought that they should be repealed. William Pitt the Prime Minister answered him, disagreeing with what Fox and the Dissenters regarded as rights, but even Pitt wanted toleration. The Whig Edmund Burke spoke next, advancing the argument that the State depended upon the preservation of the Church as by law established. Burke cited the Catechisms of Robert Robinson and Samuel Palmer to illustrate Dissenting prejudice against the Establishment. He also produced an account of a meeting held by Dissenting ministers, which stated that they planned to abolish the tithes and liturgies of the Church, rather than merely to attempt to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts. Fox's arguments that the Dissenters posed no threat to the State or Church was swept away by Burke's declaration that Dr. Joseph Priestley, the radical extremist, scientist and Dissenter, 'hated all religious establishments', and that 'the leading preachers

among the Dissenters were the avowed enemies to the Church of England', and were plotting along similar lines to those of the Revolutionaries in France. These accusations, although difficult to prove, added to the suspicions in many politicians' minds. Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was not achieved and the Dissenters lost by 294 votes to 105. One reason for this could have been that there were more MPs sitting than usual, many of whom were influenced by the 'Church and King' propaganda among their constituents to veto repeal. There was general rejoicing throughout the country. Some patriots went as far as to chalk the majority of parliament, '189', preceded by the words 'Test Act' on Dissenters' doors. In other parts of the country church bells were rung.

The supporters of the Established Church now had another anniversary to celebrate, and as George III joined the 'Church and King' club, their triumph was complete. Nevertheless attempts at repeal had increased the Church's feeling of insecurity and Churchmen placed their trust in 'Church and King' propaganda and the use of the mobs to heighten the nation's sense of danger from France and from Jacobin idealism. The patriotic clubs were opening in most towns, and declared their ultra-conservative attitudes towards all who criticised the Church or State. The radical Dissenters challenged these clubs by forming their own societies, which offered membership to, amongst others, working men with political ambitions.

The most notable spokesman against the Revolution and for the protection of the Establishment was Edmund Burke who

regarded the Revolution as a threat to Church, State and Aristocracy, and as the overturning of Christian civilization. He was indignant at the events in France, especially when he remembered his previous visit to that country, which although short had left a deep impression upon him.

It was Dr. Price's speech back in 1789 that prompted Burke to write his Reflections on the Revolution in France, published in 1790. These Reflections were in the form of a letter to a young Frenchman, Charles-Jean-François Depont. They predicted the fall of France into the hands of the nouveaux riches, whose wealth was the result of confiscated lands, then into terror and disorder, falling finally into the control of a military despot who would be powerful and destructive. Burke feared the Dissenters' attempts at repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and could see England becoming another France if the radical Dissenters had their way.[9] He linked those in England who wanted reform with the French revolutionaries, and so advocated no change, only repression. It was Burke's alarmism that first awakened the nation to the real horrors of neighbouring France, and led to a greater increase in national conservatism.

When Tom Paine, the author of the Age of Reason and defender of the American Revolution, published his book The Rights of Man to counteract Burke's writings, it served the opposite function and illustrated all that Burke warned of. Burke

[9] Philip Anthony Brown M.A., The French Revolution in English History (Crosby, Lockwood and Son, London, 1918), pp. 27-51, 76-100.

believed that any repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts would inevitably weaken the Church, and he was not alone in his view. Conservative movements saw the Church as the last defence against the anarchy and revolution that threatened Britain, to be protected at all costs, even if the price for this was the abandonment of reform. Samuel Horsley was another great antagonist of Paine and Priestley especially on questions of theology and scholarship. Even the tolerant latitudinarian Bishop of Llandaff, Richard Watson, wrote an Apology for the Bible, as an antidote to Paine's attacks on religion, and many other similar tracts and pamphlets were written in defence of the Church.

The first demonstration against the French Revolution was in Birmingham, in 1791. There had been much jealousy on the part of the Church of England clergy who did not like Joseph Priestley. Priestley was a threat to them, as he was in charge of the new meeting house. Priestley had not been part of the movement for the repeal of the Test Act, as more conservative Dissenters disagreed with his pro-French principles and radical views.[10] He belonged to the Unitarian brand of Dissent, not the Orthodox, and regarded the French Revolution in an apocalyptic light as the forecoming of the millennium. The Church of England clergy denied all links with the Birmingham riots, but there is no doubt that like the magistrates they did not try to stop the mobs, but probably encouraged their loyalist feeling. A dinner was planned for July 14th

[10]Albert Goodwin, The Friends of Liberty (Hutchinson of London, 1979), pp. 67-136.

by the Birmingham Constitutional Society. Before the dinner handbills stating that the Crown was 'too heavy' for the head that bore it were discovered, and letters supposedly written by Priestley, plotting against the Church and King. These aroused public feeling as well as the date for the dinner being Bastille Day. A crowd gathered outside the meeting house and jostled the guests as they arrived. At the dinner Dr. Samuel Parr, a prominent Whig, at first refused to toast the Church and King, but then relented adding his own remarks: 'Church and King - once it was the toast of Jacobites; now it is the toast of incendiaries. It means a Church without a Gospel and a King above the laws.'[11] The guests toasted the Constitution and Birmingham as well as France and people. They did nothing which could be interpreted as seditious, but the crowds had been worked up to a frenzy of patriotism, and after the dinner burnt down the meeting house, Dr. Priestley's house and laboratory as well as several other houses. The rioters released prisoners on the following day and the riot was not contained for three days.

It seems that many, including the King, Churchmen and other political leaders, were glad of the riots, regarding them as no more than the Dissenters' just deserts. The 'Champions' of the Church and State claimed responsibility for the riots in Birmingham and later in other towns. The mobs carried placards with 'Church and King' painted on them; they also organised 'Guy Fawkes'-type demonstrations against Tom

[11]S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889 (S.P.C.K., 1937), p.4, pp. 1-25, 68-89.

Paine. These demonstrations were nationwide and usually ended with the battering, burning and shooting of the effigy. An account in December 1792 recalled that the effigy of Thomas Paine was drawn with great solemnity on a sledge from Lincoln castle to the gallows and then hanged, amidst a vast multitude of spectators. After being suspended the usual time it was taken to Castle-hill and there hung on a gibbet post erected for the purpose. In the evening a large fire was made under the effigy, which was then burnt to ashes, amidst the acclamations of many hundreds of people, accompanied with a grand band of music playing "God Save the King".

As the Constitutional Societies grew throughout the country, so did the 'Church and King' clubs. In 1792 John Reeves, a law clerk at the Board of Trade, founded his Anti-Jacobin Association, and 'every organ of authority' was used in Britain to publicise the sufferings of the victims of the guillotine and of the French émigrés, and to counteract English Jacobin propaganda. Songs and poetry were written against people like Joseph Priestley, in support of the Church and King. They were quite simple in style, and no doubt would have been sung to popular tunes like the National Anthem:

> Sedition is their creed;
> Feigned sheep but wolves indeed,
> How can we trust?
> Gunpowder Priestley would
> Deluge the throne in blood,
> And lay the great and good
> Low in the dust.

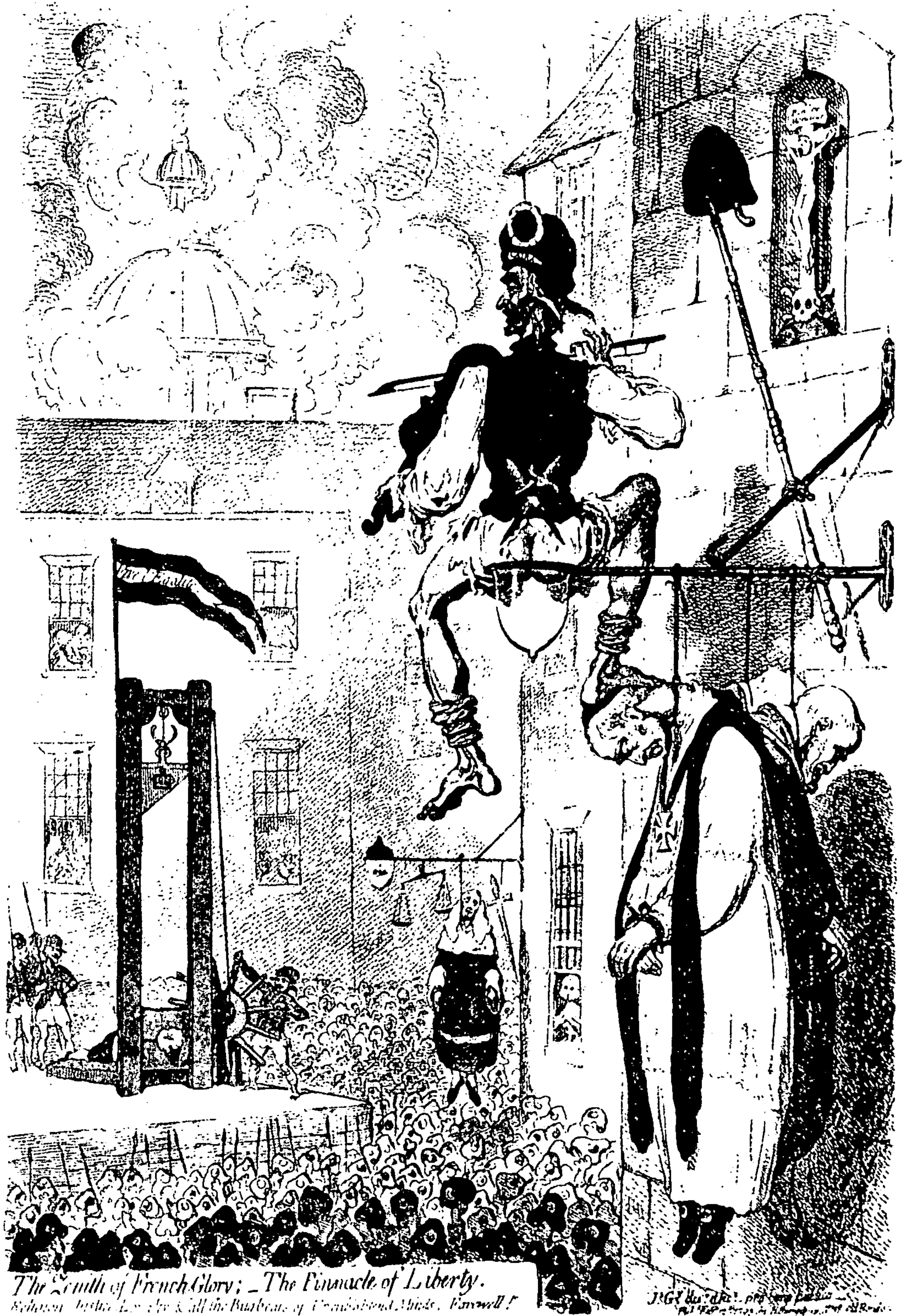
Hist'ry thy page unfold:
Did not their sires of old
Murder their king?
And they would overthrow
King, Lords and Bishops too,
And while they gave the blow
Loyally sing.[12]

The radical Dissenters were denounced as descendants of the regicides of Charles I. 'Gunpowder Priestley' is a reference to reports that Joseph Priestley wanted to blow up churches with gunpowder. This report may have arisen from his supposed speeches about laying powder to blow up the old building of error and superstition. The mobs gradually dispersed and the religious establishment relied on legal and economic pressures to curb religious deviance.

In an effort to drive home the warning of what could happen in England should France invade, the Established Church used its own magazines and poetry to great effect. The cartoonist James Gillray helped the 'Church and King' campaign with his satirical and horrendous drawings of both France and England. These drawings reflected the popular feeling of the country, and showed the opposition in a sinister light. Fox was often portrayed as a French Jacobin if not worse. After the execution of Louis XVI Gillray published 'The Zenith of French Glory... A view in perspective', which illustrates the real horror of the execution of Louis on the 21st of January 1792. This cartoon (plate 47)[13] depicts the Church and Justice being hung _à la lanterne_ and the French Jacobin triumphing

[12]C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, _The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, vol. 2_ (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1878), pp. 401-407.

[13]Draper Hill, _Mr. Gillray, The Caricaturist, A Biography_ (The Phaidon Press, London, 1965), plate 47.



47. *The Zenith of French Glory*. 12 February 1793. (p. 44)

with his foot on the Gallican Church. In this plate Gillray makes a mockery of the French ideals of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, showing that they are really the opposite to what they claim to be. The horror depicted by Gillray reflected the reactions of the Established Church and nation at the destruction of government, religion and justice in France. On 20th October 1796 Gillray published a series of plates illustrating what could happen in Great Britain if the French invasion were to be successful. In one plate[14], Canning is shown hanging back to back with the Tory Robert Banks Jenkinson, later Lord Hawksbury, from a lamp outside of White's the Tory Club opposite the Whig club Brooks in St. James's Street, while Pitt, who is tied to the 'Tree of Liberty', is flogged by a French Fox.

The Anti-Jacobin Review, set up by George Canning in 1797 to rival the Dissenting papers, worked in conjunction with Gillray's illustrations. This Review, first started as a weekly journal of news and satire, appeared every Monday that parliament was sitting. It was published by John Wright, with the author of the satirical poems Baviad and Maeviad, William Gifford, as its editor. It was supported strongly by the government. Canning enlisted the help of Gillray to boost the popularity of the Review, which was soon published under the new title of the New Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine. It was a success, reflecting the opinions that the government wanted, while the illustrations showed England's triumph over

[14]Hill, Mr. Gillray, plate 65.

65. *Promis'd Horrors of the French Invasion.* 20 October 1796. (p. 63)

France in the war, and the Whigs' despondency. Anti-Jacobin poetry was published separately and in 1799 there appeared Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin by John Wright, and The Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin from the press of C. Chapple. Gillray did a series of engravings for these. These instruments of propaganda helped to keep public opinion against reform, the Dissenters and above all the French. Robert Hall, the Baptist, commented on the violent abuse in the Anti-Jacobin Review that 'attachment to the King were to be measured by hatred to the Dissenters'. They helped to strengthen the Church's position in society, ensuring that the bloodshed and de-christianization of France would not occur in Britain. The Church became a bastion of safety, and as such had to be pampered. As Sydney Smith later remarked, the government only had to cry out 'the Church is in danger' and it achieved its object.

By attacking the French Revolution as the enemy of Christianity, English statesmen gave the Christian Church a new declaration of its importance as the central institution in British society, and the ultimate sanction of the social and political order, which the Revolution threatened to destroy. It was this counter-revolutionary role, thrust upon the Church, and eagerly accepted by it, which provided certain conservative Churchmen with fresh opportunities to influence government policy. Thus one consequence of the French Revolution was the emergence of a party of conservative High Churchmen, who had increasing influence upon the direction of ecclesiastical policy in the Church. This party were known as the Hackney

Phalanx or Clapton Sect and consisted of the 'High and dry' clergy. The Hackney Phalanx was the centre for all orthodox Churchmen who wished for the true definition of doctrine and greater activity in the Church. The circle of friends was built around Joshua Watson, the well liked wine merchant, and his elder brother John James Watson, Rector of Hackney and Archdeacon of St. Albans. Joshua Watson's brother-in-law was Henry Handley Norris, an incumbent of a district of Hackney. The Watsons were connected through marriage and relation to Thomas Sikes of Guilsborough as well as Archdeacon Charles Daubeny, both noted High Churchmen. Among their friends were William Van Mildert, a scholar and divine, later Bishop of Durham, and Christopher Wordsworth, brother of the poet and later Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Their conservatism gained the support of William Gifford and Robert Southey as well as William Wordsworth.[15] Wordsworth regarded the teaching of the Hackney Phalanx as a defence for England against liberalist manipulation. The Hackney Phalanx held to the teachings of the Early Church, and supported the authority of the Early Church against lay and state tyranny. They were sober and grave and disagreed with all forms of 'enthusiasm'. They believed in justification by works as well as faith in mass popular preaching. The Phalanx strongly disapproved of the Dissenters, and this is apparent in the attitude of Joshua Watson, who was against the sale by the S.P.C.K. of books written by Nonconformists, and would not associate with any. The party helped in all matters of Church work both in

[15]Francis Warre Cornish, M.A., The English Church in the Nineteenth Century, part 1 (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1910), pp. 62-100.

Britain and in foreign missions. Their support was both financial and literary, in the form of articles to The British Critic, the High Church paper. William Stevens helped many of the Church's voluntary societies, including the S.P.C.K., and had been the treasurer of Queen Anne's bounty. He was an authority on the Hebrew text of Scripture and used the nom-de-plume 'Nobody'. Stevens founded an imaginary association for charitable works under the title the 'Berean Society' of which he was the sole member and he also set up a club called Nobody's Friends. This club achieved its importance as a gathering place for the leaders of the Hackney Phalanx like Watson and Handley Norris.

Throughout the French Revolution, this group was growing in influence as the nation looked more and more to the Church and the government sought to strengthen it against attack. The Hackney Phalanx had the full support of the government among whom it had several friends. The increased population due to the expansion of the large cities worried the Church as the Nonconformist groups were expanding, sometimes at the expense of the Established Church. Lack of churches also meant that many people had nowhere to go on a Sunday, and were not following a Christian way of life and would be open to influence from Dissenters and Jacobins. In 1811, a series of letters were addressed to the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, concerning the state of the Church. During the reign of George III, hardly a dozen churches had been built. These letters also expressed the fears of Churchmen that children being educated by the 'National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the

poor in the principles of the Established Church', which was set up in 1811 by Norris and Watson, would have no Church to attend. The principal leader in the movement for more churches was not the Prime Minister, although he supported it, but Charles Daubeny who was helped by Watson with John Bowles as the guiding force. John Bowdler, with James Alan Park, later Justice of the Common Pleas, Watson and Daubeny wrote to Bishop Howley of London on May 4th 1814, stating that the cramped conditions in London's churches and other parts of the Kingdom meant that not one tenth of the nominally Anglican population could be fitted in. They blamed these conditions for the great number of defections to the Methodists. Watson and the rest of the group wanted the Bishop to sanction a meeting to draw up a plan for church building, which could be submitted to the Bishop, the Prince Regent and the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1815, Bowdler wrote to Lord Liverpool for aid, but Liverpool although sympathetic could not supply them with government money so soon after the excesses of war. The petitioners formed the Church Building Society, which in 1817 received an answer from Lord Liverpool suggesting they should approach the Archbishop and Bishop of London. The Society gained their approval, and the Duke of York became its patron with the Archbishop as president. The Church Building Society was constituted at a general meeting at the Freemasons Tavern on February 6th, 1818. About £50,000 was raised through subscription and was used to build churches in places where they were needed most.

This Society was patronised by the King, Archbishops and

Bishops as well as Oxford, Cambridge and City financiers. The Society gave grants to churches in which all the sittings, or not less than half, were free, as many clergymen had lost their congregations through locked pews.

The Prince Regent in a speech on January 27th 1818 made mention of the Church's plight and in March the Chancellor of the Exchequer Nicholas Vansittart, President of the Bible Society, proposed that investigations should be made into the Church's problem and that a million in sterling should be invested in church building. The government wanted the formation of new church parishes and these would be supported by pew rents from which the poor were to be exempt. Vansittart's bill faced little opposition. The Whig radical, Lord Holland, pointed out the difficulties of Chapels and Meeting halls who paid tithes and had no interest in the Church of England and he advised parliament to implement an Act similar to that of 1797, which sequested two prebends of Lichfield to repair the Cathedral. The bill was passed, and Watson, Cambridge and Christopher Wordsworth implemented it. With the increase of money to the Church, conditions improved and curates received higher wages of £75 per annum. The standard of clerical entry was also improved.

In 1820, Lord Liverpool told William Wilberforce that 'it must be a great satisfaction to us all to have observed the great improvement which has taken place in the clergy of the Established Church in the course of the last twenty, and even ten years ... now it is found that the best educated

are amongst the most correct'. In 1824 another £500,000 was voted for England and Scotland from a loan paid back by Austria after the war. In 1828 the Society was incorporated by the Act of Parliament and collections were made under Royal letters. Between 1818 and 1833 about six million pounds was spent on church building. There were many problems for the Society such as incumbents and parishioners being obstructive and existing accommodation not being used to the full, and there was also discomfort over free sittings. Bowdler, who was concerned with the economy of the Society, favoured humbler churches rather than large ornate buildings for the rich. Such buildings were a source of complaint as they drove away the poor and much money was wasted in this way. A large decorative church could cost from £15,000 to £28,000. The poor were packed in the back of these churches on narrow pews and only a few of the new churches provided proprietary seats for them. This happened in some large towns, although beneficial work was done, but in some country areas where small churches were neglected they fell into ruin. The clergy wanted to use the church building movement to bring the nation back to the Church by giving them somewhere to worship. Throughout the French Revolution and the subsequent wars, the Church had been protected by the State, which was giving large sums of money for church building and church education. The government had built up the Church, but with the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts and the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1828-29, the Church was shocked into realising it now had to fight to keep its privileged place in society and its right to existence.

The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was the first sign of a major shift in the Church-State relationship.[16] The repeal removed the Church's position of privilege and made Churchmen rethink the idea of an established Church, and its opponents question the whole idea of an established Church. The Bishop of Lincoln, John Kaye, disagreed with the opponents of the repeal and remarked that 'the Church might be separated from the State - its ministers might be ejected from their benefices - its revenues might be transferred to the support of other denominations or diverted to secular purposes - but still it would continue to exist as a religious community.'[17] Archdeacon Edward Berens declared that the government should consider how Church property should advance religion in his Church Reform by a Churchman. Lord Henley, Peel's brother-in-law, however wanted the State to administer and redistribute State property through a board of commission, but Peel opposed this. Those in the Church, like Bishop Charles Blomfield of London, wanted to give it a new security which was lost by the 1828-29 parliamentary Acts of Emancipation and repeal. The Church-State union which had been strengthened to such an extent during the French Revolution was greatly weakened by the entry of the radicals, Protestants, Non-conformists and Roman Catholics into parliament following the Emancipation Bill and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

[16]Olive J. Brose, Church and Parliament (Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 7-21.

[17]Ibid., p. 14.

The Evangelicals are also part of the Church of England, but were not always approved of by their counterparts in the Established Church. The Evangelicals, their development and reactions to the French Revolution, are described in the following chapter. This is a separate chapter from the one on the Church of England, in order to do justice to the immense activity of the Evangelicals during this period.

CHAPTER 3.

THE EVANGELICALS 1790 - 1830

'Nor do I think our Church wants mending,
But I do think it wants attending.'[1]

'the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.'[2]

'the people ... have become better, more frugal, more honest, more respectable, more virtuous than ever before.'[3]

[1] S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889 (S.P.C.K., 1937), p. 8. From Hannah More's Village Politics, in answer to the radical Tom Paine.

[2] A. Armstrong, The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850 (University of London Press Ltd., 1973), p. 133.

[3] M. Hennell, Sons of the Prophets (S.P.C.K., London, 1979), p.4, pp. 1-16. An observation made by Francis Place, no friend to Evangelicalism, on the impact of the Evangelicals upon Society at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The name 'Evangelical' was first given to a group of clergymen in the 1730s because of their zeal and determination to spread the Evangel or Gospel. The period of 1730-1790 was the age of the early Evangelicals, who were closely connected with the Methodists, especially George Whitefield whose Calvinist convictions influenced Evangelical doctrine. Moderate Calvinism was a feature of the Church of England Evangelical. A prominent centre for Evangelicalism was Cambridge under the guardianship of Charles Simeon. Simeon was a fellow of King's College and from 1783, vicarship of Holy Trinity. He was a decisive character dedicated to his mission, and shortly after his arrival at Holy Trinity, church attendance increased in response to the attraction of his preaching. Simeon used his position at Cambridge to forward Evangelicalism. Undergraduates were an especially potent force who could carry 'gospel Christianity' to the outside world, especially as so many of them were destined for the Anglican ministry. Simeon provided sermon classes for ordinands, and on a Friday evening held 'conversation parties' for instructing them in sermon presentation. His was the only such specialist instruction available for training the clergy. Holy Trinity was not the only Evangelical centre at Cambridge; at Queen's College, Isaac Milner, a man of overwhelming personality also furthered Evangelicalism amongst the clergy to whom he was a tremendous source of pastoral advice. He was greatly respected for his position, at Queen's as President,

as holder of Newton's chair and occupant of three ecclesiastical and academic sinecures. He was a great conversationalist, with a straightforward genial character, and disliked all that was false. In influence, only Simeon equalled him.

Anglican Evangelicals were theologically and socially conservative, insisting that their doctrine came from the Scriptures and the Reformation, and declaring that this doctrine was to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles, the Prayer Book and the Books of Homilies. The Evangelical movement embraced all levels of society, but their greatest success was among the middle and upper classes who flocked to their meetings. Unlike the Methodists, they did not employ lay preachers, especially in the administration of the Communion, and worked mainly within the confines of a parish. There were some itinerant preachers such as Henry Venn and John Berridge of Everton, who left their parishes, believing other areas needed to be saved and before 1795 were totally united, but after this date due to reaction to the Revolution in France, split up. The Evangelical movement was patronised by the wealthy and influential politicians and businessmen.

Cambridge's sister University[4], Oxford, also had an Evangelical centre, but not on the scale of Cambridge, as on the whole Oxford was more hostile towards the Evangelicals. St. Edmund's Hall, under the guidance of Isaac Crouch and Daniel Wilson, trained those hoping to take orders.[5] Unlike Cambridge,

[4]E. Jay, The Evangelical and Oxford Movements (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-19.

[5]J.S. Reynolds, The Evangelicals at Oxford 1735-1871 (Marcham Manor Press, 1975), pp. 58-102.

St. Edmund's Hall was not a great power in the University, but did lay the foundation for future Evangelical influence. Oxford Evangelicalism did not have its advantage in Cambridge of access to a parish pulpit from which Evangelical doctrines could be preached. Isaac Crouch was the principal founder of Evangelicalism at Oxford, and has often been compared to Simeon at Cambridge. Crouch on Sunday evenings held reading parties which were attended by about half a dozen undergraduates of the hall, and every member of the Evangelical 'little Societies' numbering about thirty in all. Others were invited to dinner once a term and to visit him at home to sample Evangelicalism in a home setting. Oxford did not attract as many 'great' names as Cambridge. The majority of those trained there went on to inconspicuous parish work which formed the mainstay of the Evangelical movement and Anglican system. However, such men as William Marsh, a clergyman, Daniel Wilson, later Metropolitan of India, and Henry Martyn, the missionary pioneer, did come from Oxford.

The other major centre of Evangelicalism was Clapham. This group of Evangelicals were given the name the Clapham Sect by Sidney Smith in a facetious mood. The Evangelicals felt the ridicule behind this name and had no desire to be thought a sect as they were loyal to the Church of England.[6] The Clapham Sect were a very influential, well informed and decisive group within the Church. It aimed through campaigns, leaflets and petitions to make the world a more moral and conscientious place to live, and wanted to impress a new set of governing ideals on

[6]A. Smith, The Established Church and Popular Religion 1750-1850 (Longmans, 1971), pp. 51-57.

British society. During the early years of the French Revolution, a group of Evangelicals settled at Clapham Common. Henry Thornton was the first to build a house there in 1792, and other houses were soon built for his friends. The membership of the Clapham Sect included William Wilberforce, a politician and close friend of William Pitt, Charles Grant of the East India Company, Edward Eliot, Pitt's brother-in-law, Zachary Macauley, the abolitionist, and a parliamentary block of twenty known as the 'Saints'.[7] Hannah More, her sister and Charles Simeon were frequent visitors to Clapham. The Clapham Sect were, on the whole, wealthy with large incomes which they used for charitable purposes. Their campaigns, which were prolific and various, ranged from the prevention of vice to the abolition of the slave trade. The Clapham Sect were often attacked by those they were campaigning against, as being conspirators plotting their next move at Clapham.

The golden age of the Clapham Sect lasted for about forty years from 1790 to 1830. Its members attended Clapham Parish Church, where John Venn was Rector. The Evangelicals at Clapham found the poverty and deprivation that affected the rest of the country prevalent in their parish. The Clapham Sect set themselves up as an example to the nation, to reform its way of life. William Wilberforce, not long after his conversion at the age of twenty seven, declared that he could not be an onlooker of any project for the welfare of mankind, because 'God has set

[7] Sir James Stephen, Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. 2 (Longman, Brown and Green and Longmans, London, 1853), pp. 289-385.

before me ... the reformation of my country's manners'.[8] Hannah More wrote her Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society in 1788, which was directed towards the conversion of the rich. Hannah More also sought to educate the working population of the Mendips, where she lived. John Venn visited every house and taught scripture in the local charity school. Every child of the parish was taught its catechism, and prepared for Confirmation, with Holy Communion celebrated every second Sunday. By the end of his life John Venn was able to say that every child in his parish could read and write, and every family had a Bible and place in Church.

The Clapham Sect's political stance was a paradox in many ways. Its members were politically conservative, but innovative as well, both supporting and criticising Pitt's repressive measures, even though Pitt was a personal friend of Wilberforce and others at Clapham. Although the Clapham Sect disliked discontent and disruption, it could stir up public feeling in a good cause. The Evangelicals at Clapham agreed with certain parliamentary reforms and vigorously supported the movement for Catholic Emancipation. During the period of the French Revolution they supported the government's campaigns for the protection of the Church and State, and preached many sermons against revolution in defence of the Constitution. The Evangelicals connected morality with politics, and the appearance of the French Revolution provided them with a means of doing this.

The reports of de-Christianization and chaos in France struck terror into the hearts of Government and Churchmen in

[8]Stephen, Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. 2, p. 249.

Britain. The political climate changed, reform and democracy were treason and the Constitution must be preserved at all cost. The Evangelicals used this favourable climate to influence the government and the nation only through a reformation of manners. William Pitt listened to many Evangelical suggestions, and William Cobbett named the friendship between Pitt and Evangelicals like Wilberforce the 'Pitt System'.[9] The French Revolution brought the upper classes closer to religion through the idea that it was vital for them to put their own affairs in order, because of their vulnerability to political agitation. Henry Thornton, curate at Clapham and a member of the Clapham Sect, at first sympathised with the revolutionaries, but once order collapsed in France, he no longer respected them. The Evangelical view was that a liberty that ignored interest was only another form of tyranny, and an equality which disregarded property was theft. The Evangelicals wanted to prevent the ignorant and simple minded from being led astray by French principles, which were preached by radicals such as Tom Paine, and by the French and Painite propaganda pamphlets which were flooding the country. To counteract these pamphlets, the Evangelicals issued their own tracts which would reach all levels of society, and which only cost a penny each. Henry Thornton described the French Revolution as 'an experiment made upon human nature', and pointed out that 'when men are thus left to follow nature, and are released from their subjection to the laws both of God and of Civil Society, iniquity will not fail dreadfully to predominate...

[9] Armstrong, The Church of England, p. 132

religion and virtue are the true cement of society'.[10] Without God's help man could not hope to govern and those who dispensed with God, as the French did, were doomed to chaos in this world and the next. The pamphlets and leaflets of the Evangelicals illustrated what awaited those who disregarded God and the Scriptures. Throughout the era of the Revolution, the Evangelicals turned their attention upon all areas of society.

At the time of the French Revolution William Wilberforce, William Pitt and other supporters of the abolition of slavery were trying to pass a bill to end the supply of slaves to foreigners and terminate the British trade.[11] This campaign was pioneered by Granville Sharp in 1787, and support increased to such an extent that hopes were high for the passage of a bill. Many pamphlets and poems were written on the plight of the African negroes in captivity. Hannah More wrote The Black Slave Trade, and the poet William Cowper wrote five poems, the best known being 'The Negroes' Complaint'. William Wilberforce was a great asset to the campaign, which was first suggested to him by Pitt. Wilberforce was a powerful speaker and of remarkable appearance with many influential friends. The Abolition Committee put forward a moral case against the slave trade with petitions and evidence against the trade. Josiah Wedgewood even produced a cameo engraved with the figure of a negro and the inscription

[10]For Henry Thornton's views on the French Revolution see Standish Meacham, Henry Thornton of Clapham 1760-1815 (Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 65, pp. 14-26, 63-90.

[11]Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810 (The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975), pp. 255-286, 321-343.

'Am I not a man and a brother?'[12] The Abolitionists set up Corresponding Committees to promote their campaign. In 1791, the motion for abolition was defeated by the government. Wilberforce tried again, but this time he wanted to secure an agreement in the Commons which would terminate the supply of slaves to foreigh countries and the British trade in 1796. The House of Lords delayed and decided that more evidence was needed and would be heard next session. This delay was disastrous for news soon reached England of new upheaval in France, and Wilberforce was advised to postpone his campaign.

The slave uprisings in San Domingo in 1792 convinced those who had corporations in that country not to give Negroes their freedom, as it would be a dangerous and foolish act. These uprisings were a result of the Declaration of Rights which the coloured inhabitants thought applied to them. However, the French colonists reacted violently against the Declaration and so it was retracted on the subject of slaves, but not before the idea of equality spread to other slave colonies.[13] Traders and plantation owners in the Caribbean feared that the absence of the slave trade would weaken their hold in that area, which the French would exploit. The slave trade was part of a business triangle, linking Great Britain, West Africa and the West Indies. Exports were made to West Africa, with the slaves collected on the way to the West Indies. The wealth and prosperity of British towns such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Bristol depended

[12]Armstrong, The Church of England, p. 137

[13]Sir James Stephen, Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. 2, pp. 205-288.

in part on this trade. The slave traders triumphed, and humanity and common sense were suppressed.

Henry Dundas, the Home Secretary, was a strong advocate of the slave trade, and once some of the panic had subsided, he proposed a substitute for abolition with a remote cessation date, but this was not given a warm reception in parliament. The French Revolution affected all future proposals as it progressed. Thomas Clarkson, who was an evangelical and with the abolition movement, was regarded with suspicion by some Tory politicians, because of a visit he made to Paris in 1789 and because he was not an anti-Jacobin. Pitt warned Wilberforce that Clarkson should take care after Pitt's agents observed him meeting with the London Corresponding Society. In 1792, Wilberforce received three defeats on the slave trade issue. The first was in the House of Commons which rejected his proposal for immediate abolition. Their next step was a motion to restrict the numbers of slaves annually imported into the Colonies, with a further plan to prohibit the employment of British capital when introducing slaves into foreign settlements. Their idea was again rejected. As the Revolution progressed into war with France, so the transport of slaves lessened, due to the vigilance of the British blockades at sea.

The French Revolution also encouraged the popularity of radical speakers such as Joseph Priestley and Tom Paine, and by the spread of their radical idealism. These radicals and Dissenters joined the Campaign for abolition, thus weakening the credibility of the Evangelicals in the eyes of Churchmen

and anti-Jacobins. The Evangelicals had worked with the Dissenters before and regarded their aim of salvation as the same, but the Evangelicals were afraid of jeopardising their precarious position. The radicals wanted to use the abolition campaign as another political and social platform for reform. Wilberforce wrote to William Hey that 'these Jacobins are all friendly to the abolition; and it is no less true and natural that it operates to the injury of our cause'. The Evangelicals were branded as revolutionaries and levellers; anyone who supported their campaign was plotting against the King and Country and was guilty of sedition. The debate of April 1792 in Parliament linked abolition with levelling principles and strongly opposed it. Pamphlets by the opponents of abolition denounced the Evangelicals. One of these pamphlets, an anonymous work, The Jacobins of England, grouped Wilberforce with Thomas Cooper, Tom Paine and Thomas Clarkson, stating that abolition was the promotion of fanaticism and false philosophy.

The attacks on the Evangelicals within the Church of England worsened as radical sympathy for abolition became widely known. The radical political societies like the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information loudly supported it, so that the tone of the abolition movement changed, as many Tories connected it with the principles of Democracy and Reform.

At Cambridge, Charles Simeon's youth meetings had expanded by 1792 into classes for those who followed his preaching. In Cambridge, disturbances had broken out over the French Revolution,

and protest groups organised meetings and marches against the levellers and republicans spouting French idealism. Simeon tried to preach calm and moderation to his congregation, to prevent their involvement in any tumult. Nevertheless, several of his parishioners were embittered towards him, and he was forced to ask those who were faithful followers to meet in a private room for prayer and Bible study once a week. Their membership soon increased and they moved to larger accommodation. Simeon organised his classes and groups very much on the lines of Wesley's classes. He appointed leaders for each separate small society, and a system of caring for the poor and the sick in the district. Simeon's idea was soon taken up by other Evangelical clergy, such as John Venn at Clapham and Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow; it was also used as an example at the first specialist Theological Colleges, in 1816 at St. Bees and later in 1828 at Lampeter.

In 1793, Wilberforce sought to hasten matters in the House of Lords by a further motion in the House of Commons, and the Abolition Committee renewed its approaches to its parliamentary supporters. The measure failed by eight votes, and was postponed in the House of Lords. George III was opposed to abolition, regarding it as a threat to the well-being of the Kingdom, as did the Duke of Clarence, his son. In 1793 the Earl of Abingdon said: 'What does the abolition of the slave trade mean more or less in effect, than liberty and equality? What more or less than the rights of man? and what is liberty and equality, and what the rights of man, but the foolish fundamental principles of this new philosophy?[14] Wilberforce, however, refused to let

[14]Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, p.317.

the panic which followed the Revolution discourage him and fought on.

The Evangelicals strongly disapproved of the radical writings of Tom Paine and organised a quick and effective campaign against them. In answer to Paine's The Rights of Man, Hannah More on March 3rd 1795 published Cheap Repository Tracts, which appeared three times a month, with an association set up after a year to distribute them using Henry Thornton as Treasurer and Zachary Macaulay as the agent. Mrs. More wrote many of these tracts, such as The History of Mr. Fenton the new-fashioned Philosopher. The tracts were designed to reach the poorer members of society, and one hundred and fourteen of them were written. Other writers were Rowland Hill and Leigh Richmond among many and soon the tracts were an established feature of Evangelicalism. The Evangelicals afterwards stated that it was through these tracts that so many were converted and led serious religious lives.

In 1794, the House of Commons for the first time passed a bill of immediate abolition; however, the Peers intervened and the bill was defeated. Wilberforce continued to labour to induce the House of Commons to resume the motion which was passed, and he also recorded the fact that a party of his supporters were lured away from a parliamentary debate by the attraction of a new opera, The Two Hunchbacks, with the great vocalist of the day, Signor Portugello. The acquisition of new colonies also helped the supporters of the slave trade to gain increased parliamentary interest. Wilberforce was not at

all popular at this time with his constituents and other members of the government, as he opposed Pitt on the question of the French wars and wanted Pitt to make known his negotiations with France in Parliament. A treaty was proposed to France: if she would keep to her limits and not molest her neighbours she would be left alone to settle her own internal affairs. By the close of 1795, Pitt himself agreed with Wilberforce's view, as the war was not popular and Lord Malmesbury's negotiation followed. This negotiation failed and the war continued.

The situation of the country in 1795 was in chaos. In the Navy there were mutinies which started in the Channel fleet and spread to Portsmouth Harbour. The sailors wanted better pay and conditions, as well as the abolition of the hated press-gang. There were fears that the mutineers would hand their vessels over to the enemy.[15] The country was riotous, indolent and in a state of drunkenness and apathy towards religion. Wilberforce, while taking a tour of his constituency in Yorkshire in 1796, was appalled at the scenes that met his eyes.[16] Many parishes did not have Sunday services and the practice of Church going had greatly decreased in some areas. Poverty and dissoluteness met him wherever he went. These circumstances prompted Wilberforce to write A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country contrasted with real Christianity, published in 1797. This work contrasted with the religion of the day with the chief points of Christian doctrine. Wilberforce

[15] E. Halévy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century (Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1961), pp. 56-7.

[16] I. Bradley, The Call to Seriousness (Jonathan Cape, 1976), pp. 19-74.

had long wanted to write this work, but would not publish it until the time was right. It became the handbook of the Evangelicals and had huge sales. The Evangelicals rebelled against the staticism of the Church of England and wanted greater action in preaching as well as works. Wilberforce's book appealed to the higher and middle classes the more so because he rejected the Methodists' otherworldly suspicions of immoral pleasures like dancing and singing. It highlighted the doctrines of the Evangelical revival, expounding the claim that Christianity was a 'vital religion', an intense all-consuming faith which appealed to the emotions.[17] Wilberforce regarded John Wesley as an example of this Christianity, and asserted that 'the prevalence of Evangelical Christianity would assist the cause of order and good government'. The social crisis for them was moral, not political, and Wilberforce hoped that through individual conversion he might gain national regeneration. The dechristianization occurring in France helped to strengthen the Evangelicals' campaign for morality and the worship of the Sabbath. A person who was motivated by 'vital Christianity' would not want worldly things or human praise, but would do their Christian duty. Practical Christianity would help to lessen the unfortunate effects of inequalities in society and also prevent the revolutionary situation which existed in France. In his History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century[18], Elie Halévy states that the Evangelicals like the Methodists influenced the middle classes against revolution.

[17]Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (Heinemann, London, 1974), p. 111, pp. 178-182.

[18]E. Halévy, History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 450-1.

For Halévy religion 'led to individual self-restraint' which helped to foster morality[19] and the chief apostles of such a restraint were Wilberforce and his fellow Evangelicals.

The Evangelicals' attitude was severe. In the schools run by Evangelicals the pupils were to have qualities 'friendly' to the growth of Christianity; their consciences were to be awakened and made attractive, submissive, passive and rational instead of obstinate and lacking in understanding. Those Evangelicals who were wealthy did not wish to undermine the class structure through their education of the poor, but their faith moved them to improve the lot of those who were less fortunate. In Clapham the poor subscribed to the parish Poor Society to buy food and coal at cheap rates. This practice was taken up by other London parishes in the 1790s. In 1799 John Venn founded the 'Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor at Clapham', and divided the poor into two categories, the deserving and undeserving. The Evangelicals, like the Methodists, used self help to instil into the poor good principles to take them to a state of independence and a high character. They often wrote pamphlets showing a person before and after; a man may have been drunk or poor and miserable, now he is sober, prosperous and happy, moral and religious.

There were, of course, fears that the Evangelicals would lead the poor astray, especially in their Sunday schools which were growing rapidly, particularly after Hannah More and her sister Martha's work in the Mendips. After ten years of work there

[19] R. Moore, Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics (Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 7, pp. 1-28.

were now 3,000 children attending in twelve parishes. The schools fought against ignorance and poverty, and contended with resistance from farmers and indifferent clergy. The schools were unpopular at first because of the fears that they would encourage Jacobinism; the poor were to be taught to read the Bible, but they could also read Tom Paine's revolutionary works. From 1798 and for many years after attacks were made on the Evangelicals by John Gifford, the editor of the Anti-Jacobin Review. It is ironical to note that Charles Simeon helped to set up the magazine and that the Evangelicals were anti-Jacobins. The Review stressed the danger the Church faced from Evangelical teaching and preaching. John Gifford repeatedly warned against the strength and activity of the Evangelicals who were increasing. He regarded the Sunday schools as the 'Nurseries of fanaticism'[20] and High Churchmen agreed, believing these schools to be agencies to spread political radicalism and encouragement to the French Revolution. It was only after 1801, with the first peace, that the prejudices were slowly dropped; with the spread of Evangelical theology, men's attitudes to slavery once again turned to the treatment of their fellow beings. Liberty was welcomed and slavery condemned.

In 1802 Wilberforce again proposed abolition to Parliament, but was defeated by the forceful arguments of George Canning. In 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded to spread the Bible all over Europe in every language to help repair some of the damage caused by French propaganda. This Society was

[20] F.K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians (Cambridge, 1961), p. 156, pp. 169-70, 527-8, 487-534.

a testimony to the place that the Bible was gaining in public esteem and cut through the argument that not just anybody should have a copy. Both the Evangelical Missionary and Educational Societies were expanding. Wilberforce and Hannah More worked hand in hand with Robert Owen to educate factory children. Henry Martyn translated the Bible into Hindustani and Persian, and later visited Persia. The death of Pitt helped the abolitionists when Fox and Grenville took over; both were strong abolitionists. When the threat of the French Revolution lessened, the Act for abolition was passed in 1808. The Act was not strong enough and was continually abused. The Evangelicals made themselves guardians of this Act and wanted it extended to international level.

In 1812, Wilberforce promoted the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor. The Evangelical clergy were gaining a hold in the Established Church and coming to form a distinct party. The Evangelical societies met each year in May to discuss the progress of their missions and campaigns and from around 1830 these meetings centred upon Exeter Hall and strengthened the Evangelicals' political stance within the Established Church. The percentage of Evangelical clergy in the Church increased from one in twenty to one in eight. In 1815 Henry Ryder became the first Evangelical Bishop, and in 1817 Simeon started a Trust to secure advowsons for Evangelical clergy, with the purchase of the Patronage of Cheltenham. The Evangelicals now had the opportunity to fill the Church with serious clergymen and to ensure a proper gospel ministry in every parish. Another clerical fund raising

organisation was the Elland Society in Yorkshire and the London Clerical Education Society in 1818. These funds were in plentiful supply due to public support which had increased since the French Revolution. Advowsons were the right of a patron to present a clergyman with a living. One great Evangelical patron was the second Earl of Dartmouth, who purchased nearly a dozen advowsons, and at Clapham Henry Thornton held the advowson, and secured the approval of the Evangelical clergy. However, the success of the leaders of the Evangelical party created its own problems. From a minority to the favour of the fashionable world led to a reaction against the increasing respectability of the movement, into a more pronounced otherworldliness. This took the form of premillennialism.

Many Evangelicals regarded the French Revolution as God's instrument to bring down the Anti-Christ, until events in France swung to the left and dechristianization began. France was seen as the Beast of Revelations, with Britain as God's agent, and Millennialists expected the beginning of the Millennium shortly, and hoped that if the Anti-Christ fell in France, the Protestant and not the Catholic religion would be restored; thus the need to spread Christianity to the heathen and Jews was pressing. Through their missions they hoped God would remove the objects of division within Christianity and the Golden Age of Christianity would return, during which the saints would rule the earth for a thousand years. The Millennialists split into two factions in the 1820s; one group thought that Christ would return before the millennium and the second group thought after, so there was contention in these factions as to when they

should prepare for the New Age. In the 1820s the Millennialists, like Edward Irving, were at their height.[21] He was a fashionable preacher in London and was loved by many who heard him, such as Charles Lamb and Thomas Carlyle. Like other millennialists he saw the Revolution as the beginning of the end and regarded the world and churches so lost that only the Second Coming could redeem them.[22] He reached the height of his fame from 1826-1830, with the first of the Evangelical conferences on prophesy in the 1820s held at Albury Park, the home of the banker Henry Drummond, where he often preached. Out of this pre-millennial group arose the Catholic Apostolic Church. One of Irving's first battles with the religion of the day was in 1824 when he preached a three and a half hour sermon on the 'ideal missionary' which was totally different from the clergy and missions of the 1820s. Drummond was a high Tory who was immensely rich and devoutly Evangelical and who later took over this group after revelations that the New Universal Church was to be centred at his country seat. The working classes also looked forward to the Second Coming when all would be equal.

Two more Evangelicals were made Bishops, Charles Sumner of Llandaff in 1826 and John Bird Sumner of Chester in 1828. During Lord Liverpool's period of office very few Evangelicals were made Bishops because of the Prime Minister's deep distrust

[21] David Tierney, 'An Exotic flavour of Zion', The Bulletin, University College London, Vol. 5 No. 12 (1983)

[22] Sheridan Gilley, 'Edward Irving, Prophet of the Millennium' an address in the United Reformed Church, Regent Square (December 1984)

of them after their campaigns for the abolition of slavery. The Catholic Emancipation Bill was enthusiastically supported by Wilberforce and other Evangelicals, but not by the Catholic Apostolic Church who saw this and later the Reform Act as further signs of the Second Coming. Also some high Tory Evangelicals feared for the stability of society and the Protestant Ascendancy. The Reform Bill in 1832 was openly welcomed by the Clapham Sect, now their full abolition bill could go through, which it did in 1833 on July 25th.

The French Revolution greatly helped the aims of the Evangelicals. The fear of a disintegration of society and religion encouraged a high regard for the Church which the Evangelicals took advantage of. They were able to advocate virtue to the upper classes at a time when they were most receptive. The Evangelicals helped to found the Victorian activities of greater Church involvement in Church and School building. Through the Revolution they were a formative influence on Victorian England, leading to philanthropy and seriousness in all aspects of life. The Methodists also struggled to improve the moral tone of the country and fought their own battle to gain respectability, and so the next chapter is concerned with the Methodists.

CHAPTER 4.

METHODISM FROM 1790 to 1830

"No 'better subjects in the British Empire than the Methodists.'"[1]

"Fear God and honour the King."[2]

[1]Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (Heinemann, London, 1974), p. 127.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 128. Methodist reply to the Church of England's claim that they are traitors.

John Wesley was the influential force behind Methodism during his lifetime, and for many years after. Wesley's background helped to form a great number of his religious and political ideas. Both of his parents, Samuel and Susanna, were strong loyal High Church members. Susanna's political sympathies were with the Jacobites, a feeling which Wesley shared during his youth. Nevertheless, he was not a Jacobite, and when the Jacobite Rebellion broke out in 1745, Wesley wrote to the Mayor of Newcastle to urge the citizens to "exert themselves as loyal subjects; who so long as they fear God, cannot but honour the King."[3] Wesley was brought up under a Puritan domestic system. Susanna considered that her children were to be obedient, not wilful towards those who were in authority over them, whether it was herself, the Government, the King or God. This system of organisation shaped Wesley's Methodist leadership.

Wesley supported Laudian theology, with its doctrines of the Divine Right of Kings and Non-resistance. He did not like democracy, and regarded its policy of government by all the nation, without class distinction, as going against God's elected ruler. He implemented this within the Methodist leadership, where he was the President, a selfless, yet egotistical autocrat. Wesley declared that "as long as I live, the people

[3] B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 58.

shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We have not, and never had, any such custom. We are no republicans, and never intend to be..."[4]

Wesley had a high opinion of the monarchy, and thought that George III when he came to the throne was "worthy of an Englishman, worthy of a Christian, and worthy of a King." The power of government came from God, and not from the people, and it was thus not answerable to them. Wesley thought the populace were not fit to determine their own destinies, and already had full political liberty; democracy would only restrict their true freedom. "The greater the share the people have in government", Wesley declared, "the less liberty, civil or religious, does a nation enjoy."

Wesley knew that there were abuses in the system, and great dissatisfaction amongst the working classes. He loved the poor, and went directly to those neglected and in need. Many Methodist enterprises were inspired by the needs of the poor, and large sums of money were raised for charity. This money was used to buy necessities, which Wesley often distributed in person. Methodists did not regard poverty as a crime, but looked upon it as a social problem in which the government should be involved. Wesley wanted the poor to find self respect through religion, as well as inspiring in the individual Methodist a philanthropic disposition. He regarded the riches of the faithful as essentially a means to charity. Wesley did not like luxurious excess, regarding it as a reason for high prices

[4]V.H.H. Green, John Wesley (Nelson, London, 1964), pp. 37-95.

and discomfort. Methodist self-help was to bring to the poor much more than revolutionary violence would offer. His was a message of individual salvation, concern and compassion. Wesley was most interested with the poor, urban and industrial parts of a town, often preaching in these areas first.

Collections for the less fortunate were taken in Methodist classes, and used to found societies and institutes. There was a dispensary for the sick, and a loan society to help the needy. Schools for children, homes for widows, and A Strangers' Friend Society for sick, homeless, and friendless strangers were set up by the Methodists. Wesley firmly disagreed with slavery. In the past he had baptised a slave owner, but after reading an attack by the Quaker Anthony Benezet in 1772, he joined the anti-slavery movement. In 1774 Wesley published his Thoughts on Slavery.[5] He was a great admirer of the Evangelical, William Wilberforce, and almost the last letter he wrote was to Wilberforce, in 1791, to tell him to "Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."[6]

The Methodists also gave their support to the prison reformer John Howard, who Wesley considered to be "one of the greatest men in Europe"[7] and at the Holy Club at Oxford a programme of prison visiting was among its activities, as Wesley

[5] A. Armstrong, The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850 (University of London Press, 1973), p.98, pp. 49-121.

[6] B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 96.

[7] A. Armstrong, The Church of England, p. 99.

considered it a Christian duty to visit prisoners, and these visits were made by preachers and lay Methodists alike.

The Methodist Revolution was a spiritual revolution, led by a man who disliked disorder, and countered dissatisfaction with his spiritual message. His message concentrated on the salvation of the lower orders; that the lower orders should consider their future with God in Heaven. Wesley did not think of poverty as a crime, the poor were meant to be poor by God and so to the Methodists they were the Holy poor.

Wesley accepted the defence of liberty by the Whigs and Philosophers, but hated violence, discontent and injustice. He was ruled, in politics, by his High Church beliefs of passive obedience to the state, derived from Biblical texts such as "thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of they people"[8] backed up by his personal experiences and observations. The nation had to submit to the Government. Any attack upon the King, Wesley quickly answered in defence of the King. He only spoke out on politics to renew or encourage political obedience. Wesley preferred preaching to politics. He considered that Methodist interests should come before politics, as politics would only lead them astray, and deflect the movement from its spiritual objectives. The Methodists were loyal to the monarchy, whichever king took the throne. It was Wesley's opinion that "a King is a lovely, sacred name", and that if a person "does not love the King, he cannot love God." It

[8]B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 57.

was these views that insulated and influenced the Methodists during the French Revolution and wars, by strengthening their conservatism.

The Methodists, therefore, showed hardly any support for the Revolution. A number of them blamed the tyranny of the French clergy and their superstitious ideas for the unbelief and attacks on Christianity by the revolutionaries. Wesley, like other religious men in Britain, looked on in horror at the events in France. The French Revolution was a grave danger to Christianity, with its ideas of democracy, unchristian views of society, and its inflammatory philosophical idealism. Methodists preached peace and order, while denouncing radicals and liberal thinkers like Priestley and Fox. Wesley viewed the Revolution as a forewarning of the day of judgement. Nevertheless, in 1790 he did not fear an uprising in England, and remarked that he had never seen the country so quiet. In 1791 John Wesley died, leaving the Methodist movement with a whole range of internal and external problems.

Within Methodism the pressure had been increasing to know who would be the next leader after Wesley. In 1784 Wesley had drawn up the Deed of Declaration, which settled Methodism on a conciliar, rather than monarchial, system of government.[9] Instead of one leader there would be many preachers sharing authority. Geographical districts would now be under the control of a president. Not everyone agreed with this system of government, and three years later another system was put forward by a group

[9] Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (general editors), A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, vol. 1 (London, Epworth Press, 1965), pp. 275-317.

consisting of Dr. Thomas Coke, a superintendent and once thought of as Wesley's successor, Samuel Bradburn, and other eminent ministers. They envisioned a semi-episcopal hierarchy of superintendents who could ordain deacons and priests. This episcopalian plan was rejected, and all plans for a majority were shouted down in 1787 by the Conference and Legal Hundred.

A second problem to be faced was that of the ministers' relationships to the laity. In higher councils such as district meetings, and the Conference, there was no direct representation of lay opinion. There was no system of democracy; each lay preacher was under the authority of the Committee, and had to do whatever it said. Every year, according to the direction of the Committee, one hundred itinerants were assigned to new districts. This system of itinerancy was regarded as the heart of the Methodists' perpetual Evangelism, preventing preachers from slipping into comfortable ways and also keeping their missionary fervour alive. A chapel was compelled to accept a preacher regardless of whether it liked him or not. There was also much friction between the Conference and some of the wealthy trustees, over the appointment of preachers. The trustees were the aristocracy of the Methodist Society and aimed to stop any anti-establishment campaigns.

It was in Bristol, in 1793, that a third problem arose, concerning the administration of the Sacrament, which many lay Methodists who were hostile to the Church wanted in the hands of their own preachers and not the Anglican parish clergy. This difficulty was also, therefore, linked to the question of

separation from the Church of England. The Church Methodists were satisfied to stay with the Church as Wesley was. John Wesley had protested loyalty to the Anglican Communion saying "We are not seceders, nor do we bear any resemblance to them", and he asserted "if ever the Methodists in general leave the Church, I must leave them."[10] He thought that the worst possible fate that could befall Methodism was separation from the Church. The Methodist 'Dissenters' wanted to change their church system, but they did not want to break away from the Church of England where they had safety. They saw Methodism as a growing society, which meant that it should continue to try out new methods. This was characteristic of Wesley's ecclesiastical planning as much as his theological convictions. John Pawson, President of the Conference for 1793-4, remarked at the conference that he knew of no one who wanted a separation, and only wanted to follow in the path of Divine Providence. Pawson, in a letter to William Thompson, a former President of the Conference, again stated that he did not want a separation, but that the two parties in the dispute should be given satisfaction.[11]

The argument was put before the Conference, where lots were cast, resulting in the postponement of the Sacraments for a year. Finally at the 1795 Conference, a Committee on general pacification was formed. This Committee was made up of Thomas Coke, John Pawson, Samuel Bradburn and other Methodists, who tried to stem the anger directed at the dominant 'Church' Methodists. The Committee introduced a method to remove unwelcome

[10] Stuart Andrews, Methodism and Society (Longman, 1970), pp. 37-95, 50-53.

[11] David Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850 (Hutchinson, 1984), pp. 57-60.

preachers from circuit. Although the leaders of the Conference wanted to follow Wesley on the issue of separation, they were obliged to yield. The pressure from local stewards and class leaders to relax restrictions against the administration of the Sacraments was too great. The Sacrament could only be offered when the majority of trustees of a chapel, as well as stewards and class leaders, were ready to allow it. The Sacrament was to be administered only on a Sunday and unless the majority wished for it, not in Church hours, and then not on the same Sunday as the local church. This 'Plan of Pacification' was a compromise between contending parties, which the chapel trustees gradually assented to.

Throughout the period of the French Revolution and the wars, the Methodists professed their loyalty to the Church, Crown and State. They tried to remain non-committal on the subject of the Revolution, following Wesley's "no politics" rule. Methodism and other Nonconformist groups have received praise from several writers, like Élie Halévy in his work History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, for the part they played in preventing a revolution in Britain. The restriction and restraint placed upon Nonconformists by their leaders, to prevent any conflict with the government, was also a deterrent against revolution. Methodism helped to elevate its members from thinking of their own social conditions to contemplating their personal salvation. Self-discipline and restraint were developed alongside the revival of religion and morality. The French Revolution heightened the need for action in religion. Through this, Nonconformity spread, with the added help of the Industrial

Revolution. Halévy regarded that the English character being serious, not volatile, was one reason for the absence of a revolution in England. The other reason was the influence which the Methodists held over the middle classes and working class élite. The leaders of these two groups, according to Halévy, were imbued with Methodist teaching. Methodism transformed the unskilled into skilled, and generally helped to improve the position of its members.[12] E.P. Thompson, on the other hand, sees the role of religion from a negative perspective, as it did not help but only reinforced the social and political stance of the ruling classes. He dislikes Methodism, regarding it as a religion of despair and disaster, and that Methodism was a paradox that kept the working classes and the radical groups in submission, but at the same time produced political leaders at a local level. Yet the dominant influence of Methodism was a conservative one. It extolled the virtues of work, and so presented employers with obedient and enthusiastic workers. Methodism replaced the popular secular entertainments with this work consciousness, which helped them to concentrate on individual rather than world change and mastery. Thompson also considers that the Methodist form of worship was psychologically damaging. Thus, according to Thompson, Methodism did prevent revolution, but not in a beneficial way.[13]

The Methodists thought that it was due to their influence that there was not a revolution, and used this as a party cry. Nevertheless, they continually had to prove their loyalty against

[12] Élie Halévy, History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 1 (Ernest Benn, 1924), Part 3, Chapter 1.

[13] E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 54, 58, 381-2, 385-411.

the distrust of the Establishment. The Church and State were inseparable, and to part from the Church was Dissent. The Methodists were looked upon by William Pitt as a weakness to the Constitution, and a breeding ground for sedition. Methodist leaders tried to disprove these accusations and preached many sermons with the title "Fear God and honour the King", the first of these by Henry Moore from Bristol. These Methodist proclamations of loyalty were usually accompanied by resolutions condemning France for its part in "spreading carnage and desolation", and establishing "a lawless freedom, and chimerical equality". John Pawson stated that the Methodists were amongst the most peaceable and quiet of the land, not involving themselves with mobs or tumults.[14] The Conference had earlier put forward a declaration that "none of us shall, either in writing or conversation, speak lightly or irreverently of the Government under which he lives". The Methodists also stated that "the oracles of God command us to be subject to higher powers", and that when they honour the King, they honour God.[15] These declarations were strengthened in 1796 when all publications were checked by the Conference for radicalism or sedition before being published by their press.

Wesleyan Methodism had little sympathy for radicalism, and anyone found preaching radicalism was expelled; in the eyes of the Conference, one could not be both a radical and a Methodist. Probably the most well known example of a radical group within Methodism were the Kilhamites, led by Alexander Kilham, who

[14] B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 128.

[15] Ibid., p. 127

championed the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and wanted members to have a greater participation in Methodist church government. "We all have an equal right to vote in these matters" he claimed, "as we are all redeemed by Christ and have each a soul to save, equally precious in the sight of God." Kilham was stimulated by the French Revolution and the writings of Tom Paine, which he used to gain a greater awareness of what was lacking in church not state government, and transferred these ideas to the Methodist church. Kilham was not a threat to the state, only a political threat to the Methodist church, which he wanted to reform. Kilham was regarded as many things: the Whigs viewed him as the first connexional liberal, whereas others saw him as the 'fulfilment of Arminian egalitarianism', as a man who was as good as his theology.[16] The Methodists thought of him as a nuisance and a threat to their stability. Kilham opposed Catholicism, absolutism, corruption and legal manipulation. He was dissatisfied with the 'Plan of Pacification' and wanted greater democratic control of the life of the chapel. The trustees had no intention of allowing this to happen and after receiving hints of government concern over Methodist loyalty from William Wilberforce, it was decided that Alexander Kilham must be reprimanded or expelled. In 1796 Kilham and his friends were seen as 'raw desperadoes, who proceed in a manner that leads to anarchy and ruin' by Samuel Bradburn and other members of the Conference. Bradburn had in 1792 been every bit as radical as Kilham, when he had preached the rights of man from his pulpit and had advocated the 'Vox populi' as

[16] Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Working Class Movement of England 1800-1850 (Epworth Press, London, 1937), pp. 54-73.

the motto of the Methodists. W.R. Ward describes Bradburn as 'The most aggressive partisan of separate communion in the Connexion'[17], but in 1795 Bradburn rejected radicalism and Kilham in particular when he supported the Plan of Pacification. So although Bradburn committed far greater acts of radicalism than Kilham, he realised that it would be to his advantage to support the Committee and so escaped expulsion. At his trial Kilham likened the Methodist leadership to 'popery', and described his trial as a contemporary inquisition. He made financial allegations against the leaders, and quoted several confidences from John Pawson, a former friend, about the abuses of trustee power. Pawson, after the trial, is said to have disclosed to Charles Atmore that Kilham only knew half of what was going on.[18] Kilham was removed because of his radical publications and his expulsion was used by the Connexion to illustrate their loyalty to the government, as they were able to declare that there were no radical elements in their movement. His parting accusation was that Methodism was controlled by rich preachers with a monopoly of good circuits and London connections, which produced a larger gap between rich and poor than in the Church of England.

Kilham went on to found the 'New Connexion' in 1797, who were also known as the 'Tom Paine Methodists' in Huddersfield. They were a democratically minded Dissenting sect which owed no allegiance to the Church of England. The New Connexion took about five per cent of the Wesleyan Methodists membership

[17] W.R. Ward, The French Revolution and English Churches, Extrait de Miscellanae Historicae Ecclesiasticae IV, Congrés de Moscou 1970 (Louvain, 1972), p. 59, pp. 55-84.
[18] D. Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society, pp. 68-73, 55-179.

with it and increased rapidly. In 1801 their numbers were 4,815 and were doubled by 1819 to 9,672. Kilham himself had boasted of about 1,500 hearers on a Sunday morning, and during the week, but on a Sunday evening the attendance doubled. To the Wesleyan Methodists the Kilhamites were very political, but their politics did not concern any matters outside of the Methodist Church.

The social crisis of the 1790s severed links between the Church of England and the Methodists, and distinguished between the orthodox and schismatic within the denomination. Before 1795 the Sunday school and Missionary Societies had been under non-denominational control, but after 1795 the Methodists gained an increasing hold upon these societies forcing the Dissenting groups to become more denominational. After 1795 the itinerancy and authority of Methodism changed; it was less easy to maintain the heritage of Wesley and social conflict within the movement was given a political edge by the French Revolution, thus creating a new denominational order which faced more opposition than the old order.

The Wesleyan Conference of 1800 sent an address of loyalty to the King signed by the President of the Connexion. It expressed the horror of the Methodists at the attack on the King, and stated a "sincere respect for and attachment to your Majesty's person and government, and our detestation of all sedition upon this occasion." It also stated its respect for authority, and agreed to pray for the King. In 1803 it was decided to hold a prayer meeting every Friday evening of the month during the present time of danger. The Methodists were using Wesley's doctrines of 'passive obedience' and 'Non-resistance' to hold

firm during the social and economic upheaval of this period, despite the internal and external pressures.

The Methodists had been determined to eradicate radicalism, but even with the expulsion of the Kilhamites, other radical groups appeared in the early part of the nineteenth century. These groups were Methodist inspired 'revivalists', who made a similar impression upon the One Hundred as Wesley had upon the Bishop of London. The most prominent of these were the Primitive Methodists. They were led by Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, and were the largest group to come from the Wesleyan body. They started at Mow Cop in Staffordshire in 1800 and preached the immediate attainability of Christian perfection. They were influenced by the American, Lorenzo Dow (crazy Dow), the epileptic son of a Connecticut farmer. Dow had come to Britain in 1805 against the wishes of the Methodists, and concentrated on the very cohesive communities such as the Northern industrial towns and rural areas. The meetings were mainly led by tradesmen with a limited knowledge and secular education, but with a spiritually intense knowledge of the Bible. Some of the groups resulted in a mixture of social protest with supernatural stimulants. Dow used the 'camp-meetings' techniques of the American frontier. The Wesleyan Connexion was afraid that these 'camp-meetings' would result in tumults and be a threat to the Wesleyan hierarchy, and managed to close many chapels to Dow and his followers, making separation unavoidable. These groups began the rural revolt against the inadequacies of an Anglican parish system in Devon and Cornwall as well as parts of Yorkshire and the Midlands. The Primitive Methodists protested against the organised religious

traditions. The agricultural workers who joined them were making a gesture of dissatisfaction of the way rural society as a whole was managed. The Primitive Methodists quickly spread to Derbyshire, Lancashire and Cheshire. Great camp-meetings were held in the Midlands where they sought to convert those in areas where Luddism was most evident. The Primitive Methodists soon increased in numbers at a greater speed than the Wesleyans. By 1824 they had quadrupled their membership to 33,507.

Primitive Methodism was popular in many mining villages in Cornwall, helping them to cope with their fears of disaster and suffering, as well as providing education for the young. The meetings also appealed to some of the women of the village, who were excluded from the all male 'tavern culture' and also helped to bring the community together. The Primitive Methodists struck a balance between individual and joint needs, and some Methodists held places of influence in local trade unions even though the Methodists were a minority in the community. They did not differentiate between social classes, only the saved and the unsaved. The Primitive Methodists helped to link the workers and employers who shared their religious and moral views. They helped to foster liberalism amongst the working classes of the North East of England. In East Anglia, due to the strong parish system, Methodism could not reach the poor as easily as in other areas. Primitive Methodism became a medium for social protest against working class conditions. In other areas Primitive Methodists were the subject of persecution, while in other districts they were engaged in radical activities, like the Tolpuddle Martyrs who were Primitive Methodists, two of them lay preachers.

The Methodists had great pressure placed upon them by external forces, mainly the Government and the Church. They were a minority, and as such were in a similar position to that of the early Christians, who were also watched closely and their movements analysed for signs of reform or sedition. The Methodists had to define their relations with the government and were accused of numerous crimes, which ranged from theft to revolution. The growth of the Methodists during the 1790s was rapid, and there were many different causes for this growth; some coincided with periods of tension and unrest, and often with rapid recovery after depression. Methodist growth occasionally took place after a social calamity, such as a cholera epidemic. Another view is put forward by E. P. Thompson, that Methodism was a compensation for failed political hopes, and that Methodism coincided with counter-revolution. Methodist influence was not widespread and was still a minority when compared to the whole population, but even so Methodists were regarded as a threat. They grew from 56,605 members in 1791 to 87,010 by 1801 and were still increasing in number. Even when at their most conservative they posed a threat to the power of the Established Church, subverting the traditional role of the clergy. Methodist itinerancy ignored parish boundaries, and in many cases was carried out by unordained preachers. Laymen also assumed pastoral responsibilities in local communities as preachers and class leaders, and Methodism with its tight-knit connexional organisation and meeting houses appeared to evolve independent of the parochial system.[19] This is illustrated in an Anglican pamphlet in 1806, which describes

[19]A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (Longman Group Limited, London, 1976), pp. 23-51, 51-94.

how a town is chosen and a congregation 'clandestinely secured'; no minister is appointed, only an itinerant missionary who would come on a Sunday and one week day. The pamphleteer described how the congregation finally turned against the Established clergyman and attended the Methodist chapel. This happened so often that the Church demanded protection. Methodism was attacked by a variety of groups; the clergymen who saw them as a threat, the gentry for supposed levelling principles, and even the Dissenters looked upon them as competition. Landlords, theatre owners and actors disliked the Methodists for their hostility to popular amusement.

After implementing a survey which lasted three years of the Established Church, its preachers and places of worship, the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, in 1811 began to secure the passage of legislation to restrain Methodist preaching by making it harder to obtain a preaching licence. This legislation was part of a larger effort by members of the clergy, Tory government and Lord Sidmouth in particular against the Dissenters, which included the Methodists. Lord Sidmouth's bill was introduced on May 9, 1811, to render the Toleration Act more effective. It specified that licences were required of Dissenting preachers and were only to be issued to those whose respectability could be vouched for. This would inevitably have put a lot of power in the hands of the local justices. The Home Secretary stated that before, all types of persons from Cobblers to Chimney sweeps were claiming to be preachers. Sidmouth thought that there was the danger of having "a nominal Established Church and a Sectarian people".

The supporters of Sidmouth, which included the Anglican Bishops, denounced the Methodists as Jacobin Champions who sought revolution and the revival of the Commonwealth. The Methodists in turn countered this charge with their party cry, that they had prevented revolution. In Manchester, at the 1811 Conference, a resolution was passed stating that the high degree of religious freedom in Britain had preserved the country from the horrors of France. The Whig politician, Earl Grey, among many opposed Sidmouth's bill. He thought that it was the wrong time for religious dissent, when they should all be united. A committee of Methodists and three denominations, Baptists, Congregationalists and Unitarians, organised themselves to fight the bill by using the same methods as the Anti-Slavery movement. Hundreds of petitions were collected by May 21st, 1811, before the second reading of the bill, and were placed in front of the House of Lords by Earl Grey, Lord Stanhope, Lord Holland and other Whig politicians.

The Earl of Liverpool, later Prime Minister, wanted the bill dropped as it was ill-advised and there was no real necessity to interfere with religion. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Manners Sutton, although agreeing with the bill, thought it was unwise to press on with it at that time. The Whig Lord Holland denounced it as an 'infringement' of 'natural rights' which would excite the Dissenters, and he exaggerated the situation by exclaiming that fifty thousand Methodist preachers would want licences if the bill was passed, for fear of persecution. Earl Stanmore was delighted at the number of petitions, which contradicted the rumours that the public did not exist, proving that it did exist with a public opinion and spirit. The bill was finally withdrawn.

In 1812 Parliament declared that Methodism was a force for stability rather than upheaval. The Conventicle and Five Mile Acts were also repealed in this year, and on July 29 Lord Liverpool, now Prime Minister, passed a new Toleration Act, causing much rejoicing at the Methodist Conference. They again renewed their protestations of loyalty with a declaration that they would "Fear the Lord and the King: and meddle not with them that are given to change."[20] The speaker declared that the 1812 Act had been passed through their loyalty and obedience.

The most noted example and symbol of Wesleyan conservatism was Jabez Bunting, who was regarded as one of the greatest ecclesiastical administrators of this period, and was active in Methodism for over half a century. Within the Methodist movement Bunting had opponents, especially Kilham and the Primitive Methodists Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. Bunting was the son of a radical Methodist tailor from Manchester. Early in life he had been an enthusiastic revivalist, but after several bad experiences he distanced himself from popular enthusiasm in both religion and politics. Bunting, with a group of other young ministers, was determined to remove all traces of Jacobinism from Methodism, especially after the formation of the New Connexion. Bunting is often criticised for his harsh conservatism, especially after his statement that "Methodism hates democracy as much as it hates sin", for his treatment of the Luddites for whom he would not perform services, and because of his refusal to intercede for the Tolpuddle Martyrs, some of whom were Methodists. Bunting was an authoritarian with a firm control over the itinerant

[20] B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 134.

preachers. He followed Wesley's views on politics which were strictly conservative, and condemned the principle of representative government. He thought that ordinary people were too ignorant and immoral to be involved in politics. Wesley had considered that political judgement "requires not only good understanding, but more time than common tradesmen can spare, and better information than they can possibly procure". Bunting clung to Wesley's views in an age which was increasingly democratic and less deferential. Through purging the radicals the Methodists finally lost contact with the more political of the working classes. E.R. Taylor said of Bunting: "he was not a politician. His approach to public questions was that of a churchman, not that of a man interested in the relation between religion and politics". Bunting used politics for Methodist ends and not for himself, in an attempt to preserve the Connexion as a highly disciplined, highly centralized, highly conventional ecclesiastical power.[21]

The years after Waterloo were hard and the Methodist preachers in the Industrial North faced much adversity. Thomas Jackson, a preacher and son of a Yorkshire farm labourer, wrote of the misery of the inhabitants of that area, reporting that political activists were inciting the villagers and townsmen to overthrow the government; soldiers were stationed in many towns in case of incident. Methodist preachers were not popular because it was known that they supported the government and would report any meetings or uprisings to the authorities. In 1819 the Conference

[21] D. Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society, p. 228.

discussed the problem of the poor being used by the agitators and Methodists were instructed not to get involved. Yet one context in which Methodism assumed a class-conscious form was in rural areas. The agricultural village chapel was an affront to the vicar and squire, but to the labourer it was a place in which he could achieve independence and self-respect. In rural areas Methodism was often seen as being as bad as poaching. Nevertheless, the Methodists offered some of the uprooted and abandoned wanderers of the Industrial Revolution a family, while for the migrant worker it could be the ticket of entry into a new community wherever he went. Methodism provided a place in a hostile world where one was recognised for one's sobriety, chastity, piety, respectability, discipline and measure of self control among other virtues.[22]

Methodism profoundly influenced some sections of the lower classes. Methodists by preaching resignation instead of revolution helped preserve the stability of the nineteenth century. In 1824 William Cobbet,who wrote the Political Register, described the Methodists as "the bitterest foes of freedom in England", because of their conservatism towards reform. He lists their faults as being "books upon books they write. Tracts upon tracts. Villainous sermons upon villainous sermons they preach... they are continually telling people here that they ought to thank the Lord for the blessings they enjoy: that they ought to thank the Lord, not for a bellyfull and a warm back, but for that abundant grace of which they are the

[22] H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff, The Victorian City, Images and Realities vol. 2 (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973), pp. 855-868.

bearers, and for which they charge them only one penny per week each."[23]

It is true the Methodists were hard task masters, and their members had to conform to their rules. Sabbath observance was very strict with no sports or leisure areas open. On a Sunday only the public houses were open and a man who might only have gone into one for company would end up drinking, as there was no alternative place to go. Through Methodism respectability increased among the urban classes. The converts to Methodism were rigorously disciplined through a series of rules concerning drink, prayer, sick-visiting and many other activities.

During the 1820s a major political conflict seemed to threaten the security of the Methodists, as the political demands of the Roman Catholics for Emancipation increased. The Methodists had always been hostile to the Irish Catholics because of their vested interests in missionary societies in that country, their Evangelical theology, their Wesleyan inheritance and their increased Toryism. Although Methodism as a whole did not publicly demonstrate their anti-Catholicism, it was well known that Methodist political leaders were against any concessions to the Catholics. To protect their missions in Ireland the Methodists had turned to the Tories for help, and through their increased hostility to the Catholics became more respectable in the eyes of the Established Church and Tory government. The Methodists were more hostile to Emancipation than the Dissenters who a year previously had gained the repeal of the Corporation and

[23]E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, p. 434.

Test Acts and so felt they had to support the Catholics. Bunting, although privately opposed to the Emancipation Bill, never publicly voiced these opinions and instead spoke in favour of the bill. He knew that the motion for Emancipation would be carried and did not want the Methodists to become politically involved. The majority of Wesleyans disagreed with this view and individually sent letters to Parliament voicing their disapproval of this issue; however, this did not prevent the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Bill. The views of the Wesleyan political leaders on this subject are illustrated in an account given by Thomas Allan, the publicist of the Protestant Union, of a meeting of the Committee of Privileges on March 11th, 1829. Allan noted that while Methodists could act individually they could not give an opinion as a 'body' unless they were prepared to suffer as a 'body', and he reported that 'with respect to the Bill for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects now before the House of Commons the Committee of Privileges do not think it their duty to take any proceedings in their collective capacity'.[24] He also observed that it was only Dr. Bunting who was in favour of the Bill. When Catholic Emancipation was passed many Wesleyans felt that the Prime Minister, Robert Peel, had betrayed them, but Bunting understood that Peel had supported the Bill to maintain the security and peace of the nation.

From 1830 the Methodists were being grudgingly accepted, but by some they were still regarded as subversive; the majority however thought them respectable. There were of course changes

[24] D. Hempton, Methodism and Politics in British Society, p. 139, pp. 116-142.

made through this; plain dress was no longer worn, and the poor, who had mixed with the rich, were now obliged in some chapels to keep a 'respectable distance'. The wealthy Methodists arrived in carriages and sat in elegant pews near the stewards and chamberlains, while the poor sat at the back, in the cold on hard benches. The class divisions were sharpening and once more there was resentment of the autocratic rule, as there had been before the New Connexion was formed. Groups continued to break away from the Wesleyan Methodists throughout the century, but at least the Committee was not worried by the charge of being revolutionaries as they had been in the past.

The Methodists were shaped by the French Revolution into a stronger more conservative group, who had to defend themselves from accusations of disloyalty and radicalism, both of which they strove to eradicate from their societies. This harshness finally alienated the Wesleyan Methodists from their primary sources of membership, the working classes. As Wesleyan Methodism grew more conservative and respectable, so it drew its membership from the middle classes. It was left to the advanced radical splinter groups, such as the Primitive Methodists and others, to take their members, through their influence in the trade unions and radical societies, to democracy and Chartism.

The Protestant Dissenters also went through a process of change during the period of 1790-1830 similar to that of the Methodists, and it is to this group that the next chapter is dedicated.

CHAPTER 5.

THE PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

'Every man's right and every nation's best interest - Liberty of Conscience.'[1]

'Our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy ... but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen.'[2]

[1]For this toast and others given by the Duke of Sussex at the Dissenters' celebratory dinner in 1828 see Bernard Lord Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (Cambridge at the University Press, 1952), p.248f, pp. 1-8, 19-53, 99-119, 217-254.

[2]R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (Independent Press Ltd., London, 1962), pp. 173-174.

Three denominations made up the great majority of the Protestant Dissenters: these were the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists. There were of course other less prominent groups such as the Quakers. The three denominations, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists, had existed in one form or other since the Elizabethan period. The Dissenters had always been persecuted and restricted by the Head of State and Parliament and from 1660 had been subject to a series of government Acts known as the Clarendon Code or Penal Laws. The first of these Acts, the Corporation Act, was passed in 1661 to prevent anyone from holding municipal office unless he had received the Sacrament according to the Church of England. The Cavaliers who supported and advised Charles II did not want the Church to include any other faiths, not even the Presbyterians who were considered the least alien to the Church. These Cavaliers wanted a National Church on the old Elizabethan model and imposed the Act of Uniformity in 1662 which sharpened the division between the Church and Dissent. In 1664 another legislation was passed in the form of the Conventicle Act which affected the Dissenters' liberty

of worship by preventing more than four persons from gathering for religious worship outside the forms of the Church of England. The Five Mile Act in 1665 went further by excluding Dissenting ministers and schoolmasters from the towns, and in 1673 the Corporation Act was further strengthened with the passing of the Test Act which affected all offices of trust under the Crown.

The Clarendon Code was mitigated by the Toleration Act of 1689, which at least allowed Dissenting worship by orthodox Protestant Trinitarians in licensed meeting-houses, and although it did not repeal this Code gave hope to the Dissenters. Throughout the reign of Queen Anne attempts were made to stiffen the penalties against the Dissenters, but were all rejected with the advent of George I in 1714. In 1727, the ministers of the three denominations constituted a 'General Body' to deal with the Government and Court for the Dissenters, but it was not until 1733 that they really took any action towards an overthrow of the Penal Laws through repeal.

On 9th November 1733, a general meeting of the Protestant Dissenters was held at a meeting-house in Silver Street, London, to discuss making an application for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. At the meeting the Dissenters decided that they should set up a Committee to decide the proper procedure in drawing up an application for repeal. They held another meeting on 29th November 1733 to discuss what they had learnt from consultations with influential individuals within the government upon the subject of a repeal. Their

reports were not favourable to launching such a campaign, but the Dissenters at this meeting wanted the Committee, with the addition of four more gentlemen, to try again. The Committee passed a resolution that every congregation of the three denominations within ten miles of London should recommend two candidates for the appointment of Deputies, to which the Committee would report. The Dissenters realised the advantage of having a permanent body to watch over their interests, and at a meeting held at Salter's Hall on 14th January 1735-6, it was decided that there should be an annual election of Deputies to be responsible for the Civil Affairs of the Dissenters. It was not until 12th January 1736-7 that the Deputies held their first meeting at Salters' Hall, with Dr. Benjamin Avery, the Treasurer of Guy's Hospital and trustee of Dr. Williams' library in the Chair. The Deputies then elected a Committee of twenty one, who would carry out the principal business of the year. The Dissenters made another attempt at repeal in 1739, but with no success, receiving only Sir Robert Walpole the Prime Minister's stock reply that 'The time has not yet arrived'.[3]

The Deputies were regularly called upon to help the Dissenters in legal and internal disputes, which increased in number towards the end of the eighteenth century, as Dissenters became more aware of their rights and defended them. From 1740-1799 the number of cases in which the Deputies had intervened in a dispute increased annually from 17 to 45.[4] A large number

[3]For more on the 1739 attempts at repeal see Bernard Lord Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p. 29.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 98.

of disputes were in rural areas, and mostly arose from appeals against parish rates, although some were of a serious nature with violence, bigotry and rancour recorded in some areas, especially Wales. Wales was often a centre of outrages against the Dissenters, as many magistrates refused to register Dissenters' meeting-houses and ministers under the Toleration Act, thus making it necessary for the Deputies to use reports of 'barbarous usage' of Dissenters in Wales to force the magistrate's hand. In some rural areas it was often hard for a Dissenter to hire a solicitor locally because of the danger to a professional man's career if he were to oppose the social and financial power of the Establishment. Often the Deputies would hire a London lawyer to give advice to the party involved. The Deputies not only reprimanded the faults of Church of England clergymen, but any impropriety or irregularity on the part of the Dissenters. The Deputies judged these situations with tact and fairness, only interfering where they had a legal right to do so.

The Dissenting churches advanced and declined in the years 1714-1760, but the Evangelical revival in the 1760's aided the advancement of the Congregationalists, who on the whole sided with the Calvinist Methodist George Whitefield. Some Congregationalists opposed this alliance, such as the Secretary of the Coward Trust, Nathaniel Neal, who regarded the Methodists' injudicious behaviour as threatening.[5] Philip Doddridge and his students at his Dissenting Academy in Northampton held the

[5]Tudur Jones, Congregationalism, pp. 146-168, 168-187, 187-245.

opposite view; they allowed Methodists to use their pulpits and emulated their style of preaching, which brought new life to the Congregational churches. In the North of England especially where the need for churches was urgent to meet the growth of the industrial towns, the Congregationalists quickly surpassed in numbers the old Dissenting groups of the Baptists and Presbyterians, a majority of whom viewed the Evangelical Revival with suspicion and rejected it.

The Baptists objected strongly to the infant baptism practised by the Evangelicals as they restricted baptism to adult believers, thus retaining their identity throughout persecution. Some of the Baptists, however, did adopt some of the teachings of the Evangelical Revival, but the Baptists rejected the Methodist mode of revivalist Evangelism and clung to the old sect-type ways of their past traditions and were mostly a rural group with some churches in London, but not in many of the large towns. Many of their congregations had by the 1770's been taken over by the Calvinist Particular Baptists or had been infiltrated by the Unitarians, but the General Assembly was not committed to Unitarian views although some of its members advocated its opinions and presently became increasingly Unitarian. The Particular Baptists were first formed out of the General Baptists in 1689, and unlike the General Baptists were Calvinistic not Arminian, but were nevertheless full of Evangelical zeal. The two groups often differed over doctrine and organization among themselves, and the Particular Baptists being the stronger of the two often took over failing General Baptist chapels. Both groups attended the

General Assembly of Baptists held regularly, which dealt with matters sent to it by Baptist Associations.

On 6th June 1770, the Arminian New Connexion of General Baptists was founded in a meeting-house in Church Lane, Whitechapel, which was one of the oldest Baptist churches in London. The New Connexion was under the leadership of Dan Taylor, minister of the first General Baptist church in Yorkshire and William Thompson, minister of the church at Boston in Yorkshire. Dan Taylor, an Arminian, and formerly a Methodist, had turned to the General Baptists in 1763 and was soon given a church in Yorkshire. He was in close contact with the Baptist churches in Lincolnshire, but they disagreed with the tendency of General Baptists to hold on to old traditions, and their general doctrinal laxity. Taylor favoured the more advanced views of the Leicestershire Evangelical movement and wanted the Baptists to amalgamate with Lincolnshire, but they refused. However, Taylor was not daunted, and with William Thompson organised a meeting with the Leicestershire churches at Lincoln in the Autumn of 1769 to discuss a union between them and the General Baptists. At this meeting the decision was taken by both parties to form a new body of the General Baptists and to hold their first meeting in London while the General Assembly was in session and they could contact representatives attending it. Gilbert Boyce, a Baptist messenger in Lincolnshire, tried to dissuade Taylor from such a scheme, but without success. The New Connexion had two Methodist characteristics, its strong Evangelical zeal through itinerant preaching and a strong corporate feeling. The General

Assembly of Baptists objected to the Connexion, and Daniel Dobell, a messenger in Kent and Gilbert Boyce in Lincolnshire acted promptly, bringing many of the erring New Connexion churches back into line with the significant exception of Boston. The New Connexion, however, survived and after 1770 was joined by some of the General Baptist churches which had assumed an Evangelical tone.[6]

The Presbyterians, on the other hand, had not supported the Evangelical Revival, favouring a more rationalistic view under the influence of the new scientific discoveries of the 1760's. Many of the Presbyterians who had once been Calvinists were changing to Arminianism and those Calvinist ministers still alive were replaced by Arminian ministers when their parishes were vacant. In fact, John Barker of Hackney was almost the only London minister who thought himself both a Presbyterian and a Calvinist in the 1740's. The Presbyterians turned their backs upon the enthusiasm of the Evangelicals and took up a rational standpoint, which was not popular and resulted in a loss of membership for them to the Baptists and Congregationalists. In the 1770's-1790's they supported liberty, first during the American Revolution and later the French, which led to further desertions from their churches. The Presbyterians were on the whole Whigs who supported the moderate and later liberal views of the Whig politicians. The Presbyterian Church may have declined in number, but it still retained its wealth through trade and connections with leading families.

[6]A.C. Underwood, A History of the English Baptists (The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., London, 1956), p. 153, pp. 149-201, 201-248.

The Congregationalists developed a militant assertiveness from the Evangelical Revival and would no longer suffer maltreatment from their Anglican neighbours with whom they had tried to live in peace during the 1760's, giving them no cause for offence. Congregationalist preachers voiced warning on the cost of sin regardless of the beatings they would receive for it or the attacks on their wealthy mercantile patrons. The Nation must repent and the success of this message is illustrated by the crowded conditions of their chapels, where there were hardly enough seats for everyone. Class distinction was often forgotten and ministers preaching in the style of Whitefield were to be heard in every town, village or hamlet. Those who had the gift of public speaking used it to great effect whenever they could. Sunday schools were set up to educate the poor, because without education a minister could make no great progress with his congregation. These Sunday schools were mostly organised on an undenominational and municipal basis with Dissenters and Catholics on the school committee. The Sunday schools were numerous in textile towns and often in rural areas led the lower class children from the Established Church. The schools survived on this nondenominational leadership with no one group superior to the other.

Robert Raikes of Gloucester, a philanthropic tradesman, was in 1780 one of the foremost promoters of Sunday schools, but there was opposition to these schools both from within the three denominations and from the Church of England who regarded it as breaking the Sabbath. The Sunday schools helped to form a feeling of community within the denominations: the ban on female participation in society did not apply to these schools, boys and girls from poorer classes received sufficient education

to enable them to move from one class to another and the Sunday schools became an efficient agency for the Nonconformist Churches of all denominations. Not only were the new Evangelical educational institutes nondenominational, but so were the charitable associations for the poor and needy set up during the period of 1780-1795. In 1788 a United Committee was established by the Dissenters and Deputies for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts with the help of the Whigs, Charles Fox and Henry Beaufoy. The coming Revolution in France would destroy this unity and change each group, so that they could never be united in quite the same way again.

The French Revoluation came both as a challenge and an aid to the Dissenters. It aided the missionary societies formed in the 1790's, through the collapse of French power in some of the countries and later the downfall of the Pope making Catholic areas more accesible to the Evangelizing missionaries. The Nonconformist mission societies answered the urgent need that some Dissenting groups felt, to Evangelize the world before the Apocalypse and Anti-Christ came, which they feared the French Revolution heralded. The French Revolution was a tremendous challenge to the Dissenters, especially to the radical implications of their political views and ambitions. This was especially true of the Presbyterians who had recently separated under the radical Joseph Priestley into Presbyterians and Unitarians. The rational Dissenters who followed Priestley wanted a bolder advance, under a new name. Priestley who had been a dissident Congregationalist, placed an emphasis on radical theology and gave the group its name Unitarian; although Unitarian

had formerly been used by Theophilus Lindsey, the sometime Anglican and militant minister of Essex Street Chapel in London, who had been part of a committee for a petition in 1772 for the abolition of subscription to the thirty-nine articles.[7] The name Unitarian represented an emphatic rationalism which was Newtonian, determinist and materialist. Priestley wanted the Unitarians to loosen their ties with the past and follow his own form of theology. Formerly a tutor at the Nonconformist Warrington College, he was an intimate friend of Benjamin Franklin and of the ferocious Jacobin, Jean-Paul Marat. The aims of the Unitarians were helped by the passing of an Act of Parliament, wherein a declaration was substituted for the previous subscription required from Dissenters as a condition for their holding any positions of trust. The declaration stated that they were Christians and Protestants and took the Scripture as their rule of doctrine and practice.

The Unitarians welcomed the French Revolution as a sign of liberty and constitutional reform. The Tory reaction, which was swift and strong, led many of the Whigs, who had formerly supported the Presbyterians, to cross to the Tory camp. William Pitt, the Prime Minister, used the support of the mercantile classes to back up his anti-Jacobin campaign and again the Presbyterians lost members. The defection of Whig politicans greatly affected the old Presbyterian movement by weakening the moderate party who opposed Priestley's Unitarians, which left only the convinced Whigs who supported Charles Fox aiding the Presbyterian cause. The 'rights of the

[7] C.G. Bolan, J. Goring, H.L. Short and R. Thomas, The English Presbyterians (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1968), pp. 228-9, 219-287.

people' was a popular topic of discussion in the Corresponding Societies, to which the radical Unitarians belonged, especially as the French Revolutionary idealism, contained in their communications with their counterparts in France, highlighted the social differences between the Dissenters and the Established Church. The Unitarians were the first target of the government-backed Church and King mobs, which the Tories used to counteract the weakened discipline of Church and State. The Baptists and Congregationalists as a whole were frightened by the excitement of the Unitarians over the French Revolution and by the growing persecution of them by the patriotic mobs. In 1789, the Unitarians, who with the Baptists and Congregationalists were campaigning for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, suggested that the Dissenters should all unite and be linked by a 'pyramid of elected councils with its summit in London'.[8] The Church of England clergy looked upon such a proposal with horror, fearing it would inflame the minds of the uneducated and lower classes, and so organized a counter-attack. However, it was not this proposal that led to an increase in conservatism, but the form of some of the radical Dissenters' meetings. In meetings held in the Midlands and North-West in 1790, a group of Unitarians urged that the Anglican liturgy be reformed and tithes should be abolished. It was groups such as this one that was carried away by its political success in 1789, when it was narrowly defeated on the repeal application, which ruined the Dissenters' chance of victory when they tried for a repeal again, in 1790. The Baptists and Congregationalists did not

[8] W.R. Ward, <u>The French Revolution and the English Churches</u>, Extrait de <u>Miscellanae Historiae Ecclesiasticae IV</u>, Congrès de Moscou 1970 (Louvain, 1972), p.59, pp. 55-84.

agree with the ideas of the radicals, which led to considerable embarrassment for the London leadership.

The Committee for Conducting an Application to Parliament, under the leadership of the Deputies and Fox, had its headquarters at the King's Head Tavern in Poultry, London. The movement had organised a series of committees to be set up throughout the country which were designed to interview the MPs of each locality, ascertain their views and report to London, thus helping the Dissenters to form 'one great and powerful phalanx'.[9] It was proposed that in the event of an election, a local committee would bring pressure to bear upon MPs in favour of the Dissenters. William Pitt was greatly alarmed by this proposal and accused the Dissenters of forming a 'Test against the Test'. The Church of England regarded the numerous meetings held by the Congregationalists in Exeter, Devizes, Manchester, Warrington and Bath as a reproduction of the meetings once held by the Dissenters' Puritan forefathers for the subversion of the Church. Anglicans saw any political activity by the Dissenters in the worst possible light as treason or republicanism. It was opinions like those held by the Tories and the extremists among the Dissenters who helped to sway political support away from the Dissenters to the government, and so led to the defeat of the Dissenters' application in 1790. The dominant conservatism produced by the French Revolution through public reaction to it delayed the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts until the next century. Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution, published in 1790, heightened government and popular opposition to the Dissenting bodies.

[9]Tudur Jones, Congregationalism, p. 184.

The feelings which Burke's work produced led to many patriotic outbursts against Dissenters throughout the country. One such outburst was the Birmingham riots in July 1791, which centred upon the dinner given by Priestley to celebrate the fall of the Bastille. For the duration of the riots many Dissenting meeting places and homes were burnt, and throughout the country anything connected with the Dissenters was attacked regardless of denomination. On local committees, many who had formerly worked with Dissenters in the past now organised an Anglican and anti-reforming party. In Birmingham a similar party was set up in the Birmingham Association for the Protection of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. In Manchester the Church and King Club annually celebrated the failure of the Dissenters' repeal. In 1792, in Manchester, a patriotic mob tried to smash down meeting-houses egged on by clergy and magistrates who did nothing to prevent attacks on the Jacobins and Presbyterians.

The Congregationalists, moderate Presbyterians and Baptists did their best to prevent their members from being involved with the radicals and made public protestations of their loyalty, similar to those of the Methodists. In 1791, John Clayton, a Congregationalist minister of King's Weigh House, stood out against the Revolution and published his sermon The Duty of Christians to Magistrates and was answered by the liberal Baptist, Robert Hall, in his Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom.[10] Nor did all the Presbyterians agree with

[10]Underwood, English Baptists, p. 168.f.

Priestley's theology; thus his friend Dr. Richard Price, although agreeing with Priestley politically, was unlike many Presbyterians theologically Arian.

What the excitement of the French Revolution seems to have done, however, is not only to stimulate the radical political enthusiasms of a minority, but to arouse a new popular interest in Evangelical religion. The Evangelicals and Dissenters had been working together for the abolition of slavery and other movements, also sharing in the same persecution directed towards them by some of the Church of England clergy and by politicians. Within the Baptists, especially the Particular Baptists, militant Evangelical activity increased through the formation of itinerancy Societies. Nor was this new Evangelistic missionary advance restricted to a domestic market. William Carey founded the Baptist Missionary Society in 1793, which was the inspiration to other independent churches to set up missionary meetings and prayer evenings. There were of course still militant Baptists like Robert Hall, who wrote in his Apology for the Freedom of the Press, 1793, that 'the French Revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history'. The Church and King mobs continued to attack the Dissenters, although less frequently than before, and as wage and food shortages were felt they had more to protest against. The Dissenters, however, were for the most part not quite so political, and preoccupied with their own ideas of reform.

In September 1794, in The Evangelical Magazine, Daniel Brogue, a Congregationalist, declared that the time was ripe

for missions, and Thomas Haweis, an Evangelical rector in Aldwincle, Northamptonshire, suggested that a society should be formed with £600 already promised towards it. The leaders of this society were John Eyre, Minister of the Episcopal Ram Chapel, Homerton, and Matthew Wilks, Minister of the Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Chapels. From these meetings a plan was put forward for a general meeting of ministers in the Summer of 1795, to organise the Society. On Monday 21st September 1795, the London Missionary Society was founded and meetings held at the Castle and Falcon, London, to discuss publicly the inauguration of the new Society and to hear a series of missionary sermons. The first missionaries were to go to Tahiti. On 25th September a board was set up, which consisted of twenty four ministers and fourteen laymen. The board members were from several denominations as it was the gospel they were sending, not a denomination. It was not only abroad that the denominations wished to Evangelise, but at home too, so they set up a system of itinerant preachers who would also help to form and aid existing churches as well as preach. The rural community became the centre of evangelistic efforts where no opportunity was lost to preach the gospel. In the counties Missionary Associations were founded such as the one in Cornwall, 'To carry the gospel into the dark and uncultivated villages and towns and to assist poor congregations' was their chief object.[11]

The worst outbreaks of violence against the Dissenters were in 1795, in both town and country, especially after reformers,

[11]Tudur Jones, Congregationalism, pp. 173-175.

some of them Unitarian, wanted to sue for peace with France. In Liverpool, violence erupted after some Unitarians or 'Jacobins' as they were known there, protested against the Slave Trade. The Church and King mobs knew who the protestors were and attacked them and their property. Radical groups within the Dissenters still preached with revolutionary fervour, but they were in the minority, and their numbers dwindled through arrests, as in the cases of Gilbert Wakefield and Jeremiah Joyce, both Presbyterians, through transportation, or as they followed the example of Joseph Priestley who fled to America in 1794. From 1792-1795 a food crisis was gaining hold on the country, which helped to turn the mobs against the government as the price of bread rose dramatically in 1795. The Naval mutinies and the rebellion and invasion in Ireland 1797-8 also distracted government attention away from the Dissenters to a certain extent and thus enabled the Dissenters to attend quietly to their own societies and concerns.

The government could not rely upon the use of mobs after 1795, to defend the Church and State from Dissenters, and instead used legislation to suspend the right of Habeas Corpus in 1795 and to pass the Treasonable and Seditious Meetings Act to counteract the growth of the Corresponding Societies. The Church and King mobs were hardly used again, but through restrictions on liberty imposed by the government, the Church lost much of its popular support to the Dissenters. Church of England clergymen accused the Sunday Schools of leading the young astray and of being breeding grounds for sedition. Before 1795 most of the domestic missionary societies were undenominational,

and helped to weaken the hold of the Church of England upon the nation, as they sprang up wherever there were industries. The missionary societies faced opposition in rural areas, both from landlords who were often the local magistrate and from Anglican clergymen. Many magistrates were also Cathedral dignitaries and largely Tory. Indeed if he did not favour the Dissenters' cause a local magistrate could have an itinerant society take hold of a rural district, and the landowner could be isolated from his labourers, who would attend the chapel not the church. However, these missionary societies from 1795 became increasingly more denominational as Dissenters found it was better to practise self-preservation to strengthen their denomination against the legislative measures of the government and the attacks of the Church.

The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine in 1798 exposed every form of liberal thought, action or feeling by the Dissenters to ridicule, even though articles stating that on the whole few Orthodox Dissenters were politically active had appeared on its pages. The Presbyterians were very active in 1798 in Ireland, helping the United Irishmen during the Irish rebellion and the invasion by the French, and several were executed for their help. At Exeter, in 1798, the minister Timothy Kenrick scandalized his congregations by praying for the French Revolution. The acts of the radical Dissenters, even though a minority, continued to sully the respectability of the Nonconformist Dissenters as a whole and increased the burden of the disabilities under which they lived. Some Nonconformist groups adopted the policy of staying inconspicuous, with the result that they went

into a sharp decline in number. The Presbyterians, who frowned upon the extremist ideas of the radical Unitarians, adopted this policy, placing an emphasis on self-defence. In the West of England some congregations ceased to exist in public, but by keeping quiet were prepared when their revival came at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many who had at first supported the Revolution now regretted it. Thomas Belsham, formerly a Congregationalist who had once been strongly attracted with the Revolution, observed that the Revolution had resulted in 'a general spirit of insubordination, giving forth to insidious and daring attacks on natural and revealed religion'.[12]

Yet this conservative reaction, although delaying political developments, was not unfavourable to Nonconformist Church growth. The Particular Baptists went through an especially dramatic phase of expansion during the period of the French Revolution. In 1794 there were 326 churches in England and 56 in Wales, but in 1798 their numbers had increased to 361 in England and 84 in Wales. John Rippon, publisher of The Baptist Annual Register in 1798 stated that 'more of our meeting-houses have been enlarged within the last fifteen, than had been built and enlarged for thirty years before'[13], and this process continued into the nineteenth century. The Baptists spread through the use of itinerant societies to evangelize in the villages. During the years of 1797-8, rumours were widespread of a threatened French invasion, and some clergymen

[12] Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, The English Presbyterians, p.236.

[13] E. Payne, The General Baptist Union (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1958) p. 19.

feared that the Dissenters would aid the invaders, so once again the Dissenters came under attack. Yet the enthusiasm for France was clearly diminishing even among former enthusiasts. The Particular Baptist, Robert Hall, formerly a sympathiser with revolutionary France, preached a very patriotic sermon in 1798 stating that he was confident that France would never successfully conquer Britain 'while the Nation breathes, they will be afraid of its recovering its strength, and never think themselves secure of their conquest till our Navy is consumed, our wealth dissipated, our commerce extinguished, every liberal institution abolished, our nobles extirpated ... and the refuse which remains swept together into a putrefying heap by the besom of destruction'.[14] Dissenting ministers frequently preached protestations of their loyalty to silence their opponents.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Unitarian revival began with an increase in theological propaganda. In 1800, a fund was set up in London under Robert Aspland, a Baptist who had joined the Unitarian wing of the General Baptists, to preach to the nation and not remain quiet any longer to please the Church of England and its supporters. This fund had the support of Baptists and Universalists, and sent out preachers such as David Eaton, a shoemaker and minister, and Richard Wright, minister of a Johnsonian Baptist congregation at Wisbeck. In 1801, another split occurred between the General Baptists and the New Connexion. Dan Taylor of the New Connexion had attended every Baptist Annual Assembly, but after the introduction of William Vidler, the Unitarian, into the Assembly, Taylor

[14]For a full account of this speech see Underwood, <u>English Baptists</u>, pp. 169-170.

absented himself from future meetings and both socieities went their separate ways. The New Connexion was alive to the needs of the time and were able to reach the working classes in the rapidly expanding northern towns. It was partly because of the Dissenters' success in the towns that their societies and Sunday schools now came under attack from the government, egged on by the Church of England. In many towns the local committee withdrew its support from the Dissenters' Sunday schools and led campaigns to break them up. The Anti-Jacobin Review published many charges like those of the Bishop of Rochester, Samuel Horsley, that these schools were Painite, Jacobin and anti-Establishment organisations. In 1799 and 1800, Michael Angelo Taylor, the member for Durham, attempted to prepare a bill to restrict itinerant preaching and Sunday Schools. However, the bill never got to the House, due to the obstruction of William Wilberforce who feared the bill would restrict the activities of the Anglican Evangelicals, and counselled Pitt not to encourage it. Taylor was in dispute with the Durham Dissentersand the proposed bill was interfering with the timetable for the passage of the Act of Union with Ireland. The Church of England throughout this campaign cut off all links with the Dissenters and reasserted the sole right of episcopal Church order to represent the Church of Christ, thus putting the Dissenters on the defensive. In the Sunday school a power struggle between the dominant Wesleyan groups and the other denominations was being fought over who would control them. The other denominations rebelled against Wesleyan control of the schools, which finally split them from the Wesleyans to become independent or under other denominational control.

Throughout the early years of the nineteenth century the denominations set up their own Bible societies to reach the poor in Britain and the heathen abroad. After the period of repression through reaction to the French Revolution, there was an upsurge in Evangelism and a militancy that would no longer tolerate their status as second class citizens. In 1803, Joseph Hughes, pastor of Battersea church, wrote an essay on 'The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures on Argument for their more General Dispersion'[15] which was the inspiration for the British and Foreign Bible Society of which Rippon and Hughes were secretaries. To carry out their Evangelism, academies for the training of ministers were established by all the denominations. From 1803-1808, William Roby, the Congregationalist, trained students for the ministry as well as supporting the Bible Society, the Tract Society and the London Missionary Society. In London, in 1810 'the Baptist Academical Institution at Stepney' was founded, which helped to strengthen the Baptists around London. The Baptists had even begun to chronicle their own history when Joseph Ivimey, a Particular Baptist, published his first volume of A History of the English Baptists in 1806. Another academy was opened in 1813, the Hackney Academy, which had formerly been Robert Aspland's home and was designed for the training of Baptist ministers, whose academic ability was not sufficient to enter Manchester College in York. The Baptists, like the Unitarians, had learnt the value of propaganda and used it to great effect to increase their membership and subscriptions.

[15]Underwood, English Baptists, p. 181.

In 1810, Joseph Ivimey wrote an article entitled Union Essential to Prosperity arguing for the need of a general union between the ministers and messengers of the neighbouring churches with two deputies from every Association in the country. It was from Ivimey's idea that the General Union of Baptist Ministers and Churches was founded in 1813, which met annually. Ivimey also took the initiative in 1813 to form the Baptist Society for Promoting the Gospel in Ireland, which was not a total success due to the resistance of the Catholics in Ireland and the social and economic conditions there.

In 1811, John Wilks founded the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty. Wilks and Thomas Pellatt, who was its secretary, invited the Methodists to join with the Old Dissenters. The Society with the Deputies dealt with any complaint of riot or injustice that they received from Dissenting congregations. In 1811, Lord Sidmouth, after complaints from the Church of England, announced that he was making a survey for a year of Dissenting groups in the nation and proposed to alter the conditions under which Dissenting minister could be certified according to the Toleration Act. The Dissenters, however, had had a year to prepare and with the support of petitions and politicians defeated Sidmouth in 1812. Consequently in the same year an Act was passed to repeal the Five Mile Act and Conventicle Act but these were only minor concessions and earned the measure the nickname of 'The Little Toleration Act'. The Dissenters, however, gained hope from this victory and discussed the idea of an application to Parliament for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts with the Methodists,

Deputies and the Protestant Society, but for the time being took no action.

William Smith, a Dissenting Deputy from 1805-32 and Unitarian MP, persuaded parliament in 1813 to abolish the penalties attaching to not believing in the doctrine of the Trinity, but marriages and funerals were still performed according to the rites of the Church of England. An extreme radical Unitarian group, the Free thinking Christians[16], continually agitated the Unitarian cause by publicly protesting in journals against members of this group being married using the Trinitarian forms. Robert Hall was also agitating for social reform and when he lived in Leicestershire, campaigned for higher wages for the frame-work knitters whom he wanted to combine in defence of their interests.

In 1814, after the first imprisonment of Napoleon, there were many celebrations from the Dissenting groups who thought that the War was over. The Deputies sent a letter of congratulation to the Prince Regent on the result of the War and declared it the 'Glorious termination of the late tremendous contest - protracted by the gigantic efforts of a mad and unprincipled ambition till Europe had been convulsed to its centre and millions involved in misery and ruin.'[17] From 1814 onwards there was a sharp rise in political radicalism and many ministers were involved in politics. The Congregationalists excused their interference by claiming that all social and public questions were at the bottom of religious ones. The slump in

[16] Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, The English Presbyterians, p.238.

[17] Bernard Lord Manning, Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p. 456.

the cloth industry was another reason to urge the rich to give to charity. Congregationalist preachers urged the rich to dress lavishly to boost the trade of the Spitalfields weavers and allow their servants to attend their churches.

In 1815, the Communion controversy divided the Particular Baptists. Robert Hall, in 1815, wrote a treatise On Terms of Communion with a Particular view to the case of Baptists and Paedobaptists which was opposed by Joseph Kingham of Norwich and continued in a pamphlet war for several years. The dispute was over open communion in which only those who had been baptised could participate, whereas open communion welcomed everyone. It was these internal disputes that hindered the Baptists' longed-for union.

The period of the war had brought prosperity to many Dissenting merchants and manufacturers, and it was their donations that helped to build the new chapels and fund charities for the poor. There was a great contrast between the Congregational chapel at Tottenham Court and the rural chapels which were attended by village labourers. In London and other large towns, congregations were often middle class, whereas in northern England they were mainly working class. The denominations had concentrated upon personal salvation and expansion rather than politics throughout the first part of the nineteenth century but a movement was gaining support for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts and social reform. The new stress on an educated ministry created a more distant and professional kind of pastor, set apart from the people. The social situation

was not, however, favourable to the Presbyterians, for the middle classes who were becoming an influential part of society were serious and sober under the influence of the Evangelicals, and of the wave of religious conservatism upholding the Established Church after the Revolution and wars. These factors all served to hinder the Presbyterians. From 1817 the subject of the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts was discussed by the Deputies and the Dissenting groups, but each time with no action taken to draw up an application. In 1819, a committee of Deputies led by William Smith were impatient to take steps towards an application to Parliament for repeal, but it met with different reactions from the denominations. The Unitarians and Protestant Society differed in opinion on the subject of repeal, the Unitarians being the more enthusiastic of the two groups. The Deputies continually kept the subject of repeal in front of the government and MPs friendly to their cause. The Whig politicians Lord Holland, Lord Russell and Lord Lansdowne were often to be seen at Nonconformist Bible and Missionary Societies as well as at the committee meetings of the Dissenters. In 1820, Lord Holland and William Smith tried to petition for the abolition of the system of restraint upon religion and religious professions, as they regarded it as a natural right. Their petition was turned down, as Whig politicians considered that the time was not right to submit it owing to the recent death of George III and the dissolution of Parliament.[18] In 1820, Henry Brougham, the radical lawyer who had been chairman of a parliamentary committee on education,

[18]Bernard Lord Manning, Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p. 222.

found that only about one person in sixteen had the opportunity to be educated, and so proposed a change to the education system. He did not consider that the voluntary agencies were sufficient for this task. His bill advocated State intervention and meant that the appointment of teachers would be conditional on the candidate being Anglican. This was met by a storm of protest from the Dissenters and the bill was not given a second reading.

A special General Meeting was held by the Deputies in January 1823 to arrange for an application to be drawn up for presentation to Parliament by Lord John Russell. The Dissenters would not include the question of Catholic Emancipation within their application for fear it would prejudice their chances. The Protestant Society wanted a postponement of the publication by the Dissenters on the Corporation and Test Acts while the Marriage Bill was being discussed in Parliament. Nevertheless, by June 1823 the statement and petitions were published and circulated to the Dissenting churches.

The expansion of Baptist chapels continued throughout the political discussions with the London Baptist Building Fund set up in 1824, for the erection of meeting-houses throughout Britain and especially in country chapels. As well as new chapels, old chapels were renovated and supported by the Fund. The trustees of this Fund hoped to end the occurrence of country ministers having to beg on the doorsteps of wealthy persons for assistance in supporting their churches. The Baptists were involved in every society or mission at home and abroad.

By 1825 a vigorous campaign was under way for repeal. The Dissenters were at first reluctant to follow the Deputies who did most of the work, with the help of Lord Holland and Lord Russell. The Congregationalists were particularly enthusiastic and impatient at any delay of action, suspecting any activity on the Unitarians' part, in case they should compromise Nonconformist issues for party politics. It was the Unitarian Association and the Board of Congregational Ministers who were interested in immediate action when the subject of repeal was again raised in February 1827. The Committee for the repeal called a conference, which was attended by representatives from the Protestant Society, Ministers, the Board of Congregational Ministers and the Unitarian Association. The groups at the meeting called for immediate action, which triggered off the final campaign of the Dissenters for repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. The Deputies decided that another committee of seven Deputies, six ministers and three representatives of the Protestant Society and Unitarian Association should interview MPs to hear their views on their application. Within ten days another meeting was held at Brown's Hotel in Palace Yard, Westminster, with Lord Holland, Lord Russell, Lord Nugent, John Marshall, Henry Warburton and other politicians who unanimously encouraged a plan of immediate application by Lord Russell. Russell was to make the move for repeal in the Commons at such a time as he thought suitable. The Dissenters formed a United Committee under the same name as in 1787, 'The United Committee appointed to conduct the Application for the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts'. The Deputies were at the heart of the committee with their secretary Robert

Winter as the Secretary of the committee, and the Deputy William Smith was its President. Gradually in 1827 more Dissenting groups joined the United Committee with only the Scottish Presbyterians reluctant to help. The United Committee met for the first time on 20th April 1827 and then every week. The Committee sent out circular letters to ministers for their opinions and petitions were addressed to the House of Commons to be signed by 'competent and suitable' male persons.[19] The United Committee, due to hesitancy upon the part of some of its members and the lateness of the session, postponed any further attempts to present the application until the beginning of 1828. The meetings of the United Committee were no longer weekly, but monthly, yet nevertheless they still continued to present petitions.

In January 1828, the Deputies, encouraged by the news that the Corporation of the City of London was petitioning Parliament for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, themselves drew up a new petition. The Test Act Reporter appeared on 1st January 1828, and 2,000 copies were published under the direction of the Rev. Robert Aspland. Drafts of petitions were revised by the Committee and negotiations reopened by them with Russell and John Smith for a renewal of the Application. Petitions were sent by the Committee to both Houses, and they hoped the Anglicans would sign in favour of the repeal. The Committee kept in touch with the English and Irish Roman Catholics, but would not give them any formal junction, only thanking them for their promised support when voting for repeal. The United

[19] Bernard Lord Manning, Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p. 229.

Committee took extra precautions to ensure that all publications had their sanction and that no-one acted individually, as misunderstandings were quick to arise and difficult to dispel.

On the evening of 26th February 1828, Russell's motion was carried by 237 votes to 193 in the Commons and a resolution was moved in the Committee of the House calling for the repeal of the parts of the Corporation and Test Acts, which was carried on 28th February. On 4th March the Committee's draft of the bill for repeal was introduced by Russell and read for the first time. Lord Althorp wanted the Dissenters to accept a moderate declaration instead of an oath and not to use any power they gained from the repeal to subvert the Established Church. The Committee then held discussions with Robert Peel, the Home Secretary, who also insisted upon a declaration, which would be given on admission to office and not only on requisition. The Committee amended their Bill, which passed its third reading on 31st March 1828. The bill was again amended in April after fears that Lord Eldon would oppose it in the Lords. Lord Holland was confident that the bill would be passed and on 9th May 1828 it received the Royal Assent. On 12th May the United Committee passed a set of resolutions of thanks to all who had helped in the repeal, especially Lord Russell and Lord Holland, who was related to the late Charles Fox to whom they were also indebted. The Dissenters were overjoyed and held many celebratory dinners. Perhaps the most elaborate dinner was given by the Duke of Sussex at the Freemason's Tavern on 18th June, which lasted for over six hours, more than half of which the Duke spent making speeches. The repeal

marked a turning point in Dissenting history, making it unnecessary for them to hide their churches or be expelled from a district for their denominational allegiance. The Catholic Relief Act of 1829 was in some respects the result of the repeal as the Dissenters had strongly supported the Catholic cause for which Daniel O'Connell publicly thanked them. In 1829, eleven per cent of the petitions for Catholic Emancipation came from the Dissenters. There were some Congregationalists who were opposed to the Emancipation Act because they were strongly anti-Catholic. William Thorp of Castle Green, Bristol, preached against it, but another Bristol minister, John Liefchild, defended the Act 'because I am a Christian and durst not persecute any man even to the deprivation of a shoe latchet for his religion'.[20]

Over the period of the French Revolution and Wars, preaching in chapels reached a new height as the day of the popular preacher had arrived. The congregation listened to the minister of their choice, who adapted his sermons according to the wants of his flock. Some of the preachers played to the well stocked galleries of the chapel, while others took on the style of Jacques Saurin, who had been a minister to the nobility at The Hague from 1705-1730 and had an argumentative, witty style of oratory. Nevertheless, there were still ministers like William Jay, the Congregationalist, whose sermons had clarity, directness and sincerity.

The French Revolution helped to influence the Unitarians politically, with its literature, but owing to this was the cause of their decline and persecution until the early nineteenth century. The suspicion which politicans felt for the Unitarians

[20]Tudur Jones, Congregationalism, p. 199.

affected the Baptists and Congregationalists, but despite repression these groups survived and flourished through their itinerant Evangelising missions. Instead of turning to revolutionary acts the main body of Dissenters sought a religious revolution against ignorance, irreligion and immorality both at home and abroad. On the one hand, the apocalyptic religious movements of the revolutionary period coincided with the enormous growth of the Evangelically-minded Nonconformist chapels and must have urged them on. Yet the dominant Anglican conservatives reaction of the era delayed any effective redress of Dissenting grievances and indeed preserved in a large measure the Anglican ascendancy until the late 1820s and 1830s, as well as delaying other measures of needed political reform. The growth of Dissent in this period was, however, arguably fatal to the survival of the Anglican ascendancy, by withdrawing so large a proportion of the population from the spiritual hegemony of the Church of England, so that the whole confessional Anglican state was gradually and inevitably weakened by the Nonconformist advance. The Anglican ascendancy was further weakened by the passage of the Emancipation Act. The Catholic fight for emancipation, its development and the plight of the Catholics in England and Ireland are described in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6

THE ENGLISH CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE FRENCH ÉMIGRÉS DURING THE YEARS 1790 - 1829

'More welcome to no land
The Fugitives than to the British Strand,
Where Priest and layman with the vigilance of
true compassion greet them. Creed and Test
vanish before the unreserved embrace of Catholic
humanity: - distrest
They came, - and, while the moral tempest roars
Throughout the country they have left, our shores
Give to their Faith a fearless resting-place.'[1]

'a full, equal and unqualified participation of the benefits of the laws and constitution of England'.[2]

[1] D.A. Bellenger, The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789 (Downside Abbey, Bath, England, 1986), p.8 from an ecclesiastical sonnet by William Wordsworth published in 1827.

[2] John O'Connell, The Select Speeches of Daniel O'Connell, M.P. 2 vols (James Duffy, Dublin, 1854), p. 25-26.

The English Catholic Church in the eighteenth century was a church with a background of persecution, restraint from the Penal Laws and of conflict, both external and internal. The Catholic Church from 1688[3] had been under control of four Vicars Apostolic, appointed by Rome. The 'Old Brotherhood' of Catholics disagreed with this system, and continually campaigned for a Bishop-in-ordinary, and not wholly dependent on Rome. There were four Vicariates in Britain, the London District, the Midland District and the Northern and Western Districts. There was a power struggle over the authority of the Vicars Apostolic over the lower clergy. Both parties appealed to Rome for a settlement. On May 30th 1753 a papal bull was issued and this controlled the English Catholic Church until 1850. The relations between seculars and regulars were set out in twenty-four sections, and the vicars were given authority over everything including the Catholic missions.

[3]Joan Connell, The Roman Catholic Church in England 1780 - 1850, A Study in Internal Politics (American Philosophical Society, 1984), pp. 29-49.

For over two hundred years the Catholic Church lived under the Penal Laws, which dictated almost every aspect of life, with the constant threat of fines or imprisonment. In a further measure, the Marriage Act of 1783[4] stated that Catholic marriages were invalid unless performed by a clergyman of the Established Church. This meant that the marriage banns would have to be published first and a licence purchased. The Catholics disagreed with this, since it would draw attention to themselves, which might bring persecution, and also a denial of their faith. Marriage was a sacrament, and to participate in the Protesant service would be to betray their ancestors' suffering and death. The Catholic priest who performed the Catholic service would be breaking the law of the land, but a Catholic couple who took part in the Protestant service would break the laws of Rome; one way to counteract this was for a Catholic couple to be

[4]M.D.R. Leys, Catholics in England 1559-1829 (Longmans, 1961) pp. 127-139.

married in a Protestant church first and a Catholic one later. Other Penal Laws restricted Catholic inheritance, and the passing of property to a Protestant relative was almost compulsory. Even when a Catholic did own any land, he had to pay double the taxes of a Protestant landowner. Yet persecution was not unrelenting;in numerous towns and villages Catholics were allowed to worship openly, and some even became town officials. The Penal Laws were not enforced everywhere, and in some areas Catholics were 'known' about, but not reported.

In 1764 a petition was drawn up by Edmund Burke, which favoured a Catholic emancipation bill. The petition was signed by nine peers and one hundred and sixty three gentlemen and was well received in Parliament. In 1778, the Catholic Relief Act was passed with very little opposition. The new bill and its benefits only applied to those who took the oath of loyalty, and was a constant source of discontent because it did not go far enough. It was after this Act that regular prayers were said for the King in Catholic chapels. Catholic volunteers were now all allowed to fight alongside Protestant soldiers against the colonists in America.

The Catholic population was only a minority in England. Joseph Berington[5], in his Behaviour of English Catholics, considered the Catholics in decline and blamed this on several things; the death of families or families conforming to the Established Church, marriage with Protestants, and general indifference to

[5] J. Connell, The Roman Catholic Church, p.37.

religion. When a family of distinction failed, the Catholics in the surrounding district who were dependent upon them soon left. Catholics living in small groups, often in outlying areas, were far from the nearest Catholic community. Some chapels or meeting rooms were very small; both the poverty of the priests as well as travelling conditions contributed to their inability to gather at a central place, and in some areas the fear of unpopularity made it unwise. The majority of priests did own a horse, which enabled them to travel from mass-centre to mass-centre on a Sunday.

Many young men entered the priesthood as it was almost the only career open to an educated Catholic man at this time, because there was no professional class. Most English Catholic schools on the Continent were primarily seminaries for the training of priests for the English mission. The priesthood was regarded as the highest calling, and often boys were encouraged to become priests to preserve Catholicism after persecution. The idea of conversion to Catholicism was not popular among Catholics, as both the laity and clergy aimed only to hold onto their faith, and to spread their faith was to endanger them and to weaken their hold on the truth.

The Vicars Apostolic were a largely conservative group, who also advocated the policies of retirement and unobtrusiveness. The Old Catholic order rejected continental devotional practice; this extended to images of the Virgin, votive candles and processions. Their churches were plain and subdued with no outward appearance of a chapel, such as bells or a cross.[6] The clergy

[6]Edward Norman, The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), pp. 1-29.

were also conservative in appearance, and did not wear clerical dress outside the chapel. This secrecy made non-Catholics suspicious of the Catholic way of life. The Vicars Apostolic were cautious of change, and looked back to the English martyrs rather than forward to a more aggressive and larger church. The clergy on the whole were poor, and like their Anglican counterparts depended upon wealthy patrons. A gentleman's chaplain would earn about £20 per annum, whereas a missioner supported himself, a servant and a horse on £20, if he was fortunate. In some cases they were poorly educated, as were their congregations who might also be undisciplined as well as ignorant. A great number of Catholics were employed in non-agricultural labour work and as handicraftsmen. Far more were in agricultural work than in domestic service.

The Act of 1778, and perhaps the funding of a Catholic Committee in this year, contributed to anti-papist feelings. This committee was set up to organise a petition for Catholic relief; it was mostly made up of the aristocracy and the clergy for the most part were not consulted. In 1779 a Protestant Association was formed with the anti-papist Lord George Gordon as its president. On January 4th, 1780, a petition was submitted by the Protestant Association for the repeal of the 1778 Act. A meeting was held on June 2nd, 1780, at St. George's fields. The outcome was the 'Gordon Riots' during which a number of Catholic chapels and property of Catholic noblemen were destroyed. In Bath a new Catholic Church just about to be opened was burnt down, and the riots continued until June 8th, when George III read the riot act. The Catholics were left afraid, but within

the Catholic community a movement was growing for further Catholic relief.

In 1782, a second Committee was elected, also with an upper class majority. The interest of this Committee was concentrated on the Southern and Midland areas, and tried to illustrate how little they wanted a Roman connection when they were loyal to England. In 1787, three clergy members were elected to the Committee. These were James Talbot, Vicar Apostolic of London, Charles Berington, Co-adjutor in the Midland district, and Joseph Wilkes, the Benedictine priest of the chapel at Bath[7], who were all from the South and Midlands.

In 1788, a petition for relief was drawn up by the Committee and made to William Pitt. The English Catholics appealed to Pitt for a bill of Relief. Evidence was then collected concerning the Catholics and their opinions. It would be upon this that the government would act. They obtained signatures from large numbers of English Catholics including the four Vicars Apostolic, and nearly all the Catholic clergymen in England. A protest was drawn up by the Catholic Committee which was then signed and presented with the petition to parliament. This protest stated that the Catholic Church held 'No power over Protestants except that of excluding them from its sacraments, and other religious privileges; no jurisdiction or authority whatsoever within this realm, that can directly or indirectly affect or interfere with the independence, sovereignty, laws, Constitution or government

[7]For the 1787 Catholic Committee see John Bossy, The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850 (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1975), p. 330, pp. 323-365.

thereof, or the rights, liberties, persons or properties of the people.'

The Relief bill was drafted by Charles Butler, the first Catholic barrister, and was intended to bring full religious toleration to the English Catholics. The views of the Committee were reflected by this bill, and they were in contact with the government about its contents. However, the bill required those who would benefit from it to take an oath, which contained passages from James I's oath of allegiance in 1606 on Catholic doctrine which the Pope had condemned. Also included in the oath was a declaration against papal infallibility, and no legal protection was given to ecclesiastical endowments. There was a general Catholic outcry against the bill, and with one exception all the Bishops were against the Committee. In October 1789, the four Vicars Apostolic condemned the Oath, and this condemnation was published in some areas of the country. After making an appeal to the House of Lords, the bill was amended and the Committee disbanded. The Committee had also discussed the rights of laymen to interfere with the nominations of Bishops, and what procedure should be used for this. In fact, the issue was the power of the laity in the Church over the clergy: the Committee saw Rome as the enemy and wanted the Vicars Apostolic changed to Bishops-in-ordinary who would be under their supervision.

The Relief bill was postponed until 1791. There were still those who opposed the Oath, and John Milner wrote a tract for the non-jurors which explained their position. Edmund Burke spoke for the Catholics in Parliament, and when the Bill was sent to the House of Lords its opponents found support in

Dr. Samuel Horsley, Bishop of St. Davids. He stated that both those for and against the Oath were equally loyal, and so entitled to relief from the Penal Laws. It was important for the Catholic Church to have a guarantee of basic rights, if they were to survive in a changing world. To help secure these rights the Catholic had tried to convince the Protestants that they were loyal subjects, even when their Church was divided by arguments. An Oath was imposed upon them by an Irish Relief Act, and was proposed by Bishop Horsley, and accepted. The Relief bill went through Parliament unopposed. William Pitt, who had supported the Relief bill, knew so little about the Catholics because of the scarcity of information, that he had to go to the London Catholic bookshop to find out what they believed and practised.

The Relief bill meant that Mass was now legal if it was celebrated in registered chapels, and if the priest took the oath. The doors of the chapel were to be kept open, and it was not allowed a steeple or a bell. If Catholic worship was to be disturbed, a fine or the individual's sureties were to be seized until evidence of his good behaviour could be produced. Ceremonies were not to be performed in public places, and although the Act stated that Catholic laity should take the oath, few did, and it eventually lapsed, as it did in the case of priests. New chapels were built, and Catholics were now able to practise law, with the exception of becoming the King's counsel or judge.

The conflict between the Northern and Southern factions and the Committee continued. In 1792, the disbanded Catholic

Committee formed the 'Cisalpine Club'[8]. Charles Butler recognised the name as denoting a school of theology which denied any temporal power to the Pope outside of Rome, and declared that the Pope was subject to a general council. The club itself emphasised civil obedience and the virtues of the English Constitution. The club later became more of a social gathering place for the upper classes, than a theological or political meeting place.

From an early period in the Revolution, some Frenchmen looked to England as a land of liberty and peace where the exiles could take refuge. The first émigrés arrived in 1791 and were mostly royalists who went into voluntary exile because of confiscation of land and property in France. After the fall of the Bastille, many friends of Royalty left Paris for the country areas until the situation improved. When it worsened they left the country and sought safety abroad. This first flight was known as the émigration de sûreté[9], and after the attack on Versailles many more left.

The first clerical émigrés arrived in 1791, and one was Monseigneur de la Marche, Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, who was to have great influence over the exiled clergy and their supporters.[10] The Bishop was smuggled into England along with barrels of brandy

[8] E. Norman, The English Catholic Church, pp. 49-50.

[9] On the emigration of the French refugees in more detail see Margery Weiner, The French Exiles 1789-1815 (John Murray, 1960), pp. 4-18, 41-53.

[10] An account of the journey made by Bishop St. Pol de Léon to England refer to Bernard Ward, The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England, 1781-1803, vol. 2 (Longmans, Green and Co., 1909) p. 5, pp. 1-37, 163-175.

from France, and after visiting London settled in the West Country, until a flood of *émigrés* arrived in 1792.

In 1791, the arrival of the first French clerical *émigrés* caused the Catholics to lay aside their divisions for a while. These refugees were to change the face of the English Catholic establishment, as well as public opinion towards them. The French Revolution through these clerical *émigrés* helped to strengthen and advance the Catholic cause in England, although at first only on a religious scale with the growth of chapels and institutions. Indeed, the French clergy helped the Catholics to gain sympathy by the fact that they bore witness to the consequences of revolution, and many Catholics and Protestants could identify with their plight. The Revolution, however, did delay the Catholic campaign for emancipation until the next century due to the suspicions of many politicians about the change and the fear that the English Catholics would join with the Irish against them.

It was impossible for the English Catholics to be impervious to the events in France, and the state of the *émigrés* when they arrived. Many English Catholics, especially the clergy, had been educated among the Catholics of France, and learnt to regard them as brethren, as many were related to the French families. Some of the most important foreign Catholic establishments were in France, and several of these in Paris itself. The English Catholics were very apprehensive for those who were near to them.

The first Northern exiles went to the Channel Islands, but

later emigrated to England. The number of priests who arrived with the first stream is estimated at about three thousand, and that included sixteen Bishops. Among the priests in Britain it was those from Brittany and Normandy who were the best represented.

The first exiles were not always greeted with kindliness; some were jeered at and pelted with bricks by the crowds who gathered at the docks. Other _émigrés_ were charged vast amounts of money for their passage, under the threat of being returned to France. Many had sold their belongings for a passport, when they were still available. However, this did not continue, once the true horrors of the situation in France became known. As this news spread, public opinion in England changed, and sympathy and help was offered to the _émigrés_.[11] There was some resentment towards certain of the _émigrés_ such as the Viscomte de Noailles who came to England previously and was welcomed, but then went to America and supported their campaign for Independence. Some men such as Sir James Bland Burges believed that the French upper classes were to blame, and he suspected them of plotting mischief in England. The _émigrés_ must have feared coming to England: England in the past had received other refugees such as the Hugenots who were victims of Catholic persecution. In England Catholics had few rights, and it was only fifteen years after the Gordon Riots. The refugees would also have remembered that in the past France and England had been natural enemies with few periods of peace between them.

[11] B. Ward, _The Dawn of the Catholic Revival_, _vol. 2_, p. 9-10.

Many of the refugees arrived in an impoverished state on landing, and some non-clerical émigrés who could not afford to leave France themselves entrusted their children to sailors. One such case was that of the Vicomtesse de Noailles who sent her baby across in a fishing boat.[12] Lord Malmesbury who was walking on the shore was told of the child, and sent money to her in France, and she arrived in England a month later. Those who had family in England were often taken in by them, but those who had no-one were often confused and anxious on facing an existence in a foreign country, where they did not understand the language or the customs of the people. Some who arrived penniless were forced to beg for food, and were often suspicious of English hospitality, as so often they were received with a welcome, only to be betrayed.

Abbé Barruel, in his Histoire du Clergé pendant la revolution Françoisè, noted the reception by the English on the shore. He said 'They flocked to the landing places to offer us a lodging or refreshment ... . they seemed more concerned for us than we were for ourselves... '[13] The émigrés were questioned as to their wants, and rooms were provided for those who could care for themselves. Carriages were hired for them, and frequently their expenses were paid for. Some émigrés were told to stop at country seats to rest and money was given to them. This occurred most frequently at the Dover landings; others

[12] M. Weiner, The French Exiles 1789-1815, p.49

[13] For a description of the émigrés' landing see Bernard and Margaret Pawley, Rome and Canterbury through four centuries (Mowbray, 1981), p.74, pp. 74-111.

landed along the coast thankful to reach land. About half the exiles made their way to London. The population of London was less than a million, and so the arrival of hundreds of exiles was felt and seen in the streets. One of the great difficulties was accommodation, and many institutions such as schools and halls were converted to house them. The *émigré* clergy settled in many parts of England especially around London and the West Country, and some even went as far as the Midlands and Scotland. In Scotland they received a great welcome and were of much use to the Scottish priests in outlying districts, as the French clergy were sent to areas where there were Catholics without a priest. The French clergy also helped to restore chapels through their work.

The English Catholic clergy at first were less than sympathetic to the *émigré* priests. The newcomers would turn up in large numbers at the churches to say mass daily, which the English Catholics did not do. The French clergy were also very exacting in their requirements. The London churches possessed no side altars, and the accommodation was inadequate for the ever increasing numbers that awaited their turn to celebrate mass. There were naturally disputes, and for a while there was a coolness between the resident clergy and the *émigrés*. Bishop John Douglas, Vicar Apostolic of London, who was the friend of the exiles, excused their faults by saying they were due to ignorance of English habits, and the English Catholics helped wherever they could to give relief to the *émigrés*. Bishop Douglas made great efforts to supply the spiritual needs of the French clergy, and gave them leave to say mass at any private house, wherever a room could be devoted to the purpose, and

fitted up as a temporary chapel. Charles Butler opened his house to twelve priests who said mass daily, and were provided with breakfast as it was questionable if they would eat again that day. Protestants also showed their sympathy in a practical fashion by the generous scale of their subscriptions. The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Shute Barrington, and his wife took in refugees and paid £5 per year to the Carmelite Nuns. The French clergy were of great benefit to the English Catholics as the sympathy which they were given was also given in part to the English Catholics. The French clergy gained respect, as they were men of conscience with high standards of piety and behaviour, who left France rather than accept the tyranny of the State over the Church.

The movement for relief for the exiles was started by a few individuals like the Marquis of Buckingham and John Wilmot, both well known public figures. For many years the Marquis was opposed to Catholicism, even preventing his wife, who was a Catholic convert, from attending Mass, and it was only through his involvement with émigrés that he grew to respect the Catholics. John Wilmot was a man of letters, a fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries and represented Coventry in the House of Commons. In September 1792, Wilmot called a meeting at the Freemasons Tavern, which was a popular Catholic meeting place. John Wilmot presided over it. Thirty one persons attended and William Pitt, Edmund Burke, Sir Philip Metcalfe M.P., William Wilberforce and members of the Protestant clergy and Catholic laymen were also present.[14] These men formed themselves

[14] B. Ward, The Dawn of the Catholic Revival, vol. 2, p.19.

into a permanent central committee, with John Wilmot as the chairman and Theodore Hester as the secretary. Their numbers were later increased to sixty although only five were necessary for a Quorum.

The committee worked in close union with the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon. The initial appeal to the nation was made by Edmund Burke, and the effects were immediate. They collected £33,775. Oxford University alone contributed £480 with a similar sum made by the City of Bristol. There were in all fifty four subscriptions of £50 or over, and seven hundred and fifty of £20 or over, with several smaller sums. Each priest received about £2 a month and the Bishops about £10. Local committees were set up which were in constant touch with London. The Bishop St. Pol de Léon distributed the funds. At Oxford University two thousand copies of the Vulgate were printed for free distribution, and a similar number by the Marquis of Buckingham. The Bishops of London and Canterbury also helped collectors to raise £41,304. At the end of 1792 the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon wrote a pastoral expressing the gratitude of the exiled clergy, and a work entitled <u>Rules of Conduct to be observed by the French Refugee Priests in England</u>.[15]

Another group of relief workers were set up by the Revd. Thomas Meynell, an ex-Jesuit, and Mrs. Dorothy Silburn, a widow from Durham. Mrs. Silburn used subscriptions from her friends and opened a house at 10, Little Queen Street, Bloomsbury as a centre of relief. This house was known as the 'Providence'.

[15] B. Ward, <u>The Dawn of Catholic Revival</u>, <u>vol. 2</u>, p. 21-22

The Bishop of St. Pol de Léon was a frequent visitor, and helped to counsel her and her work. A chapel was opened in Dudley Court for the French, through the efforts of Mrs. Silburn. It was dedicated to the Holy Cross, but was not large and on special occasions they had to move to an ordinary chapel. The Catholic resources were only small and inadequate, but Protestant England helped all it could, and differences of creed were all set aside as many recognised the plight of Christians who were persecuted by the enemies of Christianity. The formation of these charitable societies for the relief of the exiles provided a relief for the government who had been in a dilemma on how to provide for the exiles; if the government gave the émigrés financial assistance it was nothing short of war, but if it offered no help the émigrés would starve and have no shelter. Edmund Burke was an active supporter of the refugees and in 1792 wrote The Case of the Suffering Clergy of France which appeared in The Evening Mail on 17th-19th September 1792 and was later published in pamphlet form and reprinted in The Annual Register. Burke appealed to all 'right thinking men' to help the émigrés who were suffering for 'the cause of honour, virtue, loyalty and religion'.[16] Meanwhile, the position of Catholics was changing in other areas of the country too.

In 1793, the Scottish Catholic Relief was passed, after rioting in Scotland. This meant that Scottish Catholics could inherit and purchase lands and property. As in England they could now openly say mass, but could not tutor or be curators to Protestant children, though this clause was not often invoked

[16] D.A. Bellenger, The French Exiled Clergy, p.13

against them. There was little change in the Scottish mission, since the Catholics worshipped openly before and the priests were unmolested.

At first, the government only helped by paying for accommodation for the priests. At King's House in Winchester, room was found for about six hundred clergy. They were under the government of Monsieur Matin, formerly a superior of the Grand Séminaire at Lisieux. He was a great friend of John Milner and was liked by all who met him. On the execution of the King of France, a Requiem was sung at Milner's new chapel and a similar service was held after the execution of the Queen. The funds raised were still not enough to support all the clergy and laity, especially as it looked as if the exile would be prolonged. The Committee looked to the government, and William Pitt proposed that financial assistance should be given to the refugees, and public money was voted into use.[17] This amounted to about £200,000 a year, and no distinction was made between priests and laymen on distribution. A Committee was set up to distribute this fund, which consisted of the Bishop of Monpellier and fifteen French laymen. The Baron de Renac presided over the Committee and meetings were held at Mrs. Silburn's house. This new annual grant meant that a Bishop would receive £10 per month and a priest £1.5s, whereas a layman would receive £1.11s.6d. Utility was an important part of the government's policy in giving these funds so much so that one exile, Lageard, Vicar General of Rheims, suggested

[17]E.I. Watkin, Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950 (Oxford University Press, 1957), p.146, pp. 135-169.

that Pitt would be a suitable finance minister for Attila the Hun.[18]

At this time in France the British Catholic establishments which were seized were used for military purposes, and those who were unable to flee were imprisoned. In 1794, with the fall of Robespierre in July, many Catholic clergy were released, but the Catholic missions were not reclaimed, as there seemed little hope of peace. The Scottish clergy turned to the government for help in financing new colleges and the British refugees who fled from France. Some of the students from the British Catholic colleges in France did not return to England or Scotland, but went on to Spain and Belgium. In 1795, a Mr. Sone, a miller from Bedhampton, gave £10,000 for a Catholic college to be built in England to serve the whole country or London. This college was to educate boys for the priesthood. In 1796, Bishop Hay[19], the Scottish Vicar Apostolic, wrote to Abbé MacPherson telling him of a promised sum of money which would reimburse them for the Scottish colleges in Paris and Douay, when peace was restored. Bishop Hay had already approached the government the previous year. Sir John Cox Hippisley, M.P., supported the Scottish appeal and spoke for them in Parliament. On 27th August 1797 it was confirmed by Cox Hippisley that the clergy would be paid £1,600, but it was not until 1799 that they received it. Bishop Hay suggested in 1799 that if the

[18]D.A. Bellenger, The French Exiled Clergy, p.17.

[19]For the Scottish grant from the Government see Christine Johnson, Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829 (John Donald Publishers Ltd., Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 119-129.

Catholic priests received a sufficient salary there would be fewer emigrations to Canada, an occurrence that was worrying the government. The grant was divided between the clergy. Each Vicar Apostolic received £100 per year, each co-adjutor £60, and each priest received sufficient for his mission quota to an income of £20 per annum. Aquhorties and the proposed Highland college each received £300 in 1799, with a further £300 in 1800. For building costs each college received £50 per annum. The grant only lasted until 1805, when it was gradually stopped. Many payments were long delayed and only after repeated requests by the Scottish Bishops and their friends were they paid.

Schools were set up by men such as Abbé Carron, who ran a boarding school for boys, another for girls, a soup kitchen and a seminary. Both Catholics and Protestants subscribed to this work. Some English ladies under the patronage of the Duchess of York set up a relief committee for 'female emigrants who were ill'. The Quiberon soldiers,who led the abortive expedition in 1795 of that name, were looked after by the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, as were the widows of those who died at Quiberon, who received £10 per year. It was not only the ordinary priests who found relief in England, but religious orders such as the Montargis who received help from the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. This order remained in England, at first at Bodney Hall, Norfolk, then later at Princethorpe in Warwickshire. The monks of La Trappe also came to England and were helped by Thomas Weld, who established them in a house in Lulworth. Convents and schools sprang up in many

areas of Britain, and often, as in the case of the nuns of Winchester and Amesbury, were sadly missed when they left. Even after the émigrés left the seminaries and schools still flourished, showing how successful their founders were. Some of the French priests were able to help the English Catholic priests who were overworked. There are many examples of the French clergy helping to support, financially, English chapels through their work. Abbé De La Rue taught French to the Naval officers and gave the gifts he received to support the Church. The French priests were able to appeal for funds where the English Catholics could not.[20] In this way, the arrival of the émigré clergy was invaluable to the development of the Catholic educational and religious establishments. Before, a Catholic child was sent abroad for its education; with the foundation of new schools it would be possible for them to stay in Britain. Thus there would not in future be the problem of foreign trained priests, whose manners and customs were different from the people they administered to. The émigrés spurred on Catholic growth which without their intervention may have been less rapid. Through appeals set up for the French clergy many chapels were built throughout England, and the Catholics were responsible for the churches.

Politicians began to look at the Catholics less as enemies and more as a faction to be helped. For the first time in many years relations with Rome improved, because of the French Revolution and England's new attitude towards Rome. In 1793

[20] M.D.R. Leys, Catholics in England, pp. 145-146.

when Cardinal Erskine, the Papal emissary, came to England he had thanked the English people on behalf of the Pope, for their help. The English government wanted the Pope as an ally against France. The influence of the French clergy was everywhere. They made up a large part of every congregation and in London there were three churches at King Street, Conway Street and Somerstown. The congregations in the Church were at first French, but gradually more English. A church was set up by Abbé Jean Nicolas Voyaux de Franous in Cadogan Terrace, where for the first time Catholic soldiers were able to worship in public.[21]

The Revolution, in destroying and confiscating colleges and seminaries abroad, brought these institutions to Scotland and England. The college at Douay gave rise to two new colleges in England. The first of these was at Old Hall, Ware, which later moved to St. Edmund's, Ware; the new college was opened in 1799. The other college, a seminary and school, was opened at Crookthall for the Northern District in 1795. Later it moved to Ushaw, near Durham. These religious establishments were threatened in 1800 by Sir Henry Mildmay's monastic institutes bill, which was intended to make the existence of any religious houses or school conducted by them impossible. Both Charles Butler and John Milner campaigned against this, and the bill was thrown out in the House of Lords through the intervention of Bishop Samuel Horsley. A third college was

[21]On the Establishment of Cadogan Terrace Church see Bernard Ward, The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), pp. 194-195, pp. 183-195, 1-20, 99-113.

formed at Old College, Oscoth, for the Midland districts. The émigré clergy also gave the English Catholics new hope to fight for greater relief, with their strength and vitality, which was not the effect of a subservient clergy, such as the English Catholics.

The English Catholics, however, did not give up on the subject of emancipation, and hardly a year had passed without either the English or Irish Catholics proposing a bill for Catholic relief. In 1800, with the Act of Union in Ireland, hopes were raised for an emancipation bill, but William Pitt's requests for this were denied by George III. The King regarded a concession of Catholic claims as a violation of his Coronation Oath, which was to preserve the Protestant constitution. George III also took steps which led to Pitt's resignation, on 28th June 1801, and informed the Home Secretary Henry Dundas that emancipation was 'the most jacobinical thing I ever heard of! I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure.' On March 14th, 1801, Henry Addington became Prime Minister. John Milner wrote a pamphlet to ease the King's mind, and argued that the Coronation Oath contained provisions which were inapplicable to the actual state of things, but still the Coronation Oath was an obstacle and the Act was postponed.[22]

The English and Irish Catholics with the support of the Protestant Dissenters campaigned for equal rights for all

[22] E. Norman, The English Catholic Church, p.35.

denominations, and for the removal of Anglican privileges.

In 1801, conditions in France were seemingly improved. Napoleon had concluded the Concordat with Pius VII, and many clergy were encouraged to return to France. The Pope according to the Concordat suppressed a large number of French sees, and wanted the existing Bishops of those sees to resign. The Pope was exercising authority over a national episcopate, and seemed to challenge the Gallican Church's independence. Out of the eighty one Bishops only forty obeyed the Pope, and in London, fourteen out of nineteen Bishops including the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, refused to resign. In 1802, the Concordat was published in England, and only nine hundred priests remained with only eight hundred and fifty émigrés receiving state relief. There were some who strongly disagreed with the Concordat, and saw the Pope as schismatical. This group was called the 'Blanchardists' after Abbé Blanchard, curé of St. Hyppolite of Lisieux in Normandy.[23] Abbé Blanchard published pamphlets denouncing the Pope, and claiming that he was in league with heretics. Bishop Douglass wanted to stop this controversy, but was uncertain how to proceed without offending the French clergy. With the death of Bishop St. Pol de Léon in November 1805, the non-complying French clergy lost their figurehead. The Blanchardist schism finally died a natural death as one or the other of the clergy returned to France, and after 1814 all interest in it was dead.

In 1807 a bill was introduced which enabled the Catholics to

[23] B. Ward, The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, vol. 1, p. 86-98.

hold higher commissions in the Army and Navy, but this was defeated by the threat of a Royal Veto, and a board was set up to watch over English Catholic interests. The board mainly consisted of laymen, and the first manifesto of the board was signed by Bishop Douglass and about fifty priests with Edward Jerningham as its first secretary.[24] The President of the board was Lord Stourton, and among its members were the four Vicars Apostolic. John Milner, also a Vicar Apostolic, at first subscribed in 1808, but in 1810 he started to campaign against it and saw it as the Old Catholic Committee revived. It was the board that wanted to compromise and negotiate with the Protestants, but it was delicately balanced. The enemy was no longer Rome. The French Revolution had changed that, now all Catholics were fighting for equal political rights.

There were many grievances against the government about the restraints put upon Catholics; they were prevented from giving money to foundations or for priests, who were appointed to 'superstitious purposes', and so could be confiscated and not recovered if stolen, neither could any Catholic serving in the Army or Navy attend a Catholic service on Sundays.

In 1810 another Emancipation bill was proposed. A number of resolutions were put into a petition. Milner regarded this as heresy and as a betrayal of the Catholic cause. However, Bishop Poynter, Douglass' co-adjutor and Bishop Collingridge of the Western district, signed it. The Irish Bishops and the young Irish barrister, Daniel O'Connell, supported Milner against

[24] B. Ward, The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, pp. 101-102.

the petition and bill as it still contained the 'Veto' clause, which would give the government control over episcopal nominations. The bill was defeated in Parliament. A small number of Catholics began to study at Cambridge, but were fined for non-attendance at chapel, and when they left it was without a degree as they could not subscribe to the thirty nine articles. The Catholics, in 1812, came very close to achieving a Catholic Emancipation bill, when it secured a majority in the Commons, but was defeated by one vote in the Lords. In 1813, Henry Grattan, member for Dublin, pressed for a Committee of the House on Roman Catholic claims. Grattan wanted a Royal Commission which would consist of Catholic peers and gentry, and would have the veto on episcopal appointments. This idea was favourably received by some, but by others such as Poynter it was rejected. He resented lay influence in theory, but was prepared to negotiate about it if there were equal numbers of lay and clerics on the board. Grattan's bill, like previous ones, was rejected because of his wish for Catholic members of parliament.

In all the debates on the proposed bills, John Milner dominates as a strong opponent of aristocratic and lay predominance in the Church. Partly for this reason he opposed the Catholic Committee and saw them as acting in opposition to the hierarchy of the Church and to 'Catholic principles'. He regarded the other Vicars Apostolic as traitors to their order who were willing to give up Catholic doctrine and discipline for Catholic Emancipation, which would benefit the gentry. Milner supported the Irish Catholics, as they supported him.

He was often listened to by the Catholics and he sympathised with them and with the poor. John Milner was almost a middle class leader in his battle for Catholic emancipation and would not compromise.

In 1813[25], Charles Butler wrote an address to the Protestants in which he listed the disabilities under which the English Catholics lived. He stated that the Catholics were unable to take jobs in city offices, large corporations or civil or military offices. They were unable to vote and peers unable to take hereditary seats in parliament. Catholics could not present advowsons, and soldiers and sailors were heavily fined if they did not conform to the Established Church. As well as supporting the Roman Catholic Church they were expected to uphold the Established Church. There were also cases of Communion refused to the poor and children forced to attend Protestant schools. This strong speech made the Catholics more determined to keep trying for emancipation.

In 1814, Pius VII returned from exile, and Cardinal Consalvi was sent to England as his diplomatic representative. More French émigrés returned to France with the hope of calmer conditions, but others such as the Abbé Carron of Somerstown, Abbé Morel at Hampstead and Abbé Voyaux de Franous at Chelsea remained to work on behalf of the English and French Catholics. A dispute broke out in 1815, when the Pope in a letter allowed a veto to the government. The Irish Catholics led by O'Connell opposed this. In 1817, a campaign was started to encourage Catholics to read the Bible, and editions were published in

[25] B. Ward, The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, vol. 1, p.3.

Irish and English. A Catholic Bible Society was started along the same lines as the Protestant one. When the French monarchy was restored nearly all the exiled Bishops left England, and with them went much of the strength and encouragement behind the English Catholics. In 1817, commissions of every rank in the Army and Navy were immediately available to Catholics.

When, in 1823, Daniel O'Connell founded a Catholic Association in Ireland[26], with a shilling annual subscription, the English did the same. The British Catholic Association was to bring the new middle class and 'the people' into the Emancipation movement. The first meeting was held in June 1823, at the Freemasons' Tavern. The Association was financed by public subscription and branches were soon set up in other parts of the country. The Association issued a declaration disclaiming all right to the Established Church's property and all the English and Scottish Catholic Bishops signed it. The declaration declared that the Catholics held no principles that were incompatible to civil allegiance and they were concerned only for the preservation of Roman authority and were not part of the Gallican tradition. They wanted to be part of the government that they could see changing, and of the Protestant Constitution.

After O'Connell's election victory in Ireland in 1828, the English government feared a revolt if the Irish Catholics were not conciliated with an Act of Emancipation. The Prime minister, the Duke of Wellington and Robert Peel were convinced that emancipation was imminent and should not be delayed. The Irish

[26] E.I. Watkin, Roman Catholicism in England, pp. 166-169.

movement raised fears of Irish peasants gaining political power. Petitions were sent to parliament for and against the bill. It was only through Peel and Wellington that the bill was introduced into parliament, after George IV relented. In March 1829, Peel introduced the emancipation bill which was speedily passed by the Lords. On August 10th, the Bishops voted for the bill with sixteen against it, but with the Irish votes they were defeated. The Catholics were now eligible for all offices except those of the two Lord Chancellors and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. There were restrictions; Catholics could not take the title of any Anglican see, and vestments, habits and ceremonies were prohibited outside Catholic churches or private houses. Catholics could vote and sit in parliament, but had to take an oath 'not to disturb or weaken' the Protestant religion. The English Catholics were freed from the tithes of the Church of England and their independent institutions were restored.

The years following Catholic emancipation were ones of growth in number, churches, schools and religious orders. From the relief bill of 1791, the Catholics slowly gained a middle or professional class, which could now take its proper place between the other two classes. It was from this middle class that the majority of the clergy was now drawn, as the gentry were able to be employed in a wider range of work. After the Act of 1829, the clergy wanted 'a restoration of the hierarchy', with an improvement upon the position of the ordinary clergyman and greater security and stability through a local parochial structure. They did not want to be simply

at the disposal of the Vicars Apostolic, and wanted electoral rights in the appointment of Bishops, and promotion according to merit. Some were willing to give great concessions to the Protestants in order to illustrate their loyalty to the Constitution and the Crown. Those who followed O'Connell saw Emancipation as the first step towards a change in their social position.

The French Revolution and the arrival of the *émigrés* both helped and restricted the English Catholics. The Revolution postponed the reform bills for a generation, through Protestant fear and suspicion of the Catholics, who were suspected of owing an allegiance to foreign powers. The arrival of the *émigré* clergy because of the Revolution helped to dispel this notion in the majority of men's minds. The French Revolution also shattered the idea of Rome as Babylon and the Pope as a heretic, thus, Voltaire and Paris became the targets of their fear. The French *émigrés* also brought life to the Catholic Church, when it needed it, to strengthen its members for the fight for relief. The French Revolution directly affected the Catholic Church, with the emigration of the French clergy to England, and also by fears of similar revolutionary events happening in Britain. This prevented the reform bills proposed in the 1790's from achieving Catholic Emancipation at an earlier stage. It was not only the English Catholics who had struggled for Catholic Emancipation, but in Ireland the position of Catholics at the time of the French Revolution had been worse and it is with their struggle that the following chapter is concerned.

CHAPTER 7

THE IRISH CATHOLICS 1790-1829

'a measure not merely expedient, but absolutely necessary'.[1]

[1]from a petition drawn up by Daniel O'Connell to the House of Commons in 1810 for Catholic Emancipation see John O'Connell, The Select Speeches of Daniel O'Connell M.P., 2 vols (James Duffy, Dublin, 1854), p. 25-26.

The political and religious disadvantages of the Irish Catholics was similar to those of most English Catholics, but the social situation of the two groups was very different. The English Catholics were a small minority, led by aristocratic and gentry families; the Irish Catholics were the great bulk of the poor population of Ireland and made up four fifths of its total population. Irish society was split into three groups: the Anglo-Irish of the Established Church of Ireland who were Protestant, the Ulster Presbyterians of Scottish origin, and the native Irish-speaking Catholics. The Protestant landed gentry held a monopoly of power in parliament and knew this power depended upon the suppression of the Catholics who they feared would some day turn against them. The Protestant government was in turn subordinate to London for protection and to retain their control. The Presbyterians were mainly settled in counties Antrim, Down and Ulster. They were mostly yeomen farmers, with north-east Ulster as their radical political centre.

The Ulster Presbyterians had a long history of conflict with the Irish government authorities because like the Catholics they were excluded from public office and their Church was penalized. Among the Presbyterians were the 'New Light' movement who were the radical extremists, and they were in contact with

the advanced reformers Dr. William Drennan and the Protestant barrister Theobald Wolfe Tone.

The power of government in Ireland lay in Dublin Castle, the seat of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The English government could veto any Irish bill at will, and controlled the patronage of Irish offices and Trade. Absenteeism was apparent in Irish government offices, and large salaries and pensions were given by Whitehall to non-Irishmen. These men did not live in Ireland or do anything for it, and so were not morally entitled to the money. The Irish government was corrupt in every division, whether it was in the lawcourts or customs, and where there was any money or public property to be stolen an official would steal it.[2] Revenue collecting was so unpopular that the military did it in case of riots, and officers were often appointed as magistrates to keep control.

The Penal Laws were a device which exploited the religious difference between Protestants and Catholics to ensure a political, social and economic ascendancy to a small protestant, i.e. Church of Ireland, minority. These laws affected every area of Catholic life; a Catholic was not allowed leases of land of more than sixty years, and only then if it was not more than fifty acres of unprofitable land.[3] Restrictions were

[2]For an account of corruption in Irish government see E. Strauss. Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1951), p.32, pp. 8-19, 27-38, 47-67.

[3]For the Penal Laws see O. Mac Donagh, W.F. Mandle and P. Travers, Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750-1950 (The Macmillan Press Ltd., Australia, 1983), pp. 1-14, 14-40.

placed by these laws on Catholics wanting their own education, an area in which the Protestants held a legal monopoly, though poor Catholics were often taught in 'Hedge Schools'. The Catholics, refused entry to the Protestant Trinity College, were forced to go abroad for higher education. Additional taxes were paid by the Catholics, even though they were unable to vote or enter Parliament. Nevertheless, towards the end of the eighteenth century, these Penal Laws were not enforced in all areas by the local magistrates, when the Catholics in a district lacked any political and little economic power.

The Irish Catholic peasant differed from the Irish Catholic middle-class. The typical Irish peasant depended upon the acre of land he owned to grow potatoes, keep a pig, and perhaps a cow. The landlord to whom the Catholic tenant paid his rent was more like a feudal lord of the manor than his English counterpart. Many landlords were absentees, and used middlemen to collect their rents. In areas where flax was grown, women would take up spinning to help pay rent, but the bulk of the rent money had to be raised from the labour of the tenant. In areas where employment was scarce, the Catholic tenant worked for the landlord, but this paid very little money, and it took the tenant a long time to pay his taxes, rent and tithes.

The Catholic parish priest was not only the spiritual leader of a parish, but was its intellectual adviser as well. The Catholic clergy were often in a better position than their parishioners. Catholics were made to pay a Vestry Cess for cleaning a Protestant church or ringing the bell in their own

church. The Protestant Established Church in Ireland depended upon its revenues and tithes from the Catholics as well as its own members, and as in England, there was corruption and absenteeism within it. The Catholic Church was in a submissive position, and so supported the Irish government, and not the radicals and their reforms. The Catholic middle-classes who owned some land mostly supported the Irish government, and took the submissive view as the easiest way to gain a measure of emancipation.

The only profession legally left open to the Catholics was trade, and many became merchants. The well-to-do Catholics were on the whole cautious, respectable and English-speaking, taking to the English or Anglo-Irish ways and looking to the English Catholics as their examples. The Catholic resentment against the government was often expressed in ballads and poetry, but not in any outward protestation, as the Catholics lacked any active leadership against the Irish government. Those Catholics whose ancestors as clans or extended families had held land, felt they had a historical right to it, and their resentment was felt by the Protestant leaders who feared a Catholic rising. The Irish government and the great majority of the landowners were violently opposed to emancipation or any reforms that might give the Catholics the smallest amount of power.

It was against this background that news of the French Revolution came, raising the hopes of many radical and reformist groups who were tired of English interference in Irish government and religion. The movement for separation from England was

steadily gaining ground, although the Irish radicals, Protestant and Presbyterian, at first looked at America as the ideal example of democracy. However, America was far away and concerned with her own problems, and France was near and an immediate example of freedom from tyranny, which highlighted the Irish grievances and encouraged the radicals to do something about them. Ireland was already in contact with France through the linen trade and the Catholic colleges and seminaries. As many young Catholic men were educated in France, they were familiar with French literature. As a military career was closed to Catholics in Ireland, many had joined French regiments as volunteers. Ireland looked to France as the centre of fashion and exiles from Ireland fled to France, as some of the Hugenots and a few _émigrés_ had left for Ireland.

The shelves in Irish libraries were full of French books; not just idealistic works, but also chemical, historical, biological and other text books. Many revolutionary treatises and pamphlets were reprinted in Dublin, for example, the speeches of Mirabeau, the _Livre Rouge_, and Mallet du Pan's _Considerations on the Nature of the French Revolution_.[4] In July 1789 the news of the storming of the Bastille reached Ireland. _The Hibernian Magazine_ published prints of this and of the entry by King Louis XVI into Paris a few days later.[5]

[4] R.B. McDowell, _Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801_ (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), p. 351, pp. 3-50.

[5] S. Clark and J.S. Donnelly Jr., _Irish Peasants, Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914_ (Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 37-64, 155-192.

The Irish public was kept in touch with all the debates and legislative assemblies of the Convention and the Jacobin club.

For the first two years of the Revolution, much of the written and vocal opinion in Ireland of the Revolution was favourable. The French were portrayed as a nation who had liberated themselves from cruel despotism, and gained a bill of rights, equitable laws, a Habeas Corpus Act, trial by jury, and a representative government. Not everyone took this view; the conservative members of the population regarded the violence and murder in Paris with horror. Traders were dismayed and apprehensive when their trade routes were blocked, and the French whom they dealt with were capricious. Gervase Parker Bushe, a friend of the Whig Henry Grattan, returned to Ireland to give unfavourable reports of the situation in France. The assassinations and trials of suspects he spoke of with condemnation and declared that the Civil Constitution of the clergy had no justice or humanity. Irish Conservatives regarded the National Assembly as a riotous meeting in which the crowd joined in the debates; liberty was non-existent in France with everyone at the mercy of usurpers, and anyone with money ran the risk of imprisonment at the hands of his neighbour.

The more radical groups like the Ulster Presbyterians and Protestants led by James Napper Tandy, a member of the Dublin Corporation, were still sympathetic to the Revolution and found excuses for its excesses although they were sometimes puzzled over which faction to support, as they changed so regularly. In 1791 the Protestant Dublin Volunteers sent an address to

the Friends of the Constitution in Clermont to congratulate them on their revolution. In the north of Ireland, the first volunteer company of Belfast toasted the citizens of France who had pulled down the Bastille, and a Northern Whig club meeting on Magna Carta day decided to celebrate the French Revolution. Both clubs and volunteers joined in Bastille day celebrations. Bastille day was like a holiday with parades and addresses to the National Assembly, and afterwards a dinner. Again, in 1791, in Belfast busts of Mirabeau and Franklin were carried and a great standard representing the release of the Bastille's prisoners. An address was made on the Revolution in Belfast and was reported in Bordeaux to the Friends of the Constitution where it received a favourable reception. The Friends of the Constitution in Nantes also heard of the address, and both they and Bordeaux sent replies to Ireland thanking them for their support. The Anniversary of the Bastille was celebrated in other Ulster districts along the same lines.

Both Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France and Tom Paine's Rights of Man attracted great attention in Ireland. Burke's work was popular with the Whigs and Conservative groups, but not with those who supported revolution and found Paine's work nearer in sympathy to their aspirations. Numerous pamphlets were issued denouncing Paine and his ideas, and warning the public against them. Charles Sheridan, a Roman Catholic, noted that if Paine had written his work in any other country he would probably have been arrested and imprisoned. Sheridan went on to draw attention to the freedom and equality practised by Great Britain where there was one law for both the nobleman and beggar.

Burke's critics such as Wolfe Tone pointed out the differences between Britain and Ireland, the corruption of the Irish Parliament and the fact that much more than two thirds of the adult male population were unable to vote. The attacks on Christianity by Paine were quickly defended in articles published in the newspapers. Even the radical Wolfe Tone, however, wrote of Paine's Age of Reason as rubbish lacking in wit, although he had previously praised the Rights of Man as being 'the Koran of Belfescu (Belfast)'[6]. French Revolutionary writings were more popular in the Protestant North than in the Catholic South. The ruling Protestants feared the effects that this literature might have on the Catholics in case it encouraged them to copy the French and fight for their rights.

The Catholic Committee first established in 1759 to press for the relief from the disabilities imposed on the Catholic population, was not a strong organisation. It was conservative in its views, and was mostly made up of middle-class members. In 1790 the Catholic Committee drew up a petition for relief, but this was rejected, and in 1791 a power struggle took place within the movement with the democrats taking over.

In September 1791, Wolfe Tone, who had become spokesman of the Catholic Community and was one of its more radical members, issued a pamphlet, An Argument on behalf of the Catholics in Ireland, which encouraged the Catholics and Dissenters to join

[6]For information about the radicals look at E.M. Johnston, Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1980), p.168, pp. 164-196.

forces as one people for one Ireland. A month later, Tone was asked by the United Irishmen's Society to join them. The United Irishmen were in majority Presbyterian and were formed as an alternative to the Whig party. They were not a sectarian or provincial movement, but a national one for social regeneration. Tone was formerly a Whig, and although a Protestant he supported the Catholic claims, and served as an agent for the political Catholic Committee. Tone only broke from the Whigs when it became apparent that Whig policies were too weak. His pamphlet helped to bring the Catholic and Dissenting groups together, and in Dublin and Ulster Societies of Irishmen were formed.[7] The first members of these societies were Protestants and Presbyterians who were wealthy men of social standing and intellect. Wolfe Tone soon was acknowledged as the leader of this society with the more radical of its members supporting his views.

The leader of the Catholic moderates was John Keogh, a Dublin merchant, and it was Keogh who turned the Catholics from Henry Grattan and Burke to Wolfe Tone and the poplin manufacturer Richard McCormick. Tone and the New Catholic Committee embarked upon a policy which was modelled on French methods, and did not enjoy the aid or support of the Catholic clergy.

In June 1792, Tome Paine was elected as an honorary member of the Society of Irishmen in Dublin. The fall of the Bastille was again celebrated by the volunteers of Belfast, and after

[7]M. Elliot, Partners in Revolution (Yale University Press, Newhaven and London, 1982), p.22, pp. 3-35, 51-75, 124-282.

the retreat of Brunswick, volunteers met at the Donegal Arms, and held a meeting to draw up an address congratulating the French on their victories. The Northern volunteers also celebrated the revolution of 1688, and they like some Whigs regarded the French Revolution as another 1688. After the news of the King's flight to Varennes and his recapture reached Ireland, James Napper Tandy, secretary of the United Irishmen, organised handbills calling for general illumination throughout Dublin to celebrate this event. The magistrates, afraid of violence, called in the military to protect those who refused to light their windows.

The Irish government were fearful of the developments now taking place between the Catholic Committee and the United Irishmen with their growing demands for relief. William Pitt the Prime minister and Henry Dundas, secretary for the Southern Department, also viewed the situation with apprehension, and they pressed the Lord Lieutenant Westmorland and the Irish government to support a moderate measure for Catholic relief. The Irish M.P.s not in favour of this measure censured the Catholic Committee. The dissatisfied and insulted Catholics met at Tailors Hall in Backlane, and drew up and sent a petition to the King. A convention went to London led by John Keogh with the result that pressure was put on the Irish parliament, and in 1793 chief secretary John Hobart proposed the Catholic Enfranchisement Act. This Act gave the parliamentary franchise to the Catholics, and membership to all but a few offices, and to parliament. Nevertheless the franchise scheme was not accompanied by a measure to allow Catholics to sit in parliament,

and the Catholic Committee again demanded complete emancipation. The alliance between the Catholic Committee and the United Irishmen worked for a time, but it was soon apparent to Tone that the respectable Catholics in the Committee were not revolutionaries, and were fearful of the consequences of their recent victory. The government in return for the 1793 Act wanted the dissolution of the Catholic Committee. The Catholic Committee, faced with the revolutionary views of Tone on one hand, and on the other with the respectable Catholics who wanted comfortable positions in the parliamentary system, but not its abolition, decided to disband rather than enter upon a revolutionary struggle. The United Irishmen, now abandoned by the Catholic middle-classes, turned to the Catholic masses and allied with the Catholic Defenders of South Ulster who were beginning to be the largest revolutionary organisation in Ireland. This alliance transformed the Defenders into a well-knit movement with a policy of its own.

The United Irishmen now looked towards France for support, but not interference. The radical Catholics and United Irishmen condoned the execution of the King and Queen as 'a necessary excision of enemies to permit the continued growth of liberty'.[8] After the executions the Whigs no longer supported the Revolution, and in the newspapers, accounts were written in a sympathetic and moving way. Nevertheless, the mouthpiece of the United Irishmen, The Northern Star, took the attitude that the executions concerned no-one but France, and were of no consequence to Ireland or Great Britain. The same attitude was taken by Wolfe Tone.

[8] M. Elliot, Partners in Revolution, p.31

In Dublin, the House of Commons appeared in mourning, and in the south of Ireland the Bonden Union Volunteer Corps paraded in black arm bands, and went to hear a sermon on the subject. Clergymen, both Protestant and Catholic, again preached sermons against joining the revolutionaries.

The radical groups looked to France for help after the decree of November 19th 1792 offering assistance to all peoples seeking their liberty. The French in 1793 were reluctant to interfere in Irish affairs for fear of provoking England, with whom they were still negotiating for peace. Nevertheless with the Civil War in Vendée, and with both Dunkirk and Toulon betrayed to the English, the French wanted revenge. Ireland was the likeliest target for an invasion, and reports reached France that the country was ripe for revolution; the Catholic Defenders were reported to be buying arms in London. In 1794, William Jackson, a clergyman with French sympathies, was sent from France to England and Ireland to assess the situation for invasion, but was arrested three months later.

In 1794 Earl Fitzwilliam was appointed as the Irish Viceroy. He was a pro-Catholic and a Whig, and so encouraged the Catholic reformists. Irish Catholic hopes rose so high that the government feared that a revolution was about to break out. Fitzwilliam disregarded instructions given by Pitt and the Cabinet not to disturb the Irish situation, and especially the delicate Catholic question. Fitzwilliam was well-meaning, but had little idea of the procedures of office or of Pitt's long term plans for Ireland. Shortly after his arrival, Fitzwilliam dismissed several ministers

from the Castle, and turned off both Sackville Hamilton and Edward Cooke, the heads of the Civil and Military departments of the Castle Secretariat. After a fortnight, Fitzwilliam removed most of the leading officials, and there was an outcry from both the government and the opposition claiming the dismissals were illegal, and could only be made if the persons concerned refused to support the government. Fitzwilliam was in favour of Catholic emancipation, and wanted the government to comply with the demands of the Catholics. Under the threat of a French war and possible invasion, the Irish should be united, and this would only happen through emancipation. Fitzwilliam recalled Henry Grattan, another Protestant, from the House of Commons, in order to introduce a bill in England granting Catholic emancipation without first showing it to the British ministers. Fitzwilliam was reprimanded by Whitehall, and recalled on February 23rd, 1795. A crisis was in the balance, once rumours spread of the Viceroy's removal. Catholic leaders like Richard McCormick warned the government that if their demands were rejected, there would be a total union with the United Irishmen such as Tone, who was under suspicion of treason.

On March 25th Fitzwilliam departed, and there was a general day of mourning in Dublin. When Lord Camden, the new Viceroy, arrived riots broke out and many MPs who had supported Fitzwilliam's dismissal barely escaped with their lives. The Catholic delegate, who had gone to meet representatives of the government, returned snubbed to Dublin where a meeting was held with over 4,000 attending; any idea that England was in any way sympathetic to the plight of the Irish Catholics was now abandoned. In the

summer and autumn of 1795, there occurred some of the worst disturbances since 1793. Fitzwilliam proved to have been well-meaning but misguided: the chaos which he caused was due to his failure to understand his instructions, and his premature agitation for emancipation.

Protestant fears of the Catholic majority and of the impending invasion were too great to allow Catholics any entry to Parliament; once the Catholics were given any political power, Protestants did not know where it would end. The agitation of Fitzwilliam only served to turn George III against emancipation, and without his consent any attempt to secure it was useless. Grattan's Emancipation Bill of 1795 was defeated in the House of Commons by 155 votes to 84. Pitt decided to make a conciliatory gesture towards the Catholics by establishing the Royal college of St. Patrick at Maynooth; the French revolutionaries had confiscated the Irish colleges for training the clergy in France, leaving the Irish clergy in need of new college. Nevertheless the college did not pacify the Catholics, and their threat of uniting with the now underground United Irishmen's movement was very real and worrying for the government. By 1795, Tone was in close contact with the French Directory, persuading Lazare Carnot, a member of the Directory who hated England, and General Louis Hoche, who shared this hatred, that Ireland was ready for a revolution.

In 1795 the battle of the Diamond, a riot between Protestants and Catholics, took place at Armagh. This sectarian war was followed by an Orange persecution of the Catholics, and the Protestant rioters hardly met any official resistance. The

Catholic Defenders were as much to blame as the Protestants, as they both perpetrated outrages. Armagh was the home of Orangeism, which was born out of a sectarian struggle among the Protestant and Catholic linen weavers. The Protestants were fearful of competition from Catholics, and that the Catholics might invest their money in land. The Orange groups were organised by reactionary landlords against the Catholics, and many Catholics thought that the Orangemen had taken an oath to destroy them.

Many Protestants turned to the Orangemen for protection. Some of these Orangemen were convicted of crimes, but many of their other crimes were ignored. Many peasant Catholics thought that the government had encouraged the Orange outrages. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1796 for the relief of the injured Catholics in Armagh. Parliament also passed the Insurrection Act in 1796, which made it a capital offence to administer an illegal oath, and granted the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council the power to declare a district disturbed and allowed magistrates special powers of search and arrest. Both Grattan and George Ponsonby, the Irish Lord Chancellor, tried to bring forward the question of Catholic emancipation and reform but with no success. After the last failure for reform and emancipation, Grattan, Ponsonby and many of the Irish opposition resigned from Parliament. In 1796 the United Irishmen formed a military organization which they sought to arm and train for rebellion; of the many who joined the United Irishmen only a few were revolutionary fanatics. An expedition set out from France in 1796 led by General Louis Lazare Hoche, but the

small fleet was turned back and scattered by the winter gales, and only Tone reached Bantry Bay. The country was now in a state of simmering rebellion, and it would only need an incident to set it off.

Thomas Pelham, the Chief Secretary, wrote to Lord Camden on March 3rd, 1797, reporting the secret and treasonable gatherings in the counties of Down, Antrim, Derry and Donegal, disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of these districts. On March 9th, Camden wrote to the English government of the dreadful conditions in the North, where murder and violence were committed, and several areas were placed under the Insurrection Act. Camden warned the English government of the outbreak of rebellion and revolution. General Gerard Lake, in charge of the army in Ireland, was ordered by Camden to disarm the districts in which these outrages had taken place. Patrols were ordered by Camden to arrest those assemblies, and to prevent any further ones occurring. Reports were made by the yeomanry of intimidation of new recruits by the United Irishmen. General Lake was told by Camden to disarm all those persons with arms, and to do this with force if necessary. On March 13th, Lake issued a proclamation to all those in Belfast who were not soldiers or peace officers to bring in their arms. This proclamation caused debates in both the Irish and English Houses of Commons as to its legality. In Ulster, 350 pistols besides other weapons were seized by the military.

General Lake's campaign was carried out with ruthless brutality, and drove many of the poorer sections of Catholics to the United Irishmen, making the threat of a Catholic alliance with the United Irishmen a reality. Many of the revolutionaries surrendered their own arms in the knowledge that they would

soon be given arms by the French. The United Irishmen played upon Catholic fears of the Orangemen to swell their membership. In Southern Ireland, leaders of the rebellion led the Catholics in Leinster to think they would be massacred by the Orangemen and that their safety lay with the United Irishmen. The United Irishmen's Society now had a Catholic majority and changed character, taking a more sectarian and vindictive spirit. The anonymous Memoir of a State Prisoner noted that 'Wherever the Orange System was introduced, particularly in Catholic countries, it was uniformly observed that the numbers of the United Irishmen increased most astonishingly'.[9] The rebellion in the North was stopped due to General Lake's campaign, and the arrest of its leaders and papers of negotiation with France. The rebellion in the South of Ireland was just beginning to come to a head.

The numbers of attacks by the Orangemen increased during the period of Lake's campaign, and Catholics were condemned as rebels by the Orangemen. The Catholics were distressed by the apparent government support for the Orangemen; even the yeomanry seemed to support them. Catholic leaders received reports of yeomanry and militia ransacking homes and torturing suspects. Many of the militia were Catholics who did not support the Orangemen, but were too afraid to speak out. Even the Castle government seemed to uphold the Orangemen, as Catholic witnesses were scorned, the right to a legal defence abused and men and women were put to death on the meanest of evidence. Barristers wore Orange emblem rings, and the only hope Catholics

[9] E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy, p.53.

saw was to join the rebels.

The United Irishmen tried to corrupt the yeomanry and militia in Southern Ireland to make them dissatisfied. Lake wrote to the government of the subversion of the Army, wherever they went, and court-martials were held in Cork, Limerick and Belfast. The Irish government suspected that the Catholic clergy were hand in hand with the rebellion. Francis Higgins, a government agent, expressed his opinion that there were fewer than twenty priests who were loyal in Dublin. Leonard McNally[10], a United Irishman and barrister, wrote to the government that 'the Catholic clergy are to a man with the people'. Rumours of domestic servants as spies enrolled in the pay of the United Irishmen were widespread in Southern Ireland. After the persecution of the Catholics by the Orangemen, many Catholics fled from Ulster to the South of Ireland.

The House of Lords Committee in 1798 reported that 'the people were next taught to believe that their organization would be led to the abolition of tithes and to a distribution of property, in as much as they would become members of a democracy which would govern the country'.[11] Priests tried to stop the rebellion before it started, warning their congregations against the United Irishmen. At Maynooth, students were sent home for fear they would be persuaded to join the rebellion, and some were expelled for sedition. Bishops preached moderation from

[10] W.E.H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, 5 vols (Longmans, Green and Co., 1893) pp. 18-98, 116-127, 471-473.

[11] Sir James O'Connor, History of Ireland, 1798-1924, vol. 1 (Edward Arnold and Co., London, 1926), p.65, pp. 61-107, 107-121.

the pulpits and prominent bishops such as Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Lonigan, Bishop of Ossory and Dr. Dillon, Bishop of Kilmacelaugh and Kilfenara were all alarmed at the news of French assistance to the rebels. Some of the Catholic lay leaders took the same view, and on May 6th they published a declaration signed by Lords Fingall, Gormonstown, Kenmore, Southwell, Sir Edward Bellew and the Bishops and College professors, to persuade those in the rebellion movement to return to loyalty, and not be swayed by the revolutionary leaders.

The rebellion first broke out in Leinster in May 1798, and started as a crusade against Orangeism. At first the rebellion was not taken seriously, but as it spread, with the mounting threat of invasion, cavalry were sent from the mainland. After the battle of New Ross on June 15th, the rebellion was regarded seriously. The priests who supported the rebellion were at the forefront, with some of the professors of Maynooth and inferior priests. The rebellion could have ended without bloodshed, if the government had appealed to the priests to speak to the rebellious forces. In Wexford, Father John Murphy of Boulavogue led the main body of rebels. After the first capture of Vinegar Hill, in Enniscarthy, on May 28th, more rebels came to Wexford. At Newtonbury, Wexford, Father Kearn led 4,000 rebels, and at Tubberneering Father Philip Roche's forces were victorious against Colonel Walpole. On June 7th a massacre took place at Scullabogue, and insurrection broke out in the North. Many of the rebels were defeated by June 20th and retreated to Vinegar Hill, but were attacked and fled to Wexford. Father John Murphy was still fighting with 15,000 men

at Castle Comer, County Kilkerry, but after being defeated by the army the last of the rebels fled and dispersed before July 14th. Cruel and murderous acts were committed by both parties as each was afraid of what the other would do if victorious; the loyalist forces were from Britain, the militia and the yeomanry. The British soldiers were in a strange country, and were fearful of the Irish after the tales they had heard of them; the militia were mostly Irish Catholics, and were frightened of being killed as traitors if the rebels won. The yeomanry were mostly Protestants and were afraid of being murdered by the Catholic rebels, and the rebels did not expect either clemency or consideration if defeated. The suppression of the rebellion left Ireland prone, demoralised and prostrate. It increased Irish subjection, and Catholic emancipation or Parliamentary reform were not advanced. Both Protestants and Catholic were left with bitter memories of atrocities which neither would forget.

Many of the ordinary peasants who were not interested in politics were against the rebels, and were often those who suffered the most, being caught up in the middle of the conflict. A great number of peaceful Protestants were murdered as Orangemen, oppressors or loyalists. In many districts, houses were burnt; the poorer cabins by troops, and the slated houses by rebels. The rebellion left much of Ireland in ruin, with the Catholics in a weaker position than before, and the scenes which Lord Cornwallis the new Viceroy witnessed shocked even him. A revolution like the one in France would have solved many problems in Ireland; the rebels thought nothing could be

gained from the Irish Parliament and so it should be destroyed. The rebels miscalculated in their plans, and would have needed an invasion to make their rebellion successful, but this also posed problems. Britain ruled the sea, and a French force in Ireland would have had the difficulty of providing provisions and reinforcements. The new Republic, if formed, would have been fragile and vulnerable to recapture by England. Yet more than ever the revolutionaries in Ireland looked to France to come to their aid, and arouse the masses to overthrow the government.

In Ireland in 1798 there was an atmosphere of uneasy peace: Protestants and conservative Catholics once more feared invasion. The under secretary for Ireland, Edward Cooke, and Thomas Pelham, the chief secretary, warned of the new outbreak of rebellion if there was to be an invasion, which now seemed almost a certainty.

Napoleon Bonaparte was not at first interested in the idea of invading Ireland, but did consider it only to abandon the invasion in February 1798, and went on to conquer Egypt. An invasion of Ireland would probably have changed the outcome of the French wars, and led Ireland to become a major base for the French. Nevertheless, in 1798 a number of small expeditions were launched towards Ireland. On 23rd August 1798 the French landed at Killala Bay in the County of Mayo, and took the village of Killala. They brought with them some United Irishmen, including Mathew Tone, brother of Wolfe Tone, and Bartholomew Teeling. The French did not harm the local people, and took

over the Bishop's Palace. The region the French invaded was County Mayo, an area untouched by rebellion, and with little knowledge of the political situation. Bishop Stock of Killala refused to aid the French army, but later when recounting the invasion praised it for its orderly manner and protection. The peasantry only thought of plunder and of using the arms given to them to shoot sheep. French agents travelled throughout the region spreading propaganda, and stirring up old grudges against the Orangemen. The Catholics who joined the French were fervent in their support for their 'champions', who had 'come to take arms for France and the Blessed Virgin'.[12] It is ironic that many regarded the French soldiers as defenders of the faith when some of the soldiers had last been to Rome driving out the Pope, and others were atheists. Those who joined the army later marched to Castlebar. The French found they were deceived about the enthusiasm of the Irish for revolution, and it was only those with a grudge against the Protestants who really fought, and then in an undisciplined manner. Bishop Stock of Killala wrote that during the French occupation 'not a drop of blood was shed by the Connaught rebels, except on the field of war'.[13] Any violence and plunder were directed, as in the rebellion, against the Protestants. Perhaps if the invasion had taken place in a large city like Dublin, then revolutionary political views would have been at the

[12]M. Elliot, Partners in Revolution, p. 224

[13]For the French invasion of Ireland see, W.E.H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, vol. 5 (Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), p. 55, pp. 1-65, 120-123, 139-40, 201-288, 338-344.

forefront but in the rural areas any political activity in support of the French was sectarian.

Lord Charles Cornwallis, the leader of the British forces and Lake's forces surrounded the French at Ballinamuck and General Jean Hoseph Amable Humbert, in command of the French invasion expedition, surrendered on 8th September. The rebels at Castlebar were captured on 12th September after attacking the garrison. At the beginning of October, another small French expedition was captured at Lough Swilly, County Donegal. Wolfe Tone was arrested,and committed suicide on 19th November 1798. The French invasion was a boost to Catholic claims to restore their power. Wolfe Tone, who was at the centre of the invasion and was the controlling force of French Revolutionary ideas, wanted to rid Ireland of the government's tyranny by breaking with England, which he hoped would happen with French help.

After the invasion the United Irishmen drew up a memorial to state that they represented a United Irish Society of Catholics, Protestants and Presbyterians to gain parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. It was considered that the only way to end the corruption of the Irish Parliament was to separate from England, and only with the help of France could this be done.

The invasion and the rebellion led to the government taking action to prevent further outbreaks of violence by the introduction of an Act of Union. Ireland was necessary to England in her struggle with France; if England lost Ireland

she would be weakened. Pitt had considered a Union with Ireland from as early as 1792, but decided to wait until the time was right. The Catholics were led to think, by the Lord Lieutenant, that they would be given emancipation with the bill; Pitt made it plain that while there was an Irish Parliament there could not be emancipation. The Union meant there was less chance of insurrection and invasion. In Pitt's view, the government would be in the hands of a more enlightened and disinterested party where Catholic emancipation and reform would have a greater chance of success. Irish trade would no longer be restricted, and the Irish merchants would have access to English and World markets.

Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin in 1799, estimated that nine tenths of the Catholics were for the Union, and petitions were presented from counties Waterford, Wexford, Cork, Leitrim, Longford, Tipperary, Kilkerry, Roscommon and Kildare in favour of the Union. The opinion of the mass of Catholics was not heard, because there was no way in which they could be heard; only if they were led by agitators could they make their feelings known. Some Catholics outside the leading circle of clergy and gentry, such as Lord Perry, Carleton and Kilwarden, were opposed to the Union, and agreed with Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the Union was 'very dangerous, and not necessary'.[14] Leonard McNally, a United Irishman, was very discouraging over the support of the majority of Catholics, saying that 'the respectable Catholics, however, are determined

[14] W.E.H. Lecky, A History of Ireland, pp. 209-210.

not to come forward on the question of the Union in a body, though individually they are to a man against it'. The Catholics were split into two groups, the clergy and gentry being united against those Catholics allied with the masses and the United Irishmen.

Many Catholics were swayed by the hope of concessions, like a bill of Catholic emancipation, as in the case of the Scottish Act of Union which had carried Trade concessions. Pitt and Dundas wanted to ease the passing of the Act of Union with Catholic emancipation, but faced opposition from the Irish government and the King. The Union could only be Protestant as even the Chancellor of Ireland would not allow the Catholics in a united Parliament. Catholic leaders such as Lord Fingall, Lord Kenmore and Archbishop Troy approved the omission of the Catholic question from the bill, in case it was harmful to the Catholic claims.

The landowning classes also opposed the Union, as they thought they stood to lose much prestige and political power. The numbers of Irish seats would be diminished in a united parliament. An Irish M.P. was a personage in his county; now he would have difficulty retaining his own seat, as there were to be fewer county seats in the improved parliament than in the Irish one. Patronage, it was thought, would also be diminished, though paradoxically, when the Union finally came, it was to strengthen, not weaken, the Anglo-Irish position. Dublin traders were opposed to the Union out of fear of losing the business provided by the Irish Parliament. The Orange Society was also opposed to the Union, and thirty lodges of

Counties Down and Antrim passed resolutions against it for fear of losing their monopolies. Pitt's first attempts to carry the Union failed.

Pitt, with Lord Castlereagh's help, persuaded the Catholics with hints of emancipation and an Established Church within the less restricted atmosphere of a united parliament. Pitt also used corruption to an extent to secure the Union; the eighty three Borough owners were each compensated with £15,000 when the boroughs were abolished, but this was paid whichever way the holder voted. Forty six promotions were made to the peerage, twenty ecclesiastical posts filled, twelve legal positions and titular honours given as well as twelve pensions. It was not only Pitt who used bribery: the Anti-Unionists also bribed men not to vote for it. The Anti-Unionists may have carried a majority if they had united with the Catholics, but since the Anti-Unionists were mainly anti-Catholic, their cause floundered, and Lord Castlereagh exploited this Catholic anti-Protestantism to gain Catholic votes.

On February 5th, 1800, both houses of Parliament were given the King's recommendation for a legislative union by the Lord Lieutenant. The following day, the measure was introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Clare, and gained a government majority. The 1800 Act of Union was based on a series of Articles. The Irish Parliament consented to these articles on March 28th and the English Parliament on May 12th. These articles were formed into a bill, and passed, then finally given the Royal Assent on August 1st, 1800, to be operative from

January 1st, 1801. Due to opposition from both English and Irish Parliaments and the King, Pitt failed to carry Catholic emancipation, and resigned from office.

The Act of Union limited parliamentary representation of Ireland to less than one sixth in the new House of Commons. The arrangement was mostly in the interests of Britain, and kept Ireland in subjection to strengthen England's hold against any change. Irish M.P.s were now to have a voice in British affairs although this was at first really in name only. Nevertheless Ireland was able to exert great influence upon the British Parliament through the Irish question which was a continual problem. The Union was made to consolidate a political and economic link between the two countries, at a time when Napoleonic France was a threat to Britain and French revolutionary ideas still influenced some of the Irish. The hope of many of the Catholics were not realised, and among Catholics only discontent resulted from the Union; it might have been a success if Catholic emancipation had followed it.

Daniel O'Connell (the Liberator)[15] was a lawyer in English common law, who became a leader of the majority of Catholics. O'Connell's family came from the old Catholic gentry, and managed despite the Penal Laws to retain part of their land.[16] An important influence early in O'Connell's life was his uncle

[15] Kevin B. Newton and Maurice R. O'Connell, Daniel O'Connell, Portrait of a Radical (Appleton Press, Belfast, 1984) pp. 9-19, 87-107.

[16] Angus Macintyre, The Liberator (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1965), pp. 1-51.

Maurice O'Connell, the former Deputy-Lieutenant of the county and a fervent loyalist. O'Connell's uncle personified the change from the old Gaelic society to the new world of the Anglo-Irish tenantry and its landlords. O'Connell was sent to the Catholic colleges at St. Omer and Douay for his education and inherited the estate of Darrymore from his uncle. O'Connell's background instilled in him a political conservatism, and this was enforced by his education and his experiences of the French Revolution while in France. However, his studies in London for the bar also gave him liberal views. O'Connell was influenced by the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon and Paine. He passed through a period of religious scepticism and Deism which left him with a belief in toleration even when he later recovered his ancestral faith. His views of toleration and liberality bore fruit in his policies of civil and religious equality, freedom of speech and of conscience.

In short, O'Connell was strongly opposed to the Union, and wanted its repeal, and a proper status for the Irish Catholics. The Union he regarded as the loss of freedom and identity for Ireland. It was O'Connell's views on the Union that first made him take a place in Irish politics, in which he quickly won fame both as a politician and a lawyer. O'Connell disagreed with the French Revolution and its anti-clerical levelling principles. He regarded the revolution as a threat to law and order. The rebellion of 1798 O'Connell viewed with dismay as he condemned all violence. He described the rebellion as foolish and without organisation. Some of the leaders he allowed to have been well-intentioned, though they were still only using

the masses for their own schemes. He said of the rebels of 1798 that 'their struggle was one of blood and defeated in blood. The means they adopted weakened Ireland and enabled England to carry the Union'.[17]

In 1808 O'Connell helped in the agitation of the Old Catholic Committee, and demonstrated that the rural Catholics did not want government appointed Bishops or parish priests, and would reject any veto clauses in the proposed Catholic Emancipation bills, and successive bills such as the one in 1813 were rejected by the British parliament.

In 1814 Monsignor Quarantotti, Vice-Prefect of the congregation De Propaganda Fide in Rome, the department of the Vatican bureaucracy which governed the Catholic Church in England, Scotland and Ireland, published, with the approval of the English Catholics, a rescript in favour of accepting the veto. Daniel O'Connell was against this, and many clergy and Bishops agreed with him. The Vetoists were some of the gentry and middle-class Catholics led by the barrister Richard Sheil, and they agreed with most of their coreligionists. The Catholics were divided with the anti-Vetoist O'Connell on one hand and Sheil and Lord Fingall on the other. The groups reflect a major division in Irish Catholicism, and are one reason why the old Catholic Committee, made up of conservative Catholics, did not prove effective.

In 1823, the Irish Catholic masses were led by O'Connell and by Richard Sheil, who after O'Connell was the most conspicuous of Irish orators, to form a Catholic Association, which combined

[17]Sir James O'Connor, History of Ireland, 1798-1924, p.102.

the political purposes of the Catholic middle-classes and peasantry. The first meeting, of about twenty to sixty people, was held on April 23rd at Dempsey's Tavern in Dublin. Three days later seventy more enrolled. Ten months later O'Connell devised a scheme which called upon every Catholic in Ireland to enrol and subscribe a penny to the Society. This scheme was known as the Catholic Rent, which helped to transform the Association from a small club into a National movement bringing politics to the people, under the leadership of the clergy. The Catholic Association adopted annual sets of petitions asking for Catholic relief and an emancipation bill, to Parliament and the King. On November 10th 1824, John Leslie Foster, M.P. for Louth, wrote to the Home Secretary Robert Peel about the Catholic Association: 'It is impossible to rate too highly its present influence... the organisation is complete'.[18] Bishop John Jebb of Limerick, an old opponent of emancipation, also told Peel that the Catholic Association was 'omnipotent', and noted that through the Catholic Rent there was now a unity within the Roman Catholic body. 'In truth', he concluded, 'an Irish revolution has, in great measure, been effected.'

Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, did not agree with the Catholic movement in Ireland, and sought to suppress it. Both O'Connell and Sheil took precautions to avoid grounds for prosecution and suppression. Nevertheless on 4th February 1825, Henry Goulburn, former chief secretary for Ireland, gave notice in the House of Commons of his intention to bring in a bill

[18]James A. Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, 1823-1829 (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1954), p.22, pp. 1-14, 14-30, 64-87, 161-177.

which would outlaw political societies in Ireland of longer duration than fourteen days. The bill was passed quickly, but not before the Catholic Association was dissolved.

A deputation went to England in 1825 to defend the Association. Its members were denied permission to plead their case before the Bar of the House of Commons, but were able to talk to those who supported emancipation. The government decided that Goulburn's Act should be eased by an emancipation bill. O'Connell was allowed to draw up the terms of Sir Francis Burdett's relief bill. To assist the passage of this bill O'Connell agreed to two measures, one to provide state payment for the Catholic clergy, the other to raise the electoral franchise in Ireland to disqualify the forty shilling Irish votes. This caused a storm of protest with an anti-wings group being formed from a minority of the Catholic Association and antagonists of O'Connell. Fortunately for O'Connell the bill was defeated in the House of Lords.

Goulburn's Act contained a loophole which O'Connell exploited to form the New Catholic Association; any business connected with petitionary or political matters was discussed in aggregate meetings of less than fourteen days duration. The New Catholic Association was for the promotion of 'public peace and harmony'.[19] It was quiet and reserved, compared to the old Association.

The clergy rallied behind O'Connell and preached the cause of emancipation in sermons and pamphlets. The young priests were far more in favour of the Catholic Association than those

[19] James A. Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, p.24.

who had been educated in France before the Revolution, due to the influence of their professors at Maynooth, the Catholic college, and because of their contact with the native Irish which their predecessors had partly lost. Richard Sheil considered the clergy to be the lever to raise the country, and with the encouragement of the Bishops, the priests controlled the rural areas. One of the most radical Bishops, Bishop Thomas Doyle of Kildare, the famous 'J.K.L.' of Irish literature, published in 1825 a pamphlet, A Vindication of the Religious and Civil Principles of the Irish Catholics, urging his fellow Bishops to follow O'Connell. In an effort to persuade the British parliament that Catholics were equal and deserved emancipation, Bishop Doyle spoke to a Committee of the House of Commons in 1825. He told them that 'If we were freed from the disabilities under which we labour, we have no mind, and no thought, and no will but that which would lead us to incorporate ourselves most fully and essentially with this great Kingdom; for it would be our greatest pride to share in the glories and riches of England'.[20]

In 1828, the south of Ireland held its general elections, and it was the year that the forty shilling freeholders rose to political power when they voted for pro-Catholic candidates. Most of the Irish borough constituencies franchise was confined to small corporations, and were in the hands of private patrons who had managed in the past to return twenty one out of thirty five of their M.P.s in elections. The control of elections depended upon the control of the forty shilling freeholders, the majority of whom were Catholics. If the freeholders were to

[20] E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy, p. 90.

revolt against the landowners, the system would collapse, and there was nothing the landlords could do about it. The efforts of the priests and individual agitators like Richard Sheil helped to carry the votes in the counties of Dublin, Roscommon, Westmeath, Monaghan and in Waterford and Lough. O'Connell immediately supported the freeholders against the landlords, and revised the compromise made in London; he announced the revival of the Catholic Rent to protect the freeholders from eviction. The Waterford elections were the start of a new movement for political power in Ireland, and were held up as an example to other districts. These elections were the first sign that in much of Ireland Tory and anti-Catholic landed influence could not stand against an organised Catholic majority.

Goulburn's Act only lasted until March 1827, and so the Old Catholic Association was revived. In 1827 Wellington and Peel were returned to office, and negotiations with the British government became more vehement. Under the leadership of the Catholic Association, over two thirds of Ireland was defiant of the government, and bills they passed. By the end of July 1827, the Catholic Association's membership was over 10,000, with a regular income of £2,000.

In 1828 O'Connell called upon the Catholic electorate to throw out any M.P. who supported Wellington's administration. In County Clare, O'Connell stood for election against William Vesey Fitzgerald, the President of the Board of Trade, a strong candidate, but with little chance of victory against O'Connell. The Catholic priests led the forty shilling voters to the polls, and after five days of voting in July 1828, O'Connell was swept

to victory with 2,057 votes to 982. After O'Connell's victory, the government declared a crisis in Ireland. In the South, the peasantry was assembling in huge open-air meetings or processions, while in the Protestant North emissaries accompanied by mobs were touring the countryside arranging meetings. This situation was dangerous as there were riots when the Catholic groups met the Orangemen. The Ultra-Protestants formed Brunswick clubs in competition with the Catholic Association. The centre of Irish politics was no longer Dublin Castle but the Corn Exchange and Daniel O'Connell. The Association, which was now increasing its membership daily, boasted 15,000 regular members, and over three million associate members. To Wellington and Peel Ireland was now on the edge of another rebellion, and the radical movements would have to be satisfied. This could only be done by unqualified emancipation. O'Connell was not a revolutionary, but a reformer, and realised from the examples of the French Revolution and the revolt of 1798 that violence would achieve nothing. He regarded revolution as unjustified and took his lead not so much from France, as from the Scottish Catholic movement and American democracy.

Robert Peel and Wellington forced George IV's opposition to Catholic emancipation, and spent most of 1828 in secret negotiation with the King. It was only with the threat of resignation and the government that Wellington finally gained Royal permission on January 1st 1829 for emancipation to be discussed. A number of Tory M.P.s rebelled, but the bill was passed easily through both houses with only slight opposition in the Lords. On April 13th, 1829, George IV gave it his Royal

signature. The Act was simple and direct; the Catholics had to swear allegiance to the Crown, and the Protestant succession. They also had to swear that the Pope had no secular power or jurisdiction in Britain. The Act was meant for Ireland, but also covered England and Scotland. Catholics could now hold all offices except those of Regent, Lord Chancellor of either island or Lord Lieutenant. The Catholic Association speeded up the process of emancipation by the pressure it exerted through propaganda, the harrassment of the legislators and administrators, and by the threat of physical force. The victory of the Catholics was one of a popular movement over the government. For the middle-class Catholics, the rewards of emancipation were limited and ordinary people received very little benefit. The Emancipation Bill was followed by the disenfranchisement of the forty shilling freeholders, and the electorate was reduced from 100,000 to 16,000, which destroyed the safeguard of the small farmer against the landlords. The Emancipation Bill was won without rebellion or Civil War or the sectarian bloodshed of 1798.

The French Revolution did influence the Catholics in Ireland, but only the more radical groups of Catholics. The ordinary Catholic peasantry knew little of the Revolution and only understood their own livelihood and religion. Most of the outbreaks in Ireland were sectarian rather than revolutionary, and it was only those who were politically motivated that resented the English government, seeking French assistance although not a French state. It was only the radicals such as Tone and his followers who really wanted another revolution in Ireland. The Revolutionary ideas in France did influence many

politicians, and illustrated that independence could be won over a minority by the majority, and did give hope to the Catholic leaders in their fight for reform and emancipation. French literature helped the growth of radicalism amongst the Catholics, which eventually broke the Protestant hold on the government and fused the Catholic population into a united body. The threat of a French invasion also denied the Catholics early emancipation, because of the fear of French attacks on England through Ireland. French ideas were an influence on Ireland, but for democracy, the Irish looked more to America. French anti-Catholicism, however, also helped to confirm the anti-revolutionary attitudes of a great majority of Irish Catholic churchmen and so established the hostility to revolution in principle which prevailed in the Irish Catholic Church during the nineteenth century.

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