

Durham E-Theses

The political career of Edward Miall, editor of the nonconformist and founder of the liberation society

Newton, J. S.

How to cite:

Newton, J. S. (1975) *The political career of Edward Miall, editor of the nonconformist and founder of the liberation society*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online:
<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/8010/>

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

J. S. NEWTON

THE POLITICAL CAREER OF EDWARD MIALL,
EDITOR OF THE NONCONFORMIST AND FOUNDER OF
THE LIBERATION SOCIETY

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

JUNE 1975

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author.
No quotation from it should be published without
his prior written consent and information derived
from it should be acknowledged.

Abstract

In 1841 Edward Miall began his career as a radical journalist and politician. He soon became one of the leaders and propagandists of radical dissent, and was a figure of increasing importance in this field, both as editor of the Nonconformist and as member of Parliament, up to his retirement from active politics in 1874.

The central theme of his public life was the attempt to disestablish the Church of England. Though he failed to achieve this, his life's ambition, its pursuit involved him in campaigns for educational reform, university reform, electoral reform, the abolition of church rates, as well as campaigns against established churches in Ireland and in the colonies. These campaigns, to whose success Miall contributed, necessitated alliances with other pressure groups, and led him to found the British Anti-State Church Association, later known as the Liberation Society, one of the most formidable and highly organised of mid-Victorian political bodies.

Miall's career as a political tactician exemplifies the problems which confronted dissenters in particular in their search for the redress of their grievances: in general, these were the problems encountered by extra-parliamentary pressure groups seeking to secure legislative change from the reformed House of Commons. Miall's aspirations compelled him to seek a wide range of support, radicals, Irish Catholics and working class leaders, and he was among the politicians who helped construct the Liberal coalition which Gladstone led to victory in 1868, and to defeat in 1874.

In the Nonconformist, Miall possessed his own organ of opinion: this, together with his numerous tracts, pamphlets and books, makes it possible to reconstruct in considerable detail the history of dissenting agitation in the mid-nineteenth century, its successes and its failures, from his standpoint, and to see in detail the working of a Victorian pressure group, endeavouring to force causes upon Parliament.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to many people for their assistance and encouragement. Professor W.R. Ward, my supervisor, gave me indispensable guidance through the complexities of nineteenth-century dissent. His suggestions led to many interesting lines of enquiry, and saved many a fruitless hour. Mr. A.J. Heesom and Mr. A. Tyrrell, with whom I discussed various aspects of this work, gave me the benefit of their extensive knowledge and suggested valuable bibliography. The librarians of Dr. Williams's Library, Durham University Library, Bradford Central Library, Birmingham Central Library, the Bishopsgate Institute, the Guildhall Library and the British Museum patiently answered numerous queries, as did the archivists of the Greater London Record Office. Miss M.D. Sturge, and the General Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council, generously allowed me to consult and refer to documents and letters in their charge. Help and encouragement was forthcoming from the Principal and staff of Neville's Cross College, and most of all from my wife, who not only endured the Dissidence of Dissent, but also the arduous process of checking and correction.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. The struggle over elementary education	8
2. Radical dissenters and university reform	103
3. Radical dissenters and the franchise	164
4. Edward Miall and the Irish Church	241
5. Dissenting hostility to the Established Church	335
6. Edward Miall and the attack upon the Established Church	437
Conclusion	520
Bibliography	535

Introduction

Edward Miall, Independent Minister, Journalist, Member of Parliament, was born in Portsmouth in 1809, and died in London in 1881. Little in his early life indicated the political course he was later to pursue. He was educated at a London grammar school, and later at a college for candidates for the Independent ministry at Wymondley, which became part of New College, London. There are signs in his youthful letters that he feared his early life had been wasted in secular pursuits, and he received a call to Christian commitment in his late teens.¹ He became a theological student in 1828, obtaining some note as a classical scholar, but left college without completing his studies. Ordained into the Independent ministry in 1831, he became pastor of a congregation at Ware, where he remained until 1834, when he moved to Bond Street Chapel, Leicester.

Here, in an industrial town with a lively tradition of radicalism, Miall began his active political career. Though he claimed that his interest in politics began at the time of the struggle for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, his active involvement began in Leicester, where he was confronted with the grievances of urban dissent, and where he met another radical clergyman, the Rev. J.P. Mursell. Thereafter, Miall the politician emerged. From 1836 to 1841 he was a leading figure in Leicester politics, after which he moved to London to take up what was to be his life's work, the founding and editing of a radical dissenting newspaper, the Nonconformist.

With the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, dissenters were no longer second class-citizens, an invidious status which had been theirs since the seventeenth century. The victory was partly the result of dissenting pressure, but many practical grievances remained. The

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall (London 1884) pp6-9

reform of Parliament in 1832 seemed to promise the means of their removal, but the experience of the 1830s indicated that the redress of grievances was impossible without the support of one of the major parties. The Church of England retained its legal position as an establishment, and it remained for dissenters to secure the fruits of the victory of 1828 by gaining full civil and religious equality. A United Committee of Dissenters, which, however, did not include Wesleyans or Quakers, was formed in 1833, and drew up a list of six practical grievances from which dissenters still suffered. They were, the compulsory use of the Book of Common Prayer in the marriage service, the absence of the legal registration of dissenters' births and deaths, the liability of dissenters to pay church rates and other ecclesiastical levies, the alleged liability of places of worship to poor rates, the monopoly enjoyed by the Church of England of parochial graveyards, and the virtual exclusion of dissenters from the full benefits of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.¹

The majority of the leaders of dissent, of dissenting organisations, and of dissenting newspapers and periodicals, were prepared to secure the redress of these practical grievances by whatever means seemed appropriate; normally, they sought the help of Whig leaders, and relied upon their sympathy in Parliament. Miall had no faith in this strategy. He did not think it would be effective, and the experience of the 1830s had confirmed this opinion. Worse still, it compromised the principles of dissenters, involving them in dubious agreements with political leaders, and implied recognition of the power of the Church of England to give or withhold favours. Tactically, it meant that a variety of organisations would strive to secure specific reforms, to the detriment of united effort. So far as Miall was concerned, the victory of 1828 was only the first battle in a war against the privileged position of the Church of

1. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (Cambridge 1952) p274

England, and dissenters could not rest upon their laurels until this had been destroyed by bringing about its disestablishment and disendowment. The grievances of dissenters were the direct result of the established position of the Church of England, and until its position was changed, dissenting grievances would not be removed.

Such a strategy required resources which were not available to Miall in 1841. No section of the nonconformist press would give practical and continuous support to such a campaign, so he was obliged to found the Nonconformist. Ultimately, the campaign would have to be fought in the political arena, but Parliament, since 1832, had shown itself unsympathetic even to the practical grievances of dissenters. Therefore Miall supported the cause of parliamentary reform: needing allies, he attempted to gain the support of the Anti-Corn Law League in particular, and that of radical politicians in general. He hoped to add to this predominantly middle class grouping the adherence of working class leaders, first of all the Chartists, later, other forms of organised labour. There was no dissenting organisation upon which he could rely, so he played a major part in founding the British Anti-State Church Association, better known under its later title, the Liberation Society. It was a non-denominational body, which Miall hoped would attract the support both of protestant dissenters, and of Roman Catholics.

In the first place, therefore, Miall's career is that of a radical politician, attempting to wrest concessions from the reformed parliament. His successes and failures are illustrative of the difficulties this involved, and are the common experience of the majority of mid-nineteenth century pressure groups. Despite the compromises he was compelled to accept, he strove consistently for one objective, the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England. His main supporters, apart from

dissenters, were the Irish Catholic party, and British radicals, and this grouping was a fundamental part of Gladstone's majority of 1868.

His second important rôle was that of radical journalist, which he fulfilled as editor of the Nonconformist. This was published weekly, and enjoyed the comparatively high circulation for a religious journal of approximately 2,000 per week after one year,¹ rising to about 3,200 in the 1850s.² Its political tone was uncompromisingly radical, and it ceaselessly berated dissenters who were prepared to temper the full rigour of their principles. More extreme than any of the dissenting publications of the 1830s,³ the Nonconformist gradually gained the approval of two leading organs of dissent, the Patriot and the Eclectic Review, but it remained the journal of radical dissent, and dissenters who had previously regarded the Eclectic Review as their mouthpiece, founded the British Quarterly Review to replace it as the organ of moderate nonconformist opinion.⁴ Matthew Arnold considered that the Nonconformist was written with "...great sincerity and ability", though he disliked its prevailing atmosphere, "...jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea meetings, openings of chapels, sermons."⁵ This criticism ignores its excellent coverage and comment upon political affairs at home and abroad, its pages of literary criticism, quite apart from its reporting of religious meetings, of the activities of both religious and political organisations, and articles, which were frequently short essays, upon religious topics. In addition to writing many of the leading articles in the Nonconformist, Miall contributed to other dissenting journals, and, towards the end of his life, wrote political and social articles for the Illustrated London News. The editor described his writings as,

1. Miall to Charles Sturge 15.VI.1842. Sturge Family papers
2. This calculation is based upon its stamp returns
3. F.R. Salter, "Political Nonconformity in the 1830s" Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th series Vol.III (1953) pp 125ff.
4. J. Waddington Congregational History (London 1880) i, 574f
5. M. Arnold, Culture and Anarchy 1869 (Cambridge 1932) pp56-58

"...noble thoughts expressed in admirable language. The clearness and sinewy compactness of his style always excited my admiration." ¹

In addition to his newspaper writing, Miall published collections of his articles, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook (1845), The Politics of Christianity (1847), The Title Deeds of the Church of England to her Parochial Endowments (1862). There were also substantial books; Views of the Voluntary Principle (1845), The British Churches in relation to the British People (1849), Bases of Belief: an Examination of Christianity as a Divine Revelation (1853). He left unfinished The Rationale of Religion, and, besides these, published a number of tracts and pamphlets.

Thirdly, he was an active worker in the type of organisation which was an essential part of extra-parliamentary activity in the mid-nineteenth century. Most significant was his commitment to the Liberation Society, but he was also prominent in the Complete Suffrage Union, the Voluntary Schools Association, the National Reform League, the National Education League, the Peace Society, and, for a brief period in the 1840s, the Dissenting Deputies. He took no part in denominational organisations, of which he intrinsically disapproved; the organisations in which he was active were those which helped shape political and public opinion.

Lastly, Miall achieved some prominence as a radical M.P., representing Rochdale from 1852 to 1857, and Bradford from 1869 to 1874. Within Parliament, he supported issues of religious equality, and introduced two important religious questions, that of the status of the Church of Ireland, and that of the Church of England.

In these four capacities, Miall pursued his ultimate objective without deviation. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the various aspects of the enormous question of disestablishment in which he was

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p372

primarily interested. His preoccupations do not always coincide with the practical grievances defined by the United Committee of Dissenters in 1833, and his career is more easily comprehensible if his activities in the various questions which disestablishment involved are examined analytically rather than chronologically. He hoped to bring about a reorganisation of elementary education in order to reduce the influence of the Established Church in that field. The reform of Parliament was essential, if M.P.s sympathetic to change and progress were to be elected. So far as the universities were concerned, he was attempting to remedy a practical grievance, but the remedy would end a monopoly enjoyed by the Church of England. The same was true of his campaign against church rates. Direct attacks upon the principle of establishment took the form of campaigns against the Church of Ireland and against the Church of England.

The problems of dissent, its factional divisions in the 1830s and its varying political allegiances, were a peculiar feature, and Miall was never representative of the whole spectrum of nonconformity in England. Insofar as he spoke for any one section, it was for the extreme radical group which was prepared to engage in political agitation. Opponents tried to represent him as an agent of provincial extremism, seeking to impose the will of the provinces upon London leadership, as occurred in other radical campaigns. While it is true that Miall came to London from the provinces, it is somehow difficult to think of him as a provincial spokesman after 1841. The Liberation Society represented London as well as the provinces, though most of its leaders were London men. Similarly, the Nonconformist was published in London, though its domestic news coverage was nationwide. But throughout his career there is a sense in which Miall represents the impatience of provincial nonconformity with the compromising outlook of its London leaders. He saw dissent as a whole,

not as a federation of sects, embodying a great principle which was ignored, or concealed by campaigns which concentrated upon the redress of practical grievances.

In another sense, Miall is representative of the radicals who, disappointed with the performance of their Whig allies in the 1830s, and weakened and disunited after 1837, sought new issues and new supporters. In the variety of its aspects, the disestablishment issue was broad enough to attract the support of several groups, radicals, dissenters, Roman Catholics and, hopefully, working class organisations. Miall can be seen to bid for the support of each of these groups as the basis of a new political alignment. In 1868, such a grouping, which Miall helped to bring about, formed the basis of Gladstone's majority, though ironically, it was the conduct of Miall himself which made it evident how tenuous were the bonds of such a coalition.

Though the Church of England was still established by law when Miall died, its influence in the life of the country was significantly diminished, thanks to his political work. Indeed, in several important respects, it had been disestablished.

CHAPTER 1

THE STRUGGLE OVER ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Part 1. Miall's ideas on education	8
Part 2. The struggle against government intervention in education	25
Part 3. Miall's advocacy of voluntarism	35
Part 4. Miall's acceptance of government intervention	68
Part 5. The Education Act of 1870; the clash with the government	78

Edward Miall began his political career in the 1840s, at a time when the education question had already reached a critical point. Dissenters had become wary of state intervention in education, but the actual form of their resistance had yet to be evolved. In this evolution Miall played an important part, for throughout his career he was active in the debate which divided the dissenting bodies, and affected successive governments. His part in these conflicts was largely on the political level, though the ideas he preached were neither original nor practical, and were not the basis of the settlement of the question in 1870. However, he was known to contemporaries as an ardent advocate of educational reform, was accepted by official opinion as a spokesman of the Voluntarist party, while as a journalist, he was active in publicising the debates and discussions of the question. His agitation of the education question falls into three parts. From 1841 to 1847, his opposition to governmental intervention in education was unqualified. Between 1847 and 1857, when, despite the efforts of voluntarists, governmental intervention increased, he tried to prevent any serious erosion of the voluntary position. After 1857, he seems to have accepted that state intervention was inevitable, and was concerned to ensure that its form did the least possible violence to his principles.

Part 1. Miall's ideas on education

In the early part of the 19th century, the debate on education centred around two major questions, the source of provision and control, and the nature of the instruction to be given. On both questions there was wide divergence of opinion, and the issues themselves were divided into numerous subsidiary questions, such as who should benefit from education and in what ways; whether education was a right which all should enjoy, or whether it was a privilege earned by thrift and self-denial. Of

particular importance was the question of the part to be played by religion, and hence by the various denominations, in the educational process.

The underlying issue was the extension of educational facilities to the working classes. The upper and middle classes already had ample provision, and the feeling was growing that the working classes had some claim to receive at least rudimentary teaching. Many who would not concede this as a right admitted the claim on the grounds of expediency. A beginning had been made with the Sunday School and the Charity School movements. Both depended upon voluntary effort, and sought no help from government. They tried to give poor children a basic literacy, some religious training, and arguably, an introductory work discipline. The movements were under the control of religious denominations, and followed the English tradition of churches and philanthropic bodies being responsible for educating the populace. The tradition itself was not in dispute; at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was simply a question of the extent to which the voluntary agency of the religious denominations could provide the educational facilities which an expanding urban and industrial population required.

An important advance had been made with the foundation of the two great societies; the British and Foreign Schools Society in 1810, and the National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales, in 1811.¹ While the former was supported mainly by dissenters, and gave undenominational instruction, the latter, as its name implies, adopted a directly sectarian approach. That two such societies existed side by side underlines the difficulty which bedevilled the question of educational reform, the division between the Established Church and the dissenting bodies. Mutual suspicion prevented the question from being dealt with on its merits, and

1. H.C. Barnard, A History of English Education from 1760
(London 1947), pp54ff

caused it to be fought on intractable issues of principle. Until 1833 these societies, along with the Sunday Schools, provided education for poor children whose parents could afford the minimal fees and were prepared to sacrifice their childrens' earning capacity. Many felt this was adequate provision. When Whitbread introduced a bill in 1807 to establish rate-aided free schools for the needy, it was rejected. A bill introduced by Brougham in 1820 would have laid the foundations of a national system of education, but it was withdrawn. The Church of England and the dissenting bodies each recoiled from the idea of government intervention in education, partly as a matter of principle, and partly because each thought the other would gain unduly from the hold it would obtain upon youthful minds.

Thus, the voluntary system was left to provide education for the poor, and in the view of its supporters, succeeded in providing at least as many school places as there was demand for them. A leading dissenting periodical, discussing educational provision for the poor in Lancashire, remarked,

"...school accommodation has been finished for 210,894, and that instruction is accessible to four times the number that embrace it." ¹

Later in the century, the Quarterly Review discussed the government's plans for a national system of education, and observed;

"The statistics we have given have led us to the conclusion that, if the children of the poor do not go to school, it is not for the want of schools to go to." ²

The dissenting British Quarterly Review commented;

"If ever there was an age or country in which outward prosperity acquired an extraordinarily rapid growth, while knowledge education and religion more than kept pace with it, England has been that country." ³

However, these complacent statements can be offset by the more critical view taken of the voluntary system by those less committed to it. When

1. Eclectic Review, ns XXII 1847, p600
2. Quarterly Review, vol. 128 no 256 1870, p491
3. British Quarterly Review, vol. I 1845, pl53

Robert Owen gave evidence to a Commission on child labour in 1816, he admitted that in Manchester there were school places for poor children far in excess of demand for them, but attributed this to the fact that the vast majority were unable to attend school because their parents sent them to work in factories as early as possible.¹ An inspector of schools, E.H. Brodie, highlighted the weaknesses of the argument that voluntary provision was adequate:

"Schools badly distributed and capriciously erected do not always fill; whence an argument has been drawn to prove that plenty of school accommodation exists... Not correctly."²

The decade of the 1820s was occupied by the great struggles for religious equality, and 1832 saw the success of parliamentary reform. Once these great issues had been settled, the question of education achieved new prominence. The radical J.A. Roebuck argued that henceforth the poorer classes were going to play an increasingly important part in the government of the nation, and there should be better provision for their education. He introduced a bill for the "universal and national education of the whole people," but it gained little support. Brougham, who had modified his ideas on state intervention in education, provided the basis of a compromise. The government would not assume direct control, but would provide a grant to the two societies, initially of £20,000 per annum, for the construction of school buildings. There was to be no supervision of its expenditure, and the National Society, having more schools, obtained the major share.³ This measure preserved the essence of the voluntary system; the government simply contributed funds and exercised no control. But in the same year, 1833, a factory act stipulated that children employed in textile factories should receive two hours schooling each day. This was a tentative movement towards government intervention, though it stopped short of providing either funds or teachers, and the factory schools which

1. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education 1780 - 1870 (London 1960), p152
2. Report of the Committee of Council on Education 1869/1870, p300
3. F. Smith, A History of English Elementary Education (London 1931) p138

survived did so more as a result of the philanthropy of individual factory owners.

Whatever the shortcomings of the measure of 1833, the government was involved in the education of the poor, to a degree acceptable to the religious bodies. For some, mostly radicals, this was not enough.

Dr. Kay, later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, feared that the terrible conditions in large towns would be a breeding ground for revolution.

Education had a part to play in averting such an evil, and he advocated a broadly-based system, similar to that favoured by James Mill, but with a strong religious element.¹ Francis Place believed that the wealthy classes feared the consequences of an educated working class,² while Engels saw the difficulty in terms of the complacency of the bourgeoisie.³ There was justice in these strictures, to the extent that not only did the educational clauses of the Factory Act of 1833 remain relatively ineffective for lack of funds and enforcement, but the educational provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 were similarly disappointing in their results. Despite radical pressure, voluntarism best answered the current state of public feeling. This meant, in the words of Professor Best, "the nation's schools could not be reorganised on a new and original plan like the nation's workshops."⁴

In 1839 the Whig government introduced measures to supervise the expenditure of the government grant to the two societies. A committee of the Privy Council was given oversight of education, a system of inspection was proposed, and the government also proposed to found a normal school for the training of teachers. The hostility of the religious bodies was immediately aroused. The inspectors were only accepted after a great deal

1. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education pl68
2. Ibid pl69
3. Ibid pl70
4. G.F.A. Best, "The religious difficulties of National Education in England 1800-1870". Cambridge Historical Journal vol. 12 no. 2 1956, pl59

of bargaining, and the proposed normal school was abandoned. It would have had to train teachers of all sects to give religious instruction, and both Anglicans and dissenters saw the proposal as the partial endowment of all religious denominations. Both dissenters and Anglicans agreed there should be religious instruction in schools, but since the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 had destroyed the fiction of a national faith, there was no basis upon which one sect could claim a monopoly of religious education. The agreement eventually reached in 1839 was termed the Concordat, and it worked to the advantage of the Church of England; a contemporary historian of the education question observed,

"...while the Church derived substantial advantage from it, the Dissenters and the public began henceforth to regard the Department with great suspicion, and all subsequent attempts proceeding from it were looked upon as the result of a preceding agreement with the Church or the National Society."¹

The failure of the proposals of 1839 to gain unqualified approval showed that dissenters were beginning to feel that the government could not be neutral in matters of religious education. Up to this point dissenters had raised little objection to the principle of state intervention, but the same historian, Francis Adams, saw the year 1839 as the beginning of a period of dissenting militancy:

"It was not until the administration of the Committee of Council threatened to give undue advantages to the Church that Dissenters discovered civil and political reasons against State Education, and joined in a policy of opposition to its extension."²

1. Francis Adams, History of the Elementary School Contest in England London 1882 ed. A. Briggs (Brighton 1972), p113.
Hereafter cited as Elementary School Contest.
See Also F. Smith, A History of English Elementary Education p182
J. Murphy Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800-1870 (London 1971), pp 29-30.
O.J. Brose Church and Parliament. The reshaping of the Church of England (London 1959), pp 185-195
2. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest p99

His argument had been anticipated by the moderate dissenting newspaper, the Patriot, which announced that it opposed the proposals of 1839,

"...because we think that the teaching of religion ought not to be undertaken, or to be provided, or to be controlled by the State."¹

Dissenters had reason to be wary of the position which the Church of England was beginning to claim for itself in the field of education.

Peel claimed in Parliament that,

"...the Church was now awakened to the absolute necessity... of assuming that position which she ought to assume, in constant and cordial co-operation with the landed proprietors and other influential classes in this country, in the van of the education movement."²

The opposition of dissenters to state intervention grew, and in the 1840s, education became a contentious matter. As Kay-Shuttleworth later observed,

"When the government intervened to promote the improvement of education, great principles were...necessarily brought into conflict."³

Miall, who had been for a short time a school teacher, arrived upon the national scene with the foundation of the Nonconformist in 1841, and his views upon education as set out in its columns are crucial for the understanding of the positions he adopted. In principle, they remained unchanged until 1867, when he reluctantly conceded the case for state intervention. Up to that point he put forward, both in print and upon the platform, the ideas of those groups, usually regarded as extreme, which were opposed to government intervention in any sphere of life where it was not absolutely essential to safeguard life and property, and which pinned their faith upon voluntary effort. This immediately opened up a rift between the dissenters who supported this view, and their natural allies, the radicals, who were in favour of the state's promoting education.⁴ Inevitably, Miall linked the education question with the much larger question of the position of the Established Church, and his advocacy sought to

1. Patriot, 6.VI.1839, p381
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series XLV, p309
3. Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth, Four Periods of Public Education 1862 (Brighton 1973) p447.
4. O.J. Brose, Church and Parliament ppl81-182

prevent the state church's extending its power and influence through being given control of the education of the poor by governments unable or unwilling to challenge its dominant position.

One of Miall's early articles attacked the utilitarian notion that it was the duty of the state to provide education:

"It is a favourite doctrine of the utilitarian school of politicians that the state is bound to supply the rising generation with all the elements of useful knowledge."¹

While conceding that education was a great benefit, and ignorance a drawback to national progress, it by no means followed that the state should interfere. Miall believed that "...not a single argument can be adduced for state education which is not equally powerful for state religion."² State education would give additional power to the reactionary elements in society, and an aristocracy and established church, already possessing enormous influence, would be supplemented in their opposition to progress by the efforts of the schoolmaster: "...in every parish we should have two paid state advocates instead of one, of 'things as they are', the priest and the pedagogue."³ In a scarcely veiled attack upon the schools of the National Society, Miall developed his fears of an educational system controlled by the forces of reaction. The Anglican Church still tried to monopolise the privilege of teaching, despite the loss of her prerogative to dictate the faith of the nation, and the system of teaching in her schools was designed to indoctrinate rather than to educate, to produce a class of people indifferent to the enormities committed by a state church, and its partner, a reactionary aristocracy:

"An established church is built upon the ruins of mental freedom, and the public opinion that suffers and sanctions a state church has locked itself up within the doors of prejudice, and put the key in its pocket...A nation thus governed is a self-guarded prisoner. It may talk of liberty, but practically it is a slave."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 4.VIII. 1841, p296
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, 15.IX. 1841, pp385-386: 22 IX. 1841, p401

This was a doctrine more characteristic of the 'Enlightenment' than of evangelical dissent. Miall was sceptical of the Church of England's motives in extending its interest in education. For two centuries, he argued, it had had great opportunities, but such progress as there had been was due to the efforts of dissenters. Having neglected its duty for so long, the Established Church was now alarmed by the influence which dissenters had gained, and hoped, with government assistance, to recover its dominant position:

"Feelings of rivalry have fairly overcome their dislike of popular knowledge. Schools, facetiously called 'National', in which small modicums of learning done up in the bitterest sectarianism are dealt out to youthful minds, spring up in every direction - and the 'successors of the apostles' have passed from the extreme of apathy to the opposite one of zeal: insomuch as to covet the labour of those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and to demand that the whole undivided charge of instructing the ignorant shall be imposed upon them."¹

Miall was no less critical of Dr. Kay, since 1839 secretary of the Committee of the Privy Council, whose methods of education he dismissed as a "synthetical system of instruction."² The extent to which these were used in 'National Schools' accounted for the inferiority of such schools, but it was these schools which absorbed a major portion of the government grant. Often they would be the only schools in a district, and dissenters were faced with the problem of either sending their children to be taught a creed which they themselves rejected, or of denying their children schooling. Whichever choice they made, they had to pay, through their taxes, for the teaching of a creed of which they disapproved. The solution, Miall believed, was for dissenters to establish their own schools:³ the poor would be willing to contribute money if the right stimulus were provided, and the granting of the suffrage to all males, another project dear to Miall, would provide that stimulus: "Education will not need then to be forced upon the poor. They will pant for education."⁴ Miall was

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook (London 1845) p107
Nonconformist, 22.IX. 1841 p401
2. Nonconformist, 5.X.1842, p665
3. Ibid 10.XI.1841, p514
4. Ibid p520

not unaware of the economic implications of a voluntary system existing side-by-side with a system which received public money. It would be difficult to obtain voluntary contributions if people were already contributing to education through taxation; less money would be available, and consciences would be stilled by compulsory contributions through taxation. The Quarterly Review put the position succinctly:

"The real peril and difficulty is lest the State education, whether by public grant or parochial or district taxation, should diminish the amount of voluntary subscription, in the case of education."¹

Considering the history of the educational struggle, the liberal Fortnightly Review noted that,

"...not a little of the antagonism which obstructs the establishment of a compulsory system is the apprehension that voluntary contributions will cease to flow in."²

Miall was aware that a voluntary system needed to be in a position to tap the income of the classes demanding education; 'once for all' endowments would be too inflexible to enable the system to supply the growing need for schools in urban centres. He appreciated that it would be difficult to obtain voluntary contributions if incomes were already being taxed to provide schools.

While Miall sometimes argued that the competition of subsidies to the schools of one sect would stimulate voluntary contribution on certain occasions, an argument with which the unitarian Christian Reformer agreed,³ over a long period he did not believe that voluntarism could survive the competition of state subsidy:

"The voluntary principle cannot succeed whilst it runs side by side with state endowments: those endowments must first of all be swept away and then the people will feel that the responsibility of the Church rests upon them."⁴

The argument applied equally to education; Miall criticised proposals by Fox for the introduction of rate-supported secular schools on the grounds

1. Quarterly Review, Sept. 1846 vol LXXVIII, p418
2. Fortnightly Review, May 1868, p576
3. Christian Reformer, Feb. 1847, pp76-77
4. Liberator, Dec. 1856, p236

that charitable and self-maintaining schools could not survive in competition with them.¹

Miall's fears of an education system dominated by the Church of England were similar to the anxieties felt by moderate chartists, such as William Lovett. It represented the intrusion of government into an area properly confined to private activity, and posed a direct threat to individual freedom:

"An educational establishment in the hands of a government would constitute about the most fearful weapon with which a nation could entrust its rulers....to surrender to the 'powers that be' the task of moulding the habits, shaping the character and fixing the elemental principles, political, social, moral and religious of succeeding generations is just to let down the drawbridge and raise the portcullis which at present guard the citadel of national freedom... That kind of religious education in which the state is to act as fogleman...can only obtain intellectual order at the expense of intellectual freedom."²

Miall criticised a scheme for the compulsory attendance of children at factory schools, mooted by the radical Hume in 1842, as being the harbinger of state intervention in all aspects of life:

"They would seem enamoured of Spartan government, and to be willing to impose upon the legislature the duty of suckling, rearing, training and then taxing the whole population. Every natural law is to be displaced by conventional arrangements..."³

It was evident to Miall that religion must form the basis of education, but a system dominated by the Church of England could not be entrusted with this task.⁴ It was not until late in his career that he accepted that this difficulty could be overcome by confining day schools to secular instruction, and leaving religious education to the private efforts of the various sects. A prominent advocate of this view was Dr. Hook of Leeds,⁵ and he received support from such diverse sources as the unitarian

1. Nonconformist, 28.V.1851, p417 I am indebted to Prof. W.R. Ward for suggesting this line of enquiry.
2. Nonconformist, 20.VII.1842, p497. cf Wm. Lovett and John Collins, Chartism: a new organisation of the people 1840 (Leicester 1969) pp73-75
3. Nonconformist, 20 VII.1842, p497
4. Ibid, 9 VII.1845, p484
5. Letter of W.F. Hook to the Bishop of St. David's (London 1846)

Christian Reformer¹ and the moderate congregationalist British Quarterly Review.² Miall believed that those who advocated state intervention in education were the real foes of popular liberty, and he named Russell, Macaulay, Roebuck and O'Connell as being far more dangerous than Peel:

"Toryism is to be preferred to the canting liberalism of the day, which under the plea of putting all subjects on a basis of equality aims to bring them all under ecclesiastical despotism."³

Paradoxically, those named were the men whom Miall broadly supported throughout his political life, for they represented the forces of motion in the political world, and their goodwill was vital to him. In dividing himself from his natural political allies, Miall did not represent all dissenting opinion. The powerful wesleyan body did not, as a rule, share his fears, nor did the large body of moderate congregational opinion represented by Thomas Binney and Dr. Vaughan, whose mouthpiece was the British Quarterly Review. That periodical discussed the dangers of state intervention in education, and rejected the fears of men such as Miall and Edward Baines, who was putting forward extreme voluntarist arguments in the Leeds Mercury:

"We know some intelligent men who have taken up this notion, but in our view it is from beginning to end fallacious, and we feel confident that by such men it will not long be retained."⁴

Miall clearly felt his role was that of a voice warning against the dangers of increasing government influence, and his was one of comparatively few journals putting forward such views on education. His most important companions were the Leeds Mercury, the Patriot and the Eclectic Review, all inclining to the extremes of dissent in such matters.

It is unlikely that many people were converted by the preaching of the

1. Christian Reformer, Sept. 1846, p570
2. British Quarterly Review, vol. IV 1846, p474. See also Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth Four Periods of Public Education p498
3. Nonconformist, 9.VII.1845, p484
4. British Quarterly Review, vol. IV 1846, pp405,444. Ibid., vol. VI 1847, p264.

Nonconformist; a newspaper so frequently virulent and extreme was probably preaching to the converted. But at least the case against state education was being argued in print on a national basis.

His hostility to state interference in education was part of Miall's general reluctance to exceed what Herbert Spencer, in a series of letters published in the Nonconformist,¹ had defined as the "proper sphere of government"; this included national defence and the preservation of law and order. While Miall found this notion a useful weapon to use against the Established Church, the moderate British Quarterly Review believed that uncritical acceptance of it had been detrimental to the interests of dissenters:

"That it should have been so generally held by Nonconformists has inflicted very serious injury on the cause of Nonconformity."²

By voluntary support of education, Miall implied the application of the principles of free trade to education. Unlike Cobden, he believed that they were appropriate: education should be subject to the laws of supply and demand. The Times pointed out the fallacy of this argument; the laws of free trade were valid only for the essentials of life, and whilst education was regarded as an essential by the upper and middle classes, members of the working class were inclined to consider it a luxury.³

Miall argued that if poverty were removed, parents would desire the education of their children and be able to afford it. He did not really face the fact that a system subject to the laws of supply and demand would be vulnerable to economic recession, a fear shared by Dr. Vaughan and the unitarian body. The Christian Reformer pointed out that, "The voluntary principle is a fluctuating and unreliable force,"⁴ and drew the attention of its readers to Vaughan's warning that successful opposition to state

1. Nonconformist, 19.X.1842, p700. Ibid, 26.X.1842, pp714-715 of J.S. Mill, On Liberty (Everyman edition) ppl64,170
2. British Quarterly Review, XLVII 1868, p413
3. Times, 14.VI.1856, p9
4. Christian Reformer, Feb. 1847, p77

intervention would not pave the way for the success of voluntaryism, but would leave the education of the poor deficient in both quantity and quality.¹ The Unitarians as a body believed education was too heavy a burden for private philanthropy, and could only be supported adequately from public funds. To avoid abuse, state support should be confined to purely secular teaching.²

However, Miall remained indifferent to these considerations. He believed that the personal effort involved in philanthropy was itself part of the educational process. He admitted that a system backed by state funds would produce better buildings, but he agreed with Lovett and Collins that it would be a "body without a soul". The system would be rigid, would stifle independence of thought and would result in merely mechanical teaching. His thought also had something in common with J.S. Mill, who claimed,

"A general state education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another." ³

The voluntary system would produce,

"...less outward decency, but more life. The body for a time will not be comely, but it will be quickened by a soul."⁴

The very act of self-help was beneficial in that it stimulated conscience, co-operation, discussion and public spirit. These benefits, valuable in themselves regardless of achievement, would be stifled by governmental supervision, and their loss would be felt throughout society:

"The very difficulty which educational voluntaryism must cope with in order to reach its end stimulates it to more active exertion...Supercede the necessity of philanthropic effort, and the vis vitae of society will become extinct. Compulsoryism may promise a speedier return of direct results, but voluntaryism diffuses health and gladness as it goes."⁵

1. Christian Reformer, Oct. 1846, p.636
2. R.V. Holt, The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England (London 1938) p.257
3. J.S. Mill, On Liberty (Everyman edition) pl61
4. Nonconformist, 16.IX.1846, p628. See also E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle (London 1845) pp44,104
5. Nonconformist, 23.IX. 1846, p644: E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle pp75, 183
E.Miall The Politics of Christianity (London 1843) p80
 Such ideas were at the basis of Edward Baines' passionate advocacy of voluntaryism. D. Fraser. 'Edward Baines' in Pressure from without, ed. P. Hollis, (London 1974) pl95
 See also Nonconformist, 29.III.1843, pp200-201

For Miall, the remedy was simple:

"What this country wants, a more general taste for education, no agency of law can supply: and what the country does not want, official intermeddling with religious benevolence, no agency of law can be set in motion without ensuring."¹

It was certainly essential to stimulate demand; Miall himself showed that the Anglican Church had failed to do that in previous centuries, even though it had guaranteed financial resources at its disposal.² He later showed himself aware that,

"...the real question to be solved is, how to overcome the indifference of the working and the Arab classes of our population to school instruction for their children - how to get the children to school and how to keep them there once you have got them."³

He had no suggestions apart from the need to relieve poverty, and he failed to meet Lecky's argument that appreciation of education is a consequence of education, not a stimulus for it.⁴ It is true that he argued that people would value education more if they had to work to obtain it than they would if it were freely available,⁵ but this does not explain what forces would make them work for it in the first instance. Nor did he appreciate the contribution which the government could make by raising the minimum age for the employment of children, which, as Professor Simon has shown, was a factor of the greatest importance in removing obstacles to the enjoyment of education by the poorest classes.⁶

Miall's remaining arguments against state education lay in its financial implications. Such a system would have to be supported either by taxes or by local rates, and in the case of any but a purely secular system, this was open to the same objection as a church rate. People would have to contribute to the support of religious teaching of which they disapproved

1. Nonconformist, 19.IV.1854, p317

2. Ibid., 19.VIII. 1846, p564

3. Ibid., 24.VI. 1857, p491

4. Quoted in Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest pl29

5. Nonconformist, 4.XII.1861 p973

6. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education ppl52f

at best, and at worst would have to send their children to the schools of other denominations, where they would be exposed to alien creeds and dogmas. Miall found it impossible to visualise a purely secular system of education; for him, such a system had no meaning in educational terms, and no less an authority than Kay Shuttleworth believed that in the 1840s it was politically unrealistic.¹ At a later stage, Miall was to revise his view on this matter, but in his early years he was convinced of the impossibility of a purely secular system, and hence of the impossibility of impartial official support:

"You may succeed in forcing upon the country a school rate, but the country will succeed in forcing upon you a sectarian distribution and use of it. The exclusively secular theory, besides being impossible save in name, is distasteful to a large majority, and even if wisest in the abstract, is made inapplicable by circumstances."²

Miall's position on education was formulated over a number of years in the Nonconformist, and was scarcely modified until 1867, when he followed Edward Baines in admitting the necessity for state intervention. His view of the correct role for the state to adopt appears in two essays published as part of the Politics of Christianity; the second essay is entitled significantly, "A clear stage and no favor(sic)". All that government does must conform to the maxims of Christianity:

"Parental instinct, natural curiosity, the power connected with knowledge, the miseries which grow up apace on the soil of ignorance, His own command, and the peculiar motives for obeying it which Christianity supplies, all constitute part of that moral apparatus which He has constructed to secure the education of rising manhood... The end, however, is not at present secured. What then? Is it the business of government to take the matter in hand? Our argument replies "No". The duty of civil government is to provide a 'clear stage and no favor' to remove impediments from the free agency of moral nature and religious zeal, and to see to it that nothing in the shape of its own fiscal exactions or of class injustice operates to prevent the fullest and freest play of those instincts and responsibilities by which the end is to be secured."³

1. J. Kay Shuttleworth, Four periods of public education, p497
 2. Nonconformist 28.V.1851, p417
 3. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity, pp40-41. cf E. Baines. Speech to the Congregational Union in 1843. Quoted in R.W. Dale, The History of English Congregationalism (London 1907) pp650-651.
- See also E. Baines, The life of Edward Baines (London 1851) p329

Even if voluntaryism were to fail in its objectives, this would not provide justification for state intervention. Miall pointed out that state interference in trade had proved disastrous, state interference in poor relief had produced an unmanageable system, and state interference in religion had resulted in the evils of a state church.¹ The correct role for the state was to promote self-reliance and a sense of individual responsibility.² While the protagonists of state education could make unfavourable comparisons between the educational system of England, and the state supported systems of continental Europe, Miall denied that the British as a whole were worse educated than Prussians or Austrians; the British working class might know less, but had more independence of character.³ Indeed, in common with Chartists such as Lovett and Collins, Miall used the examples of Prussia and Austria as a warning against governmental oppression by means of the control of education,⁴ and the Eclectic Review argued, "The military despotism of Prussia is mainly upheld at the present day by its educational system."⁵

Thus Miall's ideas upon education were derivative, owing something to Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill, Edward Baines, and Chartist leaders such as Lovett and Collins. More than this, as Dr. Vincent has shown, his ideas rested upon "a view or recollection of English history."⁶ Up to 1867 he presented the ideas of an extreme group of dissenters, by no means representative of the whole of dissent, not even the whole congregationalist body. Separated from radicals by this extreme 'laissez-faire' doctrine applied to education, he obtained few allies and received little support, save on special occasions or in peculiar circumstances. However his ideas were not without influence upon the education debate, he was regarded as a spokesman of the voluntaryist party, and though he had ultimately to sacrifice part of his principles, he was not ineffective.

1. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity pp42-43

2. Ibid. p80

3. Nonconformist, 17.IV.1850, p310

4. W. Lovett and J. Collins, Chartism: a new organisation of the people pp73-75

5. Eclectic Review, ns vol.XIII 1843, p581

6. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868 (London 1966)xxix

Part 2. The struggle against government intervention in education

Miall was called upon to take an active part in the education question soon after Peel took office in 1841. The Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, introduced a factory bill in 1843 which had important educational clauses, which were in direct conflict with the voluntarist philosophy as expressed by Miall. The education clauses of the act of 1833 had remained virtually inoperative, and Graham was determined to remedy this state of affairs. He believed,

"...the education of the rising youth should be the peculiar care of the government. Its neglect is one of the chief causes of the evil spirit which now actuates large masses of the community."¹

He believed, as passionately as Miall, that religion was a vital element, and was determined that factory education should contain some religious teaching. Writing to Brougham, he showed himself aware of the difficulties this might cause:

"Religion cannot be separated from the system and amidst the conflict of contending sects the State, if it makes a choice, must prefer the established creed: and this preference is a signal for an attack on the measure and for resistance to the rate or tax which dissenters must pay, but the fruits of which they cannot share, if the religious instruction violate their belief."²

Graham was aware that religious education was a sensitive area, but believed he had found an acceptable solution. He informed the Bishop of London that the clauses concerning religious teaching were, "such as the Church might reasonably concede, and the Dissenters adopt, as a scheme of compulsory religious education,"³ and he wrote to the Rev. G.R. Gleig, "Mine is a measure of peace.... If I succeed in large cities and manufacturing districts, my plan is easily capable of extension."⁴ Gladstone believed Graham was optimistic, informing him that he (Gladstone)

1. Sir James Graham to Kay Shuttleworth 30.VIII.1842. Printed in C.S. Parker The Life and letters of Sir James Graham (London 1907) i, 329
2. Graham to Lord Brougham 24.X.1842, Ibid. p338
3. Graham to the Bishop of London 27.XII.1842, Ibid. pp342-343
4. Graham to the Rev. Gleig 6. III.1843, Ibid. pp343-344

remained sceptical about the possibility of giving a non-controversial exposition of the scriptures.¹ In a letter to Dr. Hook, he doubted if the country would accept the measure.²

The bill was published early in 1843. In detail, it proposed to alter the minimum age for the employment of children in factories, and to reduce the working hours for those under the age of 13 from 8 hours to 6½ hours per day. On each working day, there would be three hours teaching for children under 13, which would include religious teaching, though that was to be limited to exposition of the scriptures without commentary; doctrinal instruction could be given on Sundays. There was to be inspection by the Committee of the Privy Council, and the factory schools were to be managed by a committee of trustees, consisting of the incumbent of the parish, the churchwardens, two factory masters and two rate payers.

Graham had miscalculated the strength of feeling which the measure would arouse, and the dissenting bodies united in resistance to its provisions. The Leicestershire Mercury noted that dissenters were organising opposition in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, and added, "...even London dissenters are awakening from their slumbers."³

It was astounded that Graham ever believed that the measure would be accepted by dissenters, so biased was it in favour of the Established Church.⁴ The independent churches of Nottinghamshire denounced the measure as "subversive of civil and religious liberty."⁵ Notwithstanding the activity of provincial dissent, a lead was given by London, notably by the Nonconformist and the Patriot.⁶ The Patriot habitually referred to the bill as the "British and Sunday School Extinction Bill,"⁷ and, like its

1. Gladstone to Graham 25.III.1843. Printed in D.C.Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone (London 1910) ii, 131-132.
2. Gladstone to Dr. W.F. Hook 30.III.1843, Ibid., pp133-134.
3. Leicestershire Mercury, 1.IV.1843
4. Ibid.
5. Nonconformist, 22.III.1843, p178.
6. J.T.Ward & J.H.Treble, "Religion and Education in 1843. Reaction to the Factory Education Bill." Journal of Ecclesiastical History XX no.1 April 1969, p89
7. Patriot 20.III.1843, p180

contemporary, the Eclectic Review, regarded it as the most serious threat to religious liberty and to the position of dissenters since Lord Sidmouth.¹ It described the bill as having,

"...the objectionable features of a Church Extension Bill, a Test Act and a Church Rate, for the purpose of wresting education out of the hands of dissenters. For let there be no mistake; this is the real object."²

In a public letter to Lord Wharncliffe, Edward Baines, editor of the Leeds Mercury complained that the scheme was a direct threat to voluntary education, a definite attempt to promote the schools of the Established Church. "This bill, my lord, is a declaration of war against all the Dissenters in the Kingdom."³ Miall launched his attack in a wealth of metaphor and historical allusion in an article entitled "The noose over the neck."⁴ He proclaimed:

"The mandate of our modern Pharaoh is on the eve of going forth, and after the date of its issue, every masculine mind born in this kingdom is to be destroyed...The plan of education proposed by the ministers, and hailed as an inestimable boon by Parliament and by the press is the boldest inroad attempted upon our liberties since the revolution of 1688."⁵

The genesis of the bill lay in the industrial disorders of 1842, and its tone was generally repressive, as was apparent from the clauses making school attendance compulsory, and imposing fines for absence. Children would have to pay 3d per week from their scanty earnings for the privilege of being indoctrinated by a priest, "saturated with the frivolous traditions of popery",⁶ an attempt by Miall to play upon dissenting fears of the Oxford Movement. The composition of the management committees guaranteed the domination of the Established Church, and the inspectors would have to be approved by the bishops at their appointment, as had in fact been agreed

1. Patriot 13.III.1843, p164

2. Ibid.

3. Edward Baines, Letter to Lord Wharncliffe on Sir James Graham's Bill for establishing exclusive church schools built and supported out of the poor rates and discouraging British Schools and Sunday Schools. (London 1843) p9.

See also J.T. Ward, Sir James Graham (London 1967) p196

4. Nonconformist, 22.III.1843, p185

5. Ibid

6. Ibid., 29.III.1843, p193

in the Concordat of 1839. So seriously was the position of dissenters threatened, that Miall regarded the measure as tantamount to the repeal of the Toleration Act.¹

The official organisations of dissent also united in resistance. Unitarian leaders such as Martineau, W.J. Fox and Charles Wickstead were among opponents of the measure,² as were leading Quakers.³ The Dissenting Deputies, anxious to promote popular education, nevertheless condemned Graham's bill, which, "...disadvantageously blends the question as to Factories and Education."⁴ It would result in a "most sectarian education"; it would damage existing voluntary schools and especially Sunday Schools, and would create,

"...in favour of the parochial clergy and the Established Church, new, injurious, unlimited and irresponsible power and authority over the people...will violate religious equality and be thoroughly incompatible with the rights of conscience and civil and religious liberty."⁵

The Deputies proposed to send an address to the Queen:

"To avert the enactment of a measure which would inflict upon the Protestant Dissenters and Methodists of England and Wales...the greatest legislative evil that inherited intolerance could have devised or clerical tyranny in dark and barbarous ages might have gloried to impose."⁶

The fear of the spread of "Puseyite errors" is apparent in the minutes of the Deputies,⁷ and they organised 13,366 petitions with 2,068,059 signatures against the bill.⁸ They resolved to unite with the Religious Freedom Society, the Congregational and Baptist Unions, and "any other Metropolitan Committee of kindred character" to oppose the bill.⁹

1. Ibid.
2. R.V. Holt, The Unitarian contribution to Social Progress in England p262
3. E. Isichei, Victorian Quakers (Oxford 1970) p198
4. Minute Book of the Dissenting Deputies, 15.III.1843, ff191-192 (Guildhall Library) Nonconformist, 29.III.1843, p194
5. Minute Book of the Dissenting Deputies, 15.III.1843, ff191-192
6. Ibid., 3.V.1843, f217. cf B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p345
7. Minute Book of the Dissenting Deputies, 3.V.1843, f217
8. Ibid., 5.VI.1843, f234
9. Ibid., 23.III.1843, f200

To the surprise of both Graham and Miall, the Wesleyan body joined the opponents of the bill. Miall remarked that they had so long been dominated by their conference and had for so long given clear evidence of Tory sympathies, "...that we had quite despaired of seeing them aroused to take any part in the struggle for freedom."¹ Graham felt they too were afraid of the spread of Puseyism within the Church of England; he wrote to Peel:

"I have received the enclosed from the Wesleyan body with great regret. It is more hostile than I anticipated, and marks a distinctly wide estrangement from the church. It is quite clear that the Pusey tendencies of the Established Church have operated powerfully on the Wesleyans, and are converting them rapidly into enemies."²

His recognition of the storm he had raised is apparent in a letter to Gladstone:

"...the enmity of the Dissenters is moved to the uttermost, and they will succeed in defeating the measure, at least in the sense which led me to propose it, as a scheme of comprehension and concord."³

The new unity of dissenters became an accepted political fact. In a parliamentary speech, Ewart remarked;

"The Wesleyans, who generally leaned with a kind of kindred feeling to the Church of England, had made their wishes known unfavourably to this bill, and indeed he hardly knew a sect of dissenters from the Wesleyans to the Unitarians who had not expressed similar views."⁴

The united protest was based upon a fear of the influence which the Established Church would gain in education if supported by the government, the very fears which Miall had already expressed. When the danger took this extreme form, the only basis for resistance was a commitment to the opposite extreme, complete educational voluntarism, such as Miall advocated. Unfortunately for Miall, the danger in this overt form was not perpetual but occasional, and so was the unity which resulted from it.

1. Nonconformist, 3.V.1843, p296
2. Graham to Peel 13.IV.1843 C.S. Parker Sir James Graham i, 345
3. Ibid. See also J.T.Ward & J.H.Treble, "Religion and Education in 1843. Reaction to the Factory Education Bill." Journal of Ecclesiastical History XX no.1 April 1969, p107
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates. 3rd series Vol. LXVII, p1422

Miall was quick to recognise the effect which Graham's bill had upon dissenters, and, supported by other dissenting newspapers and periodicals, he sought to consolidate the new-found unity. He warned readers that the bill was the first step in a plan for the "virtual suppression of dissent,"¹ and begged them not to be misled by its apparently limited purpose. He doubted if it would ever achieve its stated purpose of educating the children of the poor; the best it could achieve was to give them the rudiments of literacy, and the price which they would pay in the loss of mental freedom was too high.² For this minimal gain, the priests of the state church, including Puseyites, were to be given free rein to,

"...bandage up human hearts in their absurdities, to break down human will by their superstitious notions, to make all religion consist in sacerdotal manipulation, and belief in the gospel to amount to no more than a blind credulity in the assumptions of vain and arrogant priests..."³

He was quite prepared to face the consequences of his argument; he preferred to contemplate no education for the poor at all, rather than a system dominated by the state church:

"If we must have one or the other, let's have the savagism of ancient Britain rather than the cowering, trembling, slavish superstition of modern Spain... There is some hope of natural brutality - there is none whatever of a community blighted with monkish delusions."⁴

Miall's reaction appears extreme, but he was not alone in his hatred and fear of the measure; as is apparent, his fears were shared by the majority of dissenters, many of whom were less extreme than he. The Eclectic Review, which, as a rule took up a position similar to Miall's in less excitable language, made similar criticisms of the measure, but then welcomed it insofar as it had produced what no dissenting effort had achieved, unity of purpose amongst dissenters. Never since the days of Lord Sidmouth had dissenters been so much at one;⁵ now even the leaders of

1. Nonconformist, 29.III.1843, p200

2. Ibid., pp200-201

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Eclectic Review, ns XIII 1843, p576 cf Nonconformist, 5.IV.1843, p216

dissent had been shaken out of their drift towards conservatism by this "...insidious attempt to put down dissent by law..."¹ It warned that this bill was simply a consequence of having a church established by law, and there could be no genuine religious equality, and safety for dissenters, until the alliance between church and state was brought to an end.²

Similar views were expressed by the Patriot, which was less consistent in its general support for Miall.³

On the face of it, Miall's objections to Graham's bill appear both negative and unpleasantly intolerant. He seemed to be arguing that no education at all was preferable to state education, and his statements on Puseyism are a departure from his usual standards of tolerance. In fact, he genuinely believed that, left to itself, the voluntary system could provide the schools that were needed, and he probably adopted this extreme approach to combat those who might feel that, while the scheme was objectionable, it was better than nothing; it was only four years since dissenters had agreed in principle to government intervention in education. Moreover, he was not attacking the bill simply as a scheme of education, but also as a measure of church extension and political repression. It was vital that dissenters should attack the principle of the bill, and not simply attack its details insofar as they affected a particular denomination.⁴

A campaign was better fought on the basis of principle, and the Eclectic Review agreed that the bill was a scheme for church extension.⁵

Miall also realised that it was useless merely to attack the bill from the point of view of dissenters; he insisted that his objections sprang as much from his fear of strengthening the influence of the aristocracy, and his arguments were designed to appeal to radicals and chartists.

1. Eclectic Review, ns XIII 1843, p698
2. Ibid., p713
3. Patriot, 19.VI.1843, p444
4. Nonconformist, 5.IV.1843, p216
5. Eclectic Review, ns XIII 1843, p593

Indeed, Lovett and Collins had expressed their fears of an educational system controlled by a Parliament in which the people whom it would affect were not represented. Condemning the bill as a measure of repression, Miall argued that the army had failed to quell the disorders of the preceding year, and the Home Secretary was intending to use education to inculcate more submissive attitudes:

"The object is not so much to do the people good, but to keep them in order. The thing aimed at is not so much to instruct but to govern them. Education is to do what physical force can no longer manage."¹

Schoolmaster and priest were to take over where the army left off, to safeguard the position of the aristocracy.² This again may seem an argument simply designed to attract chartist or radical support, but Graham's proposals were not unrelated to the disorders of 1842. He himself told the House of Commons,

"I am informed that the turbulent masses who, in the course of last autumn, threatened the safety of property...were remarkable for the youth of the parties comprising them. If I had entertained any doubt on the subject...the events of last autumn would have convinced me that not a moment should be lost in endeavouring to impart the blessings of a sound education to the rising generations in the manufacturing districts."³

Miall also used the opportunity to harangue dissenters, informing a meeting at Kingsland Chapel that they only had themselves to blame for the measure. They had previously accepted money from the government for education, instead of relying upon their own efforts, and it was illogical now to complain about government intervention, merely because its particular form was objectionable. Had they pursued a consistent policy in the past, remained united, and concentrated less upon practical grievances and more upon principles, no government would have dared attempt such a measure. He accused them of "guilty supineness" and "unfaithfulness to

1. Nonconformist, 15.III.1843, p168
2. Nonconformist, 8.III.1843, p153
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series LXVII, p1440.
B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education p175.

their first principles", and went on;

"The truth is that dissenters of all denominations feel themselves to have already compromised their principles by past acceptance of government money for religious education, and they are consequently seriously hampered now in giving free expression to their thoughts and principles. We advise them at once...to give to the winds...their reputation for consistency. Let them confess that they have hitherto been misled...and let them enter...into a 'solemn league and covenant' to put down...a political church."¹

From this suggestion was to spring what was possibly Miall's most important contribution to dissenting politics, the creation of the British Anti-State Church Association.

The positive side of the argument, that of the virtues and achievements of the voluntary system, Miall tended to leave to Edward Baines. With a wealth of statistical support, Baines demonstrated that in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, the voluntary system was achieving all that Graham was demanding. The senior Edward Baines was convinced that voluntarism could supply all the educational needs of the nation.² His son also adopted a statistical approach, and in a published letter to Lord Wharncliffe, observed;

"If ever there was an occasion on which the Dissenters and Methodists of the nation felt as one man...it was when they discovered the true character of Sir James Graham's bill for establishing a Compulsory Church Education at the public expense."³

However, the congregationalists, despite their subsequent achievements in the field of voluntary education, did not all agree with Baines' claims. Dr. Vaughan claimed that Baines reached his favourable conclusions by counting Sunday scholars as day scholars too, and hence exaggerated the virtues of voluntarism.⁴

Graham was not insensitive to the storm he had aroused, and offered modifications of the educational clauses of the bill, a tribute to the

1. Nonconformist, 12.IV.1843, p233
2. E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines p315
3. E. Baines, Letter to Lord Wharncliffe... 12pp (London 1843) pl.
4. British Quarterly Review, Vol. IV 1846, pp457, 479, 493-495, 496-501, 503.

effectiveness of the extra-parliamentary opposition. Miall warned against acceptance of the changes, as they did not touch the substance of dissenting objections. He reminded his readers that the bill was designed to attack the liberties of dissenters, and regarded it as the beginning of "...a war of extermination between two antagonistic systems..."¹

Graham realised the cause was hopeless, and gave up the educational clauses of the factory bill. He wrote to Peel:

"The Bill was framed with a view to concord and conciliation, but it has not been so received. Extensive modifications have been made to meet these objections, but in that attempt I have been wholly disappointed."²

Lord Ashley wrote to Peel in similar vein, commenting that even if Graham had succeeded in carrying the measure through Parliament, it would have proved impossible to operate. Curiously, he believed that the practical difficulties would have sprung less from the hostility of dissenters than from the apathy of the Anglican Church. He thought that the measure had aroused hostility because of the "perilous pranks of Dr. Pusey and his disciples." It was his conviction that,

"...united education was impossible, and no further attempt ought to be made. The Dissenters and the Church have each laid down their limits which they will not pass, and there is no power that can either force, persuade or delude them."³

To Graham, he wrote, "Combined education must never again be attempted - it is an impossibility, and worthless if possible."⁴ Even the Times remarked, "Let us hope that no mistake like the Factory Bill may again occur to stir up the prejudices of Dissent."⁵

Militant dissent had won a great victory, but Miall was determined dissenters should not relapse into complacency. He urged them to make a

1. Nonconformist, 3.V.1843, p296. cf E. Baines Letter to Lord Wharncliffe
See above, p27
2. Graham to Peel 15.V.1843, C.S. Parker Sir James Graham, i, 345
3. Ashley to Peel 17.VI.1843. Peel papers. B.M. Add.Mss. 40483,
ff114-115.
4. Quoted by J.T. Ward & J.H. Treble, "Religion and Education in 1843.
Reaction to the Factory Education Bill," p109.
5. Times, 13.X.1843, p4

firm declaration of their principles,¹ and was supported by his journalistic contemporaries. The Patriot rejoiced at the defeat of a,

"...dark insidious conspiracy against our Religious liberties and our Religious Institutions as Dissenters... by...firm united and persevering resistance..."²

but warned that the victory was merely a breathing space. Graham had laid down the principle of a dominant establishment, which could make its appearance in other forms in the future.³ War had been declared upon dissenters, and while one battle had been won, the only way to win the war was to preserve the unity which Graham's folly had created.⁴ The Eclectic Review endorsed this suggestion, and demanded an active campaign with a view to the "extermination" of the established church. It recommended support for the Anti-State Church convention which Miall proposed in the Nonconformist.⁵

Part 3. Miall's advocacy of voluntarism

One aspect of Miall's success was that in the atmosphere following the struggle against Graham's bill, he was able to get the necessary dissenting support for the Anti-State Church Association. Another was that, at a meeting towards the end of 1843, a congregationalist conference on education rejected the receipt of government money for education, and determined to run schools upon a purely voluntary basis. The Congregational Board of Education was set up⁶ and while Miall welcomed the move, he admitted that he would have preferred a united, non-sectarian body. The Congregational Board set itself the target of raising £100,000 in 5 years to establish schools, and by 1848 it has raised £130,000.⁷ It

1. Nonconformist, 21.VI.1843, p440

2. Patriot, 19.VI.1843, p444

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 22.VI.1843, p452, 3.VII.1843, p476, 10. VII.1843, p492.

5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XIV 1843, p581

6. J. Waddington, Congregational History (London 1880) i, 566-568

7. F.R. Salter, "Congregationalism and the Hungry Forties." Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society Vol.XVII no.4 1955, p109
R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism pp661-662

was apparent that Conservative leaders had learned the lesson. Goulburn wrote to Peel of his anxieties concerning Lord Wharncliffe's intention to increase the sum allocated to education in 1845. The proposal

"...was one which would defeat its own object. It would call public attention yet more forcibly to the exclusion of Roman Catholics, Wesleyan Methodists and Congregational Dissenters from a participation in it, and would probably lead to its being placed on a footing less advantageous to the Established Church."¹

However, Miall had not been completely successful. As Prof. Simon has shown, not all chartist leaders, notably O'Brien, were impressed by the voluntaryist arguments of Baines and Miall, and the Northern Star attacked the opponents of the educational clauses of the factory bill.² The Patriot regretted that the Unitarians had not opposed the bill as a body, though individual members had been prominent among its critics, and it asserted that dissenting resistance to the educational clauses was resented by the Unitarians as a body, "as it was the first decided case of insurrection against Unitarian leadership; and because it was successful, it has never been forgiven."³ Cobden, whose support would have been invaluable, refused to stand in the way of any scheme which offered a chance of giving the poor some sort of teaching.⁴ Taking a longer view, the historian of the educational struggle, Francis Adams, believed that the victory of 1843 caused dissenters to overestimate their effectiveness. They had succeeded in the sphere of opposition, but they too readily assumed that their constructive powers were equally great:

"The voluntary movement now began, and large bodies of dissenters of various denominations combined to resist the intervention of Government in education."⁵

1. Goulburn to Peel 16.I.1845 Peel papers. B.M.Add.Mss. 40445, ff20-22
2. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education p269
See also J.T. Ward, Chartism (London 1973) p171
3. Patriot, 13.VI.1844, p412
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series LXVII, p1471
D. Read, Cobden and Bright. A Victorian Political Partnership (London 1967) p180.
5. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest, p124

Miall himself earned credit from his part in the struggle. In 1847 he was one of a number of dissenters who received a circular letter from Samuel Morley and Edward Baines suggesting that the recipients were appropriate people to argue the case for dissenters in Parliament. The letter emphasised that the danger to dissenters from the encroachments of the state church was not over, and continual watchfulness was needed. The specific danger mentioned was that of concurrent endowment, which the authors of the letter believed to be the policy of several leading statesmen:

"..one of the largest and noblest services which can be rendered to religion in the present day would be to resist in the legislature those insidious encroachments of the State, which, by degrading Christianity into a mere political element, destroy, to an alarming extent, its moral beauty and spiritual power. It is the obvious design of all our leading statesmen...to subsidise the religious teachers of all sects, with a view to make the religious sentiments of the people subserve the purposes of civil government. This design can be met and frustrated only by a firm enunciation of our principles in the House of Commons."¹

Having frustrated the attempt by the government to interfere in popular education, the challenge facing the victorious dissenters was to show that their alternative, reliance upon voluntary effort, could supply the educational needs of the poor. Miall, as has been discussed, was not unaware of the difficulties which faced voluntary effort, but he threw his whole weight behind the dissenting effort to demonstrate the potentialities of voluntarism. The achievements of the Congregational Union were an immediate encouragement, and Miall's activities in support of voluntary education took several forms. He explained its principles, publicised its efforts, took an active part in certain organisations, and later argued its case in Parliament. This was the positive side of his resistance to Graham's measure.

1. E. Hodder, The Life of Samuel Morley 2nd edition (London 1888) p74

He used Baines' statistics to demonstrate that the demands for school places were being met by voluntary effort, to the extent of two-thirds of the child population. The problem was now to create a demand, for the supply was readily available.¹ Moreover, an example of the success of voluntaryism lay to hand in the triumphs of the Sunday Schools and the Ragged Schools; while they flourished,

"...is it not infatuation to call upon the government to take upon it the dangerous and new prerogative of directing, supporting and controlling the education of the people."²

Statistics could be a matter of debate, and individual instances of voluntary success were better journalistic material. Thus the opening of a normal school at Brecon in 1846 was given full coverage:

"This is the right way to go to work. Without an improved education for teachers, the people cannot be educated. There is no evil more loudly crying out for a remedy than this - the low character and qualification of the educator."³

Similarly, Miall drew attention to the establishment of people's colleges at Nottingham and Sheffield,⁴ and to the training college set up by the Congregational Board of Education at Homerton.⁵ The creation of Mechanics Institutes convinced Miall that the poorer classes were willing and able to pay for education,⁶ and he particularly welcomed the Working Men's Educational Union, which had the advantage of being non sectarian.⁷ The fiftieth anniversary of the Sunday School movement was welcomed as the greatest voluntaryist triumph: "It is doing an amount of work which, rough and unfinished though it be, can compete successfully enough with state undertakings."⁸

1. Nonconformist, 12.VIII.1846, p548
2. Ibid., 6.I.1847, p8
3. Ibid., 15.IV.1846, pp228-229
4. Ibid., 18.XI.1846, p772, 17.X.1849, p827
5. Ibid., 24.IX.1851, p766
6. Ibid., 9.XI.1859, p903
7. Ibid., 10.VIII.1853, p639
8. Ibid., 28.VII.1852, p577

The most that Miall was prepared to concede that it was proper for the government to do for education was to remove the taxes upon newspapers.¹ Apart from this negative contribution, he believed the government should make no provision for libraries and museums, even though these provided a source of information and education for the poor. If these institutions were not maintained by voluntary effort, Miall enquired:

"...why not national workshops, farms and stores as well as national schools, libraries and museums?...A nation's intellectual and religious, as well as its industrial and political institutions, to be healthful and comely, must be spontaneous and self-sustained."²

His fear was that unthinking acceptance of public provision of libraries and museums would eventually result in socialism:

"Might we not have on the same principle town news rooms, town concerts, town theatres, all sustained by public rates, all made free of access to the inhabitants. And if so, one is at a loss to understand how they are to be answered who insist...on having public establishments for the distribution of clothing, furniture and food, or a legal organisation of labour."³

The event which provoked this train of thought was the foundation of the Manchester Free Library.

Miall became a regular speaker at educational conferences. In 1847 he spoke at Crosby Hall on the danger of government intervention leading to a 'tyranny of the majority'⁴ and in the same week he addressed a meeting in Exeter Hall, whose chairman was John Bright. On this occasion he claimed that the administration of the education grant by a committee of the Privy Council was unconstitutional, and that its mode of procedure, by Orders in Council, was offensive to the dignity of Parliament.⁵ This speech was delivered in the shadow of Russell's educational proposals, which, as will be seen, were as alarming to Miall as had been those of Graham. In 1848 he delivered one of the Crosby Hall lectures on education,

1. Nonconformist, 19.VIII.1846, p564

2. Ibid., 20.III.1850, p231

3. Ibid., 8.IX.1852, p706

4. Ibid., 16.IV.1847, p246

5. Ibid., 16.IV.1847, p250

under the chairmanship of Samuel Morley. He spoke on "The non-interference of the government with popular education," and while admitting that educational reform was needed, was convinced that voluntary effort would suffice. Edward Baines had given a lecture earlier in the series, in which he had argued that at that time the voluntary system was providing school places for 1 in $8\frac{1}{2}$ of the population.¹ While Kay Shuttleworth commented that Baines overlooked the expense of training teachers,² and Samuel Smiles observed that Baines' figures were only valid if weekly attendance at Sunday school were considered an adequate education for poor children,³ Miall argued that education was the responsibility individually of every citizen, and reliance upon state education was an evasion of that responsibility.⁴ State intervention was both dangerous, and useless, as it could not provide free school places for the poorest classes of society, where parents could not afford to dispense with the earning capacity of their children. In this situation, the Ragged Schools were the only institutions which could succeed.⁵ Indeed, Miall was not convinced that education was beyond the means of even the poorest families. Like Baines, he believed in the value of sacrifice, and he introduced into the debate the temperance argument, that by the sacrifice of one pint of beer per week, any working class family could afford to educate its children. A sense of parental responsibility, aided by Christian philanthropy would be quite sufficient to provide the means of popular enlightenment.⁶

Apart from addressing public meetings, which confirmed his position as a leading spokesman of the voluntarist party, Miall was active in his support of the Congregational Board of Education, and the Voluntary Schools

1. Crosby Hall lectures on Education (London 1848) p33
2. Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth Four periods of Public Education p527
3. Quoted by D.Fraser, "Edward Baines" in P.Hollis, Pressure from without p196, n63.
4. Crosby Hall lectures on Education, ppl47, 156
5. Ibid., pl53.
6. Nonconformist, 31.V.1854 p459. For the links between educational voluntarism and temperance see B.Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (London 1971) ppl60, 174.

Association. He was a member of the latter from its foundation in March 1848, and was attracted to it principally because of its non-sectarian nature. He felt far more would be achieved if the dissenting denominations would unite, and this feeling inhibited him from taking so active a part in the work of the Congregational Board. In one sense this was unrealistic; so long as religious teaching was to be a major part of education, the basis of voluntaryism would be individual effort by each sect, so that each denomination could present its own distinctive religious teaching. As Francis Adams observed;

"It is admitted...that the Voluntaryists were fighting not for the rights and duties of parents but for the control of education by religious denominations...It is evident that Voluntaryists did not rely upon the laws of supply and demand, but on sectarian and party rivalry and zeal, which is quite a different thing."¹

The only basis upon which a united effort to promote education by the various denominations could succeed was that of secular education, which Miall was not prepared to accept until later in his career.

At the first annual meeting of the Association in 1849, Miall moved a resolution which pleaded for union between the various dissenting denominations in the provision of education.² He made a similar plea in 1850, and at a meeting in 1851 regretted the failure of an attempt by Henry Richard to combine the Voluntary Schools Association with the Congregational Board of Education.³ For the next five years he was involved in Parliamentary duties, and by 1859 there was a note of anxiety apparent in his statements. The voluntary bodies had a formidable rival in the Lancashire Public Schools Association, which, while not in competition for funds, offered an easier solution to many of the inherent

1. Francis Adams Elementary School Contest, pl29
2. Nonconformist, 2.V.1849, (Advertisements)
3. Nonconformist, 7.V.1851, pp362, 407

religious difficulties in its programme of secular, rate aided education.¹ The Voluntary Schools Association was making repeated appeals for support, and Miall believed that the cause of its difficulties was the competition of schools supported by government grants; "...there is the utmost danger of schools conducted on the voluntary principle becoming gradually extinct throughout the country."² He feared that a collapse of voluntarist activity would open the way to the expansion of the activities of the Privy Council Committee on Education. He renewed the plea in 1860,³ and when in 1861 he reported upon his experience as a member of the Newcastle Commission, he claimed its evidence showed that voluntarism was still enjoying success throughout the country. "I have lost none of my attachment to, none of my faith and confidence in the principle I have always entertained."⁴ He still maintained that the poor spent upon beer and tobacco three times as much as would suffice to educate their children. But though he claimed his faith remained undimmed, he took no further part in the work of the association. He played a less active role in the affairs of the Congregational Board of Education, and took no further part in its affairs after 1858.⁵ It seems possible that his doubts concerning the viability of voluntarism began in the 1850s. Evidently he ceased to be an active campaigner towards the end of the decade, and in 1857, when addressing his constituents at Rochdale, he affirmed his faith in voluntarism, but added,

"Still, he was open to conviction, and he did not suppose he was likely by his voice to prevent a public measure of education if the House of Commons thought it feasible."⁶

1. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest pp151-152. Fox's bill of 1850 broadly represented its views. Cobden was delighted when Sturge made favourable reference to the Manchester secular system. Cobden hoped the scruples of evangelical dissenters would be removed, and asked Sturge to communicate his view to Miall, with whom he regretted disagreeing over education. He hoped Miall would not deal too harshly with the bill in the Nonconformist. Cobden to Sturge 2.XI.1850. Sturge Papers. BM.Add.Mss 50131 ff233-236
2. Nonconformist, 5.X.1859, p803
3. Ibid., 24.X.1860, p851
4. Ibid., 5.VI.1861, pp441-442
5. Ibid., 2.VII.1851, p521; 24.V.1854, p427; 19.V.1858, p386; these are accounts of speeches he made to the Congregational Board of Education.
6. Nonconformist, 28.I.1857, p64.

His formal conversion to state intervention came in 1867. The Nonconformist suspected that Baines and Morley were wavering in their opposition to state support, and itself admitted that it no longer saw any objection to the Congregational Board of Education's accepting government aid and government inspection of its schools, so long as it was able to preserve distinctive religious teaching in its schools.¹ Miall himself informed the electors of Bradford, where he was fighting a by-election, that the nation appeared resolved to apply public resources and national organisation to the work of popular education. Since the reform of Parliament in 1867 made possible greater popular influence in the House of Commons Miall was prepared to overcome his objections, "... convinced that any measures adopted for that purpose under their direction will be free from all tendencies to sectarianism."² He hoped that the system would be based upon local rating, with a large element of local control.³ He later explained his change of heart to the Liberation Society; while retaining his conviction that voluntarism was the best foundation for education, he conceded,

"...there had been a public rush and inundation that had swept them all off firm ground, but they were struggling, as it were, with this inundation at the present time, only seeking to make it as useful to their purpose as possible."

It is not without interest that this speech was reported in the Monthly Paper of the National Education League.⁴

Soon after Miall's conversion there followed the more widely publicised renunciation of voluntarism by Edward Baines. Baines made his change of heart public in a speech to the Congregational Union at Manchester. His reasons reflect the fears expressed earlier by Miall, notably the fear that schools which rejected government grants could not continue to compete

1. Nonconformist, 22.V.1867, p423
2. Ibid., 2.X.1867, p816. This was part of Miall's election address.
3. Ibid., 9.X.1867, p830. See also A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp273-274 M. Cruickshank, Church and State in English Education (London 1963) pl2.
4. National Education League Monthly Paper no. 19 June 1871, pl0

with schools which enjoyed state support. He hoped that the government grants would only be used for the secular portion of the syllabus, and that religious teaching would not be subject to government inspection. This was possible under the Revised Code, which gave payment for results in secular subjects only, and merely demanded that some form of religious education be given. At the end of his speech, Baines remarked, "Mr. Miall, as a practical politician, has declared he must bow to forces which he could not withstand."¹

Miall's capitulation was simply upon practical grounds; after 1867 he regarded state intervention as inevitable, and was concerned to ensure that its form was acceptable to dissenters. The British Quarterly Review, from the moderate wing of dissent, claimed that despite Miall's and Baines' acceptance of state intervention, the spirit of 1846 and 1847 was not dead amongst nonconformists.² There is no reason to suppose that Miall's advocacy of voluntarism was insincere; given his hostility to the Established Church and his general dislike of undue government intervention, any other course would have been illogical and inconsistent. This makes it difficult to accept the verdict of a recent historian of nineteenth century education, who remarks that, "...both Miall, and more especially Baines, must be blamed for exploiting religious feelings for their own personal prestige."³ Such a charge underestimates the strength of religious feeling which the question aroused; opposition to government aid was not simply obscurantist. As B.L. Manning put it, it was not worthwhile for Miall and his co-believers

"...to accept the wrong sort of religious education in order to get some sort of secular education a little quicker than one would otherwise have got it."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 16.X.1867, p849. See also J. Kay Shuttleworth, Memorandum on the present state of the question of popular education 1868 (London 1969) p35. D. Fraser "Edward Baines" in P. Hollis Pressure from without pp201-202
2. British Quarterly Review, vol. XLVII 1868, pp411, 420-422
3. E.E. Rich, The Education Act 1870 (London 1970) p36
4. B.L. Manning The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p342

In fact, the failure of voluntaryism can be documented from official sources, and Miall's change of heart coincides with references in the reports of inspectors to the diminishing vigour of the system. In 1867, Fitch, reporting on the educational condition of Yorkshire, felt that the Congregationalist leaders of the West Riding would soon apply for government grants for their schools, following the conversion of the voluntaryist leaders, as they could no longer compete with the schools of other denominations. Of the money devoted to elementary education in Yorkshire, only 18.4% was raised by voluntary contributions.¹ By 1869, these had declined to 15%.² Speaking of conditions in Leeds, Fitch commented,

"...with the exception of the Wesleyans and the Unitarians I have been unable to find a single Nonconformist Congregation in Leeds which is doing anything to help forward primary education, or is contributing money or supervision to the permanent maintenance of a day school in any form."³

He believed this was due to the previous refusal of dissenters to accept state grants for education, a refusal which had, over the years, left their schools under-financed in relation to those schools supported by grants.⁴ The efforts of voluntaryists to bring education within the reach of every home were pronounced inadequate by the Committee of Council in 1869.⁵

Another explanation of the failure of voluntaryism was given by the secretary of the National Education League. Less charitable than Miall, he was not impressed with the effects of competition from schools receiving state grants, and blamed the voluntaryists for being preoccupied with securing sectarian control of education, rather than attempting to secure control of education for the people. Since 1843, voluntaryists had had

1. Report of the Committee of Council on Education 1867/1868, pp345-346
2. Ibid. 1869/1870, p321
H.M.I. Alderson described a similar state of affairs in the Eastern Counties. Ibid. p284
3. Parliamentary Papers, LIV p265, 1870 p89
4. Ibid. LIV pp86, 265. 1870
5. Report of the Committee of Council on Education 1869/1870 ppvii-viii.

the opportunity to show that the system could work, and they had failed either to stimulate sufficient demand for school places, or indeed, to respond adequately to the demand there was. Adams concluded, "It is now acknowledged that the extinction of indiscriminate individual charity would be a blessing rather than an evil."¹ As has been apparent, Miall was not unduly concerned about sectarian control; perhaps unrealistically, he hoped for a united effort by the dissenting sects; hence his higher regard for the Voluntary Schools Association than for the Congregational Board of Education. Moreover, he was aware of the need to stimulate demand, and by the 1860s he was prepared to abandon voluntaryism so long as popular control of education through an enlarged franchise was secured.

Miall began his political career with certain ideas about education which evolved into a definite scheme of action in the course of the crisis of 1843. As voluntary support of education was their central feature, Miall's activities in that sphere have been traced up to the point of his change of mind in 1867. Between 1843 and 1867 there was another side to his educational activities, the more negative aspect of opposition to schemes for government intervention. In this field he had some successes in detail if not in principle, and it was probably these activities which led to his being recognised as a spokesman of voluntaryism and eventually to the invitation to be a member of the Newcastle Commission on popular education. If Miall's action was negative, his intention was positive: it was to preserve the unity which had developed among evangelical dissenters in response to the crisis of 1843, and which had received additional impetus from the disruption of the Scottish establishment. The Maynooth controversy of 1845 had shattered this unity, and Miall used the educational issue as a possible means of recreating it. As a result, his discussion of educational issues after 1845 tended to

1. F. Adams, Elementary School Contest p129 See also John Morley, The Struggle for National Education, London 1873.

Ed. A. Briggs, (Brighton 1972) pp128-129

"Of philanthropy which takes the form of sectarian supremacy for one thing, and bad instruction for another, we have had more than enough."

represent each government plan to promote the education of the poor as a crisis for dissenters which made it essential for them to unite once again in opposition. Hence, the extreme tone of his writing, which detached him both from fellow-radicals and from the moderate body of congregationalists.

The replacement of Peel and the Conservatives by Russell and the Whigs in 1846 revived Miall's fear of government intervention in education. As is apparent from his writings upon other subjects, he believed Russell was determined to introduce a policy of concurrent endowment as a means of overcoming religious difficulties. A scheme by which the government supported the schools of all religious denominations would be a species of concurrent endowment, and for Miall this was the thin end of a wedge which would eventually lead to the wholesale establishment of religion. Throughout 1846, the Nonconformist published a series of articles on the evils of an educational system controlled by the state, and forecast that one of the first actions of a Whig government would be the introduction of,

"...a comprehensive plan of National Education, save the mark, which, because it will do a little good now, may entail upon our children the curse of, not a religious, but an intellectual establishment."¹

Miall's was not a lone voice; the Eclectic Review delivered a similar warning,² and the Dissenting Deputies resolved that, "...great and constant attention will be required from the friends of religion to ward off impending danger."³ Edward Baines published twelve letters to Russell, in which he reiterated his arguments, philosophical and statistical, in favour of the voluntary system, and warned Russell;

"It comes within my knowledge, my Lord, that any measure of State education from your Cabinet would alienate many of your firmest friends - the staunch and high principled friends of Civil and Religious Liberty - the practical and tried friends of popular education. It will break up your party in the country."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 8.VII.1846, p468
 2. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XX 1846, pp280-306
 3. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 20.I.1847, f347
 4. E. Baines, Letters to Lord John Russell First Lord of the Treasury on State Education (London 1846) pl30
- E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines pp330-331

Russell introduced educational proposals in the session of 1847; it was planned to establish a system of pupil teachers, which, together with a pension scheme for teachers would, it was hoped, improve the quality of teaching. The scope of the inspectorate was, in addition, to be extended.¹ The Nonconformist saw the proposals as a flank attack upon voluntaryism, less crude than Graham's frontal attack, and more dangerous as it was less likely to cause alarm and arouse dissenters. Hence Miall was at his most strident in discussing the proposals, attempting to recreate the sense of urgency of 1843. He admitted that superficially the proposals looked moderate, but in reality they were 'alarmingly insidious':

"There is plausibility on the face of it, there is centralisation...in the heart of it....Twenty years will not elapse after the adoption of their scheme before the educational training of the masses will, by a silent process, slide as effectually under government control as if they had erected a law to forbid all instruction which they had not themselves previously and formally licensed."²

The danger lay in the fact that voluntary schools would be increasingly badly placed in relation to schools which obtained a government grant. They themselves would eventually be compelled to accept a government grant and thus would become a part of the national system.³ As events turned out, Miall's forecast was depressingly accurate. In fighting against Russell's proposals, he made constant comparisons with Graham's measure of 1843, which had been so successful in uniting dissenters. The Whig scheme was stigmatised as a betrayal by Russell of his dissenting allies, a point already made by Baines, and Miall emphasised the menace to religious liberty:

1. Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education 1846 i, 1-9
J. Kay Shuttleworth, Four periods of Public Education pp471, 481
2. Nonconformist, 10.II.1847, p84
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XXI 1847, pp365-369, 517-518.
Nonconformist, 10.II.1847, p84

"...a plan of supplementary education, which, in its obvious adaptation to ruin voluntary effort, to bring state interference to bear upon teacher and taught, and to play into the hands of the Established clergy, outvies the educational clauses of Sir James Graham's factory bill and differs from that rejected measure only in compassing the same end more securely, more unconstitutionally, and by processes better fitted to corrupt, pervert and debase the rising mind of the country."¹

The reference to unconstitutional conduct recalled that the scheme would be implemented not by act of Parliament, but by a minute of the Committee of the Privy Council, a process which Miall regarded as irresponsible, and which he doubtless emphasised to gain radical support.

He went on to stress the need for extra-parliamentary agitation.

"Once more Dissent is threatened with extinction by the agency of statecraft, guided to its end by ecclesiastical cunning...Onemore, then, to action. The pressure from without must be applied once more."²

The suggested form of pressure was that, since the Whigs had played their dissenting supporters false, dissenters should cease to give further support to the Whigs, and should sever their traditional links with that party. Miall even attempted to appeal to the working men through the columns of the Nonconformist, though it may reasonably be doubted how many of that class a periodical priced at 6d would reach. He warned the working men that the education proposals were a device to subordinate them to the Established Church and the aristocracy.

Miall believed that the dissenting body was once again united in opposition to the government. There were protests by the Congregational Board of Education, the Baptist Union and the Dissenting Deputies.

The Dissenting Deputies agreed that voluntaryism was progressing excellently and would be able to fulfil all demands placed upon it. They feared that Russell's measure would ultimately undermine it, and resented the Anglican

1. Nonconformist, 17.II.1847, p100

2. Ibid., 3.III.1847, p132. Eclectic Review, ns vol XXI 1847, pp635-655

bias of his proposals. They recorded their objection to "...any interference on the part of the government with the general instruction of the people" and sent a memorial to Russell summarising their feelings.¹ They prepared a petition to Parliament which was presented by Brougham. In it, they admitted that their position had changed since 1839, when they had given their support to governmental intervention. Now, they felt,

"...any interference on the part of the state with the general education of the people is uncalled for, inexpedient, necessarily unjust in its operation and dangerous to public liberty."²

The Eclectic Review also believed that voluntaryism was "vigorous and healthy", and demanded that,

"...as in religion, so in education, let the demand be left to regulate the supply, supplemented only by the generous, free and enlightened efforts of those who know the value, and are ready to labour for the diffusion of education."³

It shared the Deputies' fears of the consequences of Russell's proposals, and agreed with the Nonconformist that the best means of bringing pressure to bear upon the Whigs was to make education an electoral issue.

Dissenters should be prepared to withhold their votes from Whigs even if that meant a Conservative victory, for there was no reason to trust the Whigs to safeguard the interests of their supporters.⁴ The Patriot, which sometimes distrusted Miall as an extremist, regarded Russell's measure as "...distasteful to quite as large and influential a portion of the community as Sir James Graham's bill itself."⁵ There were other signs of unrest; the Patriot published a letter from Robert Eckett, which requested the Wesleyan Association to petition the Queen to dissolve the Committee of the Privy Council in the light of 'this pernicious scheme'

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 24.II.1847, f370-373

2. Ibid. 25.III.1847, f387; 28.IV.1847, f390

3. Eclectic Review, ns XXI 1847, pl23

4. Ibid., ns XXI 1847, pp635-655; ns XXII 1847, pp103-124.

Nonconformist, 24.III.1847, pl80

5. Patriot, 25.III.1847, pl88

because the education of the people would be best served by the non interference of government. The minutes of the Committee show the secretary, Kay Shuttleworth, attempting to allay his fears.¹

The campaign had found a leader in Edward Baines. Addressing a meeting of the Anti-State Church Association in Leeds in October 1847, Miall remarked,

"...in the spring of the present year 'somebody from Leeds' came up to London - to call upon all true hearted dissenters to assert a great principle....My heart swells with delight that we are now going hand in hand with Leeds...All that we are doing, we are doing for Mr. Baines. All that he is doing, he is doing for us."²

Miall was encouraged by the response; he was by no means alone in his hostility to the proposals, and felt that there was a nationwide movement of dissenters.

"Dissenters throughout the country together with the friends of free and untrammelled education are rising in unanimous and energetic opposition to the most insidious measure of the present age."³

However, Miall was being over-optimistic: the dissenting bodies throughout the country were far from being united. The British Quarterly Review disapproved of the extreme position which Miall adopted with regard to education, and pointed out that,

"Opposition to the measures of the Government has been left almost exclusively to the Congfegational and Baptist denominations, and to a portion only even of those bodies."⁴

It later described the episode as "a gallant struggle, though...a very unfortunate one," and claimed to be speaking for dissenters such as Vaughan and Binney who believed that Miall and Baines arrived at their

1. Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education 1846 Vol.I p17
Eckett was not representative of Wesleyan attitudes, being a member of the Warrenite group. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London 1972) p275. Eckett was present at the foundation of the Anti-State Church Association.
A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p117.
2. Leeds Mercury 30.X.1847 p7. See also D. Fraser, "Edward Baines" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without pp196-197. See also D. Fraser, "Areas of Urban Politics." Leeds 1830-1880." in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff The Victorian City: Images and Realities (London 1970) ii, 784
3. Nonconformist, 10.III.1847, p155
4. British Quarterly Review, Vol.VI 1847, p268

extreme position by oversimplification;¹ it went on to show that they were reproducing the arguments of the Anglican Church and the Conservatives against the grant of the Privy Council to the two Societies in 1839. The Eclectic Review noted that, on this occasion, the government had secured the support of the Wesleyans by excluding Roman Catholic schools from the grant.² Francis Adams believed that the measure caused anxiety to the majority of dissenters, but claimed the Unitarians accepted it, and the unitarian newspaper, the Christian Reformer, argued the case for state intervention in education.³ In Leeds, Baines noted that the Unitarians joined with the Chartists and Roman Catholics in supporting Russell.⁴ Thomas Binney believed that the campaign by Miall was mistaken; with tact and care, he believed, dissenters could influence a Whig government, but public confrontation simply led to their wishes being ignored.⁵ R.W. Dale, who, like Cobden, had no faith in the application of free trade principles to education, believed that Miall was speaking for a very small proportion of the congregationalist body. Writing in 1868, he claimed that nine out of ten congregationalists wanted a national system of secular education:

"That is what we wanted nearly thirty years ago, and the protest in 1846 - 1847 against all state interference with popular education was really a temporary departure from the policy which Congregational Dissenters originally professed."⁶

Miall did his best to broaden the scope of resistance. Insofar as the proposals were a measure of church extension, Miall argued that resistance should be organised under the aegis of the Anti-State Church Association, and combined with pressure for disestablishment.⁷ He addressed meetings in London, and Norwich,⁸ he was a member of the business committee which organised an interdenominational conference on education at Crosby Hall,⁹

1. British Quarterly Review, Vol. XLVII 1868, p411
2. Eclectic Review ns vol. XXI 1847 pp641f. See also E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines p335. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, Dissenters and Disestablishment 1845-1847" English Historical Review Vol.82 1967, p77
3. Christian Reformer, Feb. 1847, p65. F. Adams, Elementary School Contest p132
4. E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines, p332
5. British Quarterly Review, Vol. VI 1847, p262
6. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale (London 1898) p271
7. Nonconformist, 24.III.1847, p173
8. Ibid., 31.III.1847, p200. 7.IV.1847, p215
9. Ibid., 14.IV. 1847 pp228-229; 16.IV.1847, p246

and, as has been discussed, addressed a meeting chaired by Bright at Exeter Hall. The agitation had some little success. Russell modified his proposals to make it possible for a dissenting school to receive a government grant without its religious teaching being subject to government inspection; school managers would simply be required to certify that there was some religious teaching.¹ The Nonconformist was not mollified by the concession, arguing it was simply irresponsible for the state to disburse public money without supervision; if supervision would inevitably cause offence, it was better for the state not to give the money at all. The concession merely meant that the government was abdicating its task of supervision; in no way was the inherent evil of the scheme removed.²

There were successful attempts to make education an issue in the general election of 1847. The Eclectic Review and the Nonconformist had each recommended that dissenters should refuse to vote for whig candidates who had supported Russell's proposals:

"There is only one way by which the Whig ministry can be made to retrace their steps. Reject their candidates at the next election and they will be accessible to reason."³

A new periodical, the Nonconformist Elector was established to explain the issues to dissenting voters. In discussing education, it attempted to avoid giving the impression that dissenters were diehard opponents of progress. It argued that dissenters would support any measure which would genuinely help forward popular education; Russell's proposals would not:

"...the majority of Dissenters think, with us, that the government scheme in the Minutes is not practically calculated to extend, much less to benefit the cause of education, but the contrary. They think that no State or legislative interference, either with the secular or

1. Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education 1847/1848 Vol.I xlvii.
Ibid. 1846 Vol. I p4
 cf Report of the Committee of Council 1869/1870 xxvii
 See also J.Kay Shuttleworth, Four periods of Public Education p471
2. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847, p469
3. Ibid., 24.III.1847, p180. cf Eclectic Review, ns vol.XXI 1847, pp635-655

or with the religious education of the people, will be beneficial for its alleged and intended purpose."¹

Perhaps the most effective attempt to influence candidates was made by the Dissenting Deputies, who prepared five questions to be put by electors to parliamentary candidates in the London area, seeking to elicit, among other things, whether or not the candidates opposed any system of government intervention in education,

"...which either directly or indirectly compels the use of a Catechism or Creed, and attendance at any particular form of public worship."²

The Deputies withheld their support from any candidate who gave unsatisfactory replies, and claimed that all candidates whose views were acceptable were in fact elected. There was apparent, "...a new spirit and confidence ...amongst dissenters, which must be encouraged."³ The Nonconformist claimed that dissenters had brought about the defeat of one of the arch-enemies of voluntarism, when Macaulay lost his seat at Edinburgh:⁴ however, it has been shown that his successful opponent owed as much to the support of distillers as to the support of voluntarists.⁵

Miall himself stood as a candidate at Halifax, but in his own campaign made curiously little reference to the educational issue. He attempted to deal with it as one aspect of the establishment question, and continually made the point that the education question could never be solved so long as the state was united with one favoured sect. He denied that education was a major issue in Halifax, possibly because his opponent, Sir Charles Wood, accused him of being hostile to educational progress.⁶ Moreover, his fellow-candidate, the chartist barrister Ernest Jones, did concentrate upon the education question, advocating full voluntarism.⁷

1. Nonconformist Elector, 9.VII.1847
2. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 4.VI.1847, f395; 13.VII.1847, f405
3. Ibid., f437
4. Nonconformist, 10.V.1847, p328
5. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, Dissenters and Disestablishment 1845-1847" p81.
6. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847 pp478-479; 4.VIII.1847 p565
7. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education p275

Miall may have felt it better tactics to present himself as the candidate of the Anti-State Church Association, and avoid being branded as a candidate of one issue only.

Russell's proposals were not further modified, and passed into law. But the voluntaryists had succeeded in obtaining some concession to their views. The Nonconformist believed it had contributed to this success by publicising the extent and character of opposition to the proposals.¹ This is probably a fair appraisal, since the urgent need of any dissenting cause was publicity, at a time when the majority of the organs of mass communication were controlled by the establishment. After the conflict of 1847, the Nonconformist was able to adopt a less militant role, though still one of considerable importance. Individuals as well as governments could propose schemes of education, and there was growing interest in the educational systems of other countries. Some of these were used as propaganda by the protagonists of state education, to demonstrate that the government could control schools without dire results. The Nonconformist appreciated the need to counter such arguments, especially in view of the disadvantageous position in which it feared voluntary schools had been placed by the measures of 1847. Thus, for example, Miall launched a bitter attack upon the educational reforms of the Second Republic, though in general he admired its achievements, and had been one of a group of dissenters who visited Paris to congratulate Lamartine upon gaining power.²

The hard core of voluntaryism was evidently small, and there was an obvious fear that it would be gradually eroded as the difficulties of voluntary schools increased. The main problem was to secure a continual supply of funds, and it was important that benefactors were not tempted by

1. Nonconformist, 24.III.1847, p173

2. Ibid., 12.VII.1848 p515. See also A. Miall
Life of Edward Miall pp 136f

other schemes of educational organisation. Hence Miall and his allies attacked the proposals of individuals and organisations in the 1850s, lest they attract the support of wavering voluntarists. Two main features appeared in these schemes: the idea of rate support for schools, which indeed met one of Miall's complaints against a system controlled by an unrepresentative Parliament, and the idea of solving the religious difficulty by making the state-supported system purely secular. Reference has been made to Miall's attacks upon the bills introduced by Fox, M.P. for Oldham, in 1850 and 1851 proposing a local rate to support schools, and stipulating that schools supported by rates should offer secular teaching only. Miall deployed his whole range of arguments against the bills, his real fear being that, "...if once adopted, they will necessarily supersede all that went before them."¹

A more serious threat was posed by the Manchester and Salford Education Bill, for while it was a private measure, it was the product of a strong body of opinion, and the Nonconformist feared that Russell might see political advantage in adopting it as a government measure. It attempted to show that the bill was superfluous, and ill-designed to solve the problems of religious education. Self-help and temperance, it was certain, would produce the necessary finance:

"We should like to ascertain...what amount is spent weekly in Manchester and Salford by the working and poorer classes at the various gin palaces and beer shops in these two boroughs. We should like to know what amount of money these classes could raise, without curtailment of a single domestic comfort, and merely by an exercise of self-denial in regard to what is positively pernicious to them, if the object thereby proposed to be attained were one about which they cherished deep anxiety."²

Another objection to the bill was its proposals for the support of schools from local rates; the sums raised would be distributed amongst the various

1. Nonconformist, 28.V.1851, p417; Ibid., 6.III.1850, p190
2. Ibid., 18.II.1852, p117.
See also A. Miall Life of Edward Miall ppl36f

sects, and this would mean that rate payers would be indirectly supporting types of religious teaching of which they might not approve. The Patriot described a school-rate system as, "...an unwise and retrograde step, fraught with injustice, involving unsound economic principles and certain to issue in failure and mischief."¹

"It cannot be exclusive without inflicting injustice upon many. It cannot be latitudinarian without inflicting besides an injury upon truth. It cannot be entirely secular without destroying the noblest functions of the schoolmaster. Far better would it be if it would cease to meddle with what it is unable to deal with satisfactorily."²

A Parliamentary Commission was set up to examine educational facilities in Manchester and Salford, and when it reported, the Nonconformist commented,

"...we have never felt more confident of the weakness of every argument in support of a compulsory system of education, and have never been more strongly and vividly impressed with the practical truth and power of the Voluntary principle."³

Miall was adopted as parliamentary candidate for Rochdale in succession to Sharman Crawford in 1851, and in the course of his election campaign in 1852, as at Halifax in 1847, avoided any profound discussion of the education question. As member for Rochdale from 1852 to 1857, and already established as a leader of the voluntarist party, Miall was, on the face of it, well placed to play an influential part in the education debates which occurred in the course of this Parliament. ^{Once in} ~~Within~~ ^{himself} ~~itself~~ Parliament ^{amended} ~~itself~~, he could rely upon the support of other leading voluntarists such as Apsley Pellatt, Samuel Morley and Edward Baines, and there was the possibility of attracting the support of leading radicals. However, his effectiveness was limited by the degree of support from outside the dissenting bodies which he could attract, and by the fact that he could not introduce any new element or idea into the education debate.

1. Patriot, 8.XII.1851
2. Nonconformist, 25.II.1852, p137
3. Ibid., 10.XI.1852, p887

amended
24.11.75
MH.

The general trend was already laid down; since 1847 state control was gradually increasing through successive Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, and there was little prospect of reversing this trend. The Eclectic Review objected to the Minutes precisely because they represented,

"...a perpetual bribe to the abandonment of sacred principles, and gently insinuate, through a measure of education, the system of universal religious endowment."¹

All that Miall could really do in these circumstances was to put the voluntary case in Parliament when the opportunity to do so arose, and to offer resistance to any substantive measures which would increase state control. Within these limits, Miall made his mark in Parliament as an able exponent of the voluntaryist cause, as a sharp critic of both government and private measures. But in acting thus, he was opposing the leaders of the party which he supported, and detaching himself from the progressive forces whose support he would later require in other contexts.

Russell's Borough Education Bill of 1853 gave Miall his first opportunity. The bill incorporated the increasingly popular idea of rate support for schools, which would give an opportunity for local control. It was an idea attractive to many radicals, whose support Miall himself needed, since it overcame many of the objections to centralised control and the irresponsible power exercised by the Committee of Council. There was also the danger that it would appeal to moderate dissenters, especially those who at present were the main financial supporters of voluntary schools. Thus it was essential for Miall to give a clear statement of principle, which the Nonconformist was able to publicise. The bill was based upon the ideas of Kay Shuttleworth,² and it intended to give local authorities the power to levy a rate to support schools, including the

1. Eclectic Review, ns vol.I 1851, p474

2. J. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition 1852-1855 (Cambridge 1968) p110

religious part of the syllabus. In general, Miall regarded the bill as unnecessary and divisive, and doubted if the ministry were sufficiently strong and united to carry such a measure.¹ His particular complaints were firstly that the bill permitted the teaching of religion in the schools of all denominations with the support of public money:

"It practically declares that one religion is as good as another, and that it does not matter what is taught or believed. Its foundation is not charity but indifferentism... Everybody's religion is to be inculcated at everybody's expense."²

In this matter, Miall's fears were endorsed by Gladstone. Admitting in a letter to the Bishop of Salisbury that Russell, given a free hand,

"...would have something in the nature of a comprehensive or united system"; Gladstone went on to observe that a local rating system would encourage the separate development of denominational schools, since local opinion would force a sectarian distribution of the rate.³

Secondly, Miall argued that the voluntary system was currently providing as many school places as there was demand for them, and the one class it failed to help, the very poor, would not be helped by Russell's measure.⁴

The Dissenting Deputies adopted a similar position. They expressed surprise that the government,

"...should have brought forward a measure for extending the means of education by the novel and objectionable expedient of public rates, at a time when the Returns made under the Census of 1851 demonstrate that the actual number of day scholars under instruction is equal to one in eight and one half of the population of England and Wales."⁵

They sent a petition to Parliament, a deputation to protest against the bill, and contributed £50 to the funds of a committee set up to fight the measure.⁶

1. Nonconformist, 6.IV.1853, p269

2. Ibid. 13.IV.1853, p290

3. Gladstone to Bishop Denison 3.VII.1853. Quoted D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone (London 1910) ii, 134-135

4. Nonconformist, 20.IV.1853, pp309-310

5. Dissenting Deputies, Minutes Book 18.IV.1853, f343

6. Ibid., 16.V.1853, f352

Edward Baines, Miall's ally, hoped that Cobden would lead the fight. He tried to persuade Cobden that all that the government could do to help education was to remove the taxes upon newspapers and periodicals.¹

This was curiously optimistic in view of the fact that Cobden had supported Graham's bill in 1843, albeit reluctantly,² and had, as early as 1850, resolved to ignore Baines and his supporters. He had given them time to "...get cool upon the subject. But they appear to be as hot as ever." Cobden himself was an advocate of the Massachusetts system, which was a secular system based upon local rate support.³

He regarded Baines as afflicted by monomania on the education question, "...seeking through distorted statistics to conceal the fact that we are the most ignorant Protestant nation in the world."⁴ He was no more flattering about Miall, whom he regarded as utterly deluded concerning the virtues of voluntaryism.⁵

Miall himself was thus forced to adopt a leading role, and addressed a number of public meetings. At one such, he claimed "...there was as much education in the country as the taste of the people would receive at present."⁶ He supported this assertion by claiming that in Manchester many educational facilities were not being used for want of scholars.

At a meeting of the Friends of Voluntary and Religious Education, he urged electors to lobby their M.P.s.⁷ He also served as a member of deputations. Along with Apsley Pellatt, Samuel Morley and Edward Baines, he met Russell and stated the objections of dissenters to the bill. The Nonconformist commented that both sides agreed that the desirable school provision was for one in eight of the population, and this was already

1. Edward Baines, A letter to Richard Cobden, Esq., M.P. on the new Government Measure of Education. (London 1853) 8pp
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series. vol. LXVII, p1471
3. J. Morley, Life of Cobden 10th edition (London 1903) p548.
4. D. Read, Cobden and Bright: a Victorian Political Partnership p179
5. J.A. Hobson, Richard Cobden. The International Man (London 1919) p228
6. Nonconformist, 4.V.1853, p353
7. Ibid., 11.V.1853, p383

being achieved by voluntary effort.¹ It based its claim on the interpretation by the Leeds Mercury of the 1851 census, and concluded that no government assistance was required.² Miall met Russell as part of another deputation to petition for the withdrawal of the bill,³ and also met Sir James Graham. According to a report in the Patriot, Miall explained to Graham that the bill should be dropped, as there was too little time left in the session for a full discussion of it; Graham was said to be sympathetic.⁴

In Parliament, Miall gave notice that he intended to introduce an amendment in committee, which would allow rate payers who already contributed to a school in a rating area to be exempt from the educational rate. This would preserve the essential structure of voluntarism,⁵ and the Athenaeum commented;

"Of all the several amendments to Lord John Russell's scheme of National Education now on the books of the House of Commons, that proposed by the member for Rochdale is the most innocent in form, and the most mischievous in spirit...such an amendment if carried in the House, would be fatal to the scheme. It would be setting up in every town the symbol of the Voluntary Principle."⁶

The bill was withdrawn, which the Nonconformist considered a triumph for dissenting M.P.s: the religious difficulty had proved insuperable.⁷ The triumph was, however, marred by the fact that a Minute of the Committee of Council, originally intended as a supplement to the bill, increased the amount of the government grant to schools without any parliamentary discussion. The Nonconformist warned,

"...the Committee of Council in respect to education is superseding the functions of Parliament, and unless something is done to curb or define this imperium in imperio, it may prove dangerous to the public welfare."⁸

1. Nonconformist, 25.V.1853, p410
2. Ibid., 1.VI.1853, p441
3. Ibid., 8.VI.1853, p453
4. Ibid., 6.VII.1853, p533; 13.VII.1853, p551
5. Ibid., 25.V.1853, p418
6. Athenaeum, 28.V.1853, p650
7. J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition p113
8. Nonconformist, 24.VIII.1853, pp679-680

Francis Adams confirmed this fear, when he observed,

"...the manner in which the Minutes of 1853 became law is worthy of notice, as showing the almost irresponsible power and the absolute independence of authority which the Committee of Council possessed."¹

In subsequent debates on education, Miall began to concentrate upon another aspect of the voluntaryist position. He maintained, upon the basis of the Religious Census of 1851 and the statistics produced by Edward Baines, that there were sufficient school places available thanks to voluntary effort.² The main task was to stimulate a "...more general taste for education (which) no agency of law can supply."³ Miall developed this theme when he spoke in Parliament on a new version of the Manchester and Salford bill, in the session of 1854. He took the opportunity to put the House of Commons, "...into the possession of the opinion of those who entertained what were called 'Voluntary Principles'".⁴ Available statistics implied there was no proper provision for the habitation of the poor, but no-one had argued that it was the task of Parliament to provide houses for the poor.⁵ The same thesis applied to education: it was the duty of parents to provide education for their children, and any deficiency was the fault of parents. He believed that the difficulty lay in the fact that parents were able to send their children to work in factories: "...until the disposition of Parliament in this respect was reformed, little improvement could be made."⁶ Here, Miall was using an argument favoured by many radicals, who believed that school places would only be filled when the alternative of employment in factories was removed, either by a reduction of the working day, or by the raising of the minimum age for employment.⁷ However, Miall was some way from conceding the radical

1. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest p168
2. For a discussion of the Religious Census of 1851 see K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.II 1960, pp74-86.
3. Nonconformist, 19.IV.1854, p317
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXX, ppl107-1109
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education p152. The report of Horace Mann on the Religious Census of 1851 gave support to this view, and was quoted by Miall in Parliament. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXIII, p262

position that education was the right of everyone; he believed that it was a privilege earned by self-help and self-denial.¹ Moreover, he feared that working men would draw the wrong conclusions from government provision of education, and come to rely upon government to provide all the necessities of life.²

He spoke in similar vein on the Education (Scotland) bill, introduced in the same year. He claimed that his opposition to state provision of schools was on practical rather than doctrinaire grounds;

"...if he could but arrive at the conviction that the education of the people ought to be provided by Parliamentary enactment or legal provision, that supposing no greater evil than the evil intended to be remedied were produced, he would willingly surrender any theory of his own, either political or economical, in order to accomplish the attainment of so desirable a result."³

Miall was unable to reach such a conviction, and denied that the bill would achieve what its supporters claimed. It would produce no diminution of crime; Miall quoted the report of Horace Mann on the 1851 census, which argued that the provision of school places for the poor would be of no value so long as they lived in degrading conditions, and so long as parents were unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices, either by refraining from sending their children to work in factories, or by refusing to reduce the £50 million per year currently spent upon liquor.⁴

In these speeches Miall gave the House of Commons a clear statement of the principles of voluntarism in education. Both bills were rejected, and the Eclectic Review jubilantly announced:

"The fruits of victory are in the hands of the Anti-State Church party, and to this issue much has no doubt been contributed by the voluntaries."⁵

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXX, ppl107-1109
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., CXXXIII, pp259-263.
4. Ibid., pp261-262
5. Eclectic Review, ns vol. VIII 1854, p492

Professor Conacher has shown that educational measures in the 1850s normally foundered upon the rock of religion, and Miall, in company with other dissenters, consistently opposed government interference in education upon religious grounds.¹ However Miall achieved his success, such as it was, in opposition to the forces upon which he would have to rely in accomplishing other, and more important parts of his programme, in opposition to the leaders of a ministry which was sympathetic towards reform, and in collaboration with industrialists who did not wish the supply of child labour to diminish through government provision of schools, and with Tories who wished to preserve the status quo in education.²

Moreover, while Miall had contributed to the opposition which forced the withdrawal of two measures, he was much less effective in his opposition to the increasing level of the government grant to schools. When the estimates of 1854 were debated, Miall complained that the grant for education was never adequately discussed by Parliament, and it increased annually without proper parliamentary sanction. He objected to this unconstitutional procedure,³ and he showed from the reports of inspectors that huge sums were spent without producing the required results. Money was not going where it was most urgently needed, a charge already made against the voluntary system.⁴ Miall further maintained that there had been little effort made to induce children to stay longer at school, and he felt that the social status of teachers was too low. He did not propose that the government grant be terminated, but that it should remain at the level of the previous year until a committee of inquiry had investigated its operation.⁵ Miall withdrew this proposal when Russell made it clear that he had no objection to such an inquiry.

1. J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, p113
2. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education pp388f
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates CXXXIV, p967; see also E.E. Rich, The Education Act 1870. p67
4. Christian Reformer, October 1846, p636
5. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXIV, p969; cf Eclectic Review, ns vol.I.1851, p474

In 1855 Miall repeated his demand for an inquiry, more than ever convinced that the real danger to voluntarism lay in the,

"...stealthy advances of the Committee of Council whose demands increase upon the Exchequer year by year, and seven-eighths of whose resources are devoted to the support of schools called 'national', but whose prominent characteristic is their ecclesiastical exclusiveness."¹

In attacking proposals for an increased grant, Miall argued that the schools supported by the grant did not cater for the very poor; that was the function of the Ragged Schools, which were maintained by voluntary effort. Nor had crime decreased, although an ever-increasing government grant supposedly provided more schools. He concluded that, "...the object for which the State interfered in the first instance in the matter of education had not been attained."²

Cobden replied with a powerful attack upon Miall; he had no faith in educational voluntarism, and was one of the founders of the National Public School Association, whose basic philosophy was the establishment of secular schools supported by local rates; this policy was increasingly attractive to moderate dissenters, and had powerful Unitarian support.³

Cobden claimed that Miall's assertion, that education did not at present reach the poor and criminal classes, was entirely unproven, and he attacked voluntarism as fallacious on the grounds that the individual efforts of parents were supplemented by eleemosynary subscriptions from the wealthier members of congregations. There was no real difference between the receipt of charitable subscriptions and the receipt of a government grant. He went on to ask;

"Where, then, was now the great obstacle to a satisfactory system being adopted? He was bound to say, and with the greatest regret he said it, that it lay amongst his respectable Friends of the voluntary principle, whose individual

1. Nonconformist, 25.VII. 1855, p572
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXIX, pp1413-1415
3. R.W. Dale History of English Congregationalism pp670-671
Christian Reformer, March 1852, pp143-144

efforts to promote education deserved so much credit. Could the Hon. Member for Rochdale (Miall) say now that a national system of education like that of the United States, was destructive of civil and religious freedom?"¹

The session of 1855 had begun with the suspicion that Russell intended to introduce another education bill. The Nonconformist commented that it would be more to the point if the military system were made less inefficient, for the Crimean War was revealing major weaknesses. The level of competence revealed could lead to no optimism about the prospects of an education system run by the government.² A bill was duly introduced, and its provisions were more to the liking of the Nonconformist, which remarked that each defeat of an education bill was followed by the introduction of a better measure, a tribute to the successful campaigning of the voluntarist party. The bill permitted town councils and rural parishes to levy an education rate, to support schools in which religious teaching would not be compulsory. For the Nonconformist it was the,

"...fairest embodiment of an unsound principle which has yet been put forth - so fair that we can hardly anticipate that a dominant Church will acquiesce in its adoption."³

In the event the bill was withdrawn, but there were five other education bills during the session, each of which Miall attacked. The Nonconformist commented;

"A gratuitous, unwarranted and fallacious assumption runs through ...these bills. They take it for granted that it is in the power of an Act of Parliament to make up in a short space the deficiencies of popular education both in quantity and quality, thus taking for granted not only what ought to be proved, but what cannot be proved...It has long been laid down that the Government are the worst of traders; it is now manifest that they are the worst of purveyors; and without another ruinous experiment it may well be believed that they would prove themselves the worst of educators."⁴

None of the bills was successful, but it had already become apparent that Miall saw the increasing government grant as the greater threat to

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXIX, ppl415-1416
2. Nonconformist, 24.I.1855, p57
3. Ibid., 14.II.1855, p117
4. Ibid., 25.IV.1855, p317

voluntaryism, and it is significant that he spoke favourably of Russell's most recent proposals with their suggestion of secular schools.

This shift of ground was apparent when Miall discussed Russell's proposals of 1856, which were a series of resolutions permitting the levying of an education rate in boroughs and country parishes, introducing a degree of compulsory attendance, providing for religious teaching and expanding the inspectorate. Baines was irreconcilably opposed, claiming that the scheme endangered voluntaryism and with it, civil and religious freedom. Once again, he showed that voluntaryism was providing schools places for one in eight of the population, which Kay Shuttleworth considered the desirable level:

"There is superabundant evidence that the schools are much more than adequate to the number of scholars attending them. The existing want is on the part of parents who...are satisfied with too short a term of schooling for their children. This is an evil not to be cured by legislation but by the gradual leavening of the working classes with more correct views and higher aspirations."¹

Miall was generally hostile to the plan, but the Nonconformist believed now that state intervention was a practical proposition so far as purely secular education was concerned.² Miall made a speech on these lines when the measure was debated in Parliament. He began by stating his usual objections to state intervention, but went on to say that if state intervention had to occur, Russell's scheme was the least objectionable he could envisage, as it left room for local initiative and choice. He felt Russell underestimated the successes of voluntaryism, and failed to appreciate the difficulty of securing school attendance. The alternative of employment in factories was still, he felt, the greatest obstacle.³ For the first time Miall went on to consider the virtues of a secular system, where the state took no responsibility for, and no part in,

1. Edward Baines, National Education: remarks on the speech and plan of Lord John Russell 32pp (London 1856) p15
2. Nonconformist, 12.III.1856, p161
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXL, pp2002-2004

religious teaching. It would, he admitted, be a practical solution to the perpetual problem of religious education:

"If a system of public education were established at all, the only way to render that system just would be to exclude religious instruction from the teaching given in the schools established."¹

Miall voted against the resolutions, but his speech was an indication that he was beginning to feel that voluntarism was not proving successful, and was seeking alternatives. Certainly he had begun to drift away from the pure voluntarism of Baines. The Dissenting Deputies regarded the rejection of Russell's resolutions as,

"...evidence of the feeling of the country that it is undesirable to disturb the powerful and extended action of the Voluntary Principle which has worked favourably for the interests of the country."²

However, Francis Adams commented that a note of despair had crept into the arguments of the voluntarists:

"At this special time the Voluntarists were making despairing efforts to sustain their failing cause, and Mr. Baines, Mr. Hadfield and Mr. Miall were indefatigable in urging their opinions on Parliament."³

Part 4. Miall's acceptance of government intervention

Miall's one positive contribution in the course of his parliamentary career to date had been to propose an inquiry into education, which he hoped might vindicate the achievements of voluntarism, and prove that state intervention was unnecessary. He was defeated at Rochdale in the election of 1857, and, having achieved some renown as a spokesman of the voluntarist party, was nominated a member of a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle which was set up on the motion of the Tory Sir John Packington,

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXL, pp2002-2004
2. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 21.IV.1856, f102
3. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest ppl74-175

"...to inquire into the present state of Popular Education in England, and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people."¹

Apart from Miall, who was on the Commission to represent the interests of dissenters, the members were the Duke of Newcastle, Sir John Coleridge, the Rev. William Lake who represented the interests of the Anglican Church, the Rev. William Rogers, Nassau Senior who was interested in social reform on secular principles, and Goldwin Smith.² The Commission represented all shades of opinion, and the fact of its appointment suggests a general anxiety about the state of popular education. Miall's later parliamentary speeches reflected this fear and it was around this time that the Nonconformist began to feel that the voluntary system was facing extinction in the face of competition from schools supported by the government.³

The Commission divided the country into specimen districts, and appointed assistant commissioners to draw up detailed reports of these areas. It also obtained statistics from the various bodies concerned with education, and was given reports on the educational systems of France and Germany by Mark Pattison and Matthew Arnold. According to Miall, the Commission had more than one hundred meetings, each lasting about four hours.⁴ His own part in its work was praised by Goldwin Smith:

"Notwithstanding his other occupations, he bore his full share...of a very heavy task. He asserted his principles with the clearness and firmness necessary to obtain for them fair consideration, but with unfailing good humour and urbanity. The Duke of Newcastle, who was the chairman and who had anticipated discord, was greatly pleased and impressed by his demeanour."⁵

1. Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the State of Popular Education in England 1861 i, 2
M. Sturt, The Education of the People (London 1967) pp241-242
2. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences ed. A. Haultain (New York 1911) pp116-117.
3. Nonconformist, 5.X.1859, p803. See above p42.
4. Ibid., 3.IV.1861, p270
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall. p231

Some years later, when Bright presented Miall with a testimonial for his work in voluntary education, he informed the audience that the Duke of Newcastle had spoken to him of Miall's courtesy, moderation, liberality, sound judgment and industry in eulogistic terms.¹ The obituary of Miall which appeared in the Nonconformist added that the Duke had told Miall that the work of the Commission could not have been satisfactorily carried out but for Miall's spirit of conciliation and co-operation, and had invited Miall to stay at his home at Clumber whenever he wished.² Goldwin Smith added that Miall strongly advocated a policy of educational voluntarism, and he and Goldwin Smith drew up a report for the Commission stressing its virtues, of which Goldwin Smith had become convinced in America. They found themselves in a minority of two, and having put their convictions on record, waived their dissent.³ Describing Miall's character, Goldwin Smith said;

"There was not about him a shadow of obscurantism. It was impossible that popular education or anything conducive to enlightenment and progress could have a more sincere and zealous friend...The tablet of memory retains only the general, but vivid and cherished image of a character formed by intense and life-long devotion to a principle, yet entirely free from narrowness or fanaticism, and not only genial but mirthful."⁴

Having expressed his reservations, Miall played a full part in drawing up the report and recommendations of the Commission;⁵ for the most part, he agreed wholeheartedly with its findings. For example, it concluded that nearly all classes of society could afford to pay for the education of their children, and would appreciate education less if it were available gratuitously.⁶ It appreciated that school attendance was one of the main difficulties,⁷ but felt unable to recommend compulsory attendance.⁸

1. Nonconformist, 8.V.1862, p397

2. Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, p5

3. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences pp119-120; A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p232

4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, pp232-233

5. Ibid. p232; Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p120

6. Report of the Commissioners, i, 73

7. Ibid., i, 84-85; 174f

8. Ibid., i, 199

Compulsion would interfere with the supply of child labour, and would deprive parents of the earning capacity of their children.¹ It found fault with the quality of teaching, especially in reading, writing and arithmetic, and recommended that there should be some inducement to raise standards.² It criticised the existing system on four main grounds: there was excessive central expenditure which secured local benefits only; no effective help was given to backward areas, and the cost of helping such areas would be prohibitive; elementary subjects were badly taught; the machinery of administration as at present organised would soon become unwieldy.³ Nearly all these points had been raised by Miall in his speeches and writings.

However, he was in a minority on two issues. The majority of members thought it had been both right and successful for the government to provide money for schools. The minority, evidently Miall and Goldwin Smith,

"...admit that the responsibilities and functions of Government may be enlarged by special circumstances, and in cases where political disasters have retarded the natural progress of society. But they hold that in a country situated politically and socially as England is, Government has, ordinarily speaking, no educational duties, except towards those whom destitution, vagrancy or crime casts upon its hands."⁴

They conceded that some good had resulted from government grants, but felt that the voluntary principle would have achieved more by functioning with less waste, by allowing greater diversity of school provision, and by avoiding religious conflict. Miall and Goldwin Smith hoped that the government would gradually withdraw its grants, except for school buildings, otherwise expenditure would grow unchecked, and the sense of parental responsibility would be undermined. Having stated their reservations, Miall and Goldwin Smith concurred in the recommendations

1. Report of the Commissioners, i, 225
2. Ibid., i, 273-274
3. Ibid., i, 313f
4. Ibid., i, 298

as a whole. On the question of religious instruction, there is evidence of a protracted discussion, and the Commission recognised that problems would arise if denominational creeds were taught in schools supported by public money.¹ However, the Commission wished religious instruction to remain part of the school curriculum, and did not envisage removing schools from the control of the various denominations. Essentially, it wished to leave the system as it was,² and offered a compromise solution whereby the religious teaching in a particular school would be left to the discretion of its managers, and H.M.I.s would only examine secular subjects. Miall disagreed; since public money was being used, its expenditure should be supervised, and H.M.I.s might prevent excesses of denominationalism in schools controlled by the Church of England.³ But once again, he deferred to the majority, and told a meeting of the Voluntary Schools Association;

"Having accomplished this much, it was necessary for me to determine whether I would put my name to that report or not. Here was a practical plan for the extension of...permanent government support and assistance. I thought that as I had worked with the Commission during a period of three years, as I was put upon the Commission with the full knowledge of my fellow-Commissioners that I advocated the voluntary principle in education, as I had never concealed my sentiments there, and as I fairly brought the matter to discussion and a vote, in which I and...a minority of the Commission were beaten; that it would have been, not only something like prudery, but somewhat unfair, to have used such influence as an individual might use to guide and to mould the decisions of the Commission, if I did not take my share of responsibility at the end, taking care, however, that the public should well understand that I did this...in the second resort, and not because they (the minority) believed that the principle of governmental support of education was sound."⁴

The Commission recommended some alteration in the distribution of grants to schools; the government grant would be supplemented by a sum from county rates, payable in respect of every child who passed an examination in reading, writing and arithmetic, and who attended school for a minimum of

1. Report of the Commissioners i, 298-299; see also A. Miall Life of Edward Miall p234
2. Report of the Commissioners i, 312; 343
3. Ibid. i, 348
4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p235

140 days in the year.¹ This was the genesis of the system of 'payment by results', which was the only positive achievement of the Commission, and was enshrined in the Revised Code. Miall fully supported the financial recommendations which were at the root of the system, and must bear some responsibility for a measure whose educational consequences were not propitious. A recent historian of the educational struggles of the nineteenth century remarked that the Commission merely approved the existing structure of education, and its recommendations offered,

"...the most meagre and sterile view of the educational process that has ever been enunciated. A great opportunity was lost...a great wrong was done to the nation's schools."²

Dissenting leaders were divided in their views of the Commission's report.

The Liberation Society welcomed it as,

"...the most emphatic testimony to the power of voluntarism and the most emphatic official rebuke to the pretensions of ecclesiastical supremacy that has ever been published in this country."³

R.W. Dale, the Birmingham nonconformist leader, remained unconvinced of the efficiency of voluntarism, and continued to advocate a state system,

"...separating himself in the matter from Edward Miall, Samuel Morley,

Edward Baines, and the most prominent leaders of Congregationalism at

that time."⁴ Not unnaturally, the Nonconformist welcomed the report of

the Commission. It praised its impartiality, and particularly the fact

that the minority view had received a sympathetic hearing. The voluntary

system had been triumphantly vindicated, and its leaders had at their

disposal a vast amount of detailed information in support of their case:

"...the free educationists...will stand on a higher level in public estimation in consequence of the labours of the Education Commission."⁵

1. Report of the Commissioners i, 337
2. F. Smith, A history of English Elementary Education p248
3. Liberator, May 1861, pp79-80
4. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale pl63
5. Nonconformist, 3.IV.1861 p270

Yet Miall seemed to be trying to convince himself; having welcomed the report as a vindication of voluntaryism, he continued the article by conceding the possibility of state intervention in education:

"If the state is to take part in the education of the English people, the plan recommended by the Commission is accepted by the minority as the best one feasible."¹

Members of voluntaryist bodies thought his attitude contradictory. The Voluntary Schools Association found it strange that he had signed the report of the Commission at all, and he had to assure members that he had not abandoned his faith in voluntaryism:

"I have lost none of my attachment to, none of my faith and confidence in, the principles I have always entertained. And while I have put my name to a report which presents to the public a plan for the extension and permanency of government support to educational institutions, not however without some protest...I still feel that the document which has just been issued by the Education Commissioners...will be found in its operations upon the public mind...to be wholly favourable to the great principle of voluntaryism."²

He seemed unaware of any incongruity between the parts of his argument; since he was re-elected to the committee of the Voluntary Schools Association at this meeting, nor, apparently, did his audience. Miall seems to have been torn in two directions, believing on the one hand that the report did show that the voluntary system was working well, yet fully aware on the other hand that his fellow-commissioners took a different view of the evidence, and had induced him to sign a report which recommended more state intervention.³ More and more, it seems, Miall became convinced that the government was going to take an increasing part in education, and felt his task as a voluntaryist and a dissenter was not to attempt to halt an irreversible process, but to ensure that the new educational system did the least possible violence to his convictions. Since he was an active politician, concerned as much with practical

1. Nonconformist, 3.IV.1861 p270.

2. Ibid., 5.VI.1861, pp441f

3. Ibid., 17.VII.1861, p571

achievement as with logical victories, there seems nothing dishonourable or inconsistent in his position.

Some of the recommendations of the Commission were given effect in an Education minute published in 1861, which became known as the Revised Code. Drafted by Robert Lowe, and Lingen, the Secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council, it stipulated that the government grant should no longer be made in respect of individual pupils, but should be made en bloc to schools managers: its total for each school would depend upon the performance of pupils in examinations of their attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic. Miall gave the minute a cautious welcome, inasmuch as it would ensure that fundamental subjects were efficiently taught, and would involve such a rise in the cost of education as to make it impossible to continue government grants on financial grounds:

"...if we are to have state aid at all, it is reasonable to adopt such precautions as will ensure its being profitably applied. We think the Revised Code well adapted to secure this end."¹

He had no sympathy with the reaction of many teachers who condemned the new code as likely to injure the cause of popular education.² Later opinion concurred in this verdict, but Miall dismissed it as a case of a vested interest opposing a progressive measure. The Nonconformist had so little sympathy with the anxieties of teachers that it compared their attitude with that of the Sepoy mutineers.³

Lowe delayed the implementation of the new code to allow full discussion by Parliament, and when it was debated in February 1862, the Nonconformist was unstinting in his praise. He had,

"...placed under the notice of the country a case so complete in itself and so amply sustained by reasoning and evidence, that in our humble opinion he has turned the tide of battle, and ensured the discomfiture of that vast array

1. Nonconformist, 28.VIII.1861, p681
2. Ibid., 18.IX.1861, p750
3. Ibid., 9.X.1861, p811

of clergy managers and schoolmasters, the mustering and preliminary meeting of which, during the recess, had been sufficiently imposing to attract the attention of the Conservative leaders."¹

It was at pains to point out that it was not convinced of the virtues of state intervention and supported the Revised Code only because it was an improvement upon the previous system of government grants, and might, because of its expense, facilitate a return to a "...natural and normal position in regard to the scholastic education of the people."² Granted that the Commission had demonstrated the need for reform, the Revised Code was not the only answer. "Is there not a plain and practical alternative of no system at all?"³ Having already argued that the Revised Code was the best blueprint for government intervention, if such was to become permanent, the Nonconformist emphasised that it would demonstrate the impossibility of efficient government control without enormous expense. "He may carry his new Code, but it will fail almost as miserably as the Old."⁴ It added to the confusion by claiming that insofar as the question was how to educate the poor most efficiently and economically,

"...we have no hesitation in again expressing our preference, as merely administrative reformers, for the New Code."⁵

For this reason, it welcomed Lowe's assurance that the scheme would be either cheap or efficient, though its contemporary, the Patriot thought it would be neither; it interpreted the evidence of the Commission as showing that half the children now in schools receiving state grants should be turned out to make room for the genuinely poor. Nothing in the Revised Code was designed to bring this about.⁶ Kay Shuttleworth had no faith in

1. Nonconformist, 19.II.1862, p170

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 12.III.1862, p231

4. Ibid. In fact, the Education Grant which had risen from £20,000 in 1832 to £813,000 in 1861, dropped to £636,806 in 1865, due to the workings of the Revised Code. M.E. Saddler and J.W. Edwards "Public Elementary Education in England and Wales" 1870-1895. Special Reports on Educational Subjects (H.M.S.O. 1897) pp10-11.

5. Nonconformist 12.III.1862, p231

6. Patriot, 12.VI 1862, pp388-389

the administrative argument. Like the Patriot, he thought the system of the Revised Code neither cheap nor efficient, and believed it would be destructive of educational standards. It would waste public money without producing the results which were declared to be its main object.¹ As a result of criticisms made in the course of the Parliamentary debate, Lowe introduced certain modifications, which took into account the reports of H.M.I.s as well as examination results in assessing the grant for schools. Miall, who had seen many inspectors' reports as a commissioner, probably felt they were unduly inclined to find mitigating circumstances for the failures of teachers, and condemned the amendments. He also felt the standards set by the code were far too low; they were at a level which, "...if the teacher can teach at all, he cannot fail to make his scholars reach."²

If the reaction of the Nonconformist to the Revised Code seems unperceptive and unduly preoccupied with cost effectiveness, it should be remembered that Miall felt the state could not provide education in the real sense, and insofar as it did intervene, it would do least damage to voluntaryist principles if it confined itself to teaching fundamentals effectively. Since Miall expected the system would prove too expensive to continue for long, his support of the Revised Code was not wholly inconsistent with his position as a voluntaryist leader, and indeed in 1862 he received a public testimonial in recognition of his work for voluntary education. Bright, who made the presentation, introduced Miall as "your faithful representative of Voluntaryism in the late Royal Commission on Education."³

1. Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth, Memorandum on Popular Education 1868 (London 1969) p30
2. Nonconformist, 16.IV.1862, p331, 2.IV.1862, p290
3. Ibid., 8.V.1862, p397

Part 5. The Education Act of 1870: the clash with the government

While the education question receded into the background between 1863 and 1866, and Miall appeared to concentrate upon other issues, there was significant development of opinions and attitudes. Miall himself recognised that current trends were towards the support of schools by local rates and towards compulsory attendance. Aware of the religious problems this would cause, he altered his whole position on the content of the school syllabus, and for the first time advocated that religious teaching should be excluded from the curriculum. Schools should concentrate upon secular subjects:

"Personally, we have no objection to the elimination from day schools of what is called religious instruction. We do not undervalue it, but we do not think the schools the most fitting place, nor the schoolmaster the most fitting person, for religious teaching...in the divided state of religious feeling, rating and denominationalism cannot run together."¹

This statement represents an important stage in the development of Miall's educational views; this disposition to accept a purely secular system of education made it possible for him to contemplate state intervention with some degree of equanimity, and ended his separation from the main body of radicals and dissenting leaders. Gladstone, too, believed that denominational education was in jeopardy, confirming Miall's own conviction. Writing to the Archdeacon of Nottingham, Gladstone forecast, "If anything is to be done to save denominational education it should be done with speed. The time is short, and the final issue drawing near."² The labour leader, George Howell, informed Forster that the working classes hoped to render service in the solution of the great questions now before the country, one of which was the education question.³

1. Nonconformist, 19.XII.1866, p1018
2. Gladstone to the Archdeacon of Nottingham 16.VII.1867 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone ii, 137
3. George Howell to W.E. Forster 15.II.1868, Howell Papers (Bishopsgate Institute) Letter Book 4 f297

The Liberation Society, which had previously avoided becoming involved in the education controversy, abandoned its detached position when it considered its tactics for 1865. Public money was being used increasingly to support Anglican schools, and the question of a conscience clause for the protection of dissenters in rural areas, where there was often only a Church of England School, had become a major issue. The Privy Council had eventually accepted such a clause, and the Liberation Society felt that nonconformists ought to be taking active measures to safeguard their rights, rather than relying upon the efforts of others.¹ The implication of its resolution was that the society, like Miall, was hoping to regulate the character of state control, since opposition was now futile.

Miall finally abandoned his support of the voluntary system in 1867.² As parliamentary candidate for Bradford in that year, he informed voters that the imminence of franchise reform had made state control of education inevitable, and his concern was to secure the best possible form.³ No longer divided from his radical allies, he was in a much better position to influence events, and join a grouping of the forces of motion. He confirmed his commitment to a secular curriculum supported by state grant; religious instruction could be financed by individual denominations separately from the normal curriculum.⁴ This condition brought him into harmony with the programme of the National Education League, though he had reservations about its proposals for free education:

"I go most heartily and sympathisingly with the Educational League in one respect. I think that if the state is to supply a general system of national education, that system must of necessity be mainly a secular one."⁵

As a candidate at Bradford, Miall was forced to explain his change of heart on the education question. The charge was made that he had changed his

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.IX.1865, p300 (G.L.C. Record Office)
2. See above pp43f
3. Nonconformist, 9.X.1867, p830
4. Ibid., 11.I.1868, p36
5. Bradford Observer, 19.I.1870

mind on the issue of state intervention merely to secure the nomination at Bradford, whose senior member was W.E. Forster. Miall refuted the charge by showing that his opposition to a state-controlled system of education had been based upon the fear that such a system would be used by the Anglican Church to increase its influence. He was now reconciled to a state system since it would be under the control of a reformed Parliament,¹ and would provide a secular education only:

"I am now for national education. I see that the people will have it and I would assist them to get it pure and unadulterated. I am for education which shall not throw power into the hands of any sect - my own or any other."²

W.E. Forster welcomed him as an ally, and told the audience at a joint meeting,

"I will say to the friends of State Education that they cannot serve the cause better than by assisting to get Mr. Miall into Parliament."³

Gladstone formed a ministry in 1868. Initially it was preoccupied with the Irish Church, and when that was settled in 1869, there was an opportunity for Forster, as Vice-President of the Committee of the Privy Council, to settle the education question. Opinion outside Parliament formed in two major groups, the National Education Union based upon Manchester, and the National Education League, based upon Birmingham. The union had developed from the Manchester Education Aid Society founded in 1864. Its researches had revealed that 20,000 children in the city were receiving no education at all, and advocates both of religious and secular education had united to raise money. Within two years they had provided 10,000 school places, but thereafter made no significant progress. As the National Education Union, this group saw the solution to the problem as the state intervening to fill the gaps in the existing system, and by implication, the retaining of religious teaching in schools. Its supporters

1. Nonconformist, 14.X.1868, p1014
2. Ibid., 5.VIII.1868, pp767-768
3. Ibid., 14.X.1868, p1014

were predominantly Anglican and Conservative, though they included Edward Baines.¹

The league was founded in Birmingham in 1867: like the union, it was concerned initially to make good the deficiency in school places for the poor, but its programme was considerably more radical. Its members felt that the deficiency could only be made good by legislation and its immediate function was, in the words of its founder, George Dixon,

"...to arouse the whole country to a sense of our present educational destitution: to create and guide a strong public opinion: and thus to make possible a bold and comprehensive measure."²

Modelling its organisation upon that of the Anti-Corn Law League, and led by the dynamic Joseph Chamberlain, its objective was a system of education financed by local rates, controlled by locally elected committees, providing free, unsectarian schools which taught secular subjects only. By 1870, it had 63 branches throughout the country, and 72 others were planned.³ Unlike the union, its supporters were both middle-class liberals, and working-class leaders too. A meeting of the Trades Union Congress at Birmingham in 1869 had demanded a system of 'national, unsectarian and compulsory education' as the minimum for the United Kingdom, and two labour leaders, Howell and Applegarth, were elected to the executive of the league.⁴ The biographer of Howell, whose interest in education has been noted, comments that, "The National Education League was probably the most important of the middle-class radical organisations which appealed to London Labour leaders."⁵ Certainly the league gained

1. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest pp193-194: 207-208. M. Cruickshank, Church and State in English Education pl7
2. Quoted in D. Read, The English Provinces (London 1964) pl70 Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest pp207-208. The aims of the League are set out in a pamphlet published in 1869. Papers of the National Education League 45692 (Birmingham Central Library)
3. P. Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain (London 1966) p6
4. B. Simon, Studies in the History of Education pp362-363. Robert Applegarth stressed the necessity for compulsory education in the interests of the working classes. R. Applegarth, "Compulsory attendance at school: the working man's view." National Education League pamphlet no. 45763.
5. F.M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical: George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics (London 1971) pl37

extensive working-class support, and was envisaged as a means of creating a pressure group comprising both middle and working classes. One of its members, A. Walton, claimed at a meeting in Hanley;

"It was the express desire of the Council of the Education League that the middle and working classes should unite with a view to bringing their power to bear upon Parliament."¹

It is apparent that the Liberation Society modelled its disestablishment campaign closely upon the National Education League.

Miall sent a letter to the inaugural meeting of the league, stating his broad agreement with its aims.² His only reservation concerned the league's demand for compulsory attendance at school: he feared that if people did not pay directly for the education of their children, they would not value it properly.³ Even so, he did not regard the matter as being sufficiently important to cause a division amongst educational reformers.⁴ He explained in the Nonconformist that he supported the league rather than the union because the essence of the question was whether the working class or the middle class should decide upon the type of education the poor should receive. The league had gained his support because its programme gave scope for working-class involvement, and moreover, in contrast with the union, its programme was undenominational.⁵ Miall's objection to denominational schools surviving was practical as well as philosophical: if such a school were the only school in an area, and if education became compulsory, as seemed probable, that school would be able to teach its distinctive doctrines to children whose parents belonged to other denominations. Miall himself was chiefly anxious about Anglican schools, but the

1. National Education League Monthly Paper no. 20 July 1871 p5
At this meeting, the Potteries Labour Representation League endorsed the programme of the National Education League, and urged local trades societies to become affiliated to it.
See also W.P. McCann, "Trades Unionists, Artisans and the 1870 Education Act". British Journal of Educational Studies vol.XVIII no.2 June 1970, pp134-150.
2. This letter appears in Report of the First General Meeting of the National Education League held at Birmingham on Tuesday and Wednesday 12th and 13th October 1869 (Birmingham 1869) pp13-15
3. Nonconformist, 13.X.1869, p979
4. Bradford Observer, 19.I.1870
5. Nonconformist, 20.X.1869, p1004

objection applied equally to schools established by dissenters.¹

The league produced a draft bill in 1869, which provided for religious teaching either before or after the main school day; attendance was to be strictly voluntary. The Nonconformist regarded the bill as providing "...an excellent and definite basis for a discussion of the whole question."²

Miall did not play a major part in the affairs of the league; in the records of the inaugural meeting he is mentioned as a member of the council of the league,³ but he does not appear in subsequent lists of officials. He addressed meetings in London, where, as Chamberlain admitted, the influence of the league was least,⁴ and identified himself with the full programme of the league. He attempted to play down the religious issue, and to show that secular education need not lack a moral basis:

"I don't think we ought to be deeply concerned to put before the children in a formal way religious instruction which they cannot at all appreciate...I say there is no reason for us to quarrel over this question of religion. It is a difficulty rather made up...by clergy and ministers than actually existing in the minds of the people themselves...I think if it is necessary to supply a general system of national education, that system must of necessity be mainly a secular system. And when we speak of a secular education, we mean this - it is not secular in the sense of excluding and denying religion as important; it is only secular in the sense of teaching those subjects which are of a secular character in themselves."⁵

Thus Miall entered the debate of 1870 convinced of the need for state intervention in education, and firmly in favour of a secular system. His views had altered radically since 1843, but the explanations he gave on each occasion provide little or no substance for charges of inconsistency or opportunism. He seems to have become convinced by the evidence available

1. Ibid. See also J. Murphy Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800-1870 p38

The reports of Mr. Bowstead, an inspector of undenominational schools in Wales, showed that in many districts, where the single school system existed, dissenters refused to send their children to schools controlled by the Anglican Church, and endeavoured to provide their own schools. The Church in Wales pub. by Liberation Society. 48pp (London 1871) p27

2. Nonconformist, 22.XII.1869, p1224
3. Report of the First General Meeting...p41
4. D. Read, The English Provinces, p170
5. Nonconformist, 26.I.1870, p80

that his ideal was impractical, and sought the best possible alternative. As an M.P., he had to represent the views of his constituents which undoubtedly were in favour of state education, and as a legislator, he had to be concerned with practical possibilities as well as ideals. He felt that it might be expedient to delay the introduction of the measure, to allow the Liberal party to reach some agreement upon the main principles; he even hoped that the league and the union might find common ground. As he rightly foresaw, a premature measure would at best result in a compromise, and at worst, would cause division in the Liberal party.¹

Forster published his Education Bill in February 1870, and the first reaction of the Nonconformist was favourable: "Generally, our idea is that the Bill, as it stands, may be accepted as the basis of the future educational arrangements of the country."² It had reservations about the proposals for religious teaching which, it felt, evaded the real issue, as the bill laid down that the type of religious teaching was to be decided by individual school boards. Nor did it feel that the proposed conscience clause gave sufficient protection to dissenters. Gladstone had warned Russell that the best the government could hope for was agreement amongst its supporters on the non-contentious issues raised by the bill: "We should leave religion free...protect conscience effectually, and keep the State out of all responsibility for, or concern in, religious differences."³

Forster had not followed Gladstone's dictum, and the Nonconformist within a week had altered its attitude to one of bitter hostility. As Francis Adams observed, it was not alone in its failure to see the menace of the bill immediately:

1. Nonconformist, 2.II.1870 p108. Francis Adams also believed that if the measure had been delayed, "...there are grounds for the belief that a stronger and more liberal measure...could have been passed." Elementary School Contest, p323
2. Nonconformist, 23.II.1870, p169
3. Gladstone to Russell 24.III.1870 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone ii, p139

"The precise effect of the bill was hardly perceived upon its introduction, and it was received with a chorus of satisfaction from the Liberal benches, which reflection greatly modified."¹

Miall addressed a meeting of the league, making the point that the bill favoured Anglican schools, particularly in rural areas where they were often the only schools, and stressing that if there were to be compulsory attendance, there must be a totally secular system.² J.S. Mill also discussed this aspect in a speech to a meeting of the league; he claimed that the bill did positive evil in that it introduced a new religious inequality, and allowed the Anglican Church to propagate its doctrines at the expense of all taxpayers.³

The debate on the second reading gave even greater cause for concern. Forster refused to alter the provisions for religious teaching, and would not accept that the bill favoured the Church of England. The Nonconformist implied that the Liberal government had betrayed its dissenting allies, and gave notice of the implacable hostility of the majority of dissenters:

"Why should a Liberal government be playing...into the hands of the Church?...We know perfectly well that we have no religious equality in England, but we should deserve to be despised to the end of our lives if we allowed this bill, which, if it were carried as it stands would strengthen ecclesiastical supremacy, to be carried without our strongest and most effective protests."⁴

The fears of the Nonconformist were shared by the majority of dissenters, and they were joined by many radicals and by working-class representatives. Dissenting unity on this scale had not been apparent since 1843, and it was a triumph for Miall in that not only was the bill attacked upon educational grounds, but more especially upon the ground that it attempted to strengthen the position of the Anglican Church. The arguments of

1. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest p212
2. Nonconformist, 2.III.1870 pp192,201
3. Speech by J.S. Mill at St. James' Hall 25.III.1870. National Education League Papers no.45708 (Birmingham 1870)
See also Francis Adams Elementary School Contest pp235-236
4. Nonconformist, 16.III.1870 p241

disestablishment could be deployed, and the education debates of 1870 were in a sense a dress-rehearsal for Miall's disestablishment campaign of 1871-1873. Public opinion was made aware of the issue in these terms, and the allies whom Miall sought in 1871 had already worked together on a similar issue.

The Quarterly Review spoke for a minority of dissenters when it claimed that Forster had rightly interpreted the wishes of the country in producing a synthesis of the arguments of the union and the league and in refusing to allow state education to be merely secular.¹ The Unitarian Herald attacked the element of compulsion in the bill, taking up Miall's point that in rural areas where there was only one school, compulsory attendance would favour the Anglicans, and it felt that the proposed conscience clause would not adequately protect dissenters.² The unitarian body had long favoured state intervention, but was mistrustful of the religious element in Forster's bill. The working-class Beehive reported a meeting of dissenters which denounced the bill as aggravating the worst aspects of the existing system, and creating a new religious establishment in every parish.³ Members of the National Education League spoke of the bill as the levy of a new church rate.⁴ John Bright condemned the bill for giving power to religious sects which should belong to the people,⁵ while John Morley saw that the Anglican parsons had been given a great opportunity to strengthen their influence in rural areas in preparation for the imminent struggle over disestablishment.⁶

In Birmingham, Dr. Dale and Rev. H.W. Crosskey supplemented the work of the league by forming the Central Nonconformist Committee. It organised

1. Quarterly Review, no. 256 1870 p488
2. Unitarian Herald, 11.III.1870
3. Beehive, 12.III.1870, p9
4. R.W. Dale at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham. National Education League Leaflet no.21 no.45766 (Birmingham 1870). See also National Education League Monthly Paper, no.21 July 1871, pp12-13
5. G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright (London 1913) p407
6. D.A. Hamer, John Morley. Liberal Intellectual in Politics (Oxford 1968)

a petition signed by "...over two thirds of all Nonconformist ministers in England and Wales, of all denominations."¹ Gladstone met a deputation which it organised on 11th April, representing the Congregational and Baptist Unions, the Wesleyans, the Primitive Methodists and the Lancashire Unitarians, a cross-section of dissenting opinions.² An earlier deputation, of which Miall was a member, represented working-class opinion in the person of Robert Applegarth, and radical opinion in the persons of Sir Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain.³

The Central Nonconformist Committee discussed tactics with dissenting M.P.s, notably Miall himself and Henry Richard,⁴ and used Miall as a Parliamentary spokesman.⁵ The Dissenting Deputies took exception to the religious provisions of the bill,⁶ and the Liberation Society found itself compelled to take an active part. The secretary reported receiving anxious letters from members, and the society resolved,

"...that, without affirming or denying the expediency of state interference with education - a question not within the scope of the society's objects - this committee is of opinion that the Education Bill now before Parliament contravenes the society's principles, and ought to be amended."⁷

A sub-committee was set up to study the question, of which Miall was not a member. It recommended that dogmatic religious instruction should not be supported by public money, and felt that the proposed conscience clause gave adequate protection to dissenters. The executive committee disagreed with the latter view, and while it hoped that the bill would be amended, no action was contemplated apart from the preparation of petitions and the lobbying of M.P.s.⁸

1. Francis Adams Elementary School Contest p221
2. Ibid. pp221-222. See also P. Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain, p8; J.L. Garvin, Life of Joseph Chamberlain, London 1932 i, 110-112 National Education League Monthly Paper no.5 April 1870 p7; Ibid. no.6 May 1870 p7.
3. Nonconformist, 16.III.1870, p242; Francis Adams Elementary School Contest pp215-217. J.L. Garvin Life of Joseph Chamberlain, i, 111f. Applegarth's speech was reprinted by the League as one of its pamphlets, no. 45763. (Birmingham 1870)
4. A.W.W.Dale, Life of R.W.Dale p278. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest, p221
5. Congregationalist, Vol. I 1872, p58.
6. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 10.III.1870, f453
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 11.III.1870
8. Ibid., 14.III.1870. See also Liberator, April 1870

Thus Miall entered the Parliamentary struggle as one of the leaders of a powerful alliance, consisting of dissenting opinion, radical opinion, and working-class opinion, an alliance such as he had tried previously to create for other issues. As in 1843, the London leaders of dissent had been slow to move, and part of Miall's role was to function as a link between the capital and the powerful provincial centre of Birmingham and the Midlands, and moreover, as a link between dissenting and radical groups.

He decided to speak in the debate on the second reading of the bill, in order to establish the principles of his opposition: "Everyone knew that when they got into committee, questions of principle were usually frittered away."¹ His opposition was not to state intervention but to the religious clauses of the bill, and he based his arguments upon the principle of disestablishment. The Anglican party refused to abandon its pretensions of supremacy, and these pretensions were buttressed by the bill:

"...it was impossible, under the present system in which one body of Christians was associated with the state and favoured by the civil power, that they could put this educational question on a basis which would be satisfactory to all, unless they abandoned something of those pretensions which had generally been advanced on this subject."²

Miall warned the government that most of the opposition to the bill came from Liberals and supporters of the government. The bill would become acceptable to them only if its religious clauses were altered:

"He himself was pledged by his constituents to vote for unsectarian and undenominational education. He believed that they could arrive at a conclusion as to unsectarian education, if they were only to come to the consideration of the question with the determination to accomplish such a settlement of it... He should be extremely sorry if a measure for education should be endangered by the principle - the false principle as he believed - contained in the bill. Let them get rid of that principle if they could."³

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXCIX, pp2027-2031
2. Ibid. Speaking for the League, George Dixon made similar points.
F. Adams, Elementary School Contest, p217
The Society of Friends considered the whole difficulty arose from the existence of a State Church.
The Friend April 1870 p80.
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXCIX, pp2027-2031

Miall's speech attracted the attention of Liberal leaders. Russell wrote to Forster deprecating the opposition which the bill had aroused, and blaming Forster to some extent: "...I must own that on the point which has aroused the objection of the Dissenting bodies, I think the Dissenters are quite in the right."¹ He went on to suggest that, "...such men as Mr. Miall and Mr. Winterbotham ought surely to be conciliated by justice and not overpowered."² Soon after the second reading, the Beehive noted that Miall, Pease, Cowen and Candlish, all radical politicians, had dined with Gladstone.³ Gladstone had already had correspondence with Henry Richard on the religious problems which the bill had highlighted,⁴ and at the end of May, he told Granville, "Tomorrow I mean to see two or three of the hardest-headed Nonconformists and try to ascertain their real wishes."⁵

Evidently Miall and his supporters succeeded in making their objections appreciated by Liberal leaders, since Forster introduced amendments to the bill before its committee stage. Religious teaching would not be inspected by H.M.I.s, and there would be a time-table conscience clause; religious teaching would take place apart from the remainder of the curriculum. The Nonconformist considered these concessions failed to meet dissenters' objections, for public money would still be used to support religious teaching.⁶ In contrast, the Liberation Society felt that the amendments absolved it from the need for further action,⁷ until it became apparent that denominational religious teaching would still be supported by public money. Then it urged members to exert themselves to prevent the adoption of such proposals.⁸ However, no practical measures were taken,

1. Russell to W.E. Forster 21.III.1870 in National Education League Monthly Paper no.5 April 1870 p10. Also in F. Adams, Elementary School Contest, pp222-223
2. Ibid.
3. Beehive, 14.V.1870, p194
4. Gladstone to Henry Richard 28.III.1870 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone ii, 139
5. Gladstone to Lord Granville 30.V.1870 The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1868-1876 ed. A. Ramm (London 1952) i, 100
6. Nonconformist, 1.VI.1870, p520
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 10.VI.1870, ff250-251
8. Ibid., 17.VI.1870, f253

and the impression emerges that the society, aware that its members were divided on the whole question of national education, was making a token gesture to humour those of its supporters who, like Miall, had taken a determined stand in opposition to the bill.

Miall reserved his main effort for the committee stage of the bill, where he acted as one of the leaders of dissenting opposition. He told Forster that he had no wish to impede the progress of the bill, but its religious clauses placed dissenters in an impossible position. It was unjust to accuse them, as Forster had, of mere factiousness. They regarded the bill as unsatisfactory, firstly because it did not seem likely that it would settle the question permanently; the bill proposed, "...no more than a system of denominational schools supplemented by rate-aided schools."¹ Denominationalism was not a secure basis for an educational system; indeed it had already been tried and found wanting. A new form of organisation was required, and that should be a system of unsectarian schools, supported by rates. There should be religious teaching, but it should be organised by individual denominations, at their own expense.² This speech was made in support of an amendment moved by Henry Richard, which had been drafted by a group of leading dissenters, led by Dr. Dale. Miall had attended the meeting, and shortly afterwards Gladstone had summoned Miall and Winterbotham to discuss the matter.³ The executive committee of the league supported the amendment,⁴ as did the Dissenting Deputies.⁵ The amendment was defeated, and in supporting it, Miall voted against the Liberal leadership. The Bradford Observer which had supported Miall's stand, at times fearfully, lest the bill be defeated as a whole, commented,

"...the situation is quite simply this, that the advanced wing of the Liberals has been badly defeated."⁶

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series Vol CCII, p626f
2. Ibid.
3. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale p278
4. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest p226
5. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 7.VI.1870, f460
6. Bradford Observer, 30.VI.1870

In the remainder of the committee stage, Miall played a less spectacular role; he clashed with George Dixon, the founder of the league, over the provision of free school places for the children of the poor, arguing that to give education as a form of charity was to degrade it in the eyes of the recipients.¹

When the bill emerged from committee, the Nonconformist described it as a 'triumph of reaction', and accused Gladstone and Forster of having ridden roughshod over the feelings of their dissenting supporters.² This was the tone of the attack which Miall launched upon the government during the third reading of the bill. Replying to an attack upon the opponents of the bill by Cowper-Temple, he reminded the government that it owed its position to the support of dissenters; they were entitled to expect some consideration in return. Since the bill touched upon many of their principles, he thought it would have been not unreasonable for the government to consult the dissenting bodies about the main features of the measure:

"They did think that some consideration would have been paid to their objection; and certainly, they had no expectation, when their objections had been urged, that remedies would have been applied that rather increased and aggravated those objections than otherwise."³

He admitted that dissenters in the House had failed to act as a party, but they had learned their lesson. This was not the only time they had been poorly treated by the Liberals:

"He would not urge this further than was necessary on the Treasury Bench, but 'once bit, twice shy'."⁴

This was a plain threat that the government could no longer depend upon dissenting support, and Gladstone interpreted it thus. He rounded upon Miall in the bitterest terms;

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CCII, pp1313-1314
2. Nonconformist, 13.VII.1870, p664
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CCIII, pp741-744
4. Ibid. p745. See also J.L. Garvin Life of Joseph Chamberlain i, 116

"But if my Hon. Friend has been bitten, by whom is it? If he has been bitten, it is only in consequence of expectations which he himself has chosen to entertain, and which were not justified by the facts. We have been thankful to have the independent and honourable support of my Hon. Friend, but that support ceases to be of value when accompanied by reproaches such as these. I hope my Hon. Friend will not continue that support to the government one moment longer than he deems it consistent with his sense of duty and right. For God's sake, Sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause which he has at heart that he should do so."¹

Forster himself, Miall's senior colleague in the representation of Bradford, levelled similar reproaches, and the tone of the exchanges indicates the degree of exasperation now existing between the government and its dissenting supporters. The Beehive described the exchange between Miall and Gladstone as the 'kicking down of the ladder' and remarked, "...An open breach was then declared between the Prime Minister and the Nonconformist section of his usual supporters." It expressed sympathy for Miall, noting that the working classes had been similarly treated by the Liberal Government. Forster was warned that the partiality he had shown towards the Church of England would alienate not only the dissenters but also the working classes. They would unite against the government, and the Beehive reported that a joint meeting had already been held at Exeter Hall.²

The bill passed its third reading, went easily through its stages in the Lords, and received the Royal Assent in August 1870. As Forster intended, the Act made use of existing denominational schools, supplementing them with School Boards where provision was inadequate, having allowed a period of grace for the various denominations to increase the number of their schools. The School Boards were allowed to pay the fees of poor children at any denominational school, but in board schools themselves there was to be no distinctive denominational teaching.³ Forster had no sympathy with

1. Beehive, 30.VII.1870, p379
2. Beehive, 18.VI.1870, p273; see also W.P. McCann "Trades Unionists, Artisans and the 1870 Education Act." pl42.
3. Reid, T. Wemyss, Life of W.E. Forster (London 1888) i, 502

opposition to his act. He wrote to Lord Houghton;

"There is nothing that riles mankind so much as seeing the objects they desire accomplished by other means than their own. Thus the Radicals are indignant at popular education being brought about with Conservative assistance, as Mazzini and Garibaldi at the unity of Italy being brought about by Victor Emmanuel. But the Mialls of England and Italy must submit to their lot."¹

The Mialls of England had no such intention. Apart from the Liberation Society which felt reasonably sanguine about the Act,² the mildest nonconformist reaction came from the Dissenting Deputies. While regarding with satisfaction the fact that the government had tried to deal with the problem of education, the Deputies regretted,

"...that in settling the details of the measure so little regard was paid by the Ministry to the expressed views of Nonconformists and fear that a great development of the Denominational System of Education will result from the provisions of the Bill."³

The radical Henry Fawcett remarked that, in dealing with education, the Government had shown itself so attached to the denominational principle as to alienate many of those who had been its staunchest supporters at the last election.⁴ Bright left Gladstone in no doubt as to the feelings of dissenters. He believed that the bill had simply strengthened the existing system when it ought to have superseded it,⁵ and wrote to Gladstone;

"The Education Bill has done a tremendous mischief to the party, and I am not sure that the exasperation felt by earnest dissenters will not bear evil fruit...The question will have to be looked at, but what can be done with it is a puzzle...The Education Bill has pleased the Church, but the Church will not maintain the Government."⁶

In reply, Gladstone admitted his anxieties. He conceded that dissenters had some cause for irritation, so far as he understood their arguments, and he believed that if an election were fought on the education question, the Liberals would become a minority. On future relationships with the

1. Reid T. Wemyss, Life of W.E. Forster i, 522
2. Liberator, Aug. 1870, p133
3. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 10.VIII.1870, f8
4. Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1871, p544
5. John Bright Public Addresses ed. J.E. Thorold Rogers (London 1879) p201
6. Bright to Gladstone 24.XI.1871 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add Mss. 44112, ff193-194

dissenters, he said,

"...I do not know whether the Nonconformists and I shall always be able to 'put up our houses' together, but they have behaved honourably and handsomely to me...I should wish to retire from public life rather than at this advanced hour of my little day go into sharp and vital conflict with them."¹

However, 'sharp and vital conflict' had already broken out. In Bradford Forster was faced with what amounted to a vote of no-confidence from the Liberal party,² while two branches of it endorsed the stand taken by Miall.³ In an exchange of letters, both Dr. Dale and the Rev. Newman Hall considered Forster's continued presence in the government an insuperable barrier to reconciliation between the government and dissenters.⁴ Dr. Allon warned Gladstone that the breach between government and dissenters had been caused by, "...a certain tone of asperity and apparent intolerance which they think they have scarcely deserved and which I think you did not intend..."⁵ Illingworth commented that Forster had never been trusted by the dissenters of Bradford.⁶ The Nonconformist believed that the government had formulated its education policy,

"...with a far more distinct reference to the wishes of their opponents than to those of their friends"

and forecast that the result would be the,

"...disintegration and demoralisation of the Liberal party in the country."⁷

The residual bitterness was of value to Miall in that it created a climate of opinion potentially favourable to the disestablishment campaign which he

1. Gladstone to Bright, 25.XI.1871 Bright Papers B.M.Add.Mss 43385, ff166-167 Also in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone ii, 142-144.
2. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest p233
3. Nonconformist 7.IX.1870 p847. See also D.G. Wright Politics and public opinion in 19th century Bradford (unpublished University of Leeds Ph.D. thesis, 1966) p875.
4. R.W. Dale to Newman Hall 7.XI.1871 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss.44188, ff102-103 Newman Hall to R.W. Dale 16.XI.1871 Ibid., f107 Congregationalist Vol.I 1872 passim
5. Allon to Gladstone 2.VII.1873 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss.44095, ff325-326.
6. National Education League, Monthly Paper no.24 Nov. 1871, p2
7. Nonconformist, 28.IX.1870, p929

proposed to launch. The Central Nonconformist Committee, with Joseph Chamberlain in the chair, resolved on 19th October 1870 to give all possible assistance to the work of the Liberation Society.¹ The immediate consequences of the act assisted Miall too. It had allowed six months in which the various denominations could, with government assistance, make good the deficiencies in their schools, after which elected School Boards would fill the remaining gaps. The Nonconformist claimed that the Church of England was responsible for four-fifths of the schools thus built, and concluded;

"Thus, in the majority of our small towns and villages, Mr. Forster's Education Act is no boon, but in consequence of its defects and deficiencies, the local clergy and gentry have been able to turn it into an effective instrument for extending Church influence, and strengthening the supremacy of the State Church."²

The clause of the act which caused the most distress to dissenters was Clause 25, which allowed School Boards to pay the fees of children whose parents wished them to attend a denominational school.³ The total sum involved was small, less than £5,000, but, as John Morley pointed out, resistance to it was a vital matter of principle, as it was, "...the tiniest element in an enormous process of denominational endowment."⁴ At a meeting of the Congregational Union, Dale said of the clause,

"I believe in my conscience this to be only a new form of the old church rate."⁵

Bright, who had described the act as "...the worst act passed by a Liberal government since the Reform Act of 1832"⁶ warned Dale that the clause was

1. National Education League, Monthly Paper no.12 Nov. 1870, p9
2. Nonconformist, 1.II.1871, p109. It could be argued that if voluntarism had retained any vigour, the six months period of grace gave it a perfect opportunity. J. Murphy, Church State and Schools in Britain 1800-1870 p55
3. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol.114 Nov.1873, p628. Ibid., Dec.1873, p739
4. J. Morley, The struggle for National Education p9.
5. National Education League, Monthly Paper no.19 June 1871, p3. Ibid. no.20 July 1871, pp12-13.
Bright informed Gladstone of this sentiment. B.M.Add.Mss 44112, ff193-194
G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright p409
Joseph Chamberlain made similar observations. P. Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain, pp9-10
6. Allon to Gladstone 2.VII.1873 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss. 44095, ff325-326.

only a symbol; it would be better tactics to oppose any increase in the level of the Parliamentary grant. If the dispute were confined to the religious issue, it would be difficult to retain the interest and support of the working-class leaders. Joseph Chamberlain warned:

"Unless you take hard ground, you will not get the support of the working class, who will consider the dispute as one... between Church Parsons and Dissenting Parsons, and in which they have little real interest."¹

Miall called for the repeal of the clause at the annual meeting of the league in Birmingham. He spoke of the disappointment of the 'friends of education', demanded the repeal of all clauses which promoted sectarian difference, and insisted that where public money was involved, the ultimate control should be invested in rate payers:

"...there was nothing more worthy of the efforts of true radicals than to put an end, if possible, to whatever cause might exist which went to create sectarian animosities... He joined the League in their endeavours to obtain the removal of that blot (sectarianism) upon the Elementary Education Act."²

Dilke, Chamberlain, Potter and Howell all spoke in similar vein, but it was Miall's speech which the Beehive discussed in its leading article.

"Let us hear what Mr. Miall urges on the matter, not only because he states his own views and feelings which are always worth listening to, but also because it is manifest from all accounts that in every word he said, he carried with him the whole body of representative men whom he was addressing."³

The sectarian bias of some of the newly founded School Boards was another weapon with which dissenters could attack the act, and Miall chaired a conference of leading dissenters at Manchester in 1872 which resolved that a national system of education must confine itself to secular teaching, religious education being the responsibility of individual denominations.⁴ Miall urged

1. Quoted in P. Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain p12
2. Beehive, 21.X.1871 pp11-12. F. Adams, Elementary School Contest p274
3. Beehive, 21.X.1871, p8
4. Nonconformist 31.I.1872 pp105-108. F. Adams Elementary School Contest p278
See also N.J. Richards, "Religious Controversy and the School Boards 1870-1902". Educational Studies vol. XVIII no.2 1970, pp181-182
W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation (London 1972) p252, n2.

dissenters to work with the league for an amendment of the act along these lines, and promised there would be a total breach between the government and its dissenting supporters, unless the government was prepared to compromise. The conference resolved to withhold support from liberal candidates who would not pledge themselves to amendment of the act in the interests of religious equality, even if this meant a liberal defeat.¹

In the session of 1873, Forster introduced some amendments to the 1870 Act, which fell short of the Nonconformist's requirements. Clause 25 was not abolished; the fees of poor children in denominational schools were henceforth to be paid by the Poor Law Guardians instead of by School Boards, and School Boards were not to be made universal. Forster evidently regarded Miall as the leading opponent at this time, for he remarked to Lord Ripon, "Without doubt, they (the amendments) would be opposed by the league, and by Miall and Co."² The Liberation Society commented that Forster had abolished clause 25 and then re-enacted it in a more objectionable form.³ The Nonconformist regarded the amendments as worse than the original act, and further evidence of the contemptuous attitude of the government towards the principles of its dissenting allies.⁴ The government was making no real effort to conciliate dissenters. The Beehive warned that such obstinacy could only result in electoral defeat,⁵ while the Congregationalist indicated there could be no reconciliation between government and dissenters until Liberal leaders ceased sacrificing the rights of dissenters to the pretensions of the Anglican clergy.⁶ Frederic Harrison observed that a "...great body of sectarian agitation has been called into political activity."⁷ Blackwood's Magazine oversimplified the issue when it regarded

1. Congregationalist, Vol. I, 1872, p633. P. Fraser Joseph Chamberlain p11
2. Reid, T. Wemyss, Life of W.E. Forster i, 554
3. Liberator, July 1873, ppl21-122.
4. Nonconformist, 2.VII.1873, p657
5. Beehive, 18.V.1872, p2
6. Congregationalist, Vol. II, 1873. p768; cf Ibid., Vol. I 1872, ppl84-185
7. Fortnightly Review, Jan. 1874, ppl47-148

the quarrels over education as inevitable, "...simply because it forms a convenient battlefield for the contending sects who compose Mr. Gladstone's nominal majority."¹

In the midst of turmoil in his own party, Gladstone called an election early in 1874. Miall did not contest his seat at Bradford on the grounds of ill-health, and felt dubious about Liberal prospects. The Nonconformist was concerned that the Liberals should show some sign of being prepared to consider the wishes of their dissenting supporters, for their record in this respect had been poor:

"...we do contend that there are humiliations to which no body of independent men can knowingly subject themselves without inflicting deep and lasting injury upon the national character. Such a humiliation has been, we think, inflicted upon the friends of religious equality by the Vice-President of the Privy Council, and countenanced by the political sanction of the Premier. The offence strikes us as of a nature which cannot be lightly condoned, and we can only proclaim our entire sympathy with those who, however painful it may be to their previous associations, are determined to call the chiefs of it to account."²

The National Education League made the education question an electoral issue, demanding that the government commit itself to a national system of education. It secured the return of many members committed to the repeal of clause 25, and viewed the defeat of the Liberals with equanimity. Its historian commented;

"The defeat of the Liberal party was not an unmixed evil. It has taught the country that no Government will be allowed to juggle with great principles with impunity."³

Gladstone himself made little reference to the education question in the election campaign, hoping that his proposals for tax reductions would rally support for the Liberals. But it was not sufficiently attractive as a programme at a time when Chamberlain was demanding, "Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools and Free Labour."⁴

1. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 114 Nov. 1873, p627
2. Nonconformist 4.II.1874 p97; cf J. Guinness Rogers, Autobiography (London 1903) p173
British Quarterly Review, vol. LVIII July 1873, p205. J. Morley
The Struggle for National Education pp2,15
3. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest pp300-301
4. W.H. Maehl, "Gladstone, the Liberals and the election of 1874."
Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research vol. XXXVI 1963, pp53-69

Chamberlain believed the Liberals had been defeated because they had been utterly demoralised by Gladstone and Forster, and instead of trying to arouse the enthusiasm of dissenters and the working classes, had fought the election on the basis of "...the meanest manifesto that ever proceeded from a great minister."¹ Nor did he believe that the election had been a triumph for dissenters; he thought them 'very hazy' as to the principles involved in the education question, and deprecated their general reluctance to co-operate with the working classes, "...without whose assistance further advances in the direction of religious equality are impossible."² He accused dissenters of being indifferent or even hostile to the aspirations of Trades Unionists and agricultural labourers, and pointed out that the Liberals had only done well in the Midlands and the Northern counties, where they had appealed directly to working-class electors, and where dissenters had supported the reforms demanded by the industrial and agricultural working class:

"I feel that this narrowness in respect to general politics on the part of many of the rank and file of Dissent will be fatal to the success of our special aims, unless we can induce and make a more generous recognition of the claims of the masses."³

Whatever the tactical miscalculations of Gladstone may have contributed to his defeat in 1874, the unpopularity of the Education Act is an important part of the explanation. Government actions towards the end of the last Parliament "...went very far indeed towards extinguishing the fire of enthusiasm which in 1868 was found to be of such eminent service to the Liberal leaders."⁴

1. J. Chamberlain to H. Allon 13.II.1874. A. Peel Letters to a Victorian Editor (London 1929), p43
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. See also J. Chamberlain, "The next page of the Liberal Party Programme" Fortnightly Review Oct. 1874, pp405-429.
4. National Education League, Monthly Paper no.51 Feb.1874, p2. See also J.F. Glaser, "English Nonconformity and the decline of Liberalism." American Historical Review vol.LXIII no.I Oct. 1957, pp352-363.

The Nonconformist welcomed the new minister in charge of education, Lord Sandon, in terms which left no doubt about its feelings towards the author of the 1870 act:

"We do not think there is any reason to suppose that Lord Sandon will be a less liberal administrator than Mr. Forster...We may be wrong, but our decided conviction is that, in respect to the working of the act, the cause of national education will lose nothing by the change of government."¹

Sandon introduced a bill in 1876 to amend Forster's act in detail. It allowed School Boards to compel attendance, made it illegal to employ children under the age of 10, and adjusted the level and distribution of grants to schools. The Nonconformist objected in particular to the clause permitting compulsory attendance, stressing the problems of areas with only one denominational school.² It deplored the feebleness of opposition to the measure in Parliament, in particular the failure of dissenters to unite, and welcomed the election of Joseph Chamberlain as member for Birmingham, seeing in him a new leader.³ The bill became law, and was condemned as likely to inflict injustice, strengthen denominational interests, and inhibit the development of a national system.⁴ The Record saw the matter in a wider perspective:

"The result of the recent education debates constitutes the most decisive check which the crusade against the Establishment has yet received. It marks a turn of the tide, of far more importance than the defeat of Mr. Miall's direct motions for Disestablishment in the House of Commons."⁵

With Miall in retirement, the Nonconformist fell silent upon the education question. After the election of 1880 it was able to welcome the appointment of Mundella to the education department, as someone who would pursue an impartial policy and show an unsectarian spirit.⁶ A few months before Miall died, the Nonconformist published an obituary of Baines, and one sentence

1. Nonconformist, 25.II.1874, p181. The National Education League expressed a similar view. National Education League, Monthly Paper no.51 Feb.1874, pp1-2
2. Nonconformist, 31.V.1876, pp541-542
3. Ibid., 28.VI.1876, pp637-638,650; Ibid., 5.VII.1876, p661
4. Ibid., 3.I.1877, p25
5. Ibid., 16.VIII.1876, p809
6. Nonconformist & Independent, 6.V.1880, p468

might well serve as Miall's own epitaph so far as his work for education is concerned. "He championed the cause of voluntary education till obliged to succumb to the 'logic of facts'."¹ In practical terms, Miall achieved little in the field of education. He represented an important part of the opposition to government intervention in education from 1841 to 1867, though the extreme voluntarist position which he adopted did not receive the unanimous support of dissenters. "Such an abstract doctrine of the province of Government was never accepted by the wisest and strongest heads of the dissenting bodies."² Between 1841 and 1867 he and his colleagues inhibited direct legislative intervention, winning their most notable success at the expense of Sir James Graham in 1843. But they were powerless to prevent the gradual extension of government influence through the Committee of the Privy Council and an ever-increasing government grant to schools. Through his work with the Voluntary Schools Association, Miall tried to present an alternative to state intervention, as a complement to his printed views. In 1867 he had to admit defeat, and thereafter could only attempt to influence the nature of legislation, as an M.P. and through extra-parliamentary pressure. He found it impossible to influence the Liberal leadership, and the act of 1870 left him profoundly dissatisfied. It was little consolation to have his prediction, that it would split the Liberal party, borne out by the election of 1874.

However, the importance of his work should not be judged in terms of its practical results. In the circumstances of 19th century politics, when the majority of newspapers were controlled by the 'establishment', any radical or dissenting cause needed a journal of its own, and this the Nonconformist provided for the voluntarists. Through it, Miall was able to present the arguments of that party and to influence a section of public opinion. As its spokesman, he became a member of the Newcastle Commission. In the final

1. Nonconformist & Independent, 9.XII.1880, pl274
2. Francis Adams, Elementary School Contest, ppl36-137

analysis, the education question was as important for Miall as he for it. He was able, over a long period, to treat it as an aspect of disestablishment, the raison d'être of his political career. When he introduced his motion for disestablishment in 1871, it was in a climate of hostility towards the Church of England which had been created by the education debates of 1870. The support which he gained both in Parliament and in the country was probably due less to his presentation of an abstract issue, than to his application of his principles in the debates upon the Education Act of 1870.

CHAPTER 2

RADICAL DISSENTERS AND UNIVERSITY REFORM

Part 1. The background	103
Part 2. Parliament and University Reform	110
Part 3. Miall and University Reformers	131
Part 4. Miall and Gladstone	145

Unlike the question of popular education, that of university reform was one which Miall approached from a restricted viewpoint. He took little interest in the broad aspects of the question, the building of new universities, or the reform of the curriculum. His concern was with the position of Oxford and Cambridge as integral parts of the Church of England, and the exclusion of dissenters from them by religious tests. He regarded this exclusion as a major dissenting grievance, since the endowments of the universities, he believed, were national property, and should be available to the whole nation, not monopolised by one particular denomination. The campaign was one of principle; he did not anticipate significant practical results. He himself had not attended a university, and he did not expect that many dissenters would go up to Oxford or Cambridge, even if religious tests were removed. His attack upon their exclusiveness was part of his campaign to disestablish the Church of England. Outright disestablishment was not a political possibility in the 1840s, but a piecemeal approach could produce limited results. If he were successful in making the benefits of Oxford and Cambridge available to dissenters as well as to Anglicans, without qualification, the Church of England would no longer have the exclusive use of collegiate endowments, and would no longer be able to impose teaching more appropriate to a seminary than to a modern university. This would be partial disendowment, and it is not without significance that Miall was especially determined to sever the link between collegiate fellowships and ordination.

Part 1. The background

This approach to the question ignored many important aspects of the mid-nineteenth century debate upon university reform in England. The crucial questions of the relationship between colleges and university, of the relationship between tutorial and professorial teaching, interested Miall

only insofar as they bore upon the disestablishment aspect of the question. Yet these were fundamental questions, with implications far beyond the older universities. Most of the universities and colleges founded in the nineteenth century presented no obstacles to the admission of dissenters. London University imposed no religious tests upon undergraduates; the provincial colleges followed its lead. Manchester was organised upon the German system, with professorial teaching and without residence requirements. For many reformers, this represented an ideal solution to the problems caused by the collegiate system, and a leading nonconformist reformer, Heywood, caused Huber's influential book, English Universities, to be translated into English. This was complemented by a volume of W.C. Perry, which described the German universities.¹ Curiously, Miall made no use of these arguments, even when many of his allies within Oxford were advocating a strengthening of the professorial side, and the opening of non-collegiate halls of residence. Nor did he campaign for new provincial colleges on the Manchester model, though he paid lip service to university extension in the form of middle class examinations.²

Its restricted objectives notwithstanding, Miall's approach to the university question is worth examining as an illustration of his political methods. Some of his most cherished convictions were sacrificed, as they were irrelevant to the question. There was no scope for the voluntaryist argument which he had used so consistently in the struggle over elementary education, for he wanted dissenters to share in the endowments which he believed were for the use of all citizens. Further, he required, and obtained, the support of the Unitarians: led by Heywood, they amongst the dissenting sects had taken the lead in the university question, and had shown little sympathy with the voluntary argument so far as education was concerned.

1. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford (London 1965) p126

2. Ibid., pp283 ff

As a matter of principle, Miall was opposed to state intervention in most aspects of national life, but he was forced to concede that only legislation could solve the university problem in the terms in which he saw it. The constitution of Oxford led to deadlock over any major question of reform: the heads of houses were counterbalanced by the college tutors, and the blocking power of M.A.s could be relied upon to preserve the status quo. Thus Miall, like Gladstone, admitted the necessity of government intervention, and his campaign had to culminate in parliamentary action. A dissenting lobby on its own could achieve little in this matter; the argument of dissenting deprivation was a small part of the total question, and could not be persuasive without other arguments and other allies. Miall's major role was as a forger of alliances between the various interested groups. He himself represented a powerful group of political dissenters, the Liberation Society, and on its behalf he made contact with the reformers inside the universities. He also made contact with the Unitarian reformers, and through them, with members of Parliament. The acts of 1854 and 1871 substantially abolished university tests, and Miall played an important part in this success. He himself regarded it as a triumph of disestablishment rather than of university reform, but its outcome was the foundation of Mansfield College in 1889,¹ and free access for dissenters to the older universities.

Before Miall's arrival upon the political scene in 1841, there had been extensive debate upon the university question. A large body of opinion believed that the older universities should be reformed, though there was no precise agreement about what was meant by reform. The Unitarian Christian Reformer pointed out that English universities stood alone in the matter of subscription: in the most bigoted catholic countries, non-conformists had no difficulty in attending a university, or in obtaining a

1. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale (London 1898) pp494ff

degree.¹ The Dissenting Deputies, speaking for the London congregations, cited exclusion from the older universities as one of six remaining dissenting grievances,² though they never initiated a movement for reform, being content to wait upon events.

The question had been discussed in Parliament, notably when a motion to abolish university tests was introduced by George Wood in 1834. Peel's attitude was not particularly encouraging for dissenters, since he regarded the bill as a conspiracy to undermine the position of the Church of England. Universities were schools of 'theological learning':

"If religious instruction were discountenanced within them, could they long continue to be the nursing places for a body of pious and well-educated clergymen?...With all religions sheltered within their walls, would not the different colleges be soon embittered by dissensions arising out of religious controversy?"³

Peel saw no solution consonant with the existing structure of the university, but Edward Stanley, the future Lord Derby, gave dissenters better reason to hope. Referring to a petition drawn up by a group of Cambridge reformers, he declared that he agreed with its fundamental principle,

"...namely, the expediency of introducing, as far as it could be done with safety to the interests of the Established Church, all protestant Dissenters whatever, as well as those professing the Catholic religion, to a participation in the civil privileges and benefits of the two national Universities."⁴

Save as an expression of general sympathy, this declaration was of little practical value, because, as Peel pointed out, the interests of the Established Church and those of dissenters were irreconcilable.. Stanley himself was only prepared to postpone the imposition of tests until the first degree had been taken, which would still prevent those who could not subscribe to the 39 articles from proceeding to university honours.⁵ Lord Althorp gave less qualified support, and the bill secured a majority of 174 in the Commons.⁶

1. Christian Reformer, Jan. 1831, p33. I am indebted to Prof. W.R. Ward for references to this periodical.
2. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (Cambridge 1951) p372 Eclectic Review, ns vol.XXV 1849, p645.
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series XXIV, pp698-708 (especially p702)
4. Ibid., pp682-683
5. Ibid., pp688-689
6. Ibid., p709

Though the Lords rejected the bill, dissenters could be encouraged both by the size of the majority, and by the evidence of support for their demands within the universities. Stanley had made reference to a petition drawn up by a group of Cambridge reformers, which consisted of 62 members of Senate, including two masters of colleges and nine professors.¹ Adam Sedgwick was a prominent member of this group, which believed that the university should be as widely accessible as possible, and saw as one possible method of making it so,

"...the expediency of abrogating by legislative enactment every religious test exacted from members of the University before they proceed to degrees, whether of bachelor, master or doctor in Arts, Law and Physics."²

Sedgwick himself thought that the exclusion of dissenters from the universities was of dubious legality in view of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts,³ but he nevertheless hoped that, if tests were abolished, dissenters would voluntarily accept the discipline and ethos of the colleges.⁴

In the following year, a bill introduced into the Lords by Lord Radnor was defeated, but the Duke of Wellington, as Chancellor of Oxford, urged the heads of houses to reform the more obvious abuses, especially those concerning subscription.⁵ The position of those at Oxford who upheld the need for subscription was made more difficult both by the fact that Cambridge did not demand subscription until graduation, and by the controversy over the appointment of R.D. Hampden as Professor of Moral Philosophy. His views were eventually declared to be in violation of the 39 articles, to which he had subscribed on matriculation. Other such cases made it difficult to argue that subscription did in fact achieve its objectives.⁶ In 1835, Peel's own attitude became less intransigent. The

1. J.W. Clark and T.M. Hughes The Life and letters of Adam Sedgwick (Cambridge 1890) i, 419

2. Ibid., i, 419

3. Ibid., i, 425

4. Ibid., i, 422

5. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford p98

6. Ibid., p116

Tamworth Manifesto announced that he would consider the position of any class of subjects excluded from the study of law and medicine, and any regulation which gave advantages to one group of society while denying them to another, should be modified.¹

Evidence of radical interest in the question came from the writings of Sir William Hamilton, many of whose criticisms of the older universities Miall was to use in his own campaign. Hamilton was particularly disturbed by the way in which the colleges had usurped the powers of the universities; by their exclusiveness through religious tests, they prevented the universities from being accessible to the whole nation. Collegiate exclusiveness was reinforced by the fact that residence in colleges was the only means of participation in the universities. The universities were no more than federations of privately endowed colleges, whose heads formed the governing bodies of the universities, and exercised a totally reactionary influence.² By the improper imposition of religious tests, the colleges had transformed what should have been national universities into seminaries for the exclusive enjoyment of one particular sect.³ The Edinburgh Review went on to show that the grievance of dissenters arose from the usurpation by the colleges of the functions of the university; the solution was to restore the universities to their proper position:

"Now, the claim of the Dissenters to admission to the public university cannot justly be refused: nor, were the university what in law it ought to be, would the slightest difficulty or inconvenience be experienced in rendering that right available."⁴

The influence of college tutors would have to be reduced, by placing more emphasis upon professorial teaching, and the monopoly of colleges could be broken by establishing non-collegiate halls of residence, without religious

1. Ed.G.M. Young & W.D. Handcock, English Historical Documents 1833-1874 XII(I) (London 1956) pp127-131
2. Edinburgh Review, June 1831, pp384, 393, 427
3. Ibid., Dec. 1831, pp496, 499.
4. Ibid., Oct. 1834, pp202, 205, 211-212.

tests. As a general consideration, the Edinburgh Review stressed that dissenters must tackle the problem as a university question, and avoid becoming embroiled with the individual rights of colleges:

"...a restoration of the University is, in fact, the only mode through which Dissenters ought to condescend to accept admission."¹

By the time Miall emerged as a national figure, there was nothing new to say about the question. It had been publicly aired, and there was evidence of dissenting and radical support as well as support from within the universities themselves for the redress of this particular dissenting grievance. It was the task of Miall, and other reformers, to keep the question before Parliament, to build up effective support from the various groups interested in the question, and to ensure that any scheme of university reform took account of the interests of dissenters. In the early issues of the Nonconformist, references to university reform were sporadic. There was little prospect of achieving anything significant under the Tory government of Peel, and its first reference to the problem was as part of the conventional list of dissenting grievances, which in practical terms meant, "...church rates, exclusion from the universities, compulsory celebration of marriage rites at the Established Church."²

Dissenters were criticised for doing nothing to secure redress of these grievances, but at this stage of his career, Miall was pre-occupied with the agitation for complete suffrage, which he regarded as a prerequisite for all other reform. He was deeply involved with opposition to Sir James Graham's proposals for factory education, and to Peel's proposals for the endowment of Maynooth College. These were immediate threats to dissenters, and in contrast, university reform was a long term project of peripheral significance.

1. Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1835, pp423-435, especially p432.
2. Nonconformist, 21.IV.1841, p17. Its contemporary, the Eclectic Review, described the exclusion of dissenters from the national universities as 'impolitic' and an 'irritating grievance'. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XXV 1849, p645.

Part 2. Parliament and University Reform

Compared with its saturation coverage of Graham's Factory bill, the Nonconformist dealt cursorily with a measure introduced into Parliament by Christie in 1843, which proposed to make it possible for dissenters to attend the older universities. Despite the fact that Christie himself was a dissenter, and his measure supported by the Dissenting Deputies,¹ the Nonconformist suspected it was a stratagem to avert more fundamental attacks upon the establishment:

"We have no wish to stir up suspicions when Charity would forbid their indulgence, but this sudden return to an agitation for a redress of grievances has, to us, about it a strong odour of whiggism. We hope it is not intended to divert dissenters from making open war upon the principles of an establishment..."²

It summarily dismissed the fears of opponents of the motion, that the abolition of tests would undermine the discipline of the colleges, and noted with indifference the failure of the proposal. Discussion of the issue was not even given an article to itself, but was included in a summary of weekly news.

The next extended reference to university reform did not occur until 1845, and was prompted by the prospective condemnation of W.G. Ward, and of Tract XC, by Convocation. For the Nonconformist, the whole affair illustrated the futility of attempting to ensure religious conformity by tests and subscriptions to oaths.³ As was apparent from the case of Ward, subscription to the 39 articles on matriculation was no guarantee of subsequent orthodoxy, and the effect of religious tests was to inhibit change and progress. Oxford had remained unaffected by a general pressure for reform throughout the institutions of the kingdom, and external stimulus was needed:

1. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p372
2. Nonconformist, 31.V.1843, p392
3. Ibid., 12.II.1845, p93

"The genius of that University has ever been famous for sectarianism of the straitest kind. Adhesiveness is its most prominent phrenological development. Its habits are even yet those of unenlightened times...a crystallisation of all the follies which the more general diffusion of light has exploded. It is almost the only cobwebbed corner of the kingdom which innovation has left entirely untouched."¹

However much the Nonconformist might distrust him, Christie had made university reform a Parliamentary issue once again; as well as securing some dissenting support, he had made contact with leading Oxford reformers, notably Jowett and Stanley.² In James Heywood, the dissenters found a more effective agitator for university reform, and the Nonconformist looked upon him as a leader. Heywood was a Unitarian who had been educated at Edinburgh, Geneva and Cambridge, though he was unable to take his degree at Cambridge because of the requirement of subscription to the 39 articles on graduation. He advocated the total abolition of tests and subscription, and encouraged the foundation of colleges to which dissenters were freely admitted, such as Owen's College at Manchester.³ With the end of Peel's ministry, there seemed a better prospect of obtaining university reform. The reforming groups within the universities were growing stronger, and both Russell and Gladstone believed that the universities would have to accept change. The majority of reformers believed that the first step was to discover the true state of affairs through a parliamentary commission, though Gladstone opposed this method of procedure,⁴ regarding it as, "... the first step in a long journey towards the nationalisation of the universities and the disestablishment of the Church of England."⁵ This, of course, was the light in which Miall regarded university reform.

1. Nonconformist., 12.II.1845,p93
2. G. Faber, Jowett (London 1957) p195
3. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp125-126. See above pp104
4. C.E. Mallett, A history of the University of Oxford (London 1927) iii, 299
5. J. Morley, Life of Gladstone(London 1903)i, 497

In 1847, Russell informed the newly elected Chancellor of Cambridge, the Prince Consort, that the government was in favour of appointing a commission to inquire into schools and colleges of royal foundation.¹ The Prince Consort expressed the hope that Cambridge might be allowed to reform itself without outside interference, but in the next year a memorial, organised by Heywood and signed by 224 members of both ancient universities, was sent to Russell.² It claimed that the universities could not be left to reform themselves, and petitioned the government to set up a Parliamentary commission:

"...the constitution of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and of the Colleges (now inseparably connected with their academical system) is such as in a great measure to preclude them from introducing those changes which are necessary for increasing their usefulness and efficiency. That under the circumstances, believing that the aid of the Crown is the only remedy for the above mentioned defects, your Memorialists pray that your Lordship will advise Her Majesty to issue her Royal Commission of Inquiry into the best methods of securing improvements of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge."³

Russell gave the memorial a sympathetic reception in July 1848, but did not act upon it immediately. Sedgwick felt that such an inquiry was inevitable; no Prime Minister could resist the demand for long.⁴ While the universities had introduced some changes, these had dealt mainly with the content of syllabuses,⁵ and had not touched the issues of tests and subscription to the 39 articles. It was clear that no measure which failed to deal with these matters would be acceptable to dissenters. When Heywood introduced a motion into Parliament to set up the commission in 1850, it gained a majority, and governmental backing. However, Russell did not intend that it should investigate the working of tests, and such information as it produced on this matter was incidental.⁶ This reservation was not immediately apparent to dissenters and reformers, who welcomed the commission.

1. J.W. Clark and T.M. Hughes, Adam Sedgwick ii, 169

2. Ibid. ii, 170-171

3. Ibid. ii, 170

4. Ibid. ii, 173

5. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford p152

6. D.A. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge (Cambridge 1947) p36

Sedgwick's view that the inquiry was politically irresistible proved accurate, for when Russell resigned as Prime Minister, his Tory successor, Derby, recalled his liberal stand in 1834, and allowed the commission to continue its work.

The Nonconformist welcomed the commission, and listed the faults which it would reveal. Oxford, in which it was especially interested, was charged with catering for too few students in proportion to the endowments it possessed. Instead of remaining a preserve of the aristocracy, it must revert to its original function of educating poor scholars. In fact, the fees were now so high that only the wealthy could take advantage of its facilities.¹ Miall himself regarded Oxford and Cambridge as hives of iniquity. Describing them as 'centres of abandoned profligacy', he affected to be horrified by the thought that they produced the legally appointed expositors of Christianity.² In common with more moderate dissenting opinion, the Nonconformist believed that if the universities were open to a greater proportion of the population, they would be compelled to bring their teaching up to date.³ The legal position of the universities was examined, in an attempt to show that they were susceptible to Parliamentary intervention, and could not shelter behind the claim that their endowments were private property, or that the wills of benefactors must remain inviolate. The Nonconformist followed J.S. Mill in arguing that the universities were the trustees, not the proprietors of their endowments, as these were ultimately the property of the nation.⁴

1. Nonconformist, 24.VII.1850, p598 E Miall, The Social Influences of the State Church (London 1867)
2. E. Miall, The British Churches in relation to the British People (London 1849) p368.
3. Nonconformist, 24.VII.1850, p598. British Quarterly Review, vol.XVI (1852), p293. E. Miall, The Social Influences of the State Church pp27ff
4. J.S. Mill "The Right and Wrong of State Interference with Corporation and Church Property" Jurist, Feb.1833. Printed in J.S. Mill, Dissertations and Discussions (London 1875) i, 1-2. See also E.A. Freeman, Disestablishment and Disendowment. What are they? (London 1874) pp8-24, 54-55. Freeman stressed the principle of parliamentary competence in such matters.

Parliament was quite entitled to supervise the use to which national property was put, and the Nonconformist showed there was a precedent for Parliament's altering the intentions of benefactors, when it had dissolved chantries and re-allocated their property in the sixteenth century.

It is evident that these arguments were capable of wider application, and could be deployed against the Church of England as a whole. Miall was attacking the monopolisation of national resources by a privileged group, and this was the whole basis of his case against the State Church. So far, he had argued on a legalistic basis, but he was too skilful a politician to neglect an appeal to popular prejudice. While deprecating current agitation over the pretensions of the Papacy, he pointed out that recent religious developments in Oxford gave grounds for fearing the spread of sacerdotalism, and an insidious advance by the Roman Catholic church.¹ The Oxford Movement could not have occurred had the university not been identified exclusively with one sect, and had it not sought to impose, by tests, a particular version of truth. An unbalanced atmosphere had resulted, genuine research and inquiry had been stifled:

"By shutting the gates of the national seats of learning against all but her own members, and imposing upon them a foregone conclusion as to the truth of her teaching, she nullified the tendencies of high intellectual culture in its application to the settlement of all questions affecting her own position. Freedom of inquiry she forbade - thoroughness of research and impartiality of judgment she discouraged - candour and self-distrust she made all but impossible."²

When the report of the commission was published in 1852, Miall resumed the offensive. Scenting success for reformers, he sought to establish in the minds of his readers the essential connection between the improvement of intellectual standards and the abolition of tests and subscription. He was concerned to show that the type of reform recommended by the commission could not be achieved unless the universities were open to all, without any

1. Nonconformist, 18.XII.1850, p1019
2. E. Miall The Social Influences of the State Church p30 : cf British Quarterly Review, vol.XVI (1852), pp320,367

religious discrimination, thus making them into genuinely national institutions. He was concerned to destroy a monopoly, whose abolition was the prerequisite of reform, rather than to accept a series of piecemeal reforms.¹ Hence a series of articles appeared towards the end of 1852, the first time the Nonconformist had devoted more than a single article to the question. This contrasts oddly with its incessant writing on questions such as educational or franchise reform; perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that Miall was not yet in contact with the major university reformers.

In the first of the articles, the Nonconformist argued that if the universities were opened to dissenters, they would be compelled to reform their teaching, as the narrow range of subjects at present offered would not suffice for the demands of an unsectarian clientele, not necessarily interested in the prospects of a college fellowship.² As Professor Ward has shown, there was force in this argument. One major obstacle to the admission of dissenters to Oxford, apart from subscription, was the fact that the Oxford curriculum was based upon the classics, while dissenters' schools tended to concentrate upon modern subjects. Quite apart from the fact that Cambridge did not require subscription until graduation, dissenters tended to favour it because of its greater emphasis upon mathematics.³ The Nonconformist went on to show that many of the objectives of reformers would be achieved if college endowments were restored to their original eleemosynary purpose; the universities could then provide a facility commensurate with their resources. The commission had noted the high cost of education in Oxford and Cambridge in comparison with Durham,⁴ and the idea of non-collegiate halls of residence began to attract the support of dissenters.⁵ Religious tests were shown to perpetuate religious inequality, for not only did they exclude dissenters from the enjoyment of national

1. E. Miall What is the separation of Church and State? (London 1851) p191

2. Nonconformist, 22.IX.1852, p737; cf British Quarterly Review, vol. XVI 1852, p325

3. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford p243

4. C.E. Mallett A history of the University of Oxford. iii, 305

5. British Quarterly Review, Vol. XVI 1852, p395.

property, but also excluded them from careers which required a university degree. The British Quarterly Review, speaking for moderate dissenters, claimed that, "...in pleading for this freer and better condition of our universities, we do not plead as Nonconformists, but simply as Englishmen."¹ Realising that few dissenters would benefit directly from university reform, the Nonconformist was careful to show that the abolition of tests would hasten the destruction of the state church.

It went on to examine in detail the evidence produced by the commission, and in the spirit of Sir William Hamilton, argued that the majority of difficulties arose because the colleges had usurped the powers of the university.² They, not the university, imposed tests, and since the university could only be attended as a consequence of college residence, it was the colleges which were inhibiting its development, and institutionalising sectarianism. Powerful support for this view came from Robert Lowe, who considered the solution lay in allowing M.A.s to open halls of residence, to provide the stimulus of competition.³ The colleges preserved their position because their heads composed the Hebdomadal Board, the governing body of Oxford, and the Nonconformist, in common with other reformers, believed that this body, and the Caput, the Cambridge equivalent, must be radically altered.⁴ It was critical of the practice of tying fellowships to ordination, since this prevented their being open to merit, and it ended the series with a scathing comment upon the way in which college revenues were often treated as private property by the fellows.⁵

The purpose of these articles was to remind dissenters that they had an interest in the fate of the commission's recommendations. It was probably difficult to sustain their interest in a cause from which few would benefit directly, and the references to sectarian monopoly, misuse of endowments and

1. British Quarterly Review, Vol.XVI 1852, p367.
2. Ibid., pp300, 307, cf Nonconformist, 29.IX.1852, p757
3. A.P. Martin The Life and Letters of Viscount Sherbrooke (London 1893) ii, 21-22.
4. Nonconformist, 13.X.1852, p797
5. Ibid., 6.X.1852, p777. 20.X.1852, p817

revenues, collegiate arrogation of the powers and functions of the university, election to university and college offices on grounds other than merit, combined to give a picture of selfish abuse and exclusiveness.

This situation was contrasted with London University, which had no religious tests, whose colleges were subordinate to the university, which offered a wide range of courses, and which, through the foundation of affiliated provincial colleges provided a truly national facility.¹

The Nonconformist concentrated upon those parts of the report of the commission which provided ammunition for its attacks upon the Church of England. It did not discuss many of the profound issues which the report raised in any great detail. There was little examination of the question of strengthening professorial teaching, either by diminishing the power of college tutors, or by promoting teaching by private tutors, as the British Quarterly Review recommended. The antithesis between Oxford as a centre of scholarship, as the reformers desired it to become, and the university in its former role of religious and pastoral care, was not pursued in depth by the Nonconformist. Nor was the question of affiliated halls of residence, which would have eased the position of dissenters, both because they need have had no tests, and would have been less expensive for undergraduates than were the colleges.²

So far, Miall had simply used the university question as a means of attacking the Church of England, and had exploited opportunities as they arose rather than taking any initiative. As parliamentary candidate for Rochdale in 1852, he made scarcely any reference to the question, concentrating instead upon issues such as franchise reform or education, which would have wider appeal. However, government action upon the question became a definite possibility in the session of 1854. The Nonconformist reminded dissenters that they had been badly let down by the Whigs in 1834 over the admission of

1. Nonconformist, 24.XI.1852, p917

2. O. Chadwick The Victorian Church 2nd edition (London 1972) ii, 440-441
C.E. Mallett, A history of the University of Oxford iii, 309-314

dissenters to universities, and insisted that dissenters must fight for the full implementation of the commission's report.¹ It feared the government might dilute the recommendations, lest a really radical measure prove unacceptable to the House of Lords: the Spectator had urged dissenters to waive their claims to admission to the universities for this precise reason.² Miall saw no value, either to dissenters or to the universities themselves, in a measure which did not abolish religious tests, and he was prepared to do everything possible to ensure that dissenters' interests were not ignored, as they had been so frequently by supposedly sympathetic whig ministries. His constant emphasis upon the disestablishment aspect of the question bore immediate fruit, for the Liberation Society felt able to take an active part in the campaign; it gave Miall no assistance over the elementary education question until 1870, on the grounds that until then, its own principles were not directly involved. In contrast, as soon as the Oxford University bill was announced, the society's parliamentary sub-committee resolved to initiate a campaign of agitation in support of the admission of dissenters to the universities.³

The Liberation Society took the same view as Miall about the difficulty of involving dissenters; as a matter of tactics, it proposed to make an unqualified demand for the admission of dissenters. In contrast to the question of church rates, the university question was not of direct interest to many of its supporters. An involved and sophisticated plea, while it might allay the fears of opponents, could lead to confusion or indifference amongst dissenters themselves. The society based its campaign upon the premise that the universities were national property, available to all citizens. It issued a pamphlet entitled The Public Right to the Universities which was intended both to encourage its own members, and to attract influential support from outside the society. In the interests of gaining

1. Nonconformist, 15.II.1854, p129

2. Quoted in Nonconformist, ibid

3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 27.II.1854, f2 Minute Book, 6.III.1854

public sympathy, it drew up a series of resolutions for publication in newspapers. Beginning with the premise that civil rights and privileges should be enjoyed by all citizens without regard to their religious beliefs, it followed,

"That this principle is violated in the exclusion of all but members of the Church of England from the University of Oxford, and from the honorary and pecuniary rewards of learning at the University of Cambridge."¹

The second resolution used the argument of dissenting deprivation, showing that dissenters were debarred from positions in public life, careers in certain professions, and suffered social disadvantages by the inability to gain degrees from the ancient universities. These resolutions were inserted in all morning papers, except the Morning Post, in dissenting papers and in leading periodicals.² The parliamentary sub-committee reported that it had prepared a petition for Parliament, a circular addressed to influential public figures and to other dissenting organisations, appealing for their support. A press sub-committee was set up, which prepared, "...a considerable quantity of paragraph matter suitable for insertion in the periodicals and provincial journals."³ Miall's was an influential voice within the Liberation Society, and these recommendations reflect the general tone of the Nonconformist. Since 1852, he was able to act as a link between the society and Parliament, and he was a member of a deputation which met Russell in March 1854 and informed him of the minimum requirements of dissenters.⁴

The Dissenting Deputies lent their support to the efforts of the Liberation Society. They drafted a petition signed by 86 M.P.s, including Miall, representing dissenting, radical and Roman Catholic opinion, which requested the abolition of tests at matriculation so far as Oxford was concerned.

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 6.III.1854
2. Ibid., 16.III.1854
3. Ibid.
4. Nonconformist, 8.III.1854 p197

When the petition was presented, Russell refused to commit the cabinet to the demands of the petitioners, but intimated that he would raise no obstacles to amendments to the government bill introduced by independent members.¹ The Nonconformist was confident that the government measure would abolish tests and subscription. It reinforced its argument by citing the evidence of the census of religious attendance compiled in 1851, which showed that the Church of England could not claim the allegiance of the majority of the nation. Statistically, it was no longer possible to speak of a 'national faith', and force was given to the demand,

"...that the administration of certain trusts originally intended for the public benefit, but which can no longer be administered in conformity with a faith once universal, shall not be permitted to be carried on for the exclusive advantage of a particular sect."²

This would be achieved by the government making provision,

"...for the free admission of any of Her Majesty's subjects duly qualified by intellectual attainments, to matriculation and graduation at both these ancient universities, without the imposition of any religious tests."³

The Nonconformist sought, perhaps, to reassure opponents of reform, that it did not envisage a purely secular university. It was certain that there would still be a place for religious teaching in colleges even after tests had been abolished; college services would have to be less identified with the doctrines of one particular sect, but this would not be harmful to religion. It would have the advantage of undermining the "prestige of bigotry". So far as dissenters were concerned, the importance of the campaign was that they would be seen to be fighting for their claims, and governments would pay more attention to their demands in the future.

When the government bill was published, it proved in one respect a great disappointment to dissenters, for despite Russell's sympathy, it made no provision for the abolition of tests. Miall took action through the

1. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p373: W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford p198: Christian Reformer, April 1854, p247
2. Nonconformist, 8.III.1854, pp197-198
3. Ibid.

Liberation Society, proposing that a petitioning movement be organised, which would expose the weaknesses of the measure.¹ Since it failed to abolish tests, Oxford would remain an Anglican preserve, and would continue to benefit a minority of the population. Miall scorned Russell's argument that the inclusion of such a clause would jeopardise the measure in the Lords; such an argument merely underlined the subservience of the government to the Lords, and indirectly to the Established Church. That such a plea could be advanced by a responsible statesman made it all the more urgent for reformers of all opinions to join dissenters in fighting for their rights. These considerations apart, Miall approved of the bill. He announced that he would support its second reading, and would endeavour to secure the inclusion of an appropriate clause in committee. If unsuccessful, he would vote against its third reading.²

Gladstone had drafted the bill, despite his earlier opposition to the whole idea of a commission.³ He intended to secure Oxford against future criticism by removing the most glaring abuses, and he considered it urgent to strengthen the position of the university in relation to the colleges, and to strengthen the position of professors in relation to the heads of houses.⁴ The bill of 1854 sought to accomplish this by abolishing the Hebdomadal Board, and establishing a new governing body comprising heads of houses together with a number of professors and tutors elected by Congregation. The bill made it possible to establish private halls of residence, and empowered the commissioners to frame new statutes for the colleges. So far as it went, it was satisfactory to reformers, but the absence of any attempt to deal with the demands of dissenters moved Bright to comment that dissenters were required,

"...to hope all things, to believe all things and to endure all things."⁵

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book, 16.III.1854: Nonconformist, 15.III.1854, p217
2. Nonconformist, 15.III.1854, pp217-219.
3. C.E.Mallett, A history of the University of Oxford, iii, 317
J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition (Cambridge 1968) pp332-333
4. Gladstone to F. Meyrick 27.IV.1853; in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone i, 215-216
5. G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright (London 1913) p202

Russell introduced the bill in the Commons, and spoke mainly of the need to make the resources of Oxford more widely available. He announced that he sympathised with the claims of dissenters, but would prefer to deal with these in a separate measure.¹ The Eclectic Review voiced the scepticism of dissenters towards whig promises when it pointed out that there had already been twenty six divisions on ecclesiastical questions in the session, and in all of them the government had voted against the principle of religious equality.² It warned dissenters to uphold their principles, even at the risk of embarrassing the coalition government. Russell's attitude made it clear that dissenters themselves would have to compel the government to include a clause abolishing tests, and Miall had helped organise considerable extra-parliamentary pressure. This was intended partly to unite dissenting opinion, partly to show reformers within the universities that they had interests in common with dissenters, and partly to remind Tories that in 1834 Lord Stanley, now Lord Derby, and Chancellor of Oxford, had supported the admission of dissenters to Oxford.³

Whereas Miall had originally intended to support the bill on its first reading, he changed his plan, and along with ten other M.P.s, including Blackett and Heywood, attacked the bill on its introduction. According to the Nonconformist, his speech was not an unqualified success:

"Mr. Blackett generously led the way in expressing regret that the measure contained no provision for the removal of tests, and Mr. Miall followed him in a short speech, which, although it raised a titter at first, was afterwards listened to with that solemn silence which betokens a consciousness of unfair treatment."⁴

Miall was prompted to speak by the sense of mortification and humiliation which Russell's speech had induced. Arguing from the religious census of 1851, he claimed that the Church of England represented only one third of

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXI, pp892-911
2. Eclectic Review, ns vol. VII 1854, pp611-621
3. Nonconformist, 28.IV.1854, p525
4. Ibid., 22.III.1854, p246

the nation, yet the bill proposed to improve and perpetuate the national institutions of Oxford and Cambridge for the benefit of a minority. He pointed out that when taxation was discussed, Parliament took no account of religious commitment: anglicans, dissenters and unbelievers were all regarded as part of the nation. Yet, when a measure to extend the advantages of education was discussed, dissenters were not regarded as part of the nation. He requested the government to accept a clause which would permit the admission of dissenters, even at the risk of endangering the whole measure in the Lords:

"...Let the responsibility of throwing out the Bill, in consequence of its containing such a clause, rest upon the members of that other place. He did not think that such a responsibility ought to rest upon Her Majesty's Government, unless, indeed, they concurred in the exclusion of Dissenters from the national institutions of Oxford and Cambridge."¹

It may be doubted whether Miall's speech was spontaneous, for it was already clear that Heywood would introduce the type of clause which Miall had urged upon the government, and Heywood was speaking for a broad range of reforming opinion.² One prominent opponent of university reform considered that the bill, as it stood, would give dissenters the substance of their demands.

John Keble regarded the measure as 'expressly anti-collegiate', its whole tendency being to separate Oxford from the Church of England. If the bill became law, even without the modifications demanded by dissenters,

"...the University will be called on to consider how far the 'natural and reasonable desire' of dissenters to get into it may be gratified."³

However, Miall and his dissenting colleagues wanted a definite commitment from the government. They made their next move at the committee stage of the bill, with a proposal to establish a select committee which would investigate the claims of dissenters, and the whole character of religious teaching in the universities. This was justified on the grounds that the

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXI, pp912-914
2. Christian Reformer, April 1854, p246
3. J.T. Coleridge, Memoir of the Rev. John Keble (London 1870) p389

commission had not investigated these aspects of the question. The Nonconformist admitted that this proposal, if successful, would delay settlement of the question: it was prepared to accept delay, for the bill, in its present form, settled nothing so far as dissenters were concerned.¹

Heywood introduced the motion for a select committee, and the Nonconformist urged dissenters to exploit the fact that Aberdeen's government was a coalition, which depended upon the support of dissenting M.P.s. It had shown little gratitude for this support, and dissenters must be prepared to risk bringing down the government if it failed to give them satisfaction.²

The Eclectic Review gave similar advice.³ Russell, despite his earlier sympathy with dissenting demands, was annoyed at Heywood's proposal. He accused both Heywood and his supporters, notably Hadfield, of ingratitude and illiberality, and argued that the motion, if successful, would deprive the bill of any prospect of success.⁴ Miall came to Hadfield's support with a speech which argued that the whole logic of the bill was to treat the universities as national institutions. There was no sense in postponing consideration of dissenters' claims, and it was far from being illiberal to insist upon such consideration. He did not believe it was good for the nation that the prejudices of the Lords should be continually deferred to by the Commons. The bill had been drafted in an illiberal spirit to secure the compliance of the bishops, and Miall sarcastically suggested adding episcopal illiberality to the existing elements of the constitution.⁵

Heywoods motion was lost by 170 votes to 90.

At the annual meeting of the Liberation Society, Miall claimed there was extensive support among M.P.s for a measure to admit dissenters to the university without tests.⁶ He believed dissenting M.P.s should frame an

1. Nonconformist, 27.IV.1854, p345

2. Ibid., 3.V.1854, p365

3. Eclectic Review, ns vol. VII 1854, pp611-621, especially p620

4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXII, pp960-963

5. Ibid., pp964-966

6. Nonconformist, 10.V.1854, pp387-391

appropriate measure, and allow the House of Lords to accept the odium of rejecting it. A demonstration of the reactionary character of the Lords would help dissenters to gain radical support, and one feature of establishment, the presence of Anglican bishops in the House of Lords, would come into prominence. Miall's conduct at this stage is more comprehensible if he is regarded as pursuing a political advantage by exploiting the momentarily exposed position of the Established Church. As Keble had pointed out, it was possible that the government bill would have given dissenters the substance of their demands, without the clause to abolish tests upon which Miall insisted. The unitarian leader, J.H. Thom, insisted in a speech at Liverpool that dissenters wanted admission to the universities, not necessarily to the colleges. "We do not ask for any of the loaves and fishes of Endowments - we ask only for the benefit of true learning."¹ The setting up of non-collegiate halls, as was possible under the bill, could have satisfied this demand, but Miall was as interested in a victory over the establishment as in the admission of dissenters to Oxford.

Heywood introduced two further amendments to the bill, one to remove religious tests at matriculation, the other to remove them at graduation. He approached the Liberation Society with the suggestion of a great meeting in London in support of his proposals, and the society's parliamentary committee gave its backing.² The executive committee suggested holding the meeting at the London Tavern on 21st June, and sent an invitation to the Dissenting Deputies.³ The Deputies agreed to co-operate in this instance, and in the case of questions where there was coincidence of opinion between the two bodies. However, they would not agree to anything more than an ad hoc arrangement, and made it clear that they saw a purpose in joint action only insofar as they represented the dissenters of the metropolis, while the Liberation Society represented the provinces.⁴

1. Christian Reformer, July 1854, p419

2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 8.VI.1854

3. Liberation Society Minute Book, 9.VI.1854

4. Ibid.

Heywood's first amendment secured a large majority of 91 votes, the second was lost by only 9 votes, and at a later stage he succeeded in securing a clause for the abolition of tests on admission to first degrees.¹ The Nonconformist was surprised and delighted, and attributed success partly to the liberal example of Cambridge in respect of tests, partly to the careful organisation of dissenting M.P.s., partly to the support of Roman Catholics, and partly to the pressure of the Liberation Society. Miall observed,

"...that the combination of these groups proved how much may be gained in the political world by making parliamentary agitation a constant and specific business."²

Gladstone claimed that the vote upon Heywood's clauses took all M.P.s by surprise, and he believed that the statistical evidence of the 1851 religious census induced many to give their support. Like the Nonconformist, he was conscious of the composition of Heywood's supporters, and he considered that their success completely altered the direction and purpose of the government measure.³ On this interpretation, Miall and his supporters had won a decisive victory; a measure of university reform now involved a species of disestablishment.

The amended bill passed its third reading, but the Nonconformist was not sanguine about its prospects in the Lords. While it recalled Derby's liberal stance of 1834, it felt that as Chancellor of Oxford he would be under pressure from reactionary interests, and doubted if the House of Lords would prove more than usually sympathetic to a question of religious equality.⁴ In the event, Derby lived up to the Nonconformist's hopes, and the House of Lords accepted the bill, including the clauses abolishing tests at matriculation, and on admission to first degrees.⁵ Both the

1. Nonconformist, 12.VII.1854, p582

2. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall ppl83-184

3. Gladstone to the Rev. A.W. Haddan, 22.VI.1854; in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone i, 217-218

4. Nonconformist, 28.VI.1854, pp525-526

5. Ibid., 12.VII.1854, p582. See also W.D. Jones, Lord Derby and Victorian Conservatism (Oxford 1956) pl91.

Nonconformist and the Liberation Society praised the liberality and wisdom of the House of Lords, and hoped that a similar measure would be applied to Cambridge.¹

Oxford was now open to dissenters, through legislative action, and not through the device of non-collegiate halls. Miall and his colleagues had forced a discussion of the universities as national assets, and had asserted the right of all citizens to enjoy their facilities. The Patriot, representing moderate dissenting opinion, gave the Liberation Society credit for this triumph:

"To its exertions in no inferior degree we owe it that our principles are represented in Parliament by a firm, though small band of vigilant men, who, without compromise of their personal independence, act together with manifest effect."²

The Eclectic Review, more conscious of the difficulties dissenters had experienced in forcing the amendments upon the government, warned that their support of the coalition should remain qualified,³ but had no hesitation in giving full credit to the Liberation Society:

"We congratulate the country on a measure which...has exceeded our most sanguine expectations...We should be doing injustice to our own feelings if we did not record our deliberate opinion that the success achieved is mainly due to the untiring diligence of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Liberation Society...we feel authorised to pronounce this department of the society's operations as amongst the most important and valuable of its labours."⁴

The Oxford University Act set up a commission to redraft college statutes. The detailed implementation of the Act soon ran into difficulties, particularly with regard to the admission of dissenters to colleges.⁵ The Nonconformist gave a detailed account of the meeting which elected the new Hebdomadal Council, and noted attempts to prevent the election of anyone

1. Nonconformist, 19.VII.1854, p593: Liberation Society, Minute Book 1. VIII. 1854.
2. Patriot 9.IV.1856, p232
3. Eclectic Review, ns vol. VII 1854, pp611-621
4. Ibid., ns vol. VIII 1854, p245
5. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp 207f

with liberal sympathies.¹ It also noted a sermon preached by William Sewell in St. Mary's, in which he warned young men,

"...to take special care to avoid the company of dissenters, should any intrude under the new bill."²

Heywood introduced a motion for a select committee to examine the whole question of admissions to universities, and the Nonconformist gave its approval. It felt such an investigation was needed to complement the Oxford University Act, and warned supporters of the motion to be wary of the attitude of the government:

"...it would be well for the friends of university reform to be on their guard, and prevent so equitable and desirable an enquiry from being set aside by Ministerial indifference or aversion."³

In the debate upon Heywood's motion, Miall spoke in support of it, expressing the disillusion which dissenters felt at the ecclesiastical policy of the Aberdeen coalition, and claiming that he hardly knew on which side of the House he ought to sit. If the opposition offered a very moderate advance upon the proposals of the government, the friends of religious liberty might well be tempted to join the opposition.⁴ He then went on to discuss, from a dissenters' point of view, the shortcomings of the act of 1854. It had not made Oxford into a truly national institution. While accepting Gladstone's analogy that universities were national institutions in the same sense as were parochial benefices, nevertheless he argued that parish churches did not close their doors to people who were not in communion with the Church of England. In comparison, "...universities were under very considerable restrictions in dispensing the advantages they had to offer."⁵ Unusually for Miall, he demanded that the State intervene to define the use to which collegiate endowments should be put, and concluded by denying that this was a question of interest to dissenters only: rather it was a major public question, affecting the whole nation. If universities were truly

1. Nonconformist, 25.X.1854, p883

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 7.III.1855, pp177-178

4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXVII, pp248-250

5. Ibid.

national institutions, their facilities should be available to everyone, without discrimination on the grounds of religion. If there were obstacles which prevented this, it was reasonable that there should be an inquiry, "...in order that their advantages might be extended to all."¹ The Liberation Society attempted to organise support for Heywood's motion, but noted that he had withdrawn it without consulting the the society.² Palmerston had in fact suggested that Heywood withdraw his motion, and introduce at a later stage a bill incorporating its substance. The Nonconformist believed that Heywood had fallen victim to Palmerstonian deviousness.³ It clearly regarded the Oxford University Act as an important milestone in the struggle for religious equality, for it printed all the division lists, that electors might be informed of the conduct of their M.P.s, and bring pressure to bear upon them at the next election.⁴

The Oxford University Act was quickly followed by a measure to reform Cambridge. There, the situation was rather different, for while there were religious tests, they were not imposed until graduation. Thus dissenters were not prevented from taking part in the education offered, though they could not enjoy its full advantage. A simple abolition of tests would satisfy their demands, but the bill to reform Cambridge was drafted by members of the university itself, without any particular effort being made to discover the wishes of nonconformists. The Prince Consort, as Chancellor, took a detailed interest in the provisions of the bill, and particularly supported those for the creation of private halls of residence.⁵

Perhaps mistaking the provenance of the measure, the Nonconformist attacked the government for its shortcomings. It criticised it as a typical example of Whig perfidy, which showed the hollowness of their pretensions as reformers.

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXVII, pp248-250
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book, 9.III.1855
3. Nonconformist, 14.III.1855, p207
4. Ibid., 18.IV.1855, p298
5. D. Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge (Cambridge 1940) pp283-284

This bill, like so many other Whig bills, was,

"...a compromise which contains a minimum of real improvement with a maximum of delusive pretence. Under their guidance, reformers are perpetually led into a false position...To oppose Whig reforms is denounced as playing the game of the Tories - to accept them lays you open to charges of peddling and insincerity."¹

Its complaints were not without justification. As it stood, the bill left all governing power in the hands of the heads of houses, which they had lost at Oxford. The Nonconformist felt that an opportunity had been missed; the Oxford Act had set a precedent for a radical overhaul of university government, and there was no need to be so timid in the case of Cambridge.² Moreover, while the wishes of dissenters were taken into account by the proposed abolition of tests and subscriptions for admission to all degrees save those in divinity, a declaration of bona fide membership of the Church of England was required for membership of Senate. Dissenters were thus to remain excluded from the government of the university, and their next step would be to secure admission to M.A. degrees.

Since the bill was introduced into the Lords, Miall was unable to speak upon it in Parliament, and could only give his views in print. He used the bill as a stick with which to beat the Whigs, accusing them of insincerity and, since the withdrawal of the Peelites, incapacity:

"The Cambridge University Bill is a fair illustration of what the country has gained by falling back upon a pure Whig coterie. The Peelites in quitting Her Majesty's government, seem to have taken with them not only the ability, but the sincerity of the Aberdeen Cabinet."³

An amended version of the bill later in the same month was more satisfactory, as it abolished subscription for the degree of M.A., but by the time it reached the Commons, the session was far advanced, and it was withdrawn.⁴

1. Nonconformist, 2.V.1855, p337

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 23.V.1855, p397. D.A. Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge p284

Part 3. Miall and University Reformers

The dissenting lobby became aware that it could not leave the preparation of another bill to whigs and university reformers; it was essential to take positive action to impress dissenting demands upon them. Heywood began to seek closer links with Miall and the Liberation Society. After a meeting in Manchester, Heywood arranged for Palmerston to receive a deputation to discuss the Cambridge University Bill, and asked Dr. Foster, a leading member of the Liberation Society, to be a member.¹ Reporting upon the meeting, Foster believed the deputation had succeeded in making a favourable impression upon Palmerston.² Heywood meanwhile secured an impressive range of dissenting support for the radical reform of Cambridge at a great meeting in Birmingham, attended by Baptists, Unitarians, Congregationalists, and even some Anglicans. He spoke of the Oxford Act as a "...compromise, a little instalment of university reform," which had merely recognised the principle of religious equality. More far-reaching measures were required to give full expression to that principle in the universities. R.W. Dale played a leading part in the meeting, demanding free access to Cambridge for dissenters.³

This pressure bore fruit, for in March 1856 Pleydell-Bouverie introduced a bill for the reform of Cambridge, which preserved the improvements and amendments of the bill of 1855.⁴ Moreover, Heywood was able to secure further vital amendments in the Commons, which incorporated all the demands of dissenters. The executive committee of the Liberation Society noted that on the third reading of the bill,

"...Mr. Heywood obtained the insertion of a clause (by 151 to 109) dispensing with oaths or declarations in connexion with scholarships and exhibitions, and also succeeded (by 84 to 60), in expunging the words preventing a dissenter becoming a member of the Senate..."⁵

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.XI.1855
2. Ibid., 14.XII.1855
3. Christian Reformer, Dec.1855, p764
4. D.A. Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge p284
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VI.1856

These amendments would have destroyed the monopoly of the Church of England in Cambridge, and the Nonconformist was not surprised that the Lords rejected them. It stressed that the only interest dissenters had in the amendments was as a matter of principle. "The right refused us we value merely as a right."¹ It agreed with the Times and the British Quarterly Review that even if the amendments were incorporated in the bill, in practice the Anglican Church would not be threatened, for dissenters would continue to send their sons to undenominational universities such as London; few would send their sons to Oxford or Cambridge, and few would wish to become members of Senate.² However, the vote of the Lords had upheld civil inequality and sectarian monopoly, and prevented Cambridge from resuming its true function:

"Our universities are not exclusively theological seminaries, but institutions for the high education of the laity. Freedom of religious thought and profession are by no means incompatible with the object of those Universities, but rather in keeping with their main design."³

With this Hamiltonian flourish, the Nonconformist hoped that the Commons would refuse to accept the Lords' amendments. Heywood moved their rejection, supported by Miall,⁴ but Pleydell-Bouverie, fearing that once again time would run out, persuaded the Commons to accept the bill as amended by the Lords.⁵ This means that at Cambridge dissenters could proceed to the degree of M.A., but could not become members of Senate. In conjunction with the Oxford University Act, it amounted to a partial victory for dissenters, and the Times commented;

"It ought to be now pretty evident to the Universities that the reign of tests is approaching an end...it is plain... that public opinion is becoming more and more opposed to them."⁶

The Liberation Society, in its report for 1856, believed that dissenters had scored a triumph,⁷ but the more perceptive unitarian Christian Reformer realised that it was only a victory of principle, and might soon be valueless

1. Nonconformist, 9.VII.1856, p493
2. Times, 23.VI.1856 p9; Brit. Qrtly. Review, ns vol.XXIV 1856, p506
3. Nonconformist, 9.VII.1856, p493
4. Ibid., 23.VII.1856, p537
5. D.A. Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge p286
6. Times, 23.VI.1856, p9
7. Nonconformist, 6.V.1857, p341

to dissenters. Even if the ancient universities had been opened to dissenters, the constituent colleges could still impose their own tests, and the result would be that the university would still be closed to dissenters, and would be ruled by the worst sort of priestly intolerance.¹ The new statutes which had been sanctioned for Exeter, Lincoln and Corpus Christi directly violated the spirit of the Act of 1854, and were evidence,

"...of the existence of an organised conspiracy...to defeat the liberal intentions of Parliament."²

If other colleges followed this example, the 1854 Act would be so much 'waste paper', and the Christian Reformer reported that Palmerston had been informed of these objections, and had agreed to appoint a committee of the Privy Council to investigate the situation. Similar difficulties became apparent in Cambridge; for instance, Trinity College found itself unable to elect dissenters to fellowships.³

However, even the victory of principle, with all its inherent practical difficulties, was no negligible achievement. Miall and his fellow dissenters had wrung concessions upon ecclesiastical matters from the Aberdeen government, and had brought about a species of disestablishment, with the help of some Tory support, and with the acquiescence of the House of Lords. This latter, as the Nonconformist admitted, had been a surprise:

"When, to the great astonishment of both friend and foe, we carried through the House of Commons the clause which opened the University of Oxford to Dissenters, it was generally assumed, as a matter of course, that the Lords would expunge it with a high hand. The Lords, however, were wise enough to lay aside their prejudices, and heedless of common expectation, to accept a policy which there was greater risk in resisting than in frankly adopting."⁴

One of the consequences of university reform was the advent of Oxford Middle Class Examinations, by means of which some of the benefits of Oxford were made more widely available.

1. Christian Reformer, May 1856, p306
2. Ibid.
3. D.A. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge p39
4. Nonconformist, 2.VI.1858, p425

"Oxford University seeks to mingle with the world, not to obstruct, but to hasten an intellectual development throughout the land. Reform has shaken her from the dream of centuries and behold! she steps forth to do good...The incrustation which a monastic bigotry deposited about her having been loosened, cracked and removed, Oxford becomes active once more, and goes from town to town to smile upon learning wherever she finds it."¹

A modern historian has concurred in this assessment of the Middle-Class Examinations. He regards them as marking the transition of Oxford and Cambridge from,

"...two exceedingly strange, inward looking, clerical republics...into more normal institutions with a sense of general responsibility for national education."²

Miall attempted to exploit the principle secured by the admission of dissenters to the older universities by extending it to another bastion of Anglican privilege, the endowed grammar schools. Dissenters were, as a rule, unable to teach in them, send their children to them, or become governors or trustees. Like the universities, they could be regarded as national property improperly monopolised by a particular sect. At the Liberation Society's triennial conference in 1859, Miall induced the society to include among its objectives the opening of the endowed grammar schools to dissenters. His motion was,

"That the legislature, having opened the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, without distinction on the point of their religious belief, it is now time, in the judgment of this Conference, to carry further the principle thus recognised by applying it to the Endowed and Free Grammar Schools of England and Wales."³

Speaking at length in support of the motion, he stressed that its object was to implement, in this particular sphere, the principle of religious equality implicit in the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Dissenters still did not enjoy full religious or civic equality; they were still penalised on account of their religious convictions, as their exclusion from the endowed grammar schools demonstrated.

1. Nonconformist, 11.VIII.1858, p639
2. G. Kitson Clark, Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885 (London 1973) p115. See also W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp280f
3. Nonconformist, 9.VI.1859, p452

The question was taken up in Parliament by Dillwyn, who worked closely with the Liberation Society in drafting his Endowed Schools Bill. The society made clear to him the requirements of dissenters, and gave him the backing of its lobbying facilities, but his measures met with failure in Parliament.¹ So far as Miall was concerned, this was simply a question of the use of endowments, and, as in the case of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, he argued that the Church of England owned these endowments only in the sense that dockyards belonged to the navy; ultimately, they were the property of the nation.² When, in 1860, Lord Cranworth was successful with a restricted version of Dillwyn's measure, the Nonconformist stressed that the real opponents of religious liberty were the bishops in the House of Lords:

"...dissenters will be perverse enough to enquire why their rights of citizenship are to be doled out to them with 'tolerant liberality' by the episcopal bench - why they are to be subjected to special grievances not inflicted upon the rest of their fellow countrymen - and if they must regard this Act as a 'step in advance', they would like to be told from what, and to what, the advance is made."³

Dillwyn persevered with his more comprehensive measure, but his avowed connection with the Liberation Society did not assist his purpose; indeed, it provoked a bitter attack from Lord Robert Cecil.⁴ It was not until 1869 that W.E. Forster introduced a bill which substantially fulfilled the ambitions of Dillwyn and the Liberation Society, to an extent that caused the Nonconformist to describe it as second in importance only to the Irish Church Bill.⁵ The Liberation Society published a resolution congratulating the friends of religious liberty upon the success of the Endowed Schools Bill, but, with the experience of the Oxford University Act of 1854

1. Liberation Society Minute Book 19.VIII.1859; 9.XII.1859. The society paid the fees incurred in seeking legal opinion. Ibid. 9.XII.1859. Three years later, the committee was confident that Dillwyn would be guided by any suggestions the committee might feel it right to make. Ibid. 5.II.1862.
2. Nonconformist, 28.III.1860, p241
3. Ibid., 11.IV.1860, p291
4. Ibid., 24.IV.1861, p330. See also W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation (London 1972) pp106-107
5. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation pp202-203. Liberation Society Minute Book, 5.III.1869. Nonconformist, 24.II.1869, p180; ibid., 16.VI.1869, p572.

in mind, urged its supporters to keep a close watch upon the activities of the commission set up to implement the act in detail, that the interests of religious equality might be genuinely advanced.¹

Miall himself took no active part in the Endowed Schools question, apart from discussing the general principles involved, as an adjunct to the university question. During the 1860s, it became clear that the university reform acts of the previous decade had **not** been an unqualified success, so far as dissenters were concerned. The moderate British Quarterly Review pointed out,

"...two out of the last three senior wranglers have been excluded from fellowships and tutorships on the grounds of religious conviction."²

The Nonconformist complained that the intention of the acts, to open the universities to dissenters, was being thwarted by the colleges:

"Parliament threw open to us the door of both Universities - but the Colleges have effectually over-ridden the decision of Parliament, and put chains across the doorway."³

This obstruction took the form of colleges insisting upon attendance at the college chapels, whose services were Anglican. The Nonconformist regarded the abolition of compulsory attendance at chapel as the next stage of university reform, and the Unitarian Association took a similar view.

Arguing that university tests had simply been replaced by collegiate tests, the unitarian Christian Reformer announced that Mr. Pollard Urquhart would oppose the statutes which the Commissioners had sanctioned for St. John's and for Trinity, "...inasmuch as they do not respect the rights intended to be secured to Nonconformist members of the University."⁴ The Liberation Society, in a survey of its own position in 1863, believed that Oxford was gradually becoming aware that, "...ecclesiastical exclusiveness is unfavourable to high mental culture."⁵ It believed that leading Oxford men shared this view, and

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VII.1869
2. British Quarterly Review, vol.XXXVI 1862, pp221f
3. Nonconformist, 22.VIII.1860, p661
4. Christian Reformer, Feb. 1860, p122
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 23.X.1863

indeed, a meeting in Manchester, chaired by Heywood, was attended by Jowett, Brodie, and other leading Oxford liberals. The meeting decided to petition the government to abolish all remaining tests, and Heywood summed up the feeling of both dissenters and university reformers when he said,

"In Oxford, the majority of the colleges have set themselves decidedly against the wishes of the legislature. The majority of the Heads of Houses had refused to admit any persons who were known to be dissenters. It was evident that without a further movement the old universities would remain very nearly as much closed as they were before...Sir Benjamin Brodie had told him it was very desirable that there should be movement outside as well as within the universities. The present restrictions were felt to be a great barrier in the way of liberalism in the Church of England itself, as well as affecting dissenters."¹

It was evident that the unitarian body, the university reformers and the Liberation Society would have to combine their resources if any further degree of reform was to be achieved. Miall's most important contribution to the university question was in helping to bring about this union. As early as 1861, he felt he could count upon a considerable body of liberal support within Oxford for the total abolition of tests, largely upon the strength of a letter written to the Nonconformist by a leading Oxford liberal, Professor Goldwin Smith, with whom Miall had worked already upon the Newcastle Commission.² Another leading reformer, Frederic Harrison, gave testimony to the fact that Miall was in contact with leading Oxford liberals.³ He believed, however, that the alignment of radicals, dissenters, and academics was due to Jowett, and was based upon a small group in London:

"...with George Brodrick...C.S. Roundell, (Sir) G. Osborne Morgan, Charles (Lord) Bowen, James Bryce and Lyulph Stanley... we formed at London a small group which, under the inspiration of Benjamin Jowett, united the forces of resident and London reformers and so with John Bright and Edward Miall were in alliance with the political Nonconformists. The delicate task of combining the mildest and even 'Churchy' types of academic Liberalism with the Radical Dissenters of the Chapels and the Lobbies was in the main the work of the organising genius of Jowett."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 22.IV.1863, p304

2. Ibid., 11.XII.1861, p981

3. Frederic Harrison Autobiographic Memoir (London 1911) i, 355

4. Ibid. i, 159

Miall realised that one of the difficulties reformers would encounter was the attitude of the general body of dissenters. He felt many were half-hearted about university reform, and even if it were achieved, might hesitate to send their sons to a university where there might be pressure brought upon them to forswear their convictions and join the Established Church. Worse still, the excesses of Puseyism and Tractarianism had by no means disappeared. Miall informed his readers that these objectionable features would vanish when the universities were reformed. but he had to concede,

"We are afraid that the subject is regarded by many among us as a less urgent claim upon our efforts and upon our interests than some others which of late have been before the public. We believe there dwells in not a few minds a lurking suspicion that free access for dissenters to the national seats of learning might be followed by the absorption of considerable numbers of the most promising young men into the church."¹

In the session of 1864, John Dodson introduced a bill to abolish all remaining tests and subscriptions. The attitude of the Nonconformist is curious to the point of being inexplicable. It gave a cautious welcome to the bill, but suspected it would only be supported by Liberals insofar as they felt they might gain electoral advantage thereby.² Admitting that the bill secured the main principle, it felt that the concession was more apparent than real:

"How many wealthy dissenters are there who, if they value their own principles, can make up their minds to expose their sons to the moral atmosphere of seminaries in which all the regulations tend to lower their social status and to disparage their religious profession."³

It claimed the bill had been drafted by a group of Oxford reformers without the dissenting bodies being consulted, and observed sourly that it would be a new experience to be dealt with in an honourable manner.⁴ Nonetheless,

1. Nonconformist, 6.IV.1864, p261. For an example of the wariness of dissenters at the prospect of their sons being exposed to the temptations of Oxford, see James Rigg to Isaac Holden, 1844. Holden Illingworth Letters (Bradford 1927) p110.
2. Nonconformist, 23.III.1864, p221.
3. Ibid., 6.IV.1864, p261.
4. Ibid., 8.VI.1864, p457

it urged support for the bill as a genuine effort to promote religious equality, and paid tribute both to the Oxford liberals and to the support of the Irish members.¹

In reality, as Miall was in the best possible position to know, there had been close co-operation between the Oxford liberals and the dissenters.

Frederic Harrison recorded a meeting in London;

"We held a meeting at which twelve M.P.s, Dean Stanley, Jowett and some eight or ten Oxford professors, Goldwin Smith, Bishop Colenso, Maurice, John Bright, J. Martineau, P. Taylor, Greg, Huxley, etc. etc. met and spoke, using identical sentiments - Anglicans, Broad Churchmen, Neo-Christians, Non-Christians, Papists, Unitarians, Quakers and Agnostics all together. The meeting was of course strictly private."²

Harrison had already identified Miall as a member of the London committee, and Arthur Miall confirms a close relationship between his father and the Oxford liberals.³ The views of Stanley on university reform show how close an affinity there was between Miall and the members of the committee:

"...the more barriers it (the Established Church) can wisely throw down, the more open it can render its Ministry and its Universities, so much the more has it fulfilled its true mission..."⁴

The records of the Liberation Society show that Miall was actively involved in consultations with the Oxford liberals. The impetus came from the society's parliamentary committee, which requested Miall to communicate with Goldwin Smith, to ascertain whether or not Dodson desired the assistance of the society.⁵ Goldwin Smith wrote to Miall informing him that Dodson would welcome the society's help, and the executive committee resolved to throw the whole weight of the society behind Dodson.⁶ The secretary, Carvell Williams, met Goldwin Smith, arranged the preparation of petitions, and promised the support of the society's Parliamentary Whip.⁷

1. Nonconformist, 8.VI.1864, p458
2. F. Harrison, Autobiographic Memoir i, 355
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp250-251
4. A.P. Stanley, Essays chiefly on questions of Church and State (London 1870) pp368-369, 376.
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 17.II.1864
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.III.1864
7. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 24.II.1864; 8.III.1864.

Miall was invited to attend a private meeting of Oxford liberals who supported Dodson's bill, and who apparently wished to sever all connection between the university and the Church of England.¹ A formal association between the Oxford liberals and political dissenters was mooted,² and Miall, according to the society's records, made it clear that Dodson's bill would not continue to enjoy dissenting support if any clause were introduced which prevented dissenters from voting in Convocation.³ Miall sent a letter to Goldwin Smith, informing him that the society's support of Dodson's bill was conditional,⁴ and Goldwin Smith forwarded Miall's letter to Dodson with a covering letter, warning Dodson that to acquiesce in any clause which excluded dissenters from full participation in university government would be,

"...a heavy blow to the cause the interests of which have been placed in your hands. It would be a Parliamentary certification of the principle of exclusion, which now rests on nothing higher than the by-laws of the University."⁵

He went on to observe that the prospects for university reform were improving. In Oxford, the liberals were gaining in strength, and the opposition was diminishing. It was the more important that the university question should be dealt with comprehensively. Dodson's notes on Miall's letter to Goldwin Smith confirm that Miall had resolutely opposed any tests for membership of Convocation or for admission to private halls. Such tests would leave dissenters an 'inferior caste.'⁶ But it is also clear that while Miall was opposing any such amendment of the bill, had such clauses been part of the original measure,

"...we should not have opposed it - we might have quietly supported it - not for our own sakes but to show disposition to help others."⁷

This is some indication of the importance Miall attached to the support of the Oxford liberals. He went on to admit that the Liberation Society was

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 10.III.1864
2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 21.III.1864
3. Ibid., 21.III.1864
4. Ibid., 30.III.1864
5. Goldwin Smith to J. Dodson 29.III.1864 Monk Bretton Mss. (Bodleian). I am indebted to the Rev. P. Robson for obtaining this reference.
6. Dodson's notes on Miall's letter. Monk Bretton Mss.
7. Ibid.

making a further concession in supporting Dodson, in that by doing so it was departing from its declared policy of concentrating its activities in the country rather than in Parliament. Having done so, it could not afford to be seen to make concessions to opponents, and if Dodson accepted any exclusive clauses, "...we must take steps to clear ourselves of participation."¹ Dodson agreed to Miall's conditions, and promised Carvell Williams he would withdraw the bill if forced to accept any clauses which discriminated against dissenters.² In return, he received the support of the society's parliamentary whip. Miall prepared a statement, to be signed by leading dissenters, which promised support for the bill, but warned against any attempt to introduce clauses to exclude dissenters from Convocation. It was signed by 117 dissenters, and was circulated among Liberal M.P.s.³ Provision was also made for regular and formal contact between the society and the Oxford liberals.

The bill was defeated on its third reading, and both the Liberation Society and the Nonconformist decided that the next stage was to make university reform an electoral issue:

"...a new question had been added to the list of testing points at the hustings...there has been found another battleground on which to contend successfully for the great principle of religious equality."⁴

The Nonconformist was critical of the Liberals for allowing the bill to suffer defeat: there had been signs of irresolution among its supporters:

"We wish the supporters of the bill had been equally resolute, in which case they would not have allowed the fruits of previous victories to be snatched from them."⁵

It published the names of liberal members who had been absent from the critical division, and claimed that yet again the government had betrayed its dissenting supporters:

1. Dodson's notes on Miall's letter. Monk Bretton Mss.
2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 11.V.1864; 15.VI.1864
3. Ibid., 15.VI.1864: see also Nonconformist, 29.VI.1864, p517
W. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation p177
4. Liberator, Aug. 1864, p123; Nonconformist, 6.VII.1864, p537
5. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1864, p537

"The Prime Minister had not once voted for the bill, the Home Secretary walked out of the House to avoid voting, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Attorney General gave the two votes which constituted the hostile majority. The cause of Liberalism has in fact in this case, as in the case of the Church Rates Abolition Bill, been sacrificed by the Liberal Ministers."¹

It spoke disparagingly of collusion between the government and the opposition front benches, but was able to extract some cheer from the defeat. The question had become a major electoral issue, and the bonds between reformers within the universities and the dissenting bodies had been cemented:

"Evidently there is here common ground for united action on the part of those who differ much in relation to matters of ecclesiastical policy. The young and generous intellect of the Church of England can here ally itself with the well trained energy of what is derisively being called 'political dissent!'"²

Late in the session of 1865, a private bill to abolish tests completely was introduced by Goschen. The Liberation Society organised outdoor meetings in support of it, and set up a committee to have oversight of the measure. Several liberal members were on this committee,³ and members of the society's parliamentary committee visited selected constituencies, to rally local support.⁴ The Nonconformist considered that the bill had no prospect of success, but would at least force M.P.s to declare their attitude to university reform. With a general election imminent, there would be the possibility of bringing pressure to bear at the hustings, and the Nonconformist warned liberals that they could not count upon the support of dissenters indefinitely:

"We cannot and shall not patiently endure for the future the galling injustice with which we are treated in this matter, and we should earnestly advise no Liberal member to presume upon our supposed readiness to overlook the affront which indifference to our claims on this head will offer us."⁵

The bill received a majority of sixteen at its second reading, and the Nonconformist insisted that the opening of the ancient universities to all

1. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1864, p537.
2. Ibid.
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 26.V.1865
4. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 15.VI.1865
5. Nonconformist, 7.VI.1865, p453

who were qualified upon intellectual grounds to attend them must become official Liberal Party policy.¹

In fact, the agitation to which Goschen's bill had given rise had an effect upon Gladstone, whose support was vital to any settlement of the question. He was critical of the way in which the agitation had been conducted; abstract propositions had simply provoked counter propositions, and this clash of principles had delayed the progress of reform. But he did not believe that the Liberals could remain indifferent to the question:

"...the change in the balance of parties effected by the elections will cast upon the Liberal majority a serious responsibility if it fails to make progress in the settlement of questions hitherto agitated with little fruit."²

One of Miall's severest critics gloomily observed;

"Mr. Gladstone will not require any very long or severe trial ere he sacrifice both Church Rates and University Tests to the Moloch of Liberalism."³

Reviewing the tasks that confronted it as a consequence of the general election of 1865, the Liberation Society laid stress upon the need to educate public opinion, and especially dissenting opinion, in the issues at stake in the university question. So far, the question had been the preserve of a few committed liberals and university men, but the Liberation Society now saw it as a means of propagating its own principles among the educated classes of society who might be unimpressed by the campaign against church rates. The question,

"...is one which may become so useful to the society, as a means of agitation among the educated classes as the church rate question has been among persons of another class."⁴

For the time being, the society decided it would simply support measures, such as Goschen's, in Parliament, but would hope for a more comprehensive measure in the future. It had abstained from direct parliamentary action for the

1. Nonconformist, 21.VI.1865, p493
2. Gladstone to the Rev. Baldwin Brown 29.VII.1865 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone i, 220.
3. R. Mashedor, Dissent and Democracy 2nd edition (London 1865) p122
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.IX.1865; Liberator, July 1865, p120

past two years, and while it intended to resume its Parliamentary role, the basis of its action would be the church rates question, and it would abandon all its campaigns if the question of parliamentary reform were introduced.¹

The Nonconformist had been encouraged by a report in the Gateshead Observer which described Durham University's abolition of tests for all save divinity degrees,² and though Goschen's bill was withdrawn, a similar measure was introduced by Coleridge in the next session. It secured a majority in the Commons which convinced the Nonconformist of the growing support for University reform.³ There were several reasons, it believed, why the bill stood an excellent chance of success. There was Coleridge himself, who delivered a "...charming speech, charmingly spoken."⁴ Then, behind the parliamentary scene, lay the unglamorous work in the constituencies, which had secured the election of members with progressive views. The work of one organisation in particular, not named but doubtless the Liberation Society, had, "...sent up to Parliament a large majority of members influenced by their constituencies to take a kindly interest in the bill."⁵ The Liberation Society considered that it had intervened effectively in particular constituencies to oppose the election of candidates whose views upon university reform were unsatisfactory; it regarded the elections in North Yorkshire, South Essex, North Warwickshire, Pembroke, West Kent, North Wiltshire and South Wiltshire as triumphs in this sense.⁶ The Nonconformist believed that another factor which might lead to success was the determination of Oxford liberals to turn down any compromise which, while satisfactory to them, would betray the claims of their dissenting allies. Such determination was evident at a meeting in Manchester, attended both by radicals such as Heywood and Jacob Bright, and by Oxford liberals

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XI.1865
2. Nonconformist, 1.III.1865, p163
3. Ibid., 14.II.1866, p121; 28.III.1866, p241
4. Ibid., 28.III.1866, p241
5. Ibid.
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 7.VII.1865

such as Temple, Brodrick, Bryce and Stanley. The meeting sent a petition to Parliament in support of Coleridge's bill.¹

Moreover, there had been excellent relationships between the Oxford liberals and the Liberation Society while the bill was being drafted. Miall informed a meeting of the society that he had been the sole representative of dissenting interests upon Coleridge's committee,² and before the publication of the bill, Miall reported to the society's parliamentary committee that he was,

"...in communication with the promoters of the Oxford University Test Bill relative to the character of the Bill to be brought in next session, and to the member in whose hands it should be placed."³

The fact that he was apparently consulted upon such tactical matters as who should have charge of the bill in Parliament, as well as upon the demands of dissenters, suggests Miall was not without influence among Oxford liberals; certainly he was able to give the parliamentary committee of the Liberation Society a complete summary of the contents of the bill before it became public knowledge.⁴

Part 4. Miall and Gladstone

The Nonconformists' feeling that there was growing support for university reform among non-dissenters was certainly not without foundation. As Dr. Winstanley has shown, M.P.s such as Northcote and Heathcote, who upheld the connection between the universities and the Church of England, believed that some concession should be made to the reasonable aspirations of dissenters.⁵ The major difficulty now to be surmounted was no longer to gain a broad range of support for the abolition of tests, but to secure the support of the Liberal party leadership. Private members bills such as those of Coleridge, Dodson and Bouverie had little chance of legislative

1. Nonconformist 11.IV.1866: W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford p243; W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation pl80
2. Nonconformist, 2.V.1866, Supplement
3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 10.I.1866
4. Ibid., 14.II.1866
5. D.A. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge p53

success, even though they served to consolidate support. Miall realised it was crucial to secure the support of Gladstone, even though his previous conduct on this question had not been reassuring. Discussing his contribution to the debate on Bouverie's bill, the Nonconformist considered,

"...he should have spoken less querulously, less captiously, less in the spirit of somewhat rude and coarse-minded Toryism, the prejudices of which he stooped to echo."¹

In the course of that debate, Gladstone justified the refusal of the government to take up the question, and gave only the vaguest of indications that it might be less obstructive in the future.²

When the Liberal ministry resigned, there was little prospect of university reform under the incoming Conservative government. Confident of ultimate success, Miall was content to keep the supporters of university reform, especially the dissenters, together as a party. He published a series of articles upon the social influence of the state church, one of which dealt with the position of the universities. It simply repeated the old arguments, that the universities were no more than 'ecclesiastical seminaries', that, by their exclusion, dissenters were debarred from many of the professions, and this state of affairs must be remedied as a matter of justice.³

Coleridge introduced another bill in 1867, which proposed the abolition of tests at both Oxford and Cambridge. In discussing its plans for the session of 1867, the Liberation Society agreed to give its support to the measure,⁴ and the parliamentary committee applied its whip on the second reading.⁵

The Nonconformist gave its support, and tried to allay the fears of those who were persuaded that the abolition of tests would lead to scepticism and irreligion becoming rampant at the universities. Such fears might cost the

1. Nonconformist, 20.VI.1866, p489
2. D.A. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge p54
3. Nonconformist, 19.IX.1866, p749: E. Miall, The Social Influences of the State Church pp27ff
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.I.1867
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 27.II.1867

support of some dissenters, and the Nonconformist refuted allegations made by the Times in this sense during the second reading of Coleridge's bill.¹

The bill was successful in the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords:

"We did not give due consideration to the temper almost sure to be excited by the disagreeable but inevitable necessity of passing a democratic Reform Bill. To be compelled to satisfy one such demand upon them at the expense of their traditional principles is no doubt accounted more than enough for a single session."²

But there was cause for satisfaction in that the Commons had supported the admission of dissenters to the governing bodies of the universities.

Miall was involved immediately afterwards in a further meeting of Oxford liberals and other reformers at the Ship Hotel, London. It planned to produce a final settlement of the question, and Gladstone was kept informed of its activities.³ However Miall gave little support to one of the assumptions which underlay the conference; that was the idea, enshrined in a bill introduced earlier in the year by Ewart, of extending collegiate facilities to students resident in lodgings,⁴ Coleridge reintroduced his measure in 1868, and the Liberation Society agreed to "...heartily support the University Test Bill."⁵ As before, the Nonconformist attempted to show that the abolition of tests was not the first step on a slippery slope leading to irreligion. It argued that tests had demonstrably failed to secure religious uniformity at Oxford, and were indeed open to the same objections as any oath:

"Does a legal declaration of faith in a particular church necessarily guarantee that he who makes it is a christian man? If so, cannot he show it is some better way?"⁶

When the Bishop of Oxford expressed fears of the results of the abolition of religious tests, the Nonconformist commented adversely upon the quality

1. Nonconformist, 17.IV.1867, p305
2. Ibid., 31.VII.1867, p617. The Liberation Society noted the rejection without comment. Minute Book, 30.VIII.1867.
3. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp270-272
4. Nonconformist, 25.IX.1867, pp784-785. W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp268-271
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.III.1868; Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 7.II.1868
6. Nonconformist, 7.III.1868, p217

of religious teaching at the universities, maintaining that, despite religious tests, Oxford men were conspicuous neither for their religious fervour nor for their theological knowledge.¹ This was not an unfamiliar complaint among dissenters; Dr. Dale later remarked that Oxford and Cambridge had no distinguished record of theological scholarship in the whole century:

"The universities of Germany have been the theological teachers of Europe."²

Miall himself was indifferent to the immediate fate of individual measures; reform would surely come, since public opinion demanded it: "...the two universities must irrevocably be adapted to the wants of the nation."³

Miall became parliamentary candidate for Bradford in 1867, and as part of his claim upon the support of liberal electors, he emphasised the part he had played in the university question. He informed electors that he had worked with Goldwin Smith for many years upon the question, and had not been without influence upon the university reformers:

"I think that Oxford reformers, and especially he...could all agree that the political influences which I have been able to bring to bear for the furtherance of the questions in which they take an interest has been such as to produce a manifest result upon the legislation of Parliament."⁴

Goldwin Smith declared his support for Miall, and paid tribute to his work for university reform in a letter to Robert Kell:

"I can testify to his exertions in support of the movement for abolishing University Tests, and opening the Universities to Englishmen of all denominations."⁵

Unsuccessful at Bradford in 1867, Miall fought the seat again in the general election of 1868. On this occasion, he made scarcely any reference to university reform; as he explained to a meeting of the Liberation Society, he felt that public agitation of the question had achieved all that could be

1. Nonconformist, 22.IV.1868, p385

2. Fortnightly Review, 1.III.1876, p336

3. Nonconformist, 1.IV.1868, p325; Liberation Society Minute Book, 7.VIII.1868.

4. Bradford Observer, 3.X.1867, p5

5. Ibid., 10.X.1867

expected of it, and was no longer an appropriate procedure.¹ The most effective body now was the Oxford Committee, consisting of men such as Jowett, Goldwin Smith and Roundell, with which Miall, "...had had the happiness of working in conjunction...almost from the origin of their movement."²

The Liberation Society shared Miall's view that university reform had not been a dominant electoral issue. The Irish Church issue had dominated the campaign, "...the abolition of University Tests and other questions being regarded as of subordinate importance."³ However, it felt that the election had been very satisfactory, in that it had centred upon a fundamental issue of ecclesiastical reform, and this would be of assistance to university reform:

"It is believed that most of those who have been elected as supporters of Religious Equality in Ireland are in favour of the abolition of sectarian tests at the Universities..."⁴

Thanks to the work of Coleridge, the society believed that the question had been so far advanced as to make its settlement in the next Parliament morally certain.⁵ The Nonconformist believed that opponents of university reform took a similar view, for it accused Pusey of attempting to divide the nonconformists by proposing the relaxation of tests in such a way as to admit Wesleyans to Oxford.⁶

By 1869, the prospects seemed better than ever. Coleridge now held government office, and with the debates upon the Irish Church, religious equality was a live issue;

"Irish Church disestablishment must communicate a most vigorous impulse in support of every other kindred measure of justice. So that, on the whole, the capture of the Oxford stronghold, as the first triumph of the great principle of nationalism in the application of university endowments, may be regarded as simply a question of time."⁷

This demand was echoed by the liberal Fortnightly Review, where F.A. Paley discussed the issue in very similar terms.⁸ Gladstone would only allow

1. Nonconformist, 7.V.1868, p461

2. Ibid.

3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 10.VI.1868

4. Ibid., 3.VIII.1868; see also Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.XII.1868

5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 7.VIII.1868, ff78-79

6. Nonconformist, 26.VIII.1868, p833

7. Ibid., 6.I.1869, p13.

8. Fortnightly Review, March 1869, p329

Coleridge to introduce his measure in a private capacity, as he did not feel able to become involved in what would amount to a secularisation of the colleges, and, by implication, a reversal of the legislation of 1854 and 1856.¹ The bill was successful in the Commons, but without the active help of the Liberation Society, which merely took note of its existence, and followed its progress.² However, the rejection of the bill by the Lords stung the society into action once again. Observing sarcastically that it was unreasonable to expect the Lords to sanction three measures based upon religious equality in one session, the two others being the Irish Church Act and the Endowed Schools Act, it resolved to bring about in the next session, "...such decisive steps...as will secure the due consideration of the question by both branches of the legislature."³ The Nonconformist warned the Lords that it was increasingly dangerous to reject measures which the Commons had passed with large majorities, and in a series of articles entitled "The work before us", it placed free access to universities, regardless of religious conviction, high upon the list of dissenting priorities.⁴ In planning its work for the next session, the Liberation Society agreed that the abolition of university tests "...should be pressed with greatly increased energy..."⁵ Ideally, it hoped for an immediate and final settlement of the question, and noted that the promoters of the measure wished to confer with members of the executive committee.⁶ Miall believed that no measure could succeed without government support,⁷ and this view was shared by a group of Oxford liberals who held a meeting at Corpus Christi. They decided to send a deputation to Gladstone demanding the total abolition of tests.⁸ Action was taken to secure such support. W.E. Forster met a deputation in Liverpool, led by the unitarian William Rathbone, which demanded that the government take up Coleridge's bill:

1. J. Morley, Life of Gladstone ii, 313
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.III.1869, 19.III.1869
3. Ibid., 30.VII.1869; 6.VIII.1869
4. Nonconformist, 21.VII.1869, p692; 27.X.1869, p1017
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.X.1869
6. Ibid
7. Nonconformist, 17.XI.1869, p1101
8. Ibid., 8.XII.1869, p1162

Forster, speaking only for himself, believed that the government would soon do so.¹ The parliamentary committee of the Liberation Society arranged a deputation to Gladstone to add the representations of dissenters to those of the Oxford reformers.² Miall himself led a deputation to Gladstone, which consisted not only of members of the Liberation Society, but also members of the Dissenting Deputies, and of the Congregational and Baptist Unions. The deputation met Gladstone on 15th December; he agreed the question should be settled as soon as possible, but he would not promise a government measure in the next session. He requested further meetings with representatives of the dissenting bodies to establish areas of common ground,³ and asked for an undertaking that in any event dissenters would not press for the abolition of clerical fellowships.⁴ In a speech at Rochdale, Miall regarded the university question as of higher priority than even the elementary education question.⁵

With the backing of the government, Coleridge introduced a bill to abolish all tests at universities in the session of 1870. The Liberation Society resolved that it receive the society's support,⁶ and Miall believed the bill would secure,

"...for all national educational institutions for superior culture a legal freedom from all religious or ecclesiastical limitation."⁷

He believed the significance of the measure lay in the fact that the government was underwriting dissenting demands for civil and religious equality.⁸ Now in Parliament as member for Bradford, he took no part in the debate on the second reading, but intervened at the committee stage to speak against an amendment to admit dissenters to degrees in Divinity, which he felt was

1. Nonconformist, 17.XI.1869, p1092
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.XII.1869; Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 6.XII.1869
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XII.1869; Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 24.I.1870
4. Nonconformist, 17.XI.1869, p1101
5. Ibid., 26.I.1870, p75; 2.II.1870
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 2.V.1870
7. Nonconformist, 27.IV.1870, p385
8. Ibid., 25.V.1870, p485

intrinsically illiberal.¹ Reluctantly, he refrained from supporting an amendment to abolish clerical fellowships,

"...feeling bound by the pledges he had given, in order to induce the government to take the matter in hand, to the effect that he and those who acted with him would forego asking for the abolition of clerical fellowships by this bill."²

Gladstone replied that Miall,

"...had shown the perfect fidelity to engagements and the honour that all who knew him would expect."³

Miall implied that it was due to his agreement with Gladstone that the government gave the bill its backing; his remarks suggest that he was treated by Gladstone as the spokesman of dissenting opinion in Parliament.

Gladstone confirmed that he had met with a deputation led by Miall and Samuel Morley, and that he had agreed to back the measure in return for an undertaking by Miall not to press for the abolition of clerical fellowships. It was certainly a major achievement to secure Gladstone's support, and Miall had evidently been prepared to make compromises, realising it would be impolitic to press for the full range of dissenting demands.

Gladstone was not yet prepared to tolerate any suggestion of secularising the colleges, and indeed, until he had severed his connection with Oxford, his support for university reform had been lukewarm. As late as 1870, he wrote to Coleridge that any proposal to secularise the colleges would be odious: "I incline to think that that work is work for others, not for me."⁴

The bill again passed through the Commons, but met with resistance in the Lords. The Nonconformist was anxious that since the bill applied only to existing foundations, there was a danger that colleges such as the newly founded Keble College, might in future be founded by individual denominations, and might impose their own tests.⁵ It was prepared to wait until the next

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series Vol.CCI, pp1956-1957

2. Ibid., p1971

3. Ibid., p1971

4. Gladstone to Coleridge 4.XII.1870 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone i, 221

5. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1870, p631. It saw no reason to suppose "...that Keble College may not in a few years be a nest of Evangelicals and Radicals." Ibid. See also W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford pp265-266

session in the hope of an even stronger measure. The bill was again rejected by the Lords. For John Morley, this indicated the need for a new political party pledged to the abolition of all privilege. It was absurd that reformers "...cannot get even a simple measure of justice like the University Test Bill passed in the face of a little group of obstructive Lords."¹ The Liberation Society and Miall felt absolved from the agreement with Gladstone concerning clerical fellowships, and decided to insist upon their abolition. Noting the co-operation with university reformers in the past, the society resolved to consult the Oxford and Cambridge reformers before taking any action.²

In January 1871, with the Elementary Education Act no longer consuming parliamentary time and passions, the dissenting bodies sent another deputation to Gladstone, Miall was a member, representing the Liberation Society, and also represented were the Dissenting Deputies and members of the Cambridge Association.³ The society resolved to join the deputation after consulting university reformers, and ascertaining that they had no objection to independent action by dissenters over clerical fellowships.⁴ Gladstone met the deputation on 18th January, and while he was prepared to make university reform official government policy, he refused to support the abolition of clerical fellowships, on the grounds that this would jeopardise the measure in the House of Lords. But he agreed that dissenting members were at liberty to introduce amendments in committee.⁵ The parliamentary committee resolved to apply the society's whip.⁶

The government measure was introduced early in the session of 1871 and passed relatively easily through its Commons stages. The Nonconformist was

1. Fortnightly Review, Oct. 1870, p487
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 6.I.1871; Nonconformist, 12.X.1870, p965
3. Nonconformist, 25.I.1871, p76; Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 19.I.1871, f15
B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p376
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.I.1871; Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 4.I.1871; 12.I.1871
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.I.1871
6. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 27.III.1871

disappointed by the bill which, as Gladstone had indicated would be the case, contained no provision for the abolition of clerical fellowships. Miall had already had one violent clash with Gladstone in Parliament, accusing him of betraying his nonconformist supporters over the education question, and these strictures were renewed concerning the university bill of 1871. In refusing to abolish clerical fellowships, Gladstone was sacrificing the interest of a large section of his party in deference to the prejudices of the House of Lords. Hence it would be necessary for him to rely upon Tory support for the bill in the Commons:

"It is not to be denied that a feeling approaching to disappointment is slowly creeping over the minds of not a few adherents to the Liberal cause...The friends of religious equality do not resort to violent measures in pursuit of their ends, but they ought not, therefore, to be dealt with as though they were indifferent to any treatment they received."¹

Dissenters merely required the same consideration given to the Roman Catholics of Ireland by the Liberal Government, and were entitled to feel affronted when they received less satisfactory treatment. This was "...not the likeliest way of keeping his great party together." Miall took no part in the debates of 1871 upon university reform, possibly because he was pre-occupied with his parliamentary campaign for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Nor did the Nonconformist give the bill detailed coverage, until it had been debated by the Lords, and returned to the Commons with several major amendments. It disliked the amendments, and believed that the dissenters were sufficiently powerful in Parliament to secure their rejection.² The Liberation Society found the Lords' amendments totally unacceptable, and resolved to do all possible to secure their removal from the bill, as they were, "...totally opposed to the principle on which the bill was based."³ The society communicated its misgivings to Gladstone, whose reply convinced them that the amendments would have to be accepted.⁴ Less charitably, the Nonconformist accused the government of

1. Nonconformist, 22.II.1871, p169

2. Ibid., 24.V.1871, p516

3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.V.1871

4. Ibid., 22.V.1871; 5.VI.1871. See also W.H. Mackintosh Disestablishment and Liberation p266

having secured Tory support to save the amendments.¹

By abolishing the majority of surviving tests, the bill gave the supporters of religious equality the substance of their demands, but Miall, already cool towards Gladstone, resented the manner of the giving:

"We have been treated as if we had been recipients of great and undeserved boons, granted only to our importunity, and not at all to any justice of our claims."²

Along with the Liberation Society, the Nonconformist was forced to recognise that, clerical fellowships apart, the act was satisfactory. Sectarianism would wither away in the universities, which would be better able to draw upon the whole range of the ability of the nation. Even clerical fellowships had been curtailed, and for the first time in two centuries, there was equality of opportunity in higher education. So far as dissenters were concerned,

"...there will be no ban upon them at either Oxford, Cambridge or Durham. They are at liberty to make their own way, and achieve such position as their abilities may enable them to achieve. All degrees, all emoluments and all offices are open to them, and it will be their own fault or misfortune if, in future years, they do not rank, so far as intellectual culture may be concerned with the most cultured men in the country."³

R.W. Dale described the measure as a,

"...great achievement, and it is less injured than most other great measures of reform by the spirit of compromise which is characteristic of English legislation."⁴

The Liberation Society considered that the measure had serious defects, but claimed that the government had promised further action upon the question, having been made aware of the society's views.⁵ There was general approval of the act among dissenters. The Liberator believed the act represented,

"...the sheer victory of reason over prejudice, of justice over injustice, brought about not by political pressure so much as by a sense of what was due to the Nonconformists, and what would be best for the interests of England."⁶

1. Nonconformist, 31.V.1871, p533

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 21.VI.1871, p617

4. R.W; Dale, A History of English Congregationalism 2nd edition (London 1907) p630

5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 18.IX.1871

6. Liberator, July 1871, ppl32-133

The Dissenting Deputies welcomed the act in much the same terms as the Nonconformist,¹ though when the deputies recorded their thanks to the leading figures in the struggle, they mentioned neither Miall nor Gladstone.² Speaking for moderate dissent, the British Quarterly Review was critical of the failure of the act to deal adequately with clerical fellowships, and advocated a campaign specifically devoted to their abolition:

"If this hoar iniquity of clerical tests be for a few years longer maintained by a mistaken section of Churchmen, it will be our duty as Nonconformists during that time, by making a vigorous protest through every channel by which public opinion is influenced, to show that if these tests be safe-guards, they are safeguards not of Catholic Christianity but of sectarian ascendancy."³

Samuel Morley regarded the ending of university tests as removing almost the last remaining dissenting grievances:

"...university tests once abolished, and a fair burials bill agreed to, the House will have disposed of the two last of a number of measures which used to be spoken of as 'dissenting grievances'."⁴

This cannot have made pleasant hearing for Miall, who still had in prospect a great battle of principle, but Morley had already disassociated himself from militant liberationism. Nor can Gladstone have been encouraged, by the distrust with which his former dissenting supporters still regarded him.

With the reform of English universities fairly satisfactorily accomplished, Miall went on to support similar proposals for university reform in Ireland. The Liberation Society had resolved that the Irish university question must be dealt with in the same spirit as the Irish Church, without sectarian bias, and had sent a memorial in this sense to Gladstone.⁵ The first suitable measure had been promoted by the radical Henry Fawcett. It envisaged the

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 19.VII.1871, ff24-25. The act, by which "...the right of all students at the National Universities to participate in future in the honours and emoluments of those Institutions without enforcing invidious tests is recognised and secured."
2. Ibid.
3. British Quarterly Review, vol. LIII 1871, p457
4. E. Hodder, Life of Samuel Morley (London 1888) p262
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.XI.1872; 23.XII.1872

total abolition of tests at Trinity College, Dublin, and Miall was disappointed by Gladstone's counter-proposals, which proved he was no true friend of religious equality.¹ Moreover, Miall was wary of plans to establish an Irish university, which he regarded as a bribe to Irish catholics by the government, and which would be a species of concurrent endowment.²

However, Gladstone's Irish University Bill, introduced in 1873, avoided these pitfalls. It proposed to expand the University of Dublin into a university for the whole of Ireland. Its basis was to be purely secular, and there was no suggestion of religious tests. It was to be, "...secular in its constitution, but all-comprehensive in its range."³ Miall made a speech during the second reading, describing it as basically in conformity with nonconformist requirements:

"He counselled the House to disregard priestly claims, and to do what was right, confident of the ultimate result. He... always claimed on behalf of their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects exactly the same rights as they claimed for themselves."⁴

The bill would give freedom of access to the national university for members of all sects without distinction, and he was delighted that the government had turned its back upon religious tests. Moreover, the underlying philosophy of the bill enshrined the principle for which Miall had been striving in the controversies over English elementary and university education; it separated religious from secular teaching, and the state assumed responsibility for the latter only:

"The government had done in Ireland with regard to university education what the Nonconformists were asking should be done in England with regard to elementary education. It separated the teaching of religion from the teaching of secular knowledge. They had asserted that principle as the only one which harmonised with religious equality. The government was not appointed to teach religion - it was unfit for it: it could not do so without

1. Nonconformist, 27.III.1872, p311
2. Ibid., 5.II.1873, p140
3. Ibid., 19.II.1873, p177
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CCXIV, p1683.
Nonconformist, 12.III.1873, p249

trampling on the rights of others. The principle which he advocated was that the instruction given by the state should be simply secular. On that ground he would support the second reading of the bill."¹

He warned against any concession to the claims of the Catholic hierarchy to control the new university, for their claims were, "...medieval in their character. They were not at all in harmony with the spirit of the age."² Despite its admirable features, the bill was defeated, and its rejection led to Gladstone's resignation for a short period.

Later in the decade, the Nonconformist showed itself predictably hostile to the idea of founding a catholic university in Ireland. When the notion was mooted in January 1879, it argued that there already existed three Queen's Colleges for the education of the Irish laity, and it would be folly to replace them:

"Why are the Queen's Colleges to be destroyed - for such must be the eventual result - in order that Romish priests, who are the abject tools of the Vatican, should be enabled by means of public resources to enslave the minds of the rising generation in Ireland."³

These were precisely the reasons for Miall's campaign to end the domination of the Anglican body in Oxford and Cambridge. Indeed, he had condemned Sir James Graham's Factory Education Bill of 1843 in similar terms. Thus the Nonconformist opposed an attempt by the O'Connor Don to establish a catholic university for Ireland by a private bill, fearing that the result would be the creation of a catholic establishment in Ireland, the old bogey of concurrent endowment.⁴ Though the O'Connor Don's bill was unsuccessful, its spirit survived in a government measure to set up an Irish university, financed from funds made available by the disendowment of the Irish Church ten years previously.⁵ Almost the last utterance of the Nonconformist upon the university question in Miall's lifetime was to express the fear that the charter granted to the university made it too easy for catholics to gain a

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CCXIV, p1685
2. Ibid.
3. Nonconformist, 22.I.1879, pp73-74
4. Ibid., 11.VI.1879, p581
5. Ibid., 20.VIII.1879, p821

majority on the senate, and then give the university a sectarian tone.¹

Meanwhile, despite his acquiescence in the reform of the English universities in 1871, Miall was convinced that much remained to be done before the universities could be regarded as properly fulfilling their rôle. At the end of 1872, the Nonconformist asserted, "We are only at the beginning of University Reform."² There were two major criticisms of the state of affairs created by the University Reform Act: clerical fellowships still survived, and the universities remained exclusive and intellectually dormant. Further, Miall's relations with the Oxford reformers began to cool. A meeting at the Freemason's Tavern adopted Mark Pattison's ideas for the future of the universities, that they should concentrate upon research and scholarship, rather than upon extending or popularising their teaching.³

Miall agreed that research and scholarship should be improved, but he also believed that if, in achieving this, the universities became more exclusive, they would be failing to fulfil their function as national facilities.

There was no virtue in ending religious tests if they were to be replaced by different forms of exclusion:

"We must spread culture as well as heighten it: make it more popular as well as more complete: give it to the multitude as well as open up the most perfect opportunities for it to the select few."⁴

This, it felt, might be accomplished by founding urban colleges affiliated to the major universities, whose lectures would be open to everyone desiring higher education. The high cost of residence at Oxford and Cambridge prevented many people otherwise well qualified from taking advantage of their facilities, "...a state of affairs notoriously opposed to the intentions of pious founders."⁵ The setting up of an urban college at Nottingham, affiliated to Cambridge, was commended by the Nonconformist.⁶

1. Nonconformist & Independent, 29.I.1880, p122
2. Nonconformist, 27.XI.1872, p1209
3. J. Sparrow, Mark Pattison and the idea of University (Cambridge 1967) p107
4. Nonconformist, 27.XI.1872, p1209
5. Ibid., 19.I.1876, p49
6. Ibid., 29.IX.1875, p982

Collegiate endowments must be redistributed, and shifted from the support of religious activity:

"Revenues which ought to make these institutions the very brain of England, originating or co-ordinating all the most ethereal impulses vibrating through the national body, are wrongfully and wastefully squandered on merely sectarian purposes."¹

The 'merely sectarian purposes' were basically the continued existence of clerical fellowships, and the upkeep of college chapels and their Anglican services, while the colleges were supposed to be open to members of all sects without discrimination:

"Those institutions are not the schools of the nation: they are appendages of the Church. And no reform short of a total abrogation of their present ecclesiastical character can possibly restore to them the intellectual sovereignty which is their historical due."²

In the campaign against clerical fellowships, Miall found an ally in Lyulph Stanley, and gave considerable space to his speeches which highlighted the abuses of clerical fellowships in Oxford.³

Proposals introduced by Lord Salisbury in 1876 led to fears that the liberal spirit had departed from the question of university reform. The Nonconformist denounced his proposals as a plan to re-endow the clergy, to repeal the University Tests Act, and to return control of the universities to clerical Tories. A commission was to implement the measure, and none of its members was representative of dissenting feelings. Miall pronounced it,

"...the duty of all Liberals to proclaim war against such a mockery and pretence of University reform, and to announce, both in debate and by divisions, that they repudiate it."⁴

In the next session, Hardy produced a measure which Miall found marginally preferable to Salisbury's.⁵ Again, he emphasised the desirability of abolishing clerical fellowships, and believed they only survived because public opinion was so ill-informed concerning the organisation of Oxford.

1. Nonconformist 19.I.1876 p49

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 17.XI.1875, p1158; 15.XII.1875, pp1269f; 22.XII.1875, pp1297 ff.

4. Ibid., 8.III.1876, p234; 29.III.1876, p299

5. Ibid., 21.II.1877, p182

He noted with satisfaction that dissenting M.P.s had held a meeting to discuss tactics, and intended to press for the abolition of clerical fellowships in committee.¹ He regarded the debate as of sufficient importance to devote an entire supplement of the Nonconformist to a verbatim account of the committee stage, and to welcome the support of Dilke and Goschen for the abolition of clerical fellowships.²

Though clerical fellowships survived, Miall was moderately satisfied with the measure as it passed into law, more because of the indication that Parliament was taking a liberal view of the question than because of the intrinsic merits of the act. Reviewing the session of 1877, the Nonconformist commented,

"...it has resulted in the passing of a Universities Bill, somewhat modified in a liberal sense, with decided indications that Parliament would have no objections for the commissioners to make these institutions broader and more national."³

It greeted Gladstone's return to power in 1880 with the hope that his government would remove all tests affecting fellowships, or headships of houses, at Oxford and Cambridge.⁴

When Miall died in 1881, he had not seen achieved all that he desired in the field of university reform. However, the acts of 1854 and 1871 had gone a long way towards satisfying the demands of dissenters, and, as the Times pointed out, disestablished the Church of England in one of its aspects. The Times went on to argue that Miall would have been more pleased with what had been achieved had he been given credit for it.⁵ He had, in fact, seen secured the essence of the proposals put forward by Hamilton in the Edinburgh Review, though, as a dissenter, Miall had naturally been chiefly concerned with one particular aspect of Hamilton's ideas. This was the admission of dissenters to higher education, and to the close corporations

1. Nonconformist, 28.II.1877, p193

2. Ibid., 6.VI.1877, p597

3. Ibid., 15.VIII.1877, p829

4. Nonconformist & Independent, 15.VII.1880, p731

5. Times, 27.XI.1871, p9

of Oxford and Cambridge colleges as of right; once this was secured, the other reforms advocated by Hamilton would necessarily follow. Miall was fighting for a principle, and regarded university reform as part of a larger issue, that of destroying the monopolistic power of the Church of England.

Given this outlook, university reform could not be a central issue for Miall. He had no experience of, and little contact with the universities themselves, and in contrast to his activities in other fields, he initiated no new ideas and launched no new movements. He did little more than support the efforts of others, though this was no negligible contribution, and he did this in three important ways. Firstly, he threw the weight of the Nonconformist, one of the most influential of radical and dissenting journals, behind any promising campaign, publicising speeches, rehearsing arguments and analysing proposals. This, in the nineteenth century, was a vital part of the process of forming electoral and public opinion: indeed, without the consistent support of at least one newspaper, no reform movement could hope for success. Secondly, as in other spheres, he was active as an organiser of alliances between various groups. He was able to secure the support of the powerful Liberation Society, a body widely regarded as one of the most sophisticated organisations of political agitation, with branches throughout the country, for the liberal reformers within the universities. It was also able to influence a considerable number of members of Parliament. Thirdly, as a member of Parliament himself, Miall was able to represent the views of dissenters when university reform was discussed in Parliament. There was an extent to which he was regarded as a spokesman for dissenters in this matter; certainly, Gladstone made certain tactical agreements with him.

However, university reform was a peripheral interest to Miall. As has been noted, the Dissenting Deputies did not acknowledge him as one of the authors

of the success of 1871,¹ and in his biography of his father, Arthur Miall makes few references to university reform. Miall himself discussed the question little outside the columns of the Nonconformist: one of his most important books upon the position of the churches contains only one reference to universities.² Nonetheless, the successes in the field of university reform represent some of the most substantial gains made by dissenters during Miall's political career, and in so far as he played an active, if secondary rôle, these successes must be counted among his political achievements.

1. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p377.
2. E. Miall, The British Churches in relation to the British People
(London 1849) p368

CHAPTER 3

ELECTORAL REFORM

Part 1.	Miall and the Complete Suffrage Union	165
Part 2.	Realism and compromise	202
Part 3.	The achievement of reform	228

Electoral reform was the first major political cause which Miall adopted; throughout his career as a politician, it was his task to reconcile two contradictory political facts. Parliament, dominated as it was by the aristocracy despite the reform of 1832, would not concede many of the reforms which Miall considered essential. However, if there was to be any political progress, Parliament would have to consent to its own reform. Miall realised from the outset that external pressure was required, and initially, he saw the issue in these basic terms. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 led him to modify his view, for this event demonstrated that Parliament, with all its imperfections, could be forced to concede urgent reforms, and could be made responsive to external pressure. It was also apparent that despite the aristocracy's control of the electoral system, it was possible to secure the election of reformers to Parliament. When Miall appreciated this, he added to his strategy of external pressure the policy of building within Parliament a party which would exert pressure upon the government of the day. His writings and speeches suggest that he saw such a group as consisting of radicals, dissenters and Irish catholics, all frustrated by the electoral system. Parliamentary reform was a question which might unite them. This indeed was the orthodox doctrine of radical dissenters since the 1830s. Fearing class struggle, and fully aware that the growing divisions in the forces of political movement strengthened the forces of reaction, they sought causes which would unite reformers. Miall advocated the reform of Parliament itself as his first contribution; later he was to offer disestablishment in its various forms. He appealed to the various groups of reformers as a politician, but also made a wider appeal to a middle class sense of duty, using the arguments of religious and social obligation. In this aspect he was as much preacher as politician, with the Nonconformist as his pulpit.

Part 1. Miall and the Complete Suffrage Union

Edward Baines summed up in the Leeds Mercury the expectations of middle-class reformers after the achievement of parliamentary reform in 1832:

"The fruits of reform are to be gathered. Vast commercial and agricultural monopolies are to be abolished. The Church is to be reformed, and, we would fain hope, severed from its unchristian and mutually injurious connection with the State. Close corporations are to be thrown open. Retrenchment and economy are to be enforced. The shackles of the Slave are to be broken."¹

However, the reformers were disappointed by the reality. A considerable part of the male population remained unenfranchised, and felt cheated when successive Whig governments ignored demands for reforms. Russell's declaration of 'finality' was the less tolerable as the demands of the various unenfranchised and middle-class groups were voiced against a background of economic distress and social discontent. The demands of the People's Charter reflect the discontent of working class-radicals with the performance of the reformed Parliaments, while the prolonged struggle of middle-class radicals to secure the repeal of the Corn Laws illustrates the difficulty of securing major concessions.²

Nor had the grievances of dissenters been removed in the 1830s. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had removed the major obstacle to the principle of civil and religious equality, and the dissenting bodies had been almost unanimous in their support of the parliamentary reformers of 1831 and 1832, hoping that subsequent Whig governments would show their gratitude by removing the remaining grievances of dissenters. They too were disappointed. To dissenters such as Miall, the Whigs of the 1830s seemed to be supporting the pretensions of the Established Church, and ignoring the demands of their dissenting allies:

1. E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines (London 1851) p167
See also E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London 1968) p901.
2. Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 3 (London 1843) pp9-11. The papers of the Union are in Birmingham Central Library.

"Ten years since, their voices commanded respectful attention... Now, although they have gained in numbers...they are despised, and what is worse, despised with impunity...A Registration Act and a Marriage Bill have been ceded to them, it is true, by a reformed Parliament. But setting these aside, to what quarter can they look for self-congratulation? The continuance of church rates, ecclesiastical imprisonments, workhouse chaplains, colonial bishops and demands for church extension prove that they are no longer formidable."¹

Miall was one of many reformers who believed that the experience of the 1830s demonstrated the futility of trying to obtain specific changes from the reformed parliament. He was initially sceptical of the value of pressure groups such as the Anti-Corn Law League which sought to persuade a parliament dominated by aristocratic interests to concede a measure which would undermine aristocratic interests, though he admired the organisation and methods of the League. He believed that limited reforms did not touch the fundamental problem, the unrepresentative character of parliament itself. A reform of the whole electoral system was, for Miall, a pre-condition of the success of any other reform: only thus would aristocratic influence be curtailed and governments elected which truly reflected the wishes of all the people. In the first years of his editorship of the Nonconformist, Parliamentary reform was the cause for which he fought consistently, and to which he assigned the highest priority.

Since Miall's preoccupation with the reform of parliamentary institutions forms a continuous thread throughout his career, it is useful to discuss his analysis of the shortcomings of the reformed parliament. Most of his writings on this matter are to be found in the first three volumes of the Nonconformist, from 1841 to 1843. He was at this time attempting to launch a radical periodical which would represent the views of militant dissent; there were groups of dissenters, especially the leaders of the old-established dissenting organisations, which felt he was far too extreme

1. Nonconformist, 14.IV.1841, pl. See also G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the dissenters and disestablishment. 1845-1847." English Historical Review vol.82 1967, pp61f

in his views, and the several dissenting periodicals which already existed for the most part adopted a more moderate tone. One which had some sympathy with Miall's analysis was the Eclectic Review, though at the outset, it did not go the whole way with him. While it believed that the franchise should be extended, it felt that it should be confined to taxpayers, as the working classes were too ignorant to make rational judgments.¹ Another leading dissenting journal, the Patriot, believed that parliamentary reform could only be achieved by the Whigs, and considered that the attempts of radicals and chartists to bring external pressure to bear upon Parliament would cause alarm to the middle classes, and promote the cause of reaction.² It agreed with Miall that parliamentary reform was a cause which might serve to reunite the reformers within Parliament, who had lost their faith in the Whigs and had been progressively weakened by electoral losses in 1835 and 1837.³

But it differed from the Nonconformist in the conclusions it drew. It saw no virtue in rejecting the aid of politicians who alone could carry a measure through Parliament, and believed it folly to attack them. If dissenters were not adequately represented, their object should be to secure the election of men better qualified to handle their questions.⁴ This was the general view of moderate dissenters, particularly the London leaders, and in going against it, Miall was fighting both dissenters and the establishment. His thesis was that such a strategy had already proved valueless, and his uncompromising statement of his views was designed to show that a new approach was needed. A prerequisite of success was a broadly-based body of support, and he hoped to attract both the leaders of middle-class groups such

1. Eclectic Review, ns vol.XI 1842, p437

2. Patriot, 21.X.1839, p765

3. Patriot, 27.VIII.1840, p596. See also W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London 1972) p195. It has been argued that the radicals and O'Connell felt betrayed by Russell's abandonment of the appropriation clauses of the Irish Church Bill of 1833. O.J. Brose, Church and Parliament: the reshaping of the Church of England 1828-1860 (Oxford 1959) p49.

4. Patriot, 24.VI.1844, p436

as the Anti-Corn Law League, the parliamentary radicals, and the working class leaders, especially the Chartists. A policy of compromise with a provenly unsympathetic political party could not hope to unite such widely differing groups: as will be apparent, Miall's programme was intended to frighten the middle-class leaders into supporting the substance of working class demands as expressed in the People's Charter. Furthermore, it would be unfair to regard his extremism as tactical; though it served an immediate purpose, the policy upon parliamentary reform which he propounded in the early issue of the Nonconformist was one which he advocated throughout his career, despite his many compromises over the means by which its objectives were to be achieved, and despite a growing disposition as he became older to accept what could be obtained immediately, as a basis for future advance. The politician may have become more and more pronounced as his career progressed, but the idealist in him never completely vanished.

Miall saw the shortcomings of Parliament as consequences of the 1832 Reform Act. It had brought true democracy no closer, and had left the aristocracy firmly in control of the representative system:

"Have not the framers of the reform bill avowed that the measure of 1832 was purposely framed so as to give the landed interest a preponderance in the councils of the nation?...Why do we not attack the root of the evil, and kindly relieve class legislators of their onerous responsibilities by taking it upon ourselves?"¹

Since aristocratic domination was so pronounced, it followed that Parliament was out of touch with the needs and aspirations of the mass of the people, and was totally unrepresentative. As such, it was no more than, "...an elaborately organised falsehood."² This was worse than no representation at all, for it meant that members of society who were represented in Parliament had no power to control events, and had to accept responsibility for legislation of which they did not approve.³ As one of the tracts of the Complete Suffrage Union put it:

1. Nonconformist, 2.II.1842, p73
2. Ibid., 15.II.1843, p104
3. Ibid., 8.II.1843, p88

"It was now but too apparent that the supreme power of the empire was lodged in the hands of the aristocracy."¹

In addition to grievances of principle, Miall had many specific complaints.

The system of registration for the franchise, as prescribed by the act of 1832, gave innumerable opportunities for manipulation.² As Peel remarked:

"There is a perfectly new element of political power, namely the registration of voters, a more powerful one than either the sovereign or the House of Commons. That party is strongest, in point of fact, which has the existing registration in its favour...the power of this new element will go on increasing as its secret strength becomes known and is more fully developed."³

A leading historian of parliamentary reform has shown the complexity of the system of registration, and its many loopholes. In particular, it was easy to complain against the registration of an elector, and it was for the individual elector to establish his entitlement to the franchise at a Registration Court.⁴ Miall was fully aware of the difficulties involved:

"The cumbrous system of registration has excluded from the franchise many thousands of liberal-minded men, whose zeal for the public good has not been proof against the annual annoyance of proving their right to possess a vote...The Tories, having much to gain and more to keep, have never relaxed their attention to this point."⁵

Furthermore, the process of selecting candidates, the high level of qualifications necessary to become a member of parliament, and the heavy cost of elections, meant that the system was weighted heavily against reformers.

While Miall constantly urged upon reformers the need to influence the selection of candidates in constituencies, he offered no solution to the difficulties involved. Electors were faced with a choice which was unreal when neither candidate would pledge himself to the support of parliamentary reform, and there was nothing they could do to secure the nomination of a reformer.

Miall was compelled to admit:

1. Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 3, pp9-11. This is printed from Eclectic Review, ns vol. XIII 1843, pp90ff.
2. C.S.Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the development and operation of the parliamentary franchise, 1832-1885. (New Haven, 1915) Ch.V.
3. Peel to Arbuthnot, 8.XI.1838, in C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel, from his private papers (London 1891-9) ii, 368
C.S. Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales ppl25-126.
4. C.S.Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales Chapters V and VI.
5. Nonconformist, 9.VI.1841, pl69

"The selection of candidates by our constituencies is rather nominal than real. Not the best man, but the richest, must be their choice if they are to succeed. The longest purse carries the election."¹

Melbourne's government had resisted all attempts to extend the franchise,² and the House of Commons would soon cease to be regarded as the expression of the nations' will. An infuriated population would seek other political outlets.³

The situation was further exacerbated by the opportunities for corruption and intimidation on the part of the aristocracy which the system of open voting allowed. The Whigs had consistently refused the protection of the ballot, a refusal which inhibited a free expression of the will of electors.⁴ The electoral system assumed that the franchise was entrusted to those beyond the reach of temptation, and that they exercised it as a trust for the advantage of the whole nation. Miall observed that a brief examination of previous elections showed the extent to which that trust had been abused.

"...when a small class of electors supposed to represent the wants and wishes of the whole country openly and unblushingly sell their votes and hold the power they possess at the disposal of the highest bidder, it is high time for all who pretend concern for their countrys' welfare to turn their thoughts to some safer and more reasonable system of representation."⁵

The corruption of the system left only two political groups, the bribers and the bribed.⁶ The domination of Parliament by the aristocracy necessarily resulted in legislation in the interests of the upper classes; reforms which would benefit other classes could obtain no support in Parliament. 'Class legislation' was the root of all current evils:

"We are desirous of proving that this is the radical evil to be got rid of."⁷

Naturally the aristocracy would do nothing to remedy this state of affairs.

1. Nonconformist, 9.VI.1841, p169
2. Ibid., 30.VI.1841, p217
3. Ibid., 7.VII.1841, p232
4. Ibid., 30.VI.1841, p217
5. Ibid., 7.VII.1841, p232
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 12.I.1842, p25

Miall regarded Whigs and Tories as being simply different sections of the aristocracy, and was infuriated by the nonchalance with which the Tories took over from the Whigs in 1841. Apparently indifferent to the sufferings of the poor, the Tories engaged in an undignified scramble for office.¹

The worst effect of 'class legislation' was the indifference of the legislature to current economic distress, and Miall saw no remedy short of a radical reform of parliament:

"The people of this country will be able to trace their tremendous sufferings to the right cause: vicious, selfish, aristocratic legislation. The Conservatives thrust themselves into office expressly to preserve and uphold the present oppressive system... Hatred of Toryism does not imply confidence in Whiggism. Both sections of the aristocracy are the objects of all but universal distrust."²

The Poor Law, the Game Laws and the Corn Laws, taken together, showed the appalling insensitivity of the legislature, which allowed a small section of society to perpetuate in their own interest, oppressive measures which caused distress to millions. Poverty was exacerbated by the laws which prevented economic expansion, and was then punished by virtual imprisonment, while the Corn Laws made food artificially expensive.³ Repeal of the Corn Laws was a highly desirable objective, but even if this were achieved, it would merely remove a symptom of aristocratic selfishness: only a reform of Parliament itself would remedy the underlying cause. Miall hoped that the Anti-Corn Law League would give its assistance to this cause.

The refusal of Parliament to surrender any part of its powers over the Church of England was another consequence of 'class legislation'. For Miall, the state church was one of the most serious evils, because its very existence depressed the social and civil status of dissenters, and inhibited progress towards civil and religious equality. In addition, the government was a totally unsuitable agency for deciding matters of religion. It would be no less logical to select 658 railroad directors, on the basis of their

1. Nonconformist, 1.IX.1841, p362
2. Ibid., 11.VIII.1841, p312
3. Ibid., 6.X.1841, p440

shareholdings alone, to govern the affairs of the Church of England.¹ Members of Parliament had no inherent qualifications to decide upon matters of faith; the Lords might be, "...infidels in creed and profligates in morals..."² An hereditary monarchy was no guarantee of a competent or suitable head of the church, which, in its turn, served as an agent of aristocratic domination through its control of a large part of the educational system. The aristocracy controlled the church through its patronage, and hence possessed the means to influence the minds of the nation's children.³ The church, in return, upheld the Corn Laws, showing herself to be an opponent of reform and progress. So long as the church and aristocracy worked hand in hand, there was no prospect of Parliament giving satisfaction to dissenters. So far as Miall was concerned, nonconformists had everything to gain from an all-out attack upon restrictive monopoly and privilege. The dissenting body should,

"...array herself once more in awful majesty and come forth to vindicate the oppressed and pillaged people of these realms. Let her lift up her hand to Heaven and swear 'monopoly shall cease.'"4

By the end of 1842, Miall believed economic collapse was imminent, thanks to the blindness of the aristocracy. Peel's sliding scale for corn would do nothing to alleviate the situation: it was simply further evidence of aristocratic selfishness:

"The legislating few are becoming far too expensive for the governed many...The condition of the country under the pressure of aristocratic government has become so bad as to admit of no essential palliation."⁵

Miall regarded the state of affairs he had thus revealed as both wrong in principle and dangerous in practice. His main fear was that if Parliament ceased to be regarded as the agent of social change, various discontented groups such as the Chartists might have recourse to violence. The Eclectic Review believed there was justice in the Chartist's demands,⁶ and there was

1. Nonconformist, 20.X.1841, p465
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 14.VII.1841, p241
4. Ibid., 23.VI.1841, p201; 1.IX.1841, p353.
5. Ibid., 19.X.1842, p704; 16.II.1842, p104
6. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XI 1842, p450

a general anxiety that violence would be the result if those who possessed the franchise showed no benevolence to those who did not. Miall warned of violent uprising and the destruction of the churches, emphasising the part dissenting ministers had to play in averting such a catastrophe:

"If they do not teach them to wrestle for their rights by peaceful means, those who have not the gospel of peace in their hands will lay hold on them, and war or violence instead of peaceable firmness will be resorted to."¹

Although regarded as an extremist, Miall had a horror of violence, which was evident in his hostility to war and to capital punishment, as well as in his hostility to revolution as a means of political and social change. The resulting evils inevitably outweighed any benefits which might be gained, so Miall was anxious to remove the causes of violence. He hoped to ally with the potentially violent elements, and direct their energies into peaceful channels. The Eclectic Review, speaking for a more moderate section of dissent, agreed that Peel's Tory government was repressive and provocative, and to avert working class violence, "...our suffrage must be simplified, purified and extended."² Miall's writings during the 1840s lay so much stress upon the dangers of social upheaval that it seems reasonable to conclude that he was playing upon the fears of the enfranchised classes, in order to obtain their support for parliamentary reform. His problem was similar to that of the Anti-Corn Law League, to induce a parliament fundamentally opposed to even minor reforms to concede the greatest of reforms, and to achieve this, he needed the support of all reforming groups. The Eclectic Review believed that the trend of politics since 1832 had been for the Whig confederation to disintegrate, the middle-class reformers devoting themselves to economic reforms, while the working-class element devoted itself to the Charter.³ In the hope of reuniting these elements, Miall evidently felt the fear of violence was more effective than reasoned argument, which the League had already tried unsuccessfully with the Chartists.

1. Nonconformist, 6.X.1841, pp440-441

2. Eclectic Review, ns XIV 1843, p473

3. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XIII 1843, pp90-100

Basically, the struggle was for democracy, and middle-class leaders tended to give an inflated importance to campaigns such as that for the repeal of the Corn Laws:

"The democratic principle must be recognised and hailed by the middle classes, organised and led forward against the very seat and centre of its foes. The choice lies between democracy and aristocracy, between the rights of the many and the privileges of the few. Compromise is now out of the question...The Corn Law question is only the ostensible cause of the coming conflict: the real strife is for mastery."¹

Though the support of the middle classes was essential, Miall was not confident about obtaining it. Innate middle class snobbery produced an unhealthy deference to the wishes of the aristocracy, at the expense of the essential relationship between middle and lower classes.² He warned, "The storm is brewing. All things betoken the slow but certain approach of a universal crash."³

The refusal of Parliament to concede reforms had already resulted in peaceful agitation by the Anti-Corn Law League, the activities of the Chartists, which were at present peaceful, and the total alienation of the unenfranchised classes.⁴ Thus, Miall argued, it would be expedient for the enfranchised classes to show concern, lest they be identified with the forces of reaction. This danger, indeed, was already apparent; many Chartists regarded the Anti-Corn Law League as a plot by manufacturers to reduce wages when the price of bread fell following repeal. Miall warned:

"There is scarcely a pang which they now endure which is not inflicted upon them by legislative monopoly...We must however forewarn our countrymen that this political indifference of theirs is but a slumber upon volcanic ground. Their danger is appalling...war will presently start up in ungovernable rage, and will snap asunder with giant strength the conventional bonds of social order...There is no choice between a peaceful and a violent revolution, a transfer of political power to the hands of the people, or a fiery outbreak of physical convulsion."⁵

Lest the middle classes take fright and ally with the forces of reaction Miall pointed out that,

1. Nonconformist, 13.X.1841, p456
2. Ibid., 25.VIII.1841, p345
3. Ibid., 28.IV.1841, p41
4. Ibid., 21.VII.1841, p258
5. Ibid., 22.VI.1842, p432

"...a return to the days of Pitt and Castlereagh would end all hope of Free Trade, since the Anti-Corn Law League as well as the Chartists would be crushed. If safety of property be their object...that property will be a thousand-fold more safe in the keeping of a grateful people than in that of an armed police and a numerous military."¹

There was even a risk that the Tories might deliberately provoke popular disorder, in order to introduce a reactionary and repressive policy. Thus Miall was able to suggest that self-interest, as well as the demands of justice, would best be served by middle-class support for parliamentary reform.² The risks inherent in enlarging the franchise were far smaller than those involved in perpetuating the existing parliamentary system.

It was also necessary to obtain working-class support, and Miall saw it as his major task to bring about a union between middle and working-class reformers. Universal manhood suffrage was the only possible basis for such a union, but the difficulty was as much one of leadership as of ideology. There were radical reformers in Parliament, though their position had deteriorated since 1835. They lacked any obvious leader, and while middle-class leaders distrusted O'Connor, who alone could command massive working-class loyalty, the working classes had no faith in middle-class leadership.³ Miall was aware of the need for leadership, and later hoped that the Birmingham philanthropist Joseph Sturge might fill the rôle. His own contribution lay in the field of journalism, and he began the attempt to reconcile middle and working-class reformers with a series of articles, designed to demonstrate to middle-class leaders that there was nothing to fear from the extension of the franchise to the lower classes. The practical difficulties were formidable. Arthur Miall pointed out that the Chartist movement was divided between the physical force Chartists and the moral force Chartists, and the threat of violence seemed immediate.⁴ The middle-class leaders were similarly divided:

1. Nonconformist, 24.VIII.1842, p576

2. Ibid., 9.VIII.1843, p553

3. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement," in P. Hollis, (ed) Pressure from without (London 1974) pp80-81.

4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall (London 1884) p74

"It must also be considered that a vast proportion of the middle class, zealous for the repeal of the Corn Laws, regard with little favour an extension of the suffrage. Indeed this constitutes the most serious objection to commencing a movement having for its object an extensive measure of organic reform... Their fears are not fixed, nor their opinions based, upon good sense and sound principles."¹

What was needed was a campaign of reasoned argument to show the middle classes that their fears were groundless, and Miall proposed to set aside a portion of the *Nonconformist*, week by week,

"...to bring about a better understanding between the middle and labouring classes...We are certain their interests are bound up together...The obstacles which have so far prevented unity can easily be overcome."²

The suffrage was a right of all men; all power in a democracy derived from the delegation of the will of the whole people, and the franchise was their sanction. Similarly, there should be no taxation without representation, but many taxpayers were not represented under the existing system.³ It followed that it was the duty of members of the enfranchised middle classes to do their utmost to secure the extension of the franchise to those unjustly deprived of it, for it was in the interests of both classes to break the aristocratic monopoly of power.⁴ If a contractual view of society were taken, there were very few grounds for excluding anyone from the exercise of the franchise; only those could be excluded who had broken their side of the contract by committing some crime, or those who, like minors or paupers, had no financial independence. Since rights were attached to people and not to property, a compromise such as household suffrage was not acceptable.⁵ The extension of the suffrage would lead to an improvement in the general tone of society, because it would be accompanied by a demand among the newly enfranchised classes for education.⁶ Once Parliament itself had been reformed, it would be easier to secure other reforms, but at this stage it would be impolitic to confuse the issue.⁷

1. *Nonconformist*, 13.X.1841, p456
2. *Ibid.*, 20.X.1841, p472
3. *Ibid.*, 29.IX.1841, p425; 20.X.1841, p472.
4. *Ibid.*, 27.X.1841, p489
5. *Ibid.*, 3.XI.1841, p505
6. E. Miall, *The Politics of Christianity* (London 1847) p76
7. *Nonconformist*, 10.XI.1841, p521.

Having outlined the advantages, Miall considered the possible objections. The Patriot, reflecting moderate dissenting opinion, opposed universal manhood suffrage, because uneducated people would receive the vote, would be unable to make reasoned decisions, and would be open to corrupt influences.¹ The Nonconformist retorted that contemporary political discussion was not of a particularly exalted level, and was distorted by bribery and intimidation. Political leaders considered the working classes sufficiently well-informed to seek their support in mass meetings. It was illogical to argue that they were unfit to enjoy the suffrage.² To the argument that the poverty of the working classes was such that opportunities for bribery and intimidation would be enormously increased, Miall replied that the system was already rife with corruption, and an enlarged electorate would make bribery more difficult:

"A disinclination to take bribes we cannot ensure; but we can go far to cut away the motives, and to create an impossibility to offer bribes, and that is the next best thing. Religion alone can accomplish the first - complete suffrage would meanwhile guarantee the last."³

The fear that, once it obtained power, the working class would use it to undermine institutions and attack property, was dismissed as groundless. Up to this point in time, the working classes had endured great hardship without resorting to rebellion, and it was wrong to provoke discontent by oppressive legislation, and plead that discontent as a reason for not extending political privilege:

"Whilst we attribute to working men evil designs, they can charge us...with evil doings. Our Parliament robs them. Their Parliament might or might not rob us."⁴

These articles met with the approval of at least one section of dissenting opinion. The Eclectic Review regarded them as,

1. Patriot, 4.XI.1841
2. Nonconformist, 17.XI.1841, p536
3. Ibid., 24.XI.1841, p552
4. Ibid., 1.XII.1841, p569

"...one of the most purely philosophical dissertations which has ever come before us on such a subject...It is written with masterly power and great simplicity, and deserves and even demands the attentive perusal of every man who is interested...in the momentous questions which at this solemn moment of crisis are appealing to the universal intellect and heart of the empire."¹

In contrast, the Patriot regarded complete suffrage as an extension of Chartism and socialism, and while Miall retorted by accusing the Patriot of trying to alarm the middle classes,² he was forced to explain his connection with Chartism. He argued that principles were more important than the men who advocated them. While deprecating the violence of certain Chartist leaders, he insisted that they were not typical of the movement as a whole, and they would not be replaced until the middle classes offered better alternatives.³

Thus did Miall attempt to provide a basis for the reconciliation of the middle and lower classes. His arguments attracted the attention of the Birmingham reformer Joseph Sturge. He was a Quaker philanthropist, who took steps to translate Miall's ideas into reality. At a meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League in Manchester in December 1841 he secured the support of some members of the League, as individuals, for a declaration in support of Complete Suffrage. This was the origin of the Complete Suffrage movement.

Sturge, like Miall, was anxious about the potentially explosive political situation; his particular anxiety was the alienation of the middle and working classes. While he sympathised with working class grievances, he feared that working class agitation might lead to violence. He wrote to the American reformer, Tappan:

"Our unenfranchised countrymen are politically much in the same position as your slaves, and in many of the electors there is nearly as strong a feeling against giving them the franchise as there is against giving it to the slaves with you...There is no such efficient auxiliary to the infidel

1. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XI 1842, p435
2. Nonconformist, 8.XII.1841, p584
3. Ibid., 15.XII.1841, pp600-601

as a system of social and political injustice perpetuated under the apparent sanction of the gospel."¹

He informed Cobden that it was hopeless to expect Parliament to take notice of the grievances of the labouring population; indeed, current policy would exacerbate their miseries:

"I therefore think that the time is arrived when every friend of humanity of whatever class, sect or party should endeavour to obtain and secure for the people a just and permanent control over their own affairs."²

His link with Miall, according to both Henry Richard and Herbert Spencer, came about after Sturge, who had contributed money to set up the

Nonconformist, read Miall's articles on the reconciliation of the middle and working classes, which matched exactly his own ideas upon the subject. The articles were published as a pamphlet, and Sturge himself provided an introduction.³ Following the meeting with members of the Anti-Corn Law League, Sturge and William Sharman Crawford, Miall's predecessor as M.P.

for Rochdale, drew up a declaration of Complete Suffrage with the encouragement of Cobden.⁴ It enshrined many of the points previously made by Miall:

"Deeply impressed with the conviction of the evils arising from class legislation, and of the sufferings thereby inflicted upon our industrious fellow subjects, the undersigned affirm that a large majority of the people of this country are unjustly excluded from that fair, full and free exercise of the franchise to which they are entitled by the great principle of Christian equity; and also by the British Constitution, for 'no subject of England can be constrained to pay any aids or taxes, even for the defence of the realm or the support of the government, but such as are imposed by his own consent or that of his representatives in Parliament.'"⁵

Miall naturally welcomed this development, and advised that it would be folly to expect the present parliament to concede Complete Suffrage: "Our main business lies with the electors. Our one aim should be to enlist votes."⁶

The Patriot believed that a campaign outside Parliament for franchise reform could not fail to gain support, because so many reformers felt frustrated by

1. H. Richard, Memoirs of Joseph Sturge (London 1865) p296

2. Ibid., p292

3. Ibid., pp297f

4. Ibid., p299

5. Ibid., p301

6. Nonconformist, 22.XII.1841, p616; 29.XII.1841, p632.

the existing electoral system. It believed that a limited reform of Parliament was desirable, but hoped it would be based upon "...sounder principles than those of the Charter"¹, with which it identified Miall. The attitude of the Patriot was typical of moderate dissent, and it meant that the dissenting body as a whole was not in favour of Miall's campaign.

The strategy which Miall recommended was limited and sensible. The advocates of franchise reform could expect nothing from Parliament itself; their proper business was to try to secure the selection of parliamentary candidates pledged to universal manhood suffrage, and then attempt to secure their election to Parliament. They could also attempt to persuade the Anti-Corn Law League that a Parliament of landowners would never repeal the Corn Laws, and the only hope for their repeal lay in a radically reformed Parliament.² During 1842, Sturge toured the country trying to obtain middle class support for Complete Suffrage and this was one of his most frequently used arguments.³

At the beginning of 1842, Miall felt that circumstances were producing a political atmosphere favourable to the campaign; he believed the middle classes had begun to appreciate the dangers of the failure of Peel's government to remedy the grievances of the lower classes, or to remove repressive legislation. The working classes had realised that their causes would be damaged by violent advocacy, and were disposed to adopt peaceful tactics. Thus one of the main obstacles to collaboration between the classes had been removed.⁴ His main fear was that the aristocracy would prove obdurate, and refuse to concede the essential reforms. If this occurred, it would be difficult to prevent the working classes from having recourse to violence, and Miall regarded it as essential to gain the support of dissenting ministers who might be able to prevent disorder. He told Sturge that they were playing with fire:

1. Patriot, 28.II.1842, p132
2. Nonconformist, 29.XII.1841, p632
3. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5. (London 1845) p38
4. Nonconformist, 5.I.1842, p8

"Politically regarded, merely, it is full of danger. We are raising a power which we may be unable to control if chafed by aristocratic opposition...The more necessity is there to get our cause well-founded in the religious portions of the public before party men and politicians take part in it."¹

This was an argument which Miall frequently employed in the 1840s; he used it in relation to the Established Church as well as with reference to the parliamentary situation.

The attempt by Miall and Sturge to unite middle and working classes was not unique. William Biggs of Leicester produced a similar scheme, essentially a modification of the People's Charter, which he named the Midland Counties Charter. Miall feared it might become a rival to Complete Suffrage, and dismissed it on practical grounds:

"Mr. Bigg's plan retains the same unstatesmanlike assortment of heterogeneous subjects. Its want of simplicity alone would render its success hopeless."²

When the Complete Suffrage movement was later compelled to accept all six points of the People's Charter, Miall had to modify his view.

The Complete Suffrage movement gathered support. At Rochdale, John Bright and a number of Chartists declared it, "...wise and just, and worthy of the earnest support of all sound reformers."³ Sturge addressed a meeting in Edinburgh, attended by a group of Chartists:

"...the proceedings were of such a nature to warrant the expectation that a union between them (the Chartists) and the middle class would be speedily effected."⁴

Lovett, one of the leading Chartists, was prepared to make some concessions in order to obtain middle-class support,⁵ and Arthur Miall was delighted by the early progress of the movement:

"The effect of these appeals was the fusion of all the more orderly and progressive workers of the Anti-Corn Law movement with the moral force Chartists, and their hearty and zealous combination for the political rights which both alike desired."⁶

1. Miall to Sturge, 28.I.1842, in H. Richard Memoirs of Joseph Sturge p333
2. Nonconformist, 5.I.1842, p9; see also A. Briggs (ed) Chartist Studies (London 1967) p357
3. Nonconformist, 26.I.1842, p53
4. Ibid., p55
5. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement," in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p85
6. A. Miall, Edward Miall p84

Miall stressed that the unenfranchised classes had no choice but to put their trust in middle-class leaders, and they must facilitate the union of the classes by ceasing to demand the adoption of the People's Charter in its entirety. They would also have to realise that the very name of the Charter would evoke memories of violence and disorder; it would be expedient to avoid direct reference to it.¹

Like the Anti-Corn Law League, the Complete Suffrage movement was fundamentally a provincial movement. Its centre was in Birmingham, and its leaders were not based in London, with the possible exception of Miall, who had recently moved there from Leicester: there is no sense in which Miall was representative of London dissent, or of any other metropolitan political force at this time. When the union was set up in Birmingham in 1842, the men behind its establishment were Sturge himself, Sharman Crawford, the member of Parliament for Rochdale, and according to the papers of the Complete Suffrage Union, the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell.² It was resolved to hold a nationwide congress, and meetings were held throughout the country to appoint delegates. Miall took the chair at a meeting in Stoke Newington, which passed the following resolution;

"The propriety of exercising the ballot in equal electoral districts, and on behalf of candidates selected without view to the qualifications of property was calmly discussed and assented to."³

Miall agreed to attend the Birmingham meeting as a delegate, and thus went to it committed to support a large portion of the People's Charter. Without doubt he sympathised with the Charter and agreed with most of its demands; on occasion, he was described as a Chartist himself. He rejected the label of Chartist on the grounds that it would jeopardise the support of the middle-class leaders, but he was quite prepared to strive for most of the principles of Chartism. If the meeting in Birmingham, scheduled for

1. Nonconformist, 23.III.1842, pl84
2. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5, p38
3. Nonconformist, 30.III.1842, pl99

April 1842, was to succeed, Miall believed it was necessary to make Chartism respectable, and acceptable to middle-class leaders by modifying its programme, giving it new leaders, and getting rid of its old associations.

Both middle and working classes had to make concessions:

"Such an (sic) union, it may be well to remind the working men, is to the full as necessary for their wellbeing as for that of the middle classes...Events have proved that the middle classes can do nothing without the aid of the millions."¹

Miall felt confident of the success of the meeting; he had no doubt that it would have an immediate impact:

"The result of their deliberations will...carry with it a greater amount of public opinion than any matter mooted since the passing of the Reform Bill."²

He himself was not part of the committee responsible for detailed planning. Bright, Lovett and Henry Vincent were present at the early meetings of the council, and one of its first actions was to ask O'Connell for a legal opinion upon the laws of political association. After some delay, he advised the council that the Complete Suffrage Union was "...strictly a legal body".³ However, in the nationwide meeting, Miall played a major part. Various speakers made reference to the contribution already made by his writings in the Nonconformist, and the meeting expressed its gratitude to him in one of its resolutions.⁴ Miall himself moved a resolution condemning class legislation, which gave him an opportunity to rehearse his arguments in favour of complete suffrage. A restricted franchise made equitable government impossible, and was founded neither in religion nor in reason. It exacerbated class division and encouraged selfish legislation. Corruption and intimidation enjoyed no restraint, and the unenfranchised classes were reduced to a position of slavery and personal degradation. Class legislation had damaged religion through its support of the state church,

1. Nonconformist, 30.III.1842, p200

2. Ibid., 13.IV.1842, p232

3. Complete Suffrage Union Papers, Minute Book of Council, (Birmingham Central Library) 9.IV.1842; 10.V.1842.

4. Ibid., 7.VI.1842

commerce through its maintenance of the Corn Laws, and society as a whole by its refusal to concede essential reforms. The only solution lay in the immediate adoption of complete suffrage, and support of it was both a christian and a patriotic duty. In a later work, Miall explained this duty thus:

"It is hardly possible, then, to conceive of anything more out of tune with the key note of Christianity, than civil government, the machinery of which rests upon a basis of property in preference to manhood. The measurement of social value by wealth alone is enough to vitiate and disgrace any political constitution."¹

He continued his speech by arguing that there should be no taxation without representation, an argument used by the union in its publications, where it claimed that only one in seven taxpayers were represented in Parliament:

"Out of 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ million males, 5,724,411 are taxed by the state without having a voice in the making of its laws."²

Miall based his peroration upon Herbert Spencer's ideas of the limits within which governments should properly function, and concluded with the statement that the suffrage was the inalienable right of all men, and the difficulties under which the nation now laboured were due to its being unjustly withheld from so many.³ In the debates on the resolutions, Miall intervened on several occasions. In opposition to Bright, he expressed doubts of the value of the ballot, preferring a system of open voting. He admitted that the introduction of the ballot might do something to eliminate electoral corruption, but he advised the meeting not to confuse the question of complete suffrage by including the ballot.⁴

But in the event, the middle-class leaders were outwitted by the Chartist leaders. Lovett and his colleagues withdrew from the meeting to draft an amendment to the resolutions, and while the council, after anxiously awaiting it, found it acceptable,⁵ the meeting, despite Miall's opposition, went on

1. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity (London 1843) pp69-70
2. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5, p33
3. Nonconformist, 13.IV.1842, pp234ff, 240f.
4. Ibid., pp240ff
5. Complete Suffrage Union, Tract III, pl6

to accept resolutions in support of annual Parliaments, the abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s, and equal electoral districts. These were the major points of the Charter, and, speaking for the Chartist delegates, Lovett refused to compromise even over the name. Miall told him that this was a tactical error, but he and Sturge were forced to agree in principle to the holding of another conference, at which the Charter would be discussed as a practical programme. Miall tried to make the best of the situation, and defended the meeting's adoption of the Charter on the grounds that it had united the working-class leaders with the middle-class reformers:

"It cannot be looked upon as the compromise of little pliant minds, but as the magnanimous concession of men indisposed to throw away the greater, in order that they may obtain the less."¹

This view gained little support from other dissenters. The Eclectic Review admitted that the adoption of the Charter may have proved the integrity of the middle-class reformers, but it was not calculated to advance the cause in the country.² The Patriot regarded the reconciliation of middle and working-classes as a good and humane objective, but shrewdly doubted if complete suffrage would do much to cure social and economic distress, or would even achieve the desired reconciliation: "...we fear that Feargus O'Connor and his followers will neither be propitiated nor extinguished by the new agitation."³ One of Miall's severest critics, the Anglican barrister Richard Masheder, regarded the union as the combining of Chartism with the movement for the separation of church and state. He held Miall responsible, describing the Complete Suffrage Movement as the "...first offspring of the Nonconformist."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 20.IV.1842, p256
2. This appears as Tract III of the Complete Suffrage Union, p16
3. Patriot, 18.IV.1842, p244-245. Miall attributed a temporary decline in the circulation of the Nonconformist to the fears produced by the Conference among the middle classes: Charles Sturge had evidently attributed a drop in circulation of about 200 to Miall's outspokenness, and a note of asperity in the Nonconformist. Miall to Charles Sturge, 15.VI.1842. Sturge Family Papers.
4. R. Masheder, Dissent and Democracy (London 1865) pp57-58.

In fact, the conference was not the success Miall claimed. Most of the Chartists present were the opponents of O'Connor. A historian of the Chartist movement has pointed out, "...the Sturge movement was rapidly becoming a rallying ground for all the ablest anti-O'Connorite Chartists."¹ Few important middle-class leaders were present. Bright described the conference as highly satisfactory, and believed the Chartists were the best speakers. He thought it might achieve some good, but also thought there was a real risk of failure.² Sturge himself was hardly a national figure, and Cobden was sceptical of the value of the movement. Nor did the movement attract the support of any powerful dissenting leaders; Dr. Dale described many of these as Whig supporters, who were offended by Miall's radical stance upon parliamentary reform.³

Undeterred, Miall went on with his advocacy of complete suffrage, attempting to persuade the middle classes that their best interests lay in supporting the union. He rated highly his own part in bringing about the Complete Suffrage movement; writing to Charles Sturge, he gave himself the credit for such success as the movement had gained among the middle class:

"I originated the complete suffrage cause among the middle classes. I think the tract on 'Reconciliation' paved the way for the conference - and the 'union'. I am quite sensible that it was but a weapon - useless, unless wielded by a powerful hand. Still it was a weapon, and happily providence sent us a powerful hand to wield it. I look, therefore, upon the existence of so noble a body as 'the union', and to the improved prospects for reform, as brought about in part, - only in part - by the Nonconformist."⁴

On an earlier occasion, he informed Sturge that he had been invited by the Bradford United Reform Club to publish his articles on the suffrage in a cheap edition: the reason for the request was,

1. M. Hovell, History of the Chartist Movement 3rd edition (Manchester 1966) pp245-246
2. Quoted by N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League (London 1968) p114
3. R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism (London 1907) p636
See also W.B. Selbie, Nonconformity: its origins and purpose (London 1912) pp212-213
4. Miall to Charles Sturge, 15.VI.1842 Sturge Family Papers

"...they are particularly adapted to dissipate the fears of the middle classes respecting universal suffrage, and to convince them of its equity and necessity."¹

Demand for reform could not be stifled, and it was preferable that movements for reform should be under responsible leadership such as that of Sturge, and that the issue should be settled once and for all:

"Organic changes...bring with them serious as well as numerous inconveniences. No people can afford a revolution every ten years...all this only proves how important it is to mould the political constitution of a country upon an original model which will admit of easy enlargement and close adaptation to all the outward circumstances of the people."²

In June 1842 the Nonconformist was formally designated the official organ of the National Complete Suffrage Union. The committee resolved:

"That it being necessary to appoint some recognised organ of communication in which the proceedings of the Union may regularly be published...and the Nonconformist newspaper having received the enthusiastic approval of the Conference by its able and honest advocacy of the rights of the people, and having zealously co-operated in the origination of the Complete Suffrage movement, and this Council having obtained the consent of the Editor, and made with him the necessary arrangements do hereby recognise and recommend that paper to the people as the weekly organ of the Union."³

Miall insisted that he remained free to criticise the movement if he wished, and reports of meetings were sent to the Nonconformist, which provided a comprehensive coverage of the provincial activities of the union.⁴ It is possible to deduce something of the organisation of the union from its minute books, though the quality of book-keeping deteriorated after 1842, and towards the end of its active existence, were simply notes upon scraps of loose paper. The organisation of the union bore a close resemblance to that of the Anti-Corn Law League. Cards of membership were issued,⁵ and the committee resolved to appoint, "...several missionaries and voluntary local lecturers."⁶ The country was evidently divided into ten districts, and

1. Miall to Charles Sturge, 15.XI.1841. Sturge Family Papers
2. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity, p89
3. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee of the Complete Suffrage Union 24.V.1842
4. e.g. Nonconformist, 29.VI.1842, p448; 6.VII.1842, p464; 13.VII.1842, p480; 20.VII.1842, p496.
5. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee 10.V.1842
6. Ibid., 17.V.1842

Sturge reported that he had persuaded ten gentlemen to act as supervisors. A table was drawn up and inserted in the minutes, which, had it been completed, would have shown details of districts and the names of supervisors.¹ However, it is possible to deduce the names of three of the supervisors, Robert Martin of Leeds, Thomas Beggs of Nottingham, and Edward Davy of Crediton. Henry Vincent and the Rev. H. Solly were appointed lecturers,² and a tract depot was set up in London, at the offices of the Nonconformist.³ Miall and Herbert Spencer acted as publications advisers,⁴ but apart from this, Miall played no part in the detailed planning of the committee.

The Nonconformist emphasised that the union must work to convert electors. To this end, local branches must be formed, and public meetings organised:

"They have to win society, not to force the government. The latter is at present utterly impracticable: the former with certainty may be accomplished."⁵

Miall saw no point in the union's functioning in the county constituencies, where the influence of the aristocracy was virtually unchallenged: "Our sole chance of success lies in the towns."⁶ He calculated that if 80,000 electors could be induced to support the union's principles, 250 parliamentary seats could be won by reformers.⁷ He provided a list of the boroughs in which the union should concentrate its efforts; the calculation was based upon the assumption that Irish and Scottish M.P.s would gladly support a measure which would undermine the power of the British aristocracy.⁸ Forty five cities in England had branches of the Complete Suffrage Union, and there were ten in Scotland; apparently the union had no organisation in Ireland and Wales.⁹

Parliamentary action took the form both of petitions, introduced by Crawford and Lord Brougham, with whom Miall had already had dealings,¹⁰ and an attempt

1. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee, 17.X.1842
2. Ibid., 7.XI.1842. See also Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 14.
3. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee... 13.II.1843
4. Ibid., 13.II.1843; 20.II.1843
5. Nonconformist, 7.IX.1842, p608
6. Ibid., 14.IX.1842, p624
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 21.IX.1842, p643
9. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5, p51
10. See below pp381-382

by Sharman Crawford to introduce a bill to extend the franchise to all males. The committee of the union noted that Crawford's bill had only been introduced, "...by the energy and perseverance of our friends,"¹ and suspected there had been collusion between the two major parties to prevent the measure being debated. Despite this, the bill secured 69 votes. A memorial with 56,439 signatures was sent to Brougham,² which he forwarded both to the Queen and to Sir James Graham.³ In a covering letter to Graham, Brougham explained that the curious language of the memorial was due to the fact that the Society of Friends had taken a leading part in its composition. He added,

"From what I know of those who promote this address, I conceive their views to be perfectly loyal and entirely consistent with the peace and good order of Society."⁴

The parliamentary campaign was not successful, and Crawford tried a new approach called the 'supply movement'. On the thesis that the redress of grievance must precede supply, Crawford introduced amendments to supply motions in Parliament, stating that there were many popular grievances which required remedy, notably the restricted nature of the franchise.⁵ Crawford introduced several such amendments up to 1844, but despite the confident expectation of the Nonconformist that they would serve as a rallying point for reformers in Parliament, they attracted little attention, and simply gave the movement some publicity in Parliament.⁶ This failure happened in spite of an all-out effort by the committee. A whip was issued, and forms distributed for electors to indicate their support of the motions to their members.⁷ O'Connell was asked to use his influence to secure a full House,⁸ and later, deputations were sent around the country to enlist local support.⁹

1. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee... 25.IV.1842
2. Ibid., 24.V.1842
3. Ibid., 27.VI.1842
4. Ibid., 4.VII.1842.
5. Nonconformist, 4.X.1843, p680
6. Ibid., 27.III.1844, p197
7. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee... 13.II.1843
8. Ibid., 6.III.1843
9. Ibid., 27.XI.1843

During 1842, Miall served the cause by reiterating the peaceful aims and methods of the union. Almost weekly, there appeared in the Nonconformist some refutation of accusations of violence, and it was his practice to publish the hostile article alongside his refutation. The Patriot, the Standard, the Morning Chronicle, the Globe, the Leeds Mercury, the Glasgow Argus and the Manchester Guardian were but a few of the journals hostile to the movement, whose articles of criticism Miall patiently answered week by week.¹ Probably the only effect of his persistence was to show that the movement had a philosophy, and a journal prepared to speak on its behalf. As a study of another nineteenth century pressure group has demonstrated, all reforming movements needed the support of a newspaper of their own, since the main organs of mass communication were in the hands of the establishment.² The difficulty of an extra-parliamentary movement was to gain a following, and then to keep it. The arranging of occasional lectures and the distribution of tracts was not enough; the support of a sympathetic journal was essential.

Miall attempted to obtain support for the Complete Suffrage Union from other pressure groups. He pointed out to Irish leaders, who, in 1843, and 1844 were demanding the repeal of the Act of Union, that many of the problems of Ireland derived from an inequitable franchise, which the implementation of the complete suffrage programme would remedy. Repeal of the Act of Union would then be superfluous, as a parliament elected upon a basis of complete suffrage would abolish such grievances as an Established Church.³ More sustained were his efforts to gain the support of the Anti-Corn Law League. He was fully aware of the difficulty of the task, and stated his misgivings in commenting upon a correspondence between Cobden and Sturge which appeared in the Nonconformist:

1. e.g. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1842 p464; 7.IX.1842, p608; 28.IX.1842, p656.
2. B. Harrison, "Liberalism and the English Temperance Press 1830-1872" Victorian Studies, XIII no.2 1969, pp125-158.
3. Nonconformist, 7.VI.1843; 14.VI.1843, p424.

"It must also be considered that a vast proportion of the Middle Class, zealous for the repeal of the Corn Laws, regard with little favour an extension of the suffrage. Indeed, this constitutes the most serious objection to commencing a movement having for its object an extensive measure of organic reform. They look upon the poorer classes of society with considerable suspicion, and deem it safer to keep their dissatisfaction pent up than to allow it a legitimate mode of expression..."¹

Regarding the League as the representative middle-class movement, he wanted its official support and backing, not merely the support of individual members. Expediency was his major argument; it was unlikely that a Tory government would repeal the Corn Laws, and the League would lose support if it did not soon have some concrete success to its credit. So far, it had none, and would have none until Parliament was reformed.² The committee of the Complete Suffrage Union thought along similar lines. Noting that a meeting of the League was to be held in London, it hoped that when the meeting failed to bring about a renewal of activity, the leaders of the League would realise they must support the movement for parliamentary reform.

They must realise,

"...the importance of cordially and actively uniting with the working classes in their efforts to obtain a full, fair and free representation of the people in the House of Commons as the only means of securing substantial justice and averting a fearful convulsion."³

The leaders of the League did not respond to these overtures. It is true that Bright showed some sympathy and attended the Birmingham Conference, but Cobden was deeply suspicious in private, and prevented the League giving any official support: "We must keep the League as a body wholly distinct from the Suffrage Movement."⁴ He informed Wilson that he had called upon Sturge and some other leaders of the 'new move', and was convinced they were tending towards Chartism. On the subject of the Corn Laws, he found them no more reasonable than O'Connor, and recommended that the factions of Chartism be left to fight each other, while a working-class party of

1. Nonconformist, 6.X.1841, pp441-442
2. Ibid., 17.XI.1841, p536; 1.XII.1841, p568
3. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee... 4.VII.1842
4. Cobden to George Wilson, in J. Morley, Life of Cobden (London 1903) pp228-230.

repealers was formed independent of both.¹ Watkin warned Cobden that the Complete Suffrage movement was damaging the League, since it had attracted some of the League's radical supporters. He had a low opinion of the movement, which he described as a "...complete humbug - respected by no class - laughed at by the electors as a body and sneered at by the Chartists."² The only value Cobden saw in the Complete Suffrage movement was that it might be an additional pressure upon Parliament for reform, and it might result in the working classes gaining better leaders:

"I am not sorry to see Sturge take up this question. It will be something in our rear to frighten the Aristocracy - and it will take the masses out of the hands of their present rascally leaders."³

Cobden was sceptical about the prospect of the working and middle classes helping each other; he told Sturge that what really made the working class slaves to the aristocracy was the high price of food. Hence repeal was the fundamental political question which affected middle and working class alike.⁴ Colonel Thompson believed that suffrage reform was far more unpopular among the governing classes than was the repeal movement:

"I defy them (the Complete Suffragists) to prove that out of the actual possessors of political power and influence, where there are ten against the removal of the Corn Laws, there are not twenty against their Complete Suffrage."⁵

The summer of 1842 saw a wave of strikes and violence, with which many of the Chartist leaders were identified. The Complete Suffrage movement itself was not immune from the resulting obloquy; the Eclectic Review commented, "...the prospects of the Complete Suffrage Movement were again overshadowed by a dark cloud."⁶ The committee of the union held a meeting in August 1842 to discuss immediate measures; it was evidently considered a vital meeting, for apart from the usual members of the committee, there

1. Cobden to Wilson 16.X.1841, Quoted by N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League pp115-116
2. Watkin to Cobden, Ibid., p116
3. Cobden to Smith, 4.XII.1841. Quoted by A. Briggs, (ed) Chartist Studies pp364f
4. D. Read, Cobden and Bright; a Victorian Political Partnership (London 1967) p35.
5. Quoted N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League p132
6. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XIII 1843, p109. Complete Suffrage Union, Tract III p19

were also present Miall, Bright, Lovett and Mursell, Miall's old friend from Leicester.¹ In an attempt to disassociate itself from the current violence in the eyes of electors, it published several documents. A memorial was sent to the Queen, attributing current disorders to class legislation.² An address was issued to the working classes, emphasising that they would only obtain satisfaction of their just demands in co-operation with the middle-class reformers, and must be prepared to make compromises.³ In a separate address, the middle classes were urged to sympathise with working-class demands,⁴ and a third address to the Irish people deprecated violence, and commended the peaceful methods of O'Connell.⁵

This was an attempt to minimise the damage done to reforming causes in general by the disorders of 1842. In addition, the Union had its own particular problems. Perhaps as a reaction to the disorder, the Birmingham municipal authorities withdrew permission for the use of Birmingham Town Hall for a meeting to appoint delegates to the Union's great conference in December 1842.⁶ There was violence at several of the local meetings to appoint delegates to the December conference, for which the Chartists were blamed.⁷ Miall tried to play this down by promising that the good sense of the conference would prevent any foolish extremism, but admitted that his main anxiety was that O'Connor might attempt to dominate the conference.⁸ This would certainly alienate middle-class electors, without whose support the movement would be helpless. He observed that a united movement led by Sturge, who had no reputation as an extremist, would

1. Minute Book of the Council of the Complete Suffrage Union, 20.VIII.1842

2. Ibid.

3. Minute Book of the General Purposes Committee of the Complete Suffrage Union, 22.VIII.1842

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 24.VIII.1842

6. Ibid., 30.VIII.1842

7. Nonconformist, 16.XI.1842, p768. The radical Thomas Duncombe, though elected a delegate along with Joseph Sturge and Robert Lowery, declined to attend.

T.H. Duncombe The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe M.P. (London 1868) i, 312-313.

8. Nonconformist, 23.XI.1842, p784

achieve far more than a working-class movement led by O'Connor. Despite his earlier acquiescence, he insisted that the Charter should not be discussed by the conference as a basis for action, and if the council failed to prevent this, he recommended that it should withdraw from the conference altogether.¹ The reaction of the Chartist Northern Star to this proposal showed how limited was the common ground between the followers of Sturge and the followers of O'Connor; it is plain that the Chartist leaders were not prepared to make any concession:

"Give up the Charter. The Charter for which O'Connor and hundreds of men were dungeoned in felons cells, for which John Frost was doomed to a life of heart-withering woe... What, to suit the whim, to please the caprice, or to serve the selfish ends of mouthing priests, political traffickers, sugar weighing tape-measuring shopocrats. Never."²

The conference was doomed to failure before it ever met. Bright resigned from the council,³ and the council itself anticipated difficulties. It rejected many of the delegates after examining their credentials,⁴ and resolved to adopt the advice already offered by Miall in the Nonconformist in the event of an attempt by the Chartists to take control of the conference:

"...if Mr. O'Connor should be elected chairman at the opening of the Conference, the friends of Complete Suffrage ought immediately to retire and re-assemble as the Conference in some other place."⁵

The intransigence of the Chartists was damaging, but not unexpected by the time the conference met in December 1842. More serious, perhaps, was the refusal of O'Connell to attend the conference, because he believed that Chartist militancy would wreck it. He wrote to Sturge,

"...there are too many other causes of strife and contention between the more ardent and violent of the Chartist party and the more placid and mild portion of the Complete Suffrage Association."⁶

Without O'Connell, there was little chance of the union's gaining Irish support.

1. Nonconformist, 30.XI.1842, p800
2. Quoted in M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement p264
3. Minute Book of the Council of the Complete Suffrage Union, 5.XII.1842
4. Ibid., 24.XII.1842
5. Ibid., 26.XII.1842
6. Patriot, 29.XII.1842, p860

When the conference met, there were immediate signs of friction and distrust. Lovett insisted upon scrutinising the papers relating to the credentials of the delegates, and the committee felt obliged to accede to his demand.¹ Miall hoped the conference would draft a Complete Suffrage Bill for introduction to Parliament, which would not be too reminiscent of the Charter. "The cordial good will of the labouring classes is important; the consent of the electors is absolutely necessary."² The conference soon ran into difficulties, with the middle-class reformers being totally out-maneuvred by the Chartists. A draft Complete Suffrage Bill was introduced as a basis of discussion, but the Chartists, led by Lovett and O'Connor, refused to compromise upon either the name or the substance of the Charter. Miall tried to persuade the conference that it was folly to quarrel over a name; the rights of the unenfranchised classes would be secured by the Complete Suffrage Bill, which would have a far better chance of success than the Charter. He reminded delegates that the main task was to gain middle-class support; the working class was already convinced.³ Miall's oratory was ineffective. A majority of the conference decided that the Charter should form the basis of all subsequent action, so, in accordance with the resolution of the council and the earlier advice of Miall, Sturge and the complete suffragists, 97 in all, withdrew to a nearby temperance hotel to continue discussion of the draft bill.⁴ Miall convinced the delegates who had withdrawn that they were still the true conference, but this was an irrelevant procedural victory. Those who had withdrawn were a minority, and the movement had split along class lines. The Patriot observed that the Chartists had completely swamped the conference, and concluded it was impossible for Chartists and middle-class reformers to unite: "Complete Suffrage is a complete failure."⁵

1. Minute Book of the Council of the Complete Suffrage Union, 29.XII.1842
2. Nonconformist, 14.XII.1842, p832
3. Ibid., 31.XII.1842, p877
4. Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 14 (London 1843) p8
5. Patriot, 29.XII.1842, p860

The leaders of the movement eventually drew similar conclusions: "It would be useless to deny that the immediate result of the conference was a serious detriment to the cause of organic reform."¹ They attributed the setback to the apathy of the middle classes, which the violent conduct of some of the Chartists had exacerbated.² Miall at first tried to gloss over the disaster, by arguing that the movement was well rid of Chartist support:

"It smells too strongly of insurrectionary violence, of Northern Star anti-free trade diatribes, of coarse ribaldry, of insolent tyranny, of profanity and irreligion, to recommend it to the great body of electors."³

If there had been a miscalculation, it had been to regard the Chartists as truly representative of the working classes. As things had turned out, the attempt to unite the classes had been premature, and the movement must now concentrate upon,

"...diffusing information respecting their own principles, by means of lectures, and through the medium of the press: to organise associations, to collect electoral statistics...to allow practical reformers to try their hands with the present parliament, and to exhibit to all classes the utter and hopeless inefficiency of the present system. We must bide our time."⁴

Miall admitted that the movement had been damaged by the waves of strikes in August 1842, and this, in conjunction with the fiasco of the conference, made it necessary for the movement to reconsider its strategy.⁵

In fact, the complete suffrage movement was fatally damaged. Thomas Cooper wrote, "The Birmingham Conference ruined the prospects of the Chartists, and the Complete Suffrage Movement never made any headway in the country."⁶

But during 1843 and 1844, the movement continued to show signs of life. In 1842, Sturge, Thompson and Vincent fought parliamentary elections upon complete suffrage platforms at Nottingham, Southampton and Ipswich respectively, each

1. Complete Suffrage Union Almanack 1844/5, p44
2. Ibid. p43. See also Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 14 p8
3. Nonconformist, 4.I.1843, p8
4. Ibid. See also Complete Suffrage Union, Tract 3 p20
5. Nonconformist, 11.I.1843, p25
6. Quoted by P. Slosson, The decline of the Chartist Movement (New York 1916) p77.

amended
24.11.75
MH.

without success,¹ and O'Connor supported Sturge's campaign at Nottingham.² Bright's electoral contest at Durham was regarded by the committee as a complete suffrage campaign; it claimed he won both as a free trader and as a complete suffragist, even though he had resigned from the committee in the previous year. His victory proved, "...that the electoral body are at length becoming aroused to a full consciousness of the duty and responsibility in the present eventful crisis."³ However, Vincent was unsuccessful at Tavistock in the same year, and at Kilmarnock in 1844, while Sturge himself failed to gain election at Birmingham in 1844.⁴ The Patriot attributed his failure to his "...extreme and peculiar views."⁵

Miall himself remained active in the movement during 1843. He was present at the formation of a London branch in July, though he was wary of committing the Nonconformist to supporting it.⁶ He became chairman of the Hackney and Stoke Newington branch in the same month, and chaired meetings both in London and in the provinces.⁷ But by September, he feared the movement was dying, and suggested it revive itself with fund-raising activities.⁸ Two months later, he commented critically upon the inactivity of complete suffragists, who simply delivered occasional lectures, or passed high-sounding resolutions.⁹ Sturge replied, in aggrieved tones, that support for the movement was growing, even if outward signs of activity were few,¹⁰ but Miall replied that Crawford's campaign in Parliament was the sole sign

1. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5 p38.
2. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p87
3. Minute Book of the Council of the Complete Suffrage Union, 7.VIII.1843
Bright made only incidental references to complete suffrage in the course of the Durham elections: his proposer, John Henderson, implied that his commitment was more definite. Durham Advertiser 16.VI.1843. Bright's correspondence with Henderson concerning the election makes no reference to complete suffrage.
John Bright. Letters concerning the Durham Election of 1843 (Durham University Library)
4. Ibid. See also Complete Suffrage Union Almanack 1844/5 pp45, 54
5. Patriot, 11.VII.1844, p476
6. Nonconformist, 28.VI.1843, p453
7. Ibid., 26.VII.1843, p516; 30.VIII.1843, p596
8. Ibid., 27.IX.1843, p664
9. Ibid., 15.XI.1843, p776
10. Ibid., 22.XI.1843, pp787,793.

of life. Nor was he impressed by this, as earlier in the year he had warned Sturge specifically not to concentrate upon parliamentary activity, and most of the union's action during the year had been connected directly with Parliament. Miall felt it was pinning too much upon Crawford's campaign: "It looks too much as if we were hoping to do something in that quarter, which is the grand error of the Anti-Corn Law League."¹ The union itself later admitted that, apart from its parliamentary campaign and its electoral activity, it had done little but publish tracts and organise lectures.² It had receipts of £416.2.9d. in the year 1842-1843, but a deficit of £244.16.3d.³

During 1844, the friends of Complete Suffrage maintained a 'listless inactivity',⁴ and Herbert Spencer, who was deputy editor of a Complete Suffrage journal, the Pilot, founded by Sturge, commented, "...there is nothing stirring in that matter just now."⁵ However, Miall's critic, Richard Masheded, noticed that at the inaugural meeting of the British Anti-State Church Association in 1844, many complete suffragists were present, marking the consummation of the alliance between dissent and democracy.⁶ Miall was elected a vice-president of the Metropolitan Complete Suffrage Association in 1845,⁷ having spent the latter part of 1844 attacking Cobden's policy of creating electoral support for the Anti-Corn Law League by the purchase of forty shilling freeholds.⁸ Miall became parliamentary candidate for Southwark in 1845, and during his campaign, made comparatively few references to complete suffrage. He regarded himself as an Anti-State Church candidate; he accepted nomination, "...on behalf of the friends of religious liberty in

1. Miall to Joseph Sturge, 11.II.1843. Sturge Papers, BM Add Mss 43845 f11.
2. Complete Suffrage Almanack 1844/5, p45
3. Minute Book of General Purposes Committee of the Complete Suffrage Union 8.V.1843.
4. Complete Suffrage Almanack, 1844/5, p54
5. Herbert Spencer, An Autobiography (London 1904) i, 247
6. R. Masheded Dissent and Democracy pp65,67
7. Nonconformist, 8.I.1845, p20
8. Ibid., 27.XI.1844 p820; 4.XII.1844, p832; 29.I.1845, p68.

the borough,"¹ and the Nonconformist, announcing the election result, said, "The defeat of the Anti-State Church candidate was a decisive one."² Nevertheless, his complete suffrage views played a decisive part in the election.

His candidature was supported by the National Association for the Political and Social Improvement of the People. Lovett was its secretary, and he circulated a document commending Miall to the electors:

"Mr. Miall has by his past conduct given abundant proof of his earnestness, zeal and ability on behalf of the great principles we have adverted to."³

Evidently Miall had not lost the support of the Chartists whose conduct he had previously condemned. The Patriot, speaking for moderate dissenters, criticised the policy of combining dissenting and Chartist principles, and deprecated Miall's linking his beliefs as a voluntaryist, "...with political tenets with which the bulk of Dissenters most assuredly do not sympathise."⁴ On balance, it urged electors to support Miall because of his religious views; as regards his complete suffrage principles, "...any evil that can accrue from them must be a remote contingency."⁵ It attributed Miall's defeat by Sir William Molesworth to his alienation of dissenting support because of the emphasis he gave to his political views.⁶ Even the Eclectic Review, normally more sympathetic to Miall than the Patriot, agreed that his views on the suffrage, "...were a bar to the adhesion of many whose votes would otherwise have been recorded for him."⁷ It regarded these views as visionary and impractical, and impolitic in that they tended to lower the respectability of dissent in the eyes of the more affluent and influential sections of society. On the other hand, it hoped Miall's campaign would remind dissenters that religious principles

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p108
2. Nonconformist, 17.IX.1845, p644
3. Copy in Lovett Papers (microfilm in Birmingham Central Library)
4. Patriot, 18.VIII.1845, p564; 21.VIII.1845, p572
5. Ibid., 21.VIII.1845, p572
6. Ibid., 15.IX.1845, p628
7. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XVIII 1845, pp492-493

must be applied to the discharge of every duty. The Leeds Mercury dismissed Miall as, "...one of the most impracticable men in the three kingdoms,"¹ a judgment echoed by a modern historian, who wrote of Miall's early political career:

"The limits of futility perhaps, were reached in Miall's efforts in the early 1840s to run in harness disestablishment, repeal of the Corn Laws, and universal suffrage."²

In retrospect, this is not an unfair assessment, and Miall himself concentrated in future upon single issues. The attempt to find allies had inevitably committed the Complete Suffrage Union to a diversity of aims, and by 1846, the movement was moribund. The penultimate meeting of the council resolved to hold a meeting with the Metropolitan Complete Suffrage Association, "...to consider whether or not it be desirable to call a conference with a view to a revival of the Suffrage Movement."³ The outcome is not recorded.

However, to condemn the strategy of the Complete Suffrage Union for its over-complication is not to deny that some such movement was necessary and appropriate in the 1840s. There were other attempts to unite middle and working-class reformers; the Leeds Parliamentary Reform Association, founded in 1840, had a committee consisting of both middle and working-class members, and held joint meetings with the Chartists. The Anti-Corn Law League itself tried to gain Chartist support, though without much success.⁴ There was a case for trying to gain Chartist support for franchise reform at this time, for the Chartist movement had lost some of its leaders, and indeed had aims in common with middle-class radicals:

"In reality, the Victorian Middle Class...had much in common with the Chartists, particularly in attacking monopoly, privilege and oppression at home and abroad."⁵ Miall and Sturge failed because they did not estimate

1. Nonconformist, 17.IX.1845, p645

2. N. Gash, Reaction and Revolution in English Politics 1832-1852 (Oxford 1965) p75 & 75n

3. Minute Book of the Council of the Complete Suffrage Union, 9.III.1846

4. Ed. Asa Briggs, Chartist Studies Ch.XI pp 356f, 363f

5. B. Harrison and P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery." English Historical Review vol. 182 1967, p505

accurately the chance of detaching the Chartists from their former leaders, and convince them of the need for middle-class leadership. According to Cooper, the attempt itself was not wholehearted:

"...there was no attempt to bring about a union - no effort for conciliation - no generous offer of the right hand of fellowship. We soon found that it was determined to keep the poor Chartists at arms length."¹

Robert Lowery was one of a small number of Chartists who accepted the overtures of the complete suffragists; he told a group of O'Connor's supporters, "...he would cut off his hand rather than retract his signature" (of Sturge's Complete Suffrage declaration)²

Though the Complete Suffrage movement has collapsed, it had helped to make Miall into a national figure. If on this occasion he had failed to attract working-class support, he was to make more effective efforts to do so in the future. When he examined his career to date in the autumn of 1845, he believed he had attempted to give Chartism, which he did not deny supporting in principle, a new respectability: "I took every one of the principles in their Charter and I baptised them with a new name."³ He had become convinced that no reform of any kind was possible until Parliament actually, rather than nominally, represented the will of the people. Nor could the major parties be relied upon to support reform of the franchise; extra-parliamentary agitation alone could succeed:

"I have laboured indefatigably, by means of the press, for some years past, to secure for the people the rights to which they are entitled...To obtain the entire separation of the Church from the State has been the main end of my effort...I am most anxious to see the legislative embodiment of Free Trade principles...I believe, however, that the full triumph of these principles will only be secured to the people by means of real, in place of nominal representation. Under this impression, I took part in the origination of the Complete Suffrage Movement, and have assiduously laboured, in co-operation with Joseph Sturge, Esquire, to secure the following objects:- franchise for all

1. J.T. Ward, Chartism p166
2. B. Harrison and P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery." p510
3. Nonconformist, 20.VIII.1845, p581

males, the ballot, equal electoral districts, the abolition of property qualifications for Members of Parliament, Annual Parliaments, Payment for Members of Parliament."¹

The failure of the Complete Suffrage Union compelled Miall to seek other means of achieving a fundamental reform of the electoral system.

Part 2. Realism and Compromise

In the aftermath of the repeal of the Corn Laws, Miall remained optimistic about the prospects of securing parliamentary reform. He believed that the aristocracy had been forced by public opinion to give way over the Corn Laws; this presaged the growing strength of popular pressure, which would demand and obtain other far-reaching reforms, if it were intelligently mobilised: "She (public opinion) is not yet seated in supremacy, but is looking around upon all gainsayers with that calm defiance which says 'I will be.'"² Now that the Anti-Corn Law campaign was over, there was scope for new agitation, but Miall did not seem to be wholehearted in his belief that that agitation should be for franchise reform, for by now, he was deeply involved in the disestablishment question. He vacillated between the two issues for some time. On the one hand, he pointed out, Catholic emancipation had been followed by an almost unanimous demand for parliamentary reform:

"...who can say but whether after the repeal of the Corn Laws... all classes and grades may not, in a similar manner, unite in insisting upon the 'reform of reforms'...a complete representation of the people in the House of Commons?"³

Complete Suffrage was discovered to have been making steady, if quiet progress among electors; far from being moribund, it had been going through a period of unspectacular consolidation, preparatory to a period of more vigorous action.⁴ Miall continued to be involved actively in agitation.

In March 1847, the National Alliance for Promoting the Real Representation

1. Nonconformist, 20.VIII.1845, pp581-582
2. Ibid., 31.XII.1845, p884
3. Ibid., 27.V.1846, p372
4. Ibid.

of the People in Parliament was founded. He was not present at the inaugural meeting, but sent a letter apologising for his absence,¹ and on the alliance's handbills, he was named as a member of the committee.² He continued to write articles and to make speeches in support of parliamentary reform. At the triennial conference of the Anti-State Church Association in May 1847, he proposed a resolution to the effect that Parliament was totally unrepresentative, and argued that dissenters could support neither of the political parties.³

On the other hand, he had also begun to argue that in succession to the Anti-Corn Law agitation, the next great question was the relationship between Church and State.⁴ This was not surprising, for he was at this time preoccupied with the newly founded Anti-State Church Association, and the agitation against the Maynooth grant. He regarded Anti-State Church principles and Complete Suffrage principles as being necessarily linked; church and state relations could not be altered until Parliament was reformed.⁵ But Miall began to lay increasing stress upon the religious issue, which he believed was comprehensive of all other issues:

"Its essential importance is immeasurably superior to that of any other question of the present age. Practically it includes in it, or carries with it, all that vitally affects a nation's freedom."⁶

Miall, along with Ernest Jones, the Chartist lawyer, became a parliamentary candidate for Halifax in June 1847, and his election speeches reflect his increasing commitment to religious issues. Around this time, dissenters were suspicious of Russell's intentions to extend the influence of the Church of England in the field of education, and of his intention to create more bishoprics; the aftermath of the Maynooth controversy left them apprehensive that both parties inclined towards a policy of concurrent

1. Nonconformist, 31.III.1847, p210
2. Lovett Papers, Loc.cit., no.217306-083
3. Nonconformist, 7.V.1847, pp311-313
4. Ibid., 1.VII.1846, p445
5. Ibid., 30.VII.1845, p525
6. Ibid., 12.V.1847, p348

endowment. Miall had urged dissenters to give wholehearted support to the Anti-State Church Association:

"Don't stand stock still year after year merely to be shot at! Take up some position at least which will not lay you open to these successive assaults! Why should you be a by-word for derision in the mouths of your rulers? Is it in very deed come to this; that dissenters meanly lick the hand that habitually smites them in the principles they profess to cherish?"¹

The Eclectic Review revived Miall's policy of 1842, urging dissenters to seek working class support. Some display of sympathy and fellowship might heal the breach between the classes:

"Let us show a generous appreciation of their rights, and they will speedily place at our command a power before which no aristocracy or clergy on earth will long stand."²

Miall himself devoted the greater portion of his speeches to religious questions, notably the problems of the Irish Church and of education. He made few specific references to electoral reform, and then only in reply to questions;³ he made it clear that he was standing upon a predominantly religious platform: "One of the great objects of my...seeking a seat in the House of Commons is primarily a religious one."⁴ Both Miall and Jones were defeated in the general election of 1847; the Eclectic Review suspected that Liberal and Tory electors had united to prevent the election of genuine reformers, and the victor, Sir Charles Wood, admitted he had been elected only through Tory support.⁵

Public interest in the question of Parliamentary reform was renewed in 1848, and Miall once again began to take an active part. He demanded the removal of Jewish disabilities, since possession of the franchise was a civil, not a religious right.⁶ The main burden of his writings, however, was that in order that Britain might avoid an outbreak of revolution such as was currently

1. Nonconformist, 13.I.1847
2. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XXII 1847, p381
3. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847, p477; 4.VIII.1847, p566.
4. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847, p477
5. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XXII 1847, p369
6. Nonconformist, 12.I.1848 p20; 9.II.1848, p84

afflicting France, there must be some concession to working class demands. Miall himself had welcomed the revolution in France, and had accompanied Sturge to Paris to offer congratulations to Lamartine. But he hoped the British government would learn the lesson of the French revolution, and make timely concessions:

"If we would avoid a revolution in England, the middle class must make themselves known to those below them - they must infuse knowledge and endeavour to level upwards. Discussions and lectures are the safety valves of the State; and timely yielding to just demands, as the mind of society enlarges, is the way to preserve peace in a nation, and promote the happiness of the people."¹

The radicals must take the lead in organising a campaign for reform; there was no reason to trust the major political parties.² There was no possibility of sidestepping the issue; it was impossible to deny full citizen rights to seven-eighths of the population of the country at a time when the peoples of Europe were securing their freedom. It would be politic to give way gracefully, for delay might lead to discontent and violence. If the franchise were gained as a result of violent upheaval, the gain in freedom would be nullified by the consequent terror and bloodshed. Miall believed that there was much middle-class sympathy with working-class demands, but he was worried by the revival of Chartism, despite his sympathy with its principles.³

"...if anything would damage their cause with those who have anything to lose...the reckless, menacing, sanguinary speeches and recommendations which were well received at the Chartist Convention would do so."⁴

He renewed his efforts of 1841-1842 to bring about a union of middle and working-class reformers, and his articles on this subject were republished as a book.⁵ He reminded the Chartists that their reluctance to compromise in 1842 had destroyed the Complete Suffrage Union, and begged them to be more accommodating lest once again they alienate middle-class support.⁶ Middle

1. Nonconformist, 22.III.1848, p194
2. Ibid., 29.III.1848, p214
3. Ibid., 5.IV.1848, p234; cf 12.I.1848, p20
4. Ibid., 12.IV.1848, p254
5. Ibid., 19.IV.1848, Advertisements.
6. Ibid., 26.IV.1848, p294

class leaders, particularly dissenting ministers, were warned that they must take the lead in demanding parliamentary reform, and they must not settle for less than manhood suffrage:

"The reforming zeal which will carry the middle class up to the mark of household suffrage but which timidly stops short of Universal, is guilty of an egregious blunder."¹

Miall took practical steps to bring about the desired co-operation between the classes. In May 1848, the People's League to Establish a Union between all True Reformers was founded. Miall, along with the chartists Vincent and Lovett, was a member of the committee, and signed an open letter inviting collaboration between, "...the best intentioned of our Chartist Brethren with the Middle Class."² Mindful of the downfall of the Complete Suffrage Union, Miall urged the inaugural meeting of the League to confine itself to discussions of strategy and tactics, and to avoid any declarations of intent or principle. He feared that the membership of several prominent chartists might create prejudice against the movement, even though its purpose was to bring about middle and working class solidarity. He took part in a deputation to lobby M.P.s,³ and at a subsequent meeting, tried to allay any possible middle-class prejudice by insisting that the Chartists must compromise, and concentrate upon the single objective of manhood suffrage.⁴ The Eclectic Review went further than Miall in placing the onus upon the middle-class leaders:

"You have the power, and on you, therefore, rests the responsibility of achieving a peaceful triumph for your fellow-countrymen. If you fail, they will be thrown on violent measures, will be given over to the counsels of violent and unprincipled men."⁵

In the event, Miall's fears were realised. The Chartist menace of violence gave the government the excuse for a policy of repression, and the middle

1. Nonconformist, 3.V.1848, p314
2. Lovett Papers, Loc.cit.
3. Nonconformist, 10.V.1848, p336
4. Ibid., 31.V.1848, p387
5. Eclectic Review, ns vol. XXIII 1848, p640

classes acquiesced. The image of reformers had been damaged by the Chartists, as well as by disturbances in Europe: "To advocate manhood suffrage now is to cease to be respectable."¹ At the end of 1848, Miall concluded that reaction was beginning to triumph throughout Europe. The need for reform in Britain was as great as it had ever been, but the government was now hostile to reform, and middle-class electors fought shy of it.² From 1841 to 1848, Miall had striven consistently to unite middle and working classes upon a basis of parliamentary reform; reform of Parliament he saw as the only method by which other major reforms could be achieved. After 1848, he abandoned the attempt temporarily; when he resumed it, the basis was disestablishment rather than parliamentary reform.

The events of 1848 seem to have persuaded Miall that it was at present hopeless to strive for manhood suffrage as an immediate object of reform.

Though he continued to advocate it as an ideal, "...separation of Church and State, manhood suffrage and peace, these are the cardinal principles of the Nonconformist,"³ he became increasingly disposed to support movements with more limited objectives. Hume's campaign for household suffrage gained his approval, notwithstanding his earlier condemnation of limited objectives, on the grounds that it would be a first step towards manhood suffrage.⁴ He withdrew his previous objections to Cobden's scheme to extend the franchise by the purchase of appropriate freeholds, as it was the only movement which seemed to have any immediate prospect of success:

"Casting...a wilful glance about us in search of means calculated to secure this blessing for our fellow-countrymen, we are constrained to admit we have met of late but little that presents a hopeful character...a succession of mortifying disappointments has left us no other resource for peacefully encompassing the object we have at heart. We must make a friend of what we once dreaded as a rival."⁵

1. Nonconformist, 23.VIII.1848, p634
2. Ibid., 24.V.1848, p375; 13.XII.1848, p954; 20.XII.1848, p975
3. Ibid., 7.III.1849, p181
4. Ibid., 27.IX.1848, p738
5. Ibid., 18.X.1848, p794

Very soon, he regarded the Freehold Franchise movement as a highly desirable enterprise. It would encourage thrift,¹ and as a political device, it was,

"...one of the happiest, one of the simplest and likely to prove one of the most important with which the political world has been favoured in our times...In a very few years it would put the House of Commons mainly under the control of the popular will."²

It seems probable that the collapse of Chartism in 1848 facilitated movements for parliamentary reform. Edward Baines, who had opposed the attempts of Stansfeld, Marshall and Smiles to enlarge the suffrage in Leeds, and who informed Sturge in 1847 that he considered Complete Suffrage inexpedient, realised after 1848 that the English working class was not inclined to revolution.³ As he became convinced that household suffrage would not lead to the swamping of a middle-class electorate, he took the lead in combined middle and working-class campaigns to reform the franchise. Miall himself supported the foundation by Sir Joshua Walmsley of the Financial and Parliamentary Reform Association in 1849,⁴ which the Nonconformist regarded as yet another attempt to unite middle and working-class reformers. Miall urged the association to set up a nationwide organisation, and became chairman of one of its London branches.⁵ The movement eventually became known as the 'National Reform Association', and comprised both working and middle-class leaders. Richard Mashedder described it as, "...another motley assortment of Dissenters and Chartists,"⁶ the successor of the Complete Suffrage Union. The Eclectic Review was alarmed to discover that O'Connor was involved in the movement, and supported it only because Miall and Walmsley were among its leaders.⁷ The support of the Freehold Franchise

1. Nonconformist, 8.IX.1847, p653.
2. Ibid., 6.VI.1849, p446; 15.VIII.1849, p646.
3. D. Fraser, "Edward Baines", in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p199. See also D. Fraser, "Areas of Urban Politics. Leeds 1830-1880" in The Victorian City; Images and Realities ed. H.H. Dyos and M. Wolff (London 1972) ii, 783. E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines p220
4. Nonconformist, 15.VIII.1849, p649
5. Ibid., 12.XII.1849, p988
6. R. Mashedder, Dissent and Democracy p69
7. Eclectic Review, ns vol XXVII 1850, pp368-369.

movement, a middle-class body, was sought,¹ and Miall accompanied Walmsley and Vincent to Manchester to speak on behalf of the association. He claimed that reform could move ahead more rapidly now that Chartism was dead.² He attended national conferences in April 1850,³ and another in November of the same year.⁴ At this meeting, Walmsley informed O'Connor, who had complained that the aims of the association fell short of the Charter, that the association intended to strive for what was practical, and not for vague ideals. Miall fully supported this more limited strategy.

In 1851, Miall undertook to participate in a series of lectures organised by the association,⁵ and in April delivered a lecture on the educational value of the franchise, which was published as a pamphlet.⁶ In it, he argued that an extension of the franchise would lead to a demand for better educational facilities and for cheaper newspapers:

"Whatever agency may be resorted to, no stroke of policy will give such a powerful and lasting impulse to the mental culture of the people as the extension of the franchise. It will operate in two ways: it will create a thirst for information, and it will prompt the fullest communication of it possible."

People would undertake tasks for themselves for which at present they relied upon the government, and full manhood suffrage would efface the class distinctions which at present were so divisive. Later in the year, the association held a conference in Manchester, where it defined its aims as the basing of the right to the franchise upon the payment of poor rates, the introduction of triennial parliaments, the use of the ballot, and the abolition of small constituencies. The Nonconformist supported these aims as practical, though it wished they went further.⁷ Since it was thought that Russell intended to introduce a reform bill, it is possible that Miall

1. Nonconformist, 9.I.1850, p37

2. Ibid., 20.II.1850, p149

3. Ibid., 24.IV.1850, p332

4. Ibid., 13.XI.1850, p919

5. Ibid., 15.I.1851, p45

6. E. Miall, The Franchise considered as a means of a people's training (London 1851). Nonconformist, 9.IV.1851, p282

7. Nonconformist, 10.XII.1851, p986

wanted the association to produce a yardstick rather than a blueprint.

Sharman Crawford decided in 1851 that he would not seek re-election for Rochdale. A general election appeared imminent in view of Russell's difficulties with his parliamentary majority, and with the support of John Bright, Miall made a bid for the liberal nomination at Rochdale.¹ He felt that his record on parliamentary reform would commend him to the electors of Rochdale, and whereas he had recently supported more limited schemes of reform, on this occasion he went the whole way in advocating complete suffrage: "I think we should have the suffrage based, not upon the circumstances and extent of property, but upon the mere possession of manhood." He also pressed for detailed electoral reforms. The exercise of the suffrage should be protected by the ballot. Constituencies must be reorganised, for it was absurd that Harwich, with 180 electors, should have the same influence in Parliament as the West Riding of Yorkshire, with 36,000. He felt it desirable that members should be in closer touch with electors, and informed his audience that in principle he had no objection to annual parliaments, as demanded by the Charter. In practice, he conceded, this would make for too-frequent elections, so he compromised on a demand for triennial parliaments, one of the recommendations of the National Reform Association. Miall's views on this and other questions satisfied the Rochdale liberals, and he was selected as their parliamentary candidate.²

Once Russell had abandoned his notion of 'finality', the reform of Parliament became a practical proposition.³ Miall no longer faced the problem of the 1840s, that of forcing a reluctant Parliament to consider reforming itself by means of public pressure. Parliamentary leaders were no longer unwilling

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p171

2. Nonconformist, 28.V.1851, p430

3. J. Prest, Lord John Russell (London 1972) pp303-306

to take the initiative, and since reformers such as Miall could not introduce measures of their own, it now had to be their aim to influence in detail the measures which the party leaders would draft. Miall rehearsed his ideas in a series of articles entitled 'Letters to the English People'. Now that Russell had abandoned the idea of 'finality', the popular support that existed for parliamentary reform must be exploited, as it manifested itself only in spasms, not continuously. Reformers must realise that if Russell introduced a bill, he would be inviting an aristocratic institution to reform itself, and it would probably do so in such a way as to preserve its influence:

"Neither Lord John Russell nor his political opponents desire reform for your sakes. They have party ends to answer in mooting it just now. Their notion of the reform needed is such a change in the composition of the constituent body as will put their own faction beyond the power of their rivals.¹

There was need for popular pressure to make it clear to the government that nothing would suffice short of a measure which gave genuine representation to the whole people.² Miall went on to discuss the shortcomings of Parliament, but his recommendations for action represent a change from his earlier attitude. Universal suffrage remained his ideal, "...but its time is not yet come." Reformers were advised to settle for the best terms they could obtain, and should strive for two major principles; household suffrage, and the redistribution of seats to get rid of small constituencies. These latter were, "...the means by which popular representation is neutralised."³ The increasingly practical approach reflects Miall's realisation that henceforth the matter would be dealt with by Parliament, and the business of reformers was to influence the authors of bills. They were more likely to be effective if their demands were realistic.

1. Nonconformist, 15.X.1851, p826

2. Ibid., 22.X.1851, p846

3. Ibid., 19.XI.1851, p926

Russell introduced a reform bill in the session of 1852. Miall, convinced that the only reason for its delay until then was the time wasted in the last session over the Ecclesiastical Titles bill,¹ was unenthusiastic. The franchise qualifications remained too high, too few seats were earmarked for redistribution, and no ballot was proposed. But it was better than nothing, and Miall's advice was for reformers to accept it, in line with his new practical approach:

"The country has a right to expect much more...but if more cannot be had this session, it would be wise, especially with a view to the next general election, to put up with what is offered."²

This was simply a practical recommendation; he regarded the bill itself as a "contemptible farce."³ However, when Chartist agitation began to revive, and an attempt was made to commit the National Reform Association, with its limited aim of household suffrage, to a more far-reaching programme, Miall remarked of the Chartists, "...we regard them as the worst pests of political society, as we are sure they are the direst foes of all national progress."⁴

When the general election was called in July 1852, Miall campaigned for parliamentary reform, which he regarded as the main election issue. He promised that, if elected, he would support any measure for parliamentary reform which might be introduced, in the expectation that it would serve as a basis for further advance:

"This country cannot afford a revolution every ten years. We do not see why we should be placed in such a condition that, in order to carry out some necessary changes, we should endanger all the vital institutions of the country."⁵

The Anti-State Church Association had been informed that parliamentary reform would be a major election issue,⁶ and Miall reminded it that reform of parliament was a precondition of its own success. He told members that the urgent priority was to secure electoral reform:

1. Nonconformist, 25.VI.1851, p506

2. Ibid., 11.II.1852, p107

3. Ibid., 18.II.1852, p126

4. Ibid., 3.III.1852, pp164-166

5. Ibid., 31.III.1852, p241

6. Records of Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 12.II.1852

"...help forth the suffrage whenever you can; help forth the separation of Church and State whenever you can; but if you cannot do both, help forth the suffrage, and the other will be secure."¹

Miall was successful at Rochdale, but he greeted the election results as a whole with mixed feelings. The election had revealed many examples of corruption, and he urged the introduction of the ballot, suggesting it as an issue upon which radical groups might unite.² The freehold land movement was urged to concentrate its efforts in twelve small county constituencies, where sufficient votes might thus be created to upset aristocratic domination: "We repeat our conviction that the Freehold land movement may be made an instrument for deciding the next reform struggle."³ The Eclectic Review gave a similarly cautious welcome to the liberal victory, concluding that what it really demonstrated was the urgent need for a large extension of the suffrage, and for the introduction of the ballot.⁴

Lord Derby, who had presided over a minority Conservative government since February 1852, resigned when defeated over the budget in December 1852. He was succeeded by Lord Aberdeen, but the advent of a liberal coalition did not make Miall more optimistic about the prospects of parliamentary reform. He thought it likely that a measure would be introduced in deference to Russell, but added,

"...we shall be agreeably disappointed indeed, if, on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, the future proposals of the Aberdeen Cabinet approximate to what we have been accustomed to regard as sacredly due to the people of this country."⁵

Hopes of reform were disappointed during the session of 1853, and in anticipation of the session of 1854, Miall stressed that reformers sought,

"...a measure embodying not all that reason might demand, but all that the spirit of the age will concede. Our remarks will have exclusive reference to the latter. We propose to limit ourselves in the present instance to the attainable."⁶

1. Nonconformist, 6.V.1852, p350.
2. Ibid., 28.VII.1852, p586; 25.VIII.1852, p667; 6.X.1852, p786
3. Ibid., 4.VIII.1852, p607
4. Eclectic Review, ns vol.III.1852, p254
5. Nonconformist, 29.XII.1852, p1026
6. Ibid., 23.XI.1853, p946

He deemed it practical to demand that the franchise should be based upon the payment of poor rates,¹ and hoped that approximately ninety small boroughs would be disenfranchised, their seats going to the large industrial towns.² The redistribution of seats was assuming almost as much importance to Miall as the extension of the franchise. He recognised that the introduction of a reform measure might be delayed by the outbreak of war between Britain and Russia, but that prospect gave him an additional argument. The conduct of the war would inspire more confidence in the nation if it were under the direction of a reformed parliament. In a speech at Rochdale, Miall expanded this argument:

"I believe that the government...as Parliament is now constituted, is not strong enough to resist the host of jobbers and adventurers which will press around them in case a war ensues... It is absolutely necessary that you (the British people) should have a real and not merely a nominal control over your own affairs."³

He went on to stress that the government would not offer universal suffrage, and that whatever was offered must be accepted, and used as the basis of future development.

This did not prevent Miall from being disappointed with the government bill when it appeared. The franchise qualifications were fixed so high as to exclude the majority of the working class, and too restricted a redistribution of seats was proposed.⁴ His suggestion was that reformers should support the bill in the House, and attempt to improve it in committee:

"Our present business is to secure what is proffered. Small as it is, we shall not get it without a struggle."⁵ In fact, he was not sanguine about the chances of the bill getting as far as a second reading, but at least it would compel liberal M.P.s to commit themselves upon the question. The bill was withdrawn because of divisions in the Cabinet, and the defection of Whig

1. Nonconformist, 7.XII.1853, p986

2. Ibid., 4.I.1854, pp1,11.

3. Ibid., 1.II.1854, p102

4. Ibid., 15.II.1854, p139

5. Ibid., 1.III.1854, p187

back-benchers.¹ Miall, who had made no contributions to the debates on the bill, criticised Russell for giving up so easily, when, with more forceful leadership, he could have carried the cabinet and the dissident back-benchers with him.²

The Crimean War left little opportunity for a measure of parliamentary reform in the session of 1855, and the prospect receded further when Aberdeen resigned, and was replaced by Palmerston. The Liberation Society decided to restrict its parliamentary activity to the church rates question,³ and Miall began to support a new extra-parliamentary movement, Samuel Morley's Administrative Reform Association, founded in May 1855.⁴ He felt its objective, to secure the appointment of more able men to positions of power, was unduly restricted, but it represented a rebellion against misgovernment by aristocratic cliques. With wider support, it could be the springboard for constitutional reform.⁵ "Administrative Reform is not a 'good cry'. It is an expression of policy, not principle..."⁶

But when the session of 1856 proved equally barren, Miall began to think that, given the apathetic state of public opinion, administrative reform had a better prospect of success.⁷ By 1857, there were signs of a new public interest. With an election imminent, Miall requested Rochdale electors to support him, because he would work for an extension of the franchise and his opponent would not.⁸ Both of the local newspapers regarded his re-election as certain, and they specifically mentioned his views on the suffrage as being satisfactory. The Rochdale Standard commended him to all the radical electors: "That he is right on the leading

1. Nonconformist, 8.III.1854, p206. J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition 1852-1855, pp291-311
2. Nonconformist, 12.IV.1854, pp306-307
3. Records of the Liberation Society, Minute Book 8.II.1855
4. E. Hodder, The Life of Samuel Morley (London 1887) pp122, 124-126
5. O. Anderson, "The Janus Face of mid-nineteenth century English Radicalism. The Administrative Reform Association of 1855." Victorian Studies Vol.8 no.3 1965, pp231-243.
6. Nonconformist, 2.V.1855, p347; 9.V.1855, p367
7. Ibid., 25.VI.1856, p463
8. Ibid., 25.III.1857, p228

questions of the day, the extension of the suffrage, the ballot...we need only refer to his address."¹ Its partner, the Rochdale Observer, urged support for Miall because of his views on the suffrage: "Let it be remembered that working men have everything to gain in this contest."² However, the unenfranchised working men could not help Miall in the face of opposition from the newly united liquor interest, and the liberal electors who were alarmed by his attack upon the Irish Church. As Dr. Vincent has shown, it was the opposition of these electors which brought about his defeat,³ though Miall himself attributed it to bribery, and the removal to the seaside of a critical number of his pledged supporters. There had been several radical gains in the election, and the Nonconformist considered that the new Parliament had a mandate for parliamentary reform which not even Palmerston could ignore.⁴

Both Bright and Cobden commented on Miall's defeat. Bright believed that even if he won his petition against the bribery practised by his opponent, his convictions had split the liberal electors, and a new candidate would have to be sought:

"...there are some electors who have never much liked him, and some local squabbles and jealousies have made a split in the party and to heal this I feel they will have to select a new candidate. This is very unfortunate, and I have done all I could to prevent it...and have written very strongly in support of Miall."⁵

Cobden agreed that it was in Miall's best interests to withdraw from Rochdale:

"To make it a condition that he abdicates in favour of Bright is almost as bad as homicide - anything would be preferable to dragging him at present into the arena. I have written to warn him against it."⁶

1. Rochdale Standard, 14.III.1857
2. Rochdale Observer, 21.III.1857
3. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party (London 1966) pp98-99, 111f
4. Nonconformist, 8.IV.1857, p270
5. Bright to Cobden 7.V.1857, Bright Papers B.M. Add. Mss 43384, f96. Cobden suspected the new candidate might be Milner Gibson, and did not welcome the idea. He believed Miall was a "...first-rate man, and has won himself the position of a leader of the dissenting body." Cobden to Bright, 16.VI.1857. Cobden Papers B.M. Add. Mss 43650, ff245-246
6. Cobden to Henry Richard, 23.VI.1857. Cobden Papers. B.M. Add. Mss 43658, ff353-355.

Cobden shared Bright's view that Miall was unpopular in Rochdale, but attributed this to local snobbery rather than to Miall's political convictions:

"The fact is that Miall is not rich enough for the Rochdale flannel lords. They would have tolerated Hadfield with precisely the same principles - but then Hadfield has £200,000. Urge Miall to withdraw. The sooner he takes the initiative the better."¹

Miall had by now achieved a major position in the ranks of advanced liberals.

After his defeat at Rochdale, he was invited by Samuel Morley to attend a meeting with Cobden, Roebuck and Gibson to discuss, "...the best course to be pursued by advanced liberals under present circumstances."² Morley hoped the meeting would lead to a conference, at which, "...some of us smaller men will gladly co-operate."³ Nothing came of the proposal, for although Miall and Gibson agreed to attend, Cobden declined to do so on the grounds of ill-health. He was gloomy about the prospects for out-of-doors agitation: "I never knew the working class so dead to politics. They literally seem to have no leaders."⁴ Bright took a more optimistic view, suggesting there was reason to suppose that public opinion favoured progress in several major spheres, including the suffrage.⁵

His recent political experience seems to have left Miall with two convictions.

In the first place, he believed more strongly than ever that reformers would have to be prepared to accept whatever concessions Parliament was prepared to give:

"Our own view of what is the right thing for Parliament to do has undergone no change, but experience has taught us something as to the mode of action by which Parliament is most likely to be won over to doing it."⁶

Reformers should keep before their eyes the ideal of full manhood suffrage, but it must be regarded as a long-term objective, to be achieved gradually.

1. Cobden to Henry Richard, 23.VI.1857. Cobden Papers. B.M. Add.Mss. 43658, ff353-355
2. Morley to Cobden 13.IV.1857, Cobden Papers B.M. Add.Mss. 43669, ff107-108.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Bright to Cobden 16.IV.1857, Bright Papers B.M. Add.Mss. 43384, f92
6. Nonconformist, 6.V.1857, p350

More limited reforms must be sought whenever public opinion made a short, concentrated campaign feasible. If there were not some immediate gain, public interest in the question might be irretrievably damaged:

"Our fear is that while the grass is grown, the horse may starve... We ask nobody to forego their principles; we do not intend to forego our own. But this we say, that any reform movement, to be successful, must be immediate...and such as the present electoral body will sustain. We wish it were otherwise, but practical plans cannot always be squared with political wishes."¹

In the second place, Miall was certain that the movement for parliamentary reform needed a new leader, a major national figure who could act independently of the major political parties, but who could command a following within Parliament. When in August 1857 John Bright was elected member for Birmingham, Miall believed that he was the man to lead a campaign for electoral reform.²

A by-election at Tavistock in September 1857 gave Miall the opportunity to publicise his more limited ideas on the suffrage question. He reminded electors that manhood suffrage remained the ideal, but he undertook to support any measure introduced into Parliament which promised the slightest degree of amelioration. After his experience at Rochdale, he was more than ever convinced of the need for the introduction of the ballot,³ and at Tavistock he also included among his desiderata the abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s, and the re-arrangement of constituencies.⁴

The influence of the aristocracy within the constituency was too strong for Miall, and he was defeated. Troubles in India convinced Miall that the issue could not be settled in Parliament immediately, and he thought some delay was no bad thing. It would give the leaders of reform an opportunity to prepare public opinion, and it might avoid the danger of the question being dealt with by Palmerston: "We had much rather wait awhile than accept

1. Nonconformist, 6.V.1857, p350
2. Ibid., 12.VIII.1857, p631
3. Ibid., 29.VII.1857, p591
4. Ibid., 9.IX.1857, p713

a pottering compromise."¹

Committed thus to another extra-parliamentary campaign, Miall was concerned that it should be successful. Unlike his promotion of complete suffrage earlier in his career, he now advocated a more restricted programme. Along with Cobden, Bright and Roebuck, he signed a declaration issued by the Parliamentary Reform Association in 1858 which called for household suffrage in the boroughs, a £10 occupation franchise in the counties, triennial Parliaments, the introduction of the ballot, and the abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s.² As in the past, he endeavoured to gain working-class support, and with his former colleague at the Halifax election, the chartist barrister Ernest Jones, he tried to persuade a group of working-class leaders to support the programme of the association. He regarded it as impolitic to insist upon complete suffrage, and in the interests of unity, urged all reformers of whatever class to unite behind the Parliamentary Reform Association.³

The programme of the Parliamentary Reform Association aroused little enthusiasm in the country,⁴ and when Derby replaced Palmerston as Prime Minister with a minority Conservative government, Miall was forced to evolve a new tactical approach. Seeing no prospect of Derby's being prepared to introduce a suitable measure, he was disposed to support the efforts of private members such as Hume, Berkeley and Locke King, to secure limited improvements through private members' bills; in the 1840s, he had contemptuously dismissed such efforts as 'piecemeal reform': "...we are coming round to the policy of going for whatever amendment of the representative system we can get from time to time. Well, we are glad of it."⁵ He hoped that the Liberal party in opposition might evolve a coherent

1. Nonconformist, 2.XII.1857, p951; 23.IX.1857, p751; 11.XI.1857, p891

2. Ibid., 6.I.1858 pp8-10. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without pp98-99. T.S. Duncombe, Thomas Slingsby Duncombe ii, 213-214

3. Nonconformist, 10.II.1858, ppl08,111.

4. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p99

5. Nonconformist, 6.V.1858, p350

programme of franchise reform, and outside Parliament, the most urgent need was to unite public opinion:

"Sectional movements will be of little avail in the reform discussions of next session, which will be influenced far more by the demands made by general public opinion, than by isolated demonstrations."¹

In the interests of unity, reformers must be realistic in defining their objectives; Miall dismissed as impractical a demand by the Northern Reform Union, led by Joseph Cowen, for manhood suffrage, and showed little patience with the charge of inconsistency which was levelled against those who were prepared to compromise:

"If Mr. Cowen thinks...he can embody Manhood Suffrage in the Bill of 1859 he takes a more hopeful view of public, and particularly of electoral opinion, than we are able to do. And inasmuch as we deem it utterly impractical to force a recognition of that political doctrine from the Legislature next year...we feel compelled to lay aside the proposition which would please us most and acquiesce in that which is nearest to it we have the slightest prospect of carrying. We are not conscious that, in doing so, we lay ourselves open to any just charge of inconsistency."²

As a speaker for the London Parliamentary Reform Committee, Miall emphasised the need for limited objectives at a meeting in Banbury in November 1858.

He spoke in support of the objectives of the Parliamentary Reform Association, and urged all reformers to accept the leadership of John Bright, who had just delivered a major speech in Birmingham on the subject of parliamentary reform.³

His views on parliamentary reform led to Miall's being invited to stand as a parliamentary candidate for Banbury at a by-election. When he addressed the electors, he told them he was seeking election so that he could take part in the discussions on parliamentary reform as an M.P. He affirmed his belief in manhood suffrage, and made little reference to the need for realism and compromise which he had tried to impress upon reformers since 1857.⁴ At first sight, it could be argued that he was prepared to adopt a

1. Nonconformist, 15.IX.1858, p738
2. Ibid., 29.XI.1858, p779. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p99
3. Nonconformist, 3.XI.1858, p881. See also G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pp268-273
4. Nonconformist, 15.XII.1858, p997; 22.XII.1858, p1101.

different stance as a candidate in order to gain election than that which he adopted as a practical politician. The dichotomy may perhaps be explained by the fact that the demand for limited reform was vitiated as an electoral platform by the attacks of Robert Lowe and the Times upon any policy of electoral reform. Their argument was that the unenfranchised classes were potentially violent, and to admit them to the suffrage would simply increase their opportunities to launch attacks upon property. Miall had to refute such attacks, and could not do so by arguing for a limited extension of the franchise.¹ But as the election approached, he spoke more of the need to adopt a practical programme which might succeed in Parliament.²

Miall was unsuccessful at Banbury, but was consoled by the fact that Bright now took up the question of parliamentary reform in earnest. At Bradford, he gave details of a bill he had drafted, which was in essence the limited programme of the Parliamentary Reform Association, and which eventually became the keynote of the policy of the National Reform Union.³ It proposed a rate-paying qualification in the boroughs, a £10 occupation franchise in the counties, the introduction of the ballots, and some redistribution of seats. Miall thought it would serve as the basis for a nationwide campaign, and as a yardstick by which to judge any measure which the government might introduce.

Disraeli had been converted to the cause of parliamentary reform. He informed Lord Stanley, "We must accommodate the settlement of 1832, to the England of 1859,"⁴ and the Queen's speech of 1859 promised a reform bill. However, Disraeli had rejected even the idea of a household franchise, deeming it 'injudicious',⁵ and Miall disliked the bill when it appeared.

The proposed £10 borough franchise would exclude the majority of the working

1. Nonconformist, 15.XII.1858, p998; 29.XII.1858, p1038
2. Ibid., 12.I.1859, p25
3. A. Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p100. Nonconformist, 19.I.1859, pp44,50
4. W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle Life of Disraeli New Ed. (London 1929) i, 1599
5. Ibid., ii, 218-219

class, there was no provision for the ballot, and the redistribution of seats proposed was quite inadequate:¹ "The Bill is not good enough to create division among reformers, and it is bad enough to fire resolution." He believed the bill was certain to be defeated, and warned reformers to be prepared for an election upon the issue of parliamentary reform, remarking, "Reformers, unfortunately, have not always been able tacticians!"² In the event, the bill was defeated upon its second reading in April, by a united Liberal vote.³ Miall hoped that the election platform of all reformers would be Bright's draft bill.⁴ He himself tried vainly to find a constituency. At Bradford, he was seriously considered as a candidate in succession to Thompson, but he was rejected on the grounds that his candidature would make disestablishment, rather than electoral reform, the main local issue.⁵ At Nottingham, he was similarly unsuccessful.

The election left Derby in a minority. He resigned when defeated upon the Queen's speech, but the appointment of Palmerston as Prime Minister gave Miall no confidence. Once more, he preferred to wait for a government with a more genuine commitment to parliamentary reform, even if this meant a delay of three or four years:

"The present government is utterly unfit to frame and carry a satisfactory Reform Bill. We believe that no future ministry of our own day which does not include Richard Cobden and John Bright will be found competent to dispose of that question."⁶

He also believed that he and his fellow-reformers had misjudged the state of public opinion; even Bright's proposals went beyond what was immediately practical:

"It is clear that the Parliamentary Reform Committee overestimated the public demand, and, we confess, we fully shared with them their erroneous conclusions. We must accept the facts as they stand and shape our proceedings on the more correct appreciation of them which has been thrust upon us."⁷

1. Nonconformist, 2.III.1859, p171
2. Ebid., 9.III.1859, p191
3. R. Blake, Disraeli (London 1966) pp400-401
4. Nonconformist, 6.IV.1859, p271
5. Bradford Observer 14.IV.1859; Bradford Review 9.IV.1859. See also D.G. Wright, Politics & Opinion in 19th century Bradford 1852-1880 (Leeds University Ph.D. thesis 1966) pp472-473
6. Nonconformist, 22.VI.1859 p502; 6.VII.1859 p542; 5.X.1859, p802
7. Ibid., 14.XII.1859, p1003

This meant accepting whatever a Liberal government could be induced to concede, a view with which Bright concurred. Cobden, too, believed that reformers had been over-optimistic, and he advised Bright to give up the question altogether, describing parliamentary reform as a 'bubble cry'.¹

Russell introduced a reform bill in 1860; it proposed a £10 county franchise, a £6 borough franchise, and intended to make 25 seats available for redistribution.² Miall was unimpressed with its scope, but admitted that it was a measure which stood some chance of success, the type of measure he had been advocating. But the bill was delayed in its parliamentary stages; Miall believed this was due to a split in the cabinet,³ though Bright took the more charitable view that Russell was serious in his intention, and had simply run short of parliamentary time.⁴ Miall was more anxious because he suspected that the leaders of both parties had felt safe in delaying the bill, since public interest in the question was at a low ebb. Bright was preoccupied with the attitude of the House of Lords over Paper Duties,⁵ and prosperity had made the electorate complacent. The bill was withdrawn in June, and Miall commented, "The Reform Question will not be settled until the titled and moneyed interests are scared at the grim visage of Revolution."⁶ The radical Frederic Harrison agreed with Miall's assessment of the obstructive part played by the aristocracy and the party leaders: "The false pretence and insincerity of every single act or movement of public men is quite disheartening. I cannot see much to choose between Tory, Whig and Radical."⁷

At this stage, Miall was beginning to feel discouraged. He wrote, "...this was not the Parliament, nor the present ministers, to give any useful legislative expression to what we believe to be the popular will."⁸ He

1. Cobden to Bright 29.XII.1859, in J. Morley, Life of Cobden 8th ed. (London 1903) pp812-814.
2. Nonconformist, 7.III.1860
3. Ibid., 25.IV.1860, p331
4. G.B. Smith, The Life and Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Bright M.P. (London 1881) ii, 48-55.
5. A. Wilson "The Suffrage Movement". in P. Hollis Pressure from without p100 G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pp289f.
6. Nonconformist, 6.VI.1860 p451; 13.VI.1860, p471.
7. Frederic Harrison, Autobiographic Memoir (London 1911) i, 209
8. Nonconformist, 13.II.1861, p131

devoted considerable energy to persuading the Liberation Society to abandon parliamentary action in favour of its distinctive policies for much the same reasons,¹ and he confessed his disillusion over the state of public affairs in a letter to Cobden.² He even began to despair of co-operation between middle and working-class reformers; commenting upon a reform conference held in Leeds in November, whose members were mainly from the working class, he observed:

"There can be no doubt that the solution of the reform problem must be mainly furnished by the classes at present excluded from constitutional rights; there can be little doubt that they possess the means, if they have the will, of bringing the question to an early and satisfactory conclusion."³

However, he almost automatically warned the conference not to frighten middle-class reformers with any demands reminiscent of the Charter, and advised them to seek middle-class help. The main obstacle to parliamentary reform was Palmerston. When Miall apologised for being unable to attend the conference, he wrote, "...until the people of this country are un-Palmerstonised, I do not anticipate there will be any great earnestness on the question so far as they are concerned."⁴

In January 1862, Miall addressed the Bradford Parliamentary Reform Association, and argued that since the middle classes were now prosperous and complacent, the working classes must be prepared to fight alone. The Leeds Mercury reported him as saying of himself, that, "...though interested in Parliamentary Reform, he was not one of its apostles."⁵ Possibly Miall regarded himself as a leader of the disestablishment movement by this time: evidently his admirers agreed, for when, on their behalf, Bright presented him with a testimonial of £5,000, no reference was made in the speeches to his work for parliamentary reform.⁶ Prospects for 1863 seemed no better.

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.II.1862; 19.IX.1862; 23.X.1863
2. Miall to Cobden, 30.XI.1861, Cobden Papers B.M.Add.Mss. 43670, ff178-179
3. Nonconformist, 20.XI.1861, p931
4. Ibid., 27.XI.1861, p954
5. Quoted in Nonconformist, 22.I.1862, p74. D.G. Wright, Politics & Opinion in 19th century Bradford 1852-1880 p579.
6. Nonconformist, 8.V.1862, p397; Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, pp5-6

Miall observed that for the moment, "Extension of the suffrage is shelved. A redistribution of Parliamentary seats is no more heard of. The ballot is voted a bore, and treated as a farce." The Liberals were suffering losses at by-elections, and he argued they should adopt parliamentary reform as a party programme, instead of relying so heavily upon the personal magnetism of Palmerston.¹ In the session of 1864, however, there was some slight encouragement. The Nonconformist was doing little apart from giving its support to the measures introduced by private members, but one of these, the Borough Franchise Bill introduced by Edward Baines, elicited support from Gladstone, who remarked,

"...every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger is morally entitled to come within the pale of the constitution."²

Gladstone later regretted that no heed was given to the qualifications he had made to this statement, and denied that he intended to become the leader of a movement for parliamentary reform,³ but the Nonconformist nevertheless greeted him as such.⁴

Since parliament was not a fruitful field for reformers in the early 1860s, Miall and the Liberation Society concentrated their efforts in the country, making a deliberate attempt to manipulate the electoral system as it existed. The executive committee of the society, frustrated by Palmerston's indifference to pleas for religious equality, resolved to attempt to influence the selection of parliamentary candidates.⁵ The moderate Patriot was doubtful about this procedure: "...we should be sorry to see the Liberation Society degenerating into a radical club, aiming to influence elections and win seats."⁶ Miall was chairman of a sub-committee of the society which prepared a report upon the possibility of the society's intervening in borough elections.

1. Nonconformist, 18.II.1863, p131
2. J. Morley, Life of Gladstone ii, 125-127
3. Ibid. See also M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution (Cambridge 1967) p31
4. Nonconformist, 1.VI.1864, p446. See also F.B. Smith, The Making of the Second Reform Bill (Cambridge 1966) pp48, 54.
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 23.X.1863. See also J. Prest, Lord John Russell p399
6. Patriot, 19.XI.1863

It examined 167 constituencies, and decided that in the majority of these it would simply distribute literature, since there was little chance of affecting the result of an election. In 33 constituencies, the society could exert some influence.¹ With a general election in 1865, electoral agents were sent to these constituencies, to work for the election of members sympathetic to the ideals of the society.² The constituencies selected were Aylesbury, Exeter, Cricklade, Cokermonth, Frome, Bath, Grimsby, Lyme Regis, Northallerton, Bury, Marlborough, Andover, Wareham, Wallingford, Salisbury, Lichfield, Stoke and Warrington. Hare, the chief agent of the society, was also requested to visit Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hastings, Cardiganshire, and Banbury. This was not a new departure for the society: it had made a similar attempt, on a less ambitious scale, as early as 1856, when Pryce visited Devon and Cornwall, "...chiefly for electoral purposes..."³

Parliament was dissolved in July 1865. Again, Miall failed to obtain nomination as a candidate. He was considered for Manchester, but passed over in favour of Jacob Bright;⁴ Stirling Burghs was the other possibility, but that was dismissed by the secretary of the Liberation Society, Carvell Williams, who, after a visit to Stirling, felt Miall's candidature had little chance.⁵ Leaving aside his own disappointment, Miall was pleased by the Liberal victory, which he regarded as a mandate for the reform of parliament.⁶ Even more encouraging, was the death in October of 1865 of Miall's *bête noire*, Palmerston. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Gladstone, 'unmuzzled' after his defeat at Oxford, and the prospects of parliamentary reform now seemed very much better to Miall.⁷

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.XI.1864
Ibid. Minute Book 18.XI.1864
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.VII.1865
3. Ibid., 8.IX.1856
4. Nonconformist, 21.VI.1865, p505
5. Liberation Society Minute Book 7.VII.1865; 21.VII.1865. A letter by Carvell Williams, who had visited Stirling, said that, in view of the state of party feeling there, "...the idea of Mr. Miall's candidature could not be further entertained." Liberation Society Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 12.VII.1865. See also Nonconformist, 12.VII.1865, p566
6. Nonconformist, 19.VII.1865, p582
7. Ibid., 1.XI.1865, p882. See also F.B. Smith, The Making of the Second Reform Bill p54.

He informed the Liberation Society that, in its own interests, it must throw its full weight behind a campaign for parliamentary reform.¹ The society's parliamentary committee, of which he was a member, considered the strategy to be followed in the new Parliament, and based its recommendations which were drafted by Miall upon the principle, "...that the composition of Parliament precludes all hope of preventing a sensible advance of our domestic policy."² It was proposed to support any measures which might promote religious equality, and to concentrate in particular upon the church rates issue; all these questions would have to be shelved if the government introduced a measure of parliamentary reform:

"Whether it accord with our convenience or not, the Reform Question, if it be introduced by the government, will claim and have not merely precedence for the session, but something closely approaching to a monopoly of interest. It will be our wisdom to refrain from challenging that claim."³

The society's own interests would stand a better chance of success if Parliament were reformed, and the society intended to suspend all its parliamentary agitation if a reform bill were introduced:

"An enlarged and amended representative system will...put within reach of all who are striving to effect salutary changes an increased leverage, and undoubtedly it will be available for helping on at augmented speed the cause of religious liberty."⁴

Miall believed that parliamentary reform now stood an excellent chance of success:

"If the government be in earnest, as we believe them to be, nothing but the grossest mismanagement can prevent their carrying their Reform Bill, or appealing to the country on that specific question."⁵

The climate of opinion was becoming more favourable to a measure which would genuinely benefit the working classes; despite the jeremiads of Robert Lowe, fears of the working class were diminishing. When the Town Council of Leeds

1. Nonconformist, 22.XI.1865, p934
2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 15.XI.1865
Ibid., Minute Book 17.XI.1865
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Nonconformist, 17.I.1866, p50

agreed to petition the government in favour of parliamentary reform, Edward Baines, only recently convinced of the desirability of parliamentary reform, agreed to present the petition, and one member of the Council, Mr. Gaunt, totally dismissed any fears of working-class violence. When Leeds had been threatened by Fenian outrages, working men had enlisted as special constables; it was illogical not to entrust them with the franchise:

"His own impression was that the men who formed their co-operative associations, who belonged to their building societies and mechanics' institutions, the two hundred and fifty or three hundred thousand men who were training youths in the Sunday school - most of them had not got the vote - he did not think that these men could be considered dangerous."¹

Part 3. The achievement of reform

The government proposals were introduced by Gladstone, whose conversion to the cause of parliamentary reform gave it a real chance of success. One set of measures dealt with the franchise; a £7 borough franchise and a £14 county franchise met with Miall's approval; he thought they were certain to arouse opposition because of their comprehensive nature and could only hope that the Conservatives would allow them to pass in order to avoid a still more radical measure.² He joined Bright in demanding public support for the measure, for he felt the greatest threat to the bill lay in the apathy of the Liberals in Parliament.³ There was a small government majority for the second reading of the bill, and when proposals were introduced for Scotland, Wales and Ireland, together with a bill which would make 49 seats available for redistribution, Miall thought that, taken together, "...they constitute a really great constitutional measure...They will render the House of Commons more fairly representative of public opinion than it has ever been since...1688."⁴ A combination of Conservatives and Liberals, members

1. Leeds Mercury, 30.III.1866, p3
2. Nonconformist, 14.III.1866, p210
3. Ibid., 28.III.1866, p250; 4.IV.1866, p270. See also G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pp350f
4. Nonconformist 9.V.1866, p370; 25.IV.1866, p330

of the Adullamite cave, defeated the borough franchise proposals in committee, and the government resigned. Ideally, Miall hoped Parliament would be dissolved, but when Derby formed a minority government, he was not unhopeful that Parliament might still be reformed.¹ The failure of the Liberal proposals was ascribed to the opposition aroused by the personalities of the bill's chief advocates, Gladstone, Bright and Russell. Miall admitted ruefully that a bill introduced by Palmerston might have had a better chance of success.²

Out-of-doors agitation, in the hands of two organisations, the pre-dominantly middle-class National Reform Union, and the more militant and more working-class National Reform League, now assumed massive proportions. Miall's was a voice for moderation. The mass meetings organised by the league at Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park made him anxious once more about the possibility of violence: while he fully conceded the necessity of demonstrations, if they threatened disorder, proposals for reform might be jeopardised. Bright, though sympathetic towards their objectives, refused to attend these demonstrations.³

Miall himself was involved directly with neither body: at an earlier stage the secretary of the league, George Howell, had written to Miall to ask him to add his name to a list of gentlemen who had each agreed to subscribe £25, a list which included William Hargreaves, Rigby Warren and Samuel Morley.⁴ There is no evidence of Miall's sending a reply, but he later

1. Nonconformist, 20.VI.1866, p498

2. Ibid., 15.VIII.1866, p658

3. Ibid., 20.VI.1866 p498; 25.VII.1866 p598. See also G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pp361-363. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution pp26-27.

Papers of the National Reform League, Minute Book of the Executive Committee 4.VII.1866, (Bishopsgate Institute)

4. Howell to Miall 31.X.1865. (Howell Papers) Letter Book I.F35 (Bishopsgate Institute)
Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the National Reform League, 8.IX.1865.

contributed £2.2.0d. to the league. In thanking him, Howell alluded to his, "...persistent efforts to alleviate the toiling masses of our fellow countrymen."¹ The league, established in 1865, was predominantly a working-class body, whose objective was manhood suffrage, one of Miall's ideas. Originally its leaders felt unable to co-operate with the middle-class National Reform Union, with its more moderate objective of household suffrage. Edmund Beales, the president of the league, condemned the platform of the union, whose author was Bright, as, "...entirely devoid of all principle, and unworthy of the man who framed it."² Miall himself supported the more moderate programme of the union; he had been a member of the Parliamentary Reform Association whose platform was adopted by the union upon its foundation in 1864. Only a movement headed by Bright could, he believed, secure the unity between the groups which he considered essential for success.³ In fact, it was Bright's own record on the question which made it possible for the league and the union to unite in both 1866 and 1867;⁴ they had financial support in common, notably from middle-class reformers such as Samuel Morley, Kell, Salt and Taylor.⁵ Middle-class radicals contributed to Howell's own election expenses at Aylesbury,⁶ and the league received the journalistic support of the Commonwealth, a radical newspaper of which Miall was a director.⁷ It was published by Arthur Miall, and Miall himself was among those who promised to write for it.⁸ Insofar as the league managed

1. Howell to Miall 23.VI.1868 Howell Papers, Letter Book 4, f515.
R. Harrison, Before the Socialists (London 1965) p147
2. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the National Reform League, 22.IX.1865. F.M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical; George Howell and Victorian working-class politics (London 1971) p56
3. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution pp34, 243-245, 250.
R. Harrison, Before the Socialists p142.
4. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the National Reform League, 6.VII.1866, 18.IV.1867. See also F.B. Smith, The Making of the Second Reform Bill p188.
5. H. Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone (London 1959) p333
A. Wilson, The Suffrage Movement in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p101
G. Howell to R. Kell 3.II.1868; G. Howell to Illingworth 11.II.1868; Howell to D. Black 22.II.1868; Howell to T. Salt 25.IV.1868. Howell Papers, letter books.
6. Howell to R. Kell. Howell Papers, Letter Book 4, 19.XII.1868, f866
7. S. Coltham, "English Working Class Newspapers in 1867". Victorian Studies Vol.13 1969/70, pp162-163. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the National Reform League, 6.VII.1866.
8. Commonwealth, 10.II.1866; 8.IX.1866.

to work along with the union, and with Liberals and radicals, this marks an important stage in the development of the 'Lib.-Lab.' alliance.¹ Miall foresaw the need for the alliance, and was correct in his assessment of its possible basis, though he played little part in its final consummation.

Miall believed that the rejection of the bill of 1866 had in fact benefitted the cause of parliamentary reform, since it had aroused public opinion:

"The question is no more 'how much can we agree to give' but 'how much will it be possible and safe for us to retain'."² Derby agreed there was a genuine demand for parliamentary reform, which the Conservatives could not afford to ignore,³ but Miall feared that working-class militance might frighten Parliament, and was relieved when a large demonstration towards the end of 1866 passed off without violence.⁴ He came to believe that it was demonstrations such as these which compelled Disraeli to introduce an extensive measure of reform.⁵ The beginning of 1867 saw a continuation of demonstrations in favour of reform, and Miall saw increasing co-operation between middle and working-class reformers.⁶ The radical Frederic Harrison claimed that the working classes were supremely fit for the paramount duty of being the arbiter of public affairs.⁷ Preoccupied, however, with the affairs of the Liberation Society, Miall did not take an active part in the demonstrations.

Disraeli introduced his proposals for parliamentary reform by means of a series of resolutions; this procedure was apparently designed to minimise party conflict.⁸ Despite the fact that he had welcomed the less extensive Liberal proposals of 1866, Miall regarded the proposed £6 borough rate franchise and the £8 rent franchise for the counties as being quite inadequate.

1. P. Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London 1967) p120
2. Nonconformist, 24.X.1866, p858
3. R. Blake, Disraeli p451
4. Nonconformist, 28.XI.1866, p958; 5.XII.1866, p978
5. Ibid., 12.XII.1866, p998
6. Ibid., 20.II.1867, p154
7. Fortnightly Review, March 1867, p277
8. W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle, Life of Disraeli ii, 220-221

The proposals should be opposed by all reformers, as their inadequacies would make the demand for a radical measure more insistent, and would increase the danger of violence.¹ In February, the franchise proposals were modified to the extent that they offered what amounted to household suffrage in the boroughs, possibly as a result of the government being impressed by popular agitation. Bright was prepared to accept less extensive provisions;² Miall accepted the amendments in principle, but disliked the franchise qualifications which remained, especially the relatively small redistribution of seats envisaged: "It is a bill rich in the elements of good, but all spoiled."³

One of the most significant events in the struggle of 1867 was the Hyde Park demonstration of 6th May. Miall paid little attention to it, simply noting that it had passed off peacefully, and warning working-class leaders not to attempt a repetition, lest violence result and with it, a middle-class backlash.⁴ The objectionable proposals were altered in committee, and Miall was entirely satisfied with the resulting measure, regarding it as an achievement for reformers comparable to making John Bright Prime Minister:⁵ "We can scarcely realise the magnitude of this result. It fairly takes our breath away." In the boroughs, the revised proposals would comprehend a large proportion of the working classes, provided they paid rates,⁶ and, when considered together with the revised county franchise, "...will satisfy the greater majority of even advanced reformers."⁷ Miall did not believe that it was the external pressure of the Reform League which, through its demonstrations had transformed a mediocre set of proposals into an excellent measure. It was, he considered, the Liberals in Parliament who had prevailed upon Disraeli, and had forced him to extend the scope of

1. Nonconformist, 13.II.1867, p134; 27.II.1867, p174

2. R. Blake, Disraeli p463

3. Nonconformist, 20.III.1867, p234

4. Ibid. 8.V.1867 p325. cf R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pp78-113. Dr. Harrison regards the Hyde Park demonstration as decisive in bringing about changes in the bill.

5. Nonconformist, 22.V.1867, p422

6. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution p17

7. Nonconformist, 29.V.1867, p446

his measure.¹ External pressure, would, he feared, prove counter-productive. Despite his efforts to unite middle and working-class effort, he seems to have had an innate fear himself of the working class, particularly since labour was becoming organised. In 1874, he attributed Gladstone's election defeat to,

"...the overbearing tone assumed by trade unions...the exclusive pretensions of various organisations of the working people...in diffusing through a large proportion of the upper and middle classes...a nervous apprehension of being brought under the domination of the less cultivated classes of the community."²

In 1867, Miall shared the embarrassment of Bright and other radical leaders with the agitation of the Reform League, and his demands for parliamentary reform seem increasingly like a search for a remedy for social unrest.

There is a sense in which he over-reacted to the demonstrations of the Reform League, for, as Dr. Cowling has shown, the threat of violence worried the Liberals, who feared association with disorderly elements much more than it impressed Disraeli.³ Thus, in a curious way, Miall seems to have drawn away from the type of agitation in which he had placed such faith as a younger man, ultimately coming to regard parliament itself as the real source of social change.

When he considered the session of 1867, Miall was naturally pleased by the Reform Act, but dubious about the manner of its achievement:

"We are afraid...that nothing valuable in the bill itself can undo the mischief which the manner of giving it will inflict upon the public. It is the third time within a generation that conservatism has denied before the world the reality of its own faith."⁴

He believed that Disraeli had framed the measure solely for party advantage,⁵ and the charge was not without foundation. The Conservatives needed to

1. Nonconformist, 17.VII.1867, p586. See also R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pp78-137; M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution ppl8, 26-27.
2. Nonconformist, 11.II.1874, p121
3. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution ppl6-27; R. Blake, Disraeli p458. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pp78-137
4. Nonconformist, 3.VII.1867, p546
5. Ibid., 28.VIII.1867, p706

attract radical support within parliament;¹ they had not been successful with the electoral system established in 1832. Since then, they had only obtained a majority in time of crisis, and Disraeli believed that the 1867 Act would destroy the monopoly of Liberalism, and restore the Conservative party to its proper place in government.² Miall did not even believe it was a final settlement: "The Act of 1867 is only a resting place on the road to perfect reform, a platform for renewed and vigorous agitation."³ He was pleased to note that both the Reform Union and the Reform League intended to continue their activities, and he himself toured South Wales, along with Henry Richard, on behalf of the Liberation Society. They helped establish a South Wales Liberal Representation Committee, and the society contributed £50 to its expenses.⁴ Two years later, the operations of this committee were considered 'highly satisfactory'.⁵

The Liberation Society welcomed the 1867 Act, which would ease its task:

"It cannot but greatly increase their political influence, and put within their reach the realisation of results, which, under the existing political system, they have not dared to contemplate."⁶

John Morley regarded the Act as the first stage in a revolution, which transferred political power from a class to the nation as a whole;⁷ a fellow-radical, Edmund Beesley, believed that it fulfilled all the ambitions of middle-class reformers, who would in future be less disposed to assist the ambitions of the working class. Unlike Miall, he saw the major issue of the future as that of Trades Union reform, not religious equality.⁸ In the event, Beesley was more perceptive than Miall, who attempted to recruit working-class support for his disestablishment campaigns; Miall undoubtedly obtained the support of radical journals, and of some working-

1. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution pp43; 61.
R. Blake, Disraeli, p466.
2. W.F. Monypenny & G.E. Buckle, Life of Disraeli ii, 287
3. Nonconformist, 11.IX.1867, p747
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.VII.1867, f455
5. Ibid., 5.II.1869, f124
6. Ibid., 30.VIII.1867
7. Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1867, p359
8. Ibid., July 1867, pp17-18

class leaders, but not the support of the main organisations of working-class opinion.

Miall became parliamentary candidate for Bradford in October 1867, and immediately declared himself satisfied with household suffrage.¹ His criticisms of the 1867 Act were of its detail, but he perceptively pointed out the danger of the rate paying qualification, and called for its abolition.² Dr. Cowling has shown that the obligation to pay rates might well reduce the number of workers actually enfranchised.³ Despite his restricted platform as regards the franchise, and notwithstanding his reluctance to commit himself to the full programme of the Reform League, Miall received its endorsement of his candidature. The council agreed to support him both on the basis of his political career to date, and upon the strength of reports it received from its Bradford branch. It issued a declaration, signed by Odger and Graham, which expressed the hope that, "...every member of the League and all other true Reformers will render whatever influence they may possess to secure the return to Parliament of so useful a man."⁴ Miall was defeated in this by election, a defeat which he regarded as, "...the last time the old constituency has exercised its power, and has been used to set at defiance the general verdict of the borough."⁵ Among his supporters had been Kell, Illingworth and Salt, all contributors to the Reform League, and when Miall was selected to fight the seat in the general election of 1868, Howell, the secretary of the Reform League, went to Bradford to visit Kell; in the course of a general discussion of the election, Miall's own candidature was discussed.⁶ However, Bradford did not figure among the constituencies, 65 in number, about which Howell sought information in 1868, and where the league concentrated its

1. Nonconformist, 16.X.1867, p851

2. Ibid., 2.X.1867, p816

3. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution p17

4. Papers of the National Reform League; packet labelled "Resolutions, Amendments Motions", no.56

5. Nonconformist 16.X.1867 p846

6. Howell Papers, Howell's diary, 5.II.1868

efforts.¹ After 1868, as discussed elsewhere, the league began to enter into closer relations with the Liberation Society, having already entered into closer relationships with the Liberal party. This may be due to the fact that the 1867 Act meant the end of financial contributions from middle-class reformers, and the diminution of the capacity of the league for independent action.²

Miall again was unsuccessful in the general election of 1868; though his victorious opponent was unseated after an appeal, Miall had to fight another by-election at Bradford. On this occasion, his candidature was supported by the working-class leader Applegarth, who urged a meeting at Bradford Trades Unionists to support him on account of his work for the extension of the franchise.³ After his election for Bradford, Miall regarded the issue of parliamentary reform as settled; apart from supporting the campaign for the ballot, which was introduced in 1872, he paid no more attention to the issue. As an M.P., he was more concerned with the question of the Irish Church, the question of elementary education, and his own disestablishment campaign.

Indeed, at the time of his Bradford election campaigns, he had begun to reveal some of the prejudices which many middle-class reformers had towards their working-class allies. He remarked rather patronisingly that the newly enfranchised working-class voters had not really used their votes to their full effect, through inexperience and vulnerability to corruption and intimidation; "...under all the circumstances of the case it would have been wonderful indeed if they had sent back a body of representatives reflecting their minds and ideas."⁴ His election campaign in 1868 had been marked by friction; the Bradford middle-class leaders tried to insist

1. Howell Papers, Election Reports.
See also R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pp154-155
2. H. Hanham, Elections and Party Management pp329-336
3. Bradford Review, 6.III.1869
4. Times, 21.V.1869, p9

upon a united effort by the Reform Union and the Reform League in support of Miall, which provoked Beales to condemn, "...the dictation by the Middle Class in reference to the action of the Council of the League."¹ The radical Beehive pointed out to its readers,

"...that the present state of voting in Parliament is as much owing to the labours of the junior member for Bradford, and very far more than to the labours of those who have worked in the front rank for that end."²

It went on to give Miall the credit for the limited success that was achieved by the Complete Suffrage Union, and claimed for him the "...gratitude and confidence of working men." When Miall retired as member for Bradford, Sir Titus Salt said of him, "...the people of Bradford will not forget that for more than thirty years he laboured to extend the suffrage."³

These immediate reactions were flattering to Miall; his contribution, when considered in a longer perspective, is more difficult to assess. Dr. Cowling has shown that in achieving parliamentary reform, the presence of a group of reforming M.P.s in the House of Commons was at least as significant as the existence of extra-parliamentary movements.⁴ Miall played a part in both spheres of action; he was involved in several extra-parliamentary movements, and, for a crucial period, he was a member of parliament, normally associating with advanced reformers. Through his journalism, and as a public speaker, he helped to form and consolidate a body of public opinion which had some influence upon those who made decisions; the organisations with which he was associated contained among their supporters M.P.s who could promote the objectives of the organisations in parliament. When Palmerston invited Cobden to join his government, he told him that he could little effect upon public life unless he had the backing of a cabinet, and the support of a parliamentary majority.⁵ Holding

1. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the National Reform League, 12.II.1868 See also R. Harrison, Before the Socialists p146. D.G. Wright, Politics & Opinion in 19th century Bradford 1852-1880 p750
2. Beehive, 28.V.1869, p4
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p291
4. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution p61
5. J. Morley, Life of Cobden p695

no office, Miall could only hope to influence public men in their decision-making: this type of influence induced the Liberals in 1866, and the Conservatives in 1867, to introduce extensive measures of parliamentary reform. Frederic Harrison attributed the success of 1867 to the extra-parliamentary campaign begun by Bright in 1858,¹ and John Morley pointed out, "...not one of the main changes of that age was carried in parliament without severe agitation out of doors...Household suffrage followed the same rule."² Dr. Cowling concedes that extra-parliamentary pressure was important, though does not see it as a creative force: "The climate of parliamentary opinion in the fifties and sixties was affected by extra-parliamentary forces, but not created by them."³

Apart from contributing to the extra-parliamentary pressure as a speaker, Miall's major contribution was as a journalist. Reform movements of the nineteenth century needed the regular support of a newspaper, to keep their members informed and interested; under Miall's editorship, the Nonconformist provided this service for parliamentary reform movements.⁴ This was his major contribution, for he was in no position to force his views upon a government. Russell conceded in 1851 that the 1832 settlement was not final, and subsequently other politicians followed his view. Insofar as it was public opinion which convinced them, Miall made a significant contribution to the settlement of 1867.

His changing tactics in this question show a gradual maturing of his political outlook. The consistent feature of his agitation was hatred of the domination by the aristocracy of Parliament, its unrepresentative nature, and the illogical exclusion of so many from it. He began his career as a

1. Frederic Harrison, Autobiographical Memoir i, 185-186
2. J. Morley, Life of Gladstone ii, 227
3. M. Cowling, 1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution p61
4. B. Harrison and P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery." passim

doctrinaire reformer, insisting upon an uncompromising programme of complete suffrage. That proved unrealistic, and he turned his attention to less ambitious objectives. Even if the ideal was unattainable, the strategy employed by Miall foreshadowed in some measure the Lib.-Labism of the 1860s and 1870s. The Complete Suffrage Union was based upon co-operation between middle and working-class reformers, given that they had interests in common. The middle classes would provide the money and the political expertise, and Miall believed the working classes should be content to follow their lead. The legacy of independent working-class action in the form of Chartism made this scheme unworkable in the 1840s, but it was not so far removed from George Howell's idea of the proper relationship between labour and liberalism in the period 1866 to 1868, and Miall anticipated Howell's fear that any separation of middle and working-class agitation would result in the emergence of extremist working-class leadership.¹ In a letter to D. Black, Howell expressed sentiments similar to the theme of Miall's 'Reconciliation of the Middle and Working classes': "The greater the element of our middle class in these movements, the less violent and more progressive will be the results."² The ethos of the Complete Suffrage Union was not dissimilar to that of the Reform League, though its structure more closely resembled that of the Reform Union.

After the collapse of the Complete Suffrage Union, Miall continued to be associated with agitation for parliamentary reform, and in most cases, with some degree of working class support. He came to realise that reform by instalments was more practical than wholesale demands, and, like Bright, was prepared to moderate his objectives in the interests of concrete achievement. By the 1860s, Miall was supporting schemes which had a chance of success in parliament, and in 1867 accepted a measure which went beyond

1. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pl44.

2. George Howell to D. Black, 22.II.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4, p307

what Bright expected, but fell short of what Miall had demanded in 1841.

While Miall was in Parliament between 1869 and 1874, it is probable that his cause derived little assistance from the Act of 1867. Much of his criticism of the government was based on its alleged ignoring of the wishes of nonconformists, the complaint which caused him to take up the issue of parliamentary reform at the beginning of his political career.

CHAPTER 4

EDWARD MIALl AND THE IRISH CHURCH

Part 1. Miall and the anti-Maynooth agitation	241
Part 2. Parliamentary action	266
Part 3. Miall and the National Association	299

Part 1. Miall and the anti-Maynooth agitation

In contrast to the issues so far discussed, Miall's campaign against the Anglican establishment in Ireland was a direct attack upon the principle of establishment, rather than an attack upon one particular manifestation of that principle. In the first issue of the Nonconformist he laid down the strategy which he and his fellow-voluntaryists were to follow throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century:

"The time has now come, either to give up the cause of religious liberty in despair, or to strike a blow at the 'heart of affairs' - to abandon the principle of expediency and resolutely to take up that of principle. Before the dissenters can hope to make way, they must make the basis of their operations national rather than sectarian - must aim not so much to right themselves as to right Christianity. The union of church and state is the real evil against which their efforts must be directed."¹

The problem, as Miall recognised, had to be tackled in its component parts, and the Anglican Church in Ireland, linked to the Church of England since the Act of Union, was especially vulnerable to criticism. As its most recent historian has shown, the Church of Ireland was ill-equipped to fulfil its primary task of providing pastoral services for the Anglican community, and was alienated from the majority of the Irish;

"Representing a narrow constituency, controlling great endowments, uncertain of its priorities, inefficient in its administration, the Church of Ireland was ripe for either reform or revolution."²

Between 1800 and 1830 reforms were implemented as a result of which the Church of Ireland became more efficient in carrying out its pastoral duties, but after the Catholic Emancipation Act, the catholic community of Ireland became a coherent political force, hostile to the protestant minority. The church of this minority was regarded as a 'badge of conquest' imposed upon an unwilling people who were hostile to it, and who, after 1829, were represented by vocal spokesmen in Parliament. The position of the Church

1. Nonconformist, 14.IV.1841, p1

2. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution (Yale 1971) p70.

of Ireland was called into question, but a successful attack upon it, as Miall was fully aware, required a renewal of the alliance between Irish catholics and dissenters which had been so successful in 1829.

The way was clear for government intervention. Since the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, it could no longer be argued that the state had an official conscience, and it was difficult for governments to uphold the dominant position of one particular sect. The right of the state to interfere with the resources of the Irish Church had already been conceded by the acceptance of the tithe reform measures of the 1820s, and by its intervention in the internal affairs of the Irish Church in 1833, with the Church Temporalities Act. This act not only reduced the number of bishoprics and redistributed the surplus resources of the church, but also raised the possibility of these resources being used for non-ecclesiastical purposes. Furthermore, the parish in Ireland lost its legal and administrative functions, and could no longer impose a levy upon the inhabitants for the support of Anglican worship.¹

Though it was to prove the most vulnerable part of the Anglican establishment, the Church of Ireland was not the only possible target for voluntaryist attacks in the 1840s. In the previous decade, the Scottish Church was rent by the turmoil which led to the disruption of 1843, and it might be supposed that it would have been a suitable area of operation for Miall and the English voluntaryists. As early as 1837, Miall had visited Scotland, meeting Dr. Wardlaw, Ewing, Harper and Heugh, the leaders of the voluntary party in Scotland, and later, Heugh and Harper visited Leicester, where Miall was embarking upon a career of active politics, to raise support in England for the Non-Intrusion party in the Scottish Church:² "Their

1. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland; Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, Ch.3 *passim*. See also O.J. Brose, "The Irish Precedent for English Church Reform: the Church Temporalities Act of 1833" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.7 1956, pp204-225
The case was discussed by E.A. Freeman in connection with the legal problems of disestablishment. E.A. Freeman, Disestablishment and Disendowment. What are they? (London 1874)
2. Leicestershire Mercury, 16.II.1839. Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, (Supplement).

eloquent appeals made a strong impression on Mr. Miall's mind, and deepened his conviction of the unscriptural character of all Church establishments."¹ The evangelical members of the General Assembly of the Scottish Church had launched a successful campaign of church extension, which had raised £200,000, and 200 churches had been built within four years.² This was the type of activity Miall had in mind for the English voluntary party throughout his career. Not only might the Scottish Church question have attracted the support of the English voluntary party; English radicals might also have found it a useful question. As a group, they had become increasingly disillusioned with the Whigs since 1832, and, having suffered heavy electoral losses in 1835 and 1837, needed a new cause to rally their supporters. Among possible causes were suffrage reform, the abolition of church rates, currency reform, free trade and, indeed, Scottish disestablishment.³ In most of these questions, dissenters such as Miall had a deep interest, and the Scottish Church question would give the provincial leaders of dissent the opportunity to jolt the more passive London leaders into action.

However, Miall found it impossible to ally with the malcontents of the Scottish Church. His contact had been with the voluntary party, whereas the main body of discontent was the evangelical party, led by Dr. Chalmers. In a series of lectures delivered in London in 1838,⁴ Chalmers had made it clear that the issue upon which he took his stand was that of 'non-intrusion', not that of disestablishment.⁵ Addressing the General Assembly in 1843 immediately before the secession, he warned:

"The Voluntaries mistake us if they conceive us to be Voluntaries...though we quit the Establishment, we go out on the Establishment principle: we quit a vitiated Establishment, but would rejoice in returning to a pure one."⁶

He went on to condemn the 'demagogues and agitators of the day' who attacked the establishment of religion.⁷

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp37-38
2. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 p194
3. Ibid., pp195-196
4. W. Hanna, Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers (Edinburgh 1853) iv, 37
5. Ibid., iv, 143, 167. See also A.B. Erickson, "The Non Intrusion Controversy in Scotland" Church History Vol. 11 Dec.1942, pp302-325.
6. W. Hanna, Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers iv, 348
7. Ibid. See also J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (Oxford 1960) pp354 f.

Miall's views on establishment were quite incompatible with Chalmers', and there was no possibility of alliance between the Scottish secessionists and voluntaryists of Miall's stamp. He welcomed the secession of 1843, but considered it fell short of moral greatness, "...because they who performed it were unable to cast the skin of their old prejudices."¹ In an obituary of Chalmers, Miall remarked:

"He never could see the incompatibility of ecclesiastical independence with State support...He endangered the voluntary principle by casting it into the mould of a Sustentation fund."²

Though encouraged by the disruption, Miall could not exploit it, even though the success of the Free Church of Scotland was hailed as a practical triumph of voluntaryism.

The Irish Church was a more promising field of operation; it was already a public issue when Miall arrived upon the national scene in 1841, and there was support available from various quarters, if it could be organised. Most politicians agreed that the Irish ecclesiastical situation required amendment. Miall's problem was to secure his own solution of disestablishment and disendowment, and to discredit other solutions, notably concurrent endowment, the impartial endowment of all sects, which was favoured by many political leaders. Concurrent endowment might have had the desired political effect of placating the catholic majority who resented being taxed to support an alien creed: Miall, however, believed as a matter of principle that state support for religion was wrong, and in the event, the catholic majority in Ireland preferred the disendowment of the Church of Ireland to concurrent endowment. The most formidable opponents of Miall's plan for the Irish Church were not so much the upholders of establishment as politicians like Lord John Russell, who supported the idea of concurrent endowment. Time was not on Miall's side; the question of the Irish establishment was part of the larger question of pacifying Ireland. Many politicians were eager

1. Nonconformist, 24.V.1843, p376; 24.V.1843, p383.

2. Ibid., 9.VI.1847, p421

to press on with the question, and Miall, having no political base, could only be a spectator.

His apprehension of concurrent endowment was not misplaced. When Russell attacked the Irish Church in 1835, he did so on the grounds that it was not an integral part of the Church of England, and it was thus possible to question its establishment upon utilitarian grounds. He agreed with those who claimed that religious establishments promoted religion and good order, but doubted whether this defence could carry much weight. In the case of the Church of Ireland:

"Does it tend to promote religion or maintain good order?... Church Establishments should be considered as a means of moral and spiritual instruction and nothing else...I propose that there should be instituted such a reform of the Church of Ireland as would enable us to adapt the establishment to the spiritual instruction of those who belong to the Church, and there should be no unnecessary surplus."¹

The issue became a party question; the Tories were determined to uphold the Irish establishment, while the Whigs were determined to modify it according to principles of public benefit. But though the reformed electoral system normally left the Whigs in power, it was not certain that their policy for the Irish Church would prevail. Their parliamentary allies, the radicals and the Irish Catholic members, whose support Miall later succeeded in obtaining, had, since 1833, gradually become alienated from the Whigs. Whereas the Whig leaders favoured some form of concurrent endowment, the radicals favoured a solution more akin to disestablishment.²

A split had developed when, under Tory pressure, the Whigs had abandoned the clause which allowed the government to appropriate property surplus to the requirements of the Irish Church, in the Irish Church Bill of 1833.³ The effect of this division was exacerbated by radical losses in the elections of 1835 and 1837. Miall could hope to find support in Parliament for disestablishment as a solution, support which would normally be hostile to

1. Quoted in O.J. Brose, Church and Parliament; the Reshaping of the Church of England 1828-1860. (Oxford 1959) pp52-53.
2. O.J. Brose, "The Irish Precedent for English Church Reform" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.7. 1956 pp217-218
3. Ibid. p219. See also O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (London 1966) i, 59.

concurrent endowment. However, it might not be proof against an attempt to pacify Ireland either by the appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Church of Ireland to secular purposes, or by its appropriation to the use of other sects, if there were widespread disorder in Ireland. Tithes had been replaced by rent charges in 1838, and landlords, as well as the Church of Ireland, were a focus of peasant resentment. Thus there were two questions; the existence of the Church of Ireland as an establishment, and the Irish Church as a cause of disorder in Ireland. The solution adopted could vary according to which of the questions was uppermost in the minds of legislators, and it was Miall's task, as journalist and politician, to show that the two questions were inseparable.

Miall's early statement of his views on the Irish Church suggest that he viewed the issue in these terms: he was concerned that his attacks upon the Irish Church should not be regarded as merely an attack upon the principle of establishment, but also as an urgent practical matter. The existence of the Irish Church was unjust, both because it was established, and because it was the church of a minority. It was a "...rank, noxious and deadly weed," more oppressive than the Established Church in England, because it was the church of a minority, supported by an unwilling majority of the population.¹ It was a major cause of Irish disorder, and threatened to lead Ireland to the brink of civil war:²

"It is obvious...that discord, variance, strife, alienation between class and class, settled distrust, and therefore a serious obstruction to social progress, and a consequent deterioration of national character must result from the anomaly."³

A little later, Gladstone wrote to Manning in similar terms: "Can social justice...warrant the permanent maintenance of the Irish Church as it is? I have not yet been able to find the grounds of an affirmative answer."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 5.VII.1843, p465.

2. Ibid., 28.II.1844, p125

3. Ibid., 21.II.1844, pp116-117

4. Gladstone to Manning, 6.III.1845 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone i, 149

Miall's immediate fear in the 1840s was that Peel would attempt to deal with Irish ecclesiastical problems by introducing some sort of grant to the catholic clergy, in order to make the clergy dependent upon government support, and thus deprive the Irish peasantry of its main spokesmen. That Miall was not being alarmist in suspecting such a motive is apparent from a pamphlet produced by Lord Alvanley in 1841.¹ In it, he argued that government measures such as the Catholic Emancipation Act had totally failed to pacify Ireland. The Roman Catholic clergy had great influence with the vast majority who did not belong to the Church of Ireland, but the British government had no influence with this body, Alvanley's first suggestion was that diplomatic contact should be made with the Papacy, which might curb the turbulence of the Irish priesthood. The other priority should be, "...a measure for the payment of the Irish Roman Catholic clergy."²

Miall believed the government reasoned thus, but while he opposed a grant to the catholic clergy for this or any other reason, he was concerned that his opposition should not be misunderstood:

"Nothing could be more ungraceful...than to object to the establishment of popery as popery. It is not because they deem it to be an erroneous code that dissenters should deprecate its union with the civil power."³

There is no reason to suppose that he was not sincere in this view, but it is also probable that he was concerned to avoid the alienation of essential allies for the future. This underlines the difficulty of Miall's position: in consistency he had to oppose government grants to the Catholic Church in Ireland, but at the same time he had to avoid giving the impression that his opposition was based upon sectarian prejudice. Hostility to catholicism as such might secure his immediate objective, but would render hopeless his ultimate purpose. He therefore had to represent government aid as not

1. Lord Alvanley The State of Ireland considered and measures proposed for restoring tranquility to that country. (London 1841) 35pp
I am indebted to Mr. P.A.J. Heeson for drawing my attention to this pamphlet.
2. Ibid., pp25-28
3. Nonconformist, 19.VII.1843, p497

being in the best interests of Irish Catholics, and to argue that the government intended to turn catholic priests into agents of repression, to control the people through their priests.¹ He attempted to demonstrate his friendship for Irish Catholics by making a well-publicised visit to O'Connell in prison in Ireland; he had already been associated with O'Connell in the Complete Suffrage Union.² In a letter to Lord Lansdowne, Lord John Russell admitted that many Irish catholics did not want to receive money from the government, "...but if we keep up the Protestant Church it is the only way of doing justice to the nation at large."³

By 1845, it was apparent that the government intended to endow at least part of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Charitable Bequests Act had made it possible for that church to hold property, and Peel's intention was to endow a seminary. A direct grant to the priesthood might be construed as a crude bribe; Peel intended to avoid this error, and to lay claim to the gratitude of the Irish priests, by providing for their successors. Miall believed he had two objectives in view; to accustom priests to state support and the public to the establishment of Roman Catholicism on the one hand, and to divert attention from the anomaly of an established church among a population seven-eighths of whom abjured its creed. Peel intended,

"...to train up a gentlemanly staff of Roman ecclesiastics upon whose sympathies with the government some dependence may be placed, and who, having tasted the sweets of state bounty, will throw no objections in the way of more substantial support."⁴

Miall saw this as the first stage of a long-term policy to bring all sects under the financial patronage of the government, and he raised the standard voluntaryist objection to any support of religion from public resources, namely that people would be forced to support a creed of which they disapproved.⁵

1. Nonconformist, 22.XI.1843, p792
2. A. Miall, Life of E. Miall pp100f. Nonconformist, 31.VII.1844, p550
3. G.P. Gooch (ed) The later correspondence of Lord John Russell 1840-1878 (London 1925) i, 64.
4. Nonconformist, 5.II.1845, p77
5. Ibid. See also E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines p320

He also objected to the cynicism of the idea, and did not believe it would help pacify Ireland: he considered it,

"...an atrocious scheme - one more atheistic in spirit, more selfish in purpose, more cruel in the means employed, more disastrous in its tendencies - has never yet been propounded to Parliament."¹

In the session of 1845, Peel introduced his proposals to increase the grant made by the government to Maynooth College. The grant dated back to 1795, and responsibility for it was transferred to the English Parliament in 1801. It had been criticised frequently in the 1820s and 1830s, and Peel intended to put it upon a permanent footing, partly as a settlement of the question of higher education in Ireland, and partly as an attempt to deprive O'Connell of some of his moderate supporters. The Charitable Bequests Act of 1844 had been part of this process of conciliation, but the enquiry which had preceded the act had alienated the catholic hierarchy in Ireland, and caused it to look upon the Maynooth proposals with suspicion.²

It is clear that the Maynooth proposals had wider implications than the conciliation of the Irish. Ultimately, it was a move towards concurrent endowment as a means of strengthening the establishment in England, which had already been under attack by the radicals in the 1830s.³ Gladstone, who had resigned from the government on account of the Maynooth grant, explained its political implications to Manning in somewhat convoluted terms:

"I have always looked upon the Maynooth measure as what is called buying time - a process that presupposes a period of surrender. Whether or not time will actually be gained as a result of the measure, or whether the thing given and the thing sought will both be lost is, I think, very doubtful."⁴

Manning himself was more explicit, making no secret of the fact that he saw the Maynooth grant as a political move to conciliate the Irish, and a safeguard for other established churches:

1. Nonconformist, 5.II.1845, p77
2. E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845" Irish Historical Studies Vol.XV 1966/7, pp407-437.
3. O.J. Brose, Church and Parliament Chapter 3, *passim*
4. E.S. Purcell, Life of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster (London 1896) i, 301.

"First, then, comes the endowment of the Roman Church in Ireland, and I am fully prepared to assent to it on grounds of political justice and of sound policy for the improvement of the social condition of Ireland. Also, I think, the principle of concurrent endowment is a safeguard to all endowments."¹

It is evident that the suspicions which the Nonconformist and other voluntaryist journals raised before and during the Maynooth controversy were by no means unfounded. One feature of Miall's journalism in this period is the skill with which he denounced a concession to Irish catholics without alienating their leaders, and without associating himself with rabid anti-catholicism. Another feature is his growing disenchantment with the Whig party and with his fellow-dissenters. In the course of the Maynooth controversy the voluntary party, which had formed during the struggle over Graham's Factory Education Bill of 1843 and which had triumphed then, was consolidated, and became a permanent factor in political life. The Maynooth question gave Miall the opportunity to discuss his voluntary philosophy, and he used it with great adroitness.

Before the voluntary party could campaign against a grant to the Irish catholics, they had to attempt to abolish, or at least show their disapproval of the state grants given to Irish dissenters. Many Presbyterian ministers in Ireland were in receipt of the Regium Donum, although there was evidence of strong voluntary feeling among the presbyterian body in Ulster.² The grant was a form of endowment, it gave a powerful argument to the upholders of establishments, and made it impossible to unite dissenters in opposition to establishments. Furthermore, it undermined the whole voluntary argument against the Maynooth grant.

The Regium Donum was a grant given by the crown to impoverished dissenting ministers, dating back to 1676. It became a regular sum of £500 per annum for the destitute widows of dissenting ministers in 1722, and was

1. Manning to Sidney Herbert. E.S. Purcell, Life of Cardinal Manning i, 301-302
2. W. Sharman Crawford to John S. Crawford, 31.XII.1835. Sharman Crawford Mss. (Northern Ireland Public Record Office D856/D/44). I am indebted to Mr. P.A.J. Heesom for this reference.

distributed by a committee of eight Presbyterian ministers. By 1764, the scope of the recipients had broadened, and the distributors included Baptist and Independent as well as Presbyterian ministers.¹ The existence of the grant embarrassed the politically active dissenters, who were trying to improve the position of dissent as a whole by securing the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and a split among dissenters developed. Those who received the grant were anxious to avoid alienating the government by overt political activity, while their opponents pilloried them as tools of the government, who, in return for bribes, inhibited effective action against the disabilities of dissenters. The Regium Donum became an annual parliamentary grant in 1804, and as the voluntary principle grew in popularity, so militant dissenters agitated for its repeal. Once the Test and Corporation Acts had been repealed, the argument against the Regium Donum had to be that it was in violation of the voluntary principle; the accusation that it was a government bribe was less convincing. In 1833 the Dissenting Deputies criticised the grant as a "...direct violation of the principles of dissenters,"² and tried to find alternative sources of charity. By 1840 most dissenting bodies had officially renounced the grant, but in Ireland, many Presbyterian ministers were still in receipt of it. Miall began one of the most effective campaigns against the grant, both in England and Ireland.³ He condemned the recipients of the grant:

"...we mention a more glaring departure from professed principles by some of the dissenting body...their acceptance of the regium donum."⁴ When the Anti-State Church Association was established in 1844, Miall emphasised the threat of concurrent endowment, and insisted that the Regium Donum was a manifestation of this tendency: "It may show itself, as it has threatened to do, in a stipendiary priesthood - or as it has actually done, in a regium donum."⁵ The Eclectic Review thought it important that dissenters

1. For a history of the grant see K.R.M. Short, "The English Regium Donum" English Historical Review Vol. LXXXIV no.330 Jan. 1969, p59f
2. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p388. See also R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism pp520-527
3. K.R.M. Short, "The English Regium Donum" passim.
4. Nonconformist, 28.VII.1841, p273
5. Ibid., 13.III.1844, p157

should attack the Regium Donum; a sustained campaign for its abolition would exonerate dissenters in the eyes of the public from the charge that they placidly accepted state bounty. If the grant were disputed in Parliament, "...the country will learn to distinguish between its recipients and ourselves."¹ The same periodical called for the abolition of the Irish Regium Donum,² since it crippled the efforts of militant dissenters. The Scottish disruption had dealt a blow to establishments, and the Irish establishment was widely condemned. It was time for dissenters to launch a sustained campaign against establishments, but they were handicapped by the Regium Donum, which left them open to the charge of inconsistency. It noted that both the Dissenting Deputies and the board of Congregational ministers had condemned the grant.³

Miall suspected that a permanent grant to Maynooth College was not all that Peel intended. He thought that Peel proposed both to set up new colleges in Ireland, and to place the Regium Donum upon a permanent basis:

"So we are to have the establishment, by degrees, of all religionists who will consent to wear the gilded fetters of the state. This...is the new plan. It is more insidious: it will prove more detrimental to civil liberty: and it will more extensively enervate and corrupt the churches than any device of modern days."⁴

The opposition to the Maynooth grant was divided into two unequal groups. One, consisting of voluntarists such as Miall, and some radicals, condemned establishments as such, and refused to tolerate the setting up of another by giving money to a seminary. The other, composed of evangelical Anglicans and moderate dissenters, objected to the endowment of Roman Catholicism. This group had the support of the Protestant Association, while the voluntarist group was backed by Miall's Anti-State Church Association. A joint committee, the Central Anti-Maynooth Committee under the chairmanship

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844,pl23.
2. Ibid., ns Vol.XVI 1844, p22
3. Ibid., ns Vol.XV 1844, pl01
4. Nonconformist, 26.III.1845, p196

of Sir Culling Eardley Smith, was set up to co-ordinate opposition to the Maynooth grant. Initially it comprehended all the opposition to the grant, while recognising the different grounds of opposition:

"While the meeting is composed of individuals who differ conscientiously on the question of the state's right or duty to employ the national resources in the support of religion -- it, with one heart and voice, condemns the endowment of popery as a course at once involving guilt and peril, and it feels grateful to Almighty God that in this unanimous conviction, there is a basis broad enough for the combined action of all Protestant Christians."¹

Miall condemned the proposed grant outright, showing it to be objectionable upon several grounds. Firstly, there was the character of the sect to be endowed; there were elements in Roman Catholicism inimical to intellectual freedom, and it was illogical for liberalism to unite itself with such a power:

"...there are in the papal system principles, both of doctrine and discipline, which make war upon the essential dignity of human nature, and which doom man, even in his noblest capacity to a foul degradation and a most ignominious bondage."²

But having said this, Miall never again used the argument as an objection to the Maynooth grant. He stressed that this was not the basis of his own opposition, and specifically warned against the use of such arguments. He informed the Anti-State Church Association:

"I oppose this measure, not because I abhor Romish doctrines; nay, I think that if I held these doctrines, I should be even more ready to raise my indignant voice against this proposal."³

Along with other dissenting journals, the Nonconformist saw it as an excellent opportunity to present the principles of the Anti-State Church Association:

"We are wrestling a throw with the state church principle, and either it will master us, or we must master it. Let there be no howling against popery as such. The doctrines and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, objectionable as they are, ought not to form the basis of our opposition to the grant. Let

1. A.S. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference of 1845. With an historical introduction and appendix. (London 1845) plxxv
2. Nonconformist, 19.III.1845, pp180-181
3. Ibid., 2.IV.1845, p210. The moderate Patriot also stressed that the basis of the opposition of dissenters should be to the principle of establishments, and should not be on sectarian grounds. Patriot, 24.IV.1845, p260

every complaint tell upon the impolicy and unscriptural character of state endowments of religion."¹

The reason for the condemnation of 'no popery' agitation was logical as well as political. If Parliament were asked not to give money to Maynooth because it would represent the endowment of error, it would be an admission that Parliament was competent to decide what was truth and what was error in religious matters. The basic principle of Miall and the Anti-State Church Association was that Parliament had no such competence. It followed that hostility to establishments as such was the only possible ground for voluntarist opposition.

Miall's second objection to the grant was that it could be regarded as a cynical bribe to the Roman Catholic priesthood, and as a crude attempt to distract attention from the selfishness of the aristocracy, and the anomaly of the Established Church:

"...the priesthods are to be paid, not on the assumption that they teach the truth, but because their influence with the people makes them efficient allies of the state. Thus oppression shakes hands with hypocrisy."²

Peel was accused of intending to use the priesthood to bring about what military force had failed to achieve, the obedience of the Irish people. Their minds and consciences would be enslaved, just as Miall had earlier accused Sir James Graham of proposing to enslave the minds of the English working-class children through government control of elementary education.³ The establishment principle now stood revealed in its true colours, a form of political expediency.⁴

His third major objection was that the proposed grant was a form of concurrent endowment; he described the grant as, "...the title page of a new volume of legislation."⁵ It could not be viewed simply as the continuation of previous government contributions, but as the beginning of a policy of

1. Nonconformist, 9.IV.1845; 23.IV.1845 p253. cf Patriot, 24.IV.1845, pp260,261. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XVII 1845, p735
2. Nonconformist, 19.III.1845, ppl80-181. The Patriot took up a similar position; Patriot, 10.III.1845, pl56; 20.III.1845, pl80; 10.IV.1845, p228
3. See above pp27,30
4. Nonconformist, 9.IV.1845, pp228-229.
5. Ibid., 26.III.1845, pl96

concurrent endowment:

"...the cautious commencement of a new system of which an extended application of the establishment principle is to be the pervading object...The great question which now calls for decision is, whether that system is to renew its strength by gradually passing into a new form, or whether its term of days shall be numbered by successfully obstructing the meditated change. This is the real alternative to which we are reduced."¹

There was fairly general agreement that concurrent endowment was intended.

The Journal des Débats noted,

"...the endowment of the seminary of Maynooth is but a first step in a new course, and leads forcibly to the general and regular maintenance of the Catholic clergy by the state."²

Reviewing the events of 1844, the Dissenting Deputies discussed the menace of concurrent endowment, and pledged themselves to resist it, even though it would remove some of the inequalities and injustices caused by the establishment of one sect.³ Both the Patriot and the Eclectic Review shared this fear,⁴ and at a meeting of the Anti-Maynooth committee, the Rev. Baptist Noel, Sir Culling Eardley Smith and John Blackburn, editor of the Congregational Magazine, all claimed that the Maynooth grant was the first step in the endowment of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵ While the unitarian body was less vehement in its condemnation of the grant, it too admitted that there was about it a suspicion of concurrent endowment:

"...as we can hardly expect the efforts of the Anti-State Church Association to be crowned with immediate success, we would have the patronage of which the government will dispose distributed as fairly as possible."⁶

However, concurrent endowment was not an issue upon which opponents of the grant could unite, for the opposition of the majority was to the endowment of catholicism; only a minority objected to any endowment of religion.

1. Nonconformist, 26.III.1845, p196
2. Journal des Débats. Quoted by Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference pliv
3. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 27.XII.1844, f68
See also B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p445.
4. Patriot, 19.VI.1845, p428. Eclectic Review, ns XVIII 1845, p492.
See also E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle (London 1845) ppiii-v
5. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference pxii
6. Christian Reformer, April 1845, p256

Miall's final objection was on the grounds of utility: contrary to the claims of Peel, the grant would do nothing to alleviate the troubles of Ireland. The real grievance was the existence of a protestant establishment, and neither Miall nor the Eclectic Review accepted that the creation of another establishment would solve the problem.¹ Nor would it touch other causes of discontent, such as land tenure, the backward state of industry and education.² It would be no kindness to the impoverished peasantry to deprive them of the leadership of their priests, who in the past had secured some alleviation in their conditions:

"Will it be a boon to the suffering Irish to throw tainted meat to their watchdogs, and thus to leave them defenceless - to bribe their spiritual teachers and render future agitation impossible of success."³

The real remedy for the ills of Ireland was the reverse of Peel's policy:

"Withdraw the present establishment altogether - withhold the Regium Donum - let the religion of the people take care of itself - throw open the gates of Dublin University to men of all creeds - and when you have thus removed the ulcer which produces inflammation over the whole system, it will be a work of comparative ease so to adjust legislation to the wants of Ireland as to secure her contentment, her gratitude and her prosperity."⁴

The Whigs, who supported the grant, could not be relied upon as friends of the dissenting body in future;⁵ the Maynooth dispute marks a significant increase in the rift between the voluntaryist party and its former Whig allies.

Through the Nonconformist Miall was able to take an active part in the controversy. Readers were urged to send petitions to Parliament, and a specimen was published for their guidance.⁶ They were urged to lobby their M.P.s, to remind them that an election would be held soon, and to

1. Nonconformist, 2.IV.1845, p212. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVII 1845, pp492f
2. Ibid. In a statement issued at the Anti-Maynooth Committee, the Dissenting Deputies followed a similar line of argument: it would be of no benefit to raise the material level of the Irish priesthood, for the evils of Ireland were not religious in origin. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference pp ci-ciii.
3. Nonconformist, 2.IV.1845, p212
4. Ibid.
5. Nonconformist, 9.IV.1845, pp228-229
6. Ibid., 16.IV.1845, p237.

threaten withdrawal of their support if their members voted in favour of the grant. Miall believed that as Parliament was constituted, the views of dissenters were not accurately represented, and he published details of the division lists, with the recommendation:

"Spare not even a Cobden in this necessary work of purgation... the support by dissenters of the party liberalism of the Reform Club is the surest treachery to themselves."¹

Two strands of Miall's thought are apparent here; his preoccupation with the unrepresentative character of Parliament, and his conviction that dissenters could no longer rely upon the Whigs. Even at the risk of allowing in a Tory, dissenters must be prepared to vote against their former allies, in support of candidates who genuinely supported voluntarism: "By putting in a reform club liberal we gain nothing - by letting in a Tory we lose nothing."² He was also concerned by the ineffectiveness of dissenting opposition. While this was partly due to the unrepresentative character of Parliament, it was also attributable to the fact that dissenters themselves had in the past accepted grants from the Government, and even now were unable to present a united front. More than a million subjects had petitioned against the bill, but Peel had felt able to ignore them. Dissenters must be prepared to act with decision and conviction; until they did, they would continue to be ignored.³

Both in the Nonconformist and at meetings organised by the Anti-State Church Association, Miall emphasised that the opposition of voluntarists to the grant was not sectarian. There was identity of interest between protestant dissenters and catholics, since both suffered under establishments to which they did not subscribe, but which they were compelled to support. He was disappointed when O'Connell misrepresented the opposition of dissenters, failing to distinguish between the two main sources of opposition

1. Nonconformist, 23.IV.1845, p260

2. Ibid., 7.V.1845, pp308-309.

3. Ibid., 16.IV.1845, pp244, 245; 4.VI.1845, p404.

to the grant.¹ Miall travelled around the Home Counties addressing meetings and organising petitions,² and the views which he disseminated through the press and on the platform were echoed in Parliament by John Bright. He was especially indignant that the grant would tie the priesthood to the government, and deprive the Irish of their leaders:

"...it is a sop given to the priests. It is hush money given that they may not proclaim to the whole country, to Europe and the world, the sufferings of the population to whom they administer the rites and consolations of religion."³

The solution was to abolish the establishment in Ireland, so that the Irish would not have to endure protestant magistrates, judges, and other symbols of alien domination. The grant would not alleviate poverty; it would merely,

"...make the priests in Ireland as tame as those in Suffolk and Dorsetshire...Ireland is suffering, not from want of another church, but because she already has one church too many."⁴

The Eclectic Review entirely concurred with this analysis;⁵ however it is symptomatic of the divisions caused by this question that Cobden and Bright took opposite sides.

The main extra-parliamentary opposition to the Maynooth proposal was organised by the Central Anti-Maynooth Committee, which hoped to comprehend all shades of protestant opinion, despite the differing grounds of opposition to the grant. Even among dissenters, there was division: while Miall and the voluntaryists attacked the grant as an endowment, Edward Baines and John Blackburn attacked it as a menace to protestantism.⁶ A meeting was organised at Exeter Hall on 30th April, which Miall and the voluntaryists attended; the majority passed a resolution abounding with optimism:

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p102. Nonconformist, 28.V.1845, p388
2. Nonconformist, 30.IV.1845, p272; 18.VI.1845, p429
3. G.M. Trevelyan, The life of John Bright p161
4. Ibid., pp161-162
5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVII 1845, p616
6. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences held by the opponents of the Maynooth College Endowment Bill in London and Dublin during the months of May and June 1845. (London 1845) p3.

"...they deem it of supreme importance under present circumstances to bear with one another in regard to minor differences, while they cordially unite in one great object."¹

However, the difference between those dissenters who were hostile to the endowment of catholicism, and those who were hostile to establishment as such was considerably more than minor. The voluntaryist group could not support the contention of many of the petitions against the grant, that in giving Maynooth College a permanent endowment, the Protestant English State would be failing in its duty to uphold religious truth; a majority of the meeting did support this view. The voluntaryists could, and did, support the objection raised in other petitions, that the grant to Maynooth was the first step towards concurrent endowment, but in supporting it, they detached themselves from their Whig allies.²

Miall felt that the whole tenor of the meeting had placed the voluntaryist group in an embarrassing position. The tone of the meeting was unduly sectarian, and concentrated too much upon the iniquities of catholicism.³

The Eclectic Review remarked; "The ground taken was much too narrow to realise the views, or to do justice to the principles of the dissenting members of the Assembly"⁴ It argued that the only tenable basis of resistance to the grant was that adopted by the Anti-State Church Association.⁵

Miall criticised the meeting for its failure to attack the whole principle of establishment.⁶ This failure was not accidental; the chairman had determined to avoid such discussion, and the committee resolved, "...that arguments either for or against church establishments in these discussions is deemed highly inexpedient by the committee."⁷ The tone of hostility to

1. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference ppxv, xciii. Blackburn, The Three Conferences pp3,7. See also G.I.T. Machin, 'The Maynooth Grant, the dissenters and disestablishment, 1845-1847' English Historical Review vol. 82, Jan. 1967, pp61-85, esp. p69
2. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p69
3. Nonconformist, 30.IV.1845, pp275-276. Thus Miall disassociated himself from the general anti-Catholicism of evangelical dissent. See G.F.A. Best, "Evangelicalism and the Victorians" in A. Symondson, The Victorian Crisis of Faith (London 1970) pp47-48.
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XVII 1845, p735
5. Ibid., p506
6. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, p301
7. Blackburn, The Three Conferences p9. E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845" p430.

catholicism adopted by the majority of the meeting made it impossible for the voluntaryist group to join the Anglicans and the moderate dissenters in their opposition to the grant; politically, they could not afford to be associated with a campaign based upon anti-catholicism. In addition, such a campaign would make nonsense of the voluntary position, which held that Parliament was incompetent to decide upon religious matters:

"...how are they to understand us when we go with state churchmen before them, and argue the comparative theological merits of Protestantism and Popery? Into what a nice mess of inconsistency and self-contradiction will all this passion for unity betray us."¹

Miall made no secret of his contempt for those dissenters who were prepared to compromise their principles in the cause of unity with the Anglican opponents of the grant. Not only did they condone an appalling sort of bigotry, but they also collaborated in attempting to silence those dissenters who were determined to stand by their principles:

"Wonderful is the passion in some minds for what they are pleased to regard as the practical advantages of union - altogether incredible the amount of dirt they will eat, if only allowed, as a reward of their self-denial, to walk arm in arm with respectability. No sacrifice is too costly, no humiliation too low for them."²

The reference to an attempt to silence certain dissenters relates to an incident in the conference. A group led by Green and J.P. Mursell, insisted that they were in no way hostile to catholicism, and attempted to have the question of endowments discussed as a whole.³ John Blackburn, in his account of the conference, admitted that it had been decided to avoid all discussion of the establishment question, but denied that this was intended to silence the voluntaryist group.⁴ Not surprisingly, the group was not convinced, and thirty five voluntaryists, including Miall, left the meeting and decided to summon another. Miall was elected to a committee to arrange a separate meeting.⁵

1. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, p301

2. Ibid. See also Ibid., 28.I.1846, pp45-46

3. E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845" p431. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences p12

4. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences p9

5. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, pp301-302.

The secession was not spontaneous; prior to the Exeter Hall meeting, leading members of the Anti-State Church Association, notably Price, Edwards and Miall, had held a meeting at the Guildhall Coffee House. They had called for a separate conference, as they feared there would be an attempt to silence them at the Exeter Hall meeting; for the sake of their Irish relationships, they did not wish to be associated with the spirit of anti-catholicism which they suspected would dominate the Exeter Hall conference.¹ The Central Anti-Maynooth committee was furious at the secession:

"The whole proceedings, it is to be feared, would appear to those who desire to promote union among Protestants, to be calculated to throw hindrances in the way of that most important object. It may be fairly questioned whether the Jesuits themselves could have devised a more effectual method of interfering with the purposes for which the Anti-Maynooth Conference was convened."²

John Blackburn accused the seceders of trying to destroy the moral influence of the conference, and laid the blame upon the shoulders of the 'Anti-State Church' editors, namely Conder, Hare, Price and Miall.³ The other historian of the conference, Thelwall, believed the Dissenting Deputies were also involved in the plot, since a public breakfast which they gave to dissenters who had come up to London for the conference was used to attract delegates to the rival conference.⁴

Miall left his readers in no doubt about the objectives of the breakaway meeting which he was helping to organise. Its resolutions might carry weight with some M.P.s, but could scarcely hope to bring about the defeat of the bill. What was important was that the voluntaryists should have been seen to protest both against the bill and against the tone of the Anti-Maynooth conference; Roman Catholics would know that their opposition was to endowment as such, and not based upon sectarian prejudice. Miall clearly had in mind the possible reaction of Irish Catholics, without whose

1. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences pp8-9, p15
2. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference pcli
3. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences ppl6, 62
4. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference pxcix

assistance in the future the voluntaryists could not achieve their parliamentary objectives:

"In our future controversy with state churches, much will depend upon whether Ireland is ranged as our foe or our friend - and we can hardly venture to anticipate her co-operation unless we convince her that we denounce with equal honesty the state church which oppresses her, as we do the paltry endowment which is designed to bribe her into quiet servility."¹

The seceders met at Salter's Hall Chapel on 2nd May, to arrange their own conference. They discussed the importance of making clear to Parliament and the country the grounds of their opposition to the Maynooth grant,² and issued the following circular, one of whose signatories was Miall:

"That, in the judgment of this meeting, it is a matter of high importance that the principles on which Nonconformists object to the proposed Endowment of Maynooth College, should be clearly and distinctly understood by both Parliament and the Country: and that for this purpose, it is expedient to convene a Conference of the friends of Religious Freedom, to adopt measures to carry on a united and consistent opposition to the Bill now before Parliament relative to the Endowment of Maynooth College, and also to all other State Endowments of any system of religious instruction and worship."³

Of the 35 members of the group, 24 belonged to the Anti-State Church Association. The conference met at Crosby Hall on 20th - 21st May. Miall delivered a speech urging dissenting electors to withhold their support from any candidate or member who supported the Maynooth grant. Judging by recent events, he argued, dissenters had nothing to lose if, as a consequence, they forfeited the goodwill of the Whigs, an outlook endorsed by the Eclectic Review.⁴ Mursell, Miall's old friend from Leicester, drafted an appeal to Irish Catholics, explaining the position of the voluntaryist group:⁵

"We have ever held that, of all the grievances under which your country has laboured, the establishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland is the most unjustifiable and oppressive, and we pledge ourselves never to remit our efforts to remove from you

1. Nonconformist, 14.V.1845, p333
2. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference p xcix
3. Ibid., p c. E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845" p433. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p70.
4. Nonconformist, 21.V.1845, p365. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVII 1845, p745
5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVII 1845, p735. E.R. Norman "The Maynooth Question of 1845" p434

this intolerable burden...We are ready to contend by your side for the attainment of an equal participation in all rights, ecclesiastical, political and social: but we will not sacrifice our consciences to the success of a state trick, nor will we patiently submit to be taxed for a bribe to you, which we would spurn with contempt were it offered to ourselves."¹

Miall considered the conference a great success, in that the true voluntaryists had appeared as a united party.² John Blackburn, at a meeting in Dublin on 2nd June, claimed that those who had organised the Crosby Hall conference were not representative of British dissent.³ In an article offensively entitled 'Dead Flies', Miall replied that dissenters who did not dissent merely gave the whole body a bad reputation, and accused Blackburn of misrepresenting the Crosby Hall meeting.⁴ Insofar as the breakaway group represented a revolt of the extreme wing of dissent against the position of the more moderate section of dissent, and its policy of allying with the evangelical wing of the Anglican church, Blackburn was not without justification.⁵ However, Miall was not without respectable support, notably that of the Dissenting Deputies, whose resolutions concurred with his analysis of the real troubles of Ireland. These would not be cured by endowing Maynooth College, and the Deputies further protested against the grant because it would result in the endowment of the entire Roman Catholic body in Ireland.⁶

The agitation had a number of important consequences. On one level, it was a failure, since the bill became law. On another level, it split the protestant resistance to the grant. The Central Anti-Maynooth committee persisted in its anti-catholicism under the title of the Evangelical Alliance, while the extreme voluntaryists gave their allegiance to the Anti-State Church Association. They began to drift away from their alliance

1. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences pp22-23. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Conference p cii.
2. Nonconformist, 21.V.1845 p373; 28.V.1845, p381
3. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences pp29,64
4. Nonconformist, 11.VI.1845, p413
5. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p68
6. Dissenting Deputies Minute Book 30.I.1846, f172

with the Whigs and radicals, whose leaders, notably Russell, Cobden and Hume, had supported the grant, and began to make overtures towards the Chartists.¹ The Conservatives found themselves divided, and the Peelites began their move towards the Liberals.² When Miall contested Halifax in the general election of 1847, he was defeated by the Whig Sir Charles Wood, but Wood admitted, "...nothing but the support of the Conservatives carried us through."³ Miall was able to derive consolation from the failure to defeat the grant:

"...we cannot but rejoice that the measure has not been defeated on the 'no Popery' ground. We should have anticipated the most direful consequences from such success: and since, in our judgment, the endowment principle is essentially false and vicious, we are not sorry to see it bearing its legitimate fruits, and bringing about such results as must inevitably bring under discussion the all-important question, whether all sects shall be endowed or none."⁴

The opposition of the voluntary party to concurrent endowment had been demonstrated, and they emerged from the agitation with a record of consistency, having shown considerable political acumen.⁵ As a postscript to the controversy, Miall contested a by-election at Southwark in August 1845. His opponent, Sir William Molesworth, had a fine liberal record, but had supported the Maynooth grant. One of Miall's most prominent supporters, Sir Apsley Pellatt, implied that he supported Miall, because Molesworth's conduct over the Maynooth grant deprived him of any claim to the support of dissenting electors.⁶ Miall's election address made much of the ambivalence of supposedly liberal M.Ps. on this issue. Their conduct,

1. G.A. Cahill, The Protestant Association and the Anti-Maynooth Agitation of 1845 Catholic Historical Review Vol.XLIII No.3 Oct. 1957 pp287,295.
2. N. Gash, Sir Robert Peel (London 1972) p474
See also G.A. Cahill Op.cit. pp273-308
3. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p82
4. Nonconformist, 18.VI.1845, p436. The newly founded periodical, of moderate dissenting views, the British Quarterly Review echoed these sentiments. British Quarterly Review, Vol.I 1845, pp611-612.
5. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p73
6. Nonconformist, 20.VIII.1845, p579

"...demonstrates the folly of sending men to the House of Commons on the strength of indefinite professions of liberalism...they conceal their real opinions, and when the pinch comes they are invariably at fault."¹

This was the first occasion upon which dissenting electors were able to express their views upon the grant; the Nonconformist regarded it as the main issue. A victory for Miall,

"...would decide the future ecclesiastical policy of the government...the Southwark election will act as a fuleman to the general election and...if it pronounces a decided condemnation of the Maynooth endowment bill, the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland must be set aside as utterly impracticable."²

The Eclectic Review remarked that his candidature had made the voluntary principle a major public question, though in common with the Patriot, it regretted that he had blurred the issue with his views upon the franchise.³

Miall was heavily defeated, and the Nonconformist lamented that dissenters had preferred party loyalty to backing their convictions over Maynooth.

Miall insisted that the only difference between himself and Molesworth was over the Maynooth grant; this alone had induced him to come forward as a candidate.⁴ He drew two main lessons from the anti-Maynooth agitation. The way in which the Whigs had ignored the wishes and petitions of the voluntaryists made it pointless to rely upon them in future. An effort must be made to secure the election of a group of voluntaryist M.P.s; this became a major task of the Anti-State Church Association. The conduct of the dissenting body as a whole made him equally sceptical. Unity only occurred in time of crisis, whereas steady and consistent effort based upon principle rather than expediency was needed, if dissenters were to be taken seriously by political leaders:

"...all the good resolutions of Dissenters passed during the heat of the anti-Maynooth agitation represented rather the force of external pressure than the vitality of an abiding principle; and ...they were no more to be relied upon than vows made in trouble."⁵

1. Nonconformist, 20.VIII.1845, p579
2. Ibid., 10.IX.1845, p628
3. Eclectic Review ns Vol.XVIII 1845, p498; Patriot, 21.VII.1845, p572; 8.IX.1845, p613. See above p199
4. Nonconformist, 17.IX.1845, pp648, 644-645.
5. Ibid., 2.VII.1845, p461

In fact, the voluntary cause was not in a strong position, for most electors were deeply concerned with Free Trade, and those to whom the voluntaries could look for support were preoccupied with keeping the liberal interest united. While voluntaryists supported Free Trade, free traders did not necessarily support voluntaryism.¹ Blackburn, evidently still smarting from Miall's attack upon him, admitted it was possible that some people with 'Crosby Hall views' might manage to get into Parliament. But what was more likely,

"...if we may prognosticate from the late Southwark election ... (is that) they may sink to their own level and no longer possess the means of impeding the usefulness and damaging the good name of those who dare to differ from them."²

What gave the voluntary cause its main impetus was Russell's plan for education, published in 1846, though the Maynooth controversy had given it a platform which Miall exploited with skill.

Part 2. Parliamentary action.

Miall regarded the Irish Church question as important, not only for its own sake, but as part of the broader issue of church establishments as a whole. It was the most vulnerable of the establishments in the United Kingdom, and its fall would presage the fall of the others. As a consequence, he believed there was no lengths to which British governments would not go to save it:

"The Irish Church is the very key to the position occupied by the English one, the main outwork of its defence. If successfully stormed, no human craft can save the citadel."³

The Maynooth controversy had given ample indication that concurrent endowment was the solution favoured by both major parties; Miall warned the Anti-State Church Association that Russell, who had succeeded Peel as Prime Minister, would attempt to pacify Ireland by such a programme.⁴ This was

1. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." pp 76-77
2. J. Blackburn, The Three Conferences p94
3. Nonconformist, 26.III.1845, p196
4. Ibid., 11.V.1846, pp312,315.

not merely conjecture, for Russell had supported the Maynooth grant, and had spoken of the desirability of extending its principle:

"...the arguments which are so sound...and incontrovertible to induce this House to found an endowment for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood will prove on another occasion as sound and incontrovertible with respect to an endowment for the maintenance of that priesthood. For my own part, preferring most strongly...a religious establishment to that which is called the voluntary principle, I am anxious to see the spiritual and religious instruction of the people of Ireland endowed and maintained by a provision furnished by the state."¹

Miall believed that the Whigs intended to achieve this state of affairs by a measure for the appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church,² and he warned dissenters to prepare for the struggle. Sectarian opposition had been proved useless, as well as undesirable, by the events of 1845; it could neither unite dissenters nor secure the backing of public opinion. Nonconformist opposition must be based upon intelligible principles, and must comprehend the ultimate objective of disestablishment, as well as the immediate objective of frustrating the endowment of the catholic clergy.³ If, as Miall suspected, the scheme was to be financed by appropriation of surplus revenues, it was politically more dangerous than the Maynooth grant, as it would involve no new charge. Deprived of the voluntaryist argument that the scheme would force taxpayers to support a sect of which they disapproved, Miall fell back on the argument which he used in the case of the ancient universities, that the property of the Irish Church was national property, belonging to the whole nation, and not to a particular sect.⁴ Dissenters must register their protest upon this basis:

"To acquiesce in it because it will lay no new burdens upon us is to declare that our hostility, from first to last, has been an affair of our pockets rather than our principles."⁵

Voluntaryist leaders were aware of the embarrassment caused to their position by the Irish Regium Donum. Miall laid stress upon the importance of

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series LXXIX, p94
2. Nonconformist, 29.VII.1846, pp516-517
3. Ibid., 19.VIII.1846, p557
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

dissenters being seen to urge Parliament to withhold the objectionable grant;¹ the Eclectic Review supported him, fearing that the grant might even be increased as part of the scheme of concurrent endowment. As it was, the grant was an endowment, and its existence made it difficult for dissenters to protest against the endowment of a rival sect: "The Irish Regium Donum is a mere outwork, raised by State policy in defence of the 'monster grievance' of the Irish Church."² It concluded that the abolition of this grant was an essential precondition of an assault upon the Irish Church, and begged English dissenters to exhort their Irish Presbyterian brethren to reject it voluntarily. Like Miall, however, it saw little prospect of a spontaneous renunciation, and commented sadly that the leading English dissenters set a poor example by their acceptance of the grant.³

His experience in 1845 convinced Miall that there was no good purpose to be served in a campaign based upon the union of the evangelical protestants. Such union was artificial, and based upon the compromise of principles. For this reason, he refused to have any connection with the main body of opposition to the endowment of the catholic clergy, the Evangelical Alliance, which had developed from the Central Anti-Maynooth conference. It was founded upon the assumption that, "...Christians learned that they could act together in some things though they conscientiously differed about others."⁴ Miall thought it inconsistent to protest against endowment in alliance with members of the state church:

"Active opposition to State Churchism is made, by churchmen, a barrier, real or ostensible, only to the Alliance: and by dissenters it is regarded as a thing that ought to be abandoned for the sake of churchmen...Now is the time for suspending, not anti-state church agitation, but all that

1. Nonconformist, 9.IX.1846, p612
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIX 1846, p399
3. Ibid., pp400-403. cf Nonconformist, 9.IX.1846, p612
4. J.W. Massie, The Evangelical Alliance. Its origin and development (London 1847) p103.

209

cannot co-exist with it. Whether the Evangelical Alliance be in that case is not our concern."¹

With the prospect of a general election in 1847, Miall broadened the scope of his criticisms. Rather than concentrate simply upon the threat of the establishment of catholicism in Ireland, which might have laid him open to a charge of sectarian opposition, he attacked the whole concept of establishment, within the general context of Irish problems. At a meeting organised by the Anti-State Church Association in Manchester, he declared that the existence of the Church of Ireland inhibited any lasting solution to the problems of Ireland.² These problems could not be solved until the Irish Church was disestablished, and the difficulties of land tenure were overcome.³ At a similar meeting in Finsbury, he warned dissenting electors not to support the Whigs in the general election, for they had shown a total disregard of the wishes of their dissenting allies over the Maynooth grant, and would doubtless behave in the same way in the future.⁴

When the election was called, Miall became a candidate for Halifax, in partnership with the Chartist lawyer Ernest Jones. The Chartists had been generally unfavourable towards the Maynooth grant in terms which suggested support for the voluntary principle; the alliance of Miall and Jones can be regarded as a union between voluntaryism and Chartism,⁵ another manifestation of Miall's search for working-class support for disestablishment agitation. Voluntaryism had no future in isolation, and had to attract radical and working-class support if it were to make a political impact; Miall seems to have been attempting to give such an

1. Nonconformist, 28.I.1846, pp45-46. See also W. Thorn, The Evangelical Alliance. Can Churchmen and Dissenters unite in it? London (undated). Thorn was certain they could not, and described the alliance in unflattering terms. "...it is erroneously designated an Evangelical Alliance, and might be more correctly called a promiscuous association of nominal protestants." Ibid. p9. Thorn condemned dissenters who supported the alliance for implicitly condoning the errors of endowment, and for impeding the efforts of those who were leading the fight against it. Ibid. p35 This tract first appeared in the Patriot.
2. Nonconformist, 27.I.1847, pp45-47
3. Ibid. See also Nonconformist, 3.II.1847, p68
4. Ibid., 10.V.1847, p325
5. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." p82.

alliance a basis upon the principle of opposition to all religious endowment.¹

In his election address, Miall emphasised the alarming tendency towards concurrent endowment, which would place an increasing number of clergy under government control: "I view with alarm the tendencies of the present age. I would call upon my countrymen to wake betimes, lest they become a priest-ridden people."² The case of Ireland was held up as an example of the way in which ecclesiastical endowment could become an instrument of government repression,³ but the argument failed to impress the electors of Halifax. Miall and Jones were both defeated. In broader terms, the voluntarist party had reason to be satisfied with the election results: Macaulay and Roebuck, special objects of voluntarist hostility, were both defeated. Miall had singled them out, along with Russell, as the main opponents of voluntarism,⁴ and while Russell survived, thanks in part to conservative votes, Macaulay and Roebuck lost their seats. In neither case was voluntarist opposition decisive, but Miall felt entitled to be gratified.⁵ The voluntarists gained a number of seats in Parliament, but were still separated from major radical leaders such as Cobden, both by conflicting attitudes to the Maynooth grant, and by the question of elementary education. As yet, they were without substantial allies, and would remain ineffective until Miall and others helped secure for them the support of radicals and Irish catholic M.P.s, to serve as the basis of a new political alignment.⁶

The Whig victory in the election of 1847 increased the danger of an attempt to endow the Catholic Church in Ireland; Miall continued to attack the notion, both as a species of concurrent endowment, and as irrelevant to the real problems of Ireland. He informed a meeting of the Anti-State Church Association in Leeds:

1. S.H. Mayor, "Some Congregational Relations with the Labour Movement." Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society Vol. XVIII no.1 Aug. 1956, pp23-35.
2. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847, pp477-478; 7.VII.1847, p491; 28.VII.1847, p545; 4.VIII.1847, p565
3. Nonconformist, 4.VIII.1847, p565
4. Ibid., 10.V.1847, p328
5. G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant..." pp81-82
6. Ibid., pp84-85

"Ireland cannot be pacified or settled until the anomaly and injustice of her Church establishment be entirely swept away...nothing can be done without settling that one great question of Church and State."¹

The question of the establishment was linked to the land question. The landlords were usually members of the Protestant establishment, and the disaffection was both religious and economic. In practical terms, catholics had to support an alien creed as well as an alien aristocracy. Payment of tithes had been commuted to a rent charge upon landlords in 1838, and though the peasantry still supported the Protestant establishment through their rents, much of their resentment shifted from the Irish Church to the landlords. Another levy, Ministers' Money, directly alienated the catholic city dwellers, although its rural equivalent, the Vestry Cess, had been abolished.² At a meeting in Manchester, Miall warned that the Whigs intended to pacify Ireland by buying the silence of the catholic priesthood.³ Such fears were not without foundation. Lansdowne had introduced into the Lords a motion to set up diplomatic contacts with the papacy, which Miall saw as the preliminary to the endowment of the Catholic church in Ireland.⁴ A minute of the Committee of Council on education allowed Roman Catholic Schools to receive a government grant, their particular religious teaching notwithstanding. This minute, he felt, "...brings closer the payment of all religious sects, and especially the Whig panacea for Ireland, the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy."⁵ If such a policy received papal backing, Miall was not confident that the Irish priesthood would hold fast against the financial inducement of endowment.⁶ He was aware that the Whigs would find this a more attractive policy than dealing with the land problem, which might arouse the formidable opposition of the Irish landed interest.⁷ He was equally aware that if a plan to endow the catholic

1. Nonconformist, 3.XI.1847, p775
2. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland pl92
3. Nonconformist, 16.II.1848, pp96-97
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 26.VII.1848, p554
6. Ibid., 2.VIII.1848, p565
7. Ibid., 16.VIII.1848, p614

priesthood were opposed on sectarian grounds, the government could convincingly pose as the champion of religious freedom against the fanaticism of dissenters:

"Instead of denouncing Popery, denounce the crafty landlordism that would borrow its aid. Enlist rather than repel the assistance of your Roman Catholic fellow-subjects in defeating the attempt to buttress the domination of the landowners."¹

Miall embarked upon a conscious search for allies. The Nonconformist promised a series of articles which would explain the voluntarist position to groups such as radicals which did not share its religious presuppositions:

"...we shall aim to point out to those of our fellow-countrymen who...do not care a jot for our tenets upon ecclesiastical subjects, the reasons which should prevail upon them if they wish well to their country and their kin, to obstruct by all legitimate means the shallow but disastrous policy of our dominant aristocracy."²

The intention of the series of articles was to present the principles of the Anti-State Church Association as a basis for common action. The suggested endowment of the Irish catholic priesthood was criticised upon grounds which might appeal to radicals. It would not achieve what was claimed for it, for such an endowment could only include the secular clergy. The regular clergy would simply take over the leadership of the peasantry once exercised by the parish priests. There would be no alleviation of Irish distress, whose root causes were economic rather than religious. The whole purpose was to gain the support of the catholic priesthood for the real authors of distress, the landlords:

"The grand measure of the Whigs is an ingenious experiment for making tolerable an agrarian system in Ireland, the product of which cannot but continue to be...a national mass of wretchedness."³

In the 1830s, the radicals had been the main critics of the established churches of Ireland and England, but in supporting the Maynooth grant, and in so far failing to register any protest against the endowment of the

1. Nonconformist, 16.VIII.1848, p614
2. Ibid., 6.IX.1847, p665
3. Ibid., 13.IX.1848, p685; 20.IX.1848, p705

catholic clergy, they had changed their policy. They were now supporting a device to perpetuate the Irish establishment, in the interests of a selfish aristocracy, and a 'stereotyped antiquity' such as Sir Robert Inglis. More than this, by upholding the Irish establishment thus, they were also upholding the established church in England:

"...the fall of the Protestant Episcopal Establishment in Ireland would carry down with it much of the inert and passive opinion in which the Church of England has its basis... The Irish Church is the keystone of the oligarchical system -¹ that gone, the whole edifice must sooner or later come down."

The duty of radicals was to expose the cynicism of the whole policy, to show the country that sectarian differences were being callously exploited by an aristocracy determined at all costs to preserve its privileges. Such a policy would be simply the first step towards the creation of a vaster establishment through concurrent endowment. Miall reminded his readers that establishments invariably hindered intellectual and social progress, and if all sects were endowed, the resulting patronage would enormously increase the influence of a reactionary system of government.²

In addition to his journalistic campaign, Miall hammered home these points at a large number of public meetings which he addressed in 1847 and 1848. He undertook a tour of the North of England in 1847, besides visits to Manchester and Liverpool,³ and in 1848 he toured South Wales,⁴ an area which was later to prove a fertile ground for the activities of the Anti-State Church Association. His object was to arouse dissenters to awareness of the danger of the Whigs' endowing the catholic priesthood, and to prepare them for a campaign based, not upon anti-catholicism, but upon the principles of the Anti-State Church Association:

"A thorough imbuing of the public mind with radical Anti-State Church truths, whether with reference to endowed Protestantism or 'to-be-endowed' Romanism is the only course which ensures a certainty of success."⁵

1. Nonconformist, 27.IX.1848, p725
2. Ibid., 4.X.1848, p745; 8.XI.1848, p845; 29.XI.1848, p905
3. A. Miall, Life of E. Miall p130
4. Nonconformist, 18.X.1848, p786. On this occasion he addressed meetings at Newport, Pontypool, Brecon, Haverfordwest, Carmarthen and Cardiff. He also undertook a tour of Northamptonshire in the same year. Ibid. 6.XII.1848, p926
5. Nonconformist, 1.XI.1848, p825

There were no spectacular results, for, as Miall admitted, there was no definite proposal to combat. The basis of his immediate fears was a statement by Russell which claimed that the only obstacle to the endowment of the catholic priesthood was the attitude of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland. This, combined with the opening of diplomatic relations with the Vatican, convinced Miall that dissenters must be on the alert, ready to combat any proposal that might be made.¹ However, by the end of 1848, Miall was convinced that the Whigs had abandoned the idea, and he claimed some of the credit for the pressure exerted by the Anti-State Church Association.² The other success was the acquisition of the support of at least one leading radical: at the beginning of 1849, Roebuck made a speech critical of any attempt to endow the catholic priesthood in Ireland.³ For a time, he was regarded as a possible parliamentary leader by the Anti-State Church Association.⁴ So far as Miall was concerned, the most serious remaining danger was that the conditions of poverty and famine in Ireland might cause a reduction in the support given to the catholic clergy by their congregations; this might make the parish clergy more disposed to accept a state subsidy, and the Whigs might seize such an opportunity to resurrect the scheme:

"Statesmen may have given it up as impracticable, but who knows what may be the effect upon them of an intimation from the distressed clergy that they will thankfully accept the State dole. We would, therefore, exhort the opponents of the scheme to maintain an attitude of watchfulness, in order that they may not be found slumbering, should the exigencies of Whig statesmen and Catholic priests again resuscitate the proposals."⁵

At the same time, Miall was encouraged to discern among some of the recipients of the Irish Regium Donum a willingness to see the grant terminated. This could not have come at a better time, when the whole question of the status

1. Nonconformist, 11.X.1848, p765. Russell's correspondence, however, makes it clear that he was considering the endowment of the catholic priesthood. (G.P. Gooch The later correspondence of Lord John Russell 1840-1878 i, 230-231)
2. Nonconformist, 13.XII.1848 p945; 27.XII.1848 p988.
3. Ibid. 10.I.1849, p30
4. See below p276
5. Nonconformist, 28.II.1849, p167

of the Irish Church was coming into prominence once again.¹ With the object of recruiting more radical supporters, Miall developed another basis of attack. He claimed that the property of the established churches was national property, which a minority had improperly monopolised for its own use. In the case of Ireland, everyone had to contribute to the support of this national resource, which was being used to teach an alien creed:²

"The complaint is not that State Church priests are paid for doing nothing - for in such a case the objection would be merely a financial one - but that out of national resources, to which, in point of fact, every consumer of agricultural produce contributes, ministers are supported for the express purpose of teaching what nine-tenths of the people regard as heresy."³

A campaign against the Irish Church would be a good test case for a future assault upon the English establishment, or upon the colonial establishments. The Anti-State Church Association would find it easier to recruit allies if there were a definite objective in view, and, in addition to the radicals, it could look for support among those who had been adherents either of the Anti-Corn Law League, or of O'Connell. With the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the death of O'Connell there was a political vacuum to be filled. The Irish Church question could provide a rallying point for radicals, repealers and the former supporters of O'Connell. To judge by the attempts of successive governments to buttress the Irish Church by endowing other sects, even the aristocracy was worried about its safety. These attempts had now been abandoned, and the way was open for a more radical approach. Miall concluded, "...we are in favour of conducting an immediate enterprise against the Irish Church..."⁴ and addressed meetings at Leeds, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Finsbury in this sense. At Finsbury, he intimated that the campaign against the Irish Church was the first step in the struggle against establishments as a whole:

1. Nonconformist, 25.VII.1849, p577
2. Dr. Akenson, working on the basis of the census of 1861, concludes that in 1861 Anglicans formed only 11.9% of the Irish population, as compared with 10.7% in 1834. Though a higher proportion in 1861, they were numerically fewer. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland p210
3. Nonconformist, 18.VII.1849, p557
4. Ibid., 26.IX.1849, p757

"...we, who are now going to make the sally upon one of the fortresses of the system do not intend to stop when we have razed it to the ground, for that which applies to the Irish Establishment applies with equal force to the English..."¹

The Nonconformist hoped that Roebuck might lead the campaign. He had announced his intention to raise the whole question of the Irish establishment in Parliament, and he was the type of leader who might rally both voluntaryist and radical support.² Behind the scenes, Miall played an important part in the effort to secure Roebuck's support for the Anti-State Church Association. A meeting of the executive committee of the association was informed that he had had an interview with Roebuck concerning the Irish Church question, and a sub-committee was set up to examine Roebuck's proposals.³ The sub-committee recommended that the association should support Roebuck's motion if it proved satisfactory in detail, by organising provincial meetings through its local branches, by arranging for a series of petitions to Parliament, and through summoning a meeting at the London Tavern, which Roebuck would be invited to address.⁴ Miall and Carvell Williams, the secretary of the association, were deputed to visit Roebuck, and discover his intentions in detail.⁵ In the event, Miall declined to visit Roebuck; however, he was evidently in touch with him through an intermediary, a Mr. Richardson of Leeds.⁶ It is also evident that Roebuck sent Miall the details of his motion, which the committee declined to support because it was too vague.⁷ The Triennial Conference of the association passed a resolution demanding the abolition of the Irish establishment, and the committee asked Miall and Kingsley to revise the resolution, and send it to Roebuck.⁸ Whether or not this initiative bore fruit is academic, for, as the committee noted, without sign of regret, Roebuck's motion was not heard through the House being counted out.⁹

1. Nonconformist, 31.X.1849, p859

2. Ibid., 19.IX.1849, p737

3. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 10.I.1850, ff4-5

4. Ibid., 24.I.1850, ff14-15

5. Ibid., 14.II.1850, f21

6. Ibid., 21.II.1850, f24; 28.II.1850, f27

7. Ibid., 7.III.1850, f31

8. Ibid., 15.V.1850, f72

9. Ibid., 29.V.1850

However, it is an early indication of Miall's determination to secure radical support for his objectives, knowing that on their own, the voluntaryists were not a major force. The Eclectic Review saw the situation in similar terms, when it commented that the waywardness of Roebuck was all that had prevented a major agitation against the Irish Church from being launched at this point.¹

The agitation against the Irish Church was delayed for another reason, the outcry which arose when Pius IX announced his intention to set up Roman Catholic bishoprics in the British Isles. Miall felt that Pius had every reason to imagine that the Whigs were sympathetic towards catholicism after their conduct over the Maynooth grant, and their subsequent inclination towards concurrent endowment. He hoped that the opposition which would inevitably be aroused would not be on the basis of 'no popery'; he informed meetings in Sheffield and Leeds that any arguments to penalise catholicism could also be used to penalise protestant dissent.² Russell's notorious 'Durham Letter' was criticised by Miall partly as being inconsistent with his earlier intention to establish catholicism in Ireland, but chiefly because it gave a signal for anti-catholic activity.³ Once again, the dissenting body was divided into those who hated catholicism, and those who hated establishments. The Patriot, on the one hand, reflected the attitude of dissenters to whom Miall's position was incomprehensible. It condemned those who refused to react to the papal threat, and who, despite it, worked for closer links between dissenters and catholics: "...had the Pope another red hat to dispose of, some soi disant Protestant dissenter might be found a rather promising candidate."⁴ The Eclectic Review, on the other hand, reflected the sympathies of those who supported Miall's position.

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XXVIII 1850, p109
2. Nonconformist, 23.X.1850, p858; 13.XI.1850, pp909, 918; 20.XI.1850, p930.
3. Nonconformist, 4.XII.1850, p978
4. Patriot, 21.XI.1850, p740; 27.I.1851, p60. The Patriot's comment underlines the extent to which Miall differed from the general outlook of evangelical dissenters regarding 'Papal aggression'.

It deplored the 'Durham Letter', refused to associate itself with anti-catholic feeling, and was uncompromisingly hostile to any interference by the government in spiritual matters.¹

Miall was forced to alter his attitude towards the Maynooth grant for the time being. Naturally he favoured the abolition of any state grant towards the support of a religious body, but he refused to associate himself with the current clamour for the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant. He claimed that his reasons were political; if the Catholic Church were treated on a different basis from other denominations, the catholic body would feel persecuted, and might gain some sympathy:

"...we must lay that act (the Maynooth grant) side-by-side with the Irish Church, and ask ourselves whether we are prepared to repeal the one without abolishing the other. Should we not be inflicting upon Irish Roman Catholics a mark of humiliation, if we were now to overturn their little establishment without taking steps to withdraw the more anomalous and burdensome one professedly maintained for the sake of Protestantism?"²

Miall's conduct was similar to the stand he took over the Maynooth grant in 1845. Then, as now, he denounced opposition based upon anti-catholicism, and insisted that hostility to the principle of endowment was the only consistent course. Where he had condemned the activities of the Central Anti-Maynooth committee in 1845, he condemned the activities of what he referred to as the 'Protestant Alliance' in 1850 and 1851. If this course of action was consistent with his principles, it was also consistent with his political strategy, which was to secure for the voluntary party the support of radicals and Irish catholics. By his actions since 1845, he had made some progress towards this goal.

The Anti-State Church Association itself was fully committed to Miall's policy towards the Irish Church. It commissioned him to draft a resolution on the Maynooth grant,³ which became the official policy of the association. The fear of concurrent endowment was the predominant theme: the Maynooth

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXVIII 1850, p762
2. Nonconformist, 8.I.1851, p21
3. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 5.II.1852

grant was condemned as,

"...an extension of the principles of State Endowments of religion and as foreshadowing the intention of political parties to render the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland stipendiaries of the state."

The committee of the association reaffirmed its conviction that, insofar as the problems of Ireland were religious in origin, they were partly due to governmental support for the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians, through the Maynooth grant and the Regium Donum. It was resolved to make every effort to secure the repeal of the Maynooth grant, but only by, "...such measures as will equally tend...to the disestablishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland."¹

A general election was imminent in 1852, after the resignation of Russell and the formation of a minority government by Lord Derby. It was important for Miall to be seen to act in accordance with his principles, and with anti-catholic prejudice from the 'papal aggression' of 1850 still fresh in the minds of dissenters, this required acute judgment. It would be of no value to gain for the voluntaryists the support of Irish M.P.s, but to lose the support of moderate dissenters as a direct consequence. Miall warned dissenters not to make an election issue of the Maynooth grant, for in many cases this would force dissenting electors to vote conservative, and a conservative victory would be the end of any hope for parliamentary reform.² He deplored attempts by both catholic and protestant bodies to exploit the Irish ecclesiastical situation. The Catholic Defence Association of Ireland, formed as a reaction to the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, gave support to parliamentary candidates: Miall thought it would be sympathetic to efforts to disestablish the Irish Church, but from a desire to share in the spoils, rather than from principle. Thus he declined to be associated

1. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 12.II.1852, p313

2. See also W. Ralls, "The Papal Aggression of 1850: a study in Victorian Anti-Catholicism." Church History Vol.43 no.2. Sept. 1974, pp242-256.

2. Nonconformist, 24.III.1852, p227

with it, and it is notable that in the future he was reluctant to support catholic demands for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland unless they were accompanied by a disclaimer to any benefit from the process.¹ Towards the activities of the Protestant Alliance, whose object was simply to repeal the Maynooth grant, he was equally hostile. Roman Catholicism should be treated in the same way as either the Anglican church or the Presbyterian church in Ireland. It had the same relationship to the government, and to single it out for special treatment would merely embitter the majority of the Irish population. Miall wished to see the grant terminated, but he was aware that the means in this case were as important as the end: "It is unjust to single out for disendowment that which Protestants disapprove of, whilst you leave immeasurably more amply endowed what Roman Catholics condemn."² One result of the anti-Maynooth agitation had been the creation of a body of militant Irish catholic M.P.s, whose presence in Parliament might help the voluntarist party, as Miall was fully aware:

"No man resolved to maintain the Irish Church Establishment and the Presbyterian Regium Donum is in a position to meet and overthrow the 'Pope's Brigade'. Even Papists might consent to that religious equality which would follow on the abolition of all State ecclesiastical endowments."³

At Rochdale, Miall's own election campaign concentrated upon the issue of endowments as a whole, and rather than a detailed discussion of particular topics, he was concerned to stress that the voluntarists might now look to John Bright as their parliamentary leader. In the Freeman's Journal, Bright had published a scheme for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland.⁴ Both the Regium Donum and the Maynooth grant would be discontinued, the land held by the Irish Church would be capitalised, and the capital divided amongst the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches. There would be no further contributions from the British

1. Nonconformist 14.IV.1852, p277
2. Ibid., 21.IV.1852, p297; 9.VI.1852, p437
3. Ibid., 21.VII.1852, p557
4. G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pl68

government. Miall had some reservations about the scheme, but it had the virtue of practicality:

"...we do think that it would be better, whenever the Irish Church question is seriously taken in hand, to give effect to those preferences which Mr. Bright himself avows and cast all denominations in Ireland, after satisfying existing legal claims, upon their own resources, unaided by any bounty from the state."¹

Once in Parliament, Miall found plenty of opportunity to put forward the views of the voluntaryist party upon the Irish church question. The English Regium Donum had been abolished in 1851 after continuous pressure by the Anti-State Church Association,² and this victory for voluntaryism strengthened Miall's hand when he made his maiden speech in a debate on a motion introduced by Spooner to reconsider the Maynooth grant. Miall opposed the motion both because it implied competence to interfere in religious matters, and because it discriminated against Catholics upon sectarian grounds. As a voluntaryist, he could not support the motion; he would be,

"...granting that the state had the right to bestow endowments for religious purposes - that such endowments could be bestowed only where the religion was true, and he would be thereby constituting the State...the judge between truth and error in religion."³

As a dissenter, he had always opposed the grant, and wished to see it terminated, but not in this way:

"How could he justify it to his own conscience to take such a step in reference to only one class of Her Majesty's subjects, while there were many more powerful classes enjoying to a large extent the benefits of ecclesiastical endowments...He would not side with the Protestants when they did wrong, and he was not at any moment ashamed of standing by the Roman Catholics when they were in the right."⁴

The speeches which followed suggest that Miall had confused his audience, but he had left no doubt as to the policy of voluntaryists towards the Maynooth grant, and he had linked it to the whole question of endowments.

The Nonconformist was encouraged by the debate, and surmised that in the new House of Commons, Anti-State Church principles had a chance of success:

1. Nonconformist, 3.XI.1852, p866
2. See below pp443f
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXIV, p449
4. Ibid., pp450-451

"We have now seen enough to produce in our minds a firm conviction that the great object upon which we have set our heart is within possible reach. Truth has made its way into the House of Commons, and is surely and rapidly imbuing the minds of the people's representatives."¹

There was reason to feel encouraged, for shortly after Spooner's proposal was debated, a motion was introduced to put at the disposal of the Canadian legislature the lands of the Anglican Church in Canada, known as the Clergy Reserves. This, as Miall explained to the Anti-State Church Association, was tantamount to disestablishment, and the association solicited the support of M.P.s for the motion.² Miall also made the position of the voluntarists on this question clear in the debate on the motion,³ and when the motion was passed, he was able to inform the Liberation Society, as the Anti-State Church Association was now known, that there was considerable support for voluntarist principles in Parliament. Not only had the Anglican Church in Canada been disestablished; in Australia too, state support had been withdrawn. The next point of attack must be Ireland, "...and there the Establishment will be swept away not by Dissenters but by a national and political feeling."⁴ Having founded the Nonconformist to combat the growth of the established churches, which he had feared would spread throughout the Empire by means of concurrent endowment, Miall now felt that the immediate danger had been averted. State-Churchism was no longer a growing evil; it had lost its vitality and was beginning to decay. The time was now ripe for dissenters to go on to the offensive.⁵

In the session of 1853, Miall took part in the debates on Miscellaneous Estimates; having earlier opposed Spooner's attempt to abolish the Maynooth grant, he now supported him in a successful attempt to prevent its being increased: he announced he would have opposed such an increase no matter which sect was to receive it. Probably he felt that to sanction such an increase was to condone the principle of concurrent endowment.⁶

1. Nonconformist, 9.III.1853, p189
2. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 17.III.1853, f476
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXV, pp486-489
4. Nonconformist, 11.V.1853, p372
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp184-185
6. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXVII, pp401, 405, 406.

At the Triennial meeting of the Liberation Society in that year, he was able to give further encouragement. In debates on ecclesiastical questions, valuable help had been given to the voluntaryists by Irish catholic M.P.s. Miall suspected that they really favoured the division of ecclesiastical resources in Ireland amongst all sects, but were prepared to accept the unqualified disendowment of the Church of Ireland, without any division of its resources amongst the sects, if this were all that was politically possible:

"They are not with us by force of conviction but by force of circumstances. It would be a mistake...to count them as friends to our object: and yet it may be pretty confidently anticipated that they will see reason under the stress of events, to move forward upon the same point as ourselves."¹

One way of inducing the Irish M.P.s to see reason was to demonstrate the identity of interest between themselves and the voluntaryists. The government intended in the session of 1854 to modify the levy known as Ministers' Money. It had originally been granted by the Irish Parliament, and fell upon certain householders in Dublin, Cork, Kinsale, Limerick, Waterford, Drogheda, Kilkenny and Clonmel. It was used to pay the Anglican clergy, and the towns involved were in the predominantly catholic South. The predominantly protestant North was thus practically exempt, and the rural equivalent, the vestry cess, had been abolished in 1833.² Irish catholics wanted Ministers' Money abolished, and Miall was not slow to grasp the opportunity thus offered to voluntaryists: "English reformers have received valuable aid from Irish Liberal members on critical occasions, and have now the opportunity of repaying it in kind."³

This was not left to chance; Miall was requested by the Liberation Society to confer with Irish members upon the subject of the abolition of Ministers' Money.⁴ The government bill proposed some modification of the levy, but

1. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1853, pp905-908

2. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church i, 57

3. Nonconformist, 27.VII.1853, p589

4. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 13.VII.1853, f528

stopped short of abolition, on the grounds that church property was inviolable. Miall attempted to get the bill dropped by proposing that it be read 'on this day six months', and though he was defeated by 203 votes to 97, he was able to demonstrate the consistency of his opposition to any ecclesiastical grant, make a good speech on the grievances of Irish Catholics, and put a case for the termination of such levies. Ministers' Money was,

"...a badge of conquest and degradation to the Roman Catholic population of Ireland...it was extremely partial in its operation and it fell chiefly upon persons whose religious belief was diametrically opposed to the creed which the tax was intended to support. He regarded the tax as both impolitic and unjust..."¹

Ecclesiastical property was not inviolable; it was national property, and Parliament could dispose of it as it pleased. Notwithstanding the failure of his amendment, this was a significant political move.

Miall had given support in Parliament to the attempt to remove one of the grievances of the Irish Catholics, and the Liberation Society had applied its 'whip' to secure a full attendance of sympathetic M.P.s. It also resolved to communicate with the constituencies of Liberals who had supported the government against Miall's amendment.² The Eclectic Review considered that the voluntaryists had acted with political skill, and had gained an important political advantage: "It is of special importance that English liberals do full justice to the righteous claims of the people of Ireland."³ In the session of 1856, Miall gave similar support to the attempt of Fagan, the member for Cork, to abolish Ministers' Money.⁴ Again, the attempt met with failure, but the alliance between voluntaryists and Irish Catholic M.P.s was being carefully fostered.

Voluntaryists were encouraged by the passing of the Oxford University Act, which represented a further erosion of the position of the Church of England.

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXXI, pp995-998
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.III.1854
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. VII 1854, p504
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXLI, pp1116-1117

Having played a considerable part in this triumph, Miall insisted that the next target for voluntaryists should be the Church of Ireland. But though,

"...the weakest, the least defensible embodiment of the State Church principle is to be found in Ireland...it is covered by two outworks of considerable strength: the Maynooth Endowment Act and the Presbyterian Regium Donum."¹

If both could be abolished, the Irish Church would be vulnerable to attack both from dissenters and from liberals. John Bright took over the leadership of the campaign against the Irish Regium Donum; in 1854, he moved that the grant be reduced by the amount of its proposed increase for that year. He was defeated by 149 votes to 62,² but the occasion was probably more important as part of an attempt to persuade Bright to act as the leader of the voluntaryists, which the Liberation Society formally requested him to become later in the year.³ However, the Maynooth grant was more vulnerable:

"If we can repeal that act which Sir Robert Peel's sagacity raised up as a breakwater for the protection of the greatest ecclesiastical anomaly of modern times, the Regium Donum will fall into our hands almost without effort."⁴

O'Neill Daunt, a catholic champion of Irish disestablishment, took a similar view of the political purpose of the Regium Donum. Whereas in the time of Wolfe Tone the Irish presbyterians had sympathised with Irish national aspirations, nowadays they were, "...thoroughly imperialised, saturated with a feeling of prostrate servility to England, and ferocious anti-catholic bigotry."⁵

Whilst endeavouring to shame the presbyterians of Ireland into giving up the Regium Donum, on the grounds that they were sufficiently wealthy not to need it,⁶ Miall also hoped that the Irish catholics would voluntarily surrender the Maynooth grant. An attack upon the grant would receive considerable support in Parliament, but not the type of support Miall could

1. Nonconformist, 12.VII.1854, p573

2. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 12.VII.1854, ff96-97

3. Ibid., 11.X.1854, f111

4. Nonconformist, 12.VII.1854, p573

5. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 23.XI.1866 (National Library of Ireland. I am indebted to Mr. P.A.J. Heesom for securing a copy of this source.)

6. Nonconformist, 11.X.1854, p833; 29.XI.1854, p981

afford if he were, without explanation, to maintain his links with the Irish M.P.s. He hoped they would not misunderstand an attack by the voluntaryists upon the grant, and from remarks made by Lucas, the member for Meath, and McGuire, the member for Cork, he had reason to suppose that such an attack would not be misinterpreted:

"Maynooth, then, is the key to our adversary's position. It may seem invidious, almost intolerant, to single it out for attack, but we are not without hope that our purpose will be understood by those who now profit by the paltry endowment - we think it not beyond the range of probability that overtures of surrender may come from themselves."¹

A major change of policy was involved. Miall, who had previously opposed Spooner and his High Church allies, now proposed to support their attacks upon the Maynooth grant. His new tactics were explained away by the need to concentrate upon limited objectives, as no one campaign could cover all ecclesiastical endowments. Maynooth was the immediate target, and he had to find what allies he could. The attack upon the grant must be,

"...on the broadest, the most intelligible, and the most equitable principles: not because it is a Roman Catholic college, but because, as a religious institution, it ought not to receive State support...The course we have taken on other questions affecting our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects clears us of all suspicion that we are actuated rather by hatred of their creed than attachment to our own principles."²

The Liberation Society supported this change of plan, but like Miall, was anxious about the reaction of Roman Catholics. It commissioned Miall to prepare an address to the Roman Catholics setting out the reasons for this policy, and re-assuring them that the society was not hostile to catholicism as such.³ The debates on Miscellaneous Estimates gave Miall an opportunity in Parliament to demonstrate his hostility to all ecclesiastical grants. He pointedly voted against a grant to the Belfast Theological College, emphasising that he did so for exactly the same reasons as led him to oppose the Maynooth grant.⁴

1. Nonconformist, 12.VII. 1854, p573
2. Ibid., 11.IV.1855, p277
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 13.IV.1855, f163
4. Nonconformist, 1.VIII.1855, p585

So far, Miall had simply taken advantage of opportunities created by others to discuss the question of religious endowments. At the end of 1855, a meeting of the Liberation Society was informed by him that he would continue these tactics, in particular supporting Spooner in his opposition to the Maynooth grant. But he went on to hint that he himself would introduce a motion in the next session condemning all religious endowments in Ireland. He did not think it had any chance of success, but it would clarify the position of voluntarists, and would serve to identify their supporters. This would be a useful guide to voters in the next general election.¹ It is not wholly clear whether or not the initiative was Miall's. A meeting of the executive committee of the Liberation Society was informed by the chairman of its parliamentary committee, Dr. Foster, that, on 10th August, 1855, "...the Parliamentary Sub-Committee had requested Mr. Miall to give notice of a motion for the next session respecting the Irish Church."² Two months later, Miall explained the details of his motion to the executive committee, and was asked to confer once more with the parliamentary sub-committee.³ The sub-committee recommended that the society support Miall's proposals. It considered that there had been sufficient incidental references to the Irish Church in the course of the present Parliament to give a substantive motion the prospect of a fair hearing. Miall was asked to introduce the motion as early in the session as possible, in particular, ahead of Spooner's motion, for its results would give some indication of the attitude of Parliament. The committee denied that this was merely a tactical consideration; it intended to commit itself to a substantial object of its policy, and did not want the issue confused. It was decided to make a definite effort to secure the support of 20 or 30 leading M.P.s, and to make full use of the press and local meetings to secure publicity.⁴ Ideally, the Irish Church question might become an issue at the next general election.

1. Nonconformist, 12.XII.1855, pp885-887

2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 10.VIII.1855, f194

3. Ibid., 26.X.1855; 9.XI.1855

4. Ibid., 30.XI.1855

The final form of the motion was arrived at after detailed consultation between Miall and the Liberation Society.¹ Its text was: "That this House will resolve itself into a committee to consider the temporal provisions made by law for religious teaching and worship in Ireland."² There followed further consideration of tactics; Miall asked the parliamentary committee to suggest a seconder for the motion, and eventually Mr. Dunlop was chosen. It was agreed to organise petitions, and Miall and Foster were asked to prepare a circular.³ Both Miall and the Liberation Society realised that the motion could not be successful. It would give Miall a parliamentary platform where he could explain in detail the voluntarist policy towards the Irish churches, and it would serve as an alternative to Spooner's motion.⁴ The official organ of the Liberation Society, the Liberator, hoped that Roman Catholics would realise that the hostility of dissenters to the Maynooth grant was not actuated by sectarian bitterness, and thought it possible that Miall might collect a few liberal supporters.⁵ The Sheffield Independent took a favourable view of Miall's prospects:

"The Irish Liberals are disposed to be very cordial, and I should not be surprised to find the Catholics voting unanimously in its support...A large minority in favour of the motion may reasonably be expected."⁶

Without irony, the article explained that the motion would gain support because nothing concrete could come of it, and M.P.s might find it easier to face their constituents having supported this motion rather than Spooner's. Miall's was a more congenial proposal for those whose opposition to the Maynooth grant was not sectarian; in a sense, he was reviving the divisions among dissenters which had appeared in 1845. The Dissenting Deputies gave Miall their support to the extent of declaring that all government subsidies for the support of religion in Ireland must end.⁷

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.II.1856, f236
2. Nonconformist, 6.II.1856, p81
3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 14.III.1856, ff27-29
4. Nonconformist, 13.II.1856, p97
5. Liberator, Jan.1856, p12; Feb. 1856, p32
6. Quoted in Nonconformist, 16.IV.1856, p250
7. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 21.IV.1856, f102

However, they gave him no practical assistance, whereas only one week later they voted £25 to Samuel Morley's parliamentary committee to cover expenses incurred in opposing Russell's most recent education bill.¹

The debate on Miall's motion was originally fixed for 22nd April, but had to be postponed for the Spithead Review. The Nonconformist believed that this betrayed the government's anxiety. Earlier in the week, the proposal to abolish Ministers' Money had attracted the support of a large minority, whose support Miall could anticipate. Steps had been taken to publicise the motion in Ireland, and the delay could only help the voluntarist cause.² Miall eventually introduced his motion on 27th May, after a short debate to decide whether or not the House should adjourn, to avoid the passions which discussion of the motion would arouse. In a patronising tone, Palmerston declared that since Miall had already failed once to secure a hearing, it would be unjust to deprive him of his opportunity, since there was no other business before the House.³

Miall began his speech by saying that his motion involved no discussion of the vices or virtues of particular sects; the only principle involved was that of justice. Admitting that while at the present moment Ireland was enjoying a respite from religious strife, he nevertheless felt himself justified in bringing forward the motion, because the respite was temporary; the ecclesiastical situation in Ireland was fundamentally offensive to a large majority. Even if the Irish were prepared to acquiesce in the present arrangements, the Protestants of Great Britain were not. Spooner and his supporters were making determined efforts to terminate the grant to Maynooth college. If they succeeded, there would be renewed strife:

"...should Parliament withdraw a small state endowment from a Roman Catholic institution...leaving its endowment of other religious bodies untouched - where will be the boasted tranquillity of Ireland?"⁴

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 28.IV.1856, f104
2. Nonconformist, 23.IV.1856, p269
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXLII, p714
4. Ibid., p717

He urged Parliament not to treat the Maynooth grant in isolation, as discrimination against the Roman Catholics would inflame their sense of grievance. Bearing in mind that he himself had supported Spooner's motion, the only explanation of this apparently contradictory behaviour is that in explaining his motion to Parliament, he was recommending an overall strategy, which was fully in accordance with his principles. Tactically, as a member of the Liberation Society, he was obliged to exploit opportunities as they arose, and if he attacked the Maynooth grant on its own, it was as an endowment, and not because of its connection with Roman Catholicism. When he offered this defence to a dinner organised by the Liberation Society for voluntaryist M.P.s, he claimed that his motives had been misrepresented or misunderstood;¹ it would be hardly surprising if opponents found the distinction he was trying to draw between strategy and tactics over-subtle.

The next section of his speech was devoted to a survey of the ecclesiastical history of Ireland, showing that government involvement in the religious affairs of that country had invariably proved disastrous. A policy of repressing the catholic majority had been followed by one of legal discrimination against them. Catholicism had grown in strength, and in 1829 the principle of protestant ascendancy had been implicitly condemned by the Catholic Emancipation Act. That act had been followed by a new policy, "...namely, equality of favour by means of indiscriminate endowments."²

The endowment of Maynooth College was the first major step in this policy, and Russell had intended to carry it further, but had been prevented from doing so by the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland, and the hostility of public opinion in Britain:

"...the noble Lord's scheme never saw the light: for, in addition to the fact that the Irish Roman Catholic hierarchy were indisposed at that time to become the stipendiaries of the State, popular opinion in this country was too unequivocally expressed against taking further steps in the direction of indiscriminate endowments."³

1. Nonconformist, 18.II.1857, pl22
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXLII, p722
3. Ibid., p723

Concurrent endowment was no longer a practical policy, and the point of the historical survey was to show that the government now had no choice but to adopt a policy of disendowment:

"I respectfully submit, then, that inasmuch as the divided religious feelings of the country prevents you, and will ever prevent you, from placing the different sects in Ireland upon an equitable footing...by means of indiscriminate endowments, you should accomplish it by means of impartial disendowment; and that, as you cannot hope to render justice to the Irish people by a public support of the religious institutions of all sects, you should withdraw that support alike from all."¹

Even if the historical argument were not conclusive, there were overwhelming political considerations in favour of disestablishment. The Church of Ireland was maintained for the benefit of a wealthy minority, who could well afford to support it from their own resources; the presbyterian body was sufficiently wealthy to pay the stipends of the ministers who received the Regium Donum, and, aside from the case of Maynooth, the Catholic Church was maintained upon a voluntary basis. No real hardship would result from disestablishment, and a genuine evil would be removed. Against the contention that the position of the Church of Ireland was protected by the Act of Union, Miall asserted that it simply enjoyed the use of national property. If Parliament chose to alter the use of that property, either by redistribution or by appropriation for other purposes, for which there was a precedent in the Church Temporalities Act of 1833, it was competent to do so: "The only title...which the Protestant Church of Ireland has to her revenues is to be found in the will of the State..."² Miall hoped that the property of the Irish Church would be appropriated to secular projects:

"I suggest that this property should be made available, in the first place, to the founding and supporting of infirmaries, hospitals, lunatic asylums and reformatories: and that what is not required for these objects should be laid out...in the construction of piers, harbours, lighthouses and quays - in providing arterial drainage, in deepening rivers, and in such other public undertakings as would best develop the great natural resources of the country."³

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXLII, p724
2. Ibid., p730
3. Ibid., pp735-736

Miall brought forward three resolutions to give effect to his ideas; to some extent, they anticipated Gladstone's resolutions on the same subject in 1868. In Miall's case, he was obliged, for procedural reasons, to exclude from them the Maynooth grant and Ministers' Money. The first proposed,

"...that it is expedient to make provision for other than ecclesiastical uses of all sites, glebes, tithes, rent charges and estates at present enjoyed or received by any clerical person of the Protestant Episcopal Communion in Ireland, for the support of divine worship according to the rites of the said communion."¹

Gladstone's own resolutions did not go into such detail on the disposition of the property;² both he and Miall were at pains to safeguard life interests. Miall's second resolution proposed the exclusion from the annual estimates of the Regium Donum, and of all grants paid to theological professors at Belfast College. The third asked for leave to bring in a bill to give effect to the first two resolutions.

The debate which followed was notable for a speech by Newdegate, which accused Miall of being an agent of the Irish Catholic group, and hinted at Jesuitical practices. He was disturbed by the fact that Miall's speech was greeted with cheers from the Irish members, and described the pain he felt when, "...the Roman Catholic members had persuaded a Protestant to make an attack on the property of the church."³ A number of speeches followed, though the only prominent voluntaryist to speak in support of Miall was Hadfield. Palmerston wound up the debate with a speech perceptibly less condescending than that with which he began, and dealt with Miall's points in a serious manner. He was unable to support the resolutions, since their logic applied equally to the Church of England, which he had no wish to see disestablished.⁴ On the motion to go into committee, Miall was defeated by 163 votes to 93; as the Nonconformist pointed out, there were

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXLII, p736
2. The Nonconformist believed that Miall had made a tactical error in discussing the disposition of Irish Church property in such detail. Nonconformist, 4.VI.1856. In replying to the debate, Palmerston maintained that this had been the main weakness in Miall's argument.
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXLII, p740
4. Ibid., pp765-770

26 pairs, so in fact, Miall had the support of 119 members.¹ It was pleased with the reception which the motion had obtained. Its parliamentary correspondent wrote that Miall was heard with close attention and evident interest. At several points, he was cheered, and for the first time Parliament had discussed the disendowment of an established church. But for the unavoidable absence of prominent voluntaryists such as Bright, Cobden, Lawrence, Heyworth, Barnes and Dunlop, the vote would have been more impressive: "The grand subject has at length been fairly launched in Parliament - and it was neither howled down nor stifled by silent contempt."²

The Liberation Society commended Miall's conduct of the debate; it resolved to reprint the speeches in its journal, the Liberator, and made it fairly clear that the tactical purpose of the debate had been to win the support of Irish catholics. Five thousand copies of Miall's speech were to be printed, "...to send to the Roman Catholic priesthood in Ireland and elsewhere."³ The Liberator itself was unreserved in its delight:

"Twelve years, six years, three years ago, what Voluntary could have ventured to predict that in 1856 the House of Commons would spend more than five hours in discussing an initiative proposition for separating Church and State in Ireland? Or... who would have anticipated that no fewer than 121 members of the House of Commons would sanction the proposal by their deliberate vote?"⁴

Sharman Crawford, Miall's predecessor as member for Rochdale, regarded the debate as a triumph for the voluntaryists: it is true that, without party backing, on a day when the House was due to adjourn, Miall had secured a hearing for his motion. Crawford was not impressed by the quality of the speeches in support of the Irish Church; no leading conservative came to its defence.⁵ In the view of the Illustrated Times, Miall had gained a

1. Nonconformist, 28.V.1856, p373f.
2. Nonconformist, 28.V.1856, pp382-383. The moderate British Quarterly Review made substantially similar points in reviewing the debate. British Quarterly Review, Vol.XXIV 1856, p30
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.VI.1856, f281
4. Liberator, June 1856, pl22
5. Ibid., pl39.

personal triumph:

"Mr. Miall's want of physical powers will always be a hindrance to him. His voice is thin and weak, and unless the House is predisposed to listen, he can never command its attention."¹

Nevertheless, on this occasion, Miall had received a fair hearing.

Press reactions were mixed. Amongst dissenting journals, the Patriot did not devote an article to Miall's motion, indicating the continuation of divisions among dissenters.² The Eclectic Review, however, was full of praise for Miall; it regarded his speech as distinguished by its ability, learning and moderation.³ The Times thought that Miall had failed to convince the House: his proposals were too extreme. Further, they were a prelude to an attack upon the Church of England:

"That proposal was professedly founded upon the particular facts of the Irish Establishment, but it was evident that it had another foundation besides that, in a religious theory doubtless held conscientiously and enthusiastically by Mr. Miall and those of his school, but still a theory against the principle of establishments altogether."⁴

The Nonconformist printed a selection of press comments.⁵ The Morning Post believed that the voluntarists had no cause for rejoicing:

"Their want of success will, we hope, be taken by them as unmistakable evidence that their doctrines have little hold upon the sympathy of the public...Considered as a party opposition to the Established Church, Dissent may be said to have greatly retrograded within the last few years."

The Sun praised Miall as the best advocate of voluntary principles:

bitter opposition came from the Sentinel:

"We do not think Mr. Miall is a knave in the employ of the Jesuits he is simply an ill-taught and ignorant man upon the working of whose prejudices and malignity they look with complacency, knowing that it is operating for their purposes."

Most of those who were critical of Miall mentioned his connection with Irish catholics; as yet, it was not a reality, but the Dublin Weekly Telegraph

1. Quoted in Nonconformist 11.VI.1856, p414
2. Patriot, 28.V.1856
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. XII 1856, p98
4. Times, 29.V.1856, p8
5. Nonconformist, 4.VI.1856, p393

published an article which urged Irish catholics to give active support to Miall. If the campaign for disendowment was ever to succeed, there had to be active co-operation between voluntarists and Irish catholics:

"To Mr. Miall and the English members who supported him, the thanks of the Roman Catholics of Ireland are due. Those truly honest-hearted Protestants have proved themselves worthy of the love, respect and gratitude of Roman Catholic Ireland."¹

This article implies that Miall was winning the trust of a group vital to his ultimate success. In Ireland, a meeting at Clonakilty expressed support for him, and in the course of the meeting, the Irish catholic leader O'Neill Daunt, made an offer of co-operation:

"The English voluntaries have brought the question before the House of Commons. We cannot expect them to fight our battles for us if we remain silent or inactive. It is our bounden duty as well as our obvious policy, to give them the utmost assistance in our power, and to draw close the bonds which unite us with them."²

In his Journal, Daunt states that he organised the meeting in response to Miall's speech in Parliament, and thereafter, worked to secure harmony between the Catholic hierarchy and the liberationists.³

Miall gave a report upon the meeting to the Liberation Society's committee, to whom Daunt sent a letter offering his co-operation. The Liberator welcomed the offer wholeheartedly; it meant, "...this is to be a genuine Anti-State Church and not an anti-Protestant Church agitation."⁴ The Liberation Society decided to send Dr. Foster to Ireland to meet Daunt, and requested him to confer with Miall before setting off.⁵ Evidently Miall communicated with Daunt, who noted that he had met Foster, and discussed the appropriate methods of joint action against the Irish establishment: "Mr. Miall...desires me to consider Dr. Foster his alter ego."⁶

Foster met Daunt, armed with a paper composed by himself and Miall, "... which was intended to be proposed as a basis of operations should opportunity

1. Quoted in Nonconformist, 11.VI.1856, p414
2. Cork Examiner quoted in Nonconformist, 27.VIII.1856, pp642-643
3. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 26.VII.1869
4. Liberator, Sept. 1856, p179
5. Liberation Society Minute Book 8.IX.1856, f291
6. O'Neill Daunt, A life spent for Ireland (London 1896) p131

offer!"¹ Encouraged to find that Daunt had arranged a series of meetings, and petitions to Parliament, Foster presented him with the paper. It warned that the Liberation Society would continue to support the anti-Maynooth movement, as part of its campaign against religious endowments. It would conduct the campaign on non-sectarian grounds, but could not promise the same of its allies. Co-operation between the society and the Irish catholics was to be restricted to one objective, the destruction of the Irish establishment, and apart from this, each would retain its distinctive identity.²

Miall wrote to Daunt thanking him for his support, and stressing the need for co-operation between voluntarists and Irish catholics.³ He informed the Liberation Society that his Irish Church motion had demonstrated his hostility to endowments, and he would continue to support Spooner's anti-Maynooth campaign:

"I wish the people of Ireland distinctly to know - the Roman Catholics of Ireland especially - that I am thoroughly sincere in this matter, and that I intend not to get rid of Maynooth and then quash the agitation, but to carry simultaneously the three propositions, namely, the withdrawal of the grant to Maynooth, the cessation of the Parliamentary Regium Donum to the Presbyterians, and the entire secularisation of the Church revenues of the Protestant Church."⁴

He was anxious to make it clear that this was simply a tactical move.

Criticising a speech in which Roebuck had refused to press for the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant, Miall argued that support for Spooner was essential, even if his motives were distasteful: "Are mere impulses of sentiment to rule us, when a little stern decision would avail us to further the great ends of public policy?"⁵ The Times endorsed Miall's tactical assessment:

"Let Mr. Spooner and his party have their own way about the Maynooth grant, and the Irish Church has immediately an argument of tremendous strength against her...the compensation

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XI.1856
2. Ibid., 17.XI.1856
3. Nonconformist, 10.IX.1856, p674
4. Ibid., 12.XI.1856, p855
5. Ibid., 19.XI.1856, p883

for Maynooth is the destruction of the Irish Establishment."¹

Nonetheless, Miall was clearly uncomfortable about his support of Spooner.

At a meeting of the Liberation Society in Bradford, he confessed that one reason for the introduction of his motion on the Irish Church was the guilt he felt at being associated with the bigotry of Spooner. He hoped to introduce a similar motion in the next session.² Again, the decision to introduce the motion followed detailed consultation between Miall and the Liberation Society; it was decided he would move the appointment of a select committee to examine the ecclesiastical situation in Ireland. This would focus attention upon the anomalies of the establishment, and would give ample evidence of the successful working of the voluntary system.³ The committee resolved to take all steps consistent with its integrity to secure the support of Irish Catholics, and hoped that a movement would be organised in Ireland in support of the total disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.⁴

But the prospects of wholehearted co-operation were endangered, as the Irish Quarterly Review pointed out, by Miall's continued support of the rabidly anti-catholic Spooner.⁵ In the event, Miall changed his mind about the type of motion he intended to introduce; he decided to introduce an abstract motion,⁶ fearing, perhaps, that with a general election impending, a select committee might be appointed, and then quietly relegated to the background. The new motion read:

"That, regard being had to the circumstances of the people of Ireland, the support of religious worship and teaching in that country by public endowment or parliamentary grants is practically incompatible with the claims to impartial treatment which all religious bodies have upon the state."⁷

The Liberation Society's executive committee, in discussing the new motion, regarded it as essential that voluntarist M.P.s should be prepared to vote

1. Times, 29.V.1856, p8
2. Nonconformist, 3.XII.1856, p914; Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.XII.1856
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.XI.1856; 17.XI.1856
4. Ibid., 1.XII.1856
5. Quoted in Nonconformist, 14.I.1857, p21
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.II.1857; 3.XI.1856
7. Nonconformist, 18.II.1857, p122

against the government, which depended upon their support. Otherwise, there would be no progress towards religious liberty.¹

A general election was called in March 1857, and in his campaign at Rochdale Miall made no direct reference either to the Church of Ireland, or to the Maynooth grant. He was defeated, and petitioned against the election of his opponent, alleging that his defeat was due to bribery: he admitted that his attacks upon the Irish Church might have alienated some of his former supporters.² The evidence which emerged, when his petition was considered, makes it clear that his attacks upon the Irish Church had played some part in his defeat. One of his supporters, J.W. Lawton, revealed that a lady who had attempted to bribe him,

"...was very violent upon the Irish Church Bill."
 "Taking away Church property or something of that kind?" "Yes"
 "I believe parties did run high at Rochdale on that question."
 "They did."
 "Mr. Miall lost some of his former supporters for his conduct on that question?" "It proved so."³

The Rochdale Standard simply commented that Miall had failed to retain the support of Liberal voters;⁴ a more recent assessment attributes his loss of support almost wholly to his attacks upon the Irish Church. He owed his election in 1852 to the support of both Liberals and dissenters of all shades of opinion. But, with the increasing prominence of ecclesiastical questions after the decline of Chartism and the triumph of Free Trade, Miall's extreme religious position became a political liability:

"...too many good Liberals were Anglican, too many dissenters were not attracted by Liberationism, and the militant Dissenters had always voted Liberal anyway."⁵

Thus Miall's advocacy of Irish disestablishment in Parliament received a major setback. The Patriot hoped the new Parliament would continue the work where Miall had left off, and forecast that within twenty-one years,

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.II.1857, f328
2. Nonconformist, 18.III.1857
3. Parliamentary Papers, 1857 session 2, Vol.VIII, Questions 1937-1941
4. Rochdale Standard, 4.IV.1857
5. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party (London 1966) pp111-113

the Irish Church would be disestablished.¹ Writing to Cobden, Bright noted that so far as church questions were concerned, "...a revolution in my opinion is apparent there also."² Certainly, Miall had laid the foundation of a fruitful co-operation between voluntaryists and Irish Catholics, and he had made Irish disestablishment a public question. The immediate question was the consolidation of the links of the voluntaryists with Irish Catholics, and this compelled Miall to reassess his attitude towards the Maynooth grant.

Part 3. Miall and the National Association

Deprived of his parliamentary platform, Miall had to work through the Nonconformist and the Liberation Society in order to consolidate his links with the Irish Catholics. This was a more formidable task than Miall's optimistic statements of the early 1850s had implied. There had indeed been contact with O'Neill Daunt, but the Liberation Society, when it discussed its attitude to Spooner's anti-Maynooth motion in 1857, did not feel it necessary to take into account the feelings of the Irish liberals: "...the Irish need not be regarded as they would not help, and could not injure the society."³ The division which followed Miall's motion of 1856 reveals that he had not really obtained significant support from the Irish M.P.s, who were mainly interested in the land question. Out of a total of 70 Irish members, 24 supported Miall, and 3 opposed him.⁴ His difficulties were exacerbated by a growing rift between the Irish members and the Whigs, caused partly by the memory of Russell's 'Durham letter', partly by the memory of the apparent indifference of the Aberdeen government to Irish problems, an attitude perpetuated by Palmerston, and partly by the

1. Patriot, 27.III.1857, p146

2. Bright to Cobden, 16.IV.1857. Bright Papers BM Add Mss 43384, f92

3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.II.1857, ff31-32

4. J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party 1850-1859. (Oxford 1958) p144, pp180-181. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXLII, pp770-772.

Whigs' support of the Italian revolutionaries. A recent analysis has shown that this rift was at its widest in the election of 1859, and was only repaired when Gladstone gave his support to Irish disestablishment.¹ So long as the Irish group felt itself alienated from the Whigs, there was little that radicals such as Miall could do but make gestures. Though these gestures had little immediate effect, Miall was to play some part in recreating the alliance between Liberals, radicals and the Irish catholics.

The immediate problem was the attitude of dissenters to the Maynooth grant. Miall's first reaction to the new parliamentary situation created by the election of 1857 was to urge dissenters not to support Spooner's anti-Maynooth motions, which had no chance of success. It had been justifiable to support them as a means to an end, when there was a chance of their succeeding, but when there was none, voluntaryists must disassociate themselves from his prejudice and bigotry.² Miall's volte face followed the discussion of the matter by the Liberation Society mentioned above, a discussion which had revealed a rift between voluntaryists and Irish catholics. The society decided that most of its supporters were opposed to anti-Maynooth motions per se, and it was resolved that the chairman should write privately to a number of M.P.s, urging them not to support Spooner in future.³ The only voluntary triumph, the abolition of Ministers' Money in 1857, was welcomed simply as a victory of principle; it was not discussed as an event which might improve relations with the Irish catholics.⁴

When the election of 1859 took place, Miall's attitude underwent another change. He believed there was no chance of a full discussion of Irish endowments, and as a consequence, he recommended dissenters to revert to the policy of piecemeal attack. He explained that this meant supporting anti-Maynooth motions in Parliament, but he urged electors to press candidates

1. K.T. Hoppen, 'Tories, Catholics and the General Election of 1859' Historical Journal Vol. 13 no. 1 March 1970, pp48-67
2. Nonconformist, 27.V.1857, p401
3. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.II.1857, ff31-32
4. Nonconformist, 8.VII.1857, p521

who declared their hostility to Maynooth to attack other endowments as well.¹

The Triennial conference of the Liberation Society endorsed this policy; by way of further explanation, Miall added that there was at present no member of Parliament sufficiently conversant with the Irish ecclesiastical situation to make it worth while to strive for a discussion in Parliament.

In this case, the best tactic was to attack endowments piecemeal, to "... take the faggot stick by stick."² In accordance with this policy, the Liberation Society used Baxter to lead a new campaign in Parliament against the Irish Regium Donum. It used its 'whip' to attempt to secure a good attendance, it requested specific members to take part in the debate, and provided copy for the press.³ The motion was lost, and Miall was disturbed to note that only two Irish M.P.s had supported it, whereas fifty-four had opposed it, and forty-nine were absent.⁴ Relations between the voluntarists and the Irish catholics were difficult at this stage: one symptom is the fact that the committee of the Liberation Society received a letter from Daunt, "...relative to proposed efforts to obtain co-operation with the Catholics from Ireland."⁵ The letter was read, and discussed by the committee, but the minutes do not suggest that any action followed.

By 1861, Miall had changed his mind yet again over the Maynooth grant. Whalley, Spooner's successor as leader of the anti-Maynooth faction, introduced a motion for the termination of the grant. Miall condemned it as intolerant and bigotted, and saw no tactical purpose to be served in supporting it:

"...we see no good end to be answered by dealing with this confessedly serious grievance in this narrow theological spirit. The Maynooth College is kept up as a buttress to the Irish Church Establishment, and the only way in which it can be consistently assailed is by placing all State endowments of religion in the same category, and condemning them in the lump."⁶

1. Nonconformist, 13.IV.1859, p281
2. Ibid., 9.VI.1859, pp449f
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.XII.1859; 25.V.1860. Ibid., Parliamentary Committee MinuteBook 14.V.1860
4. Nonconformist, 30.V.1860, p422. Liberation Society, MinuteBook 25.V.1860
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 11.XI.1859
6. Nonconformist, 12.VI.1861, p470

There are several factors which may explain Miall's apparent inconsistency in this period. As a public issue, the Irish Church question seems to have been dormant, and without a parliamentary platform of his own, Miall could only urge the exploitation of such issues as might give it prominence. At the same time as trying to gain Irish support, it was essential to preserve the support of dissenters. The Liberal party was a loose federation, lacking, Miall believed, any unifying principle. He hoped that it might eventually coalesce around the disestablishment issue, but saw little prospect of this until parliamentary representation was radically reformed.¹ In 1857 he fought a by-election at Tavistock, and another at Banbury in 1859; in neither did he make direct reference to the Irish Church question.²

The Irish members themselves were in a state of shifting allegiance; they were successfully wooed by the Conservatives in 1859,³ and, as has been noted, Miall had been disappointed by their failure to support Baxter's motion against the Regium Donum. He was even more disturbed to note that the results of by-elections in Ireland suggested that catholic voters were no longer committed to the support of Liberal candidates. Admitting that they had little reason to be grateful to the Liberals, he warned them that their support of the Conservatives would not further their objectives, and would alienate English dissenters:

"There might be an Irish Liberal party, strong in the justice of their demands, in the support of the British Liberals, and in the sympathy and mutual co-operation of English Dissenters. But so long as the Catholic members allow themselves to be mere tools of the Vatican and a stepping-stone of Tory ambition, they will be mistrusted by those who sincerely desire religious equality..."⁴

Disraeli's political skill preserved, for a time, the alliance between the Conservatives and the Irish catholics,⁵ and after a session in which the Irish

1. Nonconformist, 14.IV.1858, p281
2. Ibid., 9.IX.1857 p713; 12.I.1859 p25
3. K.T. Hoppen, 'Tories, Catholics and the General Election of 1859' p53
4. Nonconformist, 16.IV.1862, p331
5. K.T. Hoppen, 'Tories, Catholics and the General Election of 1859' p67.
R. Blake, Disraeli p496

members had given no significant support to the Voluntary party, Miall was driven to conclude; "It is, of course, evident that the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland does not desire the abolition of the State-Church."¹ The Liberator had pointed out sometime earlier that the Liberation Society was fighting a battle for all religious bodies, and was entitled to expect support from Irish members.² In the absence of that support voluntaryists could do nothing more in Parliament than attack the Maynooth grant; the Irish Church question itself could not be dealt with in Parliament.³ Miall himself admitted, in reply to a letter from Vincent Scully which alleged that Irish catholics had little reason to be grateful to English liberals, that, "...unfortunately there is at present no 'cordial co-operation' between the English and Irish liberals, though there may be among a few individual members."⁴

In one way, this was hardly surprising, for the Liberation Society was gradually withdrawing from direct parliamentary action after 1860, preferring to concentrate its efforts in the constituencies. It reserved its main energies for the church rate question, which did not attract Irish support.⁵ Attempts by Dillwyn and Osborne to discuss the question of Irish endowments in the session of 1863 convinced Miall that the public was no longer interested in the question,⁶ and that there was no possibility of English voluntaryists and Irish catholics combining, unless the objective were total disestablishment of the Irish Church.⁷ The Patriot regarded Miall's absence from Parliament as the main reason for the lack of progress upon the Irish Church question:

"Had he remained in the House, there can be little doubt that the Irish Church question would have advanced before now several stages towards its solution. As it is, the muddy waters have been stirred only to settle down again..."⁸

1. Nonconformist, 23.IX.1863, pp757-758
2. Liberator, August 1861, p131
3. Ibid., Sept. 1862, p155
4. Nonconformist, 27.II.1861 p.162
5. Nonconformist, 9.V.1860, pp362-365; 20.II.1861, pp144-145; 11.II.1863, p101
6. Nonconformist, 1.VII.1863, p517
7. Ibid., 20.V.1863 p.393
8. Patriot, 2.VII.1863, p433

That the relationship between Irish catholics and English voluntaries did not collapse completely in these years was due to the perseverance of O'Neill Daunt, who worked unceasingly to preserve it. Miall and the Liberation Society seem to have been curiously unaware of the extent to which their support of attacks upon the Maynooth grant alienated Irish catholics. Daunt was invited to become a member of the committee in 1862, and declined upon grounds of ill-health, and the inconvenience of attending meetings in London. He regretted his inability to accept, "...as it seems possible that if I could, I might be able to extend the operations of the Council in Ireland."¹ Yet when in the same year he wrote to the society,

"urging that the society should abandon opposition to the Maynooth endowment, as a means of obtaining the support of the Irish Catholics in a movement directed against the Irish Church,"

the committee simply resolved that Dr. Foster should draft a reply; no other action was taken.² Admittedly, the society was in a difficult position; a meeting which discussed its future strategy noted that its objectives had been consistently obstructed in Parliament, and considered that the position would deteriorate in the next session. All that could be done was to support attacks upon any ecclesiastical endowments in Britain or Ireland.³ The anti-Maynooth campaign was too valuable to abandon, as it served to keep together an increasingly demoralised voluntary party in England. Daunt regarded it as one of his major achievements that he had induced the English voluntaryists to abandon their attacks upon Maynooth. Had they not, Irish disestablishment would have remained a pipe dream, "...the junction of forces so necessary to our success would have been impossible."⁴ His greatest difficulty had been to persuade Irish catholics to put their trust in the English voluntaryists, "...whose anti-catholic bigotry in theological matters was notorious."⁵ Perhaps as a consequence of Daunt's representations

1. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 18.VI.1862

2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.X.1862

3. Ibid., 19.IX.1862

4. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 26.VII.1869

5. Ibid. When Daunt declined the invitation to join the executive committee of the Liberation Society, he recorded, "I have found some of our Catholics unwilling to join forces with men, so full of anti-Catholic bigotry as the English Nonconformists but I think I have tolerably well removed that unwillingness."

O'Neill Daunt, A Life spent for Ireland p192

the Liberation Society realised the damage its support of anti-Maynooth measures was causing; from this point onward, it dropped its attacks upon the Maynooth grant.¹ Moreover, Daunt had worked hard to keep interest in Ireland alive in the stagnant period after 1857. He had insisted that the Catholic Church must give up all endowments and must make no claim upon the endowments of the Church of Ireland if it were disestablished. The support of English voluntaryists was essential, and catholics would only secure it by a commitment to total disendowment.² Miall paid tribute to the value of Daunt's efforts: "The Nonconformist...says that I have probably done more than any living man to keep alive the Voluntary Principle in Ireland..."³

The records of the Liberation Society imply that it made an effort to conciliate Daunt, apart from modifying its attitude towards the Maynooth grant. In 1863, he requested the help of the society in a petitioning movement against the Irish Establishment which was to commence in Ireland in the next year. The society's parliamentary committee resolved, "...that it be suggested as desirable that some Irish members be requested to give notice of a motion on the subject next session,"⁴ a resolution, which, as it stands, seems like a deliberate snub. But Daunt's Journal makes it apparent that Carvell Williams wrote to him, explaining that the society had resolved not to petition the present Parliament upon ecclesiastical subjects; he offered help with press coverage of the petitioning movement, and gave an undertaking that the society would make the Irish Church question a prominent feature of its electoral programme.⁵

A new situation arose in Ireland when the Irish Catholic hierarchy, under Cardinal Cullen, began to reassess its political allegiance. Previously,

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.X.1862. P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales (London 1969) p42. E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland in the age of Rebellion (London 1965) p179
2. e.g. see Nonconformist, 14.XII.1859, p994
3. O'Neill Daunt, A Life spent for Ireland p243
4. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 10.XII.1863
5. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 8.XII.1863

the hierarchy had supported the Independent Irish party, but Cullen withdrew his support, and that of his priests.¹ He himself was conscious of the need to remedy the ills of the Irish, and inclined towards alliance with the Liberal party as a means of effective political action. However, alliance with the party which had passed the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, and which had supported Garibaldi, was not easy to bring about. The alternative was alliance with Fenianism, with its radical programme for Ireland, but while Cullen condemned the movement, as did Miall,² some means of achieving the redress of Irish grievances was essential. The Dublin Review was deeply concerned by the growing estrangement of English and Irish liberals,³ but, as has been observed, the contact between Daunt and the Liberation Society, though sometimes tenuous, had at least preserved some links.

The National Association was founded in 1864, as an alternative to Fenianism, for the redress of Irish grievances. During that year, Daunt had repeatedly insisted upon the need for Irish catholics to give full support to the English voluntaries, and the Liberator welcomed his leadership.⁴ He recorded that in 1864 he received a letter from Dillon, announcing a new agitation for tenant right, free education, and the disendowment of the Church of Ireland, which had the support of the bishops and a large number of laymen.⁵ The Association began as a result of the coming-together of members of the Liberation Society and Irish churchmen, and it gained the influential support of John Bright.⁶ At the inaugural meeting, Daunt moved a resolution that the Irish Catholic Church should never receive state support, and should base itself upon the voluntary principle. Both he and Digby spoke of the extent of the sympathy of the English with the sufferings which resulted from the establishment of the Church of Ireland, and Daunt promised the support of the Liberation Society.⁷ Cullen adopted the proposal

1. E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland p27
2. Nonconformist, 7.II.1866. See also P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales p41
3. E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland p26
4. Liberator, June 1864, p81
5. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 5.XI.1864
6. E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland ppl39, 142-143
7. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 29.XII.1864: A Life spent for Ireland p210

to disestablish the Irish Church as part of the programme of the Association. At this meeting, Daunt later noted that he himself had preached, "...the most out-and-out voluntaryism."¹ He understood well that this was the only basis for alliance between the Association and the Liberation Society, a view reinforced by a letter he received from Father Emright in 1862, which envisaged the support of the Irish episcopacy for disestablishment, provided the English voluntaries would consent to satisfactory terms.²

The Liberation Society regarded the formation of the Association as an important event; it resolved to publish Daunt's speech, and requested the secretary to make contact with him, evidently to invite him once again to join the committee, an invitation which he declined.³ However, the committee received a letter from Daunt giving full details of the Association.⁴ Miall welcomed the Association, noting that it intended to put into effect his motion of 1856. This could be achieved, provided that English and Irish liberals united:

"Let this but be understood to be the will of the great majority of the Irish people, and let but the representatives of Ireland who profess Liberal principles unite with those in this country in enforcing that will upon the Legislature, and we have no hesitation in saying that the political power requisite to accomplish the change is already equal to the task. We, in this country, have been waiting only for some such move as this. Nay, we have not waited, but invited it unsuccessfully by successive motions in the House of Commons. All efforts here have been paralysed by Irish inaction. Mr. Miall's motion in 1856, which aimed at exactly the same object now demanded by the aggregate meeting at Dublin was supported by but a feeble majority of the Irish Liberal members."⁵

However, Miall and Daunt cannot receive the whole credit for the new alliance: it was thanks to them that the Irish Catholics joined forces with the Liberation Society, but the equally vital support of the radical

1. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 26.VII.1869.
2. Ibid., 8.XII.1862
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 6.I.1865. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 29.V.1865. E.R. Norman, 'The Catholic Church and Ireland' pl79.
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.II.1865
5. Nonconformist, 4.I.1865, ppl-2

group was the result of the work of Dillon and John Bright.¹

Miall took a relatively passive rôle at this time. He was present at a meeting of dissenting M.P.s at which Dillwyn agreed to introduce another motion upon the Irish Church.² The debate was disappointing insofar as Dillwyn gained little Irish support. The Liberator concluded that the Irish Church was in no immediate danger, remarking, "Mr. Miall and Mr. Dillwyn were defeated because the Irish people would give them no support."³ The invaluable Journal of Daunt gives some clue to this curious inaction of the Irish members; it records that there was among the Irish members some division of opinion as to the best means of securing disestablishment. Monsell had informed Dillon that several doubted the wisdom of basing the demand upon voluntaryist principles, and favoured an alliance with the Whigs: it remained Daunt's conviction that the Irish must commit themselves to a policy of disestablishment and disendowment if they were to have the support of the English voluntary party.⁴ Some encouraging features, however, emerged from the debate. The National Association and the Liberation Society had collaborated in a petitioning campaign in support of Dillwyn,⁵ and Gladstone's speech in the debate revealed that his mind was moving towards disestablishment as a solution for Irish problems.⁶ Earlier in the year he had written, "I am not loyal to it as an establishment. I would not renew the votes and speeches of thirty years back."⁷ Many of his supporters welcomed his public commitment. Chichester Fortescue congratulated Gladstone upon securing for himself freedom of action upon this difficult matter, having thereby saved the government's Irish supporters from "...abandonment and odium."⁸ Gladstone indicated both to Phillimore

1. J. McCarthy, Ireland since the Union (London 1887) p164.
G.M. Trevelyan, John Bright p347
2. Nonconformist, 29.III.1865, p249. P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales p42
3. Liberator, Feb. 1865, p25
4. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 5.XII.1865; 26.VII.1869
5. E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland p326
6. Nonconformist, 5.IV.1865, p261
7. Gladstone to Phillimore, 13.II.1865 in D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone i, 154. Also in Gladstone Papers, BM.Add Mss 44277 ff245-246
8. Fortescue to Gladstone, 29.III.1865, Gladstone Papers BM Add Mss 44121 ff10-11

and to Sir William Brady that he had come to regard the Irish establishment as inimical to peace and justice in Ireland.¹

Parliament was dissolved in 1865, and Miall was delighted by Gladstone's speeches upon the Irish Church.² The election result pleased the Liberation Society, which felt that it augured well for the future:

"The changes made in the representation of Ireland are likely greatly to facilitate co-operation with the Irish members in regard to Equality questions both in England and Ireland."

It noted that both Sir John Gray and Dillon had close links with the National Association, and felt that the election of Roman Catholic members for English constituencies would result in a greater degree of mutual assistance between Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters.³

Miall did not expect much progress upon Irish questions in the new Parliament; he urged the Liberation Society to undertake nothing which might obstruct a possible measure of parliamentary reform, and the society accepted his recommendation.⁴ The proper activity for the society was the preparation of public opinion in the constituencies. But behind the scenes, there is evidence of close collaboration between voluntaryists and Irish catholics, in which Miall was active. In the Lords, the Bishop of Derry condemned, "...the unnatural and unholy alliance between the Liberation Society and the Irish National Association."⁵ The bishop's fears were not without foundation. A deputation from the Liberation Society, of which Miall was a member, met with Sir John Gray and other Irish members, and agreed upon the terms of a motion which Gray was to introduce, calling upon Parliament to give urgent consideration to the position of the Irish Church, which was a major cause of dissatisfaction in Ireland.⁶ At this point, the

1. Gladstone to Phillimore, 13.II.1865 BM Add Mss 44277, ff245-246.
Gladstone to Sir William Brady, 15.IV.1865, Gladstone Papers BM Add Mss 44535, ff45-6.
2. Nonconformist, 26.VII.1865, p593
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.VII.1865
4. Nonconformist, 22.XI.1865. The Liberation Society resolved that the main efforts of voluntaryists should be directed to the abolition of church rates, but everything must give way if a measure of parliamentary reform were introduced. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XI.1865
5. Nonconformist, 21.III.1866, pp231-232
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 2.III.1866; 9.III.1866; 20.IV.1866.

Liberation Society was evidently satisfied to allow others to take the initiative, and regarded Gray as the leader in this question: "...both English and Irish voluntaries...have cheerfully consented that he should lead them."¹ The alliance, however, did not deceive Daunt; he realised it was a mutual convenience, and said as much to the secretary of the National Association, in a letter which the Liberator published:

"The English voluntaries are the only party in England in whom I have any real confidence. Not that I ascribe to them any chivalrous enthusiasm for Irish rights, but they have a frank and generous spirit of fair play: and the fact that our question is also their own affords ample ground for full faith that they will heartily and loyally give us all the help in their power."²

Within this framework of mutual convenience, Daunt regarded Miall as a key figure, and attempted to find a parliamentary seat for him. He wrote to the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Leahy, suggesting Miall as a suitable successor to Dillon as member for Tipperary, but Leahy replied that, "from many local causes," Miall would have no chance of success.³

The Liberal ministry failed to pass its Parliamentary reform bill; it resigned, and Disraeli took office with a minority government. He passed a wide-ranging measure of Parliamentary reform, which delighted the Liberation Society. Addressing it, Miall pronounced the Irish Church doomed as soon as the reformed Parliament met. The only remaining danger was that an attempt would be made to solve the Irish question upon the basis of concurrent endowment. The Liberation Society had already resolved to support any motion for disestablishment which Gray might choose to introduce.⁴ The time was now ripe for a settlement of the Irish

1. Liberator, March 1866, p41

2. Liberator, May 1866, p70

3. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 22.IX.1866; 2.X.1866. Later, Daunt paid tribute to Leahy as a man who was, "...eminently useful in the disestablishment campaign," and without whose help it would have been more difficult to effect a union between the English voluntarists and the Irish Catholic hierarchy. Journal 29.I.1875

4. Nonconformist, 2.V.1867, pp346-351. Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.I.1867. This fear probably has reference to a bill introduced by Sir Colam O'Loughlin, which proposed making loans available to the Roman Catholic clergy for the purchase of glebes, and the construction of residences. The Liberation Society condemned the proposal as one of concurrent endowment, and persuaded O'Loughlin to withdraw the objectionable clauses. Liberation Society, Minute Book 24.V.1867.

Church question. There was a firm alliance between the Liberation Society and the National Association. Bright, who could deliver a considerable body of radical support, and Gladstone were both convinced that the Irish establishment must cease to exist, and Gladstone had indicated his agreement with Bright's proposals.¹ With Palmerston's death and Russell's resignation of the party leadership, the field was open to Gladstone. Gladstone made his views upon the Irish Church public at Southport, feeling less inhibited upon church questions since he had ceased to represent Oxford;² Miall had detected encouraging signs earlier, when he commented upon a speech of Gladstone's; "...his mind is making rapid progress."³ Parliament had been reformed, and Miall regarded the new situation as favourable to voluntarists:

"...we have now good hope that disestablishment and disendowment will be found to be the only practicable solution to the question at issue, and we take it as virtually settled that it will be disposed of by the first Parliament elected under the provisions of the new Reform Act."⁴

Finally, Fenian agitation made it imperative to find some means of pacifying Ireland; according to Daunt, it was the view of Carvell Williams, the secretary of the Liberation Society, that the Fenian disturbances would accelerate the disestablishment of the Irish Church, "...by compelling statesmen to take measures calculated to remove or diminish the prevalent disaffection."⁵

Miall had played a major rôle in securing the alliance between the Liberation Society and the National Association, uniting Irish catholicism with militant dissent: Bright, sympathetic both to Irish disestablishment and

1. Gladstone to Bright, 10.XII.1867. BM Add Mss (Bright Papers) 43385, ff20-21. See also D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church & Religion of W.E. Gladstone i, 154-155. W. Williams, The rise of Gladstone to the leadership of the Liberal party 1859 to 1868 (Cambridge 1934) ppl61f.
2. P. Magnus, Gladstone: a biography. (London 1954) pl91
3. Nonconformist, 15.V.1867, p389. The Liberator described the speech as a "...note of warning to all establishments, whether in Ireland, or in Wales, or in Scotland, or in England." Liberator, June 1867, pl11
4. Nonconformist, 28.VIII.1867, p697
5. O'Neill Daunt, Journal, 16.III.1867

to the Liberation Society and the National Association, brought to the alliance the support of middle-class radicals. He also found common ground with Gladstone, who spoke for the mass of Liberal M.P.s. Here, in essence, were the basic elements of Gladstone's coalition of 1868. One more element was added thanks to the efforts of the Liberation Society, the support of the newly enfranchised working classes, whose support it secured initially over the Irish Church question. It may be well to anticipate events, and trace this development.

The correspondence of George Howell, secretary of the National Reform League, reveals that he was in contact with leaders of radical dissent such as Kell, Salt and Illingworth, all of whom contributed to the funds of the National Reform League.¹ Howell himself worked to secure the return of the dissenting leader, Samuel Morley, for Bristol in the general election of 1868, and when the Reform League had achieved its immediate objective, he defined the next major political issues as the "...Irish Church, Education, the completion of the Reform Bill, etc."² Howell was introduced to Carvell Williams by Charles Gilpin, and wrote to the Liberation Society offering the services of himself and his colleagues in bringing about the abolition of the Irish Church establishment. In return, he hoped the Liberation Society would help meet some of the financial commitments of the League.³ He attached great importance to co-operation between middle and working-class reformers:

"...the greater the element of our middle class in these movements, the less violent and more progressive will be the results. For there will be no fear of counter plotting and reaction."⁴

In a lecture to the Pimlico branch of the League, Howell asserted that "...the Irish State Church is doomed..." because its abolition now had the

1. Howell to Kell, 11.II.1868; 3.II.1868; Howell Papers, (Bishopsgate Institute) Letter Book 4. Howell to Illingworth, 11.II.1868, Letter Book 4.
2. Howell to W.E. Forster, 15.II.1868, Howell Papers, Letter Book 4 f297
3. Howell to Carvell Williams, 21.II.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4, f304
4. Howell to D. Black, 22.II.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4, f307

support of Irish catholics, radical dissenters represented by the Liberation Society, English radicals, and political leaders such as Gladstone, Bright and John Stuart Mill.¹ The minutes of the Reform League's Executive Committee refer to an Irish Church Committee, whose members were Holyoake, Acland, Odger and Cooper;² the president, Beales, moved a resolution at a meeting of the General Council, that,

"...the people of this country have, as I conceive, an imperative duty now devolved upon them...by securing the return to the next Parliament...of men determined to insist upon full and complete political and religious justice and equality for our Irish brethren."³

When Gladstone introduced his resolutions upon the Irish Church, Howell congratulated him and declared that the League would support his policy as being in the interests of civil and religious liberty.⁴ Carvell Williams provided copies of the Liberation Society's tracts upon the Irish Church question which Howell distributed,⁵ and Howell proposed that the Reform League and the Liberation Society collaborate in the forthcoming general election.⁶ Carvell Williams replied to Howell, informing him that the Liberation Society had voted £50 to defray his expenses in conducting agitation on the Irish question, but the letter betrayed the distrust of the Liberation Society towards its new allies. No lump sum would be given, merely cash payments against submitted accounts.⁷ But however insecurely based, this was the alliance between militant dissent and working-class radicals which Miall had sought to establish as far back as 1841; it represents an important stage in the development of the 'Lib-Lab' alliance.⁸

1. The notes for this speech are in Howell's Letter Book 4 f386
2. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Reform League 16.I.1868 (Bishopsgate Institute)
3. Minute Book of the General Council of the National Reform League 24.VI.1868
4. Howell to Gladstone 2.IV.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4 f394
5. Howell to Carvell Williams, 2.IV.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4 f396; 5.VIII.1868, Ibid. f585. 5.IX.1868, Ibid. f640
6. Howell to Carvell Williams, 24.VI.1868, Howell Papers Letter Book 4 f519
7. Carvell Williams to Howell, 4.VII.1868. Letters received by Howell are in envelopes by year. See also Liberation Society, Minute Book 26.VI.1868.
8. B. Harrison & P. Hollis. "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery." English Historical Review Vol.82, July 1967, p532

Since some settlement of the Irish Church question was now regarded as inevitable, the Liberation Society saw its major task as ensuring that the terms were acceptable. When Russell introduced a motion for a commission to investigate the Irish Church, it instantly suspected this was a move towards concurrent endowment; the executive committee was urged to take steps, "...to influence public opinion against any measures to endow Irish Roman Catholics or other dissenting bodies."¹ Daunt, too, suspected that Russell intended concurrent endowment, and believed that his hostility to the Irish establishment was simply a device to gain Irish support.² The Liberator described Russell's proposals as "uncalled for", "inadequate" and "mischievous",³ and the executive committee voted £50 for the insertion of a resolution condemning concurrent endowment in forty-five newspapers.⁴ At the next meeting, Miall was instrumental in setting up a committee to have oversight of the Irish Church question, and to make policy recommendations.⁵ Further action was agreed upon at a meeting of the parliamentary committee, which Miall chaired; it was decided that the society's secretary should visit Ireland.⁶ Daunt arranged the details of his visit. Carvell Williams informed him he was coming to acquire information and to enlist help for the coming anti-state church campaign; Daunt wrote to several catholic bishops on behalf of Carvell Williams, whom he considered, "...a highly intelligent and practical man of business, whose heart is in the cause of disendowment."⁷ Carvell Williams reported upon his visit on 4th October. He had visited Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry and Belfast, and had received a cordial welcome both from Roman Catholic bishops and from dissenters. All parties had been assured of the

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 3.VII.1867
2. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 25.XII.1865; 29.V.1867
3. Liberator, Aug. 1867, p150
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.VII.1867, f454
5. Ibid., 19.VII.1867
6. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 26.VII.1867
Liberation Society, Minute Book 2.VIII.1867, f463
7. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 7.IX.1867

interest of the Liberal party in the Irish Church question, and of the determination of the Liberation Society to make it into an electoral issue. He had emphasised that impartial disendowment was the only basis upon which the society's co-operation against the episcopal establishment could be expected, and he found general agreement to this condition among Roman Catholics. It was equally gratifying that the Presbyterian body was prepared to give up the Regium Donum.¹

The visit bore immediate fruit, in a declaration by the Irish Catholic bishops at Dublin, by which they resolved, "...not to accept for their Church any proportion of the property now held by the Irish establishment, or any state endowment whatever."² The actual groundwork, however, had been the achievement of Daunt, who, realising that the only basis of co-operation was the voluntary principle, secured from Irish bishops a commitment to it; he wrote to Leahy of Cashel, expressing his fear that the government would introduce a measure of concurrent endowment, and warning him that, "...any deviation on our part from the pure voluntary principle would be ruinous."³ Leahy assured him that nothing would induce the hierarchy to abandon the voluntary basis of the Catholic church,⁴ and he later asked Daunt to write to all the bishops in the province of Cashel, requesting their active compliance in the agitation for disestablishment.⁵ In the same year, Daunt and Sir John Gray worked hard to frustrate an attempt by Aubrey de Vere to commit the National Association to claim a share of the revenues of the Church of Ireland. At the annual meeting of the Association, Daunt carried a motion committing it to uncompromising voluntaryism, armed with a letter of support from Leahy, and an assurance that "...the cardinal is of the same opinion."⁶ When in October 1867,

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.X.1867, ff479-480
2. Ibid. 18.X.1867. Nonconformist, 23.X.1867, p861. See also P.M.H. Bell Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales p63.
3. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 27.XII.1865
4. Ibid., 30.XII.1865
5. Ibid., 3.VII.1866
6. Ibid., 8.I.1867; 4.I.1867.

Leahy informed him that the Catholic bishops, meeting in Dublin, had unanimously rejected the principle of state support for the Roman Catholic church, Daunt observed, "There is nothing now to interrupt our alliance with the English voluntaries. Verily I have not laboured in vain."¹

Sir John Gray informed Gladstone of the strength of feeling in favour of voluntaryism as the only practical basis of a settlement,² and Gladstone, while admitting that his personal preference had been towards Russell's view, promised Gray there would be no interference, "...with whatever may seem to be the most hopeful mode of delivering the country from a great mischief and a great scandal."³

Thus all parties in the alliance had declared their commitment to a voluntaryist solution, and Miall's Irish Church committee worked to cement the alliance. It urged the National Association to commission Daunt to publish an address to English liberals: it proposed that the Liberation Society should publish as a tract a paper by Daunt upon the Irish Church. The offer of the Irish Congregational Magazine to provide publicity throughout Ireland was accepted, and the society offered £10 towards the cost. Copies of the Liberator were to be circulated gratuitously in Ireland for six months, and a conference of leading liberals and dissenters was to be organised.⁴ The conference was held on 11th December 1867, and resolved upon a policy of impartial disestablishment and disendowment for Ireland.⁵

Following the conference, the Irish Church committee recommended an extensive press and publicity campaign. A number of short pamphlets, such as Miall's speech of 1856, were to be published, in addition to a series of slightly larger tracts. Twelve lecturers were appointed throughout the kingdom, who were to give a minimum of five lectures each, at a fee of ten guineas. That such a campaign was likely to be effective is evident from

1. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 8.X.1867
2. Gray to Gladstone, 2.IX.1867, Gladstone Papers BM Add Mss 44413, ff121-125.
3. Gladstone to Gray, 6.IX.1867, Ibid. ff 134-135
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.X.1867. Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 22.X.1867.
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 13.XII.1867. Miall was chairman of the conference, and took the lead in committing it to disendowment. Nonconformist, 18.XII.1867, pp1026f.

the fact that during the two previous years, half a million of the society's publications had been circulated.¹

Miall believed that with a reformed Parliament, the settlement of the Irish Church question was only a matter of time. In October 1867 he became liberal candidate for Bradford at a by-election; his election address and speeches make it clear that the only real question for him was the form the settlement would take. Carvell Williams had visited Bradford in his support,² and Miall made the Irish Church question the main plank in his platform. Discussing the tasks facing a reformed Parliament when it should be elected, he said,

"...first among them I rank a re-adjustment of the relations of law to religious institutions. I shall strive for perfect religious equality...I wish to put all ecclesiastical bodies upon a footing of self-support and self-government. On these principles, Parliament will be shortly compelled to deal with the Protestant Church Establishment in Ireland. I believe that it will best secure that object by the secularisation of the revenues at present in the possession of that Church... and that such a settlement would satisfy the wishes of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland, as well as the demands of reason, justice and religion."³

In a subsequent speech, he hinted at the danger that Parliament might still be thinking in terms of concurrent endowment, instead of grappling with the problem effectively, by making sure that the Irish people benefitted from the disestablishment of the Irish Church.⁴ Miall was unsuccessful on this occasion, but the Liberation Society found evidence in the parliamentary session of a growing feeling in favour of total disestablishment; a motion introduced by Gray which called for an inquiry into the Irish Church with a view to its disestablishment was defeated by only 12 votes. The debate on Russell's motion had indicated a wide interest in the question, and the prospects of elections under a reformed and extended franchise,

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 10.I.1868
2. Bradford Review, 28.IX.1867, p4
3. Bradford Observer, 3.X.1867, pp3-5. Nonconformist, 2.X.1867, p816
4. Nonconformist, 9.X.1867. On the strength of his views on concurrent endowment, the Bradford Review gave him its support, Bradford Review, 5.X.1867

"...cannot but greatly increase their political influence, and put within their reach the realization of results which, under the existing political system they have not ventured to contemplate."¹

Miall's original analysis of the importance of electoral reform was thus belatedly endorsed by his dissenting colleagues. When he reviewed the events of 1867, he looked forward with confidence to a general election, certain of success both because of the factors mentioned by the Liberation Society, and because he felt that Fenian disturbances in Ireland would pre-dispose electors to support candidates who favoured Irish disestablishment.² The Liberation Society resolved to make the Irish Church question a test for candidates at the coming general election.³

Miall's main anxiety now was that Liberals would be nervous lest Irish disestablishment were simply a prelude to an assault upon the Church of England, and would seek a compromise. In 1865, Lord Derby had warned Disraeli of this danger,⁴ and Gladstone wrote to Roundell Palmer;

"The great danger of the time now is that, through the action of the adversary, the case of the English Church will be put into the same category with the case of the Irish."⁵

Palmer himself wrote a pamphlet to show that there was no valid parallel between the cases of England and Ireland,⁶ but the Eclectic Review made it entirely clear that dissenters regarded the destruction of the Irish establishment as the first stage in an assault upon the Church of England.⁷ Miall had never concealed that this was his intention, but he was worried at the ammunition it gave to opponents of disestablishment. Indeed, opponents did exploit this fear. A pamphlet published for the National

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VIII.1867
2. Nonconformist, 24.XII.1867, p1045. This view was endorsed by J.C. Morison; writing in the Fortnightly Review, he believed that Irish disorders would compel the government to deal with the Irish Church in a radical manner. Fortnightly Review, Jan. 1868, p93
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 13.XII.1867
4. W.D. Jones, Lord Derby and Victorian Conservatism (Oxford 1956) p337
5. Gladstone to Roundell Palmer, 4.IV.1868, D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone i, 155-156
6. Lord Selborne, A defence of the Church of England against disestablishment 5th edition (London 1911) pp232-233.
7. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIV 1868, pp465-470

Protestant Union argued that, once the Irish Church was disestablished, Liberationists would expect the support of Irish M.P.s in destroying the Church of England.¹ A meeting of the Central Dublin Protestant Defence Association stressed the destructive intentions of the Liberation Society, naming Miall as its main protagonist.² The Bishop of Oxford, addressing a meeting in St. James' Hall, paid unintentional tribute to the effectiveness of the Liberation Society. He contended that the Roman Catholics of Ireland had no inherently strong feelings against the Irish establishment; these feelings had been aroused,

"...by the emissaries of the English Liberation Society. The meetings held against the Established Church in Ireland have been held by them, and they, knowing the hopelessness at the present moment of making a direct attack on England have opened their trenches at a distance, intending to come upon the citadel when they have wasted the outworks."³

A public letter by Russell proposed disestablishment, but suggested a division of the resources among all the sects in Ireland. Miall suspected that Russell made this proposal because, while it would work in Ireland, it could not possibly be applied in England, and hence Irish disestablishment could not serve as a precedent.⁴ Such a solution might prove attractive to liberals, and at a breakfast organised by the Liberation Society for dissenting M.P.s, Miall warned liberal leaders that any scheme for general endowment in Ireland would split the Liberal party, as dissenters would never support it.⁵ The Liberation Society considered sending a deputation to Gladstone, but contented itself with assuring him of its support for a policy of impartial disendowment.⁶

Gladstone, however, was less amenable to external pressure than Miall and the Liberation Society seemed to imagine. On 23rd March, he introduced

1. The Irish Difficulty (London 1868) 24pp. This is in the B.M., bound in a collection of pamphlets entitled Irish Church Pamphlets 1868
2. Report on the proceedings of the Central Dublin Protestant Defence Association (Dublin 1868) p54. Bound as above
3. Speeches delivered at the Great Meeting held in St. James' Hall on May 6th 1868 in support of the United Church of England and Ireland. (London 1868) pp15-16. Bound as above. See also Times, 4.IX.1868, p6, which expressed a similar fear.
4. Nonconformist, 7.III.1868, p217
5. Nonconformist, 14.III.1868, p242. Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.III.1868
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.III.1868

his celebrated resolutions upon the Irish Church, which called for its end as an establishment, proposed the creation of no new personal interests in it, and requested the Queen to place her interest in its temporalities at the disposal of Parliament.¹ These resolutions had the effect of uniting his supporters, whilst dividing the Conservatives. The majority of dissenters supported the stand taken by the Liberation Society, though the Wesleyan Conference remained uncommitted.²

Miall regarded Gladstone's resolutions as definitive of the Liberal's attitude; the resolutions must serve as a test for all candidates.³ The Liberation Society resolved to give all possible support to Gladstone, by organising meetings in the provinces, by lobbying M.P.s, and by reprinting Miall's speech of 1856 on the Irish Church. It was also resolved to defray the expenses, up to £40, of a meeting in support of Gladstone's resolutions organised by the London Working Men's Association.⁴ Later in the year, it voted £200 to cover the expenses of meetings, and the National Reform League contributed £50, another instance of the increasingly strong links between the society and working-class leaders.⁵

Gladstone's resolutions were debated, and Disraeli's minority government was defeated upon a motion to go into committee. Disraeli wished to resign immediately, but a general election was postponed until November, to allow the preparation of new voters' lists.⁶ Miall used the interval to address meetings, putting the case for disestablishment, at Bradford in April, and at a meeting of the National Reform Union in London later in the same month. Russell was present at this latter meeting, and paid tribute to Miall's longstanding advocacy of the question.⁷ In the parliamentary

1. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland p235
P.T. Marsh The Victorian Church in decline (London 1969) pp19-20;
O. Chadwick The Victorian Church ii, 428
2. H. Hanham, Elections and Party Management p212
3. Nonconformist, 28.III.1868, pp289, 390. British Quarterly Review XLVII (1868), p505
4. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 24.III.1868
Liberation Society, Minute Book 27.III.1868
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.IV.1868; 26.VI.1868
6. W.F. Monypenny & G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (London 1929) ii, 367f
7. Nonconformist, 8.IV.1868 p338; 22.IV.1868 p386. Liberation Society
Minute Book 17.IV.1868

debates Miall and the Liberation Society were widely regarded as the villains of the piece, Miall in particular being quoted by both sides in the debate.¹

The Liberator maintained that Gladstone's position was entirely satisfactory:

"No voluntary could desire from Mr. Gladstone anything more complete or satisfactory than the principles on which he takes his stand in dealing with the Irish Establishment."²

However, there were signs of unease in the voluntaryist ranks. Daunt suspected that Gladstone's support of disendowment was simply a political calculation; he himself hoped disestablishment would be a prelude to the repeal of the Union. He expected that the alliance between Irish Catholics and English voluntaries would compel Gladstone to remain faithful to his commitments, but, "...he will probably require pressure..." lest he be tempted by any scheme for the partition of the revenues of the Irish Church amongst other sects.³ Carvell Williams wrote to Gladstone asking him to clarify his position on disendowment; he claimed he had spent some time reassuring a prominent Irish Roman Catholic that Gladstone did not intend to re-endow the Church of Ireland with much of the property it currently held. There had been other such enquiries, and Williams suggested that Gladstone,

"...would render further service to the cause for which you have already done so much by enabling me to give to my correspondents such an authoritative explanation of your intentions as would remove all misconceptions of this character."⁴

The prominent Irish Roman Catholics were evidently allies of the Liberation Society, and Daunt was one of them. He recorded the receipt on 18th May of a letter from Carvell Williams, in which Williams assured him that Gladstone had denied that he meant to capitalise the revenues of the Irish Church to give the episcopal clergy any more than compensation for life interests. Daunt

1. e.g. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXCI, pp1659-1672
2. Liberator, May 1868, pp76-77
3. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 25.III.1868; 6.IV.1868
4. Carvell Williams to Gladstone, 12.V.1868. Gladstone Papers BM Add.Mss 44415, f40

observed, "It is well to have obtained this disclaimer."¹

The Liberation Society determined to make the Irish Church question the main election issue. The executive committee circulated a list of candidates whom it felt deserved support, and resolved that the other questions in which the society was interested must be subordinated to the Irish Church.² Miall once again fought the election as a liberal candidate at Bradford, along with W.E. Forster. Naturally the Irish Church question figured prominently in his election address and his speeches:

"I hold it to be the first duty of the Reformed Parliament to remove once and for all this institutional memorial of an ecclesiastical supremacy naturally affronting to the self-respect of five-sixths of the Irish people."³

At a joint meeting with his electoral colleague, W.E. Forster praised Miall's advocacy of the Irish Church question, and said that he himself had become convinced of the need for Irish disestablishment as a result of Miall's speech in 1856.⁴

Miall was defeated at Bradford; the working class Beehive, which had regarded the Irish Church question as the "...hinge upon which the general election will turn," regretted Miall's defeat as proof that electors did not fully appreciate the importance of religious equality.⁵ The election inquiry, which was called to consider allegations of bribery against both Forster and Ripley, Miall's victorious opponent, revealed that the Irish Church was a central issue in Bradford. Ripley had formed, "...a neutralising committee, that is to keep the Irish people from voting for Mr. Miall", since it was believed that the considerable body of Irish voters in Bradford would support Miall unreservedly.⁶ One witness stated that he feared he would be killed

1. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 18.V.1868
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 12.VI.1868
3. Nonconformist, 12.VIII.1868, p796. Bradford Review, 13.VIII.1868
4. Nonconformist, 14.X.1868, p1014
5. Beehive, 19.IX.1868, p4; 21.XI.1868, p4
6. Bradford Election Petition Parliamentary Papers (28) XLVIII, pp703-720

by the Irish party if he canvassed for Miall's opponent,¹ and the essence of the case against Ripley was that he had attempted to prevent the Irish voters, numbering some 2,300, from voting for Miall.² W.E. Forster, against whom Ripley petitioned, confirmed that the majority of Irish voters had promised to support Miall.³

Though Miall's defeat was a disappointment, the election results as a whole delighted the Liberation Society. The Liberator observed, "...the result of the election has doomed the Irish establishment to destruction...has driven its defenders from power."⁴ The Nonconformist, certain that the election had centred around the Irish Church question, believed that Gladstone had received an overwhelming mandate for its disestablishment.⁵ The Liberal party could count upon a majority of about 120 for the disestablishment of the Irish Church,⁶ and Arthur Miall, extolling the success of the society's electoral campaign in Wales where it had helped secure the return of 23 liberals as against 10 conservatives, believed that 95 members of the new Parliament opposed establishments on principle.⁷ Lord Derby remarked that much of the support gained by Gladstone was the result of the "...un-ceasing efforts of the Liberation Society."⁸

The report of the Liberation Society's electoral committee reveals the enormous effort made by the society in the 1868 election campaign, which it saw as a contest solely in terms of the fate of the Irish Church. The society and the Liberal party were now mutually dependent:

"It has, in fact, been conclusively shown, that, essential as may be the leadership of the Liberal party to accomplish disestablishment in Ireland, that party has, to a large extent, still to rely on the Society and its supporters for those

1. Bradford Election Petition Parliamentary Papers (28) XLVIII, p740
2. Ibid., p744
3. Ibid., p902
4. Liberator, Jan. 1869, p7. Dec. 1868, p205
5. Nonconformist, 25.XI.1868, p1156. cf Times, 3.VII.1868; See also H. Hanham, Elections and Party Management pp204-217; E.R. Norman, The Catholic Church and Ireland p349
6. M. Cowling, 1867. Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution (Cambridge 1967) p71
7. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp263-264
8. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXCVII, p29

tuitional efforts which are needed to influence the minds and the political action of the masses of the people."¹

The detailed objective of its campaign makes clear how real was its fear of concurrent endowment, even at this stage. It had sought,

"...to ensure the defeat of any design for the extension of State endowment in Ireland, and hasten the adoption of the only effectual substitute - the disestablishment of the Church of England in Ireland: the impartial disendowment of all religious bodies in that country, and the application of the ecclesiastical property of the nation to national and unsectarian purposes."²

The resemblance to Miall's resolutions of 1856 needs no stress.³ Between December 1867 and November 1868 the society had organised 515 meetings on the Irish Church question, and produced 44 separate publications, of which 1,070,000 copies had been circulated throughout the kingdom, mostly, it was claimed, among non-members of the society. A total of £3,145 had been spent on Irish Church agitation:⁴ 825,000 tracts and 57,000 placards had been distributed,⁵ Apart from Miall's defeat at Bradford, the society's only casualty was the resignation of Samuel Morley: in a well-publicised letter, he made it clear that, while approving of the society's campaign against the Irish Church, he would not support the application of the principle of disestablishment in England.⁶

The society's Irish Church Committee now saw it as its duty to attempt to influence the details of legislation upon the Irish Church. It issued a handbook entitled Practical Suggestions, which set out its ideas. A copy was sent to Gladstone, together with the offer of a deputation consisting of Miall, Carvell Williams and Henry Richard, so that he would be fully aware of the society's requirements.⁷ Gladstone, though well aware of the differing elements forming his majority, drafted the Irish

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.XII.1868

2. Ibid.

3. See above p292

4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.XII.1868

5. Ibid., 11.IX.1868. See also J. Vincent, The formation of the Liberal Party. p69.

6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 18.XII.1868. See also E. Hodder, The Life of Samuel Morley (London 1888) pp212-214.

7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 22.I.1869

Church Bill without making overtures to any of them.¹ Nevertheless, attempts were made to influence him; Robert Lowe stressed that the bill must be based upon the principle that the property of the church was state property, which Parliament could dispose of as it wished.² This was in fact Gladstone's intention; once just claims had been satisfied,

"...the ecclesiastical property of Ireland should be held and applied for the general advantage of the Irish people, and not for the maintenance of any Church or Clergy or other ministry, nor for the teaching of religion..."³

He had also decided to abolish both the Maynooth Grant and the Irish Regium Donum.⁴

As yet unaware how closely Gladstone's proposals approximated to his own ideas, Miall tried to press his own views upon Gladstone. He wrote to him on 23rd January, saying that he and his colleagues,

"...are naturally anxious that the measure or measures about to be proposed to Parliament for the disestablishment of the Irish Church should be of a character which will enable them to give the government their heartiest support."

He felt it would be a tragedy if they could not support the government in its attempt to give expression to the will of the nation as expressed at the recent election: but recalling the courtesy with which Gladstone had received their representations at the time of the church rates bill, Miall hoped he would again be disposed to accept their suggestions. A copy of Practical Suggestions on Irish Disestablishment was enclosed, and Miall offered to call upon Gladstone along with two or three colleagues to clarify any obscurity.⁵ Gladstone summarised the letter and commented upon the Practical Suggestions; he noted that they seemed, "...very

1. J. Morley Life of Gladstone ii, 257f. P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales pp70f, 112f. P.T. Marsh The Victorian Church in decline p30. Gladstone remarked, "Our three corps d'armée...have been Scottish Presbyterians, English and Welsh Nonconformists, and Irish Roman Catholics." J. Morley Op.cit. ii, 259
2. Lowe to Gladstone, 3.II.1869, Gladstone Papers B.M.Add Mss 44301, ff37-38
3. Draft preamble of the Irish Church Bill. Gladstone Papers B.M. Add Mss 44756, ff157f. Gladstone later added the phrase, "...and especially for the relief of unavoidable catastrophe and suffering." Ibid.
4. Memoranda on Irish Church Bill. Ibid. ff183-194
5. Miall to Gladstone, 23.I.1869. Gladstone Papers B.M. Add.Mss 44418, ff198-199. Copy in Liberation Society Minutes 5.II.69 Written as the result of a decision by the executive committee of the Liberation Society, Minute Book 22.I.1869

reasonable, and coincide wonderfully with the...intentions of the Government."¹
In his reply to Miall, he promised to bring the points raised by him to the notice of his colleagues, and expressed optimism about the relations of the government with dissenters: "...after perusing this able statement, I retain the cheerful view of our relative position which I entertained before reading it." He did not feel it necessary to receive the deputation, and asked Miall and his colleagues to accept the Irish Church bill as a whole, and not to jeopardise its success with opposition over trivial points:

"Even this I say not at all in the prospect of any special disagreement on particulars, but simply because it is the only principle on which very large and complex measures can be justly or successfully dealt with."²

Miall wrote to Gladstone at the behest of the Liberation Society,³ and became a member of a sub-committee which was given oversight of the Irish Church question in Parliament.⁴ He and Henry Richard had a long conversation with John Bright, in which they discussed the society's Practical Suggestions.⁵ Bright reported the conversation to Gladstone, warning him that Miall was suspicious of the degree of compensation which might be given to the Church of Ireland. Evidently Miall feared that compensation might be given to the episcopal church on the basis of its present complement of 2,000 ministers whereas, after disestablishment, it would only be able to justify 500 ministers. Bright thought there was substance in Miall's objections, and warned Gladstone not to ignore him:

"I thought the temper of the Deputation, on the whole, cool and moderate. Mr. Miall, as you will know, was most reasonable and right minded - but, I think, to go beyond his view will not be very safe - for he is, as I have always been, more willing to yield a good deal on this matter than many of the most active of the Nonconformist body."⁶

1. Gladstone's summary of Miall's letter and notes on enclosure. Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss.44418, ff200-201
2. Gladstone to Miall, 27.I.1869 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss. 44536, ff105-106. Ibid. (same letter) B.M.Add.Mss. 44535 ff105-106 Copy in Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.II.1869
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 22.I.1869
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.II.1869, f28
5. Ibid.
6. Bright to Gladstone, 14.II.1869, Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss.44112. ff83-86.

321

This must be one of the few occasions when Miall was regarded as a moderate. Copies of Practical Suggestions, which was not designed for public consumption, were sent to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Duke of Argyll, Robert Lowe, John Bright and Bruce.¹ Miall published a series of papers on Irish Church property in the Nonconformist, claiming that the property of the Irish Church was the property of the nation, and arguing that Parliament could dispose of it as it pleased.²

Miall was not present in Parliament when the Irish Church bill was introduced on 1st March 1869. His victorious opponent at Bradford, Ripley, had been unseated following an appeal by Miall, but Miall was obliged to contest the seat yet again. He had the support of prominent working-class leaders in his campaign: Robert Applegarth commended him to a meeting of Bradford trade unionists, mentioning his work in connection with the Irish Church.³ The Beehive was unstinting in its praise for him:

"Of living men...he has done more than can be placed to the credit of any other politician in bringing to their present pass matters concerning the State Church in Ireland."⁴

On this occasion, Miall was successful, and became junior member for Bradford.⁵

Gladstone's Irish Church Bill delighted him; it involved both disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church, and the appropriation of its resources for secular purposes. The Maynooth Grant, the Regium Donum and church courts were all to be abolished: "Our expectations are fully realised. Our desires are substantially met."⁶ The Liberation Society was no less enthusiastic, deeming the bill entirely worthy of the support of the friends of religious liberty.⁷ Miall contributed a speech to the debate on the

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.II.1869; 19.II.1869. P.M.H. Bell Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales p115
2. Nonconformist, 27.I.1869 to 17.III.1869
3. Bradford Review, 6.III.1869, p5
4. Beehive, 8.V.1869, p4
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p291
6. Nonconformist, 3.III.1869. P.T. Marsh, The Victorian Church in decline pp31-32.
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.III.1869

second reading of the bill. He confessed that he could say nothing new about the matter, and had decided to speak only because he regarded his election as a mark of the approval of the electorate for the bill. He gave his unqualified support to the bill and to its author. Justice would be given to Ireland by the removal of this grievance, and it was not without significance that, as soon as working men were given the franchise, they supported the cause of justice.¹ It was not an impressive speech. Thomas Binney told Dr. Allon, "...Miall was too personal, as to himself, I mean; but sensible."² Arthur Miall explained that his father was suffering from nervous prostration,³ but it no longer mattered whether Miall spoke well or badly. His success had been to help make the question a public issue; the fact that Parliament was discussing the question meant that religious equality was no longer a sectarian issue, but a national question.⁴ At its annual meeting, the Liberation Society felt able to congratulate itself, and Miall made a speech in praise of the bill, which was still going through its parliamentary stages, confident that it would serve as a precedent for the more formidable task of dealing with the Church of England.⁵ At a breakfast given by the society for Miall, he received general acclaim for his work, and in particular from an Irish M.P., Maguire, who congratulated him upon his contribution to the pacification of Ireland.

When the bill was sent up to the Lords, it met with much more hostility than it had received in the Commons. Archbishop Tait managed to avert its outright rejection,⁶ but it was amended substantially. Lord Derby, exaggerating Miall's influence, announced that he had prepared the bill along with the Liberation Society, and Bright had forced it upon the cabinet:

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXCV, pp1856-1862
2. Binney to Allon, 20.III.1869, in A. Peel Letters to a Victorian Editor (London 1929) p289
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p301
4. Nonconformist, 24.III.1869, p265
5. Ibid., 12.V.1869, pp433, 460, 461
6. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland p268
P.T. Marsh, The Victorian Church in decline pp33-37.

"...this Bill in a great measure proceeds from a measure prepared under the auspices of the Liberation Society, and introduced into the other House by Mr. Miall."¹ The Earl of Harrowby went into greater detail; he highlighted the connection between the Liberation Society and the Irish Catholics, for which Daunt was held responsible, and claimed that the present bill followed precisely the principles advocated by Miall in 1856. It was, "...a measure of the Liberation Society as part of a campaign against Church establishments; and not a measure for purely Irish objects."² On behalf of the government, Clarendon denied any connection between it and the Liberation Society.³ In their amendments, the Lords attempted to salvage what they could of the endowments of the Irish Church, and the Liberation Society, in company with the Dissenting Deputies, prepared to organise meetings to protest against their defiance of the will of the electorate.⁴ Bright warned the Lords that if they persisted in this course, "...they may meet accidents not pleasant for them to think of,"⁵ and Gladstone had no wish to betray his supporters, as he made clear to Granville:

"I take it for granted we do not mean to carry this Bill against our friends by the votes of our opponents. That is an alternative quite possible, but plainly, I think, to be rejected."⁶

He declined to accept the Lords' amendments, and the Commons rejected them by a majority of 89.⁷ Carvell Williams sent Gladstone a copy of the resolutions passed by a mass meeting of dissenters in which the Liberation Society played a major part; they affirmed the support of dissenters for the government bill, and pointed out that the support of dissenters for protestantism was at least disinterested.⁸ Eventually a compromise was reached, which Miall and his colleagues found acceptable, as it left the fundamental principle of the bill intact.⁹

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXC VII, pp27-29
2. Ibid., CXC VI, pp1667-1674
3. Ibid., pl682
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 28.VI.1869. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1869, p609
5. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXC VII, pp5-6
6. Gladstone to Granville 18.VII.1869, Ed.A.Ramm The political correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1868-1876. (London 1952) i, 36
7. J. Morley, Life of Gladstone ii, 266-272. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXC VII, pp1891-1892; 1988-1992.
8. Carvell Williams to Gladstone, 3.VII.1869, Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss 44421 ff90, 95.
9. Nonconformist, 28.VII.1869, p705

In the Commons, Miall had almost the last word before the bill received the Royal Assent. Admitting that he was in an emotional state he said;

"I cannot but rejoice that one great and important principle of the Nonconformist body has now received legislative adoption. I believe it to be a principle of justice, and I think that in regard to Ireland the consequences of its adoption will soon appear, in greater harmony, greater social confidence among the people, and truer and more earnest exertions for the promotion of their religious ends...I congratulate the Right Hon. Gentleman on having conducted this great controversy to a successful issue, and I trust that the end of it will be the initiation of a new era of peace, harmony and prosperity for Ireland."¹

The bill became law on 26th July, and the Nonconformist remarked, "...we regard it as little short of a legislative miracle...The Liberation Society has had the honour of pioneering the way for this marvellous triumph."² Carvell Williams wrote to Gladstone expressing the gratitude of the Liberation Society³ and Gladstone, in his reply, noted,

"...we and the Committee may not be, and we are not at one in our abstract or general views of Church Establishments, but we have acted cordially together on broad and intelligible grounds when we agree, and we shall, I am sure, continue to respect each other when we may differ."⁴

The Liberation Society rejoiced to see its major objective achieved, after 25 years of work, in at least one part of the United Kingdom, and paid tribute both to dissenters, and to the Irish catholic body for their steadfast refusal to accept anything less than total disendowment.⁵ It was also pleased to note that, for the most part, the principles of its Practical Suggestions had been incorporated in the Act.⁶ Working-class opinion was no less delighted. The Beehive believed the session of 1868,

"...will be memorable in history as that in which the State Church as an integral part of the British Empire was dis-established and disendowed. It is, in fact, the session during which the broad and inevitably universal principle of religious equality was inaugurated."⁷

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXCVIII, pp590-591
2. Nonconformist, 28.VII.1869. See also Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VII.1869
3. Carvell Williams to Gladstone, 5.VIII.1869, Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss. 44421, f242. cf Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VII.1869. Liberator, Aug. 1869, pp130-131.
4. Gladstone to Carvell Williams 6.VIII.1869, Ibid. f247. Copy in Liberation Society Minutes 17.IX.1869, with similar letters from Bright and Granville.
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VII.1869
6. Ibid., 6.VIII.1869
7. Beehive, 14.VII.1869

Despite the reception given to the act by Miall and the Liberation Society, they did not consider it ideal. A suspicion had arisen during the Commons debates that Gladstone would compromise with the Irish Church over the disposal of glebe houses; the society's parliamentary committee noted this intention, and agreed that Miall should point out to Gladstone the objectionable character of such a proposal.¹ Miall wrote to Gladstone on 4th November, warning him that if he persisted in this course, many dissenting M.P.s would find themselves in a position of painful embarrassment. Though apparently a minor point,

"...it looks, or it seems to look in the direction of a policy of Parliamentary aid to religious bodies, which the Nonconformists of England and Scotland believed to have been finally abandoned, at least as far as Ireland is concerned."

Gladstone was informed that Miall and his colleagues would be under great pressure to oppose the government, and this might lead to a split in the Liberal party. Miall undertook to try to persuade his colleagues to consider the measure if Gladstone would inform him of the reasoning upon which it was based, though he was not hopeful of success.² Evidently Miall still feared concurrent endowment, and was continuing to exercise his liaison function. From the Liberation Society records, it seems that Gladstone replied to Miall, assuring him that when the government had given further consideration to the matter, he would give him more information.³ Miall apparently had some discussion with Gladstone, for it was reported on 14th January 1870, "Mr. Miall had gathered from the statement made to him by Mr. Gladstone that the provisions of the Irish ecclesiastical loans bill were not yet settled..."⁴ It was not until July 1870 that the government introduced the bill, and the society resolved to oppose it,⁵ but found that it could not count upon wholehearted dissenting support.⁶ The bill became law, though the sums involved

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 9.VI.1869
2. Miall to Gladstone 4.XI.1869, Carlingford Papers CP 1/67 (DD/SH/324). Somerset County Record Office.
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.XI.1869, f204
4. Ibid., 14.I.1870, f215
5. Ibid., 21.VII.1870
6. Ibid., 29.VII.1870

were slightly reduced,¹ and the society resolved that it was expedient,

"...to apply the policy of disestablishment and dis-endowment initiated by the Irish Church Act of 1869 as speedily as possible to the other churches established by law in the United Kingdom."²

From the Irish side, Daunt was even more critical of the Act: he regarded it as a virtual re-endowment of the Church of Ireland, whose revenues remained to act as a bribe to the ministers to be "...bad anti-national Irishmen."³ He suspected that the glebe houses would be used as a concealed form of concurrent endowment insofar as they might be given to the catholic clergy,⁴ and noted that the "rascally scheme" had been frustrated thanks to the efforts of the Liberation Society in England, and to his own in Ireland.⁵

Miall conceded that he had played little part in the final stages of the successful agitation against the Irish Church. At Bradford, he said: "Any little service I may have rendered in the cause I rendered before that bill saw the light of day."⁶ Success in the final stages was due to the tenacity of Gladstone, backed by a huge Liberal majority and an electoral mandate; to the absence of decisive leadership in the Church of Ireland itself, which only put up a feeble and disjointed struggle;⁷ to the weakness of Conservative opposition in the Commons; to the moderating influence of Archbishop Tait in the Lords; perhaps above all to the Reform Act of 1867 which secured for Gladstone a majority and a mandate which he would probably never have obtained for a controversial ecclesiastical question under the old electoral system.

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 8.IX.1870
2. Ibid., 9.XII.1870
3. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 24.VII.1869
4. Ibid., 12.VII.1869
5. Ibid., 26.VII.1869
6. Nonconformist 26.V.1869, pp495-496
7. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland pp237-273

The contribution of Miall and the Liberation Society to the disestablishment of the Irish Church is apparent over a longer term. The discussions of the Irish Church in the 1830s had been concerned more with increasing its effectiveness than with altering its status. Miall put the question upon a basis of principle, as part of the whole question of establishments, at the same time removing it from the arena of sectarian quarrels. He appreciated the need for an alliance between voluntaryists and Irish catholics, and by disassociating himself from sectarian anti-catholicism at the time of the Maynooth controversy, he laid the foundations for a working partnership between voluntaryists and catholics. The importance of this alliance was summed up by its co-author, O'Neill Daunt;

"...if we had been silent, thair efforts would have been plausibly met with the assurance that they were meddling with a question that did not concern them: and that the silence of the Irish Catholics demonstrated that we deemed the state church no grievance."¹

Both Miall and Daunt helped persuade the Irish catholics to accept total disendowment, and not to demand some part of the revenues or lands of the episcopal church; without the catholic commitment to voluntaryism, the alliance with the liberationists would have been impossible.² Miall introduced the question into Parliament in 1856, and the principles he laid down then were reflected in the Act of 1869. After he lost his parliamentary seat in 1856, he strengthened the alliance between voluntaryists and catholics, and gradually brought the latter back into alliance with the Liberals, following their disillusion of the late 1850s. With the addition of working-class support, which Miall and the Liberation Society also helped to secure, this was the basis of the coalition which brought Gladstone to power in 1868. The Irish Church Act of 1869 fulfilled one of the objectives of the Liberation Society, and paved the way for a similar

1. O'Neill Daunt, Journal 26.VII.1869
2. D. Thompson 'The Liberation Society 1844-1868' (ed. P. Hollis), in Pressure from without (London 1974) p235. Dr. Thompson regards this as the major achievement of the Liberation Society in the Irish Church question.

campaign against the Church of England. However, when Miall introduced his motion for the disestablishment of the Church of England in 1871, the circumstances which had led to success in 1869 no longer obtained. He gained no Irish support, Gladstone and the Liberals had not been converted to the idea, there was no electoral mandate, and he was heavily defeated. On its own, the Liberation Society had very limited power; it could only be effective in alliance with other bodies, a fact which Miall always recognised.

The importance of the Irish Church question is well summarised by its most recent historian. Arguing that the Irish Church was really significant as a symbol of inefficiency and anachronism, Dr. Akenson concludes;

"Its reform, therefore, was something of a totemic ceremony. Indeed, it may well be argued that the reformers did to the Church of Ireland what they would really have liked to do to the Church of England, but which politics prevented their accomplishing."¹

This was undoubtedly true of Miall and the Liberation Society.

1. D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland p147

CHAPTER 5

DISSENTING HOSTILITY TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

Part 1. Miall's criticisms of the Established Church	335
Part 2. Church Rates	373
Part 3. The foundation of the British Anti-State Church Association, and the attempt to unite dissenters.	417

Part 1. Miall's criticisms of the Established Church

The legal establishment of the Church of England was the main target of Miall's political campaigning. Most of the major causes he supported had the aim of diminishing the pervasive influence of the establishment in one or other aspect of the life of the nation. The raison d'être of his political life was the introduction of motions calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England into the House of Commons in the 1870s. This assault upon the main fortress, to borrow a typical Liberationist metaphor, had been preceded by successful attacks upon the outworks. Thanks in part to Miall and his colleagues, the influence of the Church of England was reduced in various spheres: its dominant position in the fields of both elementary and university education was eroded; its position as the sole agent of marriage and burial was successfully challenged. Ecclesiastical taxation ended with the abolition of church rates, and the greatest triumph to date had been the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.

Miall's political career did not begin until 1841, and the groundwork necessary for the accomplishment of these alterations in the status of the Church of England was the consequence of events in which he played no part. What has been termed the 'constitutional revolution' of 1828 to 1832¹ irrevocably altered the 'Protestant Constitution' and the relationship between government and organised religion. The legal inferiority of dissenters and Roman Catholics was almost ended in 1828 and 1829, while the reform of Parliament itself in 1832 gave new opportunities to critics of the Church of England. The formation of the Ecclesiastical Commission served as a precedent for the intervention of government in the affairs of the Established Church, though in practice governments interfered little with the workings of the commission, and if anything, the church was strengthened by

1. G.F.A. Best, 'The Constitutional Revolution 1828 to 1832 and its consequences for the Established Church.' Theology Vol.62 (1959) pp226-234.

the development of its resources which the commission undertook. Nonetheless, the Church of England was left in an anomalous position, its established status seriously undermined. It was no longer possible to speak of a 'national church', and it was therefore more difficult to justify the privileged position of a particular sect. Moreover, the exclusive position of the church had been undermined by a combination of its enemies, protestant dissenters, Roman Catholics and radicals, with some of its nominal supporters, the parliamentary Whigs. The Irish Church Act of 1833, as well as the Ecclesiastical Commission, suggested that the church was not immune from further rationalisation at the hands of a reformed parliament, a menace which provoked John Keble to deliver his famous 'Assize Sermon', in which he specified the danger which threatened the church:

"The suppression of ten Irish Bishoprics in defiance of Church opinion showed how ready the Government was to take liberties in a high-handed way with the old adjustments of the relations of Church and State."¹

Some Anglicans thought reform had gone far enough; others, like Peel, tried to make the church better able to withstand criticism by setting up the Ecclesiastical Commission, to reform it from within. The church itself clung all the more tenaciously to its surviving privileges, such as church rates, its monopoly of baptism, marriage and burial, its dominant position in elementary and university education. It was privileges such as these which defined its status in relation to other denominations, and its leaders, unwilling to contemplate any further erosion of its position, tended to regard them as vital symbols.

Many dissenters, by contrast, regarded the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and the Catholic Relief Act as only the beginning; they represented a major concession in principle, but many practical grievances remained, all implying that dissenters were still 'second class citizens'.

1. R.W. Church, The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833 - 1845. (London 1892) p92. See also O.J. Brose, "The Irish Precedent for English Church Reform: the Church Temporalities Act of 1833." Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.7 1956, pp204-225

There were two possible solutions. One was to secure the removal of the practical grievances through continued collaboration with the Whigs, a collaboration which had enjoyed conspicuous success so far, and might enjoy even more in a reformed parliament. In 1833 the Dissenting Deputies founded a United Committee, similar to that set up in 1827 to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The Wesleyan body and the Society of Friends declined to participate, but otherwise the committee represented the views of the dissenting leaders of London. It defined the practical grievances of dissenters as the compulsory use of the Anglican Prayer Book for marriage ceremonies, liability to church rates, the liability of dissenting chapels to poor rates, the absence of legal registration of the births and deaths of dissenters, the denial of their right of burial by their own ministers in parochial churchyards, and their virtual exclusion from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.¹ The committee hoped to secure the support of the Whigs for the removal of these grievances, but it became apparent that Grey was reluctant to give further concessions to dissenters.² Moreover, this was the cautious voice of London leaders of dissent, and by no means represented the views of provincial dissenters. Their leaders advocated a more radical programme, including the entire separation of Church and State, that is disestablishment, as a necessary precondition of the relief of dissenters.³ Many provincial meetings underlined this view, and the United Committee was later forced to support this demand in principle.⁴

The moderate view of dissenting strategy could only prevail if it led to practical results. Russell, for example, had removed many of the irritations resulting from tithes, and had been responsible for the Marriage Act, which

1. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p274. See also N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852 (Oxford 1965) p66.
2. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction p66
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. pp67-68

permitted the celebration of marriages in a dissenting chapel, in the presence of a registrar.¹ However, Melbourne was only induced to consider further measures for the relief of dissenters after a threat from the United Committee in 1835:

"...unless there were an explicit declaration of the intention of the government to introduce measures for the relief of Dissenters early next session, the present postponement might be attended with serious consequences in the event of a general election."²

In the session of 1837, a bill to abolish church rates was abandoned by the Whigs when it ran into difficulties; this was the end of any direct attempt by the Whigs to reform the Church of England further and was so regarded by dissenters. The great Whig majority of 1832 was eroded in the elections of 1835 and 1837, and they were further weakened by divisions among their allies. There was little sign of organised dissenting support for the government in the election of 1837;³ the radicals, having themselves suffered in elections since 1832, had become dispirited.⁴ Like the dissenters, they had little to show for their faithful support of the Whigs, and needed a new cause to unite them. Suffrage reform, the ballot, church rates abolition, disestablishment itself, were all possibilities; at one time or another, Miall supported all of them. However, for reasons discussed above, the issue which, on the face of it, seemed to offer the best prospect of uniting all the enemies of establishment, that of the Scottish Church was not one in which Miall and his colleagues felt able to become involved.⁵ When Miall denounced the Whigs, and pleaded with dissenters to end their dependence upon them, he could not have known that the reformed electoral system would make it difficult for either major party to secure an overall majority save in time of crisis, such as 1841.⁶ Events

1. J. Prest, Lord John Russell (London 1972) pp111-120
2. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p276
3. R. Cowherd, The Politics of English Dissent (London 1959) pp95-96
4. O.J. Brose, "The Irish Precedent for English Church Reform: the Church Temporalities Act of 1833." pp217-219.
5. See above pp242-244. See W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 pl95-196.
6. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pl93

559
were to show that the Whigs could normally hold power, but only with the support of radicals, Irish Catholics, dissenters and later, the Peelites. Each group was compelled to compromise its ideals and objectives as the necessary price of coalition.

Thus dissenters faced the prospect either of working with the Whigs and gaining small and occasional benefits, or of forming a new political alignment. The more conservative of the dissenting leaders, such as Vaughan and James, inclined to the former alternative,¹ and came under sharp attack from the more radical dissenters. John Childs, later to gain fame as a church-rates martyr, lamented James' politics, notably his attitude to church rates, and hoped the Whigs would soon be ousted from office.² He informed Hume that the latter was hazarding his character by supporting Whig despotism for so long,³ and reported to Charles Sturge the existence of a group highly critical of the Patriot, a journal of moderate views which tended to favour alliance between Whigs and dissenters. The group seems to consist of men such as Childs, and "our Leicester friends", a phrase which may well include Miall; what Childs believed the group lacked was "an organ for our opinions",⁴ a phrase of some significance in the light of Miall's subsequent foundation of the Nonconformist.

Miall himself was a prominent advocate of a new political alignment, and it can be argued that his attacks upon the Church of England were one of a number of attempts by radicals and dissenters to find a new cause which would revive their political fortunes. A disestablishment platform could reasonably hope to attract the support of dissenters, radicals and Irish Catholics; given some degree of electoral success, such a group would have

1. D. Thompson, "The Liberation Society" in P. Hollis (ed) Pressure from without in early Victorian England. (London 1974) p213
2. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 27.XII.1839. Sturge Family Papers (in the possession of the Sturge family). I am grateful to Mr. Alec Tyrrell for obtaining copies of letters from this collection for me.
3. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 8.I.1838. Sturge Family Papers.
4. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 6.II.1839. Sturge Family Papers.

considerable influence in Parliament. This is not to suggest that Miall was a politician cynically seeking a 'useful cause': his commitment to dis-establishment is the most consistent aspect of his career, even if, as was sometimes apparent, he was flexible as to the means of attaining it. He had abandoned hope, not without reason, of dissenters obtaining fulfilment of all their demands with the assistance of the Whigs, and saw as the only solution the equality of all religious denominations; this necessarily implied the destruction of the privileged position of the Church of England.

Neither Whigs nor Tories could be expected to assist in this objective.

Peel's 'Tamworth Manifesto' made it clear that he would go no further than to, "...remove every abuse that can impair the efficiency of the Establishment."¹

Russell believed in an establishment for political reasons:

"The duty of the State is, not to choose and select that doctrine which the Legislature...may consider to be founded in truth, but to endeavour to secure the means by which they can inculcate religion and morality among the great body of the people."²

Miall was thus driven to find allies outside the major parties, and in the initial stages, he had to work outside Parliament in order to unite anti-establishment forces.

Even before he left his pastorate in Leicester in 1841 to found the Non-conformist, Miall had been severely critical of dissenting leadership and had earned a reputation as a radical. There existed a number of organisations which were hostile to the Church of England as an establishment, but Miall had a low opinion of the integrity of some, and of the effectiveness of others. Leicester was a centre of radical dissent in the 1830s, and Miall was one of a number of nonconformist ministers who took militant action in defence of dissenters' rights. The militant John Childs had made reference to 'our Leicester friends', and when he failed to persuade a group of dissenters

1. Ed. G.M. Young & W.D. Handcock English Historical Documents Vol.XII (I) 1833-1874 London 1956 ppl27-131
See also N. Gash, Sir Robert Peel (London 1972) p96
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series XXXIII, pl277

to advance £50 each to get suitable material inserted in country newspapers, since men of his outlook had no organ of their own, he fell back on the Leicestershire Mercury.¹ Throughout the 1830s and the 1840s, this newspaper acted as a platform for radical dissent, a coherent and sometimes strident group. Josiah Conder, editor of the moderate Patriot, and leader of the Religious Freedom Society, records that he visited Leicester in 1840:

"...it being thought advisable on public grounds to come to a good understanding with the reverend radicals of that place, and to put a stop to the petty warfare they were waging against the London committee."²

According to one account, the 'reverend radicals' agreed to behave with "greater propriety".³ Conder tried to bring Leicester dissenters into closer alliance with the London leaders; Miall and his friend J.P. Mursell met him, but refused to compromise their independence.⁴ Conder was one of the leaders who believed in collaboration with the Whigs, and John Childs regarded him as a man whose nonconformity and credit were both compromised by his association with men such as Lushington.⁵

The Religious Freedom Society condemned state establishments of religion on both scriptural and political grounds:⁶ founded in 1838, it included among its members Burnet, Easthope, Price, J.R. Mills, Wardlaw and Cox,⁷ with some of whom at least, Miall was to be actively associated. In relation to bodies with similar objects, "...it wears a more political aspect!"⁸ Of the other groups, the Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge included in its ranks Dr. Pye Smith, Cox, Blackburn, Burnet and Binney,⁹ but by 1839 it was virtually moribund.¹⁰ The Protestant Society for the

1. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 6.II.1839. Sturge Family Papers
2. E.R. Conder, Josiah Conder: a Memoir. (London 1857) p315
3. J. Waddington, Congregational History i, 548-549
4. Leicestershire Mercury, 22.II.1840
5. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 27.XII.1839. Sturge Family Papers
6. H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891 (London 1891) p490
7. Patriot, 16.V.1839, pp324-326
8. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.X 1841, p8
9. R.W. Dale History of English Congregationalism pp634-635
10. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V 1839, p35

Promotion of Religious Liberty, the various denominational associations, and the most venerable of all, the Dissenting Deputies, all either criticised the existence of an establishment, or tried to remedy its abuses. There was undue duplication of effort, and despite general agreement over ultimate objectives, there were deep differences over the means to be employed. Some prominent nonconformists feared the activities of such societies might alienate the Whigs,¹ though the Eclectic Review, and even the Patriot were warning their readers that relations between dissenters and Whigs would have to be reconsidered.² The Religious Freedom Society intended to be non-denominational, and sought to promote its objectives solely by religious means;³ the Patriot regarded it as, "...the only society which can be said to represent Dissenters politically or to present any organisation available for concerted action."⁴ However, it was crippled by public indifference,⁵ and not all dissenters believed that it was undesirable to use political methods to achieve religious objectives.⁶ There were yet more societies with similar aims, and the Patriot was driven to comment; "We wish an effective union for constitutional and legitimate objects did exist among them. But the fact is notoriously otherwise."⁷ The Eclectic Review said of dissenters, "They are not in themselves a separate political party, or capable of becoming such."⁸ It attributed the current state of disunity and general supineness to the fact that no political organisation of protestant dissent, either for purposes of aggression or defence had ever been attempted.⁹

With dissenting effort so divided in the 1830s, and with the poor results of collaboration with the Whigs now evident, it was apparent that a more dynamic campaign was needed, and Miall sought to initiate a new approach:

1. H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches p489
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VI 1839 p31. Patriot, 27.VII.1840, p524
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.X 1841 p8
4. Patriot, 18.X.1841, p700
5. H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches pp490-491
6. e.g. Leicestershire Mercury, 8.VIII.1840
7. Patriot, 24.V.1838, p340
8. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V 1839, p31
9. Ibid. p35

"The Rev. Edward Miall, one of the Congregational ministers of Leicester, could not be brought into the state of mesmeric sleep so much desired by the moderates in London. He was so impressed by the necessity of more decided action that he proposed to relinquish his pastoral charge...in order to devote himself to the work of separating the Church of England from the State."¹

As a programme, the separation of Church and State could appeal to a variety of interests. It implied the end of Anglican control of elementary and university education, which had been attacked not only by dissenters, but also by radicals and Chartists. It implied the destruction of the privileged position of the Anglican Church in Ireland, which would appeal to Irish catholics. It included the abolition of church rates, which was a good way to secure the active involvement of dissenters, as many could vote in vestry elections who did not enjoy the parliamentary franchise. It was no mere pious hope to expect Chartist support. As early as 1837, Robert Lowery had attacked the concept of a state church, and urged Chartists to co-operate with middle-class reformers to secure its abolition.² In the North, Chartists both supported and promoted anti-church rate candidates at vestry elections,³ and from this starting point, moved on to the support of a policy of disestablishment. In Leicester, Chartist leaders described the Established Church as, "...an incubus upon the people",⁴ while at Ipswich in 1842, Vincent fought an election as a Chartist candidate, campaigning for the abolition of church rates, and for the separation of Church and State.⁵ In Wales, Hugh Williams of Carmarthen made religious equality part of his programme,⁶ and it is generally the case that Chartist leaders were hostile to the State Church.⁷

1. J. Waddington, Congregational History, i, 551
2. B. Harrison & P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery" English Historical Review Vol.82 (1967) pp507-509.
3. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society p202. Chartist hostility to church rates was not universal; in Rochdale, there are to be found Chartist churchwardens, supporting the levy of a church rate. Ibid. p189
4. ed. A. Briggs Chartist Studies (London 1959) p102
5. Ibid., p167
6. Ibid., p220
7. H.U. Faulkner, Chartism and the Churches (London 1916) pp28, 33,34,130.

Miall was a radical politician, and was recognised as such:

"...he stood on the same platform with the men who were agitating for manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, and other measures which were then regarded as dangerous and revolutionary."¹

But in addition to his undoubted sympathies with Chartism, there was a deep conviction of the overriding need for disestablishment, for religious as well as political reasons:

"Of course he deplored and denounced the personal, social and public evils which sprang from the union of Church and State, but henceforth his strongest objection was founded on the fact that it contravened the spirit and teaching of Christianity."²

He resigned his ministry at Bond Street Chapel, Leicester, in 1839, to devote himself to journalism:

"In the autumn of 1839, some symptoms of dissatisfaction appeared, and these occurring simultaneously with an opening for the more full advocacy of Nonconformist principles by means of the Press, Mr. Miall received it as an indication of the will of the Head of the Church that he should labour in another sphere in the cause to which he had already warmly devoted himself."³

The establishment of the Nonconformist was a turning point in Miall's career; from being a provincial 'gadfly' he gained a highly influential position in London, and for all practical purposes, ceased to be a representative of the provinces, despite his continued differences with the London dissenting leaders. As the letters of John Childs make apparent, the idea of a new dissenting periodical did not originate with Miall, but evidently he was in contact with those who were dissatisfied with existing dissenting journalism. The first step was to find an editor, and Miall and Mursell were deputed to visit an eminent journalist in London, to enlist his support.⁴ They failed, and Mursell persuaded Miall to undertake the editorship himself. For several months, Miall toured the country to raise money, his aim being to

1. R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism p636
2. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p38
3. Minutes of Bond Street Chapel, Leicester. Unpaged. Leicester City Museum.
4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p39. Nonconformist and Independent, 5.V.1881, p2. Evidently, the journalist in question later became editor of the Westminster Review.

545

raise £5,000 in £10 shares. Having consulted John Childs, he visited Manchester, Liverpool, Rochdale, Bradford, Birmingham, Bristol, Ipswich and Colchester, appealing both to individuals and to nonconformist organisations. He gained introductions to prominent individuals, including Cobden, Bright, Halley, Hadfield, who gave assistance to the project.¹ In making a presentation to Miall in 1862 Bright recollected that he had called upon his circle of friends to contribute to a fund to start the Nonconformist.² According to Miall, the capital deemed necessary for a metropolitan weekly paper was £3,000 and he informed Charles Sturge that he had never had at his disposal more than £1,500, of which he himself had contributed £300.³

He encountered considerable hostility; in a letter to his wife, he mentioned the circulation of scandalous reports about him at Leicester, the opposition of former friends, and the rumour that the whole project was a fraud.⁴ His motives were questioned,⁵ and in a letter to Charles Sturge, he revealed some of the difficulties which beset him, not least his deep distaste for the task of fund raising. It is worth quoting extensively, as one of relatively few self-revealing letters which survive:

"Those who know me intimately will admit, that a disposition to prey upon my friends, is no part of my character. Much anxiety I have had in conducting the Nonconformist - but my greatest trial in connexion with it, has been the necessity under which I have been laid, to ask pecuniary aid. No more painful mortification can be inflicted upon me. My whole nature recoils from the task...I do not, cannot regret having undertaken the onerous and responsible task of establishing an independent organ of the press for the advocacy of sound principles irrespectively of party. I foresaw many difficulties, and appreciated them. When I resigned pastoral office to enter upon this work, I knew well that the door would be for ever closed against my return to it. I could not hide from myself that I was forfeiting caste among my brethren, and that I exposed my reputation to be whispered and slandered away by time-serving dissenters. Before me then was a cheerless blank - a mere void - and if it was ever to be filled, it must be filled by my own

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp39-46
2. Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, pp5-6
3. Miall to Charles Sturge 15.VI.1842, Sturge Family Papers.
4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp45-46
5. Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, p2

exertions. After due deliberation I decided upon the attempt and I staked upon it my own and my family's prospects for comfort in this life. There was certainly nothing very tempting in the scene before me, when I sent in my resignation to my church at Leicester. One thing, however, I had not sufficiently taken into account - my own strong repugnance to ask for money. I spent nine months in this terrible ordeal, seven of which I was away from home, and travelled close upon three thousand miles."¹

The course taken by the Nonconformist gave offence to some who had promised financial backing, and they declined to make good their engagements. Miall himself was the sole proprietor, and in the first six months, subscribers increased at an average of thirty to forty five per week.² By the end of the first year, the circulation was two thousand per week, which almost enabled the newspaper to cover its costs.³ However, a letter written as late as 1845 implies that for its first four years at least, the Nonconformist depended upon financial assistance from the Sturge brothers.⁴

Miall's early writings upon the subject of religious establishments are fundamental to his conduct as a politician: in essentials, he attempted throughout his public life to carry out the programme he specified in the early issues of the Nonconformist. In order to achieve this, he was constantly attempting to arouse dissenters to action. He criticised their inactivity, showed them the evils of the Established Church, and suggested practical policies for them to follow. The apathy of the general body of dissenters had long concerned him; he informed a meeting at Bond Street Chapel in 1836 that he would rather that dissenting grievances should survive than that they be abolished as a result of intrigue and compromise. Since all practical grievances sprang from the existence of the Established Church, the honourable course for dissenters was to attack the principle of establishment.⁵ His letter of resignation from his ministry at Bond

1. Miall to Charles Sturge, 15.VI.1842. Sturge Family Papers.
2. Miall to Charles Sturge, 1.XI.1841. Sturge Family Papers.
3. Miall to Charles Sturge, 15.VI.1842. Sturge Family Papers.
4. Miall to Charles Sturge, 17.IV.1845. Sturge Family Papers.
5. Leicestershire Mercury, 23.VII.1836

247

Street Chapel shows his anxiety at the indifference of dissenters to the debased position of Christianity, which was the consequence of the establishment of a particular denomination:

"The degraded position of the Church of Christ in these realms has for some years past been to me a matter of anxious concern... the Dissenters as a body appear to be well-nigh indifferent to the present humiliation of the Church, to view it with growing apathy, to look upon it almost without shame. Some efforts they have made to obtain for themselves a freedom from personal inconvenience, but about the enfranchisement of religion I cannot help believing them to be criminally careless."¹

That he felt the remedy lay in the foundation of a new journal is sufficient comment upon his opinion of the dissenting press:²

"To bring about a change of view and feeling in reference to this subject, the periodical press appears, in the first instance, to be the most likely instrument. It is within our reach - it has never yet been fairly tried - it commands attention where treatises and volumes will be unheeded... It would, I trust, open the way to more direct and serious and combined effort for the accomplishment of the Church's liberation."³

His first major contribution to the disestablishment campaign was to give to the radical wing of dissent what John Childs and others had felt that it lacked, a newspaper of its own: this was an indispensable adjunct to any political campaign in the nineteenth century.

A summary of Miall's arguments impresses upon them a coherence and unity which they do not possess in their original form; they appeared week by week, and were inevitably somewhat diffuse. Certain trends, however, emerge with great clarity: his criticisms of the conduct of dissenters, his hostility to the Established Church, and his appeal for support outside the main dissenting body. Little of what he said was original; many of the arguments he deployed against the Established Church had appeared earlier. Disestablishment had already been discussed in Parliament,⁴ and

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp30-31
2. See F.R. Salter, "Political Nonconformity in the 1830s" Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th Series Vol.III 1953, pp125ff
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p31
4. e.g. by G. Faithfull in 1833. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series Vol.XVII, pl78. Lord Althorp maintained that Parliament was not a suitable forum for the discussion of this topic. Ibid. pp192-193.

events in the Scottish Church in the 1830s seemed to be pointing the way to disestablishment there.

Miall's criticisms of dissenters may be considered first, as they form the burden of the early issues of the Nonconformist. Since 1829, he maintained, dissenters had struggled for the redress of specific grievances, instead of basing their demands upon the principle of disestablishment. They were attacking the symptoms, not the cause:

"As a body they have acted uniformly as though they were ashamed of their great leading principle, and secretly distrustful of its efficiency: and they have wasted their efforts in a series of petty skirmishes which have served only to win for them more comfortable quarters, without bringing them a whit nearer the attainment of their ultimate objective. The war has been one of detail, not of principle. They have fought for themselves rather than for truth."¹

Alliance with the Whigs had necessarily committed dissenters to a policy of remedying specific ills, and it had not been successful. It was time either to abandon the cause of religious liberty, or to fight for it directly, "...to abandon the policy of expediency and resolutely take up that of principle."²

This analysis was superficial. The Eclectic Review, which, of all dissenting periodicals, came closest to Miall's position, attributed the ineffectiveness of dissenters not so much to the fact that they had placed their trust in the Whigs, but rather that Whig power had gradually declined after 1832. Dissenters had been thrown back upon their own resources, and lacked effective organisation and leadership:

"Is it to be wondered at, then, that they should exhibit, at the moment, a feebleness of purpose and action arising from want of discipline and inexperience, and the entire want of any party organisation?"³

Miall looked back to the time in the late 1820s when dissenters had fought for principles, and had triumphed by the unity of effort which resulted from a common purpose. He was inclined to gloss over the differences which had developed at this time between the Unitarians in Parliament and the dissenters

1. Nonconformist, 14.IV.1841, pl

2. Ibid.

3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V 1839, p4

549

who were outside Parliament; he also tended to ignore the alliance between the Whigs and the main body of dissent, forged by the unitarian leader William Smith, which had been a vital element in the successes of the late 1820s.¹ Nevertheless, 1828 and 1829 had been years of triumph:

"Ten years since, their views commanded respectful attention: ~~their~~ movements were bold vigorous and successful. Now, although they have gained in numbers, are possessed of equal wealth and superior intelligence, they are despised...with impunity."²

There was no lack of foundation for his criticisms. Since 1832, two reforms had been conceded by the Whigs to their dissenting supporters, the Registration Act and the Marriage Act. But in the same period, the Church of England had been strengthened and its influence extended through the foundation of new colonial bishoprics, and the creation of workhouse chaplains. Nor had church rates been abolished, despite two attempts in Parliament.³ Dissenters, Miall believed, would remain disunited so long as they concentrated upon the redress of specific grievances: different groups would concentrate upon different grievances, and politicians would never have to deal with a united body of opinion. A united effort must be based upon clear principle. He insisted:

"They must begin again the struggle with intolerance...Ultimate success will require union, patience, persevering energy and considerable self-sacrifice. Their aim must be a worthy one. It must involve a noble principle...THE ENTIRE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE is really their object."⁴

Miall realised the danger that such a principle would seem a mere abstraction, and was concerned to show that in practice it would prove more effective than the campaigns for the redress of specific grievances, which were only of interest to dissenters themselves:

1. R.W. Davis, Dissent in Politics 1780-1830. The Political Life of William Smith M.P. (London 1971) CH.XII passim.
2. E. Miall, Nonconformist's Sketchbook. (London 1842) p3. This is a collection of articles from the Nonconformist, all concerned with the establishment question. Miall had made a similar accusation as long ago as 1836, when he accused dissenters of resting upon their laurels after the victories of 1828 and 1829: "...patience has degenerated into abject servility...their apathy has become ridiculous - more than that, it was unprincipled." Leicestershire Mercury, 23.VII.1836
3. Ibid. p3
4. Ibid. p3

550

"Practical Grievances forsooth! as though the union of church and state were a mere theory, a speculation, an abstract unembodied principle about which it would be foolish to contend. As though the assumption by the legislature of authority to deal with the religious faith and exercises of its subjects were no grievance at all. As though it injured no-one, perpetrated no real mischief, and might safely be left for discussion as a matter of opinion when the practical grievances of dissenters should be redressed."¹

Though it put the case more moderately, the Eclectic Review reached a substantially similar conclusion. It remarked:

"The practical grievance ground, long held by the metropolitan leaders of dissent, is, in our solemn judgment, an erroneous shortsighted and treacherous position."²

It conceded that the civil interests of dissenters were not an unworthy objective in themselves, but the policy failed because it was essentially defensive; a more positive approach was required.³

One reason for the ineffectiveness of dissenters was the inactivity of dissenting ministers. Reference has been made to the attempts of Conder to ease relationships between the radical ministers of Leicester and the London leaders, but Miall persisted in his view that there was an unhealthy spirit of compromise among the leaders of dissent. When a former member of his congregation, William Baines, was imprisoned over his refusal to pay Church rates, Miall wrote to him;

"The Nonconformist will, I trust, soon set your case before the world...I hear you have made application to the London ministers. I fear they will desert you. Let me know their answer, for I intend to put you forward in our first number. Ministerial authority has no terrors for me...I hope they mean to act wisely, for if they do not...I shall lift the curtain to the public and show the trick."⁴

He developed this theme in an outright attack upon the integrity of the dissenting ministry:

1. E. Miall, Nonconformist's Sketchbook p7.
2. Eclectic Review, ns VII 1840 p202
3. Ibid., ns Vol.XIV, 1843 pp578-579
4. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p49

"We solemnly arraign the body of dissenting ministers in England at the bar of truth...We charge the body of dissenting ministers with unfaithfulness to sacred principles, evasion of a noble mission and seeming recklessness of all the mighty interests at issue."¹

They had failed to speak out against the state church, and had hindered those who were prepared to do so. They thus condoned the evils of establishment, not only the practical abuses which arose from it, but its whole unscriptural character, and its anomalous dependence upon Parliament. If it were true that public opinion was not ripe for a campaign against the principle of establishment, dissenting ministers were to blame for their failure to enlighten their congregations as to the true meaning of dissent, and for impeding those who attempted to do so:

"The body of dissenting ministers, with numerous individual exceptions, we admit, makes no direct effort to stay the plague, refuse to take the purifying censer into their own hands, and look coldly, nay frowningly, upon any members of their own body who feel bound in duty to do so."²

Given the circumstances of Miall's resignation from the ministry, this attack might be supposed to be the product of personal bitterness. In fact, he was simply reflecting the exasperation felt by many provincial dissenters with the London leaders. Earlier, he said:

"On the London bodies rests the odium of having betrayed the cause of the Dissenters for the sake of bolstering up the Whigs...the country dissenters have relied too confidently on London."

The traitors were named: they were the Dissenting Deputies, the Society for the Promotion of Civil and Religious Liberty, the Church Rate Abolition Society, the Religious Freedom Society, and the Patriot.³ The Eclectic Review agreed that the conduct of the London leaders had led to much discontent among provincial dissenters, who suspected that their interests were neglected or betrayed. Worse still was the division in the ranks of dissent which had resulted: most serious had been the secession of the unitarian body

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook pl6
2. Ibid. p22
3. Leicestershire Mercury, 25.V.1839. cf Ibid. 1.VI.1839. Attacks upon the London leaders from other quarters were even more virulent. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pl32

from the Dissenting Deputies in 1836, following a dispute over Lady Hewley's charity. This had meant the loss of the most able and knowledgeable leaders.¹ The Eclectic Review went on to add, however, that provincial leaders sometimes under-estimated the difficulties of the London ministers, and it was critical of a particularly outspoken attack upon them made at a meeting in Leicester which Miall had addressed.²

Miall was certainly harsh in his criticisms, but perhaps not without reason. To take one instance, in 1844 the Dissenting Deputies considered a series of resolutions calling for the separation of Church and State. These claimed that the interference by the state which resulted from establishment was an infringement of religious liberty, and a series of objections was formulated very similar to Miall's own. But the Deputies declined to raise the question publicly, deeming it inexpedient at that point in time.³

Politically the calculation was reasonable, but Miall's fury can be understood. Many leaders of dissent in London had secured for themselves a respected place in political and social life, and had little sympathy with the sense of deprivation felt by provincial dissenters. Their attitude is well summarised by the wealthy dissenter J.J. Colman, who believed that dissenters brought contempt upon themselves by over-sensitiveness. If they were excluded from certain circles, he could not imagine that these were circles in which, as dissenters, they would wish to be received: "Let us respect ourselves, and that will be one of the first steps to make other people respect us."⁴ Men of wealth and influence, such as he, were not hampered by the existence of an establishment, but there were many dissenters to whom the argument of social deprivation would appeal, and Miall employed it. As a result of the patronage of a particular denomination by the state:

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VI. 1839 p22
2. Ibid., ns Vol.VII 1840, pp359-360
3. Dissenting Deputies Minute Book 14.II.1844, ff294-295; Ibid. 27.XII.1844 ff67-68. The records of the Dissenting Deputies are deposited in the Guildhall Library. In the early 1840s, Miall was a Deputy, though not a regular attender at meetings.
4. H.C. Colman, Jeremiah James Colman: a Memoir (London 1905) p149

"Men's respectability is measured by their theological creed, and their status in society obtained by their view of divine truth...The State, by patronising a particular sect, produces in the one party arrogance, in all others, discontent. In the one case, pride will be fostered: in the other, a sense of injustice and a consciousness of degradation."¹

If all denominations existed upon an equal basis, no social prestige would accrue from belonging to one rather than to another, but so long as the Church of England monopolised the older universities, and was linked with the aristocracy, through patronage and advowsons, membership of it would carry prestige.²

One consequence of the establishment of the Anglican Church was that other denominations were tolerated. Miall followed Blackstone in regarding this state of affairs as no more than the establishment's refraining from exercising its right to persecute dissenters; Blackstone had regarded the toleration of dissent as an indulgence, not a right. The Toleration Act had removed the penalties, but did not abolish the crime, of dissent.³ The Eclectic Review regarded toleration as a half-way house between tyranny and liberty,⁴ and Miall believed it had had a detrimental effect:

"Toleration has domesticated dissenters. Run a line through history at the period of the passing of the Toleration Act and you may observe the strange difference there is between a man asserting religious freedom as his birthright, and enjoying it upon sufferance...There is among dissenters a more general and characteristic absence of manliness than among any other great body of British citizens."⁵

Furthermore, even toleration by the establishment did not secure for dissenters full civil rights. Their right to private judgment was circumscribed, as the establishment inhibited free inquiry and free expression, and the obligation to pay, through church rates, for the support of doctrines of

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p78. cf J.S. Mill; "...the chief mischief of the legal penalties is that they strengthen the social stigma...Our merely social intolerance kills no-one, roots out no opinions, but induces men to disguise themselves, or to abstain from any active effort in their diffusion." On Liberty (London (Everyman edition) 1960) pp92-93.
2. Lord Selborne later refuted this argument simply by denying that there was any property or any fund from which non-members of the Church of England were debarred. A defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment. 5th ed. (London 1911) pp314-315.
3. U. Henriques, Religious Toleration In England 1787-1833 (London 1961) p68
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1841, p106
5. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p193

which they disapproved, was another sign of inferior status.¹ Presumably this argument was intended to appeal to dissenters who might not be moved so much by theological or philosophical argument.

Miall's final argument to dissenters was to warn them that the collapse of the state church was inevitable; the menace lay in its being brought about by revolutionary violence. Both agricultural and industrial labourers, working in dreadful conditions for tiny remuneration, might rise against their oppressors, with whom the Church of England was identified.² It was better that dissenters should take the lead, and ensure that dis-establishment was accomplished without violence, rather than allow the initiative to fall into the hands of anti-religious elements. He warned:

"If dissenting ministers hesitate to break ground against this enormity, we earnestly implore them calmly to read the signs of the times, and ponder seriously the almost certain results of their indecision. The work will be done - no human power can prevent that...There are elements at work in the bosom of society of frightful virulence and force which the most trivial event may presently be the flash to ignite and explode. The Establishment will be destroyed by revolutionary and infidel fury, unless it be first peaceably put an end to by enlightened and religious men. Let not dissenting ministers be deceived. The storm which is gathering and which they alone can avert will be indiscriminate in its ravages. Not the Establishment only, but Christianity, which in the minds of many is identified with it, will be exposed to its pitiless violence."³

The Eclectic Review shared Miall's fears, and spoke of the deadly enmity cherished against the dominant church by both agricultural and industrial labourers,⁴ while Miall himself later described the hatred as being most intense in the rural areas, where the Anglican Church had least competition from dissent. Agricultural labourers believed that the squire and the parson were partners in a conspiracy to keep them in a subordinate position:

"...should any violent revolution ever occur, the most rabid enemies of the Church of England clergy would spring up in myriads from the rural parishes in which the priesthood recognised by Parliament have had things almost entirely their own way."⁵

1. E. Miall, "Religious Establishments incompatible with the Rights of Citizenship." Tracts of British Anti-State Church Association Vol.I, no.6 (London 1846) pp134,135-138. See also Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1841 p106.
2. E. Miall, The British Churches in relation to the British People (London 1849) p220.
3. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p31, p145
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIV 1843, p590
5. E. Miall, The Social Influences of the State Church (London 1867) pp45-46 See also E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p121.

This was the essence of Miall's plea to dissenters themselves: he made these points on many occasions, the form varying with the context. Though the appeal was directed primarily to dissenters, he seems to have had in mind other groups as well. Within the Church of England itself, there were groups who were uneasy about its status as an establishment. Keble's 'Assize Sermon' of 1833 was a criticism of state interference in the religious affairs of the Anglican Church, and Hurrell Froude was quite prepared to contemplate disestablishment, if 'nationalisation' stood in the way of the real character of the church.¹ Thomas Arnold believed that nothing could save the Church of England as it was, and recommended substantial changes in the interests of comprehension.² Pusey was to demand the end of state interference on several occasions, though he wished to preserve all the privileges of the Anglican Church.³ Nor was discontent confined to the Tractarian wing; the Evangelical party felt equally oppressed by state intervention, regarding it as subversive of the true nature of the church. Miall made a deliberate attempt to appeal to this group, by showing that there was no scriptural foundation for an establishment. A state church was an obstacle to true religion, and both the Church of England and the Christian faith would benefit from disestablishment:

"The present ecclesiastical system is a thorn in the side of the state: rankling, festering, impeding all free movement. It is a wen upon the otherwise vigorous frame of Christianity, diverting it into an unnatural and unsightly excrescence, the vital fluids of which would also impart bloom to the countenance, strength to the muscle, and vivacity to the spirits of the Church of Christ."⁴

1. R.W. Church, The Oxford Movement p54
 2. Thomas Arnold, Principles of Church Reform (1833) ed. M.J. Jackson & J. Rogan, (London 1962).
 3. The Liberator observed, "...Dr. Pusey intimates...that all he wants is the liberty enjoyed by Dissenters. The answer is obvious. He cannot have the Dissenter's liberty and the Churchman's privilege." Liberator, Oct. 1864, p154
 4. Nonconformist, 23.VI.1841. The Eclectic Review used the same disagreeable image when describing the state church. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p354. For fuller discussion of the evangelical outlook see G.F.A. Best, "Evangelicalism and the Victorians" in A. Symondson, The Victorian Crisis of Faith (London 1970) pp46-47. G.F.A. Best, "The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the early nineteenth century" Journal of Theological Studies, ns. Vol.X April 1959 pp63-78
- A. Bentley, The Transformation of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England in the late nineteenth century. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Durham, 1971)

Freedom of conscience, particularly valued by the evangelicals, was not possible within the context of the state church: "The state church cannot compel submission, and yet leave conscience in a position of supremacy. One or the other must yield."¹ It was absurd that spiritual matters should be under the control of a Parliament whose members might be profligates or infidels, and who were anyway the agents of a reactionary aristocracy. The element of compulsion inherent in a state church was a contradiction of the true spirit of Christianity:

"Men are to be made loyal to the Supreme - and the very step taken to accomplish this purpose is to seize their property for His ministers and worship. By this oppression they are to be taught kindness - by legalised plunder they are to be inspired with love."²

At best, a state church gave a mechanical form of religious instruction based upon dogma which was to be accepted unquestioningly, without debate or discussion.³ Within this framework, there was little scope for a pious individual to evolve his own relationship with God, through prayer or through his reaction to the preaching of committed men. Theological inquiry itself was stifled by the straitjacket of creeds and formularies: "National creeds remind us of plaster of Paris busts - once cast, they remain unchanged and unchangeable until broken to pieces."⁴ Miall favoured an appeal to market forces, in the freedom of religious ideas as well as flexibility in church organisation. Religious truth would emerge from discussion and prayer, if, like science, it were uninhibited by external pressures: whereas government interference in scientific research would be resisted, in religion, it was tolerated, even applauded.⁵

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p249
2. Ibid., pp139, 254.
3. Ibid., p131.
4. Ibid., p152
5. Ibid., pp152, 179. However, the evangelical wing of the Established Church, more afraid of infidelity and Roman Catholicism, showed no signs of seceding from the Church of England.
G. Best, "Evangelicalism and the Victorians" in A. Symondson, The Victorian Crisis of Faith pp46-47.

The connection of the church with the aristocracy led to the less savoury aspects of patronage; its whole terminology, 'living', 'patron' 'benefice', 'advowson', implied that the office of priest was a species of property. The pretensions of a priesthood appointed in this way were bolstered by church courts, and Miall argued that this trend was presently manifest in the activities of Pusey and his disciples, whose leanings towards Romish practices were anathema to evangelicals and dissenters alike. The tendency of establishments was to produce authoritarian and superstitious groups such as the Tractarians.¹ The ritual and pomp of the Anglican Church, also offensive to evangelical taste, was, Miall argued, another inevitable result of establishment. They served as a visible justification for illicit domination by a pretentious priesthood, but they obscured the inner truth of religion:

"The inner man...the power to think, to judge, to love, to adore - did Christianity which comes hither to deal with that intend to put it under authority to a set of garments or torturing irons? For what more is ecclesiastical lordship?"²

The Established Church had no scriptural justification; it was the result of coercion by Constantine. It was a 'forced marriage' which resulted in an agency totally unsuited for the task of spreading Christianity. The purpose of Christianity was to govern what men are, to rule over their hearts; when it was tied to the machinery of state, it could merely affect what they did, through compulsion: "Is Christ's church to be supported by means which would be held to contaminate a movement for civil reform?"³ In a strict sense, a state church could not be a genuine church. A true church was a voluntary association of dedicated men who were committed to a particular creed; membership of the Established Church resulted from accident of birth, rather than suitability of life or character. These

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p172
2. Ibid., p237
3. Ibid. pp215, 221, 226, 254.

arguments of Miall coincided with criticisms which were being made of the Established Church by evangelicals themselves. Though a minority, they were a recognisable party within the Church of England, and had much in common with protestant dissenters. Each disliked fixed ritual, and believed in individual regeneration through prayer and preaching. Both took an active part in voluntary good works, and there were examples of fruitful co-operation between evangelical and dissenting clergy.¹ But as a party, evangelicals, while sharing many of Miall's objections to the establishment, drew different conclusions. Evangelicals had it in common with Wesleyans that they believed that the church could be reformed from within, and had no wish to disestablish it.² Leading evangelicals were frequently Tories, believing in the basic doctrines of the Anglican Church, venerating the prayer book, and having no sympathy with the anti-establishment element in dissent.³ Religion provided a moral framework for society, and the state should nurture it. Miall never succeeded in gaining the support of the evangelicals; apart from defining common ground, he made little practical effort. He was suspicious of their organisation, the Evangelical Alliance, which had its origins in an attempt in 1843 by Sir Culling Eardley Smith to create an undenominational protestant body. The proposal gained the support of Scottish secessionists and Wesleyans, and found a tangible objective in opposing the Maynooth grant in 1845. The various elements combined to form the Evangelical Alliance in 1845, but failed to attract the support of voluntarists such as Miall, who had to consider the feelings of the Irish Catholics.⁴ Miall was one of the delegates who withdrew from the Anti-Maynooth Conference organised by the alliance; he and his voluntarist colleagues, "...could not continue co-operation from the difficulties occasioned by the combination of churchmen, and they withdrew."⁵

1. O. Chadwick The Victorian Church i, 441, 446, 448.

2. Ibid. i, 441

3. U. Henriques, Religious Toleration In England 1787-1833 p219.

G.F.A. Best "The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the early Nineteenth Century" Journal of Theological Studies ns. X. 1959. pp63-78

4. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pp218-219. The Eclectic Review considered the alliance inexpedient. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIX 1846, p503

5. J.W. Maurice, The Evangelical Alliance (London 1847) p103

The Rev. William Thorn summed up the feelings of Miall and his colleagues when he claimed that dissenters could never unite with any party within the Church of England, so long as the existence of the establishment made dissenters into second-class citizens:

"...it becomes all dissenters to seize every opportunity for protesting against the egregious and dangerous errors and doings of the state church, and for exposing them to public gaze and condemnation...But this, our dissenting friends, by joining the Alliance, are certainly not doing, and what is still worse...impeding the efforts of those who, at great pains and expense, are making the noble effort."¹

As a politician, Miall had to seek support wherever it might be gained, but he cannot have expected to obtain massive support from evangelicals. He always maintained they would be welcome as members of the British Anti-State Church Association, which was non-sectarian, though identified with militant dissent. There were few evangelical converts; the most notable was the Rev. Baptist Noel, who left the Anglican Church before becoming a member of the association. Other Anglican adherents were M.P.s such as Easthope or Trelawney, who, despite their anglicanism were sympathetic to some of Miall's objectives. Yet one dissenting periodical, of more moderate outlook than Miall, wrote: "Many members of the Liberation Society itself are good Episcopalians, and from its origination, such have ever been among its adherents."² There seems to have been no doctrinal obstacle; the Eclectic Review noted that if the Church of England were disestablished, Presbyterians and Congregationalists would be disposed to co-operate actively with it.³ Disestablishment was probably not sufficient of a live issue to enable Miall to unite all the potential critics of establishment in the 1840s: with the advantage of hindsight, his efforts to recruit evangelical support seem no more realistic than Thomas Arnold's hope of uniting all protestant Christians. To the radicals and Chartists, however, Miall could make a more coherent and effective appeal; they had much in common with militant dissent.

1. W. Thorn, The Evangelical Alliance. Can Churchmen and Dissenters unite in it? (London, undated) p35.
2. British Quarterly Review, Vol.LXXIII Jan.1881, p156
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV, 1836, p112

As early as 1833, Arnold had preached the need for all protestant Christians to unite, in order to save the Church of England, which he did not believe could survive in its existing form. But he feared the moment had passed: "Nothing, as it seems to me, can save the Church but a union with the Dissenters: now they are leagued with the anti-Christian party."¹ Parliamentary radicals were disappointed, as were dissenters, by the performance of the Whigs after 1832, and were disposed to remove what they regarded as an anomalous establishment which impeded social and political progress, and whose wealth could be better employed. Whig governments had shrunk from the idea of the appropriation of church property, and both the radicals and the dissenters needed new causes and new allies. Both were agreed on the urgency of progress towards civil and religious liberty, and links between the two groups existed before Miall arrived upon the political scene. For example, the radical Hume was elected chairman of the Birmingham Church Rate Abolition Society,² while in Durham, an Independent minister publicly stated that in order to achieve religious and political liberty, he would not hesitate to join forces with Roman Catholics, or even Deists.³ Bright gave financial help towards the founding of the Nonconformist,⁴ Joseph Sturge was chairman of the Voluntary Church Association as well as founder of the Complete Suffrage Union, and Sharman Crawford was one of Miall's closest supporters.

However, the Anti-Corn Law League made a more powerful appeal to radicals, and Miall had to show that his ideas were in harmony with the League's objectives. His most potent argument was in fact an old radical argument, that the property of the Anglican Church had been granted to it by Parliament, and what Parliament had once granted, it could revoke.⁵ Miall, borrowing Hooker's argument that the Church of England was the Nation viewed in relation to spiritual matters, and was hence co-extensive with the nation, concluded:

1. T. Arnold, Principles of Church Reform p62
2. R. Mashedier, Dissent and Democracy. Their mutual relations and common object. An historical survey. 2nd edition (London 1865) p29.
3. Ibid., p33
4. Ibid., p42
5. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction p63

"By what right...do the clergy constitute themselves 'the church' and pretend in virtue of being so to be the sole legal possessors of ecclesiastical funds...who would be defrauded were the state to appropriate them?"¹

In particular, Miall applied this notion to the question of tithes, which he used to illustrate the nature of ecclesiastical property. In 1861 he published a lengthy treatise, in which he argued that tithes had no possible origin in private liberality, but were the consequence of parliamentary enactment.² They were a tax, enforced by legal authority, whose destination and use was determined by law. Since the state determined the use to which the revenue was put, "...the Civil power...never ceased to be lord of the ecclesiastical manor."³ The Church of England had a status in law precisely similar to that of the armed forces, and Miall concluded:

"History proves...that parochial church endowments are nothing more or less than the peculiar provision made by the state to give effect to its ecclesiastical policy for the time being, which policy it has changed as frequently as it has seen fit, and which it is equally entitled to change or suppress altogether as public opinion shall authorise or demand it."⁴

This was an extension of the argument used by radical politicians in the 1830s, whereby tithes were regarded as national property set aside for specific purposes. Insofar as these purposes were ignored by the Church of England, as the holder of the property, that property was prima facie misappropriated.⁵ The radicals, in more general terms, employed a similar argument when they demanded reappropriation of the revenues of the Irish Church, or supported demands by dissenters for admission to the older universities. In one of his more laconic statements, Miall proclaimed: "The separation of church and state includes the resumption for civil purposes of all national funds now set apart for the religious instruction of the people."⁶

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p296
2. E. Miall, The title deeds of the Church of England to her parochial endowments. (London 1861. 2nd edition 1871) p5, 55-60. See also E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook pp283, 289, 296.
3. Ibid. pp79, 85-86
4. Ibid. pp88-89, 92. cf British Quarterly Review, LXXIII 1881, p161
5. W.R. Ward, "The Tithe Question in England in the early Nineteenth Century" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.16 1965, p78
6. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p55. See also E. Miall, "What is the separation of Church and State?" Tracts of the British Anti-State Church Association (London 1851), pp181-198

This was not a view held by all dissenters: a general convention which met in 1834, and which was attended by many moderate leaders of dissent such as Edward Baines, Josiah Conder, John Angell James, while critical of the Established Church, admitted that church property belonged to the Episcopalian sect alone.¹

Another appeal to radicals was upon utilitarian grounds; the church was failing to achieve the task of spreading Christianity, for the fulfilment of which Parliament had granted it the use of its property. The cause of its failure was the fact that it was established,² and Parliament was competent to take away its property: "The thing to be dealt with is a particular species of property, and as such must be regarded."³ The eminent philosopher John Stuart Mill went even further than Miall; he considered that even if the property held by the church was the result of private liberality for specific purposes, the wishes of benefactors could not be binding indefinitely. The property of the church was held in trust for the spiritual culture of the people, but Parliament was entitled at any time to consider whether the property was being used properly, and if not, to redesignate it: "The first duty of the Legislature is to employ the endowment usefully."⁴ Miall was attempting to convey to the dissenting body that the question was one which could properly be dealt with by Parliament, and to arouse dissenters to political action, which many were reluctant to undertake. The Eclectic Review had observed that the phrase, 'political dissenter' had become a stigma, implying that ideally dissenters were not involved in politics: "It is high time they became so, as religious men and from religious motives."⁵

1. H.S. Skezts & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches pp481-483
2. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p270. In one of his most popular works, The British Churches in relation to the British people (London 1849) pp364-365, Miall claimed that one reason why all churches in Britain were failing in their duty was the fact that the Church of England was established. This falsified the position of all religious bodies. It also caused the working classes to grow away from the churches. Ibid., p218
3. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook pp55, 283
4. J.S. Mill, "The right and wrong of state interference with corporation and church property." (first published in Jurist Feb. 1833). Dissertations and Discussions (London 1875) pp9, 12, 36.
5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V 1839, p4.

Miall made a similar plea:

"Is there anything so criminal in being political that sacred duties must be abandoned, rather than expose ourselves to the charge? Is the Christian Church to be left weltering in corruption, because men cannot drag it forth without defiling their hands with politics?"¹

Following the arguments of Herbert Spencer, Miall believed that the only duty of a government towards religion was to guarantee conditions in which it could flourish freely. Apart from this, religion should be left to the working of market forces: as in commerce and education, the ideal was free trade in religious belief.² To the many radicals who supported the cause of free trade, this may well have been a persuasive argument, as was the argument that the Church of England was the opponent of progress and reform. As a tool of the aristocracy, it had opposed the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform:

"The clergy have been invariably the deadliest foes of liberty, civil and religious...They have taken an active part against the people in any great political struggle from the Reformation downwards."³

Their dominant position in education enabled them to control opinion, and to inhibit freedom of thought. So interwoven was the establishment with other aspects of national life, that it was practically impossible to reform any abuse without in some way affecting the church. Measures were considered, not upon their merits, but with regard to their effect upon the establishment.⁴

Radicals might unite with militant dissenters to remove an obstacle to reform, and Miall believed that the Chartist movement had a similar interest. Its main objective was the reform of Parliament, and Miall believed that dissenting ambitions would be more easily achieved if the franchise were reformed and extended:

1. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p11. cf British Quarterly Review, LXXIII 1881, p153, which maintained that there was no disgrace in the involvement of dissenters in political activities.
2. This idea went back at least to the 1820s, when J.E. Taylor argued, at a vestry meeting in Manchester, that religion should be a 'marketable commodity'. D. Read, Press and People (London 1961) p35
3. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p71
4. Ibid., p78

"Let us get a freely and equitably chosen Parliament, and we may then put forward our claims for consideration. The wisest thing which earnest dissenters, in our opinion, can do, is to encourage by all means in their power the cause of complete suffrage."¹

The union of Chartism with militant dissent was the raison d'être of the Complete Suffrage Union, and though the attempt was a failure, the moreso as Miall tried also to incorporate the Anti-Corn Law League,² individual Chartists such as Robert Lowery and Henry Vincent supported Miall's ideas, as well as individual members of the League, such as Bright. In the future, Miall was to make other, and more successful attempts to recruit working-class support for disestablishment.

His attempts did not pass unnoticed. The Anglican lawyer, Richard Masheder, bitterly commented that Miall was responsible for reviving and organising political dissent in the 1840s. Whereas, according to Masheder, in the 1830s dissent had been identified with, but not allied to, radicalism, with the foundation of the British Anti-State Church Association in 1844,

"...there was united in unholy wedlock the two powers of Dissent and Radicalism, the representatives of the democratic principle in civil and ecclesiastical matters, in the State and in the Church."³

Masheder went on to comment that the Complete Suffrage Movement represented militant dissent throwing in its lot with Chartism:

"It is Chartism combined with the separation of Church and State. It is the democratic principle in all its entirety in civil and in ecclesiastical matters. And this is Mr. Miall's creed, and Mr. John Bright's creed, and Mr. Henry Vincent's creed, and it was the creed of Mr. Joseph Sturge, Mr. Sharman Crawford, Mr. Feargus O'Connor and of Daniel O'Connell. This was and is the creed of all who joined in the Complete Suffrage Union, and therefore it was and is the creed of hundreds of Dissenting ministers."⁴

Certainly, it was an attempt, in which Miall played a major part, to create a new radical alliance. It did not enjoy immediate success; as with Miall's attempt to secure the support of Irish Catholics, it did not come to fruition

1. Nonconformist, 13.VII.1842, p473
2. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction p75
3. R. Masheder, Dissent and Democracy p48
4. Ibid., p57

until the 1860s. Nevertheless, it was an accurate appraisal of the political requirements of dissent in the 1840s.

There was also a positive side to Miall's attacks upon the Church of England; its disestablishment would make room for the operation of free market forces in religion, or the voluntary system. The operation of voluntarism was inhibited by the very existence of an establishment, which had a natural tendency towards monopoly. The Eclectic Review regarded the establishment as, "...a jealous, corrupt and intolerant monopoly...It prohibits all that it does not provide."¹ The voluntary system accorded well enough with Miall's ideas of limited governmental activity, though, as Professor Gash has shown, it did not necessarily derive from long-established traditions of English dissent:² the fact that voluntarism was so popular in the 1840s is suggestive of the disillusion of dissenters with the whole political process, and in this sense voluntarism was a retreat from politics. For Miall, it may be regarded as one of the consequences of his frustration with the Whigs, but nonetheless, he had great faith in its potential as a positive force. The present condition of the Church of England was testimony to the failure of a compulsory system. Despite its financial and legal advantages, it had utterly failed to bring Christianity to the whole nation. Its parochial system covered the whole country, but the task of bringing religion to the great industrial centres had been fulfilled by the voluntary exertions of dissenters.³ They had done this, despite having to support their own ministers and chapels in addition to contributing to the upkeep of the Church of England. Religion should be supported, not compulsorily, but freely, as this was the most appropriate method of fulfilling the intentions of Christianity. Miall claimed:

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1836, p115
2. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction p76
3. E. Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook p206. cf T. Arnold, Principles of Church Reform p105.

200

"The voluntary system is Christianity working by means of mechanism which itself creates, vitalises, adapts, expands, repairs and reproduces. The compulsory system is machinery constructed by extraneous contrivance into which Christianity has to be introduced."¹

Indeed, Miall deprecated all endowment of religion, whether by establishment or by other means. Any endowment, he argued, discouraged activity, energy, self-denial and disinterestedness on the part of the recipients. Ossification inevitably resulted, as endowments were usually tied to a particular doctrine or observance. They were, "...a wet blanket upon our best sympathies. They need but be universal to extinguish practical Christianity altogether."² In a voluntary system, endowments had no place, for a creed would flourish so long as its adherents were prepared to support it. The notion had economic validity: dissenting sects had little prospect of attracting capital endowments on the scale of the Established Church, and voluntarism was a method of financing a sect without extensive capital resources. This was feasible, as Dr. Chalmers demonstrated in Scotland, if the wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution could be tapped. Income, rather than capital, was more appropriate, as one of the virtues of voluntarism was its flexibility. However, the fact that men were called upon to make compulsory contributions to the Church of England inhibited the growth of voluntarism. It had to tap the income of the present generation, and could not do so to a sufficient extent in competition with compulsory exactions:

"The voluntary system cannot succeed whilst it runs side by side with state endowments: those endowments must first of all be swept away and then the people will feel that the responsibility of the Church's support rests upon them."³

Miall believed that such obstacles to voluntary endeavour should be removed: he did not accept the unitarian view that voluntarism was stimulated by government competition, nor that, while it had great success in founding institutions, both ecclesiastical and educational, it was totally ill-equipped

1. E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle (London 1845) p11, p23.
2. Nonconformist, 31.V.1848, p385
3. Liberator, Dec. 1856, p236

for the sustained efforts needed to maintain them.¹ Though he was eventually forced to concede that voluntary schools were unable to compete with those maintained by the state, he did not feel that the same objections applied to religious denominations. Despite its endowments, the Church of England had not kept pace with a rising population: the alternatives were either effective voluntary effort, or the granting of additional resources to the church, which Miall would not countenance. He bitterly opposed all schemes of church extension, for they represented increased taxation to pay for the activities of a particular sect. The duty of government was to provide a "...clear stage and no favour." It should provide only justice and protection, and allow voluntary agency to work out any other necessary function. State intervention in trade and commerce had almost led to national ruin; its attempts to relieve poverty had created a virtually unmanageable system, and so far as religion was concerned, "...the empire groans beneath the burden of its failure."²

A wholly voluntary basis for religion would produce many benefits. Since no sect would be favoured, there would be an end to sectarian bitterness and rivalry.³ Its inherent flexibility would permit a variety of religious institutions and practices, according to the needs of particular areas or situations: "...religion runs not in channels scooped out for it by law, but takes the direction which an ever-present and ever-active judgment may determine."⁴ The inherent flexibility of the voluntary system made it a more suitable instrument of missionary enterprise, both at home and abroad, than the Established Church, whose cumbersome organisation could not be set up short of a process of conquest or domination.⁵ In England, voluntarism could not be seen in its true colours; its workings could only be appreciated properly in America, where there was no established religion. But its

1. Christian Reformer, Feb. 1847, pp76-78.

2. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity (London 1863) pp41-43. This is a collection of articles which appeared in the Nonconformist from 1847-1848.

3. E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle p42

4. Ibid. p36

5. Ibid. p57

achievements in England so far, hampered as it was by the state church, had been notable, and were sufficient to show that religion would not collapse if left to support itself.¹ Ministers and churches could not afford complacency in a voluntary system; they would have to win men over to religion instead of relying upon a guaranteed congregation:

"Either, then, men's will cannot be won over to religion, in which case the institutions are obviously useless, or it can, in which case the institutions are guaranteed a voluntary and efficient support."²

Miall argued a similar case for the voluntary provision of education, urban amenities, indeed of any social service. Like philanthropy in the social sphere, voluntaryism in religion developed the best of human characteristics, a sense of responsibility, a disposition to treat men as individuals with freedom of choice and a capacity for making rational decisions. By contrast, the state church demanded unquestioning obedience.³ Voluntaryism was based upon active faith, rather than passive acceptance..

Miall attempted to answer some of the major criticisms of voluntaryism. Russell had remarked that a priest relying for support solely upon his congregation might be tempted to compromise his principles in the interests of his livelihood. Miall conceded the danger, but argued that establishment did not necessarily remove it:

"Subservience to an individual patron is at least as much to be deprecated as subservience to a congregation. It may be that pay received at the hands of the state will dispose men to interpret divine truth in accordance with the wishes of the state."⁴

He saw voluntaryism as an encouragement to self-help and self-reliance, qualities which would promote a spirit of fellowship and co-operation. Unlike the establishment, whose influence was divisive, "...it encourages no division but a division of labour."⁵ Voluntaryism need have no connection with politics, whereas the establishment was by definition a political institution;

1. E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle p53

2. Ibid. p70

3. Ibid. pp81, 88, 94.

4. Ibid. p109

5. Ibid. p139

if it were abolished, there would be no place for 'political dissenters'.¹
 It would offset a tendency, which Miall considered dangerous, to rely upon state intervention rather than individual effort:

"Perhaps the greatest peril to which our social organisation exposes us, is the temptation it offers to shift from ourselves to our rulers all active care for the myriads around us, and to condense our whole duty into the payment of the Queen's taxes."²

He was at his best in theoretical justification of voluntaryism, and did not really face some of its practical shortcomings. He never answered satisfactorily the unitarian argument that voluntaryism did not necessarily cater for areas most in need. Indeed, the difficulty of relying upon market forces was that they apply primarily to what people regard as the necessities of life. For the very poor, as the Times remarked in the case of education, the priorities might be different from those of middle-class voluntaryists. Religion might not be regarded as a necessity of life, and there was a valid argument that in this case, the parochial system of the Established Church at least provided a necessary minimum.³

In summarising his arguments, Miall wrote:

"The voluntary principle...declares that what men do for the support of public worship and for the ministration of spiritual institutions...is a matter which should be left to something higher than law to regulate, which should not represent the efficiency of a command from without, but the power of a principle within..."⁴

These were by no means his only statements upon the voluntary system. In 1846 he produced another series of articles entitled The workings of Willinghood,⁵ in which he accepted that diversity of organisation and of belief might result from voluntaryism: "Mankind reaps more benefit in the long run from zealous heresy than from stagnant orthodoxy."⁶ He

1. E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle p145.
2. Ibid. p151
3. Rev. W.A. O'Connor, Popular delusions on the subject of Church and State. (London 1861) pp18-19.
4. E. Miall, Views of the Voluntary Principle p237
5. Nonconformist, 30.IX.1846 to 30.XII.1846.
6. Nonconformist, 4.XI.1846, p733

published a series of letters to Lord Shaftesbury in 1858, initially in the Nonconformist, which appeared as a book in the next year, entitled The Fixed and Voluntary Principle. He was provoked by Shaftesbury's assertion that compulsion and voluntarism were in fact complementary, but added little to his previous statements, save to point out that one consequence of establishments were unfortunate incidents such as the Gorham case.¹

The disruption of the Scottish Church in the early 1840s, while superficially a triumph of the principle Miall was advocating, in fact gave little reason for encouragement. The major issue was the power of patrons to select ministers for livings, and opponents of the practice, led by Dr. Chalmers, unsuccessfully requested British governments to amend the power of patrons, and that of ecclesiastical courts. But Chalmers was a supporter of the principle of establishment; indeed he gave a series of lectures in London in defence of the establishment of religion, though he laid great stress upon the proper spiritual independence of the church.² At the General Assembly of 1843 when the secession occurred, Chalmers insisted that the secessionists had no sympathy with voluntarism; they were leaving a corrupt establishment, but would be prepared to return if it were reformed. He attacked those who were agitating against the principle of establishment, and went on to equate voluntarism with anarchy:

"If on the flag of your truly free and constitutional church you are willing to inscribe that you are no Voluntaries, then still more will there be an utter absence of sympathy on your part with the demagogues and agitators of the day."³

Prior to the disruption, Chalmers had used his financial ability to set up a sustentation fund, which prevented ministers of the newly-established Free Church being dependent solely upon their congregations for support, a denial of voluntarism in Miall's sense.⁴

1. E. Miall, The Fixed and Voluntary Principles. Eight letters to the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury (London 1859) p40
2. W. Hanna, Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers (Edinburgh 1853) iv, 37
3. Ibid., iv, 348
4. J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (Oxford 1960) pp349f

Miall was influenced, not so much by Chalmers, but by Dr. Wardlaw and the Scottish voluntaryists, whom he met in the 1830s in Leicester.¹ Wardlaw had condemned Chalmers' view, and there was a fruitless attempt by the Leicester radicals and the Scottish voluntaryists to draft a bill exempting dissenters from church rates.² While the Scottish Church was in turmoil, Miall was preoccupied with the Complete Suffrage Union and Sir James Graham's Factory Education bill; until 1843, he scarcely mentioned events in the Scottish Church, and rarely commented upon them. He realised that there was a threat to the state church, and was gratified, but he had no sympathy with Chalmers' party. He felt that the secessionists wanted state support without corresponding state interference, which he regarded as both impossible and improper. He welcomed the disruption as a major event, but his delight was qualified:

"The Church of Scotland is rent in twain...Upwards of four hundred Presbyterian clergy seceded...(they) gave the world, if not a proof of their religious knowledge, a pledge, at all events, of their religious sincerity...We look upon their act as one of the greatest of modern times - an act which only falls short of the true moral sublime because they who performed it were unable to cast off the skin of their old prejudices."³

In 1847, Miall, looking forward to a resurgence of voluntaryism in Scotland, criticised the Free Church for, "...clinging convulsively to a theory of establishment."⁴ When Chalmers died in the same year, the obituary published by the Nonconformist showed a total absence of illusion:

"He never could see the incompatibility of ecclesiastical independence with state support. He endangered the voluntary principle by casting it into the mould of a Sustentation fund."⁵

Though Miall welcomed the disruption because it weakened the Established Church, he did not regard the process as a triumph for anti-state church principles. He greeted with equal enthusiasm similar disruptive movements

1. Leicestershire Mercury, 16.II.1839. A Miall, Life of Edward Miall p38
2. A Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester (Leicester 1954) pp252-253
3. Nonconformist, 24.V.1843, p376. This was not even a leading article, but part of a centre page 'Summary' of the events of the week. Another dissenting periodical commented, "...not one of the hundreds of clergymen who, in 1843, left their manses and separated themselves from the Establishment held the doctrine that the Church should be separate and distinct from the State." Eclectic Review, ns XII 1867, pl24
4. Nonconformist, 6.I.1847, pl
5. Ibid., 9.VI.1847, p421. Miall had remained in contact with the Scottish voluntary party. P. Landreth, The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Adam Thomson D.D. (Edinburgh 1869) pp455-456

in Geneva in 1849, led by Merle d'Aubigné; in the Canton de Vaud in 1845; much later, in Neuchâtel in 1873. As in Scotland, a Calvinist tradition was historically present in each of these cases.¹

Thus Miall spent the early years of his journalistic career in formulating an intellectual position for militant dissent which might attract the support of other groups hostile to, or discontented with, the Church of England. The sources of his ideas can only be suggested tentatively, as he acknowledged no literary debts. He appealed to a dissenting tradition of resistance and struggle, though the Puritans whom he admired had not been opposed to the principle of establishment: he was obliged to refer to their personal qualities as much as to their principles. There is an obvious utilitarian influence in his criticism of the inefficiency of the establishment, and his attacks upon its privileged position were in the mainstream of radicalism. But, on a philosophical level, he denied that the principle of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' was a valid aim of government, or, for that matter, a justification for the establishment of the numerically largest religious denomination: it implied the right to do injustice to the minority.² The idea of the separation of Church and State had already been discussed and advocated by John Locke, on the grounds that religious belief was irrelevant to civil obedience:³ Joseph Priestley had demanded equality of status for all religious sects. Arguments of religious freedom as a natural right led logically to a secular state, which existed in principle after 1828 and 1829, and of which Miall approved. Utilitarians such as James Mill regarded freedom of expression as essential to the spread of truth and disliked the intellectually repressive aspects of establishment.⁴ Miall's political thought was eclectic; Herbert Spencer's letters on the 'proper Sphere of Government' are an adequate reflection of it. He was concerned to provide a justification for militant dissent, for those who were

1. J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland p353
2. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity pp22-27
3. J. Locke, Letters concerning Toleration.
4. U. Henriques, Religious Toleration in England, 1787-1833 pp251ff

not content to follow the lead of London dissenters, and concentrate upon the redress of practical grievances. For Miall, the existence of the Established Church was the fundamental grievance: practical grievances were merely symptoms, and an effective radical alliance could only centre around a basic principle.

Part 2. Church Rates

Miall had thus formulated a strategy for anti-state church agitation, and from 1841 to 1873 the question was in the hands of Miall and his supporters. Under his guidance, the question acquired significance, and he was able to bring it before Parliament as a substantive issue for the first time in 1871. Between 1844 and 1871 the tactics of the campaign were very much those formulated by Miall and the Anti-State Church Association (later the Liberation Society), and it is perhaps in this sphere that Miall enjoyed much of his influence as a politician. As he had previously argued, the Established Church pervaded many aspects of national life: thus, when the ancient universities were opened to dissenters, when the Church of Ireland lost its privileged position, or when the reserves of the Canadian clergy were secularised, the Church of England was in these respects disestablished. Miall realised that the issue could not be raised in the first instance as a substantive question; there had to be public campaigns to rally support, M.P.s had to be convinced, and induced to lend their influence. With so abstract a question as disestablishment, this would be difficult, so Miall sought to identify practical grievances which were the consequence of the existence of an establishment. So long as these practical grievances were related to the major issue, the question of the establishment would be constantly before the public: eventually there would be sufficient public support to treat the question in its own right. Efficient publicity was essential, and this was provided both by the Nonconformist and by the

Liberation Society, which constantly reminded the public that particular questions of religious freedom were part of the larger question of disestablishment.

The church rate question was particularly suited to Miall's purpose. The rate was one of the oldest of such levies, originally intended for the repair and upkeep of the parochial church and the provision of services. Its amount was decided by the parish vestry, and it was collected by the churchwardens.¹ The levy placed dissenters in the position of having to support a sect of whose doctrines they disapproved and of whose facilities they did not avail themselves. In addition, they had to pay for the upkeep of their own places of worship. When the acts of 1828 and 1829 rendered Hooker's view, that the Church of England was the whole nation in its ecclesiastical aspect, untenable, dissenters began to feel that the obligation to pay the church rate was no longer tolerable. The Church of England was all the more determined to preserve the levy after the erosion of its position between 1828 and 1835, as a continuing symbol of its privileged status. During the 1830s, the church rate question was discussed in Parliament. Ideally, dissenters wanted the rate abolished, though there were many who were prepared to contribute voluntarily to the upkeep of parochial churches, so long as the levy were not compulsory.² The existence of church rates was one of the grievances specified by almost every public organisation of dissenters in the 1830s. The question could be fought either in the parliamentary arena, or upon a parochial level, and the history of the agitation to date gave Miall little room for tactical manoeuvre. In Ireland, the church cess, a church rate levied in rural areas, had been abolished in 1833: dissenters and radicals regarded this as a precedent for abolition in England. Agitation against the rate grew at

1. H.W. Cripps, The Laws of the Church and Clergy 5th edition (London 1869) pp515f.
2. E. Hodder The Life of Samuel Morley pp172-173. See also O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (London 1973) i, 152-153. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 pl78.

vestry meetings; in 1834, Lord Althorp framed a measure, which, while it proposed the abolition of church rates, transferred the charge to the treasury. Radicals and dissenters were infuriated, for the bill retained the principle of indiscriminate support of the establishment, and the Whigs abandoned the measure. They introduced a new measure in 1837, more far-reaching since the diminution of their majority compelled them to rely upon radical and dissenting support. The upkeep of parish churches was to be met by the more efficient management of church property, the leases of which would be taken over by the government.¹ This measure met with opposition from the Ecclesiastical Commission itself, from the Anglican hierarchy, and from the Anglican members of the Whig party.² The bill was abandoned, and with it, any hope that dissenters could obtain the redress of their grievances with Whig assistance. When Duncombe introduced a motion in 1840 to exempt dissenters from the rate, the case for both the abolition of the rate and for voluntary support of religion was made by Edward Baines Senior, but the Whig leaders showed no sympathy.³ This strengthened the hand of those who, like Miall, advocated extra-parliamentary action.

It was quite possible to fight the issue outside Parliament; the techniques were already established. Quakers had long refused to pay legally valid rates, and had suffered distraint of their goods.⁴ The acts of 1818 and 1824 which provided money for the building of new churches exacerbated the problem, for the new churches had to be supported by a new rate: in some cases, dissenters had to pay two rates, which increased their intransigence. Radicals, seeing no value in a religious establishment, supported dissenters, and the scene of the contest was the vestry elections, where the opponents of church rates tried to secure the election of members who would oppose the

1. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church i, 146
2. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852 p73
3. E. Baines, Life of Edward Baines pp254, 261-264. The Eclectic Review drew the moral that there was no point in raising the question in Parliament if the Whigs were not prepared to support dissenters' demands. Church rates must be fought in the vestries: "It is here that the battle of religious liberty must be fought." Eclectic Review, ns Vol. VII, 1840 pp346, 358. T.H. Duncombe The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe (London 1868) ii, 201.
4. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church i, 146f

levy of a rate. Some parishes escaped contests, either because the church had sufficient endowments or sufficient yield from pew-rents to make rates superfluous. The majority of the contested rates in the 1820s and 1830s occurred in major cities such as Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham, where they obtained maximum publicity.¹ Edward Baines was active in Leeds, where he secured the abolition of the rate,² while John Bright played a prominent part in the abolition of the rate at Rochdale.³ Since the dissenters required the support of other groups, such as radicals and Chartists at vestry elections, a local nucleus of opinion hostile to compulsory levies for religious purposes could be built up. The number of contested rates increased year by year; between 1833 and 1851, there were 632 contests, and many parishes ceased to levy a rate simply to avoid these contests.⁴ Dissenters could vote at vestry elections, so long as they were rate payers, and a church-rate contest was an excellent method of involving them directly in a struggle against the establishment on a local level: if successful, it was a method of disestablishing the church parish by parish.⁵

The Braintree case was to gain fame as the most famous of the church-rate battles. In 1834, Samuel Courtauld began a campaign against church rates in the parish of Braintree which had success in 1837 when, with a large majority of dissenters, the vestry refused to make a rate. The church-wardens nevertheless levied a rate, and the issue of whether or not a vestry could refuse to make a rate, or could merely determine its amount, was fought in various courts until 1853. The ambiguity allowed dissenters the opportunity of contesting the legality of rates, and Miall was quick to recognise the significance of the case:

1. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society p172.
2. D. Fraser, "Edward Baines" in P. Hollis, (ed) Pressure from without in Early Victorian England pp186,194,195.
3. G.M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright pp36-41
4. Parliamentary Papers 1851 IX 465-466. See also O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church i, 152
5. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pp 179ff

"The Braintree case supplies a truthfully characteristic illustration of the ecclesiastical love of a principle. They had allowed the old common law form of summoning the people to rate themselves prevail whilst they could induce them to buckle the load upon their own shoulders: but as soon as the sufferers doubted the obligation of carrying the burden, custom was nothing, law was nothing, and the minority was entitled to tax the majority. The beginning of the end is passing before us; and this, whichever way it may be decided, will materially advance it."¹

An interim judgment encouraged Miall:

"At all events, the Church has received a deadly wound: and it seems doubtful whether independently of the aid of fresh legislation she can long continue to uphold the iniquitous and vexatious system of church rates."²

But the case continued, and the next round was a defeat for dissenters. In 1847, Lord Denman ruled that church rates were sanctioned by law, and no vestry had the power to decide whether or not to levy a rate, but simply to decide how much it should be. Miall warned that the issue would now revive in towns such as Manchester, Birmingham, Rochdale and Nottingham, where the rate had not been levied for some time, and he forecast new dissenting agitation:

"Slumbering Nonconformists will be simultaneously stung into wakefulness, and visions of peace which enchanted dreaming theorists will be dispelled by rough contact with the almost forgotten rate collector. The issue cannot be otherwise than beneficial. For some time past, the Establishment has only been seen from afar by Dissenters in our largest and most important towns..."³

Miall possessed the invaluable talent of remaining optimistic, even in adversity, of seeing possible advantage in almost any situation: "...a little flagellation, administered by ecclesiastical hands, may possibly waken them up to a sense of duty."⁴ The decision of 1847 was reversed by the House of Lords in 1853; in what was to be a final judgment, it ruled that a minority of a vestry could not levy a rate. Miall believed that the church rate was now doomed,⁵ and Dr. Lushington concurred: "The effect

1. Nonconformist, 5.I.1842, p2
2. Ibid., 11.V.1842, p305
3. Ibid., 17.II.1847, p93
4. Ibid., 30.I.1850, p81
5. Ibid., 17.VIII.1853, p649

of that judgment would be, that it would be impossible to enforce any rate made by the churchwardens, such rate having been refused by the parish."¹ Miall urged two considerations upon dissenters; Parliament might now be more sympathetic to the views of dissenters upon church rates, and Gladstone himself might be open to conviction. It was vitally important for dissenters to take advantage of the new legal situation and demonstrate their opposition to church rates by contesting them wherever they survived.² Miall showed his appreciation of Cortauld's efforts by taking part in a testimonial to the author of this great victory.³ Church rates were now a voluntary payment, dependent upon the will of a majority of the parish;⁴ their abolition was a matter of time.

By 1855, the Eclectic Review noted that in the North of England, church rates had been almost entirely abolished, and good progress was being made in the South.⁵ However, as more and more parishes abolished rates it became more and more difficult to sustain interest on the scale of the 1830s and the 1840s; there was no repetition of the great public interest aroused at Rochdale between 1833 and 1843.⁶ The Liberator admitted there was much less enthusiasm than in the 1840s.⁷ Since local abolition was possible, it was more difficult to maintain that massive campaigns were required, and possibly M.P.s felt better able to support abolition in Parliament. The growth of parliamentary agitation coincided with diminishing local interest: one difficulty was to keep the dissenting lobby together, particularly since its radical allies were losing interest in church affairs in the 1850s, and were becoming divided by their distrust of Russell.⁸ Specific dissenting grievances were being remedied, and the church-rate question was a means of keeping dissenting morale high,⁹ and of keeping the disestablishment question

1. H.C. 1859, Sess.2 V, pp175-176
2. Nonconformist, 2.VIII.1854, p633
3. Ibid., 26.IX.1855, p714
4. H.W. Cripps, The Laws of the Church and Clergy p538
5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1855, pl06
6. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pl89
7. Liberator, Sept. 1861, pl45
8. J.B. Conacher, The Peelites and the Party System 1846-1852 (London 1972) pp146f
9. Liberator, Feb.1861, p27

before the public. Miall admitted to a church-rate conference in 1861, which was attended by members of the Congregational and Baptist Unions, the Dissenting Deputies, the Congregational Board, the Unitarian Association, the United Free Methodists and the Methodist New Connection, that the value of the question was that it preserved dissenters' sense of grievance:

"...as far as the ulterior objects of the Society were concerned, it would be better that church rates should not be abolished."¹ Once dissenters were evidently failing to retain radical support, and local agitation diminished in intensity, the Commons majorities in favour of abolition diminished, until Miall judged it expedient to abandon the parliamentary campaign.²

Miall was aware from the outset that church-rate disputes could also be fought individually, and could produce martyrs. At one stage, he recommended dissenters to refuse to pay the rate, refuse to recognise the authority of the church court before which they would be summoned, and then allow their goods to be seized: the publicity would be invaluable, and the Established Church would appear as a covetous bully.³ This was a tactic to be employed by those who did not have the resources to fight a long legal battle. He had direct experience of such tactics; prior to the foundation of the Nonconformist, Miall had helped found the Leicester Voluntary Church Society, which would contest church rates wherever possible.⁴

He commended attacks upon church rates as a means of pursuing disestablishment preferable to seeking the remedy of practical grievances. Church rates contests were an opportunity for making,

"...an open and manly avowal of those principles which had produced their dissent, and which would, he trusted, at no very distant period, bury dissent and establishments in one common grave."⁵

With the help of John P. Mursell, he established the Leicester Voluntary

1. Liberator, March 1861, pp34-35. Cf Nonconformist, 6.V.1863, p341
2. See below pp403f
3. Nonconformist, 6.VIII.1851, p617
4. A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester p251
5. Leicestershire Mercury, 23.VII.1836

Church Society in 1836, which repudiated, "...the employment of all compulsory means, all State enactments, and all temporal and worldly authority... as opposed alike to sound reason and to the word of God."¹ The Leicestershire Mercury supported Miall's cause, and commented scathingly upon the seizure of his property on account of his failure to pay church rates. Popular indignation prevented the sale of the distrained goods, and the feeling was that such incidents would discredit the establishment.² Miall was secretary of the association; he used it as a platform for the grievances of provincial dissenters, and made efforts to establish contact with leading politicians, notably Lord Brougham.³ He repeatedly denounced those who sought redress of practical grievances, or who relied upon London leaders and their Whig allies. He admitted that in practice church rates were trivial; they were, however, important as a symbol. He and Mursell produced a manifesto calling for the abolition of church rates as a means of disestablishment; the Leicestershire Mercury urged parochial battles, deprecating the policy, advocated by the Patriot of fighting the battle in Parliament.⁴ Miall's policy of defying the law had its adherents; John Childs of Bungay, Thorogood of Chelmsford, Simonds of Aylesbury, and William Baines, a member of Miall's own congregation, were all imprisoned for refusing to pay church rates.⁵ Miall addressed a meeting at which he castigated dissenting leaders for succumbing to Anglican pressure, and in particular for their failure to protest against the imprisonment of Thorogood: "What have you gained by your silence and inactivity?...You are laughed at, you are despised, you are most gratuitously kicked by men of every political creed."⁶ More moderate dissenting opinion did not agree with Miall's

1. Leicestershire Mercury, 29.X.1836
2. Ibid., 14.I.1837; 21.I.1837
3. Miall to Brougham, 3rd April 1837. Brougham Mss 8406. On this occasion, Miall was requesting Brougham to present a petition to Parliament on behalf of his congregation, and took the opportunity to remind Brougham of the obstructiveness of the Anglican hierarchy both to the relief of dissenters, and to their attempts to extend their ministry.
4. Leicestershire Mercury, 4.I.1840. See also Ibid., 23.II.1839, 16.XI.1839, 21.XII.1839.
5. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation (London 1972) p12
6. Leicestershire Mercury, 21.XI.1840

strategy. The Patriot disapproved of the action of Thorogood and Baines, disliked the tone of Miall's meetings and his criticisms of the London leaders, and regarded John Childs as a fanatic: "The cause of religious freedom has far more to fear from such professed zealots than from its most inveterate enemies."¹ The Eclectic Review was more sympathetic to the frustration felt by provincial dissenters, but deplored the tone of Miall's attacks upon dissenting leaders.²

The Leicester Voluntary Church Association met to support William Baines, and, with Thorogood in the chair, Miall delivered a fiery speech in which he attributed Baines' suffering and imprisonment to the fact that dissenters had for too long endured the iniquities of the establishment.³ Miall again wrote to Lord Brougham, asking him to present a petition to Parliament on behalf of Baines, and enclosed a lengthy explanation of Baines' protest, which amounted to an essay upon the evils of establishments.⁴ The Nonconformist was founded because it was felt by radical dissenters that existing dissenting organs such as the Patriot, the Eclectic Review and the British Banner were lukewarm and reserved in their support for the principles of disestablishment.⁵ The Leicestershire Mercury welcomed it, for dissenters had long felt the need,

"...of an honest, earnest and uncompromising metropolitan organ for the advocacy of their principles. Hitherto they have had the ill-fortune of being misrepresented by a trimming, time-serving press."⁶

The imprisonment of Baines in Leicester gaol coincided with the appearance of the Nonconformist, and Miall took full advantage. He told Baines that he would put his case before the world, and warned him to place no reliance upon the support of the London ministers, to whom Baines had appealed for

1. Patriot, 28.XI.1839, p780. cf Ibid., 28.I.1841, pp60-61
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VII 1840, pp359-360
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp27-28
4. Miall to Brougham, 13.II.1839. Brougham Mss 17747
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p38. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation pl3.
6. Leicestershire Mercury, 10.X.1840. John Childs seems to have regarded the Leicestershire Mercury as the only newspaper sympathetic to radical dissent. John Childs to Charles Sturge, 6.II.1839. Sturge Family Papers.

assistance.¹ Miall was as good as his word, and in the first issue, an article on Baines' case was given a prominent place. It argued that Baines was suffering for his fidelity to the basic principles of dissent:

"namely, that in religion, any authority exercised by man is an usurpation of a divine prerogative, and ought to be resisted. Mr. Baines, in common with the great body of dissenters professes to believe that the state trespasses beyond its legitimate province...in presuming to legislate in religious matters. He objects to the authority as such...he declines to recognise it, wielded in whatever ways, and now he is in prison solely on this account."²

A notice giving the bare facts of the case was appended, and appeared each week in the Nonconformist until Baines was released. Miall recommended Baines to read Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes in prison, and Baines acknowledged Miall's support, thanking him for his,

"...clear, fearless and independent advocacy of the principles of dissent: in these times of slavish subserviency it is really cheering to read a journal that carries out fully what it professes, despite the threats of timeservers. Your plainness of speech has astounded and frightened some of those dissenters who are careful overmuch to avoid being thought violent."³

Baines was released in June 1841 under the Act of Parliament which was passed to get Thorogood out of gaol, despite his refusal to purge his contempt of a church court.⁴ During his imprisonment, Baines had been elected to the town council, and many petitions on his behalf were presented to Parliament. The Nonconformist regarded his release as a great success, and his imprisonment as a reminder to dissenters of their duty. Miall was chairman at a public breakfast given for Baines in the Bell Hotel, Leicester, and spoke of his triumphant affirmation of voluntary principles. Mursell spoke of Miall in the warmest terms, crediting him with creating a climate of activity in Leicester which would never fade:

"I believe he is admirably adapted to the work he has adopted: if in any doubt, let them read the Nonconformist...It is the only organ that has eloquently, openly, truthfully advocated the principles of Nonconformity."⁵

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p49
2. Nonconformist, 14.IV.1841, p2
3. Ibid., 16.VI.1841, p180
4. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church i, 150
5. Nonconformist, 28.VII.1841, pp274-278

Baines' was the most spectacular example of individual protest against church rates, but Miall gave publicity to any other which was noteworthy.¹ Sometimes, detailed accounts were given specifically for the information of dissenters contemplating a like protest. Miall himself was distraised for refusing to pay the rate at Stoke Newington in 1843. When a globe was seized in default of payment, he managed to make a speech to the crowd which gathered, and from the accounts given, it seems likely that he was chosen by the churchwardens, to make an example.² Paper belonging to Miall was seized when he refused to pay a rate to St. Martin's Ludgate in 1850,³ and his silver spoons were confiscated in 1851 when he refused to pay a rate of 2s. 3d. levied by the parish of Islington. He wrote to the rector of Islington explaining his case:

"The law of the land, I believe, justifies you in regarding yourself as my spiritual pastor. Why it should be, I attempt in vain to conjecture. I derive no benefit from your ministration...I repudiate the moral right of your congregation to render me liable for debts contracted for their comfort. Honesty, no doubt, prescribes the repayment of the loan. Decency points out that they who enjoy the benefits of it should take upon themselves the just responsibility. When we, Sir, the despised Nonconformists among your parishioners, erect places of worship...we feel ourselves bound, not only to make good our pecuniary obligations, but to do so without thrusting our hands into the pockets of our neighbours."⁴

After 1853, individual martyrdom was less effective; the contests could now be fought and won in the vestries, and the number of contested church rates increased following the Braintree decision.⁵

There were other tactics open to Miall, namely the promotion of local campaigns, and the promotion of appropriate measures in Parliament. Local activity had much to commend it; dissenters throughout the kingdom could become involved in the disestablishment question on a local level. Without an issue such as church rates to give it substance, the disestablishment question was

1. e.g. in the case of Apsley Pellatt. Nonconformist 14.VII.1841, pp210, 242.
2. Nonconformist, 20.IX.1843, p642
3. Nonconformist, 12.VI.1850, p471
4. Nonconformist, 3.XII.1851, p957
5. O. Chadwick The Victorian Church i, 158

too abstract to arouse enthusiasm nationwide. As it was, church rates were a constant reminder of the establishment, and, as has been observed, Miall as a politician hoped they would never be abolished; they were valuable in keeping alive dissenting resentment, and many who were excluded from the parliamentary franchise could vote in vestry elections. The major dissenting campaign against church rates fell into three parts. Firstly, there was a combination of parliamentary and local activity. This was followed by a period of increased parliamentary activity, with the question gaining increasing support in the Commons, but not achieving success. Then came a period of renewed parochial agitation, followed by the final settlement of the question in 1868. In the main, the tactics adopted followed Miall's recommendation, and in several instances, his influence was decisive.

The pattern for local activity was already well established; dissenters attempted to secure the election of a majority of the vestry committed to the abolition of the church rate. In many large towns, this approach had already succeeded, and the campaigns themselves had publicised the grievances of dissenters.¹ However, it is worth noting that even when the rate had been abolished, there were dissenters who contributed voluntarily to the upkeep of the parochial church;² their objection to the rate was the inferior status of dissenters which the levy implied. This was not Miall's position; he had no intention of contributing to the upkeep of a denomination with whose beliefs and practices he disagreed, besides supporting his own denomination. While he was affected by the question of dissenting status, he was as much concerned with the other aspects of church rates. Serving primarily as the organ of the anti-establishment party, the Nonconformist publicised local campaigns against church rates. In its early years, scarcely a week went by without an account of a local struggle; without the assistance of a national newspaper, it would have been all too easy for these parochial

1. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society p177

2. Ibid. p178. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, i, 152-153

campaigns to have had merely local significance. As it was, dissenters could see their effort as part of a larger issue, and derive valuable lessons from the detailed accounts provided by the Nonconformist.¹ Miall himself addressed vestry meetings,² both on his own account as a resident, and outside London in cases where the issue had reached a critical stage.³ Later, the Liberation Society, under Miall's guidance was to recommend and support such action in all parishes where the rate survived: this assumed even greater importance after the failures in Parliament of the early 1860s.

While local activity could achieve much, not least by involving those who, because of the restricted franchise, could take no part in parliamentary activity, Miall was fully aware of the importance of a parliamentary platform. Debates on the church-rate question enabled broader attacks to be launched upon the Established Church; it was a method of introducing the disestablishment question into Parliament.⁴ After the failures of the 1830s, the prospects of success were slight, especially since no assistance could be expected from the major parties.⁵ But even if the attempts failed, they secured some discussion of dissenting grievances. Thus Miall urged his readers to support the motion of Sir John Easthope, by treating it as an electoral issue:

"If...Easthope's bill is rejected, it will be rejected by the people's representatives. Let dissenting electors mark that. Let them not put up with speeches followed by no vote... Let them diligently scrutinise the division list, and let them solemnly determine that the man who votes against the church rate abolition bill...shall not have their support at the next election."⁶

Easthope was M.P. for Leicester, and had already rendered assistance to the dissenting cause, by endeavouring to secure the release of William Baines,

1. A particularly full account was given of the case fought by Apsley Pellatt, with this intention in mind. Nonconformist 30.VI.1841, p210; 14.VII.1841, p242.
2. e.g. at Hackney. Nonconformist, 11.VIII.1841, p306
3. e.g. at Meldreth Nonconformist, 8.VIII.1849, p620
4. The Tory press had suspected the Unitarians and Radicals of using the church-rate question for this purpose in the 1820s. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society, p112
5. The Eclectic Review believed that church rates could easily have been abolished in the 1830s, had the Whigs behaved honourably towards dissenters. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. V 1839, p21
6. Nonconformist, 21.IV.1841, p18

and by previous attempts to exempt dissenters from church rates.¹ His measure of 1841 failed to secure a division, and he introduced another in 1842. Perhaps because the Whigs had been replaced by Peel and the Tories, Easthope argued for the abolition of the rate on the grounds of expediency; the levy yielded too little to justify the trouble it caused, and the income could be made up from pew rents. Miall denounced Easthope for using arguments of expediency rather than principle.² On the face of it, it seems surprising that Miall should turn on Easthope, who was at least a spokesman in Parliament. But there are signs that Easthope was losing his popularity in Leicester, and Miall was constantly in touch with opinion there. His old friend Mursell announced in 1843 that Easthope would not have dissenting support in future elections, following his refusal to oppose Graham's Factory Education bill.³ Furthermore, it would be of no service to Miall to have church rates abolished on grounds of expediency, when his whole object was to attack the principle of establishment. As a final consideration, his Complete Suffrage colleague Sharman Crawford, M.P. for Rochdale, was prepared to advance the church-rate question in Parliament;⁴ he believed that church rates were undesirable as a consequence of establishment, which was itself an evil. Crawford had already supported Easthope, and moderate dissenting opinion did not consider him a person in whom dissenters should place their confidence. He was regarded as the mouthpiece,

"...of a scattered band of young, zealous, ardent, but inexperienced, not to say ill-informed Voluntaries, who...seem to imagine that they have but to ring them (their principles) in increasing iteration in the ears of Parliament in order to carry everything before them."⁵

This is one of many examples of the disapproving attitude of moderate dissent towards Miall and the radical dissenters. Miall replied with some heat:

1. A Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester pp254-256. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p188
2. Nonconformist, 22.VI.1842, pp425, 427.
3. A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester p256
4. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1842, pp457-458
5. Patriot, 20.VI.1842, p420

"We loath the habit of whining, whimpering and shuffling, whether before Parliament or elsewhere, such as dissenters have been guilty of under the guidance of the Patriot."¹

Indeed, the argument from principle was the only really significant argument against church rates: the actual sum involved was trifling, and it would do dissenters no good to appear preoccupied with trivial sums:

"Church rates, except as involving the principle of an establishment, are no such grievous hardship. Tenpence is but tenpence, and unless the demand for it is, as such, a violation of some deep-seated principle of morals or religion, all the squinnying in the world about the loss of it will not make men think much of the injury we have sustained."²

It was apparent that Peel had no intention of satisfying dissenters' demands with regard to church rates, and in the early 1840s, they were preoccupied with other matters. Miall was engaged in setting up the Complete Suffrage Union. Its effective collapse coincided with the Factory Education bill of 1843, which called for a maximum effort by dissenters to thwart it. Then, Miall was deeply involved with the Anti-State Church Association, and subsequently with the Maynooth question, and with Russell's educational schemes. The energies of his allies were claimed either by the Anti-Corn Law League, or by the Chartist movement. So it is not surprising that Miall's interest in the church-rate question appears sporadic; when he stood as parliamentary candidate at Halifax in 1847, he discussed the abstract question of the state church, but not church rates as such.³

From 1842 to 1847, there had been correspondingly little parliamentary activity so far as church rates were concerned; there seemed a better prospect of a sympathetic hearing from Russell, and in 1848 the Dissenting Deputies and the Congregational Union decided upon a joint approach to Parliament; they persuaded Sir John Trelawney, an Anglican, to raise the question.⁴ He commanded respectable support, and in 1849 managed to secure a Committee of the House to investigate church rates. Miall welcomed the

1. Nonconformist, 6.VII.1842, pp457-458

2. Ibid.

3. Nonconformist, 30.VI.1847, p477

4. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies pl90

inquiry,¹ but the Eclectic Review felt that throughout the debate, dissenters had been unnecessarily, ungratefully and unwisely snubbed by the Whigs: it was more certain than ever that dissenters should cut themselves adrift from the Whigs.²

The information assembled by the committee showed that the system of collecting church rates was quite unsatisfactory; of the possible rate payers, less than half were actually paying the rate.³ It was made clear to the committee by Samuel Courtauld and George Offor that dissenters regarded church-rates abolition as an aspect of disestablishment: "...we have in these church-rate battles the very best vantage ground for advancing that question, which of all others is, in our estimation, the question of the age."⁴ Dr. Lushington and Sir Apsley Pellatt also gave accounts of the feelings of dissenters, and the most detailed evidence was given by Edward Baines, who provided a wealth of statistics, and summed up the attitude of dissenters thus:

"Because the Dissenters who constitute nearly, if not quite one half of the Church or Chapel-going population of England and Wales, and who have built and maintained as great or a greater number of places of worship than the Established Church, are taxed for the support of an establishment to which they do not belong, and of which in some important respects they disapprove."⁵

Throughout the inquiry, there was little reference to the Anti-State Church Association; it had resolved to co-operate with the Dissenting Deputies in giving evidence, and sent a circular to M.P.s explaining its position.⁶ It no doubt felt encouraged by the abolition of the English Regium Donum in 1851, the successful culmination of a long struggle, which suggested that Parliament was at least taking notice of dissenters' wishes.

1. Nonconformist, 16.IV.1851, p297
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXV 1849, pp647, 653
3. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies pl91
4. British Sessional Papers IX 1851, p73
5. Ibid. p432
6. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 15.V.1851 f220; 22.V.1851 f223

Trelawney lost his seat in 1852, but the work of his committee provided a statistical basis for future discussion of the question. He was still regarded as an ally of dissenters; he wrote to the Nonconformist outlining a new measure, in which church rates would be replaced by a dilapidation fund, which would be replenished by revenues derived from the better management of church property. The Nonconformist was not wholly enamoured of the suggestion; property was still set aside for the support of a favoured sect, but at least it would be forced to rely upon its own resources.¹ Sir William Clay took over Trelawney's rôle, and worked in co-operation both with the Liberation Society and with the Dissenting Deputies. The Parliament elected in 1852 contained an increased number of dissenters and radicals, among whom was Miall himself, elected as M.P. for Rochdale. In the preceding generation there had been bitter conflicts over church rates in Rochdale, and the rate had not been collected since 1849.² While it was not a local question, Miall and the society tried to make it a national issue during the election. With Bright at his side, he argued that the government should in no way interfere with religion,³ and during the election campaign, he called for the ending of all financial support of any sect by the state.⁴ Miall admitted, however, that the most urgent public question was parliamentary reform, not disestablishment. His election was greeted with alarm by Anglican supporters. The Morning Post referred to him as the "chief card" of the dissenters, and recalled the bitter history of church rates in Rochdale. It derived some comfort from the fact that Miall would now be amenable to the rules of the House of Commons: "There is no place in the world as well calculated to take the conceit out of a man...there... that hero of the platform and stump will find his own level."⁵ The Church and State Gazette greeted the news of Miall's election with the fear that, "...the work of revolution is beginning."⁶ Discussing the composition of

1. Nonconformist, 15.IX.1852, pp717-718
2. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society ppl85-189
3. Nonconformist, 28.V.1851, p430
4. Ibid., 31.III.1852, p241
5. Ibid., 21.VII.1852, p557
6. Ibid., p558

the new Parliament, the Nonconformist claimed there were 38 M.P.s committed to anti-state church principles: add to this the Irish Catholic members, and one-seventh of the new Parliament, it claimed, had no connection with the Church of England.¹

In 1853, Clay introduced a bill to abolish church rates, with the support of the Anti-State Church Association. The secretary, Carvell Williams, agreed to address dissenting M.P.s upon the urgency of supporting Clay's motion; he sent a circular to a wider group of M.P.s, and a reminder one month later.² The discussion in Parliament did not follow the line envisaged. The member for Tavistock, Robert Phillimore, pre-empted the debate, and introduced a bill reminiscent of Easthope's plan. Dissenters were to be exempt from paying rates on declaring their status as dissenters, and would forfeit their right to take any part in the parish vestry, or in any issue relating to church property. Clay was forced to introduce his motion as an amendment to Phillimore's. Miall took part in the debate, and made much of the information deriving from the religious census of 1851. He claimed it showed that dissenters had no difficulty in supporting their ministers and chapels, and there was no reason why the Church of England should not support itself similarly. He gave qualified support to Clay's motion, which proposed to abolish rates but to replace them with pew rents. However, he saw Phillimore's proposal for what it was, a device to remove the affairs of the Church of England from general discussion. It would have the effect, "...of transforming that which was now a national institution into a private sect possessed of certain funds."³ Miall was anxious, "...never to do aught which would denationalise the present ecclesiastical institutions of the country until they could fairly sever the Church entirely from the State."⁴ Though Phillimore's motion was lost,

1. Nonconformist, 4.VIII.1852, pp597-598
2. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 13.IV.1853 f489; 18.V.1853 f507
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXVII, pp620-623. cf Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VI 1853, p99, which supported Miall's view.
4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXVII, pp620-623

it had attracted a considerable body of Anglican support, and Miall was concerned to expose the danger inherent in such proposals. Disestablishment could only be settled by Parliament, and dissenters had to preserve the capacity of Parliament to deal with ecclesiastical matters. The notion of the parish vestry being solely responsible for church property was gaining currency; Lord Stanley proposed such a solution in a pamphlet published in 1853 entitled The Church Rate Question considered. Miall's task was to scrutinise any measure for amending church rates, to be certain that it did not sell the pass to defenders of the establishment.

In 1854, bills for abolition were introduced both by Clay, and by Packe, the member for Leicestershire. The Dissenting Deputies issued a parliamentary whip in support of Clay's bill, and went on to discuss in general terms the possibility of closer co-operation with the Liberation Society.¹ The Liberation Society itself organised petitions on a large scale; 481 were sent to Parliament, with 57,164 signatures. A circular had been sent to M.P.s, and individual members were canvassed by the society.² Miall applauded the measure, but hoped that parochial agitation would not be eclipsed by parliamentary action: "The process, certainly, is far from being an agreeable one, but at least it is useful both for instruction and for discipline."³ Miall felt that parliamentary campaigns would carry more weight if backed up by evidence of local interest. The Liberation Society reminded dissenters of the opportunity opened up by the Braintree decision, and undertook to publish the necessary legal information.⁴ The division on Clay's motion was encouraging to dissenters; it was lost by the narrow margin of 209 votes to 182, and the Nonconformist saw this as proof of the fact that dissenters were now a major political force.⁵

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 2.VI.1854, ff18-21
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book, 9.VI.1854: 16.V.1854. Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 25.V.1854
3. Nonconformist, 24.V.1854, p425
4. Ibid., 2.VIII.1854, p633
5. Ibid., 5.VII.1854, p553

The parliamentary situation had altered by the next session. Firstly, a very important victory for anti-state church principles had been secured when the Canadian Clergy reserves were abolished. This was tantamount to the disestablishment of one of the colonial churches, and Miall himself had played a significant part. Secondly, dissenters were now able to gain admission to Oxford, which represented an erosion of Anglican monopoly. Miall believed that Gladstone was open to conviction regarding the abolition of church rates,¹ and the Liberation Society decided to make a campaign against the levy the centre piece of its strategy in 1855. Having discussed the possibilities, it was agreed,

"...that it was desirable that the entire force of the Society should be directed to carrying the Church Rates Abolition Bill, other matters being duly kept before Parliament as opportunity offers, but not pressed pending the church rate discussion."²

Carvell Williams explained to the annual meeting of the society that in view of the successes of 1854, a direct attack upon the establishment should be launched, and the obvious issue was church rates.³ Clay was to introduce another bill; evidently he was in close touch with the Liberation Society, and with the government. It was noted that he had met Palmerston, to discuss the government's reaction to his proposals,⁴ and Dr. Foster reported to the parliamentary committee that Clay's proposals had been discussed by the cabinet, which would probably insist upon modifications in committee.⁵ Clay's motion, which Miall seconded, was for the total abolition of church rates: the first reading was a triumph. Palmerston supported the introduction of the bill, Gladstone and the Peelites abstained, and the majority was 79.⁶ The second reading was less satisfactory for dissenters. In his speech, Clay revealed that he had discussed the matter with the government, "...and he certainly had the impression that the assent of the Government to

1. Nonconformist, 2.VIII.1854, p633
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 8.II.1855. It was also agreed to commission a barrister, Alfred Wills, to prepare a manual setting out the legal position as regards church rates.
3. Nonconformist, 9.V.1855, p358
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.II.1855
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.III.1855
6. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXVII, p1369
Nonconformist, 4.IV.1855, p257

his Bill depended upon the nature of the explanation which he was now addressing to the House." He noted, however, that no cabinet minister was present to hear his explanation.¹ Despite seconding the motion, Miall took no part in the debate on the second reading. Palmerston, who had supported the introduction of the bill, disapproved of the detailed measure which Clay produced, and voted against the second reading, as did Gladstone and Russell.² The session ended before the bill could be taken further, and it was withdrawn, but it had gained a majority of 219 votes to 191 at its second reading.³

The Liberation Society regretted the withdrawal of Clay's bill, and set up a committee to organise resistance to church rates in individual parishes.⁴ It felt encouraged by the resignation of Aberdeen: his successor, Palmerston, was preoccupied with the Crimean War, and would not want to risk offending his dissenting supporters by failing to show sympathy to their demands.⁵ It had spent £10 upon printing church-rate circulars,⁶ and ordered 1,000 copies of Will's Church Rates Manual.⁷ The Liberator maintained that church rates were being abolished locally; it studied one hundred vestry meetings held during the year, and found that only twenty had sanctioned a rate.⁸ It hoped that the Liberation Society would be able to co-ordinate local campaigns.⁹ Miall felt encouraged by the debate on Clay's bill. The government had been compelled to resort to procedural tactics to frustrate the measure and upholders of church rates could no longer count upon a Commons' majority.¹⁰ The Eclectic Review thought it would do no harm to have Parliament debate the matter again, as it was an excellent platform for airing disestablishment principles.¹¹

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXVIII, p665
2. Ibid., p690
3. Ibid., pp692-695
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 10.VIII.1855; 21.IX.1855
5. Nonconformist, 7.II.1855, p97
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.III.1855
7. Ibid., 2.III.1855
8. Liberator, July 1855, p8
9. Liberator, Nov. 1855, pp69, 72.
10. Nonconformist, 23.V.1855 p397; 25.VII.1855, p565.
11. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.X 1855, p254

Clay reintroduced his measure in the next session; again, Miall was one of its sponsors: it is possible he had some influence in shaping the measure.¹ The cabinet seemed more sympathetic, and Palmerston appeared to be moving towards a spirit of compromise with dissenters. Miall made a speech which asserted the principle that the property of the Church of England was national property; Parliament had a perfect right to discuss its employment, and it was the duty of Anglicans to keep it in good repair:

"The members of the Established Church, unlike the Dissenters, enjoy the free use of all churches throughout the country, and it was only fair they should be asked to maintain them in an efficient state of repair."²

He assured Anglicans that if they relied upon the liberality of their members instead of compulsory exactions, the church would grow in spiritual power and influence, as had been the case with Dissenters in Wales, and Roman Catholics in Ireland. The vote on the second reading was again a dissenting triumph; there was a House of 403, of whom 221 members supported the bill, and 178 opposed it. The majority was 43, as compared with 28 in 1855.

Sir George Grey gave notice that the government intended to amend the bill, to allow exemption from the payment of rates upon a declaration of non-membership of the Church of England.³ Miall disliked the amendment; it had overtones of a religious test,⁴ but left the substance of dissenting demands intact. There was a danger that voluntaryist M.P.s might be divided in their attitude towards the amended bill, and the Liberation Society reluctantly accepted the amendment since rejection might seem unreasonable, and might alienate allies and supporters. Furthermore, the bill as amended might have a better chance of success in the Lords.⁵ Miall urged dissenters to secure the substance of their demands, even if the form were distasteful,⁶ and reminded the Triennial Conference of the Liberation Society

1. Nonconformist, 20.II.1856, p113
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series. CXL. pp1922f
3. Ibid., CXL, pp1896-1907
4. Nonconformist, 19.III.1856, p177
5. Ibid., 26.III.1856, p193
6. Ibid., 16.IV.1856, p249

that it was not simply a church-rates association. Church-rate abolition was not its ultimate objective, and voluntaryist M.P.s must not jeopardise support by appearing unreasonable. However, it is not without significance that Clay, himself an Anglican, chaired one of the sessions of the conference.¹ In the event, the government gave no more time to the bill, and it was withdrawn. Miall was relieved; he had had misgivings about the good intentions of Palmerston, and felt it possible that the government's amendments were a tactical device to divide dissenters. As it was, the dissenting body remained united, church-rate abolition still had the support of a majority, and the government amendments were a minimum standard for future measures.²

The Liberation Society, reviewing the course of the debate, felt most strongly that Palmerston was an unreliable ally. It recommended its supporters to devote their energies to vestry contests, and offered every assistance:

"...the Committee will be prepared to offer increased aid in the vestry contests now everywhere so ably conducted by the opponents of church rates, and which may be expected to go far towards extinguishing them without the interference of the legislature."³

A sum of £10 was voted for the insertion of this resolution in the press.

When the society's parliamentary committee considered the strategy now to be followed, it started with the thesis that Palmerston would impede all measures of religious equality. This had been the pattern to date,

"...instancing particularly the Church Rate Bill, in the case of which the Committee had accepted considerable responsibility in order to meet the views of the government, and had been defeated by Lord Palmerston's non-acquiescence in the decision of his own cabinet: that tho' this Bill, taken alone, might not be a sufficient ground on which to take up an attitude of hostility to the Government generally, the fact was, it was the same with all measures of proposed reform...(He) thought it

1. Nonconformist, 8.V.1856, pp309-314
2. Nonconformist, 2.VII.1856, p473. The Liberator also suspected that the intention of the amendments was to divide dissenters. Liberator, Aug. 1856, p160. The Nonconformist commented, "Palmerston has out-jockeyed us." Nonconformist, 2.VII.1856, p473
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.VII.1856. Nonconformist, 9.VII.1856 (Advertisement)

impossible that this state of things could long continue, and that a union now effected among a few M.P.s - from 10 to 20 - for the purpose of acting together adversely to the Government on the next party vote...would have the effect of altering the present policy of the government on the above questions."¹

Dr. Foster offered to do all he could to effect this union of M.P.s and the moderate Patriot considered these tactics sound.² A new note of militance had been introduced, and shortly afterwards, the government was defeated on a party vote, with Miall prominent among the dissenters who voted against Palmerston.³

In the ensuing general election, both Miall and Clay lost their seats, though in general, candidates supported by the Liberation Society did well. So far as the church-rates question was concerned, the loss of Miall was not a disaster, since the Liberation Society had been satisfied to allow members of the Church of England to take the lead on the question in Parliament; Miall himself had been primarily concerned with questions such as the Irish Church, and university reform. The loss of Clay was offset by the return of Sir John Trelawney, a former ally of the voluntarists. Very soon after the election, Dr. Foster was in contact with Trelawney about church rates.⁴

At its annual meeting of 1857, the Liberation Society decided that parliamentary activity should continue:

"The abolition of church rates is one of the foregoing principles for which public opinion is sufficiently ripe. A majority in the House of Commons have more than once pronounced in its favour. There needs now but ordinary firmness on the part of the constituent bodies to set that question finally at rest."⁵

It emphasised that parliamentary activity should not stand in the way of local action, and decided to circulate a new handbook of practical information for church-rate contests.⁶

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.II.1857
2. Patriot, 13.III.1857, p122
3. J. Vincent, The formation of the Liberal Party 1857 to 1868 p75
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 18.V.1857
5. Nonconformist, 11.III.1857, p181
6. Ibid., 6.V.1857, p341

For the parliamentary campaign, the Liberation Society obtained the support of the Dissenting Deputies, and that of many provincial organisations. It was agreed to send a deputation to Palmerston, and Miall was to accompany it.¹ He seems to have had reservations about any sort of agreement with Palmerston, but very reluctantly conceded it was necessary, since the government might introduce a measure of its own. There would, in that case, be no value in the voluntaryists' persisting with their own measure; they would have to attempt to influence that of the government.² Palmerston, however, informed the deputation that he did not intend to bring forward a bill in the present session. Miall considered his reply "jocularly evasive": he addressed the deputation as soon as it left Palmerston, and insisted that voluntaryists press ahead with their own measure, backed by vestry contests: "It affords an admirable occasion for enunciating in the hearing of Churchmen sound principles of religious equality."³

Having failed to persuade Duncombe, the Liberation Society was able to secure the co-operation of Trelawney in introducing a new bill.⁴ Its executive committee evidently drafted the bill, and the parliamentary committee sent out whips, and supplied M.P.s with nationwide evidence of hostility to church rates.⁵ Despite the replacement of Palmerston's ministry by that of Lord Derby in the middle of the Commons stages, the bill remained in existence; having gained a majority of 53 on the second reading, it passed through committee, and on the third reading there was an even larger majority of 63. This was considered an "...invaluable victory."⁶ For the first time, a church-rates bill was sent up to the House of Lords, and the society made careful preparations. Foster issued a circular appealing for petitions to be sent to peers: it suggested forms of words, supplied addresses of peers and indicated how they had voted in the

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 8.I.1858; 30.I.1858
2. Nonconformist, 3.II.1858, p81. Liberator Feb. 1858, pp21, 30
3. Nonconformist, 3.II.1858, p81
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.I.1858; 5.II.1858. Miall was present at both meetings.
5. Nonconformist, 24.II.1858, p141; 7.IV.1858, p261
6. Liberator, March 1858, p54

past upon ecclesiastical questions.¹ The Lords rejected the bill, but it had gained the support of 68 peers, and Miall commented: "If this be not a victory, it is at least the most splendid defeat which the friends of religious equality have yet experienced."² The Liberator believed that it would now be impossible to form a cabinet which would uphold church rates.³

The Liberation Society now took stock of its position, and Miall's influence upon its planning is apparent. It set up a committee, of which he was a member, to evolve future strategy,⁴ and its general recommendation was to organise local opposition more effectively. Committees should be set up in all parishes where the rate survived;⁵ deputations from London were to visit such parishes, and, to avoid over-centralisation, regional agents were to be appointed.⁶ As an interim solution, the committee suggested a measure to vest parish property in the elected vestry rather than the incumbent: it decided to increase the society's stock of church-rate publications, and to spend up to £50 upon press notices of individual parochial contests.⁷ The parliamentary situation seemed less promising. The Liberation Society, on previous form, could go on gaining majorities in the Commons for the abolition of church rates, and had very little prospect of success in the Lords. Miall saw no value in continuing to prove the point in the Commons if no positive gain could result; indeed, he felt it was unwise. Addressing the Liberation Society at the end of 1858, he warned that if a church rates abolition bill became an annual ritual, the allies of the voluntaryists would become weary of it, and a dual danger would result. There might be a defeat, which would damage prestige, or the way might be opened for a Tory compromise, which would fall far short of voluntaryist demands. As soon as the voluntaryists had achieved their success, Miall recommended that the society devote its whole effort to

1. Nonconformist, 9.VI.1858, p465
2. Nonconformist, 7.VII.1858, p529
3. Liberator, Aug. 1858, p147
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 6.VII.1858
5. Nonconformist, 28.VII.1858, p590
6. Ibid., 13.X.1858, p809. e.g. John Andrew for Yorkshire, Henry Ferris for the West Country.
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.VII.1858

parochial agitation: if parliamentary action were deemed essential, he suggested that a measure to transfer the freehold of the parish from the incumbent to the ratepayers be introduced, a move which, if successful, would facilitate disestablishment.¹ The church-rate committee had already discussed this possibility and the Nonconformist commented:

"If Parliament will not annul the taxing power of parishioners in this instance, then we are driven to claim our proper share of the benefit. Put the churches on the same footing as you put your highways, bridges and town halls. Let all ratepayers have equal rights of use under such regulations only as will prevent collision and disorder. This is the alternative upon which a persistent refusal of church rate abolition will drive us."²

This was a fundamental proposal, reminiscent of Thomas Arnold's proposals for church reform, and the Times regarded it as of great significance.

It commented that the meeting which Miall had addressed,

"...unfolded the future policy of dissenters in reference to the union of Church and State in terms most unmistakable, and calculated to give a new complexion to the church-rate agitation and to the ulterior aims of its promoters."³

However, the Times was premature in its judgment: Carvell Williams persuaded the society to support the reintroduction of Trelawney's bill, but it was delayed, as the government introduced a bill of its own in the session of 1859. Miall disliked it: "This wooden horse is full of armed men - if we admit it within the city, ruin of our cause will follow close upon our infatuation."⁴ The parliamentary committee of the Liberation Society rejected it on sight, and asked Miall to write a critique, which was then sent to M.P.s. It was also felt essential that a proper measure be put before Parliament, and Trelawney's bill was to be given full support.⁵ It passed through its Commons stages, without Miall's concealing his scepticism of its value. Its sole virtue was to act as a reminder of dissenting grievances: if the rate were ended, "...we shall thereby gain

1. Nonconformist, 24.XI.1858, p930
2. Nonconformist, 1.XII.1858, p949
3. Quoted in Nonconformist, 24.XI.1858
4. Nonconformist, 23.II.1859
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 22.II.1859; 24.II.1859.

a victory, but we shall also lose a most effective weapon."¹ From the other side of the political fence, Disraeli took a similar view. He informed the Queen: "...the satisfactory settlement of this long-agitated and agitating question will be a great relief to public life, and tend to restore and augment the good humour of the country."² He was equally aware, however, that church-rate abolition was, for dissenters, a preliminary to disestablishment; changing his tactics, he rallied the opposition in Parliament, and the Commons majority for abolition began to dwindle.³

Miall realised that Dissenters were divided in their attitude; addressing the Triennial Conference of the Society in 1859, he observed that while the committee wished to attack the Church of England "stick by stick", the rank and file wanted to attack the whole bundle. He stressed that there was no value in Commons victories: if real gains did not accrue, it was expedient to work outside Parliament. The conference endorsed his advice.⁴ However, the general election of 1859 saw the return of Palmerston, and notwithstanding Miall's plea, Trelawney introduced his measure to the new Parliament. It had to be withdrawn, but as a consolation, a Committee of the House of Lords was set up to investigate the state of the law on church rates, as a consequence of the Braintree decision. It met under the chairmanship of the Duke of Marlborough, and evidence for the Liberation Society was given by Dr. Foster and Samuel Morley. Miall had been asked to give evidence, but was unable to do so because of his absence from London:⁵ he was sceptical of the value of the committee, regarding it as the preliminary to a compromise solution.⁶

Morley informed the committee that the society objected to church rates as they were a forced contribution to worship, and he went on to make it clear

1. Nonconformist, 16.III.1859, p201
2. W.F. Monypenny & G.E. Buckle The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (Revised edition) (London 1929) ii, 88.
3. Ibid., ii, 90
4. Nonconformist, 9 VI.1859, p451
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 29.VII.1859
6. Nonconformist, 21.IX.1859, p753.

that their abolition was only the first step in the society's plans:

"I believe that the great object is to separate religion from the slightest connection with the State..."¹ The chairman affected to discover this fact for himself, and Morley confirmed that the society intended to appropriate the property of the Church of England to secular uses.² Foster made similar points, claiming that the Liberation Society had been most effective in individual parochial contests, sometimes dealing with as many as six queries per day. He extolled the virtues of voluntaryism, and concluded with two interesting observations. The first was that the society had not initiated directly any measure for the abolition of church rates. The second was that the society "...was not responsible for anything that appeared in the Nonconformist."³ The committee continued its investigation into the next year, and concluded that it had discovered no scheme concerning church rates which had not already been rejected by one or other house of Parliament.⁴ It was, therefore, not prepared to recommend any measure to Parliament.⁵

The Liberation Society still felt unable to abandon its parliamentary activity; on the advice of the parliamentary committee, it resolved once again to support Trelawney.⁵ When the bill was debated, the voluntaryist vote remained constant, but thanks to the new attitude of Disraeli, and the activity of Church Defence associations, the majority fell to 29.⁶ The Liberation Society now felt that it must persist with its parliamentary campaign; to give up now would be considered a withdrawal under pressure. So it hastily organised a massive body of petitions, and issued an encouraging circular, despite an earlier resolution not to petition Parliament

1. British Sessional Papers, Session 2 Vol.V 1859, pp67-71
2. Ibid., pp77-78
3. Ibid., ppl59-172
4. British Sessional Papers, 1860 Vol.XXII, pl67
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.XII.1859
6. The voluntaryist vote increased from 174 in 1853 to 265 in 1860, whereas the opposition had 222 in 1853, dropping to 155 in 1858, but rising to 236 in 1860. Liberator, March 1860, p34. The Nonconformist attributed the declining majority to the activity of Church Defence Associations. Nonconformist, 15.II.1860, ppl21; 141.

on this occasion.¹ Miall explained the reduced majority as the consequence of the timing of the bill, and the absence of Irish M.P.s.² However, these desperate measures attracted no significant Wesleyan support,³ and the third reading of the bill saw an even greater disaster: the majority in favour of abolition fell to 9, and rejection by the Lords was certain.⁴ The Liberation Society admitted that it had underestimated the strength of the opposition and resolved to 'whip' its supporters more vigorously in future.⁵

It became apparent that the Conservative government might introduce legislation concerning church rates; there was even fear that it might extend the levy. Miall warned that defeat upon this issue would result in loss of ground upon all questions of religious equality,⁶ while the Liberation Society agreed it would tolerate no measure which fell short of total abolition.⁷ The parliamentary committee recommended that provincial meetings be organised to keep the question alive, that an advertising campaign in the press be mounted, and individual M.P.s be lobbied. Miall agreed to draft a letter to Irish M.P.s soliciting their support:⁸ the society organised an inter-denominational conference on church rates, which attracted the support of several M.P.s.⁹ Despite these efforts, when Trelawney's measure was again debated in 1861, it lost yet more support; the majority for the second reading fell to 15.¹⁰ Renewed efforts were made to rally support; M.P.s were lobbied, petitions organised, the society's church-rates committee met daily, but the bill was defeated at its third reading by the casting vote of the speaker.¹¹ Miall's earlier warnings had been justified. Parliament had evidently wearied of continual church-rate debates: thirty seven liberals

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.XII.1859; Ibid., 30.III.1860. Liberator, March 1860, p43.
2. Nonconformist, 9.V.1860, p362
3. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868 p74
4. Nonconformist, 2.V.1860, p341
5. Liberation Society Minute Book 27.VI.1860
6. Nonconformist, 12.XII.1860, p981
7. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 15.X.1860
8. Ibid., 10.I.1861
9. Nonconformist, 30.I.1861, p81
10. Ibid., 6.III.1861, p182
11. Ibid., 22.V.1861, p401

had absented themselves from the crucial division.¹ There were other factors: opponents claimed that the abolition of church rates was merely the first step towards disestablishment. This, the society had never concealed, but it made useful propaganda for the Church Defence associations. Disraeli had rallied the opposition, and it was clear that the society would have to revise its strategy.

A lengthy report was presented to the society's church-rates committee, of which Miall was a member, following the defeat of 1861. In contrast to attempts to explain away the defeat in the press, it took a bleak and realistic view of the society's position, which it described as "new and critical":

"The position with regard to the Legislature is this. It has lost a majority on the question of church rates, which it has returned in the House of Commons for eight years. It has lost it not by a mere accident or surprise which it might reasonably hope to prevent in the future, but after the most strenuous exertions on both sides, and as the last of a series of rapidly diminishing majorities through the Parliamentary sessions."²

Recent by-elections did not suggest there was any realistic hope of a more sympathetic reception in the next session. At present, the church-rates question was the keystone of the society's strategy:

"...the abolition of church rates has for some years been our Cheval de Battaille. We could afford defeat upon other questions so long as we maintained a triumphant position on this."³

The report considered the risk of another defeat unacceptable, and, as Miall had already argued, recommended the society devote itself, "...to bring the public opinion of the community at large into harmony with our purposes."⁴ The celebration of the anniversary of the expulsion of non-conformist ministers in 1662 would provide a good opportunity, and the report

1. Nonconformist, 26.VI.1861, p501
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 27.IX.1861. The majorities had risen from 28 in 1855 to 74 in 1859, then dropped significantly: in 1860 they were 29 on the second reading and 9 on the third, and in 1861, 15 on the second reading, and lost by one vote on the third. Liberator, April 1861, p59
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. See also Liberator, July 1861, p113

suggested enlisting the aid of the liberal press, and meeting editors.¹ However, the Executive Committee rejected these recommendations, fearing that it might lose supporters and allies if parliamentary action were abandoned altogether.²

There were two hopeful signs in an otherwise grim situation. One was that the liberal party was in disarray, in urgent need of some cause to unite it, and the church-rates issue was a possibility. The other was that, now that the hopelessness, for the present at least, of parliamentary action had been demonstrated, there was every incentive to work in the parishes for piecemeal abolition of the levy. Speaking at Bradford, Miall said that the Church Defence associations which now existed in many parishes, would stimulate the Liberation Society to greater effort, and lead to public debate at a local level. With a politician's ability to derive some comfort from any given disaster, he argued that by dint of mustering all its strength, the pro-rate party had only managed to defeat the abolitionists with the aid of the speaker's casting vote. The continuous debates had at least ensured a platform for the abolitionists.³ At Edinburgh, he claimed that the formation of Church Defence associations were a tribute to the strength and effectiveness of the Liberation Society, and appealed for support to Scottish dissenters.

Away from the press and the platform, Miall took a less optimistic view. In February 1862 he was appointed member of a sub-committee of the Liberation Society, which prepared another report upon parliamentary strategy. The present position of the society called for "great practical wisdom", and was unfavourable largely because the past successes of the society had goaded the Church of England into defensive action. As a party, the Conservatives had rallied to its support, with the result that church rates had become a party

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 27.IX.1861
2. Ibid. 18.X.1861
3. Nonconformist, 22.I.1862, p63.

issue. The question which had to be faced was defined thus:

"...ought they to repeat the unparalleled efforts of the last two years with the probability that these efforts will be again unavailing, and with the certainty that in this case their moral power will suffer some diminution? Or ought they to acknowledge themselves to be, for the present, beaten in the field of political action and altogether to retreat until the return of more prosperous times?"¹

The sub-committee favoured the latter course, but once again the executive committee was reluctant to abandon parliamentary action entirely, and a compromise solution was reached:

"Sir John Trelawney will therefore at once introduce his Bill, in token of his adherence to the principle which it involves, but he will delay the second reading sufficiently long to deprive its opponents of any excuse for the non-production of a measure of their own."²

This was an apparent surrender of the initiative, but what the society hoped to prove was that no solution short of total abolition of church rates was feasible.³ It is evident, both from this report and its predecessor, that Miall could not dictate policy to the society, and was by no means always in agreement with its general policy.

Provincial agitation was not neglected: the society decided to make church rates an issue at by-elections in Oxfordshire and Lincoln,⁴ and later in the year, Miall, in company with Carvell Williams and Henry Richard, visited Wales in an attempt to rally the support of dissenters there. Miall recommended his audiences to begin with an attack upon church rates.⁵ The Triennial Conference of 1862 produced many speeches favouring a new strategy, all implying that parliamentary action was becoming too difficult and unrewarding. The changing attitude was summed up by Charles Robertson of Liverpool, who argued that recent Parliamentary defeats over the church rates issue, "...only served to impel the society's efforts into a new channel, to direct them less to Parliament and more to constituents, who are the makers of Parliament."⁶ The Patriot approved of

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.II.1862

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 28.II.1862

4. Ibid., 17.I.1862

5. Nonconformist, 1.X.1862, p827

6. Ibid., 8.V.1862, p389

the idea of shifting the society's activities to the constituencies.¹

Yet Trelawney persisted with his measure in Parliament; in the session of 1862, it was defeated by one vote on its second reading, and the Liberation Society, according to the Nonconformist, was the gainer;

"...it was impossible to conceal from itself the high probability that the success of Sir John Trelawney's measure would have swept its strongest platform from under its feet."²

The Patriot observed that Trelawney's support had remained constant; the opposition had simply managed to attract more votes: "The division... really carries no discouragement with it."³ The Liberator contrived to regard the defeat as a triumph, since the society had made no special effort on this occasion.⁴ In fact, Trelawney had gained no significant support from Irish M.P.s, and Miall suggested it would be better to wait for a new Parliament, as the present body was clearly unsympathetic.⁵ In 1863, the defeat was worse, ten votes, and Miall could only claim that the Liberation Society had not used its whip, nor had it memorialised M.P.s, for fear of irritating allies to no good purpose. The value of the church-rates issue as an irritant was stressed:

"By the help of that question...we can force a discussion of the infinitely greater one of the proper relation of the Church and the State, which, were it too-early settled, we should find it all but impossible to do."⁶

He urged that parliamentary action so far as church rates were concerned should be abandoned, and work concentrated in parishes and constituencies. Continual defeat would encourage the opposition, and dishearten dissenters. In a speech to his constituents, Trelawney agreed with this strategy,⁷ but the Patriot pointed out that the church-rate question had become a major political issue, and, of all current political issues, attracted the attendance of the largest number of M.P.s.⁸

1. Patriot, 24.IV.1862, p265
2. Nonconformist, 19.II.1862, p162
3. Patriot, 15.V.1862, p317
4. Liberator, June 1862, p89
5. Nonconformist, 21.V.1862, p441
6. Ibid., 6.V.1863, p341
7. Ibid., 19.VIII.1863, p657
8. Patriot, 30.IV.1863, p281

Miall produced for the society a report of the deliberations of a policy committee, which ostensibly met to consider the future of the society's parliamentary committee, following the resignation of Dr. Foster as its chairman. The burden of Miall's report was that neither the present Parliament nor the present government had shown any sympathy with the demands of the dissenters; it was pointless to persist in attempts to influence either. Not only had church-rate bills been rejected; the same was true of other measures concerned with religious equality, and the report thought that they had aroused opposition through being associated with the Liberation Society. Neither in Parliament nor in the constituencies was the society making any progress:

"Such is the Parliamentary position of our movement at the present moment - the prestige of our earlier successes fading, if not faded - also new measures rejected by growing rather than by diminishing majorities - none of them placed by their promoters upon a broad intelligible principle which it is worth many defeats to examine - a melancholy management of debating forces and a...want of commanding qualifications for the successful lead, even of a forlorn hope."¹

A new strategy was required, whose aim would be the creation of an independent political party, "...strong in its own strength, capable of indefinite expansion, and vitalised and united by the broad principle which this society aims to embody in legislation." The present strategy of the society would not be successful; it would lead to more serious defeats and loss of prestige: "It cannot be wise to present ourselves before the country as a losing party."² There was little to choose between the two major parties; the society had given loyal support to the liberals, but had received nothing in return. Now, the society should abandon this one-sided alliance, and devote its resources to working in the constituencies, converting public opinion, rallying dissenting voters, and, where their numbers permitted, attempting to influence the selection of candidates. On this occasion, the recommendations were accepted by the executive committee. The Liberator insisted that the aims of the society were not unrealistic:

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 23.X.1863
2. Ibid.

"...no such Quixotism is intended as that of seeking to pledge the whole Liberal party to the separation of Church and State...We want, and intend, ultimately, to have religious equality: but we expect to get it by a series of instalments, and not by a coup de main."¹

In the session of 1864, the society contented itself with requesting Sir Charles Douglas to oppose an amendment to the existing law on church rates, which had been moved by Newdegate.² Otherwise, its activity was confined to publishing a new pamphlet on parochial church-rate contests. Since Parliament was deadlocked on the issue, dissenters had to fight the battle themselves: the Nonconformist observed that this policy had succeeded in the past to the extent that, whereas in 1829 church rates realised £519,000 by 1862 this sum had shrunk to £232,905.³

The constituency work of the society bore fruit in the general elections of 1865; it was believed that a large number of Liberal candidates had pledged themselves to support the abolition of church rates, and that public opinion was favourably disposed towards religious equality.⁴

Miall was requested to draft a policy document to guide the activities of the society in the new Parliament: he recommended to the parliamentary committee that the policy of 1863 be reversed, and the society devote itself to securing the abolition of church rates in Parliament. This should not preclude support for other measures of religious equality, if introduced: moreover, he did not recommend that the society itself should take the initiative.⁵ All such measures should be abandoned if the reform of Parliament became a practical possibility. The society accepted Miall's recommendations, and he expounded the strategy to meetings at Manchester and Liverpool.⁶

1. Liberator, Dec. 1863, p192
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.II.1864
3. Nonconformist, 23.III.1864, p223
4. Nonconformist, 19.VII.1865, p573: Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.VII.1865. Liberator, April 1866, p57
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 15.XI.1865. Liberation Society Minute Book 17.XI.1865, ff325-330. Liberator Dec. 1865, p201.
6. Nonconformist, 22.XI.1865, pp934-935.

Trelawney was succeeded by the member for Bury St. Edmunds, J.A. Hardcastle, as the parliamentary leader of the campaign to abolish church rates. Hardcastle introduced a bill to end the compulsory levy of church rates in 1866, which obtained a majority of 33 on its second reading.¹ The kernel of the bill was the removal of the element of compulsion, which would be replaced by voluntary subscription. What was vital was that in the course of the debate, Gladstone gave, for the first time, qualified support to the proposal to abolish compulsory levies. His reservations were three: the use to which the voluntary subscription was put should be decided solely by the contributors; the parochial machinery of assessment and collection should remain intact; higher burial fees should be charged to non-contributors.² Miall urged the acceptance of these stipulations; they in no way affected the principle of Hardcastle's bill, and it would be tactically foolish to spurn the aid of Gladstone.³ Gladstone's support of Hardcastle's bill may be regarded as part of a general Liberal trend of renewing the alliance with the dissenters. Writing to W.H. Gladstone in 1865, he had observed,

"I believe it would be a wise concession, upon grounds merely political, for the Church of England to have the law of church rates abolished in all cases where it places her in fretting conflict with the Dissenting bodies..."⁴

He informed Samuel Morley that questions of religious liberty required, "...not only firm, but conciliatory treatment."⁵

Gladstone introduced proposals of his own, which were embodied in a government bill abolishing compulsory levies, and permitting voluntary subscription. His preparation of the measure affords some evidence of his desire to conciliate dissenting opinion, by consulting with its leaders.

1. Nonconformist, 14.III.1866, p201.
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CLXXXI, p1667
3. Nonconformist, 2.V.1866, Supplement. Miall also stressed this point at a meeting of the Liberation Society. Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.V.1866.
4. W.E. Gladstone to W.H. Gladstone 16.IV.1865. In D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone ii, 168-169
5. Gladstone to Morley, 21.IV.1866. E. Hodder Life of Samuel Morley pp162, 165. See also J. Morley, Life of Gladstone (London 1903) ii, 161. M. Cowling, 1867. Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution (Cambridge 1967) pp28, 297.

Hardcastle and representatives of the Dissenting Deputies discussed the draft proposals with the Liberation Society.¹ Evidently, reservations were expressed, for at the next meeting of the society's Executive Committee, Hardcastle reported that Gladstone had agreed to amend his proposals to meet the demands of the society.² The society was still cautious, and sought legal opinion to ensure there were no loopholes which would permit compulsory payment.³ Miall, however, had no such inhibitions, and urged the society to accept Gladstone's proposals without worrying about the details. They removed the element of compulsion which was the substance of the society's demands, and though dissenters would be under social and moral pressure to contribute to a voluntary levy, it would be folly to reject Gladstone's overture of alliance.⁴ Gladstone resigned after his defeat over parliamentary reform, but his church-rates bill proceeded to its second reading, when it was talked out by the Conservatives. Miall suspected the wiles of Disraeli, but accepted this temporary setback with equanimity. The bill was not ideal, and a better could be insisted upon in the next session.⁵ Miall and Carvell Williams undertook a tour of Wales, one of whose objects was to encourage more local action against church rates. The society itself collected information about the current level of voluntary contributions in parishes, and passed it on to Hardcastle for use in parliamentary debates.⁶

Miall helped plan the society's parliamentary programme for the session of 1867: it was decided that the society should initiate a church-rates measure of its own.⁷ Accordingly, Hardcastle re-introduced his bill, which obtained a majority of 76 on its second reading, a majority which included Gladstone.⁸ The Liberation Society and the Dissenting Deputies

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 27.IV.1866
2. Ibid., 1.V.1866
3. Ibid., 25.V.1866
4. Ibid. See also Nonconformist, 23.V.1866, p409
5. Nonconformist, 25.VII.1866, p589
6. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation pl69
7. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.I.1867
Liberation Society, Minute Book 25.I.1867
8. Nonconformist, 27.III.1867, p245

united in support of Hardcastle, organising a breakfast for dissenting M.P.s at which Miall spoke:¹ the Liberation Society was prepared to accept any amendments which Gladstone might wish.² The bill passed successfully through its Commons stages, but was rejected by the Lords. Notwithstanding the intransigence of the Lords, the society was confident of rapid success: "...progress is indicated by the anxiety displayed by the opponents of the measure throughout the debate for a settlement of the question by means of a compromise."³ Miall believed that success was inevitable, for even the Archbishop of Canterbury had conceded that, while the abolition of church rates would damage the principle of establishment, it would not significantly harm the Church of England.⁴

Gladstone introduced his own bill in the session of 1868; the Liberation Society disliked some of its features, notably the provision for collecting voluntary contributions on a contractual basis, with the possibility of the legal enforcement of the contract. This was felt to be inconsistent with the removal of compulsion. The society gave extensive consideration to the matter. The parliamentary committee recommended, "...that the second reading should not be supported without an understanding that the following proviso in Clause VI shall be withdrawn."⁵ The executive committee requested the parliamentary committee to reconsider its recommendation, since many members attached little importance to the proviso. However, the parliamentary committee, with Miall present, felt unable to change its view:

"It seems to the Committee to be inconsistent with the spirit of the Bill that it should create a contract for the payment of a voluntary rate and permit the enforcement of such contract in a Court of Law."⁶

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 3.IV.1867
2. Nonconformist, 2.V.1867, p346
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 30.VIII.1867
4. Nonconformist, 14.VIII.1867, p657
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 24.I.1868. The proviso was that which enabled a voluntary rate to be enforced by a court as a contract.
6. Ibid., 7.II.1868

Gladstone, it was reported, was willing to discuss the contentious clauses with members of the society, and Miall, in company with Carvell Williams, Edwards, Hardcastle and members of the Dissenting Deputies, formed a deputation.¹ Miall reported that the matter had been discussed with Gladstone, who had been prepared to make concessions.² The Committee was informed: "...the 5th clause has been withdrawn, and...the verbal amendments suggested by the Committee had been made."³ Dissenting pressure had evidently caused Gladstone to change his mind. He seems to have been anxious to make the measure acceptable to dissenters, presumably to consolidate the alliance of the liberals with them. When Carvell Williams wrote formally to thank him for his work, after the measure had become law, the secretary of the Liberation Society added,

"My gratification...is increased by the fact that I was one of those who, by their personal intercourse with you relative to the details of the measure, had the best opportunity of knowing your anxiety to make it as acceptable as well as an effective measure."⁴

But it may also be argued that Gladstone's concession was more apparent than real, and did not necessarily indicate that he would be so accommodating in the future. Although it was unusual for the liberal leadership to invite the participation of interested groups in the framing of legislation,⁵ he seems not to have minded doing so when no great issue was at stake. He had made it clear to W.H. Gladstone that he had come to regard church rates as a political question, affecting only the external possessions of the Church of England: he believed the Church would be damaged by clinging to an irritating impost, and it would be sensible to give way gracefully.⁶ Church rates could be abolished parish by parish, if not by Parliament, and John Morley believed that the issue of religious equality

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 7.II.1868
H.S. Skeats and C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688 - 1891 pp595-597
2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 6.III.1868; 13.III.1868
3. Liberation Society Minute Book 20.III.1868
4. Carvell Williams to Gladstone, 13.VIII.1868, Gladstone Papers B.M. Add.Mss 44415, f367.
5. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868 p239
6. D.C. Lathbury, Letters on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone ii, 169-172

was anyway losing its appeal: "Civil and religious liberty was a good battle shout in its time. Today it has passed into the land of dead things and become sheer pallid cant."¹

The debate on the bill was not marked by high passion, reflecting rather a sense of inevitability, and a desire to settle the matter as expeditiously as possible. Even the staunchest defenders of church rates realised that the levy could no longer be maintained, and public opinion was at best indifferent. Gladstone's concern was simply to preserve intact the machinery of collection, to facilitate the gathering of voluntary contributions:

"...it is not the principle of the church rate that is now at issue...It is not necessary to enter upon any argument with respect to that principle at a time when apparently the vast majority of the Members sitting on both sides of the House are not prepared to entertain it."²

He went on to argue that the Church of England would be in a stronger position once the irritations caused by church rates were removed, and many staunch Anglicans agreed; as one remarked, "...we may go further and fare worse."³ In the Lords, the Duke of Buckingham commented upon the absence of any serious opposition to the bill in the Commons, attributing this to the many similar measures which the Commons had already discussed.⁴ The Bishop of London acquiesced in the general principle of the bill, seeing in it nothing inimical to the interests of the Established Church; the Archbishop of Canterbury declined to oppose the bill, though he feared that it might be the prelude to disestablishment.⁵ The amendments which the Lords introduced were acceptable to the Liberation Society,⁶ and the bill became law:

1. Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1867, p364
2. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXG, p963
3. Ibid., p970
4. Ibid., CXCI, p1114
5. Ibid., p1123
6. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 14.VI.1868
Liberation Society, Minute Book 26.VI.1868

"Coercion is clean gone for ever, and as far as relates to the objects for which church rates are ordinarily levied: voluntary effort, conducted in legal form, is about to take its place."¹

The continuous pressure of the Liberation Society had had some influence upon the final outcome, though its parliamentary success had increased as public interest in the question declined. Miall was certain that the long struggle had benefitted the society, as it had made it possible to keep a practical aspect of the disestablishment question before Parliament:

"If it had been gracefully surrendered ten years ago, there is no saying how it might have fared with any attempt to discuss the larger question of Establishments. The persevering zeal of the Liberation Society would have been sorely tried by the languor of Dissenting communities and by a generally diffused feeling that it were wise to 'let well alone'."²

He also regarded the episode as a triumph of co-operation; when he later wrote to Gladstone about the Irish Church question, he recalled,

"...the frankness and sincerity with which you received their (dissenters) representations having reference to your Bill for the Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates, and of the advantageous results of the co-operation thereby secured encourages them to believe that you will be willing to receive in the same spirit their suggestions on a subject in which they are still more deeply interested."³

The part played by the Liberation Society was acknowledged by Gladstone, Clay, Hardcastle, Douglas and Trelawney;⁴ Gladstone, writing in reply to the official thanks of the society, did not claim that the church rate controversy had been ended for ever, but its virulence had ended. He then paid tribute to the conduct of the voluntaryists;

"I must add that nothing could be more loyal and considerate than the conduct of the Abolitionists, in and out of Parliament, throughout the proceedings on the Bill from 1866 to the final close."⁵

1. Nonconformist, 8.VII.1868, p665
2. Ibid.
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.II.1869
4. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation p175
5. H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688 - 1891 p597. Liberation Society Minute Book, 11.IX.1868

Carvell Williams saw the aftermath of the Act as a triumph for voluntarism:

"...none of the dire results predicted by the advocates of the compulsory system have followed. Instead of churches being in ruins, and services being discontinued, the edifices were never kept in so good a condition, and the services held in them were never so numerous."¹

The Liberator went much further in its assessment of the importance of the act, regarding it as the triumph of a pressure group in forcing a measure upon Parliament. The act demonstrated:

"...the absolute mastery of the party which, after a struggle lasting a whole generation, has at length compelled the legislature to concede the principle for which it has contended."²

This was to put a high valuation upon the capacity of a pressure group to force an issue upon Parliament, and the work of Dr. Cowling³ indicates that the view is oversimplified. A pressure group such as the Liberation Society had to act upon the assumption that it would influence Parliament for Parliament alone could make the necessary decision, and it could do so by creating a body of public opinion, and by securing the support of political leaders. In the case of church rates, the Liberation Society and the Nonconformist were invaluable in encouraging and reporting parochial contests, helping to create a body of public opinion which eventually influence Parliament; much could be achieved by the election of sympathetic M.P.s.

For Miall, the abolition of church rates was never an end in itself; there had been times when the Liberation Society gave the question a degree of prominence which he thought excessive. In political terms, it was the most direct means of attacking the privileged position of the Church of England, and was vital to the society both as a means of educating public opinion, and as a means of securing a parliamentary platform. Miall's part in framing the strategy of the society was directed towards making the

1. H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891 p597
2. Liberator, Aug. 1868, p141
3. M. Cowling, 1867. Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution passim

best possible use of the question. He was anxious that the society should not be solely identified with the church-rates question: in 1856 he pointed out that the society was not a Church Rates association, but, until Foster informed it otherwise, the House of Lords Committee which investigated the law on church rates in 1859 apparently thought it was. Certainly, the society regarded the church-rate question as a barometer of public and parliamentary opinion upon the general issue of religious equality, and framed its tactics accordingly.

Critics and opponents of the society highlighted its anti-church rate activities, seeing them partly as an assault upon the Church of England and partly as a method of building up a political pressure group committed to its ideals:

"...since 1859, the Liberal party has also followed the beaten track of democracy in matters ecclesiastical...to purchase the aid of Democracy, Church Rates were surrendered."¹

Archdeacon Hale, addressing London clergy in 1861, described the society as a serious threat to the Established Church, and counted its campaign against church rates as one of its outstanding achievements:

"...by the skilful use of votes in boroughs and even in counties, the Liberation Society has made good its footing in the House of Commons, and obtained the approval of the majority of the members to one of the most destructive measures - that of the Abolition of church rates."²

He went on to criticise the methods employed by the society:

"I do not hesitate to say that the constant intervention of the Liberation Society in such cases, and the evils which have manifestly followed wherever they have intervened to encourage and support mere technical litigation constitute a system of terrorism..."³

Miall saw the church-rates issue as a convenient stick with which to beat the establishment. It was a question of principle, for the actual sums involved were too small to justify a major struggle. The record of

1. R. Masheder, Dissent and Democracy 2nd edition (London 1865) p127
2. W.H. Hale, The designs and constitution of the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control. (London 1861) p13
3. Ibid., p47

his own political activities suggests that he himself was more interested in other aspects of religious equality, and, so far as church rates were concerned, he placed as high a value upon local as upon parliamentary agitation. Any difference between himself and the Liberation Society was one of tactics. Miall wanted discussion of disestablishment as a substantive issue, which, while it was the fundamental objective of the society, was a long-term aim so far as the realities of politics were concerned. He was often impatient of campaigns directed towards the redress of specific grievances, but even the redress of a trivial grievance was a contribution towards disestablishment. So far as the main body of dissent was concerned, indeed, so far as the political standing of the Liberation Society was concerned, a steady stream of success was essential, and it is possible that Miall, concentrating upon the nuisance value of the question, was less realistic than his colleagues of the Liberation Society in his attitude to the abolition of church rates.

Part 3. The foundation of the British Anti-State Church Association, and the attempt to unite dissenters.

The campaign for the abolition of church rates was a direct attack upon the privileged position of the Church of England, and was one of the main weapons in Miall's armoury from the very beginning of his political career. It was one of two main weapons he used to launch his campaign for the dissolution of the links between the Established Church and the state. The other was to bring about the reform of Parliament, in the hope that a House of Commons elected upon a broader basis than that prescribed by the Act of 1832, would be sympathetic to the demands of dissenters: the experience of the 1830s had shown that dissenters would rely upon the Whigs in vain for redress of their grievances. Thus, from 1841 to 1843, Miall devoted much of his time and energy to an attempt to unite the various groups to whom parliamentary reform was essential for the fulfilment of their aims.

He defined his own objective as the 'reconciliation of the middle and working classes, and it was to remain a constant theme in his political career. In 1841 he chose to exploit Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Union, a movement based in the provinces, which Miall hoped might comprehend radical dissenters, Chartists, and the middle-class Anti-Corn Law League. By 1843 the attempt had collapsed, not only through Chartist mistrust of the motives of middle-class reformers, but also through the distrust of many leaders of dissent for radicalism. Nor did the majority of the latter find Miall's views on disestablishment acceptable.¹ A modern historian of the period has described this attempt as reaching the "...limits of futility,"² but Miall learned from the débâcle, and quickly adjusted his thinking. Accepting that for the time being parliamentary reform was out of the question, he devoted himself to resisting a new aggressive spirit of the Church of England. In 1843, the Ecclesiastical Commission had sanctioned the creation of new parochial districts, and in the same year, Sir James Graham introduced his Factory Education bill, which threatened to increase the influence of the Anglican Church in the sphere of education.³ Abandoning the effort to reform Parliament, and thus implicitly setting to one side the objective of securing the removal of dissenting grievances, Miall attempted to resist the new pretensions of the Church of England. What quickly became apparent was the absence of any organisation to centralise and direct the efforts of militant dissenters outside Parliament.

Miall himself had long been aware of this deficiency: before he came to London he had founded, along with James Mursell, the Leicester Voluntary Church Society, whose manifesto included disestablishment as an objective, and which envisaged a nationwide system of branches.⁴ The only body which

1. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction pp75f. See also W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 pp193-194
2. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction p75
3. Ibid., pp90-91
4. Leicestershire Mercury, 21.XII.1839. See also H. Mursell, James Phillipo Mursell: his life and work (London 1866) p44

represented political dissent at a provincial level was, according to the Patriot, the Religious Freedom Society. It included Edward Baines of Leeds, Dr. Cox, and Josiah Conder, editor of the Patriot but was crippled by lack of interest and support from dissenters.¹ The problem exercised Miall when he set up the Nonconformist. He urged nonconformists to unite in their efforts, but many dissenting leaders disliked his extremism, and his disposition to enter the political arena. In an article with the defensive title "Wisdom is not wickedness" he stated:

"There would seem to be no governing power, no central mind, no authority sufficiently authoritative to compel its own recognition and to give unity to the plans and movements of the vast community of dissenters."²

His suggestion was for a single body which would represent all protestant dissenters, and the Anti-State Church Association, when eventually it was founded, bore a striking resemblance to Miall's blueprint:

"...the consolidation of numerous individual authorities and influences into a general and commanding one: a centralisation for a brief period and for an especial object of whatever there is of sound wisdom, of solid principle, and of real religion among the various bodies of dissenters: the creation, not of a despotism, but of a Parliament: a Parliament chosen by the free suffrage of the parties concerned."³

He envisaged the formation of local committees, and warned that any dissenters who engaged in such activity would have to endure the criticisms of fellow-nonconformists. Such an organisation would fulfil an educational function: there was need of, "...some efficient system of training, whereby dissenters may be made to understand and brought to venerate their own principles."⁴

There were nonconformists who shared Miall's concern. The Eclectic Review agreed that dissenting effort was hopelessly disunited, prone to rely upon the Whigs to no good purpose, and reluctant to become directly involved in political struggles:

1. Patriot, 18.X.1841, p700. See also H.S. Skeats & C.S. Miall History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1891. p490
2. Nonconformist, 11.V.1842, p305
3. Ibid., 18.V.1842, p329
4. Ibid., 25.V.1842, p353

"The phrase 'political dissenters' employed to stigmatise a portion of the body implies a tacit admission that heretofore Dissenters in general have not been political. It is high time they became so..."¹

Discussing the existing organisations of dissent, it regarded the United Committee as essentially metropolitan in outlook, the Church Rate Abolition Society as too specific in its aims, the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty as virtually moribund, the Congregational and Baptist Unions as incapable by definition of uniting dissenters. It hoped for the foundation of an organisation which would unite dissenting effort.² The Patriot, less radical in outlook, nevertheless made a similar plea for dissenting unity; its ideal was a putative body named the "Union for the Promotion of Religious Equality".³ Miall believed a national conference of dissenters was a necessary first stage. Dissenters, he thought, would be encouraged to attend by the alarming growth of sacramentalism and Puseyite doctrines in the Established Church; a church claiming to be apostolic might become more insistent in its demands for conformity.⁴

"It is high time for dissenters to lay aside their mutual animosities and merge their sectional feuds: to shake from them the spirit of slumber, and to stand up the manly assertors of entire freedom of conscience: nor do we know any plan by which this object may be attained, at once so easy and so efficient, as a general conference."⁵

This was not a new idea; two years earlier the Eclectic Review, having rebuked Miall and his Leicester colleagues for the bitterness of their attacks upon the London leaders of dissent, felt that a conference of dissenters would help remove misunderstandings, and facilitate fruitful co-operation.⁶

Miall had no illusions about the magnitude of the task of organising dissenting effort, and he regarded the absence of decisive leadership as

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V.1839, p1
2. Ibid., pp31-37. See also Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VII 1840 pp345-346 Patriot, 10.V.1841, p308. Speaking for militant dissent in the provinces, the Leicestershire Mercury accused the existing dissenting organisations of servility towards the Whigs. Leicestershire Mercury 25.V.1839.
3. Patriot, 17.I.1839, p36; See also Ibid., 17.V.1838, pp324-325 Ibid., 24.V.1838, p340
4. Nonconformist, 15.VI.1842, p409
5. Ibid., 17.VIII.1842, p553
6. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.VII 1840, p360

the major obstacle. Without mincing his words, he criticised dissenting ministers for their inactivity and apathy, accusing them of being infected with the bigotry and complacency which was the curse of the Established Church:

"The provinces are waiting for London; London is waiting for its nonconforming divines, and such of these divines...as are anxious to proceed at once to work, are waiting for the hoped-for summons of their more tardy, but perhaps more influential, brethren. It thus happens that silence and inaction are to be ascribed, in the main, not to the apathy of the dissenting body, but to the indisposition, springing from whatever cause, of a small minority of its ministers."¹

This is his familiar criticism of the London leaders of dissenting bodies, whom he regarded as entrenched in elevated social positions, accepted by their Anglican counterparts, and insensitive, as a result, to the grievances and aspirations of their flocks. As a body, they were reluctant to engage in political agitation, lest they offend their Whig allies. Miall pointed out sharply that there was nothing unchristian in political agitation; it did not debase religion, and it was inconsistent to give approval to the secessionists from the Scottish Establishment, and yet to condemn dissenting agitation in England itself:

"Their brethren in Scotland entered with characteristic energy and zeal into this warfare: and whilst the collateral result of their efforts has been the disruption of the Scottish Establishment, who can pretend that the agitation has deteriorated the vital religion which theretofore existed in the voluntary churches of that country."²

Again, he advocated a great national conference of dissenters as the most expeditious way of commencing such agitation; many dissenters had already been involved in great national campaigns with political objectives, such as the Anti-Corn Law League, or the Anti-Slavery movement. There could be no logical objection to their taking part in a movement to free religion from state control; the aim was a re-arrangement of political structures, that religion itself might benefit. In thus representing the objective, Miall was patently attempting to overcome the reluctance of many dissenters to undertake action in which religion and politics seemed inseparable.

1. Nonconformist, 12.VII.1843, p481. The Eclectic Review agreed that there was discontent in the provinces with London leadership, but deprecated Miall's strident tone. Eclectic Review ns VII 1840, pp359-360
2. Nonconformist, 12.VII.1843, p481

External political factors improved the prospects of dissenting unity. The growth of Tractarianism within the Established Church alarmed dissenters; the Scottish Disruption encouraged opponents of establishment; Sir James Graham's Factory Education bill seemed to be a direct attack upon nonconformity. The Eclectic Review believed it had done more to arouse dissenters than any single measure since Lord Sidmouth's abortive measure. Its effect was to reveal, "...the extent of our danger, and caused an instantaneous movement amongst...all classes of dissenters."¹ Miall was convinced that the time was favourable for his project:

"In Ireland, in Scotland, in Wales, in England, the tide of feeling is now at its flood. Every political agitation now rife has a main aspect towards ecclesiastical affairs. The mind of our country is awake to the subject...There exists...as everyone who watched the agitation against the Factories Bill must have observed, an anti-state church feeling diffused throughout the country, considerable both for its amount, for its intelligence, and for its zeal."²

The major task was to organise and direct this feeling, by giving it a clearly defined objective and a nationwide structure, which was non-sectarian:

"It wants to be gathered up and made to act in obedience to definite laws. Hitherto it has been little more than played with - taxed for the benefit of sectaries and agents. Much of it has grown suspicious and not without reason. A convention would instantly evoke it from obscurity, organise its power and employ it to practical uses...Such a convention of nonconformist delegates we take to be the most natural and the most effective mode of commencing the campaign against the church and state alliance."³

Only one month later, Miall claimed to have definite evidence of support for a national conference of dissenters, on the model of the United Committee meeting of 1834.⁴ The Eclectic Review, of all dissenting organs the most favourably disposed towards Miall, discussed his suggestions. It agreed that dissenters must abandon their agitation for the redress of practical grievances, and tackle the whole question of establishment. The idea of a

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIII 1843, pp576; 698.
2. Nonconformist, 26.VII.1843, p513
3. Ibid.
4. Edward Baines, Life of Edward Baines p197

conference was welcomed: "We cannot but regard the proposal in a favourable light...Cautiously and wisely reduced to practice, we believe it would be productive of no trivial an amount of good."¹ The cause of the revival of dissenting vigour was fundamentally, according to Miall, the threat raised by Graham's Factory Education bill, and the apathy of the London leaders of dissent was no longer an inhibiting factor. If they were not prepared to act, there were ministers in the provinces who were prepared to take the lead:

"If a conference upon the question of a separation of church and state be frowned upon by certain parties in the metropolis, there are men and ministers, not a few, in the provinces, who regard some such step with favour, and who, undeterred by the ominous silence preserved at headquarters, will adopt measures for giving practical effect to their judgment."²

The conference would provide an authoritative statement of dissenters' views upon the question of church establishments, and would seek to influence public opinion. It would then seek to organise dissenting opinion, put an end to faction and division among dissenters, and mark the end of piecemeal agitation:

"An assembly of delegates...would mark the commencement of a new ecclesiastical epoch. It would give a fresh and infinitely higher character to the struggle between religious freedom and intolerance. It would put an end to the desultory squabbling which chiefly affects the relative position and rights of individuals, and would rally the whole amount of zeal which the dissenting community can furnish under the banner of sacred principles."³

Part of the failure of dissenters lay in the fact that, so far, no such attempt had been made to base their demands upon principles. Nor had there been any attempt to organise opinion, or to seek support:

"...in a word, that no systematic and well-considered effort has been made to collect and to employ whatever there exists of enlightened and earnest anti-establishment feeling amongst us, is a matter of well-known history."⁴

One of Miall's journalistic techniques was to raise objections to a proposal, and then refute them. In this instance, he discussed the objections which

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIV 1843, p587
2. Nonconformist, 16.VIII.1843, p561
3. Ibid.
4. Nonconformist, 23.VIII.1843, p577

he thought inhibited wholehearted support from the dissenting body. Some dissenters felt that the Church of England was divided in its attitude to Puseyism, and, left to itself, would split into factions, some of which might secede. Strong dissenting attacks might cause Anglicans to close ranks, and a nationwide conference of dissenters was thus inadvisable. Miall insisted that religious equality, not the infliction of damage upon the Church of England as a protestant body, was the real objective.¹ The Scottish Disruption had not been achieved by dissenters standing idly by, even if it were a worthy objective to encourage secessions from the Church of England, which Miall denied. He recognised that the proposal was a substitute for political action, in which many dissenters were reluctant to engage. He considered this moral cowardice, and one of the less acceptable aspects of dissent:

"Is the question of religious establishments rife throughout Europe simply to allow the dissenters of England the privilege of holding their peace and keeping within their ranks the few wealthy members who are already half-disposed to leave them."²

The main obstacle to the success of the conference, the notorious apathy of dissenters, had been partially overcome by the reaction to Graham's Factory Education bill,³ but another difficulty was the number of dissenting organisations, with widely differing objectives, which were already in existence:

"...these societies...have become inefficient, command a very limited confidence, carry on their operations in a very desultory manner, and utterly fail to rouse the drooping spirit of nonconformists..."⁴

A conference to unite dissent would, somehow, have to represent all these bodies, and would have to carry sufficient weight and prestige for its decisions to command respect.

The Patriot, speaking for the 'centre' of dissent, doubted if the conference could achieve any of its objectives. A correspondence centred round the

1. Nonconformist, 30.VIII.1843, p593

2. Ibid., 13.IX.1843, p625

3. Ibid., 27.IX.1843, p657

4. Ibid., 11.X.1843, p689

issue that, while dissenters could be formidable in defence of their liberties, they were unlikely to unite in aggression;¹ an editorial dismissed the idea as unoriginal and ill-considered. There already existed organisations of dissenters, the proposed movement would probably be ill-organised and underfinanced. Until it had had a fund of £50,000, the Anti-Corn Law League had been ineffective, and the main reason for dissenting inactivity to date was the absence of funds. If held, the conference would probably be damaging to dissent: "Had we not been assured to the contrary, we might have supposed that 'an enemy hath done this', with a view to making Dissenters ridiculous to their opponents."² Proclaiming its disagreement with the Eclectic Review, it argued that a conference would exacerbate divisions amongst dissenters. Since ultimately disestablishment could only be decided upon by Parliament, dissenters should do all possible to preserve their links with political leaders.³ Miall replied to these articles, deploring their tone, and fearing that they represented the outlook of dissenting leaders:

"...if we regret the tone...we regret it chiefly as a too-correct index...of the feeling existing among the London dissenters, or rather that portion of them which has been accustomed to take the lead in matters affecting ecclesiastical intolerance."⁴

Since it seemed hopeless to expect support from the acknowledged leaders of dissent, the main body would have to proceed on its own. Miall proclaimed:

"The time has arrived for them, since they cannot prevail upon others to accompany them, to proceed alone. They have paid a marked deference to the feelings of their London brethren. They have waited with un murmuring patience for some decisive manifesto from that quarter. We are bound to say that reason has been evaded, and prudent forbearance has been treated with something like supercilious disregard. Let them therefore gird up their resolution and appeal to the country. Let them nominate their provisional council and issue their preliminary address."⁵

1. Patriot, 9.X.1843, p703; 15.X.1843, p715
2. Ibid., 2.XI.1843, pp756-757
3. Ibid., 6.XI.1843
4. Nonconformist, 8.XI.1843, p753
5. Ibid.

Miall was not merely concocting systems in the abstract; the underlying purpose of his efforts was to give provincial dissent a base in London. There already existed in the capital a few organisations of dissenters dedicated to attack the Established Church, and some of their leaders were later to become national figures. C.S. Miall, for example, was secretary of the Metropolitan Anti-State Church Association, whose object was: "...to arouse the inhabitants of the metropolis to the evils of church establishments, and to assist as far as possible in effecting their downfall."¹ John Carvell Williams, later to be a leading officer of the Liberation Society, was secretary of the East London Religious Liberty Society, whose origins lay in a committee of dissenters set up to fight against Graham's educational proposals of 1843. When that particular battle was won, the committee nevertheless remained in existence, to guard against similar dangers in the future, and to advance the cause of religious liberty.²

The enthusiasm for a campaign against the Established Church existed mainly in the provinces, while in London there were the models of organisation. It was Miall's achievement to assist in fusing these forces in the form of the British Anti-State Church Association. The immediate stimulus was a petition by 76 dissenting ministers from the Midlands, calling upon London ministers to take the lead in bringing about the separation of Church and State: the Patriot believed they saw this as the only guarantee of non-conformist liberties for the future.³ The Eclectic Review reported that the London ministers failed to respond to the petition, so the Midlands ministers decided to summon a conference on their own. It regarded Miall's articles of 1842 as the driving force behind this move.⁴ In fact, the London dissenting ministers met three times, but failed to give any lead to the

1. Nonconformist, 18.X.1843, p706

2. Ibid., 6.IX.1843, p611; 1.XI.1843, p738.

3. A Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester p257. Patriot, 2.X.1843, p685

4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, pp345-346

provinces.¹ The crucial meeting was held in Leicester on 7th December 1843; the Leicestershire Mercury commented that since the impetus came from the 76 Midlands ministers, Leicester was the appropriate venue for the meeting to plan the next step. While emphasising the provincial character of the leadership, it conceded: "The London ministers...are not all inert, notwithstanding the unfavourable influences by which they are surrounded."² Some attempt was made to secure at least the acquiescence of the London ministers; the meeting was held on 7th December, but Miall refrained from publishing an immediate account in the Nonconformist, since, he claimed, he wished to avoid giving offence by the premature publication of the decisions of the meeting.³ It later became apparent that Miall had been concerned to gain the support of the London organisations hostile to the Established Church;⁴ probably the Leicester meeting was convened without their being consulted.

The meeting decided to organise a convention of nonconformists, which would discuss the setting up of a nationwide organisation of dissenters. Along with Dr. Cox and Dr. Price, the editor of the Eclectic Review, Miall was given the task of organising the convention; it was to discuss the problems of founding a body whose ultimate objective was the separation of church and state, and its immediate objective would be the organisation and education of dissenting opinion. They decided to prepare a list of dissenters from the whole of the British Isles, who would form a committee to have oversight of the organisation of the convention.⁵ The Patriot now changed its attitude, hoping that the convention would preserve the impetus generated by resistance to Graham's educational proposals, but it still had reservations. The auspices under which the convention was summoned would hardly

1. D. Thompson "The Liberation Society" in P. Hollis (ed) Pressure from without in Early Victorian England. pp214-215. (This section was written before the appearance of Dr. Thompson's essay upon the Liberation Society.) The Dissenting Deputies were lukewarm in their attitude towards the dis-establishment question at this time. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p392
2. Leicestershire Mercury, 9.XII.1843
3. Nonconformist, 13.XII.1843, p833; 20.XII.1843, p849
4. Ibid., 27.XII.1843, p866
5. Ibid., 27.XII.1843, pp865, 880.

promote unity, and it felt it, "...tends more to alarm timid friends than to dispirit the enemy."¹ Not surprisingly, the Eclectic Review had no such fears: it proclaimed the dawning of a new era. Whereas until now dissenters had striven for a variety of objectives, had lacked unity, and had been essentially defensive in their outlook, they could now achieve similar ends by acting upon the basis of sound principle:

"...we regard this project as one calculated to produce a beneficial effect, chiefly upon the dissenting community... to construct a platform for united effort in the diffusion and advancement of the truths they hold..."²

At this stage, Miall regarded the new body as complementary to the existing Complete Suffrage Union:

"We have assisted at the birth of two movements both of which, we fondly believe, will tell favourably upon our country's welfare - the one political, the other ecclesiastical."³

He stressed that the new movement did not intend to strive for reform in detail, or for the alleviation of specific grievances:

"No ordinary theme solicits their regard. They are not summoned now to bestow even a transient thought upon the civil liberties of dissenters...It is not our purpose to trouble them with indignant references to the countless myriad of petty humiliations heaped by unjust power upon myriads of sincere and devoted nonconformists...Not that we deem such topics beneath notice. But we have a larger and nobler end in view - an end identified with, not the present comfort merely, but the future and eternal well-being of men - affecting the higher interests, not of a sect but of the church - not of a party but of mankind."⁴

The Leicestershire Mercury ironically recorded its thanks to Sir James Graham,

"...who has called such vast designs into being."⁵ Miall allowed himself a moment of reflection on the magnitude of the task which lay ahead: "Of these men who met together...how many will live to see the realisation of their hopes?"⁶

1. Patriot, 1.I.1844, p4
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p360
3. Nonconformist, 3.I.1844, p1
4. Ibid.
5. Leicestershire Mercury, 30.XII.1843
6. Nonconformist, 14.II.1844, p93

Both Dr. Cox and Miall tried to make it clear that the convention would not be conducted irresponsibly, and would not advocate violence:¹ these seemed to be the main fears of doubters. The Patriot reaffirmed its support, but felt that the committee had too few well-known names, and would not command widespread allegiance.² Miall observed that the proposed conference was encountering opposition similar to that provoked by the Anti-Slavery movement in America.³ However, he was delighted to receive the verbal support of the Dissenting Deputies. At a meeting which he attended in his capacity as a deputy, the evils of established religion were discussed, and a series of resolutions against the state church were moved by J.C. Evans, and approved. The meeting was then informed of the coming convention, and gave its support:

"This deputation rejoices to learn that an Anti-State Church Conference is about to be convened, and hopes that the deliberations of that assembly will tend materially to promote the better understanding of the principles of religious liberty, and will ultimately lead to their complete triumph in the legislature."⁴

Miall saw the need for a convention in the fact that the establishment was doomed anyway, but its end must be brought about in an orderly manner, not by violence:

"It is quite obvious that state churches can only be swept away by violent revolution, or by a current of public opinion broad and deep such as this country has never before witnessed. All good men must desire that the event may be brought about by the latter."⁵

The main obstacles which the convention encountered at this stage were the caution of prominent leaders, and misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

Miall commented that few dissenting leaders cared to take the responsibility of wrecking the conference, but many plainly wished it would fail. He found

1. Nonconformist, 28.II.1844, pl25; 6.III.1844, pl41.
2. Patriot, 28.III.1844, p205
3. Nonconformist, 3.IV.1844, p205
4. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 13.III.1844, f323. Nonconformist, 20.III.1844, pl80. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies pp51, 392. Miall's attendance at meetings of the deputies, of which he was a member, was intermittent from 1844 to 1847, after which it appears to cease.
5. Nonconformist, 27.III.1844, pl89

himself compelled to address the East London Religious Liberty Society to explain the purpose of the convention, "...an explanation which was the more necessary from the movement having been misunderstood in some quarters and seriously misrepresented in others."¹ However, he regarded it as an advantage that few of those involved with the convention were prominent public figures; this would safeguard the movement against exploitation by ambitious men for ulterior motives: "...it is not likely to have many followers, but such as have counted the cost and are prepared to pay it when demanded."²

The conference met at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London on 1st May 1844, and lasted for three days. Miall, Conder and Kennedy were elected secretaries. The major dissenting groups represented were the Baptist and Congregational Unions; there were also some Quakers, such as Joseph Sturge, and Scottish voluntaryists such as Wardlaw.³ The only prominent Unitarian present was Bowring, but Miall explained that there had been no intention of excluding Unitarians. He noted that the Inquirer had advised them to send representatives, and it was pure accident that none was elected to the executive committee.⁴ In general, however, Unitarians tended to accept the Established Church: Joshua Fielden, for instance, regarded it as a guarantor of religious toleration, since its particular legal status left Parliament in control of the majority sect. While specific abuses such as church rates were resented, establishment as a principle was rarely disputed.⁵ It may be that Unitarians were reluctant to associate themselves with a new organisation of Trinitarian dissenters while there was dispute over the possession of chapels, following a period of litigation over Lady Hewley's Charity.⁶

1. Nonconformist, 24.IV.1844, p254

2. Ibid., 10.IV.1844, p221

3. Nonconformist, 24.IV.1844, pp253-254. See also W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation, p27. E. Isichei, Victorian Quakers (Oxford 1970) pp198-199.

4. Nonconformist, 17.IV.1844, p237

5. R.V. Holt, The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress In England (London 1938) pp347-348.

6. See below p435

Dr. Cox opened the conference with a paper outlining the events leading up to it, and paying tribute to Miall's earlier advocacy of such proceedings. Miall himself contributed a paper entitled "The practical evils resulting from the union of Church and State", which did no more than rehearse his earlier views upon the subject.¹ Others to address the conference were Sharman Crawford, the member for Rochdale, Wardlaw, the unitarian Bowring, and J.P. Mursell, who gave much of the credit for the conference to Miall. It was Miall, he claimed, who seized the opportunity of capitalising upon the feeling among nonconformists generated by Graham's bill, and, receiving no encouragement from the leaders of dissent, organised the conference upon his own initiative.²

The conference resolved to set up a permanent organisation, and after consultation with lawyers, plans were drawn up for the British Anti-State Church Association.³ Its fundamental principle was;

"That in matters of religion man is responsible to God alone: that all legislation by secular governments in affairs of religion is an encroachment upon the rights of man and an invasion of the prerogatives of God: and that the application by law of the resources of the state to the maintenance of any form or forms of religious worship is contrary to reason, hostile to human liberty and directly opposed to the word of God."⁴

The objective of the association was to free religion from all governmental or legislative interference, and it would proceed, "...by lawful and peaceful means, and by such means only."⁵ The detailed running of the association was in the hands of a treasurer, three secretaries, who were Dr. Cox, a Baptist minister, and a veteran of dissenting politics in London, Miall, representing provincial dissent and radicalism, and J.C. Hare of the Patriot: there were also three auditors. A council of five hundred, similar to the

1. Nonconformist, 6.V.1844, pp305f
2. Leicestershire Mercury, 25.V.1844
3. Proceedings of the First Anti-State Church Conference. Held in London April 30th, May 1 & 2 MDCCCXLIV (London, undated but probably 1844) pp2ff
4. Nonconformist, 8.V.1844, p317. Eclectic review, ns Vol.XV 1844, pp724-741 esp. 736-8.
5. Ibid.

Anti-Corn Law League, had general oversight, and an executive committee of fifty supervised the officers. The association was the creation of the conference, and at the end of three years all power was returned to the conference, which would elect new officers and a new executive. The executive committee was charged with the collection of documents relating to establishments, the publication of tracts and pamphlets, the organisation of local groups and activities, and with attempting to send suitable men to Parliament and supporting them with petitions and memorials. It was further required to work for the repeal of all laws involving the union of the church with the state, and for the promotion of laws to bring about religious liberty. The Eclectic Review had particularly noted that the conference did not engage in political discussion, and that it sent no petitions to Parliament;¹ however, the articles of the association committed it from the outset to political activity. A monolithic structure was preferred to one based upon local associations, to avoid contravening the law relating to corresponding societies, which might result in a charge of conspiracy. There were also financial arguments in favour of a centralised body; duplication of function was avoided.² The association acquired premises in Paternoster Row, and Miall became secretary of the executive committee, in addition to his work as editor of the Nonconformist.

He regarded the conference as a brilliant success, which had triumphed despite discouragement and hostility:

"We now find ourselves oppressed by the difficulty of calmly estimating the magnitude of that moral triumph which...has been achieved...It is like a dream to us - a lovely and majestic dream...it (the conference) met in such strength, in opposition to the known wishes of most of those whose names until now have secured for them a leading influence in the dissenting world...Upwards of six hundred delegates

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p738. The constitution of the association, as printed in the Eclectic Review, is given in D.M. Thompson, Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century (London 1972) pp124-126.
2. Nonconformist, 17.VII.1844, p509. cf Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVI 1844, p364.

met together to proclaim that the old regime has for ever terminated."¹

The Eclectic Review was unreserved in its acclaim:

"We have never been amongst the wholesale and indiscriminate censurers of London men and London committees. Nevertheless, we feel assured that if the organisation now originated be carried out in the same spirit which marked its commencement, if it continues to unite wisdom with firmness, enlightened philosophy and clear scriptural principles with earnestness of purpose and untiring diligence, it cannot fail to gather up the elements of strength to a degree which will constitute it the most important body amongst dissenters of this country, because most fairly expressive of their views."²

The Patriot, abandoning its earlier hostility, described the conference as

"...an event and a striking one," It admitted that it had changed its mind when it seemed that the conference would lead to effective action through the creation of an organisation which would make a stand for the rights of dissenters, for the menace of 1843 had not vanished.³

The new association faced several difficulties; at first, no bank would accept its account.⁴ It was essential to initiate local activity, despite the law relating to corresponding societies, and the executive committee resorted to the appointment of local registrars, who would arrange events, collect subscriptions, and act in liaison with the committee.⁵ The Patriot noted that the new association; "...does not possess the cordial approval of all those persons on whose concurrence its originators might reasonably have calculated."⁶ It instanced in particular the Congregational Magazine, which disapproved of the fact that the association would include trinitarians, socinians and men of no religion at all, and the fact that it proposed to become involved in political action:

1. Nonconformist, 8.V.1844, p317
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV. 1844, p739
3. Patriot, 6.V.1844, p301; 11.VIII1844, p476
4. A. Miall, Life of E. Miall p97
5. Nonconformist, 14.VIII.1844, p588. Evidently Miall devised this solution. A Miall, Life of E. Miall p97
6. Patriot, 13.V.1844, p325

"...we cannot but regard the Anti-State Church Conference as liable to the same objections as the State Church itself. Its design is to employ worldly influence for the advancement of Christian objects, and to use Christian Churches for the promotion of political objects."¹

Dr. Pye Smith was requested by the committee of Homerton to withdraw from the association, but declined to do so, on the grounds that disestablishment was inevitable, and must be accomplished by religious men, not by violence.²

Dr. Vaughan believed the Eclectic Review, by its support of the association, had abandoned its role as an organ of moderate dissent: "...the Eclectic has thrown itself into the hands of an extreme section of our body..."³

Vaughan, reflecting the outlook of moderate dissenters, founded the British Quarterly Review to give expression to their views, and his attitude to the association was shared by John Angell James of Birmingham, whose followers, "...regarded Edward Miall and the activities of the Anti-State Church Society with suspicion and dislike."⁴

Miall was aware of this feeling, and did his best to overcome it, both in the press and on the platform:

"When you do ill, your actions will be regarded as the true interpreters of your motives. When well, your motives will be impugned with a view to depreciate your actions...Men first shun you and then dislike you because they have shunned you...To some such theory as this are we driven to account for the strange shyness and suspicion with which many men, sincere Dissenters in the main, regard the Anti-State Church movement."⁵

Nonetheless, he was optimistic: "...triumph is certain. We have espoused no losing cause."⁶ Critics of militant dissent regarded Miall as the moving force behind the association. Describing the Complete Suffrage Union as the first offspring of the Nonconformist, the Anglican lawyer Masheder believed

1. Congregational Magazine 1844 pp393-394. Quoted in full in J. Waddington Congregational History i, 572-574. An extract appears in D.M. Thompson Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century pp127-128.
2. J. Waddington Congregational History i, 569-570
3. Ibid., i, 574-576
4. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale p140
5. A. Miall, Life of E. Miall p98
6. Nonconformist, 6.XI.1844, p766

the Anti-State Church Association was the, "...second and larger conception of the Nonconformist." ¹ He mentioned Miall's writings of 1842 which had advocated a conference of dissenters, and described the paper he read at the conference as, "...a perfect mirror of dissenting and democratic principles." ² Masheder regarded the association as a threat to the British Constitution, and his tribute to Miall has a certain justness:

"...if we could imagine that the commemoration of benefactors formed any part of Dissenting ceremonies, Mr. Miall would rank as the author and founder of the British Anti-State Church Association. Under its auspices...in the year 1844...Dissent and Democracy became allied." ³

While he was working to set up this great union of dissenters, Miall was also trying to remove a cause of division. It is not without significance that in the same year as the association was set up, the Dissenters' Chapel Act was passed, which prevented a possible breach between the unitarian body and orthodox dissenters. The question involved the administration of Lady Hewley's Charity, and had been the subject of litigation in the 1830s. ⁴ A House of Lords decision in 1842 threatened unitarian possession of chapels, and the unitarian body secured government support for a bill which would guarantee their ownership of their chapels. The bill, introduced in 1844, was opposed by many orthodox dissenters, ⁵ and Miall was one of few who gave it their support. He found himself in a minority of the Dissenting Deputies; whereas the majority opposed the bill, Miall was one of eight who caused a special meeting to be summoned. They argued that opposition was inexpedient,

"...particularly because the influence of the Dissenting body would be materially injured by the divisions inevitably consequent on such opposition." ⁶

Though such arguments failed to impress the main body of dissenters, Parliament

1. R. Masheder, Dissent and Democracy p58
2. Ibid., p59
3. Ibid., p67
4. Skeats & Miall, History of the Free Churches pp497 f.
W.R. Ward, Religion and Society pp202f.
5. Christian Reformer, Jan. 1845, pp3-4
6. Dissenting deputies, Minute Book 2.V.1844.
B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p91

passed the bill, preventing the alienation of the Unitarians from the remainder of the dissenting body, and preventing the squandering of vast sums upon litigation in the future.¹ It is possible that Miall's action was significant in securing the support of some Unitarians for the Anti-State Church Association,² and it is difficult to imagine any united body of dissenters surviving intact the possibility of endless inter-denominational litigation.

1. R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism pp642-643
2. W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation p30

CHAPTER 6

EDWARD MIALL AND THE ATTACK UPON THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

Part 1.	The early years of the British Anti-State Church Association	437
Part 2.	The Liberation Society and Parliament 1852-1858	459
Part 3.	Extra-parliamentary activity	473
Part 4.	Disestablishment and Parliament	487

Part 1. The early years of the British Anti-State Church Association

The British Anti-State Church Association was given a mixed reception by the dissenting world. The radical Beehive, from the vantage point of 1871, recognised the early difficulties:

"When Mr. Miall began his noble - we might now almost add his illustrious career, in what state did he find those to whom he was entitled to look first for support - his brother Nonconformists? Did they all equally understand and alike appreciate the principles which he had avowed and the objects for which he made fight? Did he not find fewer friends than he had a right to expect, and was he not met with rebuffs among fellow-Dissenters more frequently than with applause?"¹

Miall had been involved with the provincial dissenters from whom the initiative came in 1843; having sought in vain a lead from London dissenting organisations, they organised a conference of dissenters as a consequence of which the British Anti-State Church Association was founded. Instead of busying themselves with ad hoc attempts to remedy practical grievances, dissenters could now work for:

"...the great principle which, whenever realised, will remove from their midst every cause of complaint, whilst...it will take out of the way of earnest Christianity the greatest institutional impediment which it has ever had to encounter."²

Initially, the association drew much of its strength from the Congregationalist body: support also came from the Baptist and Presbyterian bodies, but despite Miall's own efforts, there was no official support from the Unitarian organisations. As a body, Unitarians, with their tradition of co-operation with Whig leaders, were eager to reform specific abuses, but less interested in the pursuit of abstract ideas.³ In what was clearly a search for allies, Miall attended a meeting of the Complete Suffrage Union, of which he was already a prominent member, as an accredited representative of the Anti-State Church Association, and, until the collapse of the Union, he envisaged both

1. Beehive, 27.V.1871, pp8-9
2. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p346
3. Christian Reformer, Jan., 1846, p26. Miall had supported the Dissenters' Chapel Bill, which would give Unitarians secure possession of their premises. He was one of few prominent dissenters to do so. See above p435

organisations working for the same ultimate goal.¹ When the endowment of Maynooth College became a major political issue, Miall seized the opportunity to make overtures to the Irish Roman Catholics. Steering a delicate course between condemning endowment on the one hand, and deprecating anti-catholic feeling upon the other, he endeavoured to show Irish Catholics that they had a common interest with the association. At a meeting of the executive committee of the association, he persuaded his colleagues to send a petition to Sir William Clay and to Colonel Fox, emphasising that they opposed the measure, not from hatred of Roman doctrine, but because it was a new endowment of a denomination.² Reporting on the years' activities to the executive committee, Miall was gratified to note that a significant part of dissenting opposition to the Maynooth grant had avoided any sectarian bias. He added:

"...they conceive themselves warranted in tracing this result, in part, to the wide influence which the proceedings of the Anti-State Church Association exerted upon the minds of dissenters, and to the knowledge of their principles diffused by means of the lectures and publications of this Association."³

This was the basis of a policy pursued by Miall and the association with patience and skill for the next twenty years, and which resulted in a firm alliance between the Liberation Society, as the Anti-State Church Association became known, and the Irish Catholic party.⁴

In 1844, the immediate task was to launch the work of the association, and to extend its influence outside London. Its declared objectives did not command wide sympathy, and difficulty was experienced in finding a bank prepared to handle its account. However, its finances were reasonably healthy; in the first year, receipts amounted to £1,002-12-11d, with a balance remaining of £132-4-3d.⁵ Miall had published a pamphlet, "The practical evils of the State Church" which had sold 776 copies; a number

1. Nonconformist, 7.II.1844, p85
2. Ibid., 2.IV.1845, p210. cf Ibid., 14.V.1845
3. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, p304. The Eclectic Review fully endorsed the policy of the Anti-State Church Association. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVII 1845, pp491-506, 606-628, 732-749.
4. See above p435
5. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, p304

of pamphlets had been published during the Maynooth controversy, and a series of monthly tracts was planned. The Nonconformist played an indispensable part in publicising the activities of the association, and the most prominent activity had been the number and variety of lectures promoted by the association. In his report as secretary on the first year's work, Miall had indicated the legal difficulties of having local branches in correspondence with a central body; his solution was the appointment of local registrars, who would be visited by deputations from London.¹ Shortage of funds was a restriction, and many lecturers gave their services free. In this connection, Miall undertook a formidable amount of work. In addition to editing the Nonconformist and acting as secretary of the association, he accepted a heavy burden of lecturing. Some of the lectures he delivered in London, but during 1845 he is to be found travelling to Sudbury, Northampton, Bradford, Harleston, Ipswich and Leicester. The Morning Chronicle described one of his lectures at Tower Hamlets thus:

"Although compelled to depict the growth of evils in our own establishment, the tone of the lecturer was very courteous, and not offensive to its members. The effect of the lecture was a great addition to the number of members, and it may be stated that the cause is making great progress in this district."²

At Colchester, he laid down the general lines of strategy, placing the priorities of the association in an order which precluded immediate political action.³ The first task must be the education of dissenters; this would be undertaken by means of lectures and tracts. After two or three years, there would be a united body of dissenting opinion, though Miall was later forced to revise this estimate. The next stage was the education of non-dissenters in the principles of the association, and only then would an attempt be made to enlighten the government of the day. This last was the most daunting aspect: "...we think there is nothing will force truth upon the minds of our rulers but the enthusiastic desire and determination of a great and united people."⁴ Miall's pessimism possibly reflects his disappointment at

1. Nonconformist, 7.V.1845, p304
2. Quoted in Nonconformist, 8.I.1845, p17
3. cf D.M. Thompson, "The Liberation Society" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p216
4. Nonconformist, 5.III.1845, pp141f

the growing ineffectiveness of the Complete Suffrage Union, upon which he had pinned his earliest hopes of a political breakthrough by dissenters. His despair of immediate parliamentary action was apparent in his speech to the annual meeting of the association in 1845. Militant dissent had no voice in Parliament, and it would, he asserted, be unrealistic to expect sympathy from Peel, who intended to endow Maynooth College, and who was suspected by Miall of planning to extend the power and influence of the Church of England.¹ Nor did the record of the Whigs suggest that any practical assistance could be expected from them. This analysis was eminently realistic, and its implication, that effective action would have to be outside Parliament, helps explain the devotion of Miall and the association to the church-rates issue, which lent itself to local activity.

In the next year, Miall's lecturing commitment diminished, thanks to the appointment by the association of a salaried lecturer, Kingsley. This left him free to contest a by-election at Southwark as an anti-state church candidate; thus he described himself at a fund-raising soirée.² Apsley Pellatt, a wealthy dissenter, was his proposer, and his nomination speech concentrated upon the Maynooth question, without emphasising the broader issue of religious equality. However, the National Association, whose secretary was William Lovett, praised Miall's hostility to "...the monstrous evil of state church endowments."³ Miall himself managed to broaden the issue by attacking the Maynooth grant as the first step towards concurrent endowment. Ireland would then be subject to an ecclesiastical tyranny similar to that in England, where,

"...in all our rural districts you will find that the population is entirely under the thumb of the parish priest and the squire. Who can tell the power that it gives to the conservative interests of the country that in every parochial district there is a standing electoral committee of three - the squire, the parson and the parson's clerk..."⁴

1. Nonconformist, 14.V.1845, pp333.
2. Ibid., 26.XI.1845, pp799-800
3. Ibid., 20.VIII.1845, p579
4. Ibid., p582

He went on to argue against the principle of state support for ministers of religion, and concluded: "It is with a view to the development of these principles especially that I have put myself forward to solicit your votes."¹

However, the Anti-State Church Association did not fully endorse his candidature, for he also introduced arguments for Complete Suffrage, which proved embarrassing. At a meeting in Southwark, both Cox and John Burnet demanded support for the association's principles, without mentioning Miall.

William Forster, an Independent minister from Highgate explained the position:

"Mr. Miall was not the nominee of the Association, who had never been consulted as to his coming forward...the Anti-State Church Association, confiding in his integrity and wisdom, in the rectitude of his principles and his mind, resolved that they would do their utmost to enable the electors to send him to Parliament...They did not support him in the character of a politician - for some members of the Association did not go to the length of supporting his views upon the extension of the suffrage."²

Dr. Price would only support his ecclesiastical views, and it was evident that his political radicalism was not to the liking of many members of the Anti-State Church Association. Letters from dissenting voters to the Nonconformist were in similar vein, and thereafter, Miall laid more stress upon religious issues. He was defeated, principally on account of dissenting voters supporting his opponent, but notwithstanding the disapproval of the association, its principles were publicised in a national context. The Eclectic Review commented:

"...the course pursued by Mr. Miall and his friends was not an unadvised one...The voluntary principle has been drawn forth from its privacy and placed in the eyes of the nation."³

Miall resumed his programme of lecturing,⁴ and the association published another of his pamphlets, Religious establishments incompatible with rights of citizenship. Its monthly tracts proved successful, and two new publishing ventures were proposed, a series of leaflets, and a series of books

1. Nonconformist, 20.VIII.1845, p582
2. Nonconformist, 27.VIII.1845, p589. cf Patriot, 18.VIII.1845, p564; 21.VIII.1845, p572.
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XVIII 1845, pp482-499
4. At Bristol, Southampton, Sudbury, Ipswich, Bungay. Nonconformist, 18.V.1846, p344.

designed for use in schools. The annual income declined slightly, to £996-19-8d, and the association ended its second year slightly in debt. It had the nucleus of a nationwide organisation in 220 local registrars.¹ The suspicion and hostility of many moderate dissenters persisted:

"We have witnessed with real concern the conduct which not a few men, of whom we could have wished to think well, have pursued in relation to the Anti-State Church Movement. Would that we could charm away the prejudices that enchain them, or breathe vigour into the faith which they profess to cherish."²

Meetings and provincial tours continued: Miall and John Burnet undertook an extensive tour of Scotland, visiting Paisley, Kilmarnock, Perth, Dundee, Cupar, Berwick, Portobello, Musselborough, Edinburgh, Leith, Glasgow, Greenoch and Stirling.³ Miall hoped for a revival of the spirit in Scotland which had earlier made possible the Disruption of 1843, and which would stimulate English dissenters. But a note of disillusion was becoming apparent in the Nonconformist: it argued that in principle there was no distinction between what most dissenters professed, and the ideals which the Anti-State Church Association represented. If any of its practical details were distasteful, dissenters should join the association, and amend them, for to ignore the association was to encourage the government to trample upon the rights of dissenters. Miall even hoped that the government would introduce some measure similar to Graham's bill of 1843, which would cause dissenters to close ranks; they seemed unlikely to do so left to themselves. Pleading with dissenters to do something more positive than criticise their active colleagues, he said:

"Take up some position at least which will not lay you open to these successive assaults. Why should you be a by-word of derision in the mouth of your rulers? Is it in very deed come to this, and must Dissenters meanly lick the hand that habitually smites them in the principles they profess to cherish?"⁴

1. Nonconformist, 18.V.1846, p344
2. Nonconformist, 11.XI.1846, p749.
3. Ibid., 6.I.1847, p8. See J.B.Mackie, The Life and Work of Duncan McClaren (Edinburgh 1888) ii, 218, for Miall's letter to McClaren arranging this tour.
4. Ibid., 13.I.1847, pl7

The Eclectic Review believed that, unlike other societies, and despite the indifference and hostility of dissenting leaders, the association was flourishing. But it too spoke of the "...ominous silence of some of our contemporaries, and the more than suspected hostility of others," notwithstanding the unviolent character of the association. In particular it criticised the Patriot, for its complaint that the association had not attacked the doctrines of the Anglican Church.¹

Miall detected one glimmer of hope; the campaign against the Corn Laws had ended successfully, and seemed to prove that a well-planned agitation, with well-defined objectives, could wrest concessions from Parliament. Since commercial monopoly had been abolished, Miall saw no reason why a campaign against religious monopoly should not be attractive to the members of the Anti-Corn Law League, whom he termed the "...young mind of dissent." Thanks to the work of the Anti-State Church Association, "...they seize upon the first fair opportunity presented to them to transfer to yet nobler objects the service they erewhile rendered to the cause of free trade."² While few of the leaders of the League gave their support to the association, many of its dissenting supporters in Lancashire took up the cause of disestablishment.³

It is worth a short digression to explain Miall's conduct with reference to the Regium Donum, a grant received by poor dissenting ministers from the crown.⁴ Its existence had long embarrassed politically active dissenters; it was difficult to campaign for the end of the endowments of the Anglican Church on grounds of principle when some dissenters were receiving a grant from the state. Moreover, those dissenters who were involved with the grant did not welcome the criticisms of those who disapproved of it, and division was exacerbated. Miall even feared it might serve as the basis

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XIX 1846, pp221, 245-246.
2. Nonconformist, 27.I.1847, p45
3. N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League (2nd edition, London 1968) p212
4. K.R.M. Short, "The English Regium Donum" English Historical Review LXXXIV no.330 Jan. 1969, pp59ff.

for concurrent endowment; Archdeacon Manning saw it as a way of safeguarding the Church of England against the attacks of disestablishmentarians, since it pre-empted any case against concurrent endowment.¹ Miall's hostility to the grant was uncompromising:

"It behoves them, therefore, to prepare themselves for the contest and by an instant repudiation of state assistance towards their own body granted under the now delusive title of Regium Donum to put themselves into a position of moral strength for meeting this incursion upon civil and religious liberty."²

The Eclectic Review stressed the importance of dissenters' exonerating themselves in the eyes of the public from the charge that they placidly accepted state bounty for themselves, while condemning it for others. If, despite their representations, the grant were forced through Parliament, "...the country will learn to distinguish between its recipients and ourselves."³

The association launched a twin attack. Miall addressed a letter to both the distributors and the recipients of the grant, begging them to abandon it, as it violated the whole principle of the Anti-State Church Association, and, considered in conjunction with the Maynooth grant, had alarming possibilities for the spread of concurrent endowment.⁴ He also launched an attack upon the integrity of one of the distributors, the eminent dissenter Dr. Pye Smith,⁵ both for his association with the grant, and for alleged irregularity in its distribution. Pye Smith protested against these allegations, on the grounds that the regium donum was not an endowment but a charity.⁶ The Anti-State Church Association published a refutation of Pye Smith's plea, and demanded that dissenters surrender the grant. With some complacency, it asserted:

"...a lack of principle is more truly lamentable than honourable indigence, nor can we allow benevolence itself to become a scapegoat on which such a sin against Dissenting principles is

1. E.S. Purcell, Life of Cardinal Manning (London 1896) i, 300-302.
2. R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London 1962) p276
3. Nonconformist, 4.X.1843, p673. cf Ibid., 13.III.1844, p157
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p123
5. Nonconformist, 9.VII.1845, p480
6. Ibid., 18.VI.1845, p429. The Eclectic Review criticised the distributors for "...the wrong which they are unwittingly doing to the dissenting body." Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XV 1844, p104. See also F.R. Salter, "Congregationalism and the Hungry Forties" Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society Vol.XVII no 4 1955, p114
6. Nonconformist, 30.VII.1845, p526

to be borne away uninjured. Let the Distributors reflect that to do right, whatever consequences it may involve, can never be an act of cruelty."

No effort was made to conceal the fact that the trustees were being attacked simply because their names were known, whereas those of the recipients were not.¹

Miall came to suspect that the government was not aware of the feelings of militant dissenters, because they were misrepresented by their parliamentary spokesmen,² notably Dr. Rees, who received the grant from the treasury:

"According to him, there is all but universal hunger for the Regium Donum -none but an insignificant section of noisy ultras see in the acceptance and distribution of it any violation of professed principles."³

The Anti-State Church Association, having exhorted dissenters, in 1850 embarked upon its first parliamentary campaign; it requested Dr. Lushington to represent its views in Parliament.⁴ Lushington proposed a reduction in the amount of the grant, "...in compliance with the urgent applications of most, if not all, of the principal dissenting bodies."⁵ Both Lushington and John Bright tried to convince the government that dissenters found the grant objectionable, humiliating, and insulting to their principles, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that he accepted Dr. Rees' view, that dissenters welcomed the grant.⁶ Lushington's proposal was defeated by 127 votes to 33, but the same proposal had only secured 3 votes in 1845.⁷ Miall was pessimistic about the prospects of abolition; Anglican domination of Parliament would guarantee the continuance of the grant, despite the representations of dissenters.⁸ The association made careful preparations for the debate in 1851, briefing Lushington once more, sending circulars to M.P.s, and securing the support of Bright.⁹ However, the Chancellor surprised both Lushington and the

1. Reply of the British Anti State Church Association to Dr. Pye Smith (London 1845) pp17-18.
2. Nonconformist, 5.VII.1848, p485
3. Ibid., 23.VIII.1848, p625
4. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 15.V.1850; 29.V.1850
5. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series, CXIII, pp128-130
6. Ibid., pp130-131
7. H.S.Skeats & C.S.Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891 p502
8. Nonconformist, 24.VII.1850, p589; 14.VIII.1850, p649
9. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 3.IV.1851; 17.IV.1851; 15.V.1851.

association by reporting:

"...the item for Dissenting Ministers had been frequently objected to in that House, and the government had come to the determination not to propose such an item hereafter."¹

Miall gave the credit to the Anti-State Church Association for its organisation of publicity and its lobbying of M.P.s, while the association itself regarded the abolition of the grant as a triumph of dissenting pressure.² This campaign is a good example, on a small scale, of the tactics Miall and the association followed in other, more complex questions; the creation of a body of public opinion, the securing of a parliamentary leader, and then the raising of the matter in Parliament until success was achieved.

To return to the mainstream of political events, Miall's appeal to the Anti-Corn Law League was not wholly successful, because many former supporters of the league became interested in educational rather than religious questions.³ However, educational questions were at the centre of politics in 1847, and Russell's educational proposals of that year came as a panacea to heal temporarily the divisions amongst dissenters. The Anti-State Church Association condemned the proposals as they would involve compulsory religious teaching supported by public money, and schools would be inspected by Anglican clergy.⁴ The influence of the establishment would be increased, and the association organised a series of meetings to exploit this opportunity. Their tone is apparent from a speech by Miall at one of them:

"I look upon the scheme as one of the cleverest, the most hurtful, the most insidious, for bringing back the whole population of these realms under the domination of the State priesthood."⁵

He made similar speeches in the course of a tour of Norfolk, claiming that the government would never have introduced such a scheme had dissenters shown

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXVIII. p970
2. Nonconformist, 23.VII.1851. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 31.VII.1851
3. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 p283
4. Nonconformist, 10.III.1847, p156
5. Ibid., 24.III.1847, p176

any degree of unity or determination; they must learn the lesson for the future, and prepare a new basis for their action:

"...we must cut off all our old alliances with political parties. We must just be content, as Dissenters, to begin the political work over again...We must not merely stand upon our principles, but must make them known. We must be an active party."¹

Meetings were organised in London, at Crosby Hall and at Exeter Hall;

Miall addressed both, and Bright acted as chairman at Exeter Hall. Miall

believed that the dissenting cause had benefitted from the controversy,

which had demonstrated the unreliability of the Whigs:

"Amongst men who have, until now, piqued themselves on their moderation, in circles once supposed impervious to extreme counsels, there is diffused an element of stern decision, which...reveals a sudden and remarkable change in the atmosphere of Nonconformity. We owe to having been taken somewhat by surprise. Scarcely can we believe for joy."²

The Triennial Conference of 1847 gave an opportunity to assess the early years of the association's work. Every three years, the executive bodies surrendered their power to the delegate body, elected by congregations and other local institutions, and the executive machinery was set up anew. This was to prevent the association falling under the domination of a particular group, though in practice the personnel varied little. As secretary, Miall reported upon the operations of the association to date. There had been no direct attack upon the establishment: the major effort had been devoted to securing the support of dissenters, and this task had been facilitated by the educational proposals of 1847. The association as such had not been involved in the activities of the Anti-Corn Law League, or those of the Anti-Maynooth committee. Its publicity had been most effective: 18 large tracts, 4 occasional papers, and 17 short Tracts for the millions had been published, a total of approximately 200,000 copies. A salaried lecturer, John Kingsley had been appointed: he had given 120 lectures, and delegations from London had attended approximately 80 meetings in England, Scotland and

1. Nonconformist, 7.IV.1847, p245

2. Ibid., 21.IV.1847, p260

Wales. The income for the year 1846/7 had risen to £1429-7-9d, and a balance remained of £61-0-4d. The main items of expenditure were the expenses of lectures and meetings, £322-4-8d, advertisements in the press, £222-11-10d, the costs of the association's publications, £167-15-6d, and the salaries of its officials, £336-0-0d.¹

At the numerous sessions of the conference, Miall concentrated upon tactical issues, and the mode of operation; he secured agreement that dissenters should sever their connection with the Whigs by declining to support Whig candidates at the forthcoming election:

"Dissenters were now forced to take their stand, and this they were beginning to do, as a proof of which he referred to resolutions lately passed by Dissenters in the West Riding of Yorkshire with whom he was connected, to the effect that they had decided upon renouncing all further political connexion with Lord Morpeth...thus the Whigs would prove the best promoters of a true alliance among all sections of the Dissenting body..."²

The object of dissenters at the election should be the defeat of a number of Whigs through abstention, which would make it clear that dissenters could not be ignored.³ The Eclectic Review endorsed this proposal,⁴ as did another dissenting organisation, the Dissenter's Parliamentary Committee. Claiming that, so far as dissenters were concerned, there was no discernible difference between Whigs and Tories, it issued an election address over the signatures of dissenting leaders such as Sir Titus Salt, Josiah Conder, Samuel Morley, Joseph Sturge, and Miall himself. It assured dissenters:

"No damage, therefore, can be done to any great national interest by your refusal to take part in contests which allow you no opportunity of bearing witness against the ecclesiastical policy recently pursued by Parliament."⁵

The general election of 1847 gave the association an excellent opportunity to launch its political activities, and Miall himself stood as Liberal candidate at Halifax. According to the Leeds Mercury, he owed his selection

1. Nonconformist, 7.V.1847, pp303ff
2. Ibid., 7.V.1847, p317
3. Ibid., 10.V.1847, p328 (Supplement)
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXII 1847, pp103-124
5. Nonconformist, 16.VI.1847, p437

to the fact that some electors wanted a candidate, "...pledged to resist all future State encroachments of religion and to advocate the ultimate separation of Church and State."¹ His election address forecast that the question of religious equality was the next major question with which governments would have to deal, and he himself hoped to contribute to the debates in Parliament. Seeing the menace of concurrent endowment in the policies of both parties, he showed that the only ground on which to combat it was that of voluntarism, though he did not mention the association by name. He insisted that the property of the Church of England was national property, and should be used for the benefit of all the people. His stand was taken upon anti-state church principles, and he would not have accepted the nomination, "...but for the alarm with which I...have witnessed the evident drifting of recent legislation towards the subsidizing by the State of the religious teachers of all sects."² Throughout the campaign, Miall made no direct reference to the Anti-State Church Association, perhaps regarding it as an electoral liability at this stage, but the Leeds Mercury had no doubt that both he and his partner, the Chartist lawyer Ernest Jones, were committed to the separation of Church and State.³ Both Miall and Jones were defeated, and the Nonconformist identified the next task of the association as the organisation of sympathetic bodies of electors in the constituencies.

One of the results of the 1847 election was a reappraisal of the strategy of militant dissent. To some extent, this had been evident in Miall's own campaign at Halifax, where he placed noticeably less emphasis than hitherto upon electoral reform. Possibly he wished to avoid the rift between himself and the Anti-State Church Association which had been apparent at Southwark in 1845, though the Nonconformist gave unreserved support to Sturge's candidature at Nottingham. After the election, Miall made it plain that he considered the complete suffrage question temporarily moribund:

1. Quoted in Nonconformist, 23.VI.1847, p461
2. Nonconformist, 7.VII.1847, p491
3. Quoted in Nonconformist, 4.VIII.1847, p564

"...events have convinced us that to seek, at this day, the attainment of our ends by means of Complete Suffrage, or rather, by continuing to place that question foremost, would be to disregard some of the plain intimations of Providence."¹

The success of the complete suffrage strategy had depended upon the economic depression of the early 1840s working to unite both middle and working classes; with growing prosperity, such class unity as had existed evaporated, and a new strategy was required. The Anti-State Church Association had been founded to provide it, by exploiting the anger felt by dissenters at Graham's Factory bill: "The fire was kindled - it was our duty to furnish it with fuel."² Since the Complete Suffrage question had little relevance now, as the failure of the great Chartist campaign in the next year was to testify, it would be folly to retain it as an integral part of the programme of militant dissent.

An article appeared in the Eclectic Review,³ which took the argument a stage further. The policy of relying upon the Whigs for the redress of dissenters' grievances had been misguided, and the actions of both parties demonstrated that they were each committed to a policy of concurrent endowment:

"The nonconformists of these realms have been driven to the distinct and emphatic enunciation of their principles... They were clearly averse to agitation. Old associations bound them to the Whig party... These influences might have prevailed for many years had our opponents been wise. But their folly has been our redemption. Not content with what they had, they madly sought for more. Instead of confining themselves to the defensive, they adopted an aggressive policy, and have thus effectively aroused that abhorrence of ecclesiastical usurpation which had long slumbered, but was never extinct in the English mind."⁴

Neither party could be supported by dissenters, and it was noted that during the election, both the Anti-State Church Association and local dissenting bodies in Scotland, Yorkshire and Lancashire had urged nonconformist electors to withhold their votes if there were no candidate committed to anti-state church principles.⁵ These principles had been an issue at the election, to

1. Nonconformist, 2.VI.1847, p405
2. Ibid.
3. Eclectic Review, VolXXII 1847, pp354-382.
4. Ibid., p356
5. Ibid., p358

the extent that Whig and Tory electors had combined to defeat radical and dissenting candidates, for thus was Miall defeated at Halifax and Russell successful in the City of London. But dissenters were now aware of their electoral strength, and the principles of the Anti-State Church Association were well known.¹ Members had been elected who would support them in Parliament, and it was claimed, erroneously, that anti-state church pressure had caused the defeat of Macaulay at Edinburgh.² Political action by dissenters was now a respectable modus operandi, and they must immediately attend to the registration of sympathetic electors, secure county votes by the purchase of freeholds, and create electoral organisations in boroughs.³ It was suggested that the Dissenters' Parliamentary Committee, rather than the Anti-State Church Association, would be the appropriate body to co-ordinate these tasks, since the reputed extremism of the latter might alienate moderate dissenters.⁴ The Dissenting Deputies had pursued a comparable policy during the election; refusing to give blanket support to a party, they had prepared a list of questions on religious equality to be put to candidates, and had supported only those who answered satisfactorily.⁵ With the object of preaching the new policy to dissenters, Miall and John Burnet undertook a tour on behalf of the association, addressing meetings at Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Halifax and Huddersfield. This was followed by a tour of the North East of England, where they visited Beverley, Hull, Whitby, Malton, Scarborough, Stockton, Darlington, Sunderland and Newcastle upon Tyne.⁶ At the beginning of the next year, Miall visited Essex and Lancashire, along with Carvell Williams, who was rising to prominence in the association.⁷ At a meeting of the executive committee, Miall emphasised that deputations from London were not enough to keep the movement alive in the

1. Eclectic Review, VolXXII, p366

2. Ibid., p376

3. Ibid., p379

4. Ibid., p380. cf Ibid., pp103-124

5. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 4.VI.1847, f395; 13.VII.1847, ff405, 437.

6. Nonconformist, 3.XI.1847, pp772f; 10.XI.1847, pp790f; 17.XI.1847, pp812f.

7. Ibid., 26.I.1848, pp46-47; 16.II.1848, pp96f

provinces: there must be local committees, local officials, and local functions.¹ He began to seek support outside the main body of dissenters. Addressing a meeting at Norwich, he asserted that the separation of church and state could only be effected by political means, and dissenters needed the support of the working classes, who suffered most from the evils of the establishment:

"I believe that the question will be carried as a great question of politics. That it will be carried by the working men of the country...that when they attain their rights...they will use those rights in the first place for a full and just and final settlement of the State Church question."²

This was an attempt to renew Miall's former links with the Chartist movement.

The activities of the association were expanding. Carvell Williams was appointed full-time secretary, which relieved Miall of an onerous task.³

In the year 1847/8 there had been more than 100 deputations to the provinces, and Miall had undertaken a large share of the work. Expenditure for the year had increased to £1546-11-8d, and yet a balance remained of £115-11-0d.⁴

For Miall, yet more lecture tours followed; at the end of 1848, a tour of South Wales and Northamptonshire, followed in 1849 by tours of the West Country and Scotland.⁵ The amount of travelling was immense, and by 1849 he felt it had borne fruit. The association, though still not adequately supported by dissenters, had survived, and its principles were well known. It was now time to expand the scope of its activities, and Miall suggested that it should "...lay siege to Parliament" by means of a series of petitions dealing with the various aspects of the association's principles.⁶

To date, the association had behaved realistically; in the words of the Eclectic Review, "...they had avoided running their heads against every wall

1. Nonconformist, 22.III.1848, p185
2. Ibid., 26.IV.1848, p285
3. For the career of Carvell Williams see A.H. Welch, John Carvell Williams: the Nonconformist Watchdog. (Unpublished Kansas Ph.D. thesis 1968). There is a copy in the Greater London Record Office.
4. Nonconformist, 3.V.1848, p306
5. Ibid., 11.X.1848, pp765ff; 28.II.1849, pp158-159; 25.IV.1849, p318
6. Ibid., 2.V.1849, pp337-338.

in their way."¹ But as Miall realised, there was a danger that the association might lose its impetus if there were no tangible results fairly early. He was realistic enough to know that any major success lay far ahead in the future, but it would suffice to secure the discussion in Parliament of some aspect of the disestablishment question. The success of the association in securing the abolition of the English Regium Donum has already been discussed, and Miall's hope was that Roebuck would act as a spokesman for dissenters in Parliament, and would obtain the backing of Irish members.² He was one of a sub-committee of the association which was set up to discuss with Roebuck the terms of a measure dealing with the Irish Church. There is evidence of detailed discussion between Roebuck and the members of the association, though eventually the attempt came to nothing;³ the episode illustrates the difficulty the association experienced in trying to carry out its parliamentary work through agents who were not of its membership. Miall maintained his lecturing commitment, with a tour of the West Country and the Midlands,⁴ and the association was not deterred by its experience with Roebuck. The theme of the second Triennial Conference of 1850 was the launching of the association's parliamentary campaign.⁵ Lushington agreed to raise the question of the continuance of the Regium Donum,⁶ and Carvell Williams addressed a circular to M.P.s, setting forth the ideals of the association.⁷ The Eclectic Review commended the political activities of the association as among its most important work, but noted that the Patriot, a "professed ally", preserved an "ominous and suspicious silence."⁸

The organisation of the association was becoming more professional. Carvell Williams was an able administrator, following in the wake of Miall's missionary

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXVIII 1850, p100
2. Nonconformist, 24.X.1849, p837
3. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book, 10.I.1850; 24.I.1850; 14.II.1850; 7.III.1850; 29.V.1850. See also Eclectic Review ns Vol.XXVIII 1850, p109
4. Nonconformist, 27.III.1850, p242; 3.IV.1850, pp261,282
5. Ibid., 3.V.1850, pp341f
6. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 15.V.1850
7. Nonconformist, 5.VI.1850, p449
8. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXVIII 1850, pp100,109.

zeal. The number of meetings organised between 1847 and 1850 was more than double that of the previous three years, and each major town had been visited annually by a deputation from London. Carvell Williams began the practice of sending circulars to M.P.s with regard to specific questions, a device which developed into a regular parliamentary whip.¹ In 1851, a publications sub-committee was set up, of which Miall was a member. A target fund of £2,000 was set up, to which Samuel Morley contributed £100, and a series of tracts on anti-state church principles, entitled "Library for the Times", was planned.² The income of the association rose to £1,811-1-11d, and new premises were acquired at Ludgate.³ However, the Eclectic Review pointed out that the leaders of dissent still looked askance at the association, and preferred to rely upon the Whigs.⁴

Miall's most urgent task in 1850 was to attempt to prevent dissenters from becoming involved in the anti-catholic passions engendered by the so-called Papal Aggression of 1850. The association needed the support of Irish catholics, and declined to become involved in anti-catholicism, but many dissenters took a different view. The Patriot, though by now a cautious supporter of the association, nevertheless hoped that dissenters would present a united front against Papal aggression, and was astounded by Miall's attitude: "...had the Pope another red hat to dispose of, some soi disant Protestant Dissenters might be found as rather promising candidates."⁵ Indeed, Miall propounded the dangers of dissenters' becoming involved in this type of agitation in yet another series of lectures, in the Midlands and in Scotland. His outlook had the support of prominent radicals, and some dissenting leaders. Cobden recalled meeting Miall, Henry Richard and Samuel Morley at Charles Gilpin's home. While they

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1855, p110
2. Nonconformist, 8.I.1851. (Advertisement)
3. Nonconformist, 14.V.1851, p378
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.XXV 1849, p654; XXVI 1849, p21
5. Patriot, 18.XI.1850, p732; 21.XI.1850, p740. The Dissenting Deputies adopted a similar position. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p207

disagreed about education, all concurred in Cobden's suggestion that,

"...a declaration of complete religious freedom and equality ought to be drawn up and sent through the country to be signed by the leading laymen amongst the dissenters."

Such a declaration, urged by men such as Miall, Bright, Morley, Sturge, Hadfield and McClaren, "...would make the unsound men amongst the non-conformists pause and reconsider their principles." It might aid the cause of peace between England and Ireland.¹ Cobden suggested that Miall draw up the declaration: "He will do it better than I."² Unless a party were formed to do justice to Roman Catholics in England and Ireland, "...we shall be involved in a struggle in which more than Catholic liberties will be involved."³

A general election was expected in 1852, and the association made careful preparations. Miall considered that the prospects were good for dissenters, and expected the Whigs to show them more sympathy:

"The same exigency which will force the Whig section, in some instances, to forego the selection of both members of their own party, will also dispose them to be somewhat more accommodating than usual in reference to topics which they have been accustomed to dismiss with an offhand carelessness of manner."⁴

Discussing the election with the executive committee of the association, Miall estimated that between twenty and thirty dissenting M.P.s would be elected; his advice to electors was to support anti-state church candidates if possible, but to support any candidate pledged to electoral reform, regardless of his religious beliefs.⁵ Carvell Williams published a letter to dissenting electors, designed to help them in questioning candidates:⁶ it reflected the general view of the association's electoral committee, of which Miall was a member, that the main electoral questions would be parliamentary reform and Free Trade. Electors would have to do

1. Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 24.III.1851. Cobden Papers BM Add Mss 43656 ff201-202
2. Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 27.III.1851. Cobden Papers BM Add Mss 43656 ff203-204
3. Cobden to Sturge, 17.III.1851. Cobden Papers BM Add Mss 43656 f199
4. Nonconformist, 17.III.1852, p197
5. Ibid., 6.V.1852, pp349-354
6. Ibid., 30.VI.1852, pp498-518

their best to raise religious issues, and the association even suggested that the Maynooth grant should be used as an election issue.¹

Looking beyond the election, Miall had already considered how the association should conduct its parliamentary activities. He believed it would be possible to raise the association's principles only in the context of specific grievances, such as church rates, and only with the aid of prominent M.P.s. A substantive motion on disestablishment was obviously impractical, and Miall was content to have the principles of the association discussed whenever ecclesiastical questions were before Parliament. In this way, he argued, Parliament and the nation would gradually become accustomed to the question in its various aspects and would not regard it as a sinister revolutionary design, as might be the case if it were introduced without preparation.² Addressing a dinner held for dissenting M.P.s after the election, Miall warned against any attempt to bring about debates upon abstract questions; he told his audience there would be plenty of opportunities to discuss disestablishment in relation to specific topics.³ When the question had been discussed in its components, attacks should then be mounted upon the least justifiable and most vulnerable of the established churches, the Church of Ireland and the colonial churches. Of the two, Miall preferred the Irish Church, since Irish questions were constantly before Parliament in some shape or form, and it was reasonable to expect the support of Irish M.P.s. Debates on colonial churches would have less public appeal, and did not offer so good an opportunity to create a disestablishment party in Parliament.⁴ The Eclectic Review, even some years later, believed that the rôle of the association was primarily educational, both in Parliament and in the country: "The nation is not yet ripe for the

1. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 12.II.1852; 26.VI.1852

2. Nonconformist, 15.III.1848, p165

3. Nonconformist, 23. II.1853, pp151f

4. Nonconformist, 26.IX.1849, p757

changes we contemplate, nor is Parliament prepared to discuss them."¹

The 1852 election marks a turning point in the development of the association. Miall himself was elected for Rochdale, and the new Parliament contained 38 dissenters, and more than 50 Roman Catholics, though at this stage Miall was not disposed to place a great deal of trust in the Irish catholics:

"We say nothing now of the Irish members. We cannot regard them as worthy, on ecclesiastical questions, of implicit reliance - but, for the most part, the leaning of the majority of them may be expected to be hostile to existing Church Establishments."²

The dissenting members had to learn to act as a party, if the best use were to be made of the resources of the association, with its nationwide organisation and its facilities for publicity: "The freedom of individuals must be harmonised with conjoined action."³ The association began to apply a parliamentary whip on ecclesiastical questions,⁴ and some years later, tribute was paid to the work of Sir Charles Douglas, "...whose services as 'Whip' in connexion with religious equality bills have been of great value to the Society."⁵ Describing the election as the beginning of a new chapter, Miall saw the rôle of the association as supporting dissenting M.P.s with information, publicity, and public meetings.⁶ Its success in this field drew a reluctant tribute from an Anglican opponent, who considered it, "...a masterpiece of political mechanism, more perfect...than any agitation machine heretofore constructed."⁷

The new era was symbolised by a change of title. The old British Anti-State Church Association, was felt, after long correspondence in the Nonconformist, to have negative implications and overtones of belligerence.

1. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.V 1853, p375.
2. Nonconformist, 14.VII.1852, p537
3. Eclectic Review, ns Vol. IV 1852, p383
4. e.g. in support of Clay's Church Rate bill in 1854. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 25.V.1854.
5. Liberation Society Minute Book 21.VII.1865 f285. See also D.M. Thompson, "The Liberation Society". P. Hollis, Pressure from without p221.
6. Nonconformist, 1.XII.1852, p939
7. The Rev. G.S. Bull in the Birmingham Post. Quoted in Liberator, Dec. 1861, p199.

The new title, the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, usually abbreviated to the Liberation Society, was thought to imply a more positive approach:

"In dropping its former title...it deferred to scruples which it did not itself share, it surrendered associations of considerable interest and power, and it freely exposed itself to unfriendly criticism, in the hope of uniting parties whose principles are identical, but who have hitherto been indisposed to be marshalled under a common flag. Henceforth, the society will bear a name intended to express the good it seeks to do, rather than the evil it has to overcome - a name more positive than its former one, but less antagonistic."¹

Speaking for the executive committee, Miall made it clear that the name had been changed simply in an attempt to secure the support of dissenters who had hitherto stood aloof.² The Patriot thought that the change of name signified the abandonment of its fundamental principles and broader terms of reference,³ and the Eclectic Review, initially sceptical about the wisdom of changing the name, saw it as a public relations exercise:

"To the old Anti-State Church Association there were objections, but surely all that reasonable men can think of has been done to meet them. It has abandoned its name; it has expunged the formula of its principle; it employs new modes of operation."⁴

That the move was partially successful is evident from the fact that Edward Baines, who had long stood aloof from the old association, was willing to become involved in the Liberation Society.⁵ However, the change of name did not result in dissenting unity on a large scale. The Liberation Society approached the Dissenting Deputies in the next year with a scheme for combining the functions of the two bodies. The Deputies agreed to joint action so far as parliamentary business was concerned, but saw no advantage in uniting for any other purpose. The tone of the rejection was patronising:

1. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1853, p897
2. Patriot, 7.XI.1853, pp732-733
3. Ibid.
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1855, p114. cf Ibid., Vol.VI 1853, pp770-771
5. D.M. Thompson, "The Liberation Society" in P. Hollis, Pressure from without p219

"The Committee consider that the Liberation Society is likely to be very useful inasmuch as its representation extends throughout the provinces, while the representation of the Deputies is the Metropolitan districts."¹

Carvell Williams, himself a deputy, pointed out that the Liberation Society had a metropolitan as well as a provincial constituency,² but the Deputies as a body were anxious not to be identified with the Liberation Society. When a financial appeal was launched in 1857, the secretary was instructed to distinguish between the objects and labours of the Deputies, and those of the Liberation Society.³

Part 2. The Liberation Society and Parliament 1852-1858.

The election of Miall as member for Rochdale delighted the association.

It was resolved that the committee,

"...offer its heartiest congratulations to Mr. Edward Miall as one of its most valued members on his election to a seat in the House of Commons as member for the borough of Rochdale, and expresses its earnest desire that he may be enabled in his new sphere of labor (sic) to render important services on behalf of those great principles of which he has been the unwearied and uncompromising advocate."⁴

In a paper written for the Liberation Society, Miall carefully considered the position of dissenters in Parliament. The time, he considered, was not ripe for discussion of the disestablishment issue; if raised prematurely, possible future supporters whose minds were not yet prepared, would be alienated. The question had to be insinuated gradually:

"Our true policy, it strikes me, is to limit ourselves for a year or two to tutorial efforts...We are not yet in a position...to lead the conversation, but we can join in it, and as occasion serves, give full utterance to our doctrine."⁵

He then considered the various groups in Parliament whose support might be obtained. The support of the radicals could be fairly assumed; the support of Irish members should be sought, but they could not be counted

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 2.VI.1854, f18
2. Ibid., 14.VII.1854, f24
3. Ibid., 27.V.1857, f135
4. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 15.VII.1852, p384
5. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1853, p905. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 31.X.1853.

reliable allies:

"They are not with us by force of conviction, but by force of circumstance. It would be a mistake, committed too with our eyes open, to count them as friends to our object: and yet, it may be pretty confidently anticipated that they will see reason under stress of events, to move forward upon the same points as ourselves."¹

Others whom dissenters might cultivate were Tractarians, some of whom wished to see the end of the control of Parliament over the church, and individual members frustrated in projects of reform by the restrictions of the establishment. These were ideas which Miall had formulated some years earlier, but they had more force when applied to existing circumstances, and they became the policy of Miall and his colleagues. He also recommended the formation of a Parliamentary Committee, which would plan parliamentary action on a systematic basis, rather than on the ad hoc basis of earlier years, which would undertake lobbying, issue Whips, and attempt to secure the election of suitable M.P.s. He proposed the committee should have a fund of £5,000. Dr. Foster was appointed chairman, and at a fund raising soirée, with Bright and Heywood present, Foster paid tribute to Miall as the organising brain behind this vital committee.² It was envisaged that the committee would work closely with the Dissenting Deputies, and Miall reported that there had been contact with them;³ as has been mentioned, the response of the Deputies was limited.

Miall had thus provided a coherent strategy for liberationists, with close liaison between the Liberation Society and its parliamentary spokesmen. As has already been discussed, Miall played a major part in the first major triumph, admission of dissenters to Oxford and Cambridge, and he secured discussion of the Irish Church question. He also rendered valuable service

1. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1853, p905. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 31.X.1853.
2. Nonconformist, 8.II.1854, ppl09-110. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.II.1854. See also I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" Welsh History Review (1961) Vol.I no.2, pp212-213. The Parliamentary Committee was set up on 23rd January 1854. Miall was a member, but it had to be content with a fund of £500. Liberation Society, Minute Book 23.I.1854.
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 16.II.1854, f48

on a number of less spectacular issues, beginning with the status of the Canadian Church. The Anglican Church in Canada held lands known as the Clergy Reserves, and in 1850 the Canadian government voted to resume possession of these lands, and use them for secular purposes. The decision required the approval of the English Parliament, and Miall was quick to see its significance; if Parliament gave its consent, the Anglican Church in Canada would be disendowed, and the precedent would be vital: "...an important event in connection with the history of Canada, as well as of the Anti-State Church question."¹ The Queen accepted a petition from the Canadian government, and the Nonconformist hoped that the precedent might be followed in Australia and Ireland. It felt that the government had no choice but to approve the resumption of the reserves, and wrote exultantly: "The first blow is struck. The first victory is won. The Church Establishment system has encountered a defeat, the ultimate issue of which it is impossible to foresee."² The government introduced the necessary legislation in 1853, and Miall immediately suspected that it intended to emasculate the measure. Before intervening in the debate, he consulted the association, and Carvell Williams agreed to circularise sympathetic M.P.s, soliciting their support for an amendment which it had been decided Miall should introduce.³

In committee, Miall launched an attack upon Russell, accusing him of intending well with regard to ecclesiastical questions but always spoiling measures with weak compromises.⁴ Miall charged the government with attempting to weaken the measure in order to avoid giving its sanction to the voluntary principle. Religion in Canada, he claimed, would flourish under the discipline of voluntarism, just as it flourished in the United States. When he announced his intention of dividing the House, Bright came

1. Nonconformist, 7.VIII.1850, p629

2. Ibid., 26.II.1851, p157

3. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 17.III.1853, f476

4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXV, pp486f.

to his support, and though Miall's amendment was defeated by 176 votes to 108, his supporters included the majority of dissenting M.P.s.¹ Though unsatisfactory in detail, the measure, in its final form, was nevertheless significant: "The position of State Churches has already been logically surrendered...We Voluntaries are no longer theoretical dreamers."² The Canadian Clergy Reserves were finally abolished in 1855, and the principle of disendowment had been conceded by Parliament. The Nonconformist claimed some credit for this success, both for itself and for the Liberation Society. It announced that more than one Canadian newspaper had reprinted articles from the Nonconformist, and that during the parliamentary process, there was constant contact between, "...eminent men in Canada and the committee of the Religious Liberation Society."³

Comparatively minor matters gave Miall further opportunities to discuss the society's principles. In debates on the Maynooth grant, he was able to argue the case for religious equality. Discussions of Miscellaneous Estimates, where minor expenditures, including grants by the government to religious bodies, were debated, enabled him to attack such grants individually. He voted against the annual Maynooth grant, "...because he should have opposed any similar vote, whatever the religious body might be that was to have been benefitted by it..."⁴ In consistency, he voted against grants to pay the salaries of theological professors at Belfast,⁵ to support religious establishments in West Africa,⁶ and Heligoland,⁷ and at St. David's College, Lampeter.⁸ Carvell Williams sent a circular to Liberal M.P.s seeking their support for Miall,⁹ who also took part in a deputation on behalf of the association to Sir William Molesworth, who intended to introduce legislation concerning burial grounds, a matter of

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXV, pp504-505.

2. Nonconformist, 9.III.1853, p189

3. Ibid., 10.I.1855, p21

4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXVII, pp401, 404.

5. Ibid., p421.

6. Ibid., 448

7. Ibid., 449

8. Ibid., 467

9. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 13.IV.1853, f489

concern to dissenters. The bill was substantially altered, but Miall informed the executive committee that he had failed to persuade its promoters to abolish the distinction between consecrated and unconsecrated ground in cemeteries.¹

The sessions of 1854 and 1855 saw further examples of Miall's raising detailed questions of principle as opportunity occurred. The principle of church extension was attacked when he opposed the building of a new church at Stoke Newington, as public money would be involved. It was reported that the Liberation Society had helped secure a good attendance at the debate, though the measure was defeated.² Miall raised the same principle when he attacked a bill introduced by Blandford, which would obtain money for the Church of England by the improved administration of resources. He argued that if a surplus thus became available, it should be used to render church rates superfluous.³ The established churches in the colonies were also brought under liberationist scrutiny: Miall made speeches opposing the Colonial Clergy Disabilities Bill, which he believed would strengthen the position of established churches in colonies,⁴ and he opposed the Victorian Government Bill of 1855 because it set aside money for religious purposes in defiance of the wishes of the people of Victoria.⁵ The object in fighting for reforms which seemed remote from the situation of English dissenters was to convince Parliament that the Liberation Society was genuinely fighting for religious equality as a principle, and not merely for sectarian advantage.⁶ Miall believed that the strategy had been successful, and that, since 1852, dissenters had become an effective force in Parliament. There was reason for confidence, for the Religious Census taken in 1851, but not published until 1854, appeared to show that dissenters were a majority of the nation: perhaps more important was the growing

1. Anti-State Church Association Minute Book 13.VII.1853, f527; 27.VII.1853
2. Nonconformist, 8.III.1854, pp198,206
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CXXXVI, pp2057-2058
4. Ibid., CXXXI, pp1014-1015.
5. Ibid., CXXXVIII, pp1958-1959
6. Nonconformist, 12.IV.1854, p297

tendency of dissenting M.P.s to act as a party within Parliament.¹

However, Miall's own position in the Liberation Society was evidently not one of dominance. The parliamentary committee discussed the possibility of finding a leader for the voluntaryist party in Parliament, and while it negotiated with Bright in this sense, it did not consider Miall.² Moreover, in the next year, a sub-committee of which Miall was not a member, recommended that the society should produce its own organ, the Liberator.³ The Nonconformist was never the official organ of the society, though it had served it faithfully. William Baines had once said of it: "That paper was not, and never had been, the organ of the Association..."⁴ The Eclectic Review made a similar denial.⁵ But the very fact that such a denial was necessary is testimony to the close identification of Miall with the society. The feeling of the sub-committee was that, while newspapers such as the Nonconformist had given full coverage to the activities of the society, the readership of the Nonconformist was not identical with the society's subscribers. What was proposed was, "...a monthly journal of but modest size and pretensions, forwarded to subscribers of a certain amount."⁶ The Liberator was rather smaller than the Nonconformist, and sold for 2d; it contained no commercial advertisements, had little political or secular news, and carried extensive reprints of articles from other journals. It was Carvell Williams who pressed the committee to set up its own newspaper, and it agreed after he undertook to edit it free of charge.⁷ By 1874 it had a circulation of 8,000, though

1. Nonconformist, 5.VIII.1854, p553. For a full discussion of the Religious Census, see K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.II 1960, pp74-86. For the limitations of the Religious Census, see D.M. Thompson "The 1851 Religious Census: Problems and Possibilities". Victorian Studies Vol.XI no.1 Sept. 1967 pp87-97.
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 11.X.1854, fl11. Miall was not present at this meeting.
3. Ibid., 29.VI.1855
4. Nonconformist, 2.III.1853, p170
5. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.III 1851, p513
6. Liberator, July, 1855, p1.
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 18.V.1855, fl74. An experiment of an editorial committee of Foster, Price and Carvell Williams was short-lived; Carvell Williams became sole editor by December 1855. Ibid., 14.XII.1855, ff217-220. See also A.H. Welch, John Carvell Williams, *passim*.

only 250 were sold, the remainder being sent gratuitously to all who subscribed more than ten shillings per annum to the society. It cost the society between £600 and £700 per annum,¹ and Dr. Dale suspected that it was frequently thrown into the wastepaper basket unread.²

As has been discussed above, following the successful campaign for university reform in 1854, Miall and the Liberation Society determined to force a discussion of the position of the Irish Church. As a result of the motion introduced by Miall in the session of 1856, Parliament discussed the question of disestablishment, and closer links between the Liberation Society and Irish catholic members were forged. The Liberator believed:

"...there is to be a genuine Anti-State Church and not an anti-Protestant Church agitation...communications have been opened up with the anti-endowment party in England with a view to co-operation in the next session. The necessity for such co-operation is felt as much in England as in Ireland..."³

Miall had intended to re-introduce the motion in the session of 1857, but Parliament was dissolved after the debate upon the Canton incident, in which Miall voted against Palmerston. Miall was defeated at Rochdale in the ensuing general election, though he attributed his defeat to bribery and corruption, rather than to his religious views.⁴ He petitioned against the election of his victorious opponent, and the investigation revealed that the reasons for his defeat were complex and partly connected with his religious views. One witness, Mr. D. Nuttall, claimed that Miall had the support of the majority of dissenters,⁵ but Alderman Livsey, a former Chartist who described himself as an extreme Liberal, believed that many churchmen had supported him, while many dissenters voted against him.⁶ J.W. Lawton believed Miall had lost support because of his stand upon religious matters;⁷ but Livsey believed he also

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.VII.1874, ff137-138
2. Congregationalist, Vol.I May 1872, 319
3. Liberator, July 1856, pl79
4. Nonconformist, 1.IV.1857, p251. The Patriot took a similar view. Patriot, 7.IV.1857, pl2; 14.IV.1857, p28
5. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 1857, Session II, Vol.VIII, Qu.1700
6. Ibid., Qu. 2091-2092
7. Ibid., Qu. 1937-1941. See above p298

lost support over his vote on the Canton question, and in particular, he lost the support of beersellers on account of his conduct in opposing Berkeley's bill.¹ A modern analysis of the Rochdale poll of 1857 shows that the liquor interest was decisive in defeating Miall, but his religious views had cost him the support of many, including dissenters, who voted for him in 1852.² Miall's defeat prompted a considerable correspondence between Bright and Cobden. Bright told Cobden that even if Ramsay were unseated, it was not likely that Miall would be chosen as a candidate again. There were local quarrels, divisions among the liberals, and many electors had never liked Miall.³ Cobden replied that Henry Richard had informed him that a 'shabby trick' was likely to be played upon Miall: Milner Gibson would be invited to stand if Ramsay were unseated. He warned Bright not to associate himself with any attempt to replace Miall; who ought not to be put aside "...like a piece of damaged flannel..." Miall was, "...in every respect, in education, honesty, temper and judgment, a first-rate man, and has fairly won for himself the position of a leader of the dissenting body."⁴ Bright denied that anyone intended to behave shabbily towards Miall, and wrote a long letter to Cobden examining the electoral situation in Rochdale. Analysing the reasons for Miall's defeat, he believed that he had lost support over local issues, and because of his attitude to the war. Bright confirmed that Miall was not well-liked; many important electors had stood aloof and refused to use their influence on Miall's behalf. He made no reference to Miall's religious views; while the objections to him were "stupid and contemptible", the liberals of Rochdale did not intend to seek a less radical candidate.⁵ When Cobden received this, he forwarded it to Henry Richard, adding that he thought Miall should withdraw from Rochdale. It would be better for him to

1. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 1857, Session II, Vol.VIII, Qu.2098-2099
2. J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868 (London 1966) pp98-99, 111-112. J. Vincent, Pollbooks: how Victorians voted (Cambridge 1967) p166.
3. Bright to Cobden, 7.V.1857, Bright Papers BM Add Mss 43384, ff96-97.
4. Cobden to Bright, 16.VI.1857, Cobden Papers BM Add Mss 43650, ff245-246.
5. Bright to Cobden, 22.VI.1857, Bright Papers BM Add Mss 43384, ff98-101.

find a seat in the South of England, for in the rich manufacturing towns "...the wealthy dissenters are terribly snobbish."¹

Miall made two early attempts to find a new constituency, when his opponent's election at Rochdale was upheld; at Tavistock in 1857, and at Banbury in 1858. Neither was successful: in both campaigns he underlined the need for parliamentary reform, and religious questions, while not ignored, did not receive undue prominence.² His three electoral defeats, together with the defeat of other prominent voluntaryists, suggest that public opinion was not yet ready for the question of disestablishment.

His career as member for Rochdale had assisted in bringing the question before Parliament and the public, but public opinion still required education, and the voluntaryists had to strengthen their party in Parliament, and find new allies. Miall's period as member for Rochdale coincides with the emergence of the Liberation Society as a real force in British politics, following a long period of preparation. In both phases, Miall had played a major if not a dominant rôle. The Patriot considered that by 1856 the Liberation Society had made excellent progress. It stood for, "...practical objects by practical means under the guidance of Parliamentary leaders and out-of-doors tacticians, who so well understand how to collect, direct and handle their forces."³ Miall was mentioned as a high-principled man who well appreciated that compromises and alliances were essential if there were to be any positive achievement. The Eclectic Review saw the success of the society as making political action by dissenters acceptable: "We are a party in the House. What was once reproached as political dissent is now acknowledged as dissenting politics."⁴

1. Cobden to H. Richard 23.VI.1857. Cobden Papers. BM Add.Mss 43658, ff 353-355
2. Nonconformist, 9.IX.1857, p713; 8.XII.1858, p980; 22.XII.1858, p1011; 12.I.1859, p25.
3. Patriot, April 1856, p232
4. Eclectic Review, ns Vol.IX 1855, p105

While Miall was busy in Parliament, the society itself was preoccupied with financial problems. Its commitments were extensive, even though its income in 1853 exceeded £2,000.¹ Miall thought a fund of £5,000 essential for the working of the society's committees, but by 1854 the income had dropped to £1789-16-11d.² The expense of publication was heavy, though by 1853 this activity was showing a profit.³ Miall was deputed to meet Samuel Morley, to discuss ways of increasing the society's income;⁴ Morley agreed to draw up a subscription list, and to organise a dinner for subscribers. This was an attempt to enlist the support of wealthy dissenters; both Bright and Heywood responded to the appeal.⁵ Miall was then asked to undertake a fund raising tour,⁶ and by 1858 the income rose to £2740-5-2d.⁷ Two years later it reached £3,788,⁸ and by 1869 was £7,838-1-9d, mainly due to an increasing number of small donations.⁹

The general election of 1857 affords a good example of the operations of the Liberation Society. Its object was to identify and organise 'religious liberty' sympathy, and it went about this task in a manner later copied by the National Reform League. In 1856, it was recorded that Mr. Pryce visited Devon and Cornwall, "...chiefly for electoral purposes,"¹⁰ while Mr. Smith visited the Eastern counties.¹¹ The society examined the counties, "...not only from the ordinary political handbooks, the census returns, etc...but from continuing receipt of information dating back from considerably more than a twelvemonth." Ten county constituencies were selected, Bedford, Cambridge, East Norfolk, East and West Sussex, North Essex, East Somerset, West Gloucester, North Wiltshire, North and South Northumberland,

1. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1853, p897
2. Ibid., 10.V.1854, p387
3. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 3.III.1853
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XI.1853, f7; 8.XII.1853, f15
5. Ibid., 4.II.1854.
6. Ibid., 16.II.1854
7. Nonconformist, 6.V.1858, p342
8. Ibid., 9.V.1860, p362
9. Ibid., 5.V.1869, p410
10. Liberation Society, Minute Book 8.IX.1856, ff291-292
11. Ibid., 27.VII.1855, f191

in which there were prospects of securing the election of a sympathetic member.¹ The society published information, and circulated a series of questions to be put to candidates. It was effective work, for the society claimed it had thirty to forty additional supporters in the new Parliament, and had been successful in most of the constituencies on its list.² Its nationwide effectiveness was increased by the appointment of district agents. Initially there were three, based in Yorkshire, East Anglia and the West Country:³ by 1868, there were eight, in the Northern districts, Lancashire, the West Country, the Midlands, Scotland, London, South Wales and North Wales.⁴

After his defeat at Rochdale, Miall devoted himself to the voluntaryist cause outside Parliament. His work between 1857 and 1868 in securing the abolition of church rates, in consolidating the links between the Liberation Society and the Irish catholics, in the fields of popular education, of university reform, and of parliamentary reform, has been discussed. Each of these issues was responsible for undermining the monopolistic position of the Church of England in one or other aspect of national life, and, with his editorship of the Nonconformist, occupied his time between his loss of Rochdale, and his election for Bradford in 1869. Before his success at Bradford, he had contemplated contesting the seat of Stirling, in 1865; Carvell Williams himself visited Stirling to appraise the situation, and wrote back: "...the idea of Mr. Miall's candidature could not be further entertained."⁵ Apparently, after Tavistock and Banbury, Miall was unwilling to risk a further fiasco, for no more was heard of the proposal.

1. Liberator, July 1856, p140
2. Ibid., May 1857, p68
3. Ibid., Nov. 1858, p199.
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 24.VII.1868, f74. In the election of 1865, agents visited selected constituencies. For example, Mr. J. Hare visited Aylesbury, Exeter, Cricklade, Cokermonth, Frome, Bath, Grimsby, Lyme Regis, Northallerton, Bury, Knaresborough, Andover, Wareham, Wallingford, Salisbury, Lichfield, Stoke, Warrington, Norfolk, Sussex and Essex. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.VII.1865, ff278-286
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 7.VII.1865, f275; Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 12.VII.1865

Before examining Miall's activities, apart from those mentioned above, in this period, it is worth surveying the main trends of the Liberation Society's activities. There were several minor successes, springing from measures initiated by non-members, which the society exploited. Ministers' Money was finally abolished in 1857, which was recognition that the Irish population should not be taxed for the benefit of one sect.¹ Considerable effort was made to amend the law concerning burials; many dissenters were unwilling to accept burial in consecrated ground with compulsory Anglican rites. This was bad enough in the case of parochial churchyards; when the distinction was preserved in municipal cemeteries which were supported by public money, it was intolerable. Miall summarised the grievance thus:

"...if Dissenters, whose feelings have so often been outraged by the antics of bigoted or supercilious ecclesiastics, even at the very graves of their dead relatives, do not now resist this attempted perpetuation of the system, they will richly deserve whatever other indignities may be heaped upon them."²

It was accepted that new graveyards were needed, and that government help was needed to establish them, but nonconformists were not disposed to accept an Anglican monopoly of the new graveyards, or a favoured situation for Anglican clergy. A measure introduced into Parliament in 1853 was criticised by Carvell Williams,³ and on behalf of the society Miall made representations to Molesworth, the government leader.⁴ The government measure was abandoned, and the society itself supported a measure in 1857 which amended the situation regarding consecrated ground.⁵ Through the agency of Massey, and later, on Bright's advice, through Mellor and Hardcastle, it tried to promote a measure of its own, though without immediate result.⁶ It specifically refrained from supporting an eminently suitable bill introduced by

1. Nonconformist, 8.VII.1857, p521

2. Ibid., 29.III.1848, p205

3. Ibid., 22.VI.1853, pp489-490

4. Anti-State Church Association, Minute Book 13.VII.1853, f527

5. Nonconformist, 19.VIII.1857, p641

6. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 9.III.1859, f48; 20.VII.1859; 2.VIII.1859, ff56-57.

Sir Morton Peto in 1861, lest its support jeopardise the success of the bill:¹ the bill was rejected despite Peto's denial that the society was connected with the measure. There was a similar failure in 1863, and again the society disclaimed any responsibility for drafting the bill:² this was in conformity with the policy of the society in the early 1860s to withdraw temporarily from parliamentary activity, and is an indication of the hostility which the society aroused. It renewed its parliamentary action on this question by supporting Osborne Morgan's burial measures in the early 1870s, though it declined to support the measure further after a succession of failures from 1870 to 1873.³ It was not until 1900 that Carvell Williams himself successfully removed the grievance, with the help and support of the Dissenting Deputies.⁴

Both Miall and the Liberation Society considered it a triumph for the voluntary principle when the government declined to give active support to the Christian Churches in India, and would permit neither penalty nor favour as a consequence of religious profession.⁵ A proposal to hold a religious census in 1860 was abandoned thanks to a parliamentary pressure by society.⁶ Miall organised a deputation which called upon Palmerston, and supplied it with arguments. A joint meeting was held with the Dissenting Deputies and representatives of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Unitarians and Wesleyans. Miall acted as convenor, persuaded Samuel Morley to make representations to Lord John Russell, and organised a separate meeting of Liberal M.P.s.⁷ Parliament withdrew the religious profession clause from the census format, and the Parliamentary Committee minuted its gratification, but tactfully refrained from publishing it,

1. Nonconformist, 3.IV.1861, p261

2. Ibid., 15.IV.1863, p281

3. Ibid., 1.I.1873, pl. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p317

4. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies pp329-330

5. Nonconformist, 8.XII.1858, p969

6. Nonconformist, 18.VII.1860, p561; Liberation Society, Minute Book 20.VII.1860. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 7.V.1860, f79.

7. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 11.VI.1860; 18.VI.1860, f86-7.

"...from fear of too close identification by the public of that Committee with the Liberation Society."¹ Again, it is interesting to note the hostility which the society felt it aroused, and the growing discreteness of its actions.

Hadfield's Qualification for Offices bill was supported by the society throughout the 1860s: it sought to abolish oaths and declarations when taking any office, thus removing a residual religious test. The Commons passed the bill four times, with Gladstone and the Irish members among its supporters, but the Lords proved intransigent until 1866. Hadfield asked the society for help, which it supplied, in mustering the votes of M.P.s at divisions,² and the society kept Hadfield informed as to its parliamentary intentions.³ There was similar co-operation between the society and Dillwyn over his Endowed Schools bill, which sought to open these charitable foundations to dissenters; they had previously been excluded by religious tests.⁴ Dillwyn was not successful despite working closely with the parliamentary committee,⁵ and the issue was finally settled by a government measure, carried through by W.E. Forster, Miall's colleague in the representation of Bradford, in 1869. Miall considered its significance, "...second only in importance and breadth of purpose to the Irish Church Bill to which it bears some analogy..."⁶ Such minor successes gradually whittled away the position of the establishment, and removed some practical grievances of dissenters. Rarely, in these cases, was the society promoting its own measures; rather it chose to support the proposals of non-members. This was a policy in line with Miall's recommendation to

1. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 16.VII.1860, f93 Dr. Inglis has shown that the opposition of dissenters was to a census of religious profession, which would make the Anglican Church appear stronger than in 1851, when the census was of attendance. He argues that in 1860 dissenters had no objection to a census of attendance. K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851" p74.
2. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 4.II.1860, p62
3. Ibid., 3.II.1864
4. Ibid., 12.III.1860. Liberation Society Minute Book, 4.II.1859
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 25.III.1863
6. Nonconformist, 16.VI.1869, p572

abandon direct parliamentary action, after the majorities in favour of the abolition of church rates began to dwindle in 1861. These unspectacular, but important gains, were supplemented by the society's preparation for major advances regarding the Irish Church, university reform, and the question of elementary education, which bore fruit after 1867.

Miall was heavily involved in the work of the Newcastle Commission, but made time to draw up a policy document for the society upon ecclesiastical problems in India, a subject upon which Cobden thought him illiberal, though the essence of his idea was that the government should not favour any particular sect or religion.¹ However, Cobden had no sympathy with Miall's voluntarism. He wrote to Henry Richard:

"What does Miall mean by so arbitrarily proclaiming that he would recover our dominion in India 'at any cost'? He is not the man generally to use phrases in a vague and parrot fashion...he would sanction the waste of any amount of blood and treasure in reconquering India on the plea of setting up the voluntary principle. Was ever self-delusion so powerful in blinding a really acute and logical thinker?"

He resumed his lecture tours on behalf of the society; in addition to his membership of the executive committee, he served on the electoral committee² and various ad hoc groups which formulated the society's strategy. He visited Bradford frequently, and was discussed as a possible parliamentary candidate as early as 1859,³ but was not adopted until parliamentary reform had been achieved, as the Bradford liberals feared his candidature would make disestablishment rather than the reform of Parliament the pre-dominant local issue.

Part 3. Extra-parliamentary activity

In the early 1860s, largely at Miall's behest,⁴ the society withdrew from

1. Cobden to Henry Richard, 23.XI.1857. Cobden Papers. B.M. Add.Mss 43658 ff392-394. Nonconformist, 25.XI.1857, p922. J.A. Hobson, Richard Cobden. The International Man (London 1919) pp228-230
2. Liberation Society, Minute Book 14.III.1859
3. Bradford Observer, 14.IV.1859; Bradford Review, 9.IV.1859. See also D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford. (Unpub.Ph.D thesis) Leeds 1966) p470.
4. See above pp400f

parliamentary activity, and devoted itself to work in the constituencies. The Patriot approved this course; the Liberation Society, now a nationally important body, had wisely ceased, "...wasting its energies in fruitless appeals to an indifferent legislature; it has returned to the constituencies."¹ A symbol of the growing effectiveness of the society was the setting up of Church Defence associations,² but, it added, the aggressiveness, arrogance and self-assertiveness of the society had alienated many potential supporters.³ In direct contradiction, however, the Unitarian Inquirer announced that many Unitarians were beginning to support the practical side of the Liberation Society's programme, whilst not committing themselves to any anti-state church theory.⁴

Many of Miall's tours in 1863 and 1864 were to explain the new strategy of the society, and to mobilise opinion in the provinces. In 1862, along with Carvell Williams and Henry Richard, he addressed a meeting at Swansea with the object of involving Welsh dissenters in the society's work. Miall had long wanted to mobilise the electoral power of Welsh dissent,⁵ and the Liberation Society believed, "...that the Nonconformists of that part of the kingdom have it in their power to aid them to a far greater extent than they have yet done."⁶ Despite the almost total numerical dominance of dissent in Wales, there were scarcely any dissenting M.P.s representing Welsh constituencies. Miall urged Welsh nonconformists to cease their passivity, and to organise themselves in support of the Liberation Society. Especially they should set up electoral committees,⁷ and then Wales could lead the way to disestablishment. Carvell Williams went on to Cardiff, to set up an electoral

1. Patriot, 24.IV.1862, p265

2. Ibid., 23.V.1861, p334

3. Ibid., p335

4. Quoted in Liberator, Jan. 1863, p7

5. C.S. Miall, Henry Richard M.P. A Biography (London 1889) pp119-121

6. Liberator, Sept. 1862, pp158-159

7. Nonconformist, 1.X. 1862, p827. I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" pp216f.

organisation, and appointed an agent for South Wales.¹ The society organised another visit by the same deputation in 1866, which had the additional support of Goldwin Smith, and which consolidated the work of 1862.² Miall addressed meetings at Newtown, Denbigh, Merioneth and Cardigan, stressing the need for Welsh dissenters to organise their electoral strength, and to resist intimidation by landlords: "...They had come as a deputation among the Welsh because they did not believe that the people of the Principality had done their duty by the Church of Christ."³ Miall and Henry Richard gave a report of the tour to the executive committee claiming it had been a success, and a sub-committee of Miall, Richard and Carvell Williams was set up to co-ordinate the society's activities in Wales.⁴ This Welsh campaign, according with Miall's policy of working in the constituencies rather than in Parliament, proved successful: in the general election of 1868, the Liberals gained nine seats, in Wales, due to the better organisation of Welsh nonconformity.⁵ The Liberation Society contributed £50 to the expenses of the Welsh Reform Association in connection with the general election,⁶ while in 1870, it paid the debts of the South Wales Electoral Reform Association.⁷ By 1871 the society had five agents in Wales, each with a salary of £25 per annum, with 10% commission on the subscriptions they collected.⁸

The major political question of the 1860s was that of parliamentary reform,

1. Nonconformist 12.XI.1862 p947. I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" p218
2. A. Miall Life of Edward Miall pp261-262. Liberator May 1867 p69. I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" pp219-220. The tour resulted in the formation of the South Wales Liberal Registration Committee. Samuel Morley contributed £100: the society contributed £50. Liberation Society, Minute Book 5.VII.1867, f455.
3. Nonconformist, 26.IX.1866, p770. I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" p220
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.X.1866. Liberator, Oct.1866, p172
5. P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales (London 1969) p107. I.G. Jones, "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868" p222.
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 26.VI.1868, f65
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.VII.1870, f260
8. Ibid., 22.V.1871, f339

and, given that the Liberation Society had abstained from parliamentary activity, it was logical that the society should wait until that reform was completed before renewing its work in Westminster. Projects which might stand in the way of parliamentary reform were to be abandoned if the question were raised.¹ A special appeal was launched in 1865 to aid the society's political work: it realised £13,000, and significant contributions came from wealthy manufacturers who were later active in support of the National Reform League; Salt contributed £500, Kell £250, Illingworth £250, and Samuel Morley £500.² The society made new overtures to the Dissenting Deputies, offering collaboration between the two bodies, and the Deputies agreed to organise a joint public breakfast.³ As soon as parliamentary reform was an accomplished fact, the main task of the society was electoral; it had to cultivate the support of the newly-enfranchised working classes.⁴ With Gladstone more favourably disposed towards religious equality, with the possibility of a sympathetic Liberal party, and the support of Irish members, the outlook for the Liberation Society in 1868 was favourable. The reform of the franchise made it easier to secure the election of M.P.s who supported the ideals of the society, and parliamentary activity was resumed with the church rates bill and the Irish Church bill. However, the society was not complacent; Miall warned dissenters that it was not safe to assume that the newly-enfranchised classes would automatically favour religious equality; it was essential to launch a major campaign, even at the risk of a financial deficit, to make new electors aware of the ways in which they would benefit from religious equality.⁵

The executive committee spent the majority of 1867 in the consolidation of its links with the Irish catholic party, in preparation for the attack upon

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.XI.1865, ff325-330
2. Liberator, July 1865, p125
3. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 3.I.1866, f346; 18.I.1866, f347; 5.III.1866, f349.
4. Nonconformist, 2.V.1867, p346
5. Ibid., 29.V.1867, p437; 2.V.1867, p346.

the Irish Church. It was thanks to the work of the Liberation Society that the alliance between the Irish catholic party and the English dissenters became a political reality, and a force available to Gladstone when he made it clear that there was a Liberal commitment to religious equality, at least with regard to Ireland. However, Miall and his colleagues had few illusions as to the extent of that commitment; they still suspected the Liberals of favouring concurrent endowment as a solution to all religious problems. So far as the Irish Church was concerned, the Liberals could be used, because their policy happened to coincide with that of the Liberation Society. Thereafter, dissenters would have to use their parliamentary strength to influence the outlook of the Liberal party on religious issues:

"The legislative fruit which we most clearly prize, and which, sooner or later we are intent on gathering, cannot be the product of the ground principles they hold...In dealing with the relation of the State to the religious organisations of the community...we rejoice in the prospect of a Parliamentary chief, who, much as his present views differ from our own, may be counted upon for striving to shape a final settlement of the question as nearly as may be in conformity with the spirit of the revelation he accepts as divine...His insights into the wants of the age may be trusted, we think, for correcting the prejudices of the school from which he emerged."¹

At the Triennial Conference of 1868, Miall warned members of the society that even if the Irish Church question were settled, it would be an immense task to capitalise upon that victory by persuading public opinion and Parliament to accept the idea of disestablishment in England.

Irish catholics and Gladstonian liberals were not the only allies sought by the Liberation Society. At the beginning of 1867, it organised an appeal specifically to younger men, by a series of Young Men's Conferences.² The society hoped to obtain their assistance at elections,³ and to build up a body of support for the future. The first of these conferences was held in London, and speakers dwelt upon the fundamental problems of the Anglican

1. Nonconformist, 11.IX.1867, pp746-747. See also E.J. Feuchtwanger, Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party (Oxford 1968) pp190-191.
2. Liberator, Feb. 1867, p33
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 17.VI.1868, f63

establishment, notably the anomalous positions of the Evangelical and Ritualist parties within it.¹ Miall warned the large audience that agitation for ideals such as those of the Liberation Society would be unpopular, and might prove socially damaging.² The conference was adjudged a success;³ others quickly followed,⁴ and Miall addressed a young audience in Bradford later in the year.⁵ This was part of his election campaign in Bradford, a campaign worthy of detailed examination since it shows him engaged in a conscious effort to implement the policy of the Liberation Society by exploiting the newly-enfranchised classes, as well as attempting to woo Roman Catholic, Dissenting and Liberal electors.

Miall was well known in Bradford long before he became one of its parliamentary candidates, thanks to his lecture tours on behalf of the Liberation Society. The society had a considerable following in the town, and Miall was known to many of the local political leaders. He had been discussed as a possible candidate in 1859, and again in 1861, when he received the support of the radical leaders Kell and Illingworth, both committed to religious equality.⁶ He withdrew his candidature when it became apparent that his extreme religious views would divide the liberal electors, and W.E. Forster was chosen instead.⁷ Miall continued to visit Bradford, addressing meetings upon the subject of parliamentary reform, which many Bradford liberals considered a pre-requisite of any other reform. It is understandable that they feared Miall's candidature might distract attention from the issue, but after the Reform Act of 1867, this objection no longer carried weight. The leading Bradford liberals were men such as Sir Titus Salt, Alfred Illingworth and Robert Kell, dissenters who were model employers,

1. Nonconformist, 9.I.1867, p21
2. Ibid., 16.I.1867, p45
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 11.I.1867
4. Liberator, March 1869, p43; April 1869, p61
5. Nonconformist, 2.X.1867, p798
6. Bradford Observer, 7.II.1861; Bradford Review, 2.II.1861
7. D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford, p559.

and who favoured social reform as well as disestablishment. Both Salt and Illingworth were supporters of the Liberation Society, and spoke for the radical wing of dissent in Bradford: the moderate wing was represented by W.E. Forster, who opposed disestablishment. Salt, Illingworth and Kell, along with Samuel Morley, were typical of wealthy dissenting employers, favouring the legal recognition of Trades Unions, the raising of wages, and generally with a sense of obligation towards their employees. They enjoyed good relations with working-class leaders, contributed to working-class newspapers such as the Commonwealth and the Beehive, and to political movements such as the National Reform League.¹ Miall's own outlook had much in common with theirs.

His last overt bid for working-class support had been at the time of the Complete Suffrage agitation of the 1840s. Since then, he had gradually severed his links with his former Chartist associates, and in its formative period, the Liberation Society had no working-class links. Indeed, true to his principle of restricting government interference, Miall had opposed the Ten Hour Bill; nor had he been favourable towards the aspirations of Trades Unions. But in the 1860s he made a conscious effort to renew his links with working class leaders. In 1866, the working class Workingman's Advocate changed its name to the Commonwealth, and received capital from many middle-class reformers, including Kell and Miall himself. Miall promised to write for the paper, and Arthur Miall was its manager for a time.² Miall and George Howell unsuccessfully tried to persuade Frederic Harrison to become its editor.³

Though he had an impeccable record on the question of parliamentary reform, Miall was not acceptable to the whole spectrum of Bradford liberalism.

The issue came to a head in September 1867 when Forster's colleague,

1. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists (London 1965) pp36-38
2. Commonwealth, 10.II.1866; 21.IV.1866. See S. Coltham, "English Working Class Newspapers in 1867" Victorian Studies Vol.XIII nos.2 Dec.1969, pp162-163.
3. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists pp264-265.

Whickham, died, and a by-election was called. The Bradford Observer supported Miall's candidature, with reservations:

"He has an honourable reputation as a politician, and his unshaken testimony to the great principle of liberty in ecclesiastical matters has made him a great favourite with a powerful section of our constituency. But these special qualities have proved an obstacle to his entrance to Parliament in other places, and will not be without their prejudicial effects here also."¹

The Bradford Reform League had wanted Illingworth as candidate, but he promoted Miall's candidature, amid considerable opposition, arguing:

"Mr. Miall's presence in the House of Commons is found now to be a national want."² A meeting of Liberal electors resulted in four candidates being considered, Ripley, Godwin, Thompson, all local men with local interests, and Miall himself, whom his opponents branded an outsider, uninterested in local issues, and obsessed with religious questions. Ripley's supporters warned that Miall would do nothing to help the working classes, and both Kell, who proposed Miall, and Illingworth who seconded him, worked hard to show that Miall had wide political interests, stressing his opposition to state intervention in education.³ Miall was eventually selected as the liberal candidate, but a group of moderate liberals considered him ruthless and unyielding, and united with conservative electors in favour of Ripley and Thompson.⁴ Forster and his moderate supporters found their main difficulty was Miall's commitment to disestablishment, which they could not support.⁵

The Liberation Society greeted Miall's candidature with "warm sympathy" and both the Bradford newspapers gave their support; the Bradford Observer considered that the major questions for Parliament would concern religion, and Miall was a recognised authority:

1. Bradford Observer, 26.IX.1867, p5
2. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p268
3. D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford pp714-720.
4. Ibid., p725
5. T. Wemyss Reid, Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster (London 1888) i, 448.

"...the election of Mr. Miall for Bradford would be accepted throughout the kingdom as a manifesto that ecclesiastical privilege must go the way of political privilege."¹

Illingworth was chairman of Miall's committee, and the main object of Miall's campaign was to unite the various groups of liberal supporters; he was aware of the divisive effect of his religious views, apparent from the fact that the adoption meeting had consisted of only 1,200 electors, out of a total of 5,946.² Thompson, who was selected as the candidate of the moderate liberals and conservatives, produced an election manifesto liberal in tone, save that he opposed disestablishment. As a brewer, he had the considerable advantage of the support of the publicans, but the local temperance leaders guaranteed their support to Miall.³ An address to the electors illustrates his intention of appealing to a variety of interests. Discussing the questions with which a reformed Parliament would have to deal, he mentioned the Ballot as one of the most significant, followed by the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. As regards the Church of England, he denied that he had any animosity towards it; he merely wished it to be placed on the same footing as other denominations:

"...all that I wish to do in relation to ecclesiastical subjects is this, so to place every denomination of christians or every association on non-christians in the kingdom - so to place them in reference to the law that they shall all stand upon an equal footing - and that their religion, the faith which they profess, shall stand or fall according to its own merits."⁴

He went on to show that the established position of the Anglican Church affected not only religion, but schools and universities. Switching to education, he explained that he had recently abandoned his opposition to governmental control of education since a reformed Parliament, in which the working classes were represented, would henceforth deal with the matter. Goldwin Smith sent letters of support, praising Miall's work in the field of

1. Bradford Observer, 3.X.1867, p4. cf Bradford Review, 5.X.1867, which gave Miall support for similar reasons.
2. D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford pp708,720.
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p277. D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford pp731-733
4. Bradford Observer, 3.X.1867, p5

university reform, and Miall concluded by giving qualified support to a demand for the legal recognition of Trades Unions.

Despite Miall's attempt to show the breadth of his sympathies, his opponents represented him as a would-be destroyer of the Church, and published a selection of his early writings which, taken out of context, gave a convincing picture of an extremist.¹ They also published some of his criticisms of the Wesleyan Conference, which he had described as, "...the most execrable form of priestly intolerance and exclusiveness to be found in these realms." This appeared as a handbill entitled Mr. Miall and the Wesleyans, and was obviously designed to sway Wesleyan electors.² Miall was defeated, after a disorderly poll, by 2,210 votes to 1807. Both Bradford newspapers agreed that the Court House Yard was too small to permit an orderly election.³ The Bradford Observer attributed his defeat to the fact that Thompson had secured the votes of both the Wesleyans and of the liquor interest.⁴ The Bradford Review extended the range of Miall's opponents to include, "...the unholy alliance of faithless liberals, Tories, Church parsons, publicans, bigots and fanatics."⁵ Miall's son admitted that some electors disliked his father on personal grounds.⁶

His supporters affirmed their faith in him, and determined he should be a candidate for Bradford in the general election.⁷ Once again, Kell and Illingworth organised his campaign:

"Both sides felt that the first thing was to get Mr. Miall into the House in the new Parliament, but that his return for Bradford would serve the cause better than any other constituency. Here he had been defeated, and the progress of public opinion would be very marked if the new constituency returned him triumphantly."⁸

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, pp277-278. Bradford Observer, 10.X.1867
2. Bradford Central Library Local Collection Case 36; Box 17; no.6.
3. Bradford Observer, 17.X.1867. Bradford Review, 12.X.1867
4. Bradford Observer, 12.X.1867
5. Bradford Review, 19.X.1867
6. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p276
7. Bradford Observer, 21.XI.1867
8. Alfred Illingworth to Isaac Holden, 7.VII.1868, The Holden Illingworth Letters (Bradford 1927) p415

A canvass convinced Illingworth that Miall would be successful, given the vastly enlarged constituency.¹ Goldwin Smith joined Miall on the platform,² and Miall was selected as one of the Liberal candidates at an outdoor meeting on 11th June 1868, with strong working-class support.³ The crucial problem for Miall was to obtain the support of W.E. Forster; his election was not in doubt, and his supporters would have to decide between Miall, and Thompson's successor, Ripley, who was the candidate of the moderate liberals and the conservatives. Forster was not enamoured of Miall's views upon disestablishment, but in public at least, the differences were resolved, and a joint committee was set up under the chairmanship of Salt. Forster said of Miall at a public meeting:

"I know he and I differ on the abstract principle of establishment. I know that he would take a far different course in regard to the English Church...But that is a question for the future."⁴

Forster had in fact been very reluctant to join forces with Miall, despite subsequent appearances of mutual support. He informed an election inquiry of 1869 that he had not known Miall personally, and supported him only as a matter of duty:

"I met him, I think once, at Mr. Cobden's funeral, and I saw him once for a minute or two at a committee upon education, I think it was: otherwise I never saw him until the day on which I thought it my duty to coalesce with him."⁵

Miall avoided the issue of English disestablishment in this campaign, partly to avoid disagreement with Forster and his supporters, and partly in conformity with Liberation Society policy, which he had helped formulate:

"The abolition of the Irish Establishment to be the main point to be insisted upon at the Election: the abolition of University Tests and other questions being regarded as of subordinate importance."⁶

1. Alfred Illingworth to Isaac Holden, 7.VII.1868
Holden-Illingworth Letters, p415
2. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p281
3. Ibid., p283
4. Nonconformist, 5.VIII.1868, p769; 14.X.1868, pp1014-1016.
5. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 28 (1868-1869) XLVIII, p896.
See also T. Wemyss Reid Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster i, 447-448.
6. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book, 10.VI.1868

Accordingly, Miall concentrated upon the Irish Church question, where he and Forster agreed, and which was of importance in securing the considerable Irish vote in Bradford.¹ The election enquiry, held in 1869, makes it apparent that both sides were preoccupied with the Irish electors. Ripley's supporters set up an Irish committee, "...for neutralising the Irish votes, knowing that they were Irish people who had a prepossession in favour of Mr. Miall."² One elector claimed that he feared he would have been killed by the Irish party if he had canvassed for Ripley,³ and Forster confirmed that the Irish vote was solid for Miall.⁴

Forster was also reconciled to Miall by the latter's explanation that he had opposed government intervention in education only when it seemed that it would lead to a crudely disguised Anglican monopoly; the reform of Parliament had removed that danger.⁵ Miall also addressed an appeal to working men, even if the tone seemed patronising:

"I wish not simply to be identified with the working men, but with all men. My sympathies do not stop with the order to which I belong. They descend below the class with which I am associated...I shall not flatter working men, though I honour them, but I will work for them as heartily as I will work for any...If you choose to send me to Parliament I shall go thither without any class restraints...and the one thing that I wish to do in framing the laws which are to touch the interests of the people, is justice to all men."⁶

He spoke in vague terms of equality of rights for employers and employees alike, conscious, no doubt, that many of his prominent supporters were also major employers. He gave vague support to the principle of Trades Unions:

"If he (the employer) can be associated with his equals and his compeers for the purpose of protecting his capital, so can you for the purpose of protecting your labour. I say that if his funds are protected by law, so your funds should be protected by law,"⁷

1. In Bradford in 1868, out of 21,000 voters, 3,000 were Irish, and most of those working class. J. Vincent The formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868, p265.
2. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 28 (1868-1869) XLVIII, p720
3. Ibid., p740
4. Ibid. p902 All sides recognised the Irish question as central in the 1868 election. Marx had asserted "...the Irish question dominates," and Miall acted accordingly. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists p160
5. Bradford Observer 27.VIII.1868. A.Miall, Life of Edward Miall p286
6. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p284
7. Ibid., p285

On less delicate ground, he admitted that his opposition to the Ten Hours Bill had been based upon a misconception, and he was now in favour of shortening the hours of labour.¹ Forster and Miall campaigned jointly, but at the election, Miall came at the bottom of the poll.²

Bribery was alleged by both Miall and Ripley: at the resulting enquiry, Ripley admitted to spending £7,211 and to hiring 158 committee rooms, at 115 of which refreshments were freely available. He was found guilty of bribery, but it is evident that both Miall and Forster were only less guilty in degree.³ They spent £3,397, of which Miall contributed £500 himself. They too hired committee rooms, 157 in total, of which 129 were in public houses:⁴ refreshments were distributed by them either through a system of coloured tickets given out by their agents or else were available in 62 public houses. In the South Ward alone, their bill for refreshments amounted to £247.⁵ Ripley was unseated, but his supporters recalled Thompson as their candidate, and insisted upon a third election.⁶ In this election, the breadth of Miall's support was apparent. The Working Men's Committee for Promoting the Separation of Church and State pledged its support,⁷ temperance leaders pledged theirs,⁸ and Robert Applegarth, the labour leader, wrote to the Bradford Review, urging working-class electors to give their backing to Miall, whom he claimed as a personal friend.⁹ Once again, the election was disorderly:

"The streets of Verona under Montagues and Capulets were scarcely more factious than those of Bradford during the Miall election. Friendships, even families, were severed, and the populace was disposed to settle the matter by a rougher ordeal than the polling booth."¹⁰

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p287
2. The result was Forster 9,648, Ripley 9,347, Miall 8,768.
3. Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 28 (1868-1869) XLVIII pp744,759
4. Ibid. pp744,889,832,875 See also Scruton collection Case I Box 16 no.19 (Bradford Central Library) for samples of Miall's election literature.
5. H. Hanham Elections and Party Management London 1959 p264
6. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p290
7. Bradford Observer, 16.XII.1871. Letter from John Clark
8. D.G. Wright, Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford p845
9. Bradford Review, 12.III.1869
10. Memoir of Alfred Illingworth. Holden Illingworth letters (Bradford 1927) p735.

Miall was at last successful, and Forster sent his congratulations. At a meeting at Manningham, a complimentary address signed by 1,500 working men was presented to Miall.¹ Miall's campaigns at Bradford were not fought upon a liberationist platform: while never forswearing his principles, neither did he give them undue emphasis. He attempted to appeal to a variety of interests, dissenters, radicals, working men, Irish catholics, the interests to which Gladstone had appealed on a national scale in the general election of 1868. Miall believed that the election had been a triumphant demonstration of the strength of the party favouring religious equality, which had emerged as an integral part of the Liberal party. The Liberation Society believed it had contributed to this victory by functioning, "...as a centre of information and as an educational agent."² Gladstone had received a clear mandate to deal with the Irish Church, and he himself was sufficiently impressed by the number of dissenting M.P.s to make a private analysis of the various dissenting groups within the Liberal party; he reckoned their number as 95.³ But Miall's assessment of the position of dissenters was realistic:

"We do not feel ourselves warranted in deducing from the fact that because an overwhelming majority of the first Householder Parliament is pledged to do justice to Ireland by giving her religious equality, it will be any more disposed on that account to apply the same principles in Great Britain. It is not at all impossible, indeed, that for a while, the opposite disposition may be manifested."⁴

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p291-292
2. Liberator, Jan. 1869, pll.
3. Private memo. dated 1869. Gladstone Papers B.M. Add.Mss 44612, ff138-139. Gladstone's breakdown of dissenting groups was as follows:
 - 10 Independents (including Miall and Baines)
 - 14 Presbyterians
 - 5 Baptists (including Illingworth)
 - 9 Unitarians (including Bowring)
 - 7 Quakers (including Bright)
 - 4 Methodists
 - 6 Jews
 - 36 Roman Catholics
 - 4 Doubtful
 - Total 95
4. Nonconformist, 2.XII.1868, pll69

Part 4. Disestablishment and Parliament

The disestablishment of the Irish Church, following hard upon the abolition of church rates, were great victories for the liberationists. Once they had been accomplished, the parliamentary committee of the Liberation Society, conscious of the need to maintain momentum, gave careful consideration to its next step. The Scottish establishment was thought to be the most vulnerable of the remaining religious establishments, but the committee found no evidence to suggest that a campaign specifically directed towards it would attract much support from either English or Scottish voluntaryists.¹ On the face of it, the established church in Wales was an attractive target; there would be plenty of support for an attack upon it in Wales, where Miall had helped set up an organisation for the Liberation Society. It had already helped Henry Richard in his fight to prevent the intimidation of Welsh dissenters by landlords,² and both the conservative Quarterly Review, and the moderate dissenting periodical, the British Quarterly Review, thought that the society would direct its efforts towards Wales.³ But the committee thought it impossible to consider the Church in Wales apart from the Church of England, and accepted the advice of some of its supporters that a campaign in Wales would have little chance of success until voters were protected by the ballot. A motion for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, devised by Watkin Williams, was discussed at this meeting, and the committee declined to support it. Eventually, the committee decided upon a direct attack upon the Church of England:

"...the Society should now set before itself, as a practical object to be pursued by well chosen means, the Disestablishment of the Church of England - the demand for which would involve the assertion of the Society's principles in all their breadth."⁴

Immediate parliamentary action was not envisaged; much information would have to be assembled, and public opinion would have to be prepared:

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.X.1869
2. Ibid., 6.VIII.1869. Liberator, Oct.1869, p158
3. Quarterly Review, Vol.128 no.256 1870, p387. British Quarterly Review LIII 1871, pp139-178
4. Liberation Society Minute Book 1.X.1869

"It is, therefore, suggested, that all the Society's future meetings, lectures and publications, and its movements generally, should have in view the familiarising of the public mind with the idea of disestablishment, not as a matter of abstract speculation, or as a distant possibility, but as an event which is rapidly approaching."¹

In the meantime, there would be plenty of parliamentary work in connection with the proposed Education Bill, the burials question and university tests.

In Parliament, Miall was primarily concerned with the Education Bill of 1870, the University Tests Bill of 1871, and his three motions dealing with the disestablishment of the Church of England. By the time he entered Parliament, the church rates question and the Irish Church question were effectively solved. He took part in the debate on the Endowed Schools Bill and supported Osborne Morgan's Burials Bill. But the Liberation Society failed to restrain Watkin Williams, who introduced his motion for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales. The result was a fiasco, and the Nonconformist commented: "...no cause...is exempt from the possibility of being seriously checked...by the escapades of nominal friends, whom extremely recent conversion fires with indiscreet zeal."² Both Miall and the society were aware of the need for preparing public opinion for disestablishment; their victory over the Irish Church had only been possible with Liberal assistance, and that help would not necessarily be available in the future.³ In fact, a breach between Gladstone and his dissenting supporters had already opened up over the Education Act of 1870, which Miall regarded as a betrayal. The parliamentary committee advised the annual meeting of the society that Parliament was, at the moment, weary of the disestablishment question, having spent the last session upon the Irish Church question.⁴ It thought that dissenters should discuss their principles in the context of other issues, but they were stung to direct action by the

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.X.1869. The Society hoped that Watkin Williams would abandon his proposed motion, and sent Carvell Williams to visit a Mr. Gee of Denbigh, editor of the Banner to discuss the matter. See also K.O. Morgan, "Gladstone and Wales" Welsh History Review Vol.I 1960, p67
2. Nonconformist, 1.VI.1870, p509.
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.X.1869. P.M.H. Bell Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales pp222-223.
4. Nonconformist, 27.X.1869, p1017.

conduct of Gladstone over the Education Bill of 1870. They regarded its religious provisions as a gratuitous insult to their principles, and this, coupled with Gladstone's rebuke of Miall, prompted Henry Richard to remark of Forster:

"...he had thrown overboard the whole Nonconformist body of this country: and the Bill was forced through the House in the teeth of the declared convictions and remonstrances of more than half the Liberal party, the Government accepting the votes of their opponents to defeat the wishes of their friends."¹

Joseph Chamberlain had foreseen that the education measure would lead to a new demand for disestablishment. He told George Dixon:

"If Forster forces his Bill through the House there will be a tremendous revival of the agitation for the disestablishment of the English Church...If you see Mr. Forster, you may safely tell him that he has succeeded in raising the whole of the Dissenters against him, and if he thinks little of our power, we will teach him his mistake."²

The Unitarian Herald committed itself to the support of Liberationist principles, the first official support they received from the Unitarian body,³ and the working-class weekly, the Beehive, termed Gladstone's action the "kicking down of the ladder", and replied to his taunt that Miall, if dissatisfied, should take his support elsewhere.:

"As for Mr. Miall and his friends, we of the working-class interest can fully sympathise with them: for we, after all our services and all our confidence in fair promises have been apparently thrown overboard in much the same acrimonious manner."⁴

A group began to emerge, outside the bounds of the Liberal party, as a consequence of the discontent caused by the Education Act. The Liberation Society had the support of a section of organised labour, and of the unitarian body. The National Education League, led by Joseph Chamberlain, also felt itself betrayed, while the Congregational Union declared itself

1. Beehive, 16.VII.1870, p347
2. J.L. Garvin The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London 1932) i, 110
Chamberlain made the same point in a speech at Birmingham Town Hall on 7th March 1870. Ibid i, 111
3. Unitarian Herald, 9.XII.1870, p392
4. Beehive, 30.VII.1870, p379

opposed to the act, and in favour of disestablishment.¹ R.W. Dale gives some indication of the depth of feeling among dissenters:

"The disruption of the Liberal party in 1870, the alienation of the Nonconformists from its official leaders, and Mr. Gladstone's challenge to Mr. Miall to take his support elsewhere...all combined to bring the disestablishment questions to the front. The Nonconformists, so rebuffed, felt that the time had come to assert themselves, and that they would get nothing except by pressure."²

Notwithstanding the fiasco of Watkin Williams' motion for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, the Liberation Society determined to launch an immediate attack upon the Church of England. It had realised it could expect no more assistance from the Liberals, having failed to secure the concessions it demanded regarding both the Education Act and the burials question.³ A campaign was required, with some urgency, to demonstrate that the society was prepared to stand by its principles, and was not a group which humbly accepted crumbs of comfort from Gladstone when the support of the society happened to be useful to the Liberal party.⁴

In July 1870, Miall intimated to the parliamentary committee of the society that he intended to introduce a motion concerning the position of the Established Church.⁵ He was impelled to do so when it became clear that Gladstone had no real sympathy with the principles of religious equality, and would not tolerate any undermining of the position of the Established Church:

"My father considered, therefore, that the time was come when the whole question of Church and State...should be introduced into the House of Commons, believing that by such means it would be most effectually brought before the whole nation."⁶

The executive committee learned of his decision with great satisfaction⁷ and, on the advice of the parliamentary committee, set up a group to organise support for Miall.⁸ A brief was prepared for the society's lecturers,⁹ and

1. S.M.Ingham, "The Disestablishment Movement 1868-1874" Journal of Religious History June 1964, p44
2. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale of Birmingham pp377-378
3. Ibid., p377
4. Nonconformist, 21.IX.1870, p893
5. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 25.VII.1870
6. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p310
7. Liberation Society, Minute Book 21.VII.1870, f261
8. Ibid., 8.IX.1870, ff269-274; 28.X.1870, f285.
9. Liberation Society, Parliamentary Committee Minute Book 5.X.1870; 26.X.1870

the precise terms of Miall's motion were defined at a special meeting.

It was resolved:

"...that it is expedient to apply the policy of disestablishment initiated by the Irish Church Act of 1869 (as speedily as possible) to the other churches established by law in the United Kingdom."¹

Miall's motion, and the concomitant supporting activities, were to be the basis of the society's future operations.² The Liberator was more blunt; it believed that so few practical grievances remained, that they could no longer be the basis for a campaign,³ a view shared by Samuel Morley:

"University Tests once abolished, and a fair Burials Bill agreed to, the House will have disposed of the two last of a number of measures which used to be spoken of as 'Dissenters' grievances.'"⁴

This state of affairs would certainly make it more difficult to maintain the political momentum of dissenters, but the society was equally aware of the obstacles in the way of the disestablishment of the Church of England. When Carvell Williams had written to thank Gladstone for his action over the Irish Church question, he expressed the hope that Gladstone would survive, "...to witness the complete and acknowledged success of the policy you have so triumphantly initiated."⁵ Gladstone's reply gave fair warning that it would be infinitely more difficult for the society to secure his support for any extension of that policy: "We and the committee may not be, and we are not at one in our abstract or general views of Church Establishments."⁶

Undaunted and angry, the society organised meetings throughout the country to explain Miall's motion. Miall himself addressed meetings at Leicester, Bradford, Southsea, Manchester, Nottingham, Derby and Birmingham, where he was supported by Joseph Chamberlain.⁷ The Beehive commented: "The

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 9.XII.1870, f293
2. Ibid., 8.IX.1870
3. Liberator, Sept. 1870, p150
4. E. Hodder The Life of Samuel Morley (2nd edition London 1888) p262
5. Carvell Williams to Gladstone, 5.VIII.1869 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss. 44421, ff242-243.
6. Gladstone to Carvell Williams, 6.VIII.1869 Ibid. f247
7. Nonconformist, 9.XI.1870 p1063; 23.XI.1870, pp111of

Liberation Society is preparing the way for its illustrious leader, Mr. Miall."¹ These, and other similar meetings, seem to have been effective insofar as they alarmed leaders of the Church of England. In a pastoral letter, the Bishop of Carlisle expressed his foreboding:

"I cannot shut my eyes to the possibility of a great change coming, sooner or later, over the status of the Church of England: she may possibly cease to be an Established Church -- in some important particulars she may, perhaps, already be said to have done so: and in our own days changes, as we know from experience, are made so rapidly, that it is as well at least to be prepared for that which may occur very soon: and weighing advantages and disadvantages against each other, I devoutly trust that the status of the Church of England, as an Established Church, may long be maintained: but looking to that which is possible, and which many thoughtful persons deem probable, I regard it as highly desirable that we should accustom ourselves to a kind of action which, in the case of a disestablished Church, becomes an absolute necessity. It will be well to practise swimming before the craft becomes a wreck."²

The meetings continued in 1871: more than 150, mainly in the Midlands and the North, were recorded by the Liberator between January and May,³ and the Liberation Society mobilised all its provincial speakers. Meetings in London were supported by the Baptist Union, the Congregational Union and the Dissenting Deputies: resolutions were sent to Gladstone, who acknowledged their receipt.⁴ The simple record of these meetings conceals the wide range of feeling which existed. When the Congregational Union offered its support, the veteran Thomas Binney categorically stated that: "...the Congregational Union ought not to become a branch of the Liberation Society."⁵ Joseph Chamberlain felt that Miall's motion did not go far enough, and demanded that disestablishment be made an electoral test, until it was indicated to him that it was necessary, "...to combine political wisdom with zeal and courage."⁶ Miall's motion was welcomed by the

1. Beehive, 17.XII.1870. Liberator, Dec. 1870, pp197,200.
2. Beehive, 31.XII.1870, p731
3. Liberator, Jan. 1871, pp14-15. S.M. Ingham "The Disestablishment Movement 1868-1874" pp44-45.
4. Nonconformist, 12.IV.1871, p343. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.III.1871; 17.III.1871; 21.IV.1871. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p395
5. Liberator, Nov. 1870, p178
6. Ibid ., Jan. 1871, p13

Dissenting Deputies, but when they were invited to attend a meeting in support of it, they resolved to do so only in an individual capacity.¹ However, the Triennial Conference of 1871 was an optimistic occasion; Miall claimed the undivided support of dissenters, and hoped to gain extensive Liberal backing.² Perhaps of greater significance was the presence of the labour leader George Potter, "...who dwelt upon its political aspects. He was loudly cheered in stating his belief that the working men of the country went with the society in its policy."³ Another labour leader, George Howell, had already begun to work in support of the society. Up to March 1871, he had been engaged by the society to address meetings in all the leading towns, and "awful ones" had taken place in Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Lincoln, Derby, Leicester, Hull, Newcastle upon Tyne, Darlington and Dewsbury. He noted: "This has been no light job. Parsons and laymen have attended, and disputed our facts, figures and statements. But in all cases we have carried our resolutions by immense majorities."⁴ The Beehive considered that the Triennial Conference would convince all parties that there was extensive and resolute support for Miall's motion.⁵

Miall introduced his motion on 9th May 1871. Rejecting Samuel Morley's view that the society's practical work would be complete once University Tests were abolished, and a suitable Burials measure passed,⁶ he claimed his motion, "...does not rest upon any sectarian or narrow grounds. It involves a matter of high national policy."⁷ He disclaimed any intention of discussing benefits to dissenters which might result from disestablishment, and claimed that his motion was the logical outcome of a policy begun with the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Establishments had been under attack throughout the world for thirty years past; many had vanished, and such as

1. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 21.II.1871 f19; 16.III.1871, f21; 20.IV.1871, f22.
2. Nonconformist, 4.V.1871, pp416,422
3. Beehive, 6.V.1871, p11
4. Howell to Charles Bartlett, 17.III.1871. Howell Papers Letter Book 5, f566
5. Beehive, 6.V.1871, p9
6. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCIV, p68
7. Ibid., CCVI, p474

remained had no further relevance. The Church of England had no attraction either for dissenters, who represented a large proportion of the population, or for the majority of the working classes. The matter must be discussed by Parliament lest agitation get out of control; disestablishment was inevitable, but must not come about through violence:

"It seems to me that for the sake of all the parties...the matter is one which should not be allowed to drift down with the silent stream until it finds itself in troubled waters. It would be nothing short of a national calamity if the changes, the legal changes, which the disestablishment of the Church of England would require, should be set about under the impulse of political terror, or popular passion, or, indeed, under any external conditions except such as would allow of ample leisure, cool deliberation, and quiet interchange of opinions."¹

The burden of his case was the incongruity of the state devoting all of its religious support to a sect which had not the allegiance of half the population: "It was meant to be the Church of the nation; it is the Church of only about half of it. Its nationality is but a fiction of law."² The effect of establishment upon the Anglican Church had been to stifle theological inquiry and to fossilise its structure; despite coercive powers, however, there was not even unity of belief within the Church.

He went on to argue, with some force, that if the Church of Ireland had been disestablished in order to remove a grievance, the same policy should be applied in England, where the establishment was no less a burden and an injustice. He claimed:

"...what was unjust in Ireland is unjust here; for neither geographical, nor arithmetical, nor accidental conditions can alter the essential justice or injustice of a policy... the inmost principle of a Church Establishment is necessarily unjust in its operation...that man suffers injustice at the hands of the State whom the State places in a position of exceptional disadvantage on account of his religious faith, or his ecclesiastical associations."³

Notwithstanding the removal of the practical grievances of dissenters, the effect of the establishment was to divide the nation. He then deployed his

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCVI, p477
2. Ibid., p479
3. Ibid., pp486-487

familiar argument to justify the intervention of Parliament in the affairs of the Church of England:

"It should be borne in mind that when we speak of Church property, we speak of the property set aside by the nation for its ecclesiastical affairs."¹

It was a commonplace of radical thought that the nation could alter its mind as regards the disposition of national resources, whenever the original disposition had become inappropriate. Miall then stressed the beneficial effects of voluntary effort, both in a social and in a religious context, and used the example of the Education Act to show that the existence of any state supported body hindered the working of parallel voluntary effort.² He concluded by pointing out the damage inflicted upon the Anglican Church by its establishment, and argued it would in no way suffer if compelled to rely upon voluntary effort.³

No new arguments appeared in Miall's speech; in essence, it had appeared many times before, in print and on the platform. It was seconded by an Anglican, J.D. Lewis, who was concerned at the danger of violent attacks upon the church, and saw disestablishment as a way to avert this danger. Support for Miall came from Henry Richard and Watkin Williams, while the main opposition came from Sir Roundell Palmer, who nonetheless praised Miall's handling of the topic. Apart from those who supported Miall's arguments as intellectual exercises, two main dissenting reactions were apparent. The wealthy manufacturer J.J. Colman typified those who sympathised with Miall's case, but thought its introduction into Parliament impolitic, since it would divide the Liberal party: "I am a Nonconformist, but I am a Liberal too, and I fear the latter will lose more than the former will gain."⁴ The other reaction was stated in Parliament by Leatham, who loosed a furious onslaught upon those who opposed Miall. It would not be long, he argued,

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCVI, p488
2. Ibid., p490
3. Ibid., p496
4. H.C. Colman, Jeremiah James Colman. A Memoir (London 1905) p260. See also D.A. Hamer Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford 1972) Chapter I passim.

before the status of dissenters became a test question of Liberal opinion, and he regretted that Liberal leaders were taking up a position which might become untenable. Nonconformists were the moving force of the Liberal party, and he raised the question implicit in the clash between Miall and Gladstone in 1870; "As a supporter of the Government, I hope never to hear the question asked in anger - 'How long are we, a party of dissenters to be led by a Cabinet of Churchmen?'"¹ Leatham warned the government that it was in danger of losing the electoral support of dissenters:

"The fundamental error of those undertaking to lead the Liberal party is to suppose that anything short of this, any mere remission of the remaining pains and penalties of dissent... will satisfy Dissenters now. The time has gone by for ever for these crumbs of toleration."²

This more militant view had the powerful support of provincial leaders such as Joseph Chamberlain and R.W. Dale. The latter was prepared to sever the connection between dissenters and the liberals altogether; "...if the great authorities on Liberal thought were...their most determined opponents, they and the Liberal party had done with each other."³ If the Liberal party were false to its principles, he argued, it was time for it to be broken up.⁴ Disraeli tried to cool the temperature of the debate by refusing to accept that Miall represented any considerable body of opinion, and Gladstone spoke in similar vein. He agreed with Leatham that any withdrawal of dissenting support would damage the government, but refused to submit to blackmail. While he admitted the validity of some of Miall's arguments, he issued him with a challenge:

"...if he seeks to convert the majority of the House of Commons to his opinions, he must first begin by undertaking the preliminary work of converting to those opinions the majority of the people of England."⁵

The division cannot have been wholly encouraging to Miall: he received only 89 votes, with 374 against him. None of his supporters was a minister and

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCVI, p546

2. Ibid., p547

3. Liberator, May 1871, p89

4. F. Adams, History of the Elementary School Contest in England 1882 p273

5. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCVI, p571

there was little sign of Irish support.¹ However, Miall had had a fair reception in a well attended debate, and the Nonconformist observed philosophically that many major questions had commenced their parliamentary progress with less support.² Perhaps the most heartening reaction was that of the Times, which wrote: "It is scarcely possible to doubt that this century will see the consumation Mr. Miall so devoutly wishes."³ It went on to argue that the real grievance of dissenters concerning the establishment was social rather than political, and no act of parliament could remedy their feeling of social deprivation. It praised Miall's speech, which displayed, "...an earnestness and moderation which recalled Mr. Cobden's best and most persuasive manner..."⁴ but when it discussed Miall's motives, it perhaps did him less than justice in accusing him of pursuing disestablishment simply because his name had not figured in any of the successes achieved at the expense of the Established Church so far: "As Cobden has written his name on the grave of protection, so Mr. Miall humbly hoped to figure on the vast wreck of the Established Church."⁵ The reaction of Miall's supporters was jubilant. The Liberation Society received a report of the debate, and recorded its thanks to him for providing,

"...the strongest incentives to renewed exertions to produce that national conviction of the righteousness and expediency of the Society's object which, it is admitted, will eventually secure its realisation."⁶

It ordered 30,000 copies of his speech to be printed and circulated, and admitted that he had received more support than anticipated.⁷

The significance of the debate was variously assessed. The Unitarian Herald saw it as an event of historic significance: "It is the commencement of a struggle in Parliament which must be a long one...but of which the final

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCVI, pp572-575
2. Nonconformist, 11.V.1871, p445
3. Times, 9.V.1871, p9
4. Ibid., 11.V.1871, p9
5. Ibid., 27.XI.1871 p9
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 15.V.1871
7. In a leading article, the Montreal Witness implied that Miall's motion had aroused considerable interest in Canada. The trend in Roman Catholic countries was towards the separation of Church and State, and it observed that disestablishment, like death, was only a matter of time. Quoted in a letter in Bradford Observer, 16.XII.71

issue is safe. The day of State Churches is past."¹ The Bradford Observer believed that May 9th 1871 would be remembered as the day upon which war was declared in Parliament against the establishment,² while the moderate British Quarterly Review described Miall as having led a "...skirmishing party rather than ...a final attack,"³ but having nevertheless made dis-establishment a major political issue. The working-class Beehive, unstinting in its praise of Miall, regarded success as inevitable, and guaranteed working-class support:

"Let Mr. Miall's speech and the debate to which it led be distributed by tens of thousands of copies throughout the island, and especially in the large towns, and we should see as the result the formation of a strong public opinion among the working classes which would tend more than anything else to reduce the qualifying clause in his motion "as soon as practicable" to narrow limits."⁴

This was a particularly gratifying response, for Miall had made a deliberate bid for working-class support in his speech: the working classes suffered an injustice when revenue was abstracted to maintain a religious organisation for the benefit of the middle and upper classes.⁵ In fact, the Liberation Society already had the active support of one labour leader, George Howell; in 1869, Carvell Williams had invited him to a parliamentary breakfast, where he offered to serve the society in any way he could, being free to do so as he had resigned as secretary of the Reform League.⁶ He had given invaluable assistance to the society's campaign against the Irish Church. The Beehive, in a leading article signed by Lloyd Jones, urged that disestablishment must cease to be simply a contest between Church and Chapel and become a question of national policy, concerned with the proper disposition and use of national property, rather than the claims of rival sects. This was a view which Miall himself had pressed, notably in his

1. Unitarian Herald, 19.V.1871, pp156-157
2. Bradford Observer, 11.V.1871, p5
3. British Quarterly Review, Vol.LIV 1871, p189
4. Beehive, 13.V.1871, pp8-9
5. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates CCVI, pp488-489
6. G. Howell to Carvell Williams, 11.III.1869 Howell Papers Letter Book 4, f924.

book Title Deeds of the Church of England to her Parochial Endowments, first published in 1861, and reissued by the Liberation Society in 1871. The Beehive agreed that the nation was the owner of Church property: it could dispose of it as it wished, and should do so in the context of the right distribution of national wealth. The disestablishment movement could only succeed if it had working-class support, and a new outlook: "To succeed in the disestablishment of the Church, the old battle ground must be changed, and the number of combatants increased."¹ Miall was held up to working men as an example of bold and courageous political endeavour. He had taught his fellow dissenters, despite many rebuffs, to unite in order to achieve their objectives, and to rely upon their own strength. Working men must follow his example.²

Miall's support from among the working class was not a personal following, but the result of careful planning by the Liberation Society. After Miall had secured the debate upon his motion, the society discussed its defeat, and considered the expediency of, "...promoting a movement intended to secure for the society's object a greater amount of support from the working classes."³ George Potter was approached, and he suggested the formation of a small committee to discuss the question in detail. Its members were Potter himself, Howell, Guile and Lloyd Jones.⁴ Potter was elected to the executive committee of the society.⁵ It was agreed to set up the "Working Men's Committee for promoting the Separation of Church and State" which would be distinct from the Liberation Society, but would act in concert with it, and receive financial assistance. It was formally constituted in September 1871; Howell, invaluable for his membership of the 'Junta' and his position as secretary of the Trades Union Congress was elected chairman. George Potter, editor of the Beehive, was its secretary, Guile its treasurer, and the

1. Beehive, 20.V.1871, p1
2. Ibid., 27.V.1871 pp8-9. When the Beehive reported a meeting of the National Education League, despite the fact that it was addressed by Joseph Chamberlain, Cowen, Sir Charles Dilke, Howell and Potter as well as Miall, it was Miall's speech which the Beehive particularly noticed. Beehive, 21.X.1871, p8
3. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.VII.1871, f356
4. Ibid., 17.VII.1871. See also G. Howell Mss Autobiography Howell Papers Acc.no.4112 unpagued. "The Liberation Society 1868 onwards"
5. S.M. Ingham, "The Disestablishment Movement 1868-1874" p47

committee included Robert Applegarth and Henry Broadhurst.¹ The committee was to conform to the society's objectives, but was free to select its own mode of operation. That there was scarcely whole-hearted trust between the middle-class Liberation Society and its working-class allies is apparent from the outset. Each side disclaimed responsibility for the future indiscretions of the other, and while the society agreed to finance the Working Men's Committee, its finance committee would only advance £10 per month; any other expenditure had to be specifically sanctioned, and could only be refunded against submitted receipts.² The Working Men's Committee made it clear to the committee that this attitude was resented,³ and Howell felt that it showed how little middle-class leaders understood working men. He wrote to George Potter:

"I really was under the impression that most of the preliminary arrangements as to finance had been arranged between you and Mr. Carvell Williams previous to the formation of the Committee. I certainly expected that the question of rent for the office and pay for office work had been mutually agreed upon. And yet it appeared to me from the observations of Mr. Williams that no such expense was expected. This seems incomprehensible to me. Did he really expect that we should create a movement involving a great amount of work, all of which was to be done by anyone? If you can undertake such extra work without extra help and extra pay, be it so. But the thing is preposterous and impossible...Now as to payment for loss of time; if these men are to be called from work, they must be paid. If not, let the gentlemen of the Liberation Society arrange to make us at right. 1 shilling for 'bus fare is nothing to some of these men but to some of our men it is material...Is it not wonderful how some men of what is called the middle class expect us to more than equal their contributions, not by work only, but by petty expenditure caused by that very work. More than ten per cent of my income, in addition to labour, has been devoted to this kind of work for more than 20 years. I wonder how many can say the same. I am not at all sure whether the arrangement to work as a Committee of the Liberation Society was a wise one. I fear it will hamper us terribly."⁴

The arrangement was to last until 1872, when it was to be reviewed. The Working Men's Committee published an address to the working class as a whole, pointing out that since Miall had raised the question of disestablishment in

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 18.IX.1871, f382
2. Ibid., 2.X.1871, f385
3. Ibid., 16.X.1871, f387
4. Howell to Potter 28.X.1871 Howell Papers Letter Book 5, f487

Parliament, it was for the whole nation to decide upon the validity of his case. In the course of the debate, Gladstone had informed Miall that before embarking upon parliamentary action, he must convince the majority of the nation. While the Liberation Society had begun this process,

"...the working men of Great Britain have never yet, as a body, pronounced any judgment on this great question: but it is felt that, after the broad challenge thrown down by the Premier, they can no longer, with respect either to him or themselves, refrain from a declaration of their honest and deliberate sentiments... It behoves the working men, therefore, to answer that appeal... and that not simply upon the purely numerical ground suggested by Mr. Gladstone...but also, and perhaps especially, with a view to the return of pledged candidates at the next general election."¹

The address went on to give seven reasons in support of disestablishment, similar to those propounded by Miall, and laying emphasis upon the socially divisive character of an establishment. It urged that branches of the committee should be set up in all large towns, so that, when Miall re-introduced the question, he would be able, "...to give to Mr. Gladstone's challenge a satisfactory and decisive answer."

The first meeting of the Working Men's Committee was held at the Cannon Street Hotel in November 1871. With Miall on the platform, Applegarth moved a resolution demanding the disestablishment of the Anglican Church:

"...the time has come when the working classes should use their political influence to secure such an alteration in the relations between Church and State as to put an end to the injustice and other evils of the existing system."²

He claimed that eight out of ten working men were in favour of disestablishment. Howell and Holding both discussed and welcomed the link between the Working Men's Committee and the Liberation Society, but insisted that the Working Men's Committee had no interest in sectarian quarrels; it was interested in disestablishment, "...solely upon its social and political grounds."³ Miall stated that this outlook was entirely compatible with the

1. Address of the Working Men's Committee for Promoting the Separation of Church and State Oct. 1871. Howell Papers. Packet labelled Church Affairs. Beehive, 21.X.1871, p10.
2. Beehive, 11.XI.1871
3. Ibid.

views of the Liberation Society. It was resolved to set up local committees; indeed, according to Howell, some were already in existence at Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, Nottingham, Oldham, Southampton, Wolverhampton and Weymouth.¹ Miall was greatly heartened by this meeting, seeing it as solid evidence of working-class support for his objectives, though he regarded the committee as an ally, who would, "...travel the same road...but work as a separate corps d'armée."² However, he admitted that as yet the London press did not consider disestablishment a practical question:

"As yet, the question of putting an end to Church Establishments is, with the London press, an abstract question - theoretically tenable it may be, but not socially and politically powerful, nor capable of exercising vast political influence."³

Potter and Howell travelled throughout England, addressing meetings at Brighton,⁴ Bradford,⁵ Leeds, where Potter claimed the meeting was disrupted by the middle-class church party, Kidderminster, Wolverhampton,⁶ Sheffield, Dewsbury, Norwich,⁷ Lincoln, Derby, Leicester,⁸ Newcastle, Darlington and Hull.⁹ Howell mentioned meetings, in addition to those above, at Liverpool, where he had to dodge an egg thrown from the audience,¹⁰ at Wigan where chairlegs were thrown, and at Sheffield where the speeches had to be abandoned. Potter reported upon the meetings to date to the Liberation Society, and it was noted that they had been "...well attended and had otherwise proved successful."¹¹ He proposed similar meetings in the future; the finance committee considered the proposal, and agreed to finance 20 meetings, on the understanding that the average cost would not rise. Meetings were arranged at Lincoln, Derby, Leicester, Chatham, Newcastle, Sunderland and Darlington.¹² The arrangements were reviewed

1. Beehive, 11.XI.1871. See also Liberation Society, Minute Book 29.I.1872 f414
2. Nonconformist, 8.XI.1871, p1089
3. Ibid.
4. Beehive, 18.XI.1871, pp12-13
5. Ibid., 25.XI.1871, p11
6. Ibid., 2.XII.1871, p11
7. Ibid., 27.I.1872, p14
8. Ibid., 24.II.1872, p10
9. Ibid., 9.III.1872; 16.III.1872
10. G. Howell, Mss. Autobiography
11. Liberation Society, Minute Book 29.I.1872, f414
12. Ibid., 12.II.1872, f418

by the finance committee in May,¹ and it reported to the executive committee that Potter and Howell had addressed meetings throughout the country. The meetings had been well attended, and the speeches "...well calculated to advance the Society's purpose." Working Men's committees had been formed in several towns, but none had so far engaged in active operations. It was agreed to continue the arrangement until April 30th 1873.² Later in the year, the Working Men's Committee proposed to extend its operations to agricultural areas, but the executive committee did not consider this expedient, and would not sanction any such extension of activity.³ By 1873, the collaboration was virtually at an end, though both Howell and Potter remained members of the committee of the Liberation Society. Howell was re-elected to the committee in 1874,⁴ but he and Potter took less and less part. In 1875, Howell attended only 7 meetings and Potter 3,⁵ while in 1876 Potter attended only one meeting, and Howell none at all.⁶ The society continued to look for new allies: in 1873, Carvell Williams attended an Agricultural Labourers' Conference at Leamington, with a view to promoting the disestablishment question in rural areas.⁷ However, when it was later suggested that Joseph Arch be employed as a lecturer, "...the Secretary was instructed to employ him occasionally only, and that as an experiment."⁸

Part of the difficulty had been the attitude of the Liberation Society leaders towards the working class leaders, and Howell evidently disliked its sectarian outlook. At a working men's meeting at Newcastle, the chairman insisted, "...the present meeting had no connection with the Liberation Society."⁹ The Beehive had been critical of Miall and other liberationists for failing to oppose the government over the appointment.

1. Liberation Society, Minute Book 13.V.1872, f449
2. Ibid., 3.VI.1872, ff452-453
3. Ibid., 9.XII.1872, f490
4. Howell to Carvell Williams, 15.V.1874. Howell Papers Letter Book 8
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 4.V.1875, f247
6. Ibid., 27.IV.1876
7. Ibid., 19.V.1873, f29
8. Ibid., 13.X.1879, f203. S.M. Ingham, "The Disestablishment Movement 1868-1874 p49
9. Beehive, 9.III.1872, p11

of Sir K. Collier as a judge of Common Pleas, an appointment of which the Beehive disapproved, and which showed, "...that the Nonconformists were too magnanimous to embrace any by-occasion of showing their dissatisfaction with the Government."¹ The fundamental difficulty in the way of close co-operation between the working-class leaders and the middle-class Liberation Society was the highly abstract character of the issue of disestablishment. It was too slender a basis for union unless as Chamberlain realised, it were combined with issues of more direct interest to the working classes, such as the status of Trades Unions. As John Morley had pointed out in 1867, civil and religious liberty as an issue was by now moribund.²

The Liberation Society continued to hold its own meetings, quite distinct from those of the Working Men's Committee: a different type of action was discussed, such as urging dissenters to withhold their electoral support from M.P.s who had opposed Miall's motion, even if that meant a Tory being elected.³ Miall was quite prepared for this consequence; so far as dissenters were concerned, Gladstone's government had completed its programme, and, as the Education Act demonstrated, would do nothing to assist them.

The proper business of dissenters was to work for the return of M.P.s pledged to disestablishment.⁴ Determined to renew parliamentary activity in 1872, the parliamentary committee conferred with Miall on the tactics to be adopted in the next session. Gladstone's challenge to Miall, to convert public opinion before making disestablishment a parliamentary issue, had obviously not been fully met, and the committee decided that Miall should keep the issue alive by moving the appointment of a Royal Commission which would examine, "...the origins, amount, and application of any property and revenues appropriated to the use of such Church."⁵ A conference was held in Manchester to arouse the support of dissenters. Joseph

1. Beehive, 24.II.1872, p9
2. Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1867, p364
3. Nonconformist, 8.XI.1871, p1094
4. Ibid., 22.XI.1871, pp1138, 1162
5. Liberation Society, Minute Book 1.I.1872

Chamberlain insisted they had been betrayed by Gladstone, and should withdraw their support from his government, both in Parliament and at elections.¹

A second conference was attended by representatives of the Congregationalists, Baptists, Unitarians, several Methodist bodies and the National Education League, in addition to the Liberation Society. Chamberlain reiterated his demand that dissenters withdraw their support from Gladstone, and hoped that Miall's motion would become an electoral issue. There was no reference to working-class support,² even though George Potter claimed, in the Fortnightly Review, that working men fully appreciated the force of Miall's reasoning.³

Miall's motion of 1872 was much milder than that of 1871; the Nonconformist hoped its restricted scope would result in increased Liberal support,⁴ while the Liberation Society's annual meeting was told of the abundance of working-class support.⁵ He introduced his motion on 2nd July 1872 claiming that in renewing the discussion, he was giving a lead to public discussion, for ultimately it was the mass of the electorate whom he must convince. The justification for an enquiry by a Royal Commission was the national character of the established church, which made it amenable to parliamentary scrutiny in the same way as any other institution maintained by public resources:

"...the Church of England, regarded as an Establishment, is a national institution. It is largely...sustained by national resources...In its connection with the State it belongs to the whole people of the State in the same way as the Army, the Navy, the Civil Service or the two Universities...The State, therefore...has a full right to inquire into the nature, amount and application of the property and revenues which it enjoys."⁶

The Church, he maintained, had nothing to fear from such an enquiry; indeed, there was more danger in concealment, which might lead to suspicion among

1. Nonconformist, 24.I.1872, p89
2. Ibid., 31.I.1872, p107
3. Fortnightly Review, Feb. 1872, ppl78-179
4. Nonconformist, 19.VI.1872, p635
5. Ibid., 2.V.1872. The Beehive concurred. Beehive, 27.IV.1872, p9
6. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCXII, p530

working men that the Church was solely preoccupied with its wealth.¹ The indications throughout Europe pointed to the inevitability of disestablishment, and there was a better chance of the process being carried out in a civilised manner if full and accurate information were available.

The debate had begun inauspiciously with an attempt to count out the House: it had not attracted the attendance of many members. Miall's own speech was temperate, but a virulent attack upon cathedrals by his seconder, Leatham, produced a more lively atmosphere. Whereas in 1871, Gladstone had given a sober reply to Miall's motion, on this occasion he was sarcastic and patronising. He informed opponents of the motion that they had overlooked one vital argument: "...if this Commission is appointed, we should get rid of the Hon. Member and his Motion for several years to come while this inquiry was pending."² There was no evidence produced, Gladstone claimed, to show that public opinion was in favour of disestablishment, and he assured the House that the Government would continue to oppose it.³ Miall's motion was lost by 295 votes to 94.

The Liberation Society again expressed its gratitude to Miall for presenting to Parliament its views upon Church property; an analysis of the division lists of 1871 and 1872 revealed that 129 members had supported disestablishment, and in 1872, Miall had gained 28 new supporters.⁴ The Dissenting Deputies expressed their thanks to Miall for his continuing efforts to achieve religious freedom and equality:

"...the success which attended his former efforts to obtain the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland... encourage the friends of religious liberty to apply the same principles to the established churches of England and Scotland."⁵

The Unitarian Herald felt that 94 votes was satisfactory support for an

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCXII, p533
2. Ibid., p573
3. Ibid., p578
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 3.VII.1872
5. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 25.VII.1872, f53

abstract issue,¹ while the Nonconformist derived encouragement from the fact that the Irish Church question had gained less support when Miall raised it in Parliament in 1856, yet the liberationists had triumphed in 1869.² The Beehive retained its confidence in the final outcome:

"...Mr. Miall has neither been snuffed out nor laid upon the shelf. He will re-appear next session, and session after session either personally or by successor, until the object to which he has dedicated himself shall be achieved."³

The only answer to Gladstone's taunts was for dissenters to make religious equality an issue at the next election, and to work for the return of M.P. pledged to disestablishment. A less encouraging reaction came from the Times: amending its view that Miall's ultimate success was inevitable, it claimed he was pursuing a lost cause. He had demonstrated no practical grievances for which the Church of England was responsible, which would make disestablishment a desirable experiment.⁴ It went on to accuse Miall of having no sympathy with the financial plight of Church of England parsons, "...living as he does in an atmosphere of millionaires."⁵ George Howell had observed a similar lack of sympathy on the part of the Liberation Society towards working men.

The Liberation Society was soon at work planning the resumption of its parliamentary activity. Miall thought it essential to keep the question before Parliament, and formulated another motion, in less conciliatory terms:

"That the political connection sustained by the State to the Churches established by law in the United Kingdom is based upon a violation of religious equality: and that it is required, no less by sound policy than by justice that, regard being had to all personal interests - that so far as they result from law, the support and ascendancy of those Churches should be put an end to."⁶

The committee agreed that this was the most suitable form of the motion;

1. Unitarian Herald, 12.VII.1872, p222-223
2. Nonconformist, 10.VII.1872, p709
3. Beehive, 6.VII.1872, p10
4. Times, 3.VII.1872, p11
5. Ibid., 4.VII.1872, p9
6. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.VII.1872

undertook to organise meetings in support of it, and decided upon a petitioning movement, to show that Miall's supporters were more than a vociferous minority.¹ The first such meeting was held at Birmingham in October 1872: it was attended by Miall, R.W. Dale, and Joseph Chamberlain. Miall's speech was remarkable for its conciliatory tone and its implicit rejection of the more militant approach of the Beehive. The disestablishment question, he insisted, was not yet an appropriate electoral issue, and should not be used as a test for candidates. It was not in the best interests of dissenters to break away from the Liberal party: it was expedient to educate Liberals, so that religious equality would become part of their platform.² He put this view to similar meetings in Manchester, Bradford and London.³ Support for the general campaign came from the Congregational Union, which urged all friends of religious liberty to support Miall.⁴ The Dissenting Deputies supported the motion, though they were divided about the wisdom of making it an electoral test, some fearing it would damage the Liberals;⁵ However, the Deputies set up a committee to organise petitions and meetings, and to lobby M.P.s in support of Miall.⁶

The approach advocated by the Beehive was altogether more militant. Arguing on the one hand that there was no issue at present before the public so important as disestablishment, and on the other hand, that Gladstone was kept in power by dissenting M.P.s, it deduced that the logical step for dissenters was to make their influence felt at elections, and to make religious equality a central issue.⁷ It took the ominous view that if nonconformist support for the Liberals was rewarded with such a measure as the 1870 Education Act:

1. Beehive, 14.IX.1872 p6
2. Times, 2.X.1872, p5. Nonconformist, 2.X.1872, pp997, 1003f. This advice was regarded as over-cautious. Congregationalist, Vol.I.Nov.1872, p698
3. Nonconformist, 16.X.1872, pp1045, 1048; Ibid., 12.II.1873, p156
4. Liberator, March 1873, p37
5. Ibid., Jan. 1873, p5
6. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 7.XI.1872, f56; 5.XII.1872, f60; 11.XII.1872, ff64-65.
7. Beehive, 5.X.1872, pp8-9

"...what encouragement is thus held out to other sections of the community to throw their weight with the same decision as these deluded Dissenters into the Ministerial scale?"¹

The annual meeting of the Liberation Society was more concerned with the possibility of a general election than with Miall's motion. It was agreed that disestablishment was unlikely to be an election issue: Miall's campaign was in a preliminary phase. However, Carvell Williams was encouraged by the success of the public meetings in favour of Miall's motion, and Miall spoke of widespread dissenting support.²

Miall introduced his motion on 16th May 1873; its substance was that the existence of an establishment was a violation of religious equality, imposed upon Parliament duties which it was incompetent to fulfil, deprived the established churches of the right of self-government, and caused divisions in society.³ He admitted that he did not expect to obtain a majority, but felt it right to persist, in order to enlighten public opinion. He examined the ways in which established churches, by their very existence, were inimical to religious equality; their members were privileged, and the churches had a favoured position in law. Religious equality was the logical outcome of Liberal policy since 1869 and the government could not, in consistency, reject its full implications:

"...I may be permitted...to suggest that religious equality is in strict keeping with the entire framework of Liberal policy which they have helped by past legislation to construct, and that, unready as they may be just now to give it the sanction of their vote, they will find themselves obliged before very long, either to fight against the natural and logical outcome of their own political principles, or manfully to go with them to their ultimate issues."⁴

The remainder of his speech was taken up with familiar arguments, and the subsequent debate was brief. Gladstone rose at an early stage, paid some routine compliments to Miall's sincerity and ability, but refused once more

1. Beehive, 30.XI.1872, p9
2. Nonconformist, 1.V.1873, pp426, 431
3. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCXVI, p16
4. Ibid., pp24-25

to accept that there was any considerable body of public support for disestablishment. He conceded the validity of some of Miall's criticisms of the establishment, but believed the Anglican Church could reform itself. He was not prepared to consider the case of the Irish Church a valid precedent for disestablishment in England.¹

Miall received disappointingly small support; his motion was lost by 356 votes to 61.² He obtained very little Irish support, and, apart from Bright and Fawcett, none from leading radicals.³ In a letter to the Times, Miall insisted he had suffered so heavy a defeat because the division had been called early;⁴ the Dissenting Deputies attributed his defeat to tactical manoeuvres,⁵ while the Nonconformist accused Gladstone of allying with the Conservatives to cut short the debate.⁶ Certainly, Gladstone's treatment of Miall caused offence to dissenters. Dr. Allon informed him that his reply to Miall had widened the breach between the government and its dissenting supporters. He described the schism as 'hopeless' and added: "...the speech has done a great deal to exacerbate it, not so much because of the position taken by you...but because of a certain tone of asperity and apparent intolerance." Coupled with the manoeuvres to curtail the debate, dissenters had the feeling of having been treated without consideration; Allon feared; "...the breakup of the Liberal party seems inevitable". He warned Gladstone that on every hand he found nonconformists ready to welcome the Tories to power.⁷ Gladstone, in reply, could not see what there was in his remarks to Miall to cause offence, but agreed, "...there may be much in your sombre anticipations."⁸

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series CCXVI p43
2. Nonconformist, 21.V.1873, p505
3. Times, 19.V.1873, p7 A.J. Mundella expressed the reaction of some radicals to such abstruse ideas: "I am utterly wearied and disgusted with hobby riders, and am becoming the sworn enemy of all abstractions... I am almost in the mood to hit out right and left at Fawcetts, Mialls, Herberts, Dilkes, 'et hoc genus omnes'." Quoted by W.H.G. Armytage, A.J. Mundella 1825-1897. The Liberal Background to the Labour Movement (London 1951) p118.
4. Times, 20.V.1873, p7
5. Dissenting Deputies, Minute Book 6.VI.1873, f82
6. Nonconformist, 28.V.1873, p537
7. Allon to Gladstone, 2.VII.1873 Gladstone Papers B.M.Add.Mss 44095, ff325-326
8. Gladstone to Allon, 5.VII.1873, Ibid., f327

Allon's fears were borne out by the tone of the Congregationalist, edited by the eminent nonconformist leader R.W. Dale: it argued that disestablishment was bound to be a key issue in the next general election, and Gladstone had behaved as he did to show that Miall had negligible support. Nonconformist electors now had no choice but to judge Liberal candidates by their attitude to religious equality.¹ Even the moderate British Quarterly Review granted that Gladstone's speech would embitter his relations with nonconformists, but felt he could only have behaved otherwise if he were prepared to make the question a public issue.² The Nonconformist maintained that the record of the Liberal government showed that Gladstone was the real enemy of religious equality, and nonconformists would have to abandon any hope of Liberal assistance in the future.³ The Liberation Society again announced its gratitude to Miall, and published a circular recommending dissenters to work in the constituencies to secure the election of suitable members since Parliament was demonstrably hostile to its ideals.⁴ The Liberator observed that a Tory government could have shown no greater determination to protect the Established Church, and in this respect, would be no worse than its predecessor.⁵

In November 1873, Miall announced that he would not contest his Bradford seat at the forthcoming general election. The Times maintained that his decision was attributable to his discouragement at the heavy defeats his disestablishment motions had suffered in Parliament: "Mr. Miall's public life has been...a failure because he has proposed...only negative aims."⁶ Miall himself claimed that the only factor in his decision was the size of the Bradford constituency, and did not preclude the possibility of his seeking a smaller constituency.⁷ Gladstone called a general election early

1. Congregationalist, Vol.II June 1873, pp379ff
2. British Quarterly Review, Vol.LVIII 1873 pp193, 213.
3. Nonconformist, 18.VI.1873, p611; 6.VIII.1873, p777
4. Liberation Society, Minute Book 19.V.1873. Liberator, July 1873, p124
5. Liberator, Sept. 1873, p153
6. Times, 10.XI.1873, p9
7. Nonconformist, 19.XI.1873, p1146. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp344-348

in 1874: in fiscal reform he attempted to find an issue which would reunite the Liberal party and its supporters.¹ It failed utterly to attract dissenting support: the Nonconformist admitted that religious equality was not a major issue in the election and the Liberation Society gave no clear directive upon the question.² Insofar as dissenters and the working classes coalesced around a particular issue, that issue was the Education Act rather than disestablishment. Even so, Joseph Chamberlain did not believe that the Education issue would preserve the links between these groups:

"I have long felt there is not enough force in the Education question to make it the sole fighting issue for our friends. From the commencement it has failed to evoke any great popular enthusiasm. Education for the ignorant cannot have the meaning that belonged to Bread for the Starving...the assistance of the working class is not to be looked for without much extension of the argument."³

It was improbable that disestablishment would provide the necessary extension.

The Liberals were defeated at the general election, and, although the Liberationists retained approximately ninety M.P.s, a major cause of defeat was nonconformist abstention:

"...the Government dissolved Parliament without having made peace with its Nonconformist allies. The result...was...the absence of that enthusiasm which helped to secure the great Liberal triumph of 1868."⁴

However, Dale and Miall remained the representatives of a comparatively small group of dissenters who were prepared to pursue disestablishment at the risk of destroying the Liberal party.⁵ J.J. Colman and Samuel Morley were typical of a larger section which sought to work within the Liberal party, and it was this view which triumphed after the débâcle of 1874; indeed, the majority or radical groups at this time reconsidered their relations with the Liberal party, and most decided to work within it. At the suggestion of C.S. Miall,

1. W.H. Maehl, "Gladstone, the Liberals, and the Election of 1874" Bulletin of the Institute of Hist. Research XXXVI 1963, pp53-69.
2. Liberator, Feb. 1874, pp17-18. Nonconformist, 4.II.1874, p97. S.M. Ingham, "The Disestablishment Movement 1868-1874" p55
3. J.L. Garvin, Life of Joseph Chamberlain i, 146
4. Liberator, March 1874, pp38-39.
5. D.A. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery p7

the Liberation Society adopted this policy in 1877,¹ though J.J. Colman, a member of the executive committee until 1875, particularly disliked its practice of extracting pledges to support disestablishment from parliamentary candidates.²

In a parliamentary sense, Miall's advocacy of disestablishment met with failure. He did not secure any considerable degree of support, and even leading dissenters became irritated with the question. Illingworth, a leading liberationist, recalled a rebuke by Bright in 1873:

"You and Miall add to our troubles by tormenting us with these Church questions. These annual motions add to our perplexities, though you haven't a hundred men in the House of Commons behind you."³

Gladstone felt able to adopt a fairly casual attitude towards Miall in the three debates, and support claimed by the Liberation Society did not materialise when it was needed. The lesson to be drawn from the disestablishment of the Irish Church was that, without government support, there could have been no success, and the depressing fact was that Miall obtained no ministerial support in any of the divisions on his motion. While Gladstone lost dissenting support in the general election of 1874, the Liberation Society was unable to benefit. Indeed, Miall's initial reaction to Gladstone's defeat was to blame, not his poor record on religious equality, nor the ill-feeling engendered by the Education Act, nor the action of the Liberation Society, but working-class militancy:

"The overbearing tone assumed by Trades Unions, the extensive strikes which have crippled many industrial interests: and the exclusive pretensions of various organisations of the working people, have largely co-operated with the prosperity of the country...in diffusing through a large proportion of the middle and upper classes of society a nervous apprehension of being presently brought under the domination of the less cultivated classes of the community."⁴

1. H. Hanham, Elections and Party Management pp119-124
2. H.C. Colman, Jeremiah James Colman: a Memoir p210-211
3. A. Illingworth, Fifty Years of Politics (Bradford 1905) p51
4. Nonconformist, 11.II.1874, p121. cf Fortnightly Review, Oct 1874, p405, where Joseph Chamberlain expressed a similar view.

He conceded that the actions of the government had dampened the ardour of nonconformists and caused resentment among them, and amplified his argument in a private letter to Illingworth:

"Talk of our disregard of Liberal interests: why, what earthly consideration towards them has he (Gladstone) displayed? I suspect he would have sacrificed all his friends to get a...commanding majority. It is well he has been rebuked by the disastrous issue of the general election - disastrous for him, I mean, not for us - not for any real good."¹

Understandable as his disillusion with the liberals may be, Miall's mistrust of the working classes, which was increasingly evident, made it inevitable that, as in the 1840s, it would be difficult for middle-class leaders to secure the support of the working classes. Miall believed that the working men should concentrate upon disestablishment in its religious and equitable aspects, rather than its financial aspect. Addressing a banquet held in his honour at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which was attended by representatives of the Liberal party, the Liberation Society and working men, he gave a highly idealised version of the motives which should lead working men to fight for disestablishment. Very little remained to be done by governments in the spheres of commercial or social reform, he asserted, and it would be a moral exercise to engage in a campaign from which no material reward could be expected:

"All the principles which belong to disestablishment and disendowment are of a refining character...We in this country are material enough. We have pursued commercial ends in our legislation, until we can declare that we have almost all the measures in that direction that we shall ever require - and perhaps we have somewhat lowered the tone of our minds in the earnestness with which we have prosecuted mere secular engagements...There will be nothing so improving to the great working classes who have been brought into the fresh enjoyment of the franchise, as to set them at once in pursuit of an enterprise that will lift their minds a little above wages and such like, and place them upon principles of higher value: and I am certain of this, that they will be the first to rejoice at having a question put before them which will expand their minds, which will exercise their judgments and strengthen them, and which will give tone to the best sympathies of their own nature."²

1. Miall to Illingworth 22.II.1874, Holden Illingworth Letters (Bradford 1927) pp493-496.
2. Nonconformist, 29.XI.1871, p1164

While Miall was indulging in this type of rhetoric, with its apparent absence of understanding of working-class interests, Howell and Potter were trying to emphasise the secular aspects of disestablishment. John Morley warned the Liberation Society at its Triennial Conference: "... unless they were prepared to make the movement a national and political one, it would fail."¹ R.W. Dale was convinced that it would require a great national political effort to bring about disestablishment, and all sense of exclusiveness would have to be abandoned; for him, the church question was the next great political issue, and he hoped that the working classes could be induced to give their support.² Joseph Chamberlain was perhaps the most perceptive analyst; he pointed out to Dr. Allon that dissenters had not shown themselves sympathetic to working-class grievances, and, in return the working classes had little innate sympathy with dissenting principles:

"...the present political system of Dissenters is not satisfactory...they have ceased to combine cordially with the working classes without whose active assistance further advances in the direction of religious equality are impossible."

He highlighted in particular the lack of sympathy shown with the demands of agricultural labourers, and with the demands of Trades Unions:

"Unless this is altered in the future, such questions as Disestablishment and Disendowment will be indefinitely postponed, as the artisan voter can see little difference between Caesar and Pompey: and looking at the whole affair as a mere squabble between Church and Chapel, will take no interest in the matter."

In the general election of 1874, Liberals had done well only where they appealed to working-class electors, and Chamberlain called upon Allon to use the British Quarterly Review, which he edited, to further the cause of union between nonconformists and the working classes.³ In an article entitled "The liberal party and its leaders", Chamberlain developed his view of future political strategy for nonconformists: the shift of Liberal

1. Liberator, May 1874, p88

2. Fortnightly Review, Feb.1875, p303; Jan.1876, p151; Feb.1876, p305

3. J. Chamberlain to Dr. Allon 13.II.1874, in A.Peel(ed) Letters to a Victorian Editor (London 1929) pp43-44

policy since 1868 had left both dissenters and working classes dissatisfied, and these groups must unite:

"...the discontent of the working classes assures their alliance and support to the Nonconformist party. They will not forget the ties which bind them to the non-established sects, whose leaders have invariably been on the popular side in every previous contest."¹

The Church of England was still the opponent of progress and reform, but a basic programme for uniting nonconformists and the working classes must include, Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools and Free Labour.² Working men would support dissenting demands for disestablishment since they would hope to see church property devoted to more popular use; as a programme, it would arouse more enthusiasm than the redress of the redistal grievances of nonconformists. This was more realistic than Miall's appeal to the highmindedness of the working classes, and the lack of understanding and sympathy displayed by the Liberation Society. The Religious Census of 1851 should have given fair warning that the support of the working classes for disestablishment was unlikely to be secured by an appeal to principle, for while its returns made it possible to argue that less than half the nation belonged to the Established Church, Mann's own analysis revealed that the mass of working men had little attachment to any denomination.³

Miall's whole philosophy clashed with Chamberlain's outlook. Whereas Miall was opposed to government interference, Chamberlain regarded government as an appropriate agency for the remedy of abuses. While Chamberlain was prepared to pay regard to the demands of the working classes, Miall's view of their position was as the obedient cohorts following the lead given by middle-class reformers, with whom they had interests in common. Their grievances would be heeded insofar as it suited their middle-class mentors.

1. J. Chamberlain, "The Liberal Party and its Leaders" Fortnightly Review Sept. 1873, p293. See also J.L. Garvin, Life of Joseph Chamberlain i, 218-219. P. Fraser Joseph Chamberlain (London 1966) pp20-21.
2. Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1873, p294. The radical Frederic Harrison took a similar view. Fortnightly Review, Oct. 1873, pp555-556, and Chamberlain later wrote that Gladstone must commit the Liberals to at least part of his four point programme if the Liberals were ever to regain power. Fortnightly Review, Oct. 1874, pp417ff.
3. K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851" p86. This was the burden of one of Miall's own books, The British Churches in relation to the British People. (London 1849)

This attitude had proved the downfall of the Complete Suffrage Union in 1842, but the tone of Miall's utterances some thirty years later reveals little change. Ironically, he seems to have thought that the proper relationship of the working classes to the middle classes in political matters was precisely similar to that of dissenters to Whigs in the 1840s, and to which he had vehemently objected. In the eyes of potential allies, Miall and the Liberation Society had failed to raise the disestablishment question above the level of sectarian argument, or the redress of dissenters' grievances. It was difficult to show what practical advantages would accrue from it, and in the absence of practical gains, there were those who felt the danger to the Liberal party unjustified. On the other hand, there were those who found the approach of the society unduly secular, too far removed from religious principle. One such was Dr. Dale:

"...the platform of the Liberation Society was not altogether to his mind. He sometimes found himself in uncongenial company...¹ What he heard at meetings often jarred and sometimes offended."

If the society could win the support of neither Dale nor Chamberlain, despite their approval of its fundamental principle, the difficulty of securing the necessary allies would be insuperable.

The agitation for disestablishment continued after Miall's retirement from active politics. Dr. Dale and Dr. Guinness Rogers disassociated themselves from a plan for disestablishment drawn up by the Liberation Society in 1876,² while the Dissenting Deputies discussed a plan of their own in 1877.³ That the question was still a live issue is evident from the testimony of Lord Granville, who wrote to Gladstone in 1877 to inform him of the electoral situation in Bradford: "...they do not care twopence about Eastern Question, County Franchise or anything else but Miall and disestablishment."⁴ The

1. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale p378 . See also R.W. Dale, "The Disestablishment Movement" Fortnightly Review March 1876, p339
2. A.W.W. Dale Life of R.W. Dale p386
3. B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies p397
4. A. Ramm(ed) The political correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876-1886 (Oxford 1962) i, 51.

society gained the support of intellectual radicals such as John Morley and Frederic Harrison. Harrison records that he worked for the society from 1875 to 1877, and acknowledged his debt to Miall, Morley, Chamberlain, Carvell Williams and Illingworth. In addition to lecturing and preparing pamphlets, he drafted a bill to disestablish the Church of England in 1878. He believed that the movement lost its impetus after 1878, and degenerated into a struggle for mastery between evangelical dissent and the Established Church, in which the latter regained much of its popular support:¹

E.A. Freeman inquired of Dr. Allon why the Liberation Society allowed its cause to be pleaded by an "atheistical mountebank" such as Harrison.²

The Bulgarian agitation of 1876 saw a great upsurge of dissenting effort in collaboration with the Liberal party. Miall believed it was entirely spontaneous, and considered:

"It is by no means improbable that in some such manner as this the problem of disestablishment and disendowment may be ultimately solved - solved, perhaps, much sooner than is generally anticipated."

All that the Liberation Society could do was to prepare public opinion, assisted in this task by the growing intolerance of the Church of England:

"The breath has not yet come which is destined to convert a silent opinion into an active and germinating force. We know not whence it will come, nor in what precise form."³

However, Dr. Guinness Rogers felt that the Bulgarian agitation distracted attention from disestablishment,⁴ and by the 1880s, the question of Ireland had superseded that of disestablishment.

Miall's contribution had been to make the state church question into a political issue. When he began his political career in 1841, it attracted scarcely any interest. When he retired from public life in 1874, he had

1. F. Harrison Autobiographic Memoir (London 1911) ii, 294-295
2. E.A. Freeman to Dr. Allon 19.IV.1878, A. Peel, Letters to a Victorian Editor p129.
3. Nonconformist, 13.IX.1876, p905
4. J. Guinness Rogers, Autobiography (London 1903) p214

brought the question to a point where, "...the only effective resistance is based on the doctrine that 'the country is not governed by logic'."¹

The Liberation Society existed to promote it, Parliament had discussed it, and prominent leaders in the 1870s thought it the major political issue.

But the final triumph eluded Miall and his successors. Dale discerned in him, "...a rare remoteness and detachment from the visible order,"² and

such a quality was required to pursue disestablishment as a theoretical grievance. Guinness Rogers showed that the practical evils for which

establishment was responsible were few and far between, and this made it more difficult to unite even dissenters.³ Dr. Fairbairn considered that

the absence of dissenting disabilities made dissent more difficult and less effective.⁴ While in the year of Miall's death, the British

Quarterly Review commented,

"It would be difficult to find an intelligent politician or clergyman, or observer of any class who does not deem it (disestablishment) impending,"⁵

the question failed to gain, or retain the interest of political leaders and faded from public view.

1. British Quarterly Review, quoted in Liberator, Feb. 1874, p23
2. A.W.W. Dale, Life of R.W. Dale p368
Bright had detected another aspect of this trait in Miall's character much earlier. He told Cobden in 1841: "I will write to Miall just to hint that he should not lose sight of the practical, but he is greatly tempted to do so from the circumstance that I suspect he finds it a great deal easier to write on a theoretical point than on facts with which probably he is but imperfectly acquainted."
Bright to Cobden, 9.X.1841. Bright Papers BM Add.Mss 43383, f20
3. J. Guinness Rogers, "Social Aspects of Disestablishment" The Nineteenth Century Vol.I May 1877, p456
4. J.F. Glaser, "Nonconformity and the Decline of Liberalism" American Historical Review Vol.63 1957/58, p361
5. British Quarterly Review, LXXIII 1881, p156

CONCLUSION

In addition to his special interests, Miall was involved in a number of other questions, of general interest to liberals and radicals. He was not a supporter of temperance movements, for while he valued individual restraint, he would not countenance legal compulsion. It was an unwarranted intrusion of government, as law was no agent of true morality.

Thus he was critical of the efforts of the United Kingdom Alliance to secure legal backing for its temperance campaign,¹ or to enforce abstinence by legal process. In taking this stand, Miall was following the tradition of seventeenth-century Puritanism, which, while advocating voluntary temperance, was opposed to prohibitive legislation.² Miall's dislike of this type of compulsion accorded with the stand taken by radical and nonconformist leaders such as Cobden, Bright, Baines, Cowen and Samuel Morley.³ However, Miall was unable to ignore the drink question in his political career; as Dr. Vincent has shown, the attitude of a number of Rochdale electors in 1857 was shaped by Miall's conduct in relation to temperance legislation.⁴ With regard to sabbatarian legislation, Miall took up a similar position; if Sunday entertainments were curtailed by law, "...there would be no more religion in consequence of the arrangement than there was before."⁵

Throughout his career, he was an opponent of capital punishment. The spectacle of public executions simply brutalised the onlookers, and legalised killing by the state was unlikely to increase respect for either life or law.⁶

"Protective justice, not retributive, is the justice which the state ought to administer between men and men: and it is clear that this is more effectually accomplished by the certainty, than by the severity, of the punishment."⁷

1. Nonconformist, 16.XI.1853, p926. See also Ibid., 12.VIII.1846, p549; 26.VIII.1846, p581; 26.V.1847, p397; 2.XI.1853, p887.
2. B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians p87.
3. Ibid., pp287-288, 293f, 385
4. J.R. Vincent, "The electoral sociology of Rochdale" Economic History Review Vol.16 1963 pp76-90. esp. p77
5. E. Miall, The British Churches in relation to the British People ppl67f See also Nonconformist, 25.XI.1846, p789; 27.X.1852, p837; 20.II.1856, ppl13.
6. Nonconformist, 17.XI.1841, p537; Ibid. 1.II.1843, p73
7. Ibid., 1.I.1845, pp8-9

When he contested the parliamentary seat of Southwark in 1845, Miall did not hesitate to declare himself an abolitionist,¹ and in the next year, addressed an abolitionist meeting at Finsbury, where he argued that retributive justice was contrary to the spirit of Christianity.² He did not consider capital punishment an effective deterrent, and it precluded the possibility of reform, which he believed to be the main purpose of punishment.³ Furthermore, he was deeply concerned at the possibility of error.⁴ As an alternative, he proposed life imprisonment; commenting on the death sentence in a particular instance, he wrote, "...a hard and degrading doom for life would have been the meetest reward."⁵ Miall particularly admired the crusade of Charles Dickens against the death penalty, but deprecated any compromise such as that of carrying out executions in private: reform and repentance would still be precluded and the task of abolition would become more difficult, a view shared by another noted abolitionist, John Bright.⁶ As a realist, Miall was gradually forced to concede that the most he could hope for was the ending of public executions;⁷ his dislike of the death penalty remained as strong as ever: "...experience does not manifest the superior efficacy of death punishments. The crime of murder is becoming alarmingly frequent."⁸ A royal commission on capital punishment proposed the ending of public executions, though a minority, which included Bright, had stood out for total abolition.⁹ Miall accepted that in the present state of public opinion, no more could be expected,¹⁰ and when private execution became the rule in 1868, he commented:

"So long as the extreme penalty is inflicted upon murderers, it is far better that no halo should be cast around their last moments...if the gallows have any moral influence in deterring from crime, it will be far more effectual if murderers are allowed to die in that solemn silence which befits the occasion."¹¹

1. Nonconformist, 3.IX.1845, p614
2. Ibid., 28.X.1846, p726
3. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity Ch.XIX. Nonconformist, 17.III.1847, p165
4. Nonconformist, 8.XI.1848, p855
5. Ibid., 11.IV.1849, p287
6. E.O. Tuttle The Crusade against Capital Punishment in Great Britain (London 1961) p15. See also, Nonconformist, 21.XI.1849, p927; 23.I.1856, p55
7. Nonconformist, 14.V.1856, p343
8. Ibid., 21.XI.1860, p931
9. E.O. Tuttle, The Crusade against Capital Punishment p18
10. Nonconformist, 27.XII.1865, p1043
11. Ibid., 19.VIII.1868, p820

Ultimately, Miall did not believe that capital punishment could be abolished until governments ceased to indulge in expensive mass homicide, through war.¹

Miall's views on punishment in general were reasonably enlightened. He hoped transportation to penal settlements would cease, as it neither reformed criminals nor protected society.² Punishment could only be justified if it reformed criminals, as well as penalising them, and if it protected society by deterring men from crime:

"In this respect, no government has been more heedless than our own. Whether in our jails, or penal settlements, all the gradations of vice have been indiscriminately heaped together and left to putrify, until society is exposed to the chances of a moral pestilence."³

The root causes of crime, he believed, were pauperism, unemployment and urban overcrowding, and they could be alleviated by free trade, which would stimulate economic growth: "Crime is seldom beloved for its own sake...

Give criminals a feasible chance of righting themselves and how many a one would leap to avail himself of it."⁴ The rehabilitation of prisoners would be facilitated if they were given productive work and some measure of industrial training to occupy them,⁵ while better facilities for education would curb the incidence of juvenile crime.⁶ Penal institutions exclusively for young offenders should be set up, where they would live at the expense of their parents, and avoid contamination by hardened criminals.⁷ Miall welcomed the formation of the National Reformatory Union, which, operating upon a voluntary and non-sectarian basis, would provide institutions to reform, rather than punish youthful offenders, whose lapses into crime were often the result of parental neglect.⁸ Miall's one fear, as he told Parliament, was that parents would send out their children to commit some small offence, in order that they would be provided for at the expense of

1. Nonconformist, 20.III.1878, pp270-271

2. Ibid., 9.VI.1847, p429

3. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity Ch. XX Nonconformist, 5.I.1848, p1

4. Nonconformist, 6.XII.1848, p935

5. Ibid., 24.I.1849, p67

6. Ibid., 7.XI.1849, p887

7. Ibid., 6.VII.1853, p539; 10.X.1855, p749

8. Ibid., 27.VIII.1856, p643

others.¹ Miall's views on foreign affairs closely followed those of John Bright and other leading radicals. The Nonconformist was deeply critical of the 'Opium War', and hoped that a Christian nation would not, without protest, allow it to be said that such deeds were carried out with its approval.² Trade, Miall believed, was a factor for peace, and peace would best be preserved if governments refrained from interfering in the affairs of other nations. One of the reasons for his dislike of Palmerston, whom he referred to in this context as 'Meddlesome Matty' was his disposition so to interfere.³ An active foreign policy was often the pretext for increased expenditure upon armaments, and it was always a possibility that an insecure ruling class would use a real or alleged foreign danger, such as the fear of French invasion, to build up the armed forces in case of domestic disorder.⁴ When in the 1850s a clash between Russia and Turkey seemed inevitable, Miall considered the prospect of a Russian occupation of Constantinople preferable to that of European war;⁵ Russia could not threaten British interests, while war would damage trade, and delay domestic reforms.⁶ As M.P. for Rochdale, Miall declared his opposition to the Crimean War: the government, he claimed would be unable to exercise proper control over either supplies, or military operations.⁷ He did not oppose war on principle; it was justifiable as a means of defence against aggression,⁸ but this war he regretted because it was unnecessary. Since it had broken out, and since Britain was involved, it should be finished as efficiently as possible; he had nothing but contempt for the Charge of the Light Brigade.⁹ The disasters of the war were attributable to aristocratic domination of the army, and a system of patronage which permitted the appointment of incompetent

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates 3rd series CXXXII, p448

2. Nonconformist, 13.X.1841, p451; 16.III.1842, p168

3. Ibid., 30.IX.1846, p660; 16.VI.1847, p444; 9.XII.1857, p972

4. Ibid., 29.XII.1847, p908; 22.IX.1852, p747

5. Ibid., 13.VII.1853, p559; 14.IX.1853, p738

6. Ibid., 5.X.1853, p798.

7. Ibid., 1.II.1854, p102

8. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity Ch.XXII. Nonconformist, 19.I.1848, p29

9. Nonconformist 15.XI.1854, p951; 24.I.1855, p64.

commanders.¹ He supported Roebuck's demand for an inquiry into the conduct of the war, which led to the resignation of Aberdeen.² Similarly, in 1857, he was one of a number of radicals who supported Cobden's motion condemning the bombardment of Canton, a motion upon which the government was defeated.³ Cobden's commercial treaty with France was hailed as the harbinger of peace, and the means of reducing military expenditure.⁴

Apart from his vote against Palmerston over the Canton affair and his membership of a deputation to Paris to congratulate Lamartine upon the foundation of the Second Republic in 1848, a deputation which had its origins in a meeting to oppose increased military expenditure,⁵ the only active part Miall played in foreign affairs was in support of the work of the Peace Society. This was a predominantly Quaker group, whose object was to induce governments to submit disputes to arbitration rather than have recourse to war. Miall addressed meetings organised by the society, and generally supported its objectives without going to the length of condemning war absolutely. Distrusting diplomacy, he supported Cobden's view that contact between nations was of greater importance than contact between governments, for while the former normally led to tension and war, the latter led to trade and peaceful intercourse.⁶ He informed a meeting organised by the Peace Society:

"The settlement of international differences by arbitration has already become sufficiently frequent to prove that it might be universal. The prejudices of the oligarchy and the interests of the military profession are the only obstacles in the way."⁷

At the international Peace Congress held in Paris in 1849, Miall developed these ideas, and went on to condemn war as a misuse of human energies and

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp191f. Nonconformist, 5.XII.1855, p870
2. Nonconformist, 31.I.1855, p87; 14.II.1855, p127
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p216. Nonconformist 7.I.1857, p11; 4.III.1857, p171. See also J.R. Vincent, "The Electoral Sociology of Rochdale" Economic History Review Vol.16. 1963, p86
4. Nonconformist, 25.I.1860, p71
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p136f; Nonconformist, 8.III.1848, p159; 22.III.1848, p195.
6. E. Miall, The Politics of Christianity Ch.XXIII. Nonconformist, 2.II.1848, p61.
7. Nonconformist, 27.IX.1848, p734

resources. The energies which were now misapplied to conflict between nations could be better employed in overcoming the obstacles to social reform:

"For himself, he had no doubt about the attainment of their object. They had a principle of eternal and immutable truth to stand upon, and on such a principle, once ascertained, he, for one, would rather plant his feet, even if he felt the whole world shrinking beneath them, than join in the temporary shout of triumph with those who embraced a falsehood."¹

In the next year, he addressed a similar meeting at Frankfurt.² On the brink of the Crimean War, Miall had engaged himself to attend a Peace Conference at Manchester, but was prevented from doing so by ill-health. The Nonconformist criticised the increasing expenditure upon armaments, and hoped that the Peace Society would check popular demands for war.³ However, Miall informed his Rochdale constituents that he was not a member of the Peace Society,⁴ though he deplored the possibility of a European war. If war came, "...we must go at it vigorously...It is of no use to hit, unless you can hit hard, and unless you can hit home."⁵ As the war was drawing to a close, Miall formed part of a deputation which called upon Palmerston demanding the cessation of hostilities, and the setting up of international machinery of arbitration.⁶ At a later date, he demanded that the Trent incident be dealt with in this manner.⁷ During the American Civil War, Miall supported the Union, regarding its preservation, and the ending of slavery, as a legitimate war aim.⁸

The Times dismissed Miall's public life as a failure, and claimed he was retiring from Parliament in despair at having achieved none of his aims.⁹

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, p147. Nonconformist 29.VIII.1849, p686
As well as middle-class radicals such as Miall and Cobden, the Peace Congress also attracted Robert Lowery and Henry Vincent. The radical William Linton regarded the proposals for arbitration as being the international version of laissez-faire.
F.B. Smith Radical Artisan, William James Linton 1812-97 (Manchester 1973) p90.
2. Nonconformist, 21.VIII.1850, p679; 28.VIII.1850, pp693,698,701.
3. Ibid., 2.II.1853, p98
4. Ibid., 1.II.1854, p102
5. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p190
6. Nonconformist 19.III.1856, pp183,185
7. Ibid., 24.XII.1861, p1030
8. Ibid., 4.XI.1863, p886
9. Times, 10.XI.1873

Certainly his ultimate ambition, the disestablishment of the Church of England had not been realised, though for some time after his retirement, many thought it was not beyond the bounds of possibility. Nor did he achieve any public recognition for those aspects of disestablishment which were achieved; it was Gladstone who disestablished the Church of Ireland; if any dissenter received the credit for university reform, it was Heywood rather than Miall. Parliamentary reform was the result of Disraeli's manoeuvrings, while the attempt by nonconformists to modify Forster's Education Act was a failure. There was no successful cause to which Miall's name could be attached, and even the principle of voluntarism, which was at the basis of his thought, was being eroded by the time he quitted political life. On this level, the judgment of the Times has validity, but on the less public level, it is wide of the mark. It may be that successes desired by Miall were achieved by other men, but his ceaseless work behind the scenes helped create the forces necessary for success. Further, more than forty years as editor of an influential and respected weekly newspaper can scarcely be dismissed as failure.

The influence of the Nonconformist is difficult to assess. Both Cobden and Bright were worried by its criticisms of the Anti-Corn Law League in the 1840s. Bright informed Cobden that he had written to Miall, warning him not to discourage the League by harping upon its lack of success.¹ Cobden informed Villiers that he had helped found the Nonconformist to advocate the separation of Church and State, not to damage Free Trade: "If that paper falls into the querulous wiry tones of the Spectator (which it seems likely to do) it will have no influence upon parties of any kind."² One historian credits Miall with driving Dr. Vaughan from the editorship of the Eclectic Review, and replacing him by Price, whose views were more to Miall's taste.³

1. Bright to Cobden, 13.X.1841. Bright Papers. BM Add.Mss 43383, f23.
2. Cobden to Villiers, 19.I.1842. Cobden Papers. BM Add.Mss 43662, ff55-58.
3. E. Halévy A History of the English People 1841-1852 The Age of Peel and Cobden (London 1947) p339.

This probably exaggerates Miall's powers, but the Nonconformist was influential as the organ of the radical wing of nonconformity, criticising the temporising attitude of dissenting leaders, their passive spirit, their desire for social acceptance and their anxiety lest a militant approach offend their Whig allies.¹ The Nonconformist was a political journal:

"Under cover of making war against clericalism, embodied in the worship of the Establishment, it spoke of nothing but free trade, the franchise and the individual's political rights, and thus, instead of making Radicalism Christian, it ended by secularising Christianity."²

Even if this assessment does less than justice to the varied contents of the Nonconformist over forty years, its achievements were political rather than spiritual. It played a vital part in the process of uniting many of the sections of nonconformity upon the basis of principle in the 1840s, and making them into an effective political force. Under Miall's guidance and influence, they became significant in parliamentary terms, and were backed by one of the most effective and professionally organised pressure groups of the mid-nineteenth century, the Liberation Society,³ in whose foundation and development Miall had played a crucial part. The Times was probably justified in denying Miall public credit, but its judgment overlooked Miall's work as a creator of public opinion and an organiser of pressure groups, a significant role in the nineteenth-century political process.

Miall's career is not wholly typical of nineteenth-century nonconformist politicians. He had risen to prominence through the Independent ministry, and subsequently made his name as a radical journalist and politician. He retained, in public at least, a thrusting and forceful personality, and a total hostility to compromise, particularly over matters of principle.⁴

1. J. Guinness Rogers, Autobiography pp157-159
2. E. Halévy, The Age of Peel and Cobden p339
3. M. Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties (London 1902) i, 564. E.J. Feuchtwanger, Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party. (Oxford 1968) p191
4. Liberator, June 1881, p97

This intransigence distinguished him from leading dissenters such as Jeremiah Colman or Samuel Morley. They were much wealthier than Miall, and less disposed to support a campaign against the principle of establishment when the practical grievances of dissenters were being removed. Indeed, once the Irish Church had been disestablished, Morley resigned from the Liberation Society.

Disestablishment was largely a theoretical issue by the time Miall raised it in Parliament: even if he were successful, dissenters would not benefit in any practical way. It had political validity only so long as there were practical grievances which could be attributed to the existence of an establishment: when it became apparent in the 1850s that Parliament was prepared to accede to the demands of dissenters, there was no longer a practical case for disestablishment. It would not remedy the sense of social deprivation felt by some dissenters, for, as a modern study has shown, the 'aristocracy' of evangelical dissent could gain social acceptance by co-operation with wealthy or aristocratic Anglicans in philanthropic activities, by marriage into Anglican families, or by adoption of the Anglican faith.¹ Wealthy dissenters consequently had diminishing sympathy with Miall's criticism of the Establishment on social grounds. Furthermore, some evangelical dissenters, such as George Williams,² or Samuel Morley, who was, "...too practical a man to care for, or to take part in, controversies between Christians,"³ saw the existence of an establishment as a safeguard against infidelity or popery.

1. C. Binfield, George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. A study in Victorian Social attitudes (London 1973) pp34, 202, 238
Walter Bagehot noted the tendency of increasing wealth and social rise to lead to membership of the Established Church: "So subtle and so strong are the influences of life and society, of rank and homage and luxury - so feeble the strength of loose opinion, that few families resist the former long: hereditary wealth, in a generation or two, very conscientiously retreats to the religion of the wealthy." ed. N.St.J. Stevas, The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot (London 1974) vii, 336. See also K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England. (London 1963) p73
2. C. Binfield, George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. p205
3. E. Hodder, Life of Samuel Morley p494

As a political question, disestablishment had a limited appeal, confined to those who were prepared to sever the links between nonconformists and the Liberal party. It was only the extreme wing of dissent which felt that, after 1870, Gladstone's government could render no further service to dissenters, and was hence undeserving of their support. Many dissenters were disappointed by the Education Act of 1870, but the majority was prepared to heal the breach. Outside the ranks of the Liberation Society, Miall gained little support for disestablishment, either from dissenters, or from liberals or radicals. Moreover, Miall failed to appreciate the increasing degree of co-operation between dissenters and Anglicans in the field of philanthropy; the resulting tendency to break down sectarian barriers made it more difficult to attract support for disestablishment.¹

Over a range of politico-religious questions, Miall was not representative of the views of the majority of evangelical dissent. He refused to become involved with anti-catholic agitation either in 1845 or in 1851;² he was not prepared to give his support either to the Evangelical Alliance or to any specifically denominational body, and he took no part in the Rivulet controversy of 1855,³ save as an advocate of freedom of speech. While, like Robert Lowery, he believed in the importance of the day of rest,⁴ he would not support sabbatarian legislation; likewise, though an advocate of personal temperance, he opposed temperance legislation. He was not prepared to see morality enforced by law or government, for to concede this would weaken his case against establishments, besides being alien to his laissez-faire outlook in politics.⁵

1. C. Binfield, George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. pp261ff
See also D. Owen, English Philanthropy 1660-1960 (Oxford 1965) pl65
2. A. Miall, Edward Miall pl65
3. Ibid., pp206-211. See also C. Binfield, George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. p204
4. B. Harrison & P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery" p525.
5. Hostility to temperance legislation was not necessarily typical of Liberationists: as Dr. Harrison has shown, between 1833 and 1872, 36 prominent teetotalers were involved with the Liberation Society. B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians pl74. Edward Baines was opposed to temperance legislation on grounds similar to Miall's; he would not concede the right of the state to compel abstinence. J.R. Lowerson, The Political Career of Sir Edward Baines 1800-1890 (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds, 1965) p250.
B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians p241

In a broader context, Miall was prominent among those middle-class leaders who attempted to combine their efforts with those of the working classes. He appreciated that Chartists and dissenters had interests in common in the early 1840s sufficient to make co-operation a possibility, even if he underestimated the differences of view over leadership, strategy and even semantics.¹ Chartists such as Robert Lowery and Vincent responded to Miall's overtures: Lowery, under the influence of David Urquhart, deprecated violence, and urged his colleagues to seek middle-class support,² while Vincent became a collaborator of Miall, both in the Complete Suffrage Union and in the Liberation Society. They were representative of the wing of Chartism which increasingly co-operated with middle-class leaders in reforming causes; Miall, Vincent and Lowery were all members of Lovett's Peoples' League,³ and there was co-operation between middle and working-class groups in other fields, facilitated by improved material conditions in the 1850s.⁴ Later, Miall renewed his approach, through Howell, Applegarth and the National Reform League, but in each case, while the moderate leadership was disposed to co-operate, this was not necessarily true of the rank and file.⁵ For a while, Miall seemed to secure the support of working-class leaders for his disestablishment campaigns, but, as Joseph Chamberlain realised, disestablishment did not offer a broad enough basis for class unity. However, both Miall and some working-class leaders were striving for a link between the working-class movements and the Liberal party, and in this sense Miall may be considered a forerunner of the Lib.Lab. alliance, which came to fruition in 1868.⁶

1. B. Harrison & P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery." pp504-505, 532.
2. Ibid., pp507, 514-517. Henry Solly condemned the physical force Chartists who rejected co-operation with middle-class leaders; he supported the foundation of Working Men's Clubs as a non-political means of healing the rift between middle and working classes. R.N. Price, "The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology." Victorian Studies Vol.XV no.2 Dec. 1971, pp117-147 See also B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians p337
3. J.T. Ward, Chartism p220. P. Hollis (ed) Pressure from without p106 n6
4. B. Harrison & P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery." pp532-534. J.T. Ward, Chartism p160.
5. B. Harrison & P. Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery." p531. J.T. Ward, Chartism pp159, 171, 173.
6. R. Harrison, Before the Socialists p209

While Miall's public personality is well documented, it is difficult to re-construct his more intimate nature. His son notes that the pressures of journalism and public life prevented him from maintaining a large private correspondence.¹ Letters on matters of public business are normally brief, though friendly, and their relatively small number can possibly be explained by the fact that, living and working in central London, it was easy for him to make verbal contact with journalists, politicians and dissenting leaders.

It is evident, both from the letters preserved by his son, and from brief personal references by friends, that Miall's private nature belied his popular image as a thrusting and ruthless agitator. Heavily bearded and bespectacled, of middle height and slim build, he did not strike his friends as an archetypal demagogue.² The son of a merchant, he rose to prominence in the Independent ministry, and if his position as a leader of dissent in Leicester, and later as a radical journalist in London, compelled him to adopt a thrusting and forceful character in public, perceptive contemporaries such as Dr. McKerrow realised that beneath the public image was a shy and sensitive personality.³ Miall admitted to an audience at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1871 that only the demands of conscience kept him in public life,⁴ while he confessed to Charles Sturge the distaste he had experienced in soliciting funds to found the Nonconformist.⁵ That he did not lack courage and determination is evident from the fact that he gave up a secure position in Leicester for a hazardous career as a radical journalist, braving the hostility both of members of the Establishment and fellow-dissenters.⁶

1. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p248
2. Ibid., ppl-2. Miall's appearance is apparent from a photograph in his son's book, and from several cartoons from Punch 20.V.1871, 13.VII.1872, 17.V.1873, 12.VII.1873.
3. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp41-42
4. Ibid., p337
5. Miall to Charles Sturge 15.VI.1842 Sturge Family Papers. See also A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp42, 145
6. Liberator, June 1881, p96

As a public figure, he was handicapped to some extent by the fact that he was a poor speaker. Although in the pulpit, it was possible to forget, "...a feeble voice, or a bodily presence not adapted for effect"¹ yet on the public platform and in Parliament, he did no more than "...delight his admirers". His speeches were, "...not oratorical, and they were better calculated to influence the minds of a thoughtful and prepared audience, than those of an indiscriminate multitude."² An observer of his performance at the first Anti-State Church conference noted: "...he does not seem made to be an orator. He is defective in physical energy. His form is attenuated...his voice feeble."³ Colleagues and opponents alike paid tribute to his courtesy and moderation in debate,⁴ and evidently Miall was something of a hero among Sunday School teachers, and students in dissenting colleges.⁵ According to the Rev. Guinness Rogers, his popularity derived neither from genius nor from eloquence, but from personal qualities of simplicity and unselfishness.⁶

A quiet demeanour in the pulpit surprised many who had expected to hear a fiery orator,⁷ but while his manner was "...prim and somewhat artificial..." he gave an impression of intellectual rigour:

"His pale face tells of thought. You see it in his small clear eyes that thought crystallises in his brain. His clenched hand, his determined teeth, his shrugged-up shoulders, prepare you for the tenacity with which he clings to what thoughts come to him."⁸

His old friend, Henry Richard, described him as a man of,

1. J.E. Ritchie, The London Pulpit (London 1854) p123
2. Obituary of Miall, Nonconformist & Independent 5.V.1881, p3
3. United Secessionist Magazine, July 1844, p338
4. e.g. The Rev. Joseph Baylee, after a public debate with Miall at Birkenhead in 1847. A Miall, Edward Miall p119. John Bright, when presenting a testimonial to Miall in 1862. Nonconformist & Independent, 5.V.1881, p6. In Parliament, "...churchmen of character and position, whilst they differed from him, honoured the man and honoured his loyalty to conscience." Liberator, June 1881, p94.
5. J.E. Ritchie, The London Pulpit p125. Nonconformist & Independent 5.V.1881, p2
6. Rogers, like Richard, was addressing the Liberation Society. Liberator, June 1881, p94
7. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall p58
8. J.E. Ritchie, The London Pulpit ppl25-126

"...vigorous and well-disciplined intellect, a spirit full of fervid devotion to his work, unswerving firmness and force of will, and that highest form of courage which is rooted in profound conviction and sustained by a consciousness of something like a Divine call."¹

Miall's intimate letters to his family reveal a sensitive nature, a lively appreciation of the beauties of nature, and a gift for evocative description.² Letters to his children, often written in the turmoil of election campaigns or in the course of busy lecture tours are full of interesting details of his travels, interspersed with sound moral precepts.³ To a friend in Hamburg, Miall wrote that he was looking forward to smoking a cigar with him, though he was not a regular smoker, and a letter to his wife from Switzerland implies no abhorrence of spirits.⁴

In his family circle, he was a lover of music, and his main trait was a disposition towards humour and geniality.⁵ A collection of essays entitled An Editor off the Line,⁶ and dealing with subjects such as "Drizzle", "Kicking over the traces", "Fancy neighbourhoods", "Mountain Scenery", "Beggars", and "Springtime", reveals another and more human side to the implacable opponent of the Establishment.

Reviewing Miall's life, the Nonconformist saw it as his main claim to fame that, when he arrived upon the political scene, dissenters, though discontented, were far from a realisation of their true mission, and saw their grievances in unduly restricted terms, without application to political life:

1. Liberator, June 1881, p96. Henry Richard was addressing a meeting of the Liberation Society shortly after Miall's death.
2. A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall pp33, 102, 120, 131, 161.
3. Ibid., pp123, 134
4. Ibid., pp162, 187-188
5. Ibid., pp189, 314
6. E. Miall, An Editor off the Line, or Wayside Musings and Reminiscences (London 1865)

"It is Edward Miall's chief claim to future remembrance that he did see this, and devoted his whole life to making others see it. The voluntary principle in religion; religious equality in politics - such was his contribution to our historical development.¹

If, at his death, the Anglican Church still survived as an establishment, the Irish Church did not, nor did established churches in the colonies. Universities were open to men of all creeds, compulsory church rates no longer existed, and questions of religious equality had become major political issues:

"And though the magnificent transformation which this age has seen has been mainly wrought by forces of genius and tides of popular impulse, which he was among the foremost to honour and admire, the man who made the voluntary principle and religious equality household words on British soil will always have his reward and remembrance amongst the faithful servants of the nation."²

The Daily Telegraph believed that, "...he might fairly boast that no man had sown more of the seed which had ripened to such a harvest,"³ while the Leeds Mercury thought his career resembled,

"...some milder and more sectional Mazzini or Garibaldi, though without any of the enforced secrecy of the one, or the wayward and somewhat heedless chivalry of the other; but intense in conviction as they, as single of eye and purpose, and as innocent of personal aggrandizement."⁴

The Newcastle Chronicle compared his place in history to that of William Lloyd Garrison,⁵ But perhaps the most fitting tribute is that of John Bright, who noted in his diary that he had attended the funeral of his old friend Edward Miall; he wrote of him:

"The paper (the Nonconformist) has done great good, and the question of the disestablishment of the Church occupies its present position mainly through the labours of its editor and proprietor Mr. Miall. He had a good cause. He conducted it with singular ability and temper, and he worked on thro' or over all the obstacles in his path with a wonderful persistency, and unflagging zeal. I regard him as one of the most remarkable men I have been connected with during my political life."⁶

1. Nonconformist and Independent, 5.V.1881, p409. Obituary notice.
2. Ibid.
3. Quoted Ibid., 5.V.1881, p6
4. Quoted Ibid., p7
5. Ibid.
6. John Bright, Diaries. ed R.A.J. Walling (London 1930) p463.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript Sources

- Bond Street Chapel, Leicester; Minute Book (Leicester City Museums)
- Bradford Central Library Local Collection (Scruton Collection)
- Bright Letters (Durham University Library)
- Bright Papers (British Museum)
- Brougham Papers (London University Library)
- Carlingford Papers (Somerset County Record Office)
- Cobden Papers (British Museum)
- Complete Suffrage Union Papers (Birmingham Central Library)
- Daunt, J. O'Neill, Mss. Journal (National Library of Ireland)
- Dissenting Deputies; Minute Books (Guildhall Library, London)
- Gladstone Papers (British Museum)
- Howell Papers (Bishopsgate Institute, London)
- Liberation Society Papers (G.L.C. Record Office)
- Lovett Papers (on microfilm in Birmingham Central Library)
- Monk Bretton Papers (Bodleian Library)
- National Education League Papers (Birmingham Central Library)
- National Reform League Papers (Bishopsgate Institute, London)
- Peel Papers (British Museum)
- Sharman Crawford Papers (Northern Ireland Public Record Office)
- Sturge Family Papers (in the possession of Miss M. Sturge of Birmingham,
and reproduced with her kind permission)
- Sturge Papers (British Museum)

Newspapers and Periodicals

- Athenaeum
Beehive
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

Bradford Observer

Bradford Review

British Quarterly Review

Christian Reformer

Commonwealth

Congregationalist

Durham Advertiser

Eclectic Review

Edinburgh Review

Fortnightly Review

Friend

Leeds Mercury

Leicestershire Mercury

Liberator

Monthly Paper of the National Education League

The Nineteenth Century

Nonconformist

Nonconformist Elector

Patriot

Punch

Quarterly Review

Rochdale Observer

Rochdale Standard

Times

Unitarian Herald

United Secession Magazine

Contemporary Printed Material

- Adams, F., History of the Elementary School Contest in England
London 1882. Ed. with intro. by A. Briggs.
Brighton 1972.
- Alvanley, Lord, The State of Ireland considered and measures proposed
for restoring tranquility to that country. London 1841
- Arnold, M., Culture and Anarchy (1869). Cambridge 1932
- Arnold, T., Principles of Church Reform (1833). Ed. M.J. Jackson
and J. Rogan. London 1962.
- Baines, Edward, Letter to Lord Wharmcliffe on Sir James Graham's Bill
for establishing exclusive Church Schools built and
supported out of the Poor Rates and discouraging
British Schools and Sunday School. London 1843.
- Letters to Lord John Russell First Lord of the Treasury
on State Education. London 1846.
- A letter to Richard Cobden, Esq., M.P., on the new
Government Measure of Education. London 1853
- National Education: remarks on the speech and plan
of Lord John Russell. London 1856
- Blackburn, J., The Three Conferences held by the opponents of the
Maynooth College Endowment Bill in London and Dublin
during the months of May and June 1845. London 1845
- Brewer, J.S., The endowments and establishments of the Church of
England (ed. L. Dibdin) London 1885.
- Bagehot, W., Collected Works (8 vols) ed. N. St. J. Stevas
London 1974.
- Complete Suffrage Almanack London 1845
- Crosby Hall Lectures on Education London 1848
- Daunt, J. O'Neill, A Life spent for Ireland London 1896
- Freeman, E.A., Disestablishment and Disendowment. What are they?
London 1874.
- Halé, W.H., The designs and constitution of the Society for the
Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and control.
London 1861.
- Hook, W.F., On the means of rendering more efficient the education
of the people. A letter to the Bishop of St. David's.
3rd edition London 1846.
- Irish Church Pamphlets (British Museum) London 1868.

- Liberation Society The Church in Wales, being an examination of the statements put forth by the Liberation Society and the British Quarterly Review London 1871
- The Case for Disestablishment; a handbook of facts and arguments in support of the claim for religious equality. London 1884 (reprinted 1894)
- Lovett, W. and Collins, J., Chartism: a new organisation of the People (1840) with intro. by A. Briggs Leicester 1969.
- Mashedier, R., Dissent and Democracy: their mutual relations and common object. An historical survey. (2nd edition) London 1865.
- Massie, J.W., The Evangelical Alliance. Its origin and development. London 1847.
- Miall, E., Views of the Voluntary Principle London 1845
- Religious Establishments incompatible with the Rights of Citizenship. (British Anti-State Church Association Tracts. Vol.I No. 6) London 1846
- On the non-interference of the Government with Popular Education (Crosby Hall Lectures on Education) London 1848.
- The Nonconformist's Sketchbook; a series of views of a State Church and its attendant evils. London 1845
- The British Churches in relation to the British People London 1849
- What is the separation of Church and State? British Anti-State Church Association Tracts Vol. 2 London 1846.
- The Franchise considered as a means of a people's training London 1851
- The Fixed and Voluntary Principles. Eight letters to to the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury. London 1859
- The Title Deeds of the Church of England to her Parochial Endowments London 1861 (2nd edition 1871)
- The Politics of Christianity. Reprinted from the Nonconformist 1847, 1848 London 1863
- An Editor off the line, or Wayside Musings and Reminiscences London 1865.
- The Social Influences of the State Church London 1867
- Mill, J.S., On Liberty (1859 Ed. A. D. Lindsay London 1910
- Dissertations and Discussions London 1875

- Morley, J., The Struggle for National Education (1873)
Ed. A. Briggs Brighton 1972
- O'Connor, W.A., Popular delusions on the subject of Church and State
London 1861
- Proceedings of the First Anti-State Church Conference held in London
April 30th, May 1st and 2nd, MDCCCXLIV (Undated, but probably 1844)
- Reply of the British Anti-State Church Association to Dr. Pye Smith
London 1845
- Ritchie, J.E., The London Pulpit London 1854
- Report of the First General Meeting of the National Education League
held at Birmingham on Tuesday and Wednesday, 12th and 13th October 1869
Birmingham 1869
- Shuttleworth, Sir Four Periods of Public Education, as reviewed in 1832,
James Kay, 1839, 1846, 1862 London 1862. With intro. by
N. Morris Brighton 1973
- Memorandum on the present state of the question of
popular education (1868) London 1969
- Stanley, A.P., Essays chiefly on Questions of Church and State
from 1850 to 1870 London 1870
- Thelwall, A.S., Proceedings of the Anti Maynooth Conference of 1845.
With an historical introduction and appendix.
London 1845
- Thorn, W., The Evangelical Alliance: can Churchmen and Dissenters
unite in it? London 1846

Official Publications

- Hansard Parliamentary Debates
- Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education
- Parliamentary Papers
- Reports of the Committee of Council on Education
- Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the
State of Popular Education in England 1861
- Special Reports on Educational Subjects 1897

Biographical Works, and Letters

- Baines, E., The Life of Edward Baines London 1851
- Clark, J.W. and Hughes, T.M., The Life and Letters of Adam Sedgwick
Cambridge 1890 2 Vols.
- Coleridge, J.T., Memoir of the Rev. John Keble London 1870
- Colman, H.C., Jeremiah James Colman. A memoir. London 1905
- Conder, E.R., Josiah Conder: a memoir. London 1857
- Dale, A.W.W., The Life of R.W. Dale of Birmingham London 1898
- Duncombe, T.H., The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe
London 1868 2 Vols.
- Gooch, G.P., The later correspondence of Lord John Russell
1840-1878 London 1925 2 Vols
- Hanna, W., Memoirs of the life and writings of Thomas Chalmers D.D
Edinburgh 1853 4 Vols
- Harrison, Frederic, Autobiographic Memoir London 1911 2 Vols
- Hodder, E., The Life of Samuel Morley (2nd edition) London 1888
- Holden-illingworth Letters Bradford 1927
- Illingworth, A., Fifty Years of Politics Bradford 1905
- Landreth, P., The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Adam Thomson D.D.
Edinburgh 1869.
- Mackie, J.B., The Life and Work of Duncan McClaren
Edinburgh 1888 2 Vols
- Martin, A.P., The Life and Letters of Viscount Sherbrooke
London 1893 2 Vols
- Miall, A., Life of Edward Miall, formerly Member of Parliament
for Rochdale and Bradford London 1884
- Miall, C.S., Henry Richard M.P. A biography. London 1889
- Morley, J., Life of Richard Cobden (10th edition) London 1903
The life of William Ewart Gladstone London 1903 3 Vols
- Mursell, H., James Phillipo Mursell: his life and work
London 1866
- Parker, C.S., Sir Robert Peel, from his private papers
London 1891-1899 2 Vols
The Life and Letters of Sir James Graham, second baronet
of Netherby London 1907 2 Vols

- Purcell, E.S., Life of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster
London 1896 2 Vols
- Reid, T. Wemyss, Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster
London 1888 2 Vols
- Richard, H., Memoirs of Joseph Sturge London 1864
- Rogers, J. Guinness, An Autobiography London 1903
- Rogers, J.E.
Thorold John Bright: Public Addresses
London 1879
- Smith, Goldwin, Reminiscences (Ed. A. Haultain) New York 1911
- Smith, G. Barnett, The Life and Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Bright M.P.
London 1881 2 Vols
- Spencer, H., Autobiography London 1904 2 Vols
- Walling, R.A.J.(ed) John Bright. Diaries London 1930

Secondary Sources

Articles

- Anderson, O., "The Janus Face of mid-nineteenth-century English Radicalism. The Administrative Reform Association of 1855" Victorian Studies Vol. 8 No. 3 1965
- Best, G.F.A., "The religious difficulty of National Education in England 1800-1870" Cambridge Historical Journal
Vol. 12 No. 2 1956
- "The Constitutional Revolution of 1828 to 1832 and its consequences for the Established Church"
Theology Vol. 62 1959
- "The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the early nineteenth century" Journal of Theological Studies ns Vol. X April 1959
- Brose, O.J., "The Irish Precedent for English Church Reform: the Church Temporalities Act of 1833" Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol. 7 1956
- Cahill, G.A., "The Protestant Association and the Anti-Maynooth Agitation of 1845" Catholic Historical Review
Vol. XLIII No. 3 Oct. 1957
- Coltham, S., "English Working Class Newspapers in 1867" Victorian Studies Vol. 13 No. 2 1969
- Erikson, A.B., "The Non-Intrusion Controversy in Scotland" Church History Vol. II (Dec. 1942)

- Glaser, J.F., "English Nonconformity and the decline of Liberalism."
American Historical Review Vol.LXIII No. I Oct. 1957
- Harrison, B., "Philanthropy and the Victorians"
Victorian Studies Vol.IX no.4 June 1966
- "Liberalism and the English Temperance Press."
Victorian Studies XIII No.2 1969
- Harrison, B. and Hollis, P., "Chartism, Liberalism and the life of Robert Lowery."
English Historical Review Vol.82 July 1967
- Hoppen, K.T., "Tories, Catholics and the General Election of 1859"
Historical Journal Vol.13 No.I March 1970
- Ingham, S.M., "The Disestablishment Movement, 1868-1874."
Journal of Religious History Vol.13 June 1964
- Inglis, K.S., "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851."
Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.II 1960
- Jones, I.G., "The Liberation Society and Welsh Politics 1844-1868."
Welsh History Review Vol.I No.2 1961
- McCann, W.P., "Trades Unionists, Artisans and the 1870 Education Act."
British Journal of Educational Studies Vol.XVIII No.2
June 1970
- Machin, G.I.T., "The Maynooth Grant, Dissenters and Disestablishment
1845-1847." English Historical Review Vol.82 1967
- Maehl, W.H., "Gladstone, the Liberals and the election of 1874."
Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
Vol. XXXVI 1963
- Mayor, S.H., "Some Congregational Relations with the Labour Movement."
Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society
Vol. XVIII No.I Aug. 1956
- Morgan, K.O., "Gladstone and Wales." Welsh History Review
Vol.I 1960
- Norman, E.R., "The Maynooth Question of 1845" Irish Historical
Studies Vol.XV 1966/7
- Price, R.N., "The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian
Social Reform Ideology." Victorian Studies
Vol. XV, no.2. 1971
- Ralls, W., "The Papal Aggression of 1850: a study in
Victorian Anti-Catholicism." Church History
Vol.43, no.2 Sept. 1974
- Richards, H.J., "Religious Controversy and the School Boards
1870-1902." British Journal of Educational Studies
Vol.XVIII No. 2 1970
- Salter, F.R., "Political Nonconformity in the 1830s."
Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
5th Series Vol.III 1953

- Salter, F.R., "Congregationalism and the Hungry Forties." Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society Vol.XVII No.4 1955
- Short, K.R.M., "The English Regium Donum." English Historical Review Vol.LXXXIV No.330 Jan. 1969
- Thompson, D.M., "The 1851 Religious Census: Problems and Possibilities." Victorian Studies Vol.XI no.I, 1967
- Vincent, J.R., "The electoral sociology of Rochdale." Economic History Review 2nd series Vol.XVI 1963
- Ward, W.R., "The Tithe Question in England in the early Nineteenth Century." Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.16 1965
- Ward, J.T. and Treble, J.H., "Religion and Education in 1843. Reaction to the Factory Education Bill." Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.XX No.1X April 1969

Books

- Akenson, D.H., The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution Yale 1971
- Armytage, W.H.G., A.J. Mundella 1825 - 1897 London 1951
- Barnard, H.C., A History of English Education from 1760 London 1947
- Bell, P.M.H., Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales London 1969
- Binfield, C., George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. A study in Victorian Social attitudes. London 1973
- Blake, R., Disraeli London 1966
- Briggs, A. (ed) Chartist Studies London 1959
- Brose, O.J., Church and Parliament. The reshaping of the Church of England 1828-1860 Oxford 1959
- Burleigh, J.H.S., A Church History of Scotland Oxford 1960
- Chadwick, O., The Victorian Church London 1966 & 1970 2 Vols
- Church, R.W., The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833-1845 London 1892
- Clark, G. Kitson, Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885 London 1973
- Conacher, J.B., The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855: a study in mid-nineteenth-century party politics. Cambridge 1968
- The Peelites and the Party System 1846-1852 London 1972

- Cowherd, R., The Politics of English Dissent London 1959
- Cowling, M., 1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and revolution: the passing of the second Reform Bill Cambridge 1967
- Cripps, H.W., The Laws of the Church and Clergy 5th edition London 1869
- Cruikshank, M., Church and State in English Education London 1963
- Dale, R.W., The History of English Congregationalism London 1907
- Davis, R.W., Dissent in Politics 1780 - 1830. The political life of William Smith M.P. London 1971
- Dyos, H.J. and Wolff, M., The Victorian City: Images and Realities London 1970 2 Vols
- Faber, G., Jowett London 1957
- Faulkner, H.U., Chartism and the Churches: a study in democracy New York 1916. Reprinted London 1970
- Feuchtwanger, E.J., Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party. Oxford 1968
- Fraser, P., Joseph Chamberlain; radicalism and empire 1868-1914 London 1966
- Garvin, J.L., Life of Joseph Chamberlain London 1932-1951 4 Vols
- Gash, N., Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852 Oxford 1965
- Sir Robert Peel London 1972
- Halevy, E., A History of the English People 1841-1852. The Age of Peel and Cobden London 1947
- Hamer, D.A., John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics Oxford 1968
- Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery Oxford 1972
- Hanham, H.J., Elections and Party Management: politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone London 1959
- Harrison, B.H., Drink and the Victorians; the temperance question in England 1815-1872 London 1971
- Harrison, R., Before the Socialists; studies in labour and politics 1861-1881 London 1965
- Henriques, U., Religious Toleration in England 1787-1833 London 1961

- Hobson, J.A., Richard Cobden. The International Man
London 1919
- Hollis, P. (ed) Pressure from without in Early Victorian England
London 1974
- Holt, R.V., The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England London 1938
- Hovell, M., The Chartist Movement 2nd edition Manchester 1925
- Inglis, K.S., Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England London 1963
- Isichei, E., Victorian Quakers Oxford 1970
- Jones, R. Tudur, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962
London 1962
- Jones, W.D., Lord Derby and Victorian Conservatism Oxford 1956
- Lathbury, D.C., Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone London 1910 2 Vols
- Leventhal, F.M., Respectable Radical: George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics London 1971
- Mackintosh, W.H., Disestablishment and Liberation. The movement for for the Separation of the Anglican Church from State Control London 1972
- McCarthy, J., Ireland since the Union London 1887
- McGord, N., The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846
London 1958 2nd edition London 1968
- Magnus, P., Gladstone: a biography London 1954
- Mallett, C.E., A history of the University of Oxford
London 1927 3 Vols.
- Manning, B.L., The Protestant Dissenting Deputies
Cambridge 1952
- Marsh, P.T., The Victorian Church in decline. Archbishop Tait and the Church of England 1868-1882 London 1969
- Monypenny, W.F.
and Buckle G.E., Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield
new edition London 1929 2 Vols.
- Murphy, J., Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800-1870
London 1971
- Norman, E.R., The Catholic Church and Ireland in the age of rebellion 1859 to 1873 London 1965
- Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England London 1968
- Ostrogorski, M., Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties
2 Vols. London 1902

- Owen, D., English Philanthropy 1660-1960 Oxford 1965
- Patterson, A. Radical Leicester: the history of Leicester 1780-1850
Temple, Leicester 1954
- Peel, A., Letters to a Victorian Editor London 1929
- Prest, J., Lord John Russell London 1972
- Ramm, A. (ed) The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1868-1876 London 1952 2 Vols
The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876-1886 Oxford 1962 2 Vols
- Read, D., Press and People, 1790-1850: opinion in three English cities. London 1961
The English Provinces 1760-1960: a study in influence London 1964
Cobden and Bright: a Victorian Political Partnership London 1967
- Rich, E.E., The Education Act 1870 London 1970
- Selbie, W.B., Nonconformity; its origins and purpose London 1912
- Selborne, Lord, A defence of the Church of England against disestablishment. 5th edition London 1911
- Seymour, C., Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the development and operation of the parliamentary franchise 1832-1885 New Haven 1915
- Simon, B., Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870 London 1960
- Skeats, H.S. and History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891
Miall, C.S., London 1891
- Slosson, P., The decline of the Chartist Movement New York 1916
New edition London 1967
- Smith, F., A history of English Elementary Education 1760-1902 London 1931
- Smith, F.B., The making of the second Reform Bill Cambridge 1966
Radical Artisan. William James Linton, 1812-97 Manchester 1973
- Smith, P., Disraelian Conservatism and social reform London 1967
- Sparrow, J., Mark Pattison and the idea of University Cambridge 1967
- Sturt, M., The Education of the people. London 1967

- Symondson, A., (ed) The Victorian Crisis of faith London 1970
- Thompson, E.P., The Making of the English Working Class
London 1963 Paperback edition 1968
- Thompson, D.M., Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century London 1972
- Trevelyan, G.M., The Life of John Bright London 1913
- Tuttle, E.O., The Crusade against Capital Punishment in Great Britain London 1961
- Vincent, J., The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868
London 1966
- Pollbooks: how Victorians voted Cambridge 1967
- Waddington, J., Congregational History London 1880 2 Vols.
- Ward, J.T., Sir James Graham London 1967
- Chartism London 1973
- Ward, W.R., Victorian Oxford London 1965
- Religion and Society in England 1790-1850
London 1972
- Whyte, J.H., The Independent Irish Party 1850-1859
Oxford 1958
- Williams, W., The rise of Gladstone to the leadership of the Liberal party 1859-1868 Cambridge 1934
- Winstanley, D.A., Early Victorian Cambridge Cambridge 1940
- Later Victorian Cambridge Cambridge 1947
- Young, G.M. and Hancock, W.D., English Historical Documents Vol. XII (I) 1833-1874
London 1956

Unpublished Theses

- Bentley, A., The Transformation of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England in the late nineteenth century
Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 1971
- Lowerson, J.R., The Political Career of Sir Edward Baines 1800-1890
Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds 1965
- Martin, H.R., The Politics of the Congregationalists, 1830-1856
Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 1971
- Mason, B.J., The Rise of Combative Dissent 1832-1859
University of Southampton M.A. thesis 1958
- Welch, A.H., John Carvell Williams: the Nonconformist Watchdog
Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Kansas, 1968
There is a copy in the G.L.C. Record Office.
- Wright, D.G., Politics and public opinion in nineteenth-century Bradford.
Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1966