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Prelates and People

Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783–1852

R.A. Soloway

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For George L. Mosse

With gratitude and affection

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Preface

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Richard A. Soloway

Chapel Hill, N.C.
August, 1968

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Introduction

The reform of the Church of England in the first half of the nineteenth century was moulded considerably by the same pressures of industrialization, urbanization, and population growth that rapidly altered English society and its institutions as a whole. As one of those institutions, legally established, whose bishops sat in Parliament, and whose clergy were expected to support the State in their parochial ministrations, the Anglican Church and its episcopal leadership were particularly sensitive to the transformation of the country that took place from the later eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. Already troubled by a spiritual revival that called attention to the secularity and neglect of their clergy, churchmen in the 1790's were staggered by the upheaval of European-wide revolution that seemed to threaten the very existence of Christian civilization. Even before recovering from that alarming experience, they were compelled to recognize very real institutional as well as clerical weaknesses in the Establishment. These weaknesses became increasingly obvious, and even dangerous, as decade after decade, English society rapidly expanded in ways that made the national Church often appear hopelessly archaic and irrelevant to the needs of an industrial, urban civilization.

This book examines the responses of the episcopal leadership of the Church in England and Wales to the transformation of the society to which they ministered. It considers primarily their social ideas and policies from the decade preceding the French Revolution to the middle of the nineteenth century; from that period when a few bishops began to worry about the effectiveness of their abuse-ridden Church to the time when the Establishment, ecclesiastically reformed and spiritually revitalized, looked forward to evangelizing the diverse multitudes who peopled the new age. By then the Church of England was more episcopal than at any time since the early eighteenth century. Convocation was

being revived after 135 years; bishops were resident administrators of their dioceses, overseeing an extensive network of social and religious projects; ecclesiastical discipline was more vigorously enforced, and in Parliament, the Church's interests were promoted regularly with skill and determination by prelates themselves.

Although much of the reform impetus within the Establishment was generated by the laity, especially in the earlier stages, men like William Wilberforce, Joshua Watson, Robert Peel, and Lord Liverpool were not simply riding roughshod over the objections of reactionary prelates.[1] On the contrary, episcopal consultation and co-operation in Church reform was increasingly the rule, not the exception. This does not mean that the bench was usually in the vanguard of reform; many of its members shuddered at the mention of the word. But in each episcopal generation there were important individual bishops who, though deeply conservative, were also realistic men who recognized that the Church was in a new age, faced with challenges demanding unprecedented adjustments on the part of its clergy. Recognition and accommodation to these realities were hardly uniform; but then few things were in the nineteenth-century Establishment. Parliamentary domination, the lack of a centralized ecclesiastical policy-making body, and the extraordinary independence of the Anglican clergy make it difficult, if not impossible, to discuss collective Church positions. Rarely was there a single Church position; there were usually party positions, or, more commonly, individual positions assumed by individual churchmen.

In such a particularized and fragmented ecclesiastical community the gradual reassertion of episcopal authority, especially with its close relationship to the government and Parliament, was particularly significant. It was very much in contrast to the eighteenth century when bishops intervened hardly at all in the administration of their dioceses and the lives of the parochial clergy. At that time, prelates' main functions were political, serving in the House of Lords, supporting the party or individuals to whom they were indebted for their episcopal thrones, and eager to please those in a position to translate them to an even more lucrative see. After that they were theologians, classical scholars, literary critics, and occasionally diocesan administrators as time, inclination, and transportation allowed.[2] Relations with their dioceses were usually formal: business was executed by archdeacons, secretaries,

[1] For the study of Church reform see, W. L. Mathieson, *English Church Reform 1815–1840* (1923); G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars. Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (1964); Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, I (1966); Olive Brose, *Church and Parliament. The Reshaping of the Church of England 1828–1860* (1959).

[2] N. Sykes, *Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century* (1934), Chaps. II, III.

and registrars. As Dr Best describes it, bishops' seals and signatures mattered much more than the bishops themselves, whose natural habitats were the West End and the universities. In their dioceses they were viewed as annual migrant visitors ordaining and confirming the years' accumulation of new clerics and new communicants.[1]

Diocesan affairs and ecclesiastical discipline sadly degenerated, reflecting and contributing to the disintegration of ecclesiastical and spiritual functions which scandalized Victorian and later critics of the eighteenth-century Church. In fact, by the 1780's, it was even beginning to trouble a few bishops alerted by the alarming growth of Methodism and the mounting criticisms of the Establishment. Ironically one of the first prelates to acknowledge the sad state of diocesan affairs, and urge the reassertion of inspiring episcopal leadership, was himself a veritable monument to clerical abuse. Nevertheless, in 1783, Richard Watson, the pluralistic (sixteen livings), nepotistic, non-resident Bishop of Llandaff (1782–1816) urged a fairer distribution of ecclesiastical revenue to improve parochial religion, and restore episcopal authority.[2] Sensitive to charges of opulence and diocesan neglect leveled at the bishops, Watson conceded the point by suggesting in a *Letter* to the Archbishop of Canterbury that a more equitable dispersal of Church resources would encourage episcopal residence and acquaintance with the clergy: 'by being better acquainted with their situations, prospects, tempers, and talents . . . (bishops) would be better able to co-operate with them, in the great work of amending the Morals of His Majesty's subjects, and of feeding the flock of Christ.'[3] Watson, appointed to one of the least affluent dioceses, understood the desire for translation that made bishops excessively dependent upon the laity, and placed the bench in a contemptible position. 'The laity, whilst they entertain such a suspicion concerning us, will accuse us of Avarice and Ambition, of making a gain of Godliness, of bartering the dignity of our Office for the chance of translation, in one word—Secularity. . . .'[4]

Watson was right, of course, but like most of his ecclesiastical contemporaries, he knew that Parliament governed the Church and had no intention of surrendering control. There was little sentiment, even on

[1] Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 359–60.

[2] Richard Watson (1737–1816), son of a Westmorland schoolmaster, Professor of Chemistry (1764) and Regius Professor of Divinity (1771) at Cambridge. An open supporter of the Whig cause, he owed his elevation to Llandaff to his former pupil Charles Manners, 4th Duke of Rutland, and to the Duke of Grafton, both of whom recommended him to Shelburne.

[3] R. Watson, *A Letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury* (1783), 20. In addition to a more equitable distribution of episcopal revenue, Watson urged the augmentation of poor livings from cathedral revenue.

[4] *Ibid.*, 11.

the bench, that it should. No bishop supported Watson's suggestions. Archbishop Cornwallis promptly died without replying; though there is no evidence that Watson's startling proposals contributed to his end. Only one of the twenty-four other prelates who were sent a copy of the *Letter* even bothered to acknowledge receiving it. Watson certainly was not surprised; knowing the dependence and timidity of his brethren he viewed his *Letter* as merely an opening wedge into a public discussion of the Church's problems. It would, as he predicted, take years of controversy before 'the utility of the changes was generally acknowledged.'[1] It took, in fact, more than fifty years before the newly-established Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1836 partially equalized episcopal income, and, four years later, endorsed the redistribution of portions of cathedral revenue for use in overcrowded, urban districts.[2]

During those years, Parliament, without relinquishing control of the Establishment, increasingly shared it with an improving episcopate ready to assume a greater role in the administration and direction of the Church. Gradually, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the bishops loomed ever larger in the life of their dioceses, their ecclesiastical authority steadily strengthened by the passage of reform legislation designed to correct the worst clerical abuses, and extend the Church into the populous parts of the expanding nation. The bishops were not merely the passive agents of implementation of parliamentary Church reforms; they participated in the formulation of legislation and, when they disagreed with a particular measure, were often strong enough to stop it, or at least win a compromise. Moreover, as some of the bench began to understand that questions of Church effectiveness, and even survival, were closely linked to the economic and political forces at work in English society, they gradually took a wider view of their role in Parliament, and concerned themselves with social and political issues that seemed to bear directly upon the ability of the clergy to minister to the ever-expanding industrial society.

Only four of the bishops who guided the Church's progress in the

[1] R. Watson, *Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, Bishop of Landaff, Written by Himself at Different Intervals, and Revised in 1814*, 2nd ed. (1818), I, 175.

[2] The Established Church Act of 1836 abolished livings held *in commendam* with sees, and established a scale of episcopal income ranging from £15,000 for Canterbury, £10,000 each for York and London, and so on down a scale to a minimum of £4,000 *per annum*. Although it was hardly a leveling of incomes, the richer sees were reduced somewhat to raise the poorer dioceses to an average of £4,000 to £5,000. The Dean and Chapter Bill of 1840 suppressed all non-resident prebends (about 360), sinecure rectories (68), and resident canonries above the number of four to each cathedral, with certain exceptions, and vested the money in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. See Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 136–7.

first half of the nineteenth century were born in that age. Most of their associates were born in the eighteenth century, before the French Revolution, and in most instances in the 1760's and 1770's. They were raised, educated and ordained in an eighteenth-century world, and began their ministry in a Church that had not yet adjusted to the past, when it began to suspect that it was not remotely in touch with the present. As eighteenth-century men, they brought to nineteenth-century problems ingrained rationalistic assumptions about human nature and social harmony. The Church they knew and loved reflected that harmony; it was rural, simple and pastoral, its patent charms captured in Southey's affectionate reminiscences. Its clergy formed an integral social and political alliance with the landed governing classes whose education, values and family connections they shared. No more than seventeen of the 104 bishops who led the Church between 1783 and1852, when England was largely transformed from a rural to an urban country, ever held an urban living. Only two of them had any ministerial experience in a manufacturing or mining parish before their elevation to the bench.

This pattern of nominations remained, and, as the century wore on, the age of new appointments steadily increased so that the bench continued to be filled with prelates who had been born in the pre-revolutionary decades, and who had grown to maturity before the Napoleonic wars were finally over. Although two of Grey and Melbourne's fifteen nominees between 1830–41 were born in the first year of the new century, most of the remainder were born in the 1770's and 1780's. Had the Whigs come to power sooner, many of their episcopal appointments would have probably been elevated to the bench at a younger age. As it was, they averaged fifty-four years as compared to forty-six years for the twenty-three appointments made by the Tories, Liverpool, Canning, and Wellington, during the years 1812–30. The average age for all bishops installed between 1783–1852 was fifty. Victorian Prime Ministers in that period were especially partial to older candidates. With the exception of Samuel Wilberforce,[1] born in 1805 and raised to Oxford in 1845, Peel's bishops were closer to fifty-eight years old when nominated,

[1] Samuel Wilberforce (1805–73), son of the Evangelical reformer, William Wilberforce. Bishop of Oxford (1845) and Winchester (1869), he was a controversial and dynamic prelate who owed his initial appointment to royal favor, and to Peel's confidence that he could control the tumultuous situation created by the Tractarian controversy at Oxford. His antagonism of Palmerston and Disraeli (the latter modelled the worldly bishop in *Lothair* after Wilberforce) cost him further advancement until his close friend Gladstone, who would have raised him to Canterbury had he come to power six weeks earlier, moved him to Winchester. See A. Ashwell and R. G. Wilberforce, *The Life of Samuel Wilberforce*, 3 vols. (1880–2).

and were, therefore, like most of their predecessors, born before the French Revolution and raised in that tumultuous era. Despite the consternation caused by some of Lord John Russell's controversial episcopal selections between 1846–52, they were, if anything, the right age, all but one being born in the 1790's. For the first time, however, a majority of the episcopal appointments in the Victorian Church were men who were ordained after the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.

Of the 104 bishops who occupied the twenty-six English and Welsh dioceses (increased to twenty-eight after 1836) between 1783 and 1852, twenty-five were already installed when Pitt assumed power in 1783. Four of these men were still alive after Waterloo; the last of them, James Cornwallis, Bishop of Lichfield–Coventry since 1781, died in 1824 at the age of eighty-two, a year after succeeding his brother to the family earldom. Although all of Peel's and Russell's appointments made in the 1840's lived well into the second half of the century, as did a few of Melbourne's and one of Liverpool's, most of the prelates who dominated the Church during the critical first half of the nineteenth century had already ended their careers by 1852, or shortly thereafter. The influence of those few who remained was fast eclipsed by a younger, more dynamic generation of churchmen, some of whom, like Samuel Wilberforce, already installed before mid-century, and others like Archibald Campbell Tait,[1] whose episcopal career was launched in 1856, dominated the Church in the mid-Victorian era.

This study concentrates on the four overlapping episcopal generations largely preceding that of Wilberforce and Tait; it examines the thought and policies of those prelates installed in the years before 1783, and from 1783–1812, 1812–30, and 1830–52.[2] For the most part they were men of the ruling classes; not only as a consequence of their being spiritual peers in the House of Lords, but often as a direct result

[1] Archibald Campbell Tait (1811–82), born in Edinburgh, raised as a Presbyterian. Succeeded Thomas Arnold as Headmaster of Rugby. Bishop of London (1856), Archbishop of Canterbury (1868). See R. Davidson and W. Benham, *Life of Archibald Campbell Tait*, 2 vols. (1891).

[2] Genealogical and career information has been compiled from such standard reference works as the *Dictionary of National Biography*, various editions of Burke's *Landed Gentry*, Burke's *Peerage*, and G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*; also from Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses* (1715–1886), J. A. Venn, ed., *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Pts. I, II, J. LeNeve and T. D. Hardy, *Fasti ecclesiae anglicanae, or, a calendar of the principal ecclesiastical dignitaries in England and Wales* (1854), and Joseph Foster, ed., *Index Ecclesiasticus, or Alphabetical Lists of all Ecclesiastical Dignitaries in England and Wales since the Reformation* (1890). This *Index* is primarily a clergy list with a brief summary of careers for the period 1800–40. In addition, information has been utilized from published biographies when available, and cited accordingly.

of their temporal family connections and education. Although the social origins of four of the 104 members of the bench studied remain illusive, twenty-three of the other 100 were of noble families in which their father, brother or uncle bore a title at the time when their episcopal kin were elevated to a diocese. Four of this number were themselves sons of bishops, three of whom were closely related to peers. Still another prelate was connected to the peerage through his mother, while three more had the good fortune, or foresight, to marry bishops' daughters. Consequently, slightly more than one-quarter of the bishops between 1783–1852 were directly related to the peerage before their elevation, either through parental or marital associations. In addition, another prelate, Thomas Musgrave, later Archbishop of York (1848–60), married the daughter of a peer in 1839, two years after his appointment to Hereford.[1]

Although the extent of episcopal relationships with the landed gentry is much more difficult to determine accurately, it appears that the fathers of twenty-four of the 100 known bishops were of that class. At least three other prelates had mothers of the gentry, and ten were connected by marriage to recognized gentry families; as a result, thirty-seven members of the hierarchy were closely related to the non-noble, landed aristocracy. There is little question that the episcopate was heavily aristocratic: a compilation of male relations alone in the peerage and gentry indicates that forty-seven, or nearly half of the prelates whose genealogical origins are known, were of either class. When maternal and marital relationships are included, nearly two-thirds of the bishops fall into these elevated social categories. The preponderance of aristocratic alliances in the hierarchy is even more striking when the familial connections of the fifty-three bishops whose fathers were not of the aristocracy are examined more closely. The mothers of three of these men were the daughters of gentry landowners, ten more married into that class, and two into the peerage. Consequently, only thirty-eight of the 100 bishops already installed in 1783 or appointed over the next sixty-nine years lacked any direct familial relationship with the aristocracy, though it is likely that the four prelates whose genealogy is undetermined would probably fall into this category.[2]

[1] Thomas Musgrave (1788–1860), son of a wealthy Cambridge tailor and woollen draper, married a daughter of Lord Waterpark. Had a long career at Cambridge before his appointment to Hereford and later York (1848–60). Was a political Liberal, but a very conservative Evangelical churchman.

[2] For a comparative analysis of the French and English episcopate in the eighteenth century see Norman Ravitch, *Sword and Mitre. Government and Episcopate in France and England in the Age of Aristocracy* (The Hague, 1966). Ravitch carries his analysis of the English bench up to 1836, and

Nevertheless, the aristocratic nature of the Church's leadership in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is clear. Its development was a long-term reversal of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century trends. Aristocratic families apparently did not find the plundered Church after the Reformation a very enticing attraction for their younger sons. Professor Lawrence Stone has calculated that, of twenty-eight bishops in the 1630's, the fathers of nine were gentry, eight were clergymen, seven were merchants, one a yeoman, and three were artisans or below. It appears that the highest ranks of the clergy were generally regarded as inferior in status to the highest ranks of the legal profession, despite the presence of bishops in the House of Lords.[1] At the close of the reign of Charles II, only two prelates were sons of peers.[2] The rising importance of Parliament, the steady appreciation of episcopal landed income, the decline of anti-clericalism, and the general improvement of the clergyman's status in society, made the clerical profession, especially at the higher levels, increasingly attractive. Throughout the eighteenth century there was a steady rise in aristocratic representation in ecclesiastical positions in general, and on the episcopal bench in particular. As competition for these positions in the Church increased, familial connections were more important than ever. Of the twenty-six prelates already installed in 1783, eight were the sons or brothers of peers, and another was married to the daughter of a noble. Five additional bishops were sons of gentry parents, while three more had married into that class. This meant that half of the bench were sons of aristocratic families; when marital alliances are considered, more than two-thirds of the bishops were well-connected. At no time between 1783–1852 were less than half the episcopal nominees aristocratically allied by birth or marriage.

Eighteenth-century ecclesiastics were delighted by the trend, and nineteenth-century successors were worried that it might not continue. Though Archbishop Secker (1758–68) wished there were more opulent benefices to attract clergymen from the higher ranks of society,[3] his

[1] Lawrence Stone, 'Social Mobility in England 1500–1700', *Past and Present*, No. 33 (April 1966), 20.

[2] T. B. Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II* (1849), I, 327. For an attempt to put Macaulay's analysis in perspective see C. H. Mayo, 'The Social Status of the Clergy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *English Historical Review*, XXXVII (1922), 258–66.

[3] Sykes, *Church and State*, 226

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though his general conclusions substantiate the aristocratic composition of the bench, they are based entirely upon male relationships and include a very large number of prelates whose genealogical connections are described as 'uncertain'.

colleague, Bishop Warburton of Gloucester (1760–79), thought it was no longer a problem. He rejoiced to see the sons of peers regularly entering the Church which 'has been of old the cradle and the throne of the younger nobility . . .' who left it after the spoliation of Henry VIII.[1] To those low-minded 'enthusiasts' who were unconvinced, and who suggested that the first leaders of Christ's Church were not especially hindered by a lack of social rank, Bishop Newton of Bristol (1761–82) conceded that there were probably some advantages in the Apostles being of a lesser station. Times had changed, however, and the benefits to be derived were, to eighteenth-century churchmen, no longer obvious. On the contrary, aristocratic clergymen 'may add strength and ornament to [the Church] . . . especially as long as we can boast of *some*, who are honourable in themselves as well as in their families; and whose personal merits and virtues, if they had not been nobly descended would have entitled them justly to the rank and pre-eminence that they enjoy.'[2]

The heavy laicization of the Established Church in the eighteenth century had brought the clergy ever closer to the dominant secular interests and values of the age. Not surprisingly, the hierarchy of the Church more closely resembled that of the State as Church and State, nearly split apart by the revolutions of the seventeenth century, were rejoined more tightly than ever under Parliament's domination. As clergy and laity adopted the same ideals and almost the same conduct, the spiritual and temporal estates became again what they had always been in medieval theory, twin dimensions of an indivisible unity.[3] Instead of feeling suffocated by the sweeping temporal embrace of establishment, Church leaders welcomed it as a blessing which permitted the laity and clergy to promote harmoniously common interests of material and spiritual benefit to all. Bishop Warburton's description of establishment as a mutual contract between the State and the majority Church based upon common interests and utility, made perfect sense to his and later generations.[4] Although there were rumblings of discontent in the closing years of the eighteenth century, disillusionment with the benefits of establishment was not really significant until the 1830's.

Church leadership by then was still heavily aristocratic; Liverpool

[1] William Warburton, *Letters From a Late Eminent Prelate to One of His Friends*, 2nd ed. (1809), 157.

[2] Sykes, *Church and State*, 186. See also N. Ravitch, 'The Social Origins of French and English Bishops in the Eighteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, No. 3, VIII (1965), 310–11.

[3] Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 70.

[4] W. Warburton, *The Alliance Between Church and State, or the Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test-Law Demonstrated* (1736).

even exceeded Pitt's strong preference for appointments from the better families of the realm. In this they reflected the wishes of the Crown even if they did not necessarily approve of royal intervention. Pitt, for example, was thwarted in his attempt to promote his old tutor, secretary, and ecclesiastical adviser, Bishop Pretyman of Lincoln, to Canterbury in 1804, when the king insisted on a man with better credentials for so lofty a position.[1] Though Pretyman, who had added the name of Tomline in 1803 to inherit the estates of an eccentric admirer, was of an old Suffolk family, George III refused to yield to Pitt's arguments and succeeded in elevating Charles Manners–Sutton, grandson of the Duke of Rutland, to the archiepiscopal throne.[2] George IV, who also occasionally demanded an appointment over the objections of his prime ministers, wrote to Manners–Sutton's successor, Bishop Howley of London,[3] shortly before his elevation to Canterbury in 1828, that it was 'very desirable' and good 'to connect the Bench, with the nobility of the Country; particularly when the heads of such noble families strongly support the Protestant Interests of the Country.'[4] The king in this instance was trying to strengthen the bench against the threat of Catholic emancipation, but his sentiments were certainly not contrary to prevailing notions of ecclesiastical patronage.

Liverpool, unlike Pitt, was much more concerned with the academic and theological credentials of candidates, as well as their political and

[1] George Pretyman-Tomline (1750–1827), son of Suffolk gentry, Bishop of Lincoln (1787) and Winchester (1820). Was also Pitt's biographer. A pluralist and a nepotist, he left over £200,000 (*Gentleman's Magazine* (Dec. 1827), 523).

[2] Pretyman to G. Rose, 13 Nov. 1804, *Pretyman Family Archives*, Ipswich and East Suffolk Record Office, T 108/45; also Pretyman to wife, 29 Dec.; 23 Jan. 1805; 5 March. When he learned that the Archbishop of York had fallen ill in January, 1805, Pretyman groaned at the thought of going to the north, but the old incumbent, Markham, survived another two years.

Charles Manners-Sutton (1755–1828), son of Lord George Manners-Sutton, Bishop of Norwich (1792) and Canterbury (1805). A reasonably active High Church prelate who managed to place seven of his relations in sixteen benefices.

[3] William Howley (1766–1848), son of a Hampshire vicar, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford (1809), Bishop of London (1813) and Archbishop of Canterbury (1828). He owed his appointment to Lord Abercorn, whose son he had tutored. A gentle, pious, and princely prelate, his very real generosity did not prevent him leaving a £120,000 estate. See S. L. Ollard and G. Crosse, eds, *A Dictionary of English Church History*, 2nd ed. (1919), 288–9.

[4] 23 Feb. 1827, *Royal Letters to Archbishop Howley*, Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 1754, f. 99.

familial qualities. Improvement, if not reform, was clearly on his mind as he labored to provide the Church with leaders who were both ecclesiastically and socially respectable in the broad spectrum of Anglican opinion. Given the diversity and partisanship of that opinion in the post-war world of the Established Church, it was no mean task. It seemed to some serious Church spokesmen that social criteria were perhaps more important than they should be in the age of Church improvement. Charles Lloyd, Regius Professor of Divinity and soon after Bishop of Oxford,[1] wrote in 1826 to Peel, his former pupil and now patron, that he could not accept Liverpool's belief that it was necessary to have men of family in the Church, especially when it led to the appointment to bishoprics of Lord George Murray and the Prime Minister's cousin, John Banks Jenkinson.[2] 'They have their advantages in a temporal point of view—but from their great professional ignorance these advantages are, in general, very largely counterbalanced.'[3] Lloyd, who did much to revive the study of theology for clerical candidates at Oxford, indicated how rapidly standards were changing when he cited professional competence as a desirable quality in a bishop.

The number of prelates related to the peerage fell rapidly after 1830. The peak had been reached during the preceding two decades when, between 1812 and 1830, Liverpool, Canning, and Wellington nominated seven of their twenty-three bishops from the peerage. Five of these were Liverpool's selections. In addition, five more prelates were related to gentry families, so that nearly two-thirds of the episcopal generation that came to power before the important election of 1830 were of the aristocracy. The general aristocratic nature of the bench did not change after 1830, but its social content was altered. Of the twenty-five bishops instituted between 1830–52, only two were of the peerage, and one of them, Edward Grey, Bishop of Hereford (1832–37), was the brother of the Prime Minister. It was an appointment Earl Grey had been reluctant to make. Not only did it leave him open to charges of nepotism, but he was continually plagued by his ineffectual brother for still

[1] Charles Lloyd (1784–1829), son of a Buckinghamshire schoolmaster, Regius Professor of Divinity (1822), Bishop of Oxford (1827). Deeply influenced Froude, Newman and Pusey, who attended his private lectures at Oxford.

[2] George Murray (1784–1860), son of Lord George Murray, Bishop of St David's (1801–3), and nephew of Duke of Atholl, to whom he owed his appointment to Sodor and Man (1814) and Rochester (1827). He was very High Church and sympathetic to the Oxford Movement.

John Banks Jenkinson (1781–1840), son of John Banks Jenkinson, brother of 1st Earl of Liverpool; Bishop of St David's (1825) and added Deanery of Durham in 1827.

[3] Lloyd to Peel, 15 May 1826, *Peel Ps.*, British Museum, Add. MS. 40342, ff. 348–9.

higher preferment.[1] Already suspicious that Edward leaned too closely towards the Evangelical party, the Prime Minister was further irritated when his brother regularly voted more like a Tory than a Whig in the House of Lords.[2] When, in 1836, Bishop Grey vainly solicited Melbourne for translation to the princely see of Durham —'a duty I owed to my family'—he wisely suspected that his brother would not be pleased, and received little support from that quarter.[3]

Melbourne, in fact, only made one appointment to the bench directly from the peerage, when, in 1840, he nominated Henry Pepys, brother of the first Earl of Cottenham, to Sodor and Man, and translated him to Worcester the following year.[4] His only other episcopal selection connected with the nobility was Charles Thomas Longley, the future Archbishop of York (1860–62) and Canterbury (1862–68), whose initial appointment to the newly-created diocese of Ripon in 1836 was promoted by his father-in-law, Sir Henry Parnell, first Baron Congleton.[5] The rapid decline of noble prelates was not entirely a Whig phenomenon; none of Peel's four nominees was of the peerage, nor, when the Whigs returned in 1846, were any of Lord John Russell's. If the number of episcopal appointments from the nobility fell sharply after 1830, new members of the bench continued to come from genteel families. Five of the thirteen recipients of Melbourne's patronage were the sons of gentry families, some very eminent, and a sixth was related by marriage. Half of Peel's choices were also of gentry parentage, and two of Russell's five nominees were related to old recognized landed families through mother or wife. Popular opinion, demanding a more serious and dedicated standard of clerical behavior, forced the government to be less obvious in succumbing to aristocratic favoritism. Moreover, in an era of reform, including ecclesiastical reform, it was increasingly important to appoint bishops who would support the government and offset the stubborn resistance to change still exemplified by several older Tory prelates. It is also possible that the sons of Whig peers were traditionally less attracted to a clerical career from the later eighteenth century onwards, as their opportunities for satisfactory preferment were limited by the Tory domination of ecclesiastical positions. Consequently, as Mel-

[1] Bishop Grey to Earl Grey, 9 Jan. 1833, and Earl Grey to Bishop Grey, 29 Aug., *Grey of Howick MS.*, The Prior's Kitchen, Durham Cathedral, Box 32/10a.

[2] Edw. Grey to Earl Grey, 28 Sept. 1826, *ibid.*

[3] Bishop Grey to Melbourne, 23 Feb. 1836, *ibid.*

[4] Henry Pepys (1783–1860), son of Wm. Weller Pepys, Bart. A Liberal prelate, resident, popular and conscientious.

[5] Charles Thomas Longley (1794–1868), son of a political writer and Rochester magistrate. Was Headmaster of Harrow (1829–36) before his elevation to Ripon. Was also Bishop of Durham (1856–60).

bourne discovered, it was not only difficult to find Whig clergymen of sufficient stature to be nominated to the bench, it was probably even more difficult to find them among the Whig peerage.

Of at least equal importance were the reforms within the Church that demanded an episcopate concerned with spiritual and ecclesiastical problems. The social and political perquisites of an episcopal career were still very attractive, but the opportunities for well-connected clerics to improve their lot steadily in the hierarchy were considerably reduced. The elimination of many cathedral dignitaries in 1840, following the partial equalization of episcopal revenue four years earlier, indicated that the Church was not only determined to use its financial resources more effectively, but, as Bishop Watson had urged fifty-three years before, to improve episcopal administration by discouraging the endless competition for translation to more lucrative sees. This competition had been especially advantageous to the politically compliant and the well-connected for over a century. Twelve of the twenty-six prelates on the bench in 1783 had been translated to their existing dioceses. From that year to the reforms of 1836 there were fifty-two additional translations with Pitt and Liverpool responsible for thirty-one of them. After 1836, however, episcopal mobility was strikingly reduced, and by 1852 only five translations, two of them archiepiscopal, had been permitted. Over the next twenty years, five additional moves took place.[1]

It is unlikely that the improving administration and discipline of ecclesiastical life left a large number of noble clergymen trapped in a family living far from an elevated *niche* in the hierarchy. Opportunities outside the Church for the privileged were greater than ever in the expansive society of the nineteenth century, and the sons of the nobility, if they chose to do anything, were taking advantage of them. Lord George Murray feared that it would only be a matter of time before there would be no more ecclesiastical dignitaries like him entering the Church. As a nephew of the Duke of Atholl and son of a bishop, Murray was particularly sensitive to Church reforms that might lead to a decline in clerical social standards. The episcopal reforms of 1836 and the cathedral reforms of 1840 indicated that the Church was abandoning all the social advantages won in the preceding century, and that it would 'drag on a mutilated and degraded existence. . . . It will soon sink into the state . . . where the clergy are but one degree removed from the labourer and the mechanic.'[2] A wiser generation had opposed this trend in the 1780's; Murray urged his to do the same.

[1] Thomas Lundeen, *The Bench of Bishops. A Study of the Secular Activities of the Bishops of the Church of England and of Ireland 1801–1871*, unpub. PhD. dissertation (University of Iowa, 1963), 138–9.

[2] G. Murray, *Charge . . . to the Clergy of His Diocese At the Triennial Visitation, Holden in July, MDCCCXL* (1840), 31.

Murray was only one of several prelates who feared that the harmonious ideal of a clerical hierarchy representing all classes, and paralleling the natural temporal hierarchy, was in danger. The comforting knowledge that 'the son of the highest peer, and the son of the humblest yeoman, along with every intermediate grade [are] engaged in the same course of pastoral duties, with equal earnestness and devotion' was threatened by the defection of those placed by providence at the top of the social pyramid.[1] Bishop Monk of Gloucester (1830–56),[2] when issuing this warning in 1835, recognized, as critics charged, that it might appear that 'the low-minded and worldly motive of pecuniary benefit' was a consideration of the well-born in entering the clerical profession. If anyone was guilty of such material weakness, however, it was not the individual interested in the Church, but his parents, who expected adequate recognition and advancement for their son.[3]

This concern about the social composition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy bothered Church leaders more and more in the 1830's and 1840's. Not only old Tory appointees like Murray and Monk fretted about leveling tendencies; young Liberals like Bishop Dension of Salisbury (1837–54) were uneasy as well.[4] Although he supported Church reform, Denison, like many moderate High churchmen, was never very happy about it. Stimulated by the Continental revolutions of 1848, Denison wondered if democratic notions were weakening the natural social hierarchy reflected in the Church. He devoted much of his visitation *Charge* of that year to warning of the dangers of drawing too heavily on the lower classes for clerical recruitment. It would in time severely curtail the influence and usefulness of the Establishment. France, where revolution had again erupted, suffered grievously from such a policy, he claimed; the excessive equalization of income in the French church had driven the better sort out, so that it is only among 'peasants and mechanics, in that part of the population entirely destitute of fortune, or even of the rudiments of education, that the Church is obliged to seek her ministers.' Denison explored the similar situation in Ireland and Scotland where, in contrast to the English clergy, they have 'none of the advantages of personal weight and consideration, of social and family

[1] James Monk, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester, In August and September, MDCCCXXXV* (1835), 17.

[2] James Henry Monk (1784–1856), son of a military officer, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford (1809–23), Bishop of Gloucester (1830). A very conservative High Churchman.

[3] J. Monk, *Charge* (1835), 18.

[4] Edward Denison (1801–54), son of a London merchant, later landowner and M.P. Though High Church and Oxford, was a Whig. A diligent, reforming bishop.

relations'.[1] The bishop realized that the changing composition of English society in his own lifetime made this a sensitive subject, and conceded that perhaps the national Church had of late drawn too few clergy from the middle and lower classes. Nevertheless he thought this an error on the side of caution, convinced that the clergy drawn from the higher orders at least had the interest of all levels of society at heart. If, however, the trend towards equalization within the Church continued, it would have a profound effect on the composition and character of the body of the clergy. For this reason Denison was opposed to further reforms that would have reorganized and expanded the number of dioceses to be financed out of still another redistribution of ecclesiastical revenue. As far as he was concerned, any further reduction of existing resources would make a clerical career even less appealing to men of good family, and in time this would be reflected to a disproportionate extent on the episcopal bench itself.

Denison, of lesser gentry parentage, was not in imminent danger of being swept away by a flood of low-born bishops. Nevertheless, there was an obvious increase after 1830 of prelates who lacked his or even higher genteel credentials. Fourteen of the twenty-four men elevated to the bench by Grey, Melbourne, Peel and Russell were of non-aristocratic families. At no time since the mid-eighteenth century had non-aristocratic appointments constituted more than 48 per cent of the new prelates. Yet 58 per cent of the episcopal generation elevated during the period 1830–52 could not claim a genteel pedigree. The sharp decrease in the number of bishops selected from the peerage was in part compensated by an increase in the number of appointments from the gentry, but even more so from the less-favored classes. This is what worried those churchmen already established in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is clear, however, that their new colleagues, if not always as well-born as they might like, were still at least well-connected.

Three of the non-aristocratic bishops had in fact married into the gentry and another into the peerage, so that in fact only ten of the twenty-four appointments after 1830 were completely unrelated to the aristocracy. When marital as well as parental relationships are evaluated, they reveal a slight upswing in the percentage of prelates born or married into the aristocracy. In 1783, 76 per cent of the bishops were so connected; between then and 1812, the percentage fell to approximately 62 per cent. Despite the increase in appointments from the peerage by Liverpool there was a decrease in those with gentry connections, so that the number of aristocratically-related prelates continued to fall, reaching slightly more than 56 per cent in 1830. The comparatively high incidence of non-aristocratic bishops appointed after 1830 who married

[1] E. Denison, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Salisbury ... July and August, 1848* (1848), 23–25.

above their station actually reversed this trend, so that though the proportion of low-born prelates installed was probably greater than at any comparable period since the mid-eighteenth century, 58 per cent of them were still directly related by birth or marriage to aristocratic families.

Although a few of the fifty prelates between 1783–1850, lacking an aristocratic pedigree, were the sons of artisans, grocers, graziers, livery stable proprietors, and even a butler, most stood somewhat higher in the social scheme of things. Many bishops were in fact the offspring of bankers, merchants, attorneys, and, more often, military officers, government officials, and clergymen. In fact, thirty-two of the 100 bishops whose origins are known were sons of clergymen, and the mothers of an additional six were parsons' daughters. Consequently, approximately one-third of the prelates were at the top of what had become a hereditary profession. When maternal origins are included, the figure approaches two-fifths. As early as the 1630's, more than a quarter of the bishops were sons of parsons, and the figures for the later eighteenth century would suggest that the proportion remained fairly constant.[1] Of the bishops in power in 1783, one-quarter had clerical fathers. Information on the mothers of eighteenth-century bishops is too limited to be significant; although in all probability, if later trends are accurate for the earlier period, several additional prelates in 1783 had maternal grandfathers who were clergymen.

The hereditary characteristics of the bench were steadily extended in the next two episcopal generations: nearly a third of the bishops elevated between 1783–1812 had clerical fathers, and the proportions rose to over two-fifths between 1812–30. If maternal considerations are included, slightly more than half the prelates appointed in the latter period were carrying on their father's or maternal grandfathers' clerical profession. By the 1830's, however, as contemporary ecclesiastics noted, the Church was attracting a clergy of more diverse social composition, and this was in part reflected on the episcopal bench. In contrast to the previous episcopal generation, only one-fifth of the appointments made after 1830 consisted of sons of clergymen. The number of bishops whose mothers were clerical daughters does not appreciably alter this proportion. In all likelihood the Whig ministers who made most of the episcopal appointments after 1830 had nothing against clergymen's sons—only against Tory clergymen's sons. As the Anglican clergy was heavily Tory, politically and emotionally, the possibilities of finding suitable ecclesiastical appointments from that quarter were considerably reduced.

The Church hierarchy, closely related to the ruling classes by birth

[1] Stone, 'Social Mobility', *P. & P.*, 48.

and marriage, was further allied through education. Clergymen were not educated separately in seminaries; they received the same instruction as the laity. Although some of the bishops considered in the following chapters were in fact founders of formal clerical seminaries in their dioceses, none of them had been the recipients of a special education designed to prepare them for the Church.[1] More than half the bishops were educated in one of the seven foundation schools, usually Eton or Winchester, before moving on to Oxford or Cambridge.[2] All prelates attended one of the universities, and appointments to the bench usually reflected a long-standing custom of alternating the filling of vacancies between the two institutions. Melbourne broke the custom, nominating Cambridge men to nine of the thirteen sees he had to fill. Though he perhaps believed, as he claimed, that Cambridge produced ten able men to Oxford's five, his problem was more basic: it was difficult to find respectable churchmen from Oxford who were also reliable Whigs. Melbourne was determined to have co-operative bishops, but the search was often arduous and time-consuming, as revealed in his weary cry, 'Damn it, another bishop dead!' when he received news of still another vacancy.[3]

The improvement of university standards, and the revival of theological instruction in the first half of the nineteenth century, undoubtedly contributed to the improvement of clerical education and the quality of ministerial activity. In terms of advancement, however, the personal contacts made at school or university were probably still more important. Though scholarship, and occasionally even theology, were often routes to recognition and promotion, influential classmates or pupils were especially valuable ingredients for success in the Church, particularly when family connections were not all that they might be. The history of ecclesiastical patronage in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century is more a history of whom one knew and whom one was related to, than it is a study of the rewards of merit and virtue. It is, in effect, a study of the same standards that prevailed in most English institutions.

As the quality of these standards improved in the nineteenth century, they reflected the changing expectations of a society in extraordinary transition. The law, Parliament, governmental agencies, local administration, were rationalized and reformed more in accordance with the utilitarian values and the economic and political realities of the age. The Established Church was inevitably affected. Its ecclesiastical leadership was still permeated with ambitious, place-seeking, mediocre party men who owed their advancement to family and friends. Many earnest

[1] In particular, Thomas Burgess, George Henry Law, and, more importantly, Samuel Wilberforce.

[2] Lundeen, *The Bench*, 43.

[3] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 122.

and dedicated clergymen whose very real merits were obscured by their distance from men of influence, or negated by their controversial opinions on troublesome issues, were undoubtedly neglected. What is surprising, however, is that the system produced as many capable and energetic prelates as it did to govern the national Church during its most trying period since the civil wars of the seventeenth century.

None of them were particularly original or daring men, though some of them were extremely intelligent and perceptive. They were, however, institutional beings, prelates of an ancient establishment. Conservative, sometimes utterly reactionary, innovation and reform were, for many of them, horrid concepts, and for others, at best, a necessity. Although, as a group, the episcopate was well educated, even learned, no single prelate of the age stands out as a great divine whose intellectual powers and example stimulated contemporaries. There was no Wesley, Newman, Pusey, Arnold, or Maurice among them to excite their times. Nevertheless these were the men who had to govern the Church when it was shaken and fragmented by Evangelical revivalism and High Church Tractarianism. More importantly, as this study emphasizes, they were also the men who had to guide, administer, and even reform the national Establishment in a period of unprecedented economic and social change that would have placed enormous demands on the most modern, perceptive, and innovative of social institutions. The Church of England was certainly none of these—something its leaders at first took pride in until they realized that their ideas and policies were perhaps the dangerous vanities of a bygone age.

I

Social Speculation and Revolutionary Upheaval

1. THE NATURE OF SOCIETY

A decade or two before the outbreak of the French Revolution, English Church leaders were becoming increasingly uneasy about trends in social criticism. Too many contemporaries seemed interested in questions of social causation and inequality, as if existing rationalistic and theological explanations were unsatisfactory. Prying into established notions was disturbing to eighteenth-century bishops, but it was particularly worrying when the subject was the nature of society. Prelates were not very interested in wrestling with new social theories or critical analyses of inevitable, and natural, social problems. For most of them, the Bible and John Locke had explained the essentials; they saw no reason to enquire more deeply into the subject. As Professor Sykes has shown, the mitred guardians of the Establishment were primarily political functionaries whose interest in ecclesiastical matters was often ceremonious and superficial.

Episcopal interest in social questions was even more slender. Although many bishops certainly supported charitable and philanthropic projects, and annually delivered uninspiring sermons on behalf of the charity schools, few of them, until later in the century, could be considered in the forefront of social improvement. They were long accustomed to think of relevant problems in terms of papal threats, Nonconformity, deism, scepticism and religious enthusiasm. That the concerns of the Church might be re-examined in terms of the nature and problems of

society was a concept remote from most prelates' minds until the closing decades of the century. Then, prodded by Rousseau's ideas in particular, and the critical atmosphere of the times in general, a few Church leaders urged the imposition of restraints upon some of the far-fetched notions being propounded by restless social analysts.

It seemed that men were losing their perspective when they failed to see that periodic imbalances in society were inevitable, and that the exaggerated inequities that resulted for the less fortunate classes would in time be modified by a natural restoration of social balance. In the meantime, Christian charity and parochial relief would provide for those unable to stand the wait. Yet, despite such ancient truths, the explicitly antisocial criticisms of Rousseau, blaming individual misery and misfortune on the corrupting evils of propertied society itself, were, in varying forms, being preached by enthusiasts who refused to see that social causation was unscientific, unnatural, and unscriptural. To insist that the individual parts of society were a result of the whole was a violation of the most fundamental rational-empirical principles of modern science, as any Cartesian or Newtonian knew. To argue that social inequality was unnatural, the result of the wicked imposition of private property upon simple, unsuspecting men, was contrary to all that was known of human nature, the voluntaristic, contractual origins of society, and the progressive history of civilizations. Moreover, Rousseau's tardy warning to ignore the imposter who first arrogantly claimed, '*ceci est à moi*', and his lament that man was lost when he forgot that the fruits of the earth were for everyone, contradicted the Scriptural evidence of God's wrathful judgment when betrayed by this own creation—a judgment that in fact condemned man to labor inequitably for those fruits.[1]

Prelates thought they understood the reason for the assertions that the inequities of society were the results of social conditions and man-made distinctions: it was the result of the erosion of belief in a divinely-conceived hierarchical structure formulated in accordance with a predetermined plan. Eighteenth-century speculative thinkers, indefatigably seeking the rationally comprehensible natural laws governing man and society, neglected the truths of revelation and placed too much emphasis upon anthropocentric causation. The continual discovery of innumerable natural laws offering new insights into human behavior and the development of society made Scriptural explanations and justifications appear irrelevant and even ridiculous. Religion itself was often relegated to a derivative rather than a causal characteristic—more reflective of a society than formulative. Montesquieu, for example, included it along with climate, laws, governmental maxims, historical

[1] *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes,* in *Œuvres* (Paris, 1826), IV.

experience, customs and manners, as an intrinsic part of any social complex.[1]

In general, however, the diminution of divine causation and Scriptural explanation did not challenge concepts of the natural structure of society and the inevitability of inequality. Even deists or sceptics, while rejecting the supervision and intervention of an omnipresent God, did not deny the conservative assumption that existing societies were essentially derived from the nature of things. Utilitarian psychology and social contract theory both emphasized the importance of rational individual choice in the creation of the social community. English ecclesiastics, themselves very much products of their enlightened age, had little difficulty in accepting these general propositions and merging them into their broad concepts of natural religion. From their standpoint, rationally comprehended natural laws of social development did not conflict with the Scriptural explanation originating in the expulsion of fallen man from eternal paradise. Endowed with free will, and henceforth confronted with the problem of survival, man was plunged into a state of nature from which he had been developing ever since. When properly interpreted, the revealed laws governing that process did not really conflict with those that were natural and rationally discoverable. If anything, most English prelates believed, they were complementary. When, in the later years of the century, speculation started to expand in less comforting directions, and critics and reformers started overly emphasizing the causative factors of temporal conditions, propertied beneficiaries of those conditions thought it time to invoke less worldly explanations once more. Bishops, ostensibly the bridge between the spiritual and the temporal, were well suited for the task.

In 1769 Richard Watson, then Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Professor of Chemistry, and later Bishop of Llandaff, felt it imperative to remind his contemporaries that the institutions of society were necessary as they existed. Contrary to recent suggestions, any defects in society were the result of individual failings, and those who agitated for social reforms were hopelessly ignorant of both revealed and natural law. Troubled particularly by domestic unrest over rising corn prices, Watson feared that critics were starting to draw some of their arguments from Rousseau's misguided writings. The implications of such an approach to natural phenomena far transcended periodic price fluctuations. Clergymen, the future prelate felt, should be especially sensitive to these developments as the parochial ministry had a primary role to play in the preservation of social harmony and continuity. 'Let us,' he urged, 'as ministers of the gospel of peace, co-operate in our proper stations with our superiors, in promoting harmony and good order in society, in preserving a due respect to the authority, and a proper confidence

[1] *L'Esprit des lois*, Bk. XIX, Chap. IV.

in the ability and integrity of those who are set over us.'[1] Watson, one of the most assertive clerical promoters of Old Whiggery, often did not practise what he preached. He vigorously opposed the American War and Lord North, and continually distrusted the ability and the integrity of the king as well as most of his ministers.[2] But his message, 'Christianity Consistent', was intended for transmission to the lower orders who were encouraged to show none of the ambition, contentiousness and neglect that he and many of his clerical brethren exhibited throughout their careers. In that sense, Watson was merely charting the course of social retrenchment followed by the Church during the tumultuous years of the French Revolution and in the early decades of the next century.

Society was, after all, as several bishops proclaimed, as much a divine creation as the Newtonian universe itself. To suggest that God created one but not the other was little better than atheism.[3] Deistic and materialistic descriptions of society developing independently of the creator were, according to Bishop Bagot of Bristol (1782–83), crude rejections of divine intelligence.[4] The refutation of such ideas was especially appropriate in a sermon in 1783 commemorating the death of the martyred Charles I. Free will, he preached, certainly allowed man to influence and participate in the development of his society, and in that sense it reflected the passions and prejudices of human nature. Nevertheless, society ultimately developed in accordance with a preconceived plan directly and continually involving the creator.[5] As in the universe itself, God demanded order and harmony in society; when men lost sight of that necessary truth, as some had of late, and many had in the preceding century, all ran the risk of being plunged into misery. Though he spoke to the highest peers of the realm, the Bishop of Bristol specifically urged the disgruntled poor to take note of his words.[6] As few among that lowly class spent much of their time perusing episcopal sermons delivered to the House of Lords, it was more likely they would receive the message from a less exalted clerical guide.

[1] R. Watson, *Christianity Consistent With Every Social Duty. A Sermon Preached at the University of Cambridge . . . March 9, 1769* (Cambridge, 1769), 15.

[2] See Watson's *The Principles of the Revolution Vindicated in A Sermon Preached . . . May 29, 1776* (Cambridge, 1776).

[3] Lewis Bagot, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . January 30, 1783, Being the Day Appointed to be Observed as the Day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I* (1783), 5–6.

[4] Lewis Bagot (1740–1802), son of Sir Walter Bagot, Bart., and brother of 1st Lord Bagot. Dean of Christ Church (1777), Bishop of Bristol (1782), Norwich (1783), St Asaph (1790).

[5] Bagot, *Sermon* (1783), 8.

[6] *Ibid.*, 13–14.

The moderate, aristocratic Bagot, charitable and industrious by the episcopal standards of the age, was repelled by the idea that society developed from a savage and disorderly state of nature and that all its advantages were 'the gradual work of mere human effort and ingenuity'. It troubled him that such naturalistic interpretations had permeated the Church itself when 'every power of the human mind, every affection of the human heart, is more than demonstration . . .' of the fallacy of those ideas. Furthermore, he was alarmed by the growing belief that society was essentially the work of fallible men; such a conclusion 'must either annihilate all social duties, both publick and private, or rest the obligation of them on false and insecure grounds.' Bagot was one of several prelates in the pre-revolutionary decade who wondered how far down the hierarchical social layers such naturalistic ideas had filtered. Was it just a matter of time before people on the lowest level would reject the evidence showing that God had placed man in society with all the 'various distributions of rank, wealth, power, and all the exterior circumstances of life'?[1]

Bagot's obscure successor at Bristol (1783–92), Christopher Wilson, basically agreed with but was not critical of the naturalistic premise that man formed society as a necessary means of self-preservation. 'Society is the natural object of his affections and attachments,' but man entered into it because the alternative state of nature was miserable and chaotic. Englishmen had caught a glimpse of that savage reality during the civil wars of the seventeenth century. Instead of denying the destructive nature of pre-social man, as did the more tender-minded Bagot, Wilson felt it should be frankly recognized so that men would be more willing to offer greater obedience to God and to authority.[2] Wilson, one of Pitt's first appointments to the bench, was typical in his easy reconciliation of rationally understood natural law with revelation. Few prelates of his generation found it a troublesome problem. Deists had, of course, failed to understand the continuing relationship between creative laws and the creator, and were blind to the obvious fact that natural religion and morality were in essence no different from the inspired precepts laid down in the Bible. Bishops Butler and Warburton had more than refuted claims to the contrary, and Archdeacon Paley resolved any lingering doubts.

This is what the energetic and influential future Bishop of St David's

[1] L. Bagot, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of St Paul . . . June 5, 1788, Being the Time of the Yearly Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity Schools* . . . (1788), 3–5.

[2] Christopher Wilson, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . January 31, 1785, Being the Day Appointed to be Observed as the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles I* (1785), 10–12.

(1803–24) and Salisbury (1824–37), Thomas Burgess,[1] meant in 1789 when he insisted that even if Scripture was ignored, 'the religion of Nature consists of certain notions of a superior being, collected from the works of creation. . . . [They] . . . are the unwritten will of God, and consist of certain universal and permanent principles conducive to the general good of society.'[2] A productive theologian and classical scholar before his elevation to the bench, Burgess, then chaplain to the powerful Barrington of Salisbury and (in 1791) Durham, explained that divine laws, as they regard society, 'originate from the two great principles of Self-Love, and Social Affection'. Common to all men, they embraced the natural laws of self-preservation and personal freedom. From the standpoint of these basic rights, Burgess agreed, all men are equal and independent, but when translated into social terms individual rights become modified by necessity.[3]

'Mutual protection and happiness are the ends of Society'; consequently, morality and good had to be judged in terms of those goals. Burgess added:

> Any moral good may be said to be intrinsically good, which conduces to those ends of Society. Whatever therefore contributes to the happiness of our fellow creatures, and to maintain the just rights of Society, is intrinsically good, because it promotes the peace and well-being of Society.[4]

The danger to society came when 'a pursuit . . . abstractedly and intrinsically understood . . .', and apparently not contrary to natural law, conflicted with the practical concerns of society. Burgess saw that danger emerging in his own time as social critics derived broad and disruptive conclusions from their analyses of individual natural rights, and accused society of violating those rights. Once speculative philosophy was permitted to intrude upon reality, the wildest conclusions were possible. He emphasized that 'the abstract and intrinsic nature of actions can form no rule for the general conduct of mankind. Such a rule would be susceptible of the worst perversions.'[5] Ultimately, social utility must be the final determinant, as individual utility was the initial motivation for the establishment of society. That which is in conformity with the fundamental purpose of society must also be in tune with natural law. As society had been a necessary and later development than the primitive

[1] Thomas Burgess (1756–1837), son of a Hampshire grocer, classical scholar, opponent of the slave trade, and close friend of Bishop Barrington, his patron. A serious, pious clergyman who revitalized the Church in the diocese of St David's. See John S. Harford, *The Life of Thomas Burgess, D.D.* (1840).

[2] T. Burgess, *Considerations on the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Upon Grounds of Natural Religious and Political Duty* (Oxford, 1789), 39.

[3] *Ibid.*, 43–44. [4] *Ibid.*, 27–28. [5] *Ibid.*, 30.

state of natural individualism, it was erroneous and potentially harmful to abstract from the latter to condemn the former.

To some members of the Anglican hierarchy, such speculation was not only dangerous, it was also sheer nonsense. It was especially foolish when flowing from the pens and pulpits of Christian ministers. How could thinking and religious men believe their earliest ancestors once lived in a primitive and savage state of nature which they voluntarily abandoned to join together in society under acceptable political authority? George Horne, who briefly occupied the see of Norwich (1790–92) before his death, insisted that God had never created such people, left to themselves as savage beasts, uninstructed, eventually establishing a voluntary civil compact.[1] Dean of Canterbury for nearly a decade before his reluctant acceptance of the mitre, Horne was a sincerely devout High churchman who found natural law explanations of society thoroughly unconvincing.[2]

Horne could find no evidence that man ever lived in a state of equality and independence. From the time of his creation he was in a state of subordination, 'since from the beginning, some were born subject to others; and the power of the father, by whatever name it be called, must have been supreme at the first, when there was none superior to it.'[3] Scripture and rational understanding of familial dependency proved that the origins of society were patriarchal, and subordination was natural from the first presence of man on earth. Society and government developed from this basic familial-subordinate structure into warring tribes conquering and subordinating others. Over centuries, Horne concluded, these tribes combined to form states capable of controlling turmoil between the families and tribes within, and of protecting themselves from other states.[4] Scripture and history supported his account, he believed, and both were far more reliable than self-generating abstractions drawn from corrupt man's overweening pride in his reason.

Whatever modifications and qualifications Church spokesmen chose to place upon their varying interpretations of society, they all indicated

[1] G. Horne, 'A Discourse on the Origin of Civil Government', *The Scholar Armed Against the Errors of the Time; Or, A Collection of Tracts On the Principles and Evidences of Christianity, the Constitution of the Church, and the Authority of Civil Government*, 2nd ed. (1800), 271.

[2] George Horne (1730–92), son of a Kent clergyman, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, Vice-Chancellor of the University, Chaplain to George III. Owed his advancement to Lord North and the king.

[3] Horne, *Discourse*, 271.

[4] *Ibid.*, 272–6. Horne believed David Hume's 'false philosophy' had contributed much to this erroneous interpretation of social development. See *A Letter to Adam Smith, L.L.D. On the Life, Death, and Philosophy of His Friend David Hume, Esq.* (1799). First pub. 1777, and reprinted as late as 1836.

a genuine uneasiness about ideas of innovation and reform abroad in the land. The political and personal divisions, as well as the economic problems created by the American War, stirred up the feelings of clergy and laity alike. Catholic incursions, the explosiveness of the Gordon riots in 1781, Dissenter demands for admission to the universities, mounting criticisms of the Church by Methodists and enthusiastic Evangelicals, sent occasional tremors through the hierarchical pillars of the Establishment. Frequently, the prelates appeared more disturbed by a state of mind and a changing atmosphere than by specific events. Their often heavy and insensitive antennae seemed to sense a rumbling beneath the foundations of Church and State. It caused Bishop Pretyman of Lincoln to repeat on the eve of the French Revolution the many recent reminders that 'subordination of ranks, and the relation of magistrates and subjects, are indispensably necessary in that state of society for which our Creator has evidently intended the human species.'[1]

Like many of his brethren, Pretyman was prepared to invoke the deity on behalf of the *status quo*; he duly warned that whoever weakens and threatens the existing social and political structure 'by his words or by his actions, weakens the particular form which is duly established and justly administered in the community of which he is a member, sins against the ordinance of God.' And if, the new bishop portended, 'he should be the means of its entire destruction, he is guilty of the greatest crime which in his social capacity he can possibly commit.'[2] Six months later the Bastille fell.

2. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Over the next decade, Englishmen indulged in an orgy of self-evaluation, deprecation and condemnation, decrying every source of corruption from adultery and duelling to an unsupervised reading of Erasmus Darwin's suggestive *Loves of the Plants*.[3] It was an era of moral self-flagellation in which people whipped themselves with dreary tracts on the evils of luxury, dissipation, religious indifference, and discontent, while intoning the stabilizing virtues of contentment, chastity, marriage,

[1] G. Pretyman, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . January 30, 1789, Being the Anniversary of King Charles's Martyrdom* (1789), 16.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] The Revolution triggered a near-hysterical preoccupation with chastity in many quarters. Darwin was aware of this when he recommended that ladies be permitted to read his botanical studies only under the closest supervision. See his *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (Dublin, 1798), 45–46; also *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LXV, Pt. II (Dec., 1795), 979.

home and the interdependent responsibilities of all members of society.[1] Once it became obvious that 'the French people, insensible of their own delirium [were] eager to spread the infection and to render all mankind as miserable as themselves', it was necessary to launch a national campaign of moral inoculation.[2] After all, Edmund Burke, the prophet vindicated, had recalled that France has always 'more or less' influenced English behavior, and ominously predicted, 'when your fountain is choked up and polluted, the stream will not run long, or not clear . . .'.[3] The sources of pollution were studied carefully in the waning years of the century, and all possible contamination isolated and exposed. Burke had provided some comfort by his assurances that the institutions of English society were not a site of infection. The pollutants were festering elsewhere, and were repeatedly traced to the corruption of social relationships brought on by the thoughtless behavior of the higher orders. Pious Evangelicals had of course been preaching against the dissolute behavior of the religiously indifferent rich for many years, but the Revolution provided them with a greatly enlarged congregation and chorus, many members of which hardly shared their spiritual enthusiasm or Low Church theology.

Warning cries of 'Reform or Ruin: Take Your Choice!' rang out from a wide variety of voices. The respected High Church barrister, John Bowdler, posed that alternative in 1797, and Englishmen considered it through eight successive editions. Like many others, Bowdler analysed the behavior of people in the middle and higher ranks, ranging from the lesser clergy, 'loose and neglectful in their duties', to the king himself, of whom he had no complaint. But below the monarch, among the nobility and gentry, 'do not Luxury, Corruption, Adultery, Gaming, Pride, Vanity, Idleness, Extravagance, and Dissipation, prevail too generally?'[4] Unfortunately things were not much better among the gentlemen of his profession any more than they were in medicine, commerce and trade. From such evidence, Bowdler wisely concluded that in the future all classes must 'BE GOOD!'[5] This was no different

[1] See R. A. Soloway, 'Reform or Ruin: English Moral Thought During the First French Republic', *The Review of Politics*, 25, no. 1 (Jan. 1963), 110–28.

[2] John Bowles, *The Real Grounds of the Present War With France* (1793), 5.

[3] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Works of . . . Edmund Burke* (New York, 1813), III, 96.

[4] J. Bowdler, *Reform or Ruin: Take Your Choice! In Which the Conduct of the King, the Parliament, the Ministry, the Opposition, the Nobility and Gentry, the Bishops and Clergy, etc., etc., etc., is Considered and That Reform Pointed Out Which Alone Can Save the Country*, 2nd ed. (1797), 9–11.

[5] *Ibid.*, 26.

from what Frederick Howard, Fifth Earl of Carlisle, decided, nor the anonymous 'Belzebub', who chortled, 'I have always said that TOO MUCH LIBERTY AND LUXURY would make Britain my own.'[1]

Well above that satanic wisdom there was the exalted Burke's description of how 'the most licentious, prostitute, and abandoned . . . and at the same time the most coarse, rude, savage, and ferocious' manners and morals had destroyed the Old Régime.[2] This theme of moral and social corruption pervaded Burke's influential criticism as he reminded his contemporaries, 'all other people have laid the foundations of civil freedom in severer manners, and a system of masculine morality . . .'.[3] Even Richard Price, the Unitarian minister whose defense of the Revolution provoked Burke's *Reflections*, conceded that a remarkable 'accumulation of luxury, avarice, vice and venality' plagued both France and England;[4] he hoped that the French Revolution and its example would 'have ultimately in view a reformation of manners and virtuous practice'.[5]

Popular Evangelicals such as William Wilberforce and Hannah More joined with John Bowles and other High Churchmen not only to decry the uninspiring behavior of the upper classes, but to warn them of the deleterious effect it was having on their social inferiors.[6] How many 'amens' must have responded to Bowles's prayer, 'would to Heaven that the upper ranks could be prevailed upon to consider, before it be too late, how much the morals, and consequently the fate of their country depend upon them.'[7] While much of this criticism was inspired by religious revivalism, and fed upon a deep-rooted sense of personal sin, more of it was prompted by the awful crisis threatening the political and social structure of European society. The two motivating forces often became confused, but, more often than not, frightened critics of upper-class behavior were far less concerned with the salvation of souls

[1] F. Howard, *The Crisis: and Its Alternatives Offered to the Free Choice of Englishmen* (1798), 14. *Gentleman's Magazine*, LIX, Pt. I (June 1789), 508.

[2] E. Burke, *Four Letters Addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament on the Proposals for Peace With the Regicide Directory of France* (1796), in *Works*, IV, 368–9.

[3] Burke, *Reflections*, 54.

[4] R. Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, Delivered on November 4, 1789* (1789), 46–7.

[5] *Ibid.*, 15.

[6] W. Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*, 6th ed. (1798). H. More, *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, in *The Complete Works of Hannah More* (New York, 1857). I.

[7] J. Bowles, *A View of the Moral State of Society at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (1804), vi.

than with the prevention of lower-class revolution. Believing as they did in a hierarchical society, it was logical and instinctive that they would concentrate upon the natural leadership of that society when it was in danger of neglecting or abusing its critical responsibilities.

Much to their discomfort, responsible and respectable critics found their fears justified when Jacobin sympathizers agreed that the higher orders had been far from exemplary in their treatment of the laboring poor. If the solutions of a Tom Paine, the American Joel Barlow, or a William Vaughan were hardly palatable to Wilberforce, Hannah More or John Bowles, they nevertheless jointly decried the want of understanding and moral leadership by the propertied classes. Although republican agitators were basically concerned with political and social questions rather than those of moral behavior, Vaughan in his *Catechism of Man* (1794) defended the rights of the people on the grounds that the lower orders were more moral and better behaved than their betters. Why, he asked, should moral folk be ruled by those who are immoral, simply because of an accident of birth or good fortune?[1] There was no lack of evidence for such dangerous, leveling queries. The frightened propertied classes were filling books, newspapers, magazines, parliamentary debates, and the ears of innumerable congregations with more than enough examples of the rich's loose and thoughtless manner of living to keep a Jacobin well-armed.

All this contributed to an appalling sense of social disharmony and disintegration prodded by the stabbing fear of a revolutionary-minded laboring class no longer acquiescent in their natural state in the community. Troubled clergymen had vaguely warned of such a possibility as they grew uneasy about the excessive secularization of explanations of individual and social behavior. When it was proposed by Rousseau and others that man was in fact a product of his own corrupt creation, society, rather than society being the result of individual corruption, the prospects for maintaining indefinitely the natural balance seemed to diminish. The French Revolution was startling testimony to what might be expected once the natural laws of social harmony were no longer respected.

Most members of the Church hierarchy responded slowly and cautiously to the Revolution until it took a more violent turn in 1792. They were certainly uneasy before then. Any sudden alteration of the *status quo* tended to cause a slight tremor in episcopal circles, and Burke's powerful analysis of events across the Channel did little to steady prelatic nerves. Initially, however, since the Catholic Church appeared to bear the brunt of changes undertaken, Protestant bishops could readily

[1] W. Vaughan, *The Catechism of Man; Pointing Out From Sound Principles, and Acknowledged Facts, the Rights and Duties of Every Rational Being* (1794), ix-x.

find some soothing compensation. George Horne saw no reason at first to be alarmed. He was in fact amused by the impulsive prophecies thrown about during the opening months of the Revolution, and in a letter to George Berkeley, Vice-Dean of Canterbury, he lightly compared the warning of one Anglican parson that 'the devil is just broken loose' with Dr Price singing 'his *Nunc dimittis*, on the sight of paradise returning upon earth'.[1] Horne did not live long enough to witness the more somber evaluations which many of his episcopal associates made of such predictions.

Only one prelate, Watson, found anything good to say about the fall of the Bastille and French attempts to establish constitutional government. That Whig champion of English constitutionalism looked to Paris and saw the 'glorious prospect of the prevalence of general freedom and general happiness' in Europe. Civil and religious liberty were about to triumph, and despotic government would soon give way to 'lawful rule, and right supremacy'. Like many early sympathizers in England, Watson interpreted developments in France in the tradition of 1688, and concluded that princes would soon appreciate the importance of popular affection, liberty and loyalty.[2] During the following year, 1791, the bishop was less certain, but still hopeful that the main benefits of 'this wonderful Struggle' will be 'a Trial by Jury—an Habeas Corpus Act—and an incorrupt Administration of public Justice'. Perhaps influenced by Burke, whom he admired, and who shared his earlier views against the American War, a note of caution crept into his pronouncements. While continuing to rejoice in 'the Emancipation of the French Nation from the Tyranny of Royal Despotism', Watson was becoming uneasy about the French populace and 'popular and aristocratic Demagogues' whom he disliked more than monarchs. Possibly, he conceded, the French emancipation was more apparent than real.[3]

The disappointment Watson felt as the Revolution turned more violent contrasted with the feelings of horror and revulsion that swept the bench and the higher classes. Nevertheless, throughout the remainder of the decade he continued to believe that the bloodshed would run its course, and in time a better France and a better Europe would emerge. Although less positive than he had been during the American War, the bishop still felt it an error for England to fight against a revolutionary movement. Repeatedly he urged negotiations with the Directory which would secure France the fruits of its revolution and guarantee its bor-

[1] 15 Dec. 1789, *Berkeley Ps.*, British Museum, Add. MS. 39312, f. 108.

[2] R. Watson, *Considerations On the Expediency of Revising the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England: In Which Notice is Taken of the Objections to That Measure, Urged in Two Late Pamphlets* (1790), 105–6.

[3] R. Watson, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff* (1791), 4.

ders. Burke's denunciations of a regicide peace were more reflective of ruling-class sentiments, but Watson suspected that the French would be better off temporarily under a democratic government than they had been under the Bourbons. In any event, the French should be permitted to work out their own destiny, and the bishop believed that in time they would revert to some modified monarchy.[1]

Internal unrest seemed much more dangerous to Watson than did the external military threat. An inhumane conflict was becoming transformed into a grandiose crusade that could drag on indefinitely while intensifying grave problems with the restive lower orders at home. The prelate frankly thought that the French government should be answerable for its sins to God and to its own people rather than to the English. Once the revolutionary government halted its offensive, there was no need to proceed against France any further.[2] Mutiny in the English fleet in 1797 and the imminence of rebellion in Ireland only strengthened Watson's conviction that the war had created a desperate situation internally. Consequently he advocated conceding to the victorious French all their conquests in order to end the war before 'adding a British republic to those of Italy and Germany'. That revolution, feared by so many of his colleagues who viewed France with unrelieved horror, now even panicked Watson. Peace alone would cause the 'fever of republicanism' to subside and give time to all established governments to remedy their defects.[3] What he despaired of most in the Revolution was its stultifying effect upon desperately needed reforms in England and elsewhere. Yet, 'it may be said to every man in England and Europe who attempts to reform abuses either in church or state—*desine, jam conclamatum est*'.[4]

The emergence of Napoleon and the spectre of invasion finally shattered Watson's hope that, if left alone, France would transform itself into a peaceful constitutional monarchy. Instead, tyranny triumphed once more. Watson no longer called for a generous peace, but for total mobilization. In one of his rare appearances in the House of Lords, the disappointed old prelate in 1804 recanted his Whig illusions about French republicanism. He would now 'rather live upon clap-bread and water, and be shod with the wooden clogs of Westmorland for the rest of my life, as a free subject of this limited monarchy, than be pampered with all the delicacies, cockered with all the luxuries of this luxurious town [London], as a slave of the French Republic.'[5]

To most ecclesiastics, it was incredible that any of their brethren might ever have felt otherwise. Samuel Horsley, the most powerful and articulate excoriator of French republicanism in particular, and change

[1] Watson, *Anecdotes*, II, 16–19. [2] *Ibid.*, 19.
[3] Watson to Duke of Grafton, 10 Oct. 1797, *Ibid.*, 46–47.
[4] *Anecdotes*, I, 222. [5] *Ibid.*, II, 191–2.

in general, was far more reflective of Church attitudes.[1] The parallels that he drew were not with 1688 but with the terrible civil wars earlier in the century that had torn English society apart. Horsley contended that, during that dark period, contractual ideas of popular sovereignty were introduced to inflame 'the phrensy of that fanatical banditti, which took the life of the First Charles. In the madness and confusion, which followed the shedding of that blood, our History holds forth an edifying example of the effects . . . that are ever INTENDED, by the dissemination of those infernal maxims, that Kings are the servants of the people, punishable by their Masters. The same lesson is confirmed by the horrible example, which the present hour exhibits, in the unparalleled misery of a neighbouring Nation. . . .' The execution of Louis XVI, nine days before the annual January 30th sermon commemorating the death of the 'martyred' Charles, stirred the bishop to heights of rhetoric from which he rarely descended during the long war years that lay ahead. 'O my Country! Read the horror of thy own deed in this recent heightened imitation! Lament and weep, that this black French treason should have found its example, in the crime of thy unnatural sons!'[2]

In retrospect such savagery appeared inevitable to Horsley once the French demolished their government, overthrew the altars, despoiled and degraded the nobility, and forced the best citizens into exile. He described the results:

> Her riches, sacred and profane, given up to the pillage of sacrilege and rapine! Atheists directing her Councils! Desperados conducting her Armies! Wars of unjust and chimerical ambition consuming her Youth! Her Granaries exhausted! Her fields uncultivated! Famine threatening her multitudes! Her streets swarming with Assassins, filled with violence, deluged with blood!

England had been fortunate in the quick restoration of Church and Monarchy that followed 'our bloody deed', but it was impossible to determine what would happen across the Channel now that 'Public Justice [is] poisoned in its source . . .'.[3] The progress of the Revolution

[1] Samuel Horsley (1733–1806), son of a London clergyman, tutor to 4th Earl of Aylesford and chaplain to Bishop Lowth of London both of whom were his patrons. Bishop of St David's (1788), Rochester (1793) and St Asaph (1802). An extravagant, pluralistic High Churchman, and competent scientist. See Heneage Horsley Jebb, *A Great Bishop of One Hundred Years Ago: Being a Sketch of the Life of Samuel Horsley, LL.D.* (1909).

[2] S. Horsley, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . January 30, 1793, Being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First. With an Appendix Concerning the Political Principles of Calvin* (1793), 22–23.

[3] *Ibid.*, 23–24.

was an unrelieved catastrophe for Horsley; there could be no compromise, no reconciliation. Certain that the Christian world was engaged in a fateful struggle, the bishop felt England was the last outpost to resist. He demanded in 1798 that the clergy be mobilized into an armed militia for the final defense. Other prelates, equally alarmed by the naval mutiny, the resistance in Ireland, and predictions of imminent insurrection at home, nevertheless had reservations about the propriety and military value of clerical warriors. At a special meeting at Lambeth Palace, old Archbishop Markham of York urged the bishops to 'check the arming influenza of their inferior brethren', and most agreed.[1] Horsley, however, continued to insist he was ready 'to level the musket, and to trail the pike', if necessary, and, after his translation in 1802 to the more exposed diocese of St Asaph, he helped to organize the local militia, and encouraged it to exercise and drill on the palace lawn.[2]

As Watson had feared, the struggle against the French had become transformed into a holy war for the preservation of Christian society. While he repeatedly appealed for peace, Horsley insisted there could never be any reconciliation with bloody regicides at war with mankind. During the debates in 1801 preceding the Peace of Amiens signed the following year, Horsley opposed the government, though not 'insensible to the miseries of war . . .', and well aware of his clerical obligation 'to stop the effusion of human blood'.[3] Not even Bishop Porteus's measured warning that after nine years of war, and now two years of famine, the distress of the lower orders was so severe that a respite was absolutely necessary, was sufficient justification.[4] Horsley knew that in so cataclysmic a struggle, peace could not last until one party was ultimately defeated. A temporary withdrawal would only benefit the forces of darkness, for internal vigilance and repression would be relaxed and the Jacobin levelers would quickly revive.[5] But Horsley's opposition was founded upon even more forbidding assumptions. By the dawn of the new century he, like several of his clerical associates and many laymen, was utterly convinced of the existence of a grand international conspiracy directed against Christian civilization and unfolding in accordance with apocalyptical and millenarian prophecies. Given this belief, the establishment of peace would have little effect upon the elaborate machinations inexorably undermining the foundations of Christian society.

[1] Jebb, *Great Bishop*, 117–19. [2] *Ibid.*, 172–3.
[3] Cobbett's *Parliamentary History* (1801), XXXVI, 179–81.
[4] *Ibid.*, 183. [5] *Ibid.*, 182, 191.

3. CONSPIRACY AND MILLENNIUM

E. P. Thompson, in his illuminating and provocative study of the English working class, has described the appearance of millenarian prophecy and activity among the lower classes in the 1790's and the opening years of the nineteenth century. In accordance with his general thesis about the revolutionary nature of working-class thought and action in this period, the author associates millenarianism with the frustrations of a deeper democratic revolutionary impulse diverted and projected into prophetic fantasies.[1] Millenarian illusions, however, were more widespread than Thompson has suggested. They were prevalent among the higher orders as well, where they often became confused with revelations about age-old super-secret societies dedicated to the destruction of monarchy and religion. In the early months of the Revolution, the fashionable and learned, if somewhat erratic, Mrs Piozzi, earlier Mrs Hester Thrale, the wife of the wealthy brewery owner, wondered if the end of the world was approaching. The King's insanity, the death of Emperor Joseph II, 'the French struggling to obtain that Liberty they will not know how to use; the Rage for emancipating Negro Slaves, the Number of Jews lately baptized into Protestant Churches . . .', and many other signs pointed in that cosmic direction. According to her system of historical dating, the approaching year 1800 would leave only two centuries more before a third division of two thousand years would be completed; two thousand from the creation to the deluge; two thousand to the coming of Christ; and another two thousand more 'from his crucifixion to his second appearance in Glory, preceded by a flaming world'.[2] Mrs Piozzi believed in 1790 that her great-great-grandchildren would probably see 'the closing scene'. Four years later, events had caused her to revise her timetable and to conclude, 'so I shall live to see the great Prophecy completed, and our Saviour's *second* coming will then be most surely at hand.'[3]

She saw great significance in exaggerated reports of Jewish conversion, which she interpreted as a prelude to Christ's return. Others, like James Bicheno, a later fervent proponent of Malthusian prophecy as well, emphasized the destruction of papal power in France, and by citing numerous biblical prophecies and mystical numbers, interpreted it as the prelude to the kingdom of Christ being established on earth.[4] Al-

[1] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1965), 116–19.

[2] K. C. Balderston, ed., *Thraliana–The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs Piozzi) 1776–1809*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1951), II, 744.

[3] *Ibid.*, 869.

[4] J. Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times: Or, the Overthrow of the Papal Tyranny in France* (1793).

though the Privy Council in 1795 was sufficiently alarmed to lock up in an asylum the retired naval captain Richard Brothers when his interpretations of the Book of Revelation prophesied the end of monarchy and the triumph of the honest poor, Parliament was willing to listen to those of an obscure clergyman, Elhanan Winchester, who assured the legislators that the millennium was upon them. After passing through the three great periods of 'woe'—Mahomet's reign, the triumph of the Turks, and now the French Revolution—mankind was fast approaching the restoration of the Savior's universal rule. 'Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air! And so shall we ever be with the Lord.'[1] Whether or not many M.P.s shared Winchester's conviction of an ultimate elevation, some of them were unsure enough to listen to two of these prophetic sermons in a three-week period in 1793.

The variety and extent of such prophetic speculation was in part stimulated by the spiritual excitation of religious revivalism preceding the Revolution. Startling events in France added new dimensions to spiritual enthusiasm that often fed upon portentous signs and a quickened sense of imminence. But many people ostensibly uninfluenced and even hostile to the spiritual awakening could not escape a gnawing sense of confrontation that increasingly clashed with their ingrained confidence in rational explanation. Both attitudes were prevalent in episcopal circles, the latter much more than the former.

Bishop Porteus, more sympathetic to the Evangelical revival than most of the bench, believed, like many of his contemporaries, that the French Revolution could best be explained as a result of the immorality and irreligion that had corrupted French society and dissolved natural hierarchical bonds.[2] Consequently he welcomed and endorsed the innumerable appeals for moral rejuvenation and exemplary behavior on the part of the higher orders in England before the French example made an irreversible impression upon the inferior classes. Tom Paine, and leveling Jacobins like him, were already at work with their deplorable 'democratical' tools etching into the simple minds of the poor the exaggerated lessons of French fanaticism. Alarmed though he was, Porteus

[1] Elhanan Winchester, *The Three Woe Trumpets of which the First and Second are Already Past and the Third is Now Begun under which The Seven Vials of the Wrath of God are to be Poured Out Upon the World. Two Discourses Delivered in Parliament February 8 and 24, 1793* (1800), 69–70.

[2] Beilby Porteus (1731–1808), son of a Virginia landowner who emigrated to York in 1720, Royal Chaplain (1769), Bishop of Chester (1776), of London (1787). Was anti-Calvinist, though pro-Evangelical. A decided opponent of the slave trade, early patron of the Church Missionary Society and Bible Society, he was a pluralistic but energetic, improving prelate by the standards of the day.

shied away from the growing assumption that the crisis was in fact part of a greater scheme of things beyond human control. That mankind was plunged into a period of severe testing, there was no denying; whether it was, as some saw, the fulfilment of biblical prophecy leading to the millennium or the day of judgment, he did not pretend to know. All Porteus would say in 1794 was that mankind was caught up in 'awful and portentous times' that required the most serious attention to obligation and responsibility.[1]

The rest of the bench were at first equally cautious. Most of them thought of themselves as rational, suspicious of enthusiasm, and advocates of a moderate natural theology conformable to a balanced mind that found it difficult to give credence to agitated prophets ranting about the apocalypse or the second coming. Conspiracy, however, was more logical—the product of perverted free will contaminated by the defects of the human mind violating the rational laws of nature. Consequently, if the leaders of the Church were initially unable to swallow prophetic, millenarian explanations of the disintegration of European society, many of them readily accepted proof of a fantastic human plot designed to achieve that ominous end.

When, in 1797, the *émigré* Jesuit, the Abbé Augustin Barruel, revealed that the French Revolution was the culmination of efforts by a grand international conspiracy led by the Freemasons, Encyclopedists, and the mysterious Bavarian *Illuminati*, his propositions found ready acceptance on the episcopal bench. In his four-volume *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme*, Barruel traced the conspiracy from the medieval Order of Templars to the Enlightenment, where it fell under the control not only of the Freemasons but of their atheistic, literary, and political allies, Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet, Diderot, d'Holbach, and d'Alembert. From 1776 onwards, Condorcet, in alliance with the Abbé Sieyes, had constructed the Jacobin revolutionary organization that finally launched the Revolution.[2] Barruel had been influenced in his Masonic illusions by the conspiratorial notions of the Scottish mathematician, John Robison, whom he met in London. The latter's *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies* appeared the year after Barruel's *Mémoire* and gave them added authority.[3] If English clergymen were naturally cautious of the claims of

[1] B. Porteus, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London . . .* (1794), 28–30.

[2] A. Barruel, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme* (1797–98). See also Norman Cohn, *Warrant For Genocide—The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1967), 25–27.

[3] J. Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati*

a French Jesuit, their substantiation by a safe, respectable, Scottish scientist went far to dispel serious doubt.

Shortly after Barruel's *exposé* appeared and before Robison published his *Proofs*, Lord Liverpool suggested that Bishop Watson, who had recently given Paine a sound drubbing in print, would be the proper person to clothe the arguments of the Abbé in 'a Protestant dress' to give them wider circulation and effect.[1] He picked the wrong man. As a devoted Lockeian rationalist and a confirmed Whig Protestant, Watson found it difficult to reconcile his ideas and feelings about the Revolution with those of an *émigré* Jesuit who represented much that was wrong with France and the Catholic Church before the Revolution. Moreover, Watson welcomed the civil constitution of the clergy and the redistribution of Church property.[2] He himself had been advocating similar reforms for the Established Church for more than a decade.[3] In addition he long thought it possible to interpret the assault on the Gallican Church not as dangerous precedent, but as a step in the direction of international religious toleration and co-operation long resisted by the Papal powers.[4] While he was not prepared simply to reject Barruel's explanation, Watson could not give 'full credit to what had been asserted, the existence of a conspiracy among the philosophers of France and the *illuminés* of Germany to pull down altars and thrones'. The bishop saw that the 'progress of literature and the cultivation of science had, in every country, roused into activity the human intellect, and spurred it to shake off the shackles of superstition and the chains of arbitrary power', but he did not think that this added up to an organized conspiracy. Though in England 'some precipitate and self-sufficient spirits would outrage common sense, and, in over-stepping the bounds of sober investigation, would cease to distinguish the Christian religion from its corruptions, and equitable government from continental despotism', he doubted Barruel's explanation would help restore perspective.[5]

Several of Watson's episcopal brethren had no such reservations. George Pretyman of Lincoln informed his clergy in 1800 that the Abbé Barruel and Professor Robison had conclusively proven the existence

[1] Sir John Dalrymple to Watson, 25 April 1797, *Anecdotes*, II, 37–38. See Watson's *An Apology for the Bible in A Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine* (1796).

[2] Watson, *Charge* (1791), 6–7.

[3] See Watson's *Letter to the Archbishop* (1783) and *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Ely . . . June 12, 1788* (Cambridge, 1788).

[4] Watson, *Considerations*, 107–10. [5] Watson, *Anecdotes*, II, 38–39.

and Reading Societies (Edinburgh and London, 1797). *Proofs* went through five editions in two years.