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The Catholic Church and Radicalism in Ireland in the 1790s

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND RADICALISM IN IRELAND IN THE 1790s

Daire Keogh

The University of Dublin

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

October 1992

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Summary

This thesis examines the role of Catholic Church in the radical politics of the 1790s in Ireland. The French revolution cast a long shadow over the decade; while for Tone and the Reformers the revolution represented the Morning Star of Liberty for Ireland, the Catholic Hierarchy saw in it the incarnation of all that was contrary to Christianity.

The spread of the revolution threatened the future not only of the Continental church, but of the domestic church which depended on the European colleges for the education of the clergy. The security of the kingdom was also threatened and this crisis brought about a novel development in relations between the government and the Catholic hierarchy.

Both the government and the radicals appreciated the potential of the institutions of the church and endeavoured to harness the possibilities they afforded. The advanced party of the Catholic Committee demonstrated clearly the potential of the church structures in the elections to the Catholic Convention and the key role played by the clergy in this context convinced both the radicals and the Castle of the value of clerical support. Throughout the decade the hierarchy engaged in a curious battle to maintain the loyalty of their clergy, while at the same time opposing attempts by the government to establish a veto on episcopal appointments and a financial provision for the clergy. In spite of the efforts of the prelates and the loyalty of the vast majority of their priests, significant numbers of the lower clergy displayed symptoms of the 'French disease'; many became involved in radical politics and seventy priests were implicated in the rebellion of 1798.

The events of the decade, the turmoil on the continent, the radical challenge at home and the attempts of the government to establish a

measure control, represented potential disaster for the Irish church. The hierarchy, however, skillfully exploited the crisis and through perseverance and diplomacy succeeded in surmounting the crisis and creating the modern Irish church in the process.

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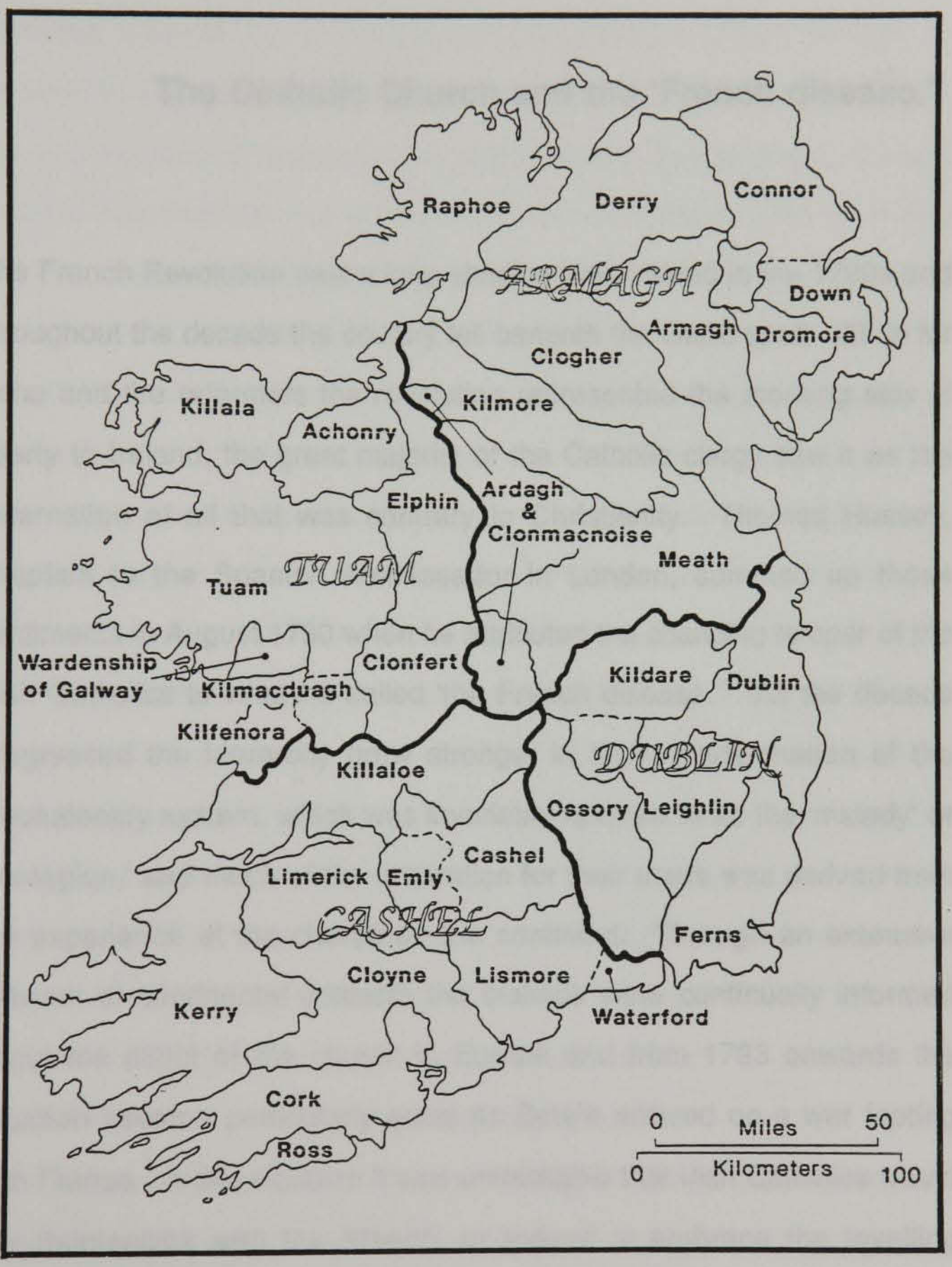
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Daire Keogh

List of Abbreviations

A.P.F.	Archives of Propaganda Fide
B.N.L.	*Belfast News Letter*
C.D.A.	Cashel Diocesan Archives
C.G.	*Cork Gazette*
D.D.A.	Dublin Diocesan Archives
C.J.	*Clare Journal*
D.E.P.	*Dublin Evening Post*
E. C.	*Ennis Chronicle*
F.D.J.	*Faulkner's Dublin Journal*
F.J.	*Freeman's Journal*
H.J.	*Hibernian Journal*
I.E.R.	*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*
I.H.S.	*Irish Historical Studies*
L.C.	*Limerick Chronicle*
M.P.	*Morning Post*
N.S.	*Northern Star*
S.N.L.	*Saunders News Letter*


Raphoe
Derry
Connor
ARMAGH
Down
Armagh
Dromore
Clogher
Killala
Kilmore
Achonry
Elphin
Ardagh
&
Clonmacnoise
Meath
TUAM
Tuam
Wardenship
of Galway
Kilmacduagh
Clonfert
Kildare
Dublin
Kilfenora
DUBLIN
Killaloe
Ossory
Leighlin
Cashel
Limerick
Emly
CASHEL
Ferns
Cloyne
Lismore
Kerry
Waterford
Cork
Ross
0
Miles
50
0
Kilometers
100

1

The Catholic Church and the 'French disease.'

The French Revolution cast a long shadow over Ireland in the 1790s and throughout the decade the country fell beneath the Gallic spell. While for Tone and the reformers the revolution represented the morning star of liberty to Ireland, the great majority of the Catholic clergy saw it as the incarnation of all that was contrary to Christianity. Thomas Hussey, chaplain to the Spanish Ambassador in London, summed up these sentiments in August 1790 when he attributed the changing temper of the Irish Catholics to what he called 'the French disease.'[1] As the decade progressed the hierarchy grew stronger in their condemnation of the revolutionary system, which was invariably referred to as the 'malady' or 'contagion,' and much of the inspiration for their tirade was derived from the experience of the church on the continent. Through an extensive network of continental contacts the bishops were continually informed about the plight of the church in Europe and from 1793 onwards the situation became particularly acute as Britain entered on a war footing with France. In this situation it was unthinkable that Irish Catholics would ally themselves with the French, or indeed to embrace the levelling principles of the Revolution: haunted by the images of the suffering

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1 Thomas Hussey to Richard Burke, 28 August 1790, *Burke Corr.* iv, p134.

church in Europe, the hierarchy exerted all their energies to prevent this happening.[2]

It was inevitable that the reformers in France would turn their attention towards the Catholic church. In November 1789 the National Assembly ordered that all ecclesiastical property be seized and sold in an effort to solve the financial crisis facing the country. The Assembly, however, agreed to support the secular clergy, but all regulars were urged to renounce their vows and leave their monasteries. On 12 of July 1790, the Assembly went further and introduced the 'Civil Constitution of the Clergy' which abolished all papal jurisdiction in France. The Constitution provided for the selection of priests by district electoral assemblies, and the old diocesan boundaries were redrawn to correspond with the new Departmental structure of France. To all intents and purposes the Church in France had been nationalised with the Bishops and priests becoming 'ecclesiastical public functionaries.' Pope Pius VI was slow to condemn the Constitution, but when an oath of loyalty to the regime was demanded of the clergy, he denounced the Constitution, on 10 March 1791, as schismatical, declared the ordinations of the new state bishops sacrilegious and suspended all juring clergy. In November 1790 all those refusing to take the oath were deprived of their office or benefice, while on 26 August 1792 they were given two weeks to quit France or face deportation to South America.

Reactions to the Civil Constitution and the oath were very mixed. Tackett, in his analysis of revolution and regional culture in eighteenth-century France, marks the oath of 1791 as 'a critical turning point, not only in the French revolution but in modern French history as well.'[3]

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[2] See Patrick Kelly, 'Irish writers and the French Revolution,' in *La storia della storiografia Europea sulla rivoluzione Francese*, (Rome, 1990) pp. 329-349.

[3] Timothy Tackett, *Religion, revolution and regional culture in eighteenth century France; the ecclesiastical oath of 1791* (Princeton, 1986),p. xv. See T. Bartlett, 'Religious rivalries

Contemporaries, too, perceived the oath in monumental terms. One Dublin pamphleteer in 1798 described the oath as 'the touchstone,' marking the last blow to public religion in France.[4] Amongst the clergy in France, however, the oath was greeted with very mixed reactions. In April 1791 the Rector of the Scots College at Douay noted that of the 'numerous clergy' of the town only two had complied and taken 'the vile oath,' and that one of these had become bishop of the department.[5] Fr James Quigley, the Armagh priest, later to be an United Irish emissary to France, 'refused positively' to accept the oath, choosing to return and 'die in any manner' in Ireland rather than swear against his conscience.[6] However, recent studies by Loupés on the Irish clergy in Bordeaux during the Revolution suggest that the situation was not as clear as has been previously accepted. Loupés reveals that the Irish clergy of Bordeaux were divided down the middle on the question of the oath, with 9 jurors (seven parish priests, two curates) and 9 non-jurors (eight parish priests and one curate). This is in marked contrast with what might have been expected from clerics educated for a mission under a strict Tridentine system and with a keen sense of the universal church. Yet there was no great difference in the divide amongst the Irish and amongst the native French clergy - the percentage of jurors among the clergy of the Gironde was 59. Loupés has commented on the difficulty in analysing the lines of division between the jurors and refractory clergy and believes that these Irish priests do not 'lend themselves readily to patterns devised by historians to account for the responses.'[7] Age,

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in France and Ireland in the age of the French revolution,' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland,* (1991) pp. 57-76.

[4] [W. Corbett], *Democratic principles illustrated by example,* (Dublin 1798), p. 47

[5] Fr Farquharson, Douay to Mr Thompson, 1 April 1791, cited in C. Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, 1789-1829,* (Edinburgh, 1983)p. 92

[6] James Quigley, *Life*, p. 27.

[7] Philippe Loupes, 'The Irish clergy in the Diocese of Bordeaux during the French Revolution,' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(eds), *French Revolution,* pp. 28-39.

superiority, wealth, family ties, length of time in the ministry in France - none of these factors define the opposing groups. A similar difficulty, however, is also faced in drawing the dividing line amongst the Irish lay community in France; no simple analysis can account for their acceptance or rejection of the Revolution.[8] There was, nevertheless, a tendency in the Irish newspapers to portray the juring clergy in less than favourable terms. The pro-revolutionary *Cork Gazette*, which devoted considerable attention to French news, reported the persecution of the non-juring clergy of Amiens in June 1791. There the Constitutional bishop was reported at the head of a society called 'the Devil's Club', while the non-juring clergy were deprived of their benifaces which had been given to 'others of loose morals and no principles.'[9] Shortly after this report, the same newspaper carried an account of great satisfaction amongst the lower clergy at the improvement in their financial position which had resulted from the regulations of the Assembly. In consequence the constitutional clergy 'preach vehemently in favour of the Rights of Man,' and their efforts had greatly contributed to the stability of the new government.[10]

Conditions became increasingly difficult for the non-juring clergy and much of the clerical correspondence from France is taken up with doleful accounts of the sufferings of the Irish priests there. In July 1791 Charles Kearney, rector of the Irish College in Paris, wrote to the Bishop Patrick Plunket of Meath informing him of the 'evil influence of our famous revolution.' Kearney's letter, which included a bleak description of the dismal situation of the Church in France, is typical of the many accounts reaching Ireland, both in private correspondence and in the newspapers,

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[8] L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century Politicisation in Ireland: Problems in its study and French links' in P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen(eds), *Cultures et Pratiques*, pp. 136-157.
[9] *C.G.*, 25 June 1791.
[10] *C.G.*, 29 June 1791.

and these had enormous influence in shaping clerical opposition towards the revolution:

> religion lost - impiety triumphing - the Sees occupied by schismatics, immoral, irregularly consecrated bishops - the true ones dispersed, persecuted, outlawed, parishes abandoned to wolves - the true pastors obliged to hide themselves - the churches deserted - everything, in a word, that hell can invent put into execution to discourage the faithful and absolutely overturn religion.[11]

Circumstances were further complicated in April 1792 when France went to war against Austria and Prussia. The already chaotic political situation became even more volatile and a great deal of anger was directed against the foreign clergy as the French suffered defeats in the early stages of the war. The King had previously afforded the clergy some degree of protection, but as the Jacobins gained control of the Assembly, even this small comfort was in jeopardy. In any event, the monarchy was abolished in August 1792 and the majority of the Irish refractory clergy left France following the decree of exile passed in the same month. Once more the newspapers carried extensive coverage of the difficulties suffered by the priests as they attempted to leave France.

The experiences of the Irish priests and the accounts they carried home with them certainly contributed to the anti-revolutionary feeling in Ireland, but this did not necessarily determine the future behaviour of many of the priests. Indeed quite a significant proportion of the priests later implicated in United Irish activity had witnessed the events of the revolution. Ironically, in the wake of the rebellion of 1798, Leonard McNally was to attribute the inspiration of the rising to the influence of the schoolmasters and priests, and among this group he singled out the clerics expelled from France as having been the most active in promoting

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[11] C. Kearney, Paris, to P. Plunkett, 14 July 1791, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 194.

sedition.[12] Valentine Derry recalled meeting Fr James Quigley shortly after his return to Ireland in 1789. Quigley gave Derry the 'most satisfactory account of the causes and commencement of the Revolution [he] had obtained from any quarter.' The priest, he believed, was 'not then a friend to the French Revolution.' In fact Quigley had run many risks and narrowly escaped being lanternised by the mob at the outbreak of the Revolution.[13] Fr Mogue Kearns, a curate from the Duffry, County Wexford, had actually been hung from a lamp post, but fortunately the lamp post bent under his weight so that his feet could touch the ground![14] Fr Michael Murphy, escaped a similar fate at Bordeaux, yet Musgrave commented that he had afterwards 'manifested a strong predilection for the principles of that nation and a desire to join them, should they land in Ireland.'[15]

The decrees of the National Assembly had serious implications for the discipline of the church, not only in France, but throughout Europe. The French church had become schismatic, the appointment of bishops was now conducted by election and priestly celibacy had been abolished. Such developments represented dangerous precedents, which the Irish bishops were anxious to avoid. In 1792 Robert McEvoy, a priest of the Dublin diocese got married. He justified his action by an appeal to the decrees of the National Assembly. McEvoy's action was

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12 J.W. to ..... 6 June 1798 S.P.O., 620/10/121/111 For recent studies on Irish links with France in the late eighteenth century see L.M. Cullen 'Late Eighteenth-Century politicization in Ireland: Problems in its study and its French Links,' In P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen (eds), *Cultures et Pratiques*, pp. 137-158, 'The Political Structure of the Defenders, ' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(eds), *French Revolution*, pp. 117-139 Kevin Whelan, 'Politicization in County Wexford and the origins of the 1798 Rebellion' in Dickson and Gough *French Revolution*, pp. 156-179.

13 Valentine Derry's preface to *The Life of the Rev. James Coigley, An Address to the People of Ireland, as written by Himself during his confinement in Maidstone Gaol.* (London 1798).

14 John Jones, *An impartial Narrative of the most important Engagements which took place between His Majesty's Forces and the Rebels during the Irish Rebellion 1798.*,(Dublin 1799), p. 31.

15 Musgrave, *Memoirs* . p.339.

met with immediate condemnation from Archbishop Troy who saw ominous overtones in the appeal to the Assembly. Troy was still reeling from the humiliation he endured from being identified with the losing side in the bitter split in the Catholic Committee, and he was anxious to firmly establish his spiritual authority in advance of the meeting of the Catholic Convention. McEvoy was excommunicated on 29 September 1792 and the notice of excommunication was read in every church of the diocese on the following Sunday.[16] Troy deli vered a blistering attack on the progress of the revolution in France, but there is no doubt but that his address was intended to warn the Irish radicals against adopting a similar policy. Troy described McEvoy's appeal to the National Assembly as:

> ridiculous and absurd in the extreme, as all decrees and proceedings of that assembly relative to the Church were apparently designed and without doubt uniformly tend to establish the dominion of a selfish and intolerant philosophy, the parent of infidelity, on the ruins of religion. Hence: the propagation of errors against the Catholic faith, the profanation, pillage and prostration of churches, the usurption of eccles-iastical authority by unprincipled and mercenary intruders, the debasement and persecution of orthodox clergy, the suppression of religious institutions, the total subversion of ecclesiastical discipline, and other innumerable most fatal, but necessary consequences of the infidel system, which the enemies of religion have long been endeavouring to establish.[17]

Significantly Troy had this pastoral reprinted in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion, when the sectarian polemic was at its height, in an effort to illustrate the swift measures that had been taken by the prelates to stem

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16 John T. Troy, *The Excommunication of the Rev Robert M'Evoy, priest of the Dublin Archdiocese for promulgating and upholding principles established by the French Revolution,* (London 1798).
17 J.T.Troy, *Excommunication*, p. 9

the advance of the 'dismal consequences' which flowed from the French revolution.

(11)

The advent of war between Britain and France in February 1793 and the Napoleonic campaigns introduced an novel turn in relations between the British government and the church. The interests of the church and the government now coincided and the fate of both seemed united. O'Donoghue has commented on the irony of a situation where less than twenty years since the beginning of the dismantling of the penal laws the British government should be seen by the hierarchy as the saviour of Christendom.[18] On 18 September 1793 the National Assembly ordered the arrest of all citizens of foreign powers in France and this decree against the 'enemies of the Revolution' resulted a massive exodus of priests. Many of these went to England where they joined an already large group of emigre clergy; in London alone there were 1,500 French priests in August 1793. Contemporaries commented on the reception received by these refugees and such accounts, reported widely in the press, strengthened the bond of gratitude between the church and the British government. Abbe Paul MacPherson, Scots agent in Rome, described the scene in London at the end of August 1793:

> I was astonished at the attention and civility shown to them at London.. Nor is less regard paid to them at Dover where, if you were to judge of the inhabitants by the people you

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18 Patrick O'Donoghue, 'The Catholic Church in the age of Revolution and Rebellion, 1782-1815,' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, N.U.I., 1975), p. 313. See P. Scholfield, 'British Politicians and French Arms: The Ideological War of 1793-5,' in *History*, (June, 1992) pp. 183-202.

> see on the streets, you would think the one half were French priests. Not only is no insult offered to them, but everyone of every rank pays them the greatest attention. Generous Britain, Heaven must reward such eminent charity. They pass and repass between Dover and Ostend without paying a farthing. Government pays their freight; the English passengers if there be any, their victuals, if not, the honest Tars - 'damn their eyes, would they allow a poor French priest to pay for a meal or two.'[19]

The government had provided accommodation for the clergy and an allowance of £2 per week for a priest and £10 for a bishop.[20] A number of these priests made their way to Ireland where some of their number would staff the newly founded Catholic academies and seminaries; at Carlow there were two French Sulpicians and in Maynooth Abbé Andre Darré of Auch and Abbé Pierre Justin Delort of Bordeaux formed part of a wider *societé d'emigrés*.

The Irish Bishops in their battle against radicalism were eager to stress this new relationship between the Church and the King's government. Throughout the 1790s almost all pastoral addresses urged the faithful to a sense of gratitude and loyalty to King George for his benevolence and especially for the various measures of Catholic Relief. In stark contrast to the rhetoric of the radicals these concessions were invariably attributed to 'His Majesty's Bounty' and the embarrasing memories of the penal era were played down. Ironically Thomas Hussey, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, whose infamous pastoral of 1797 was castigated for reviving the memories of past sufferings, took this to an extreme in a sermon delivered in London in May 1798. Reflecting on the renewed relationship between Britain and the Holy See, Hussey created an elaborate image on an unbroken friendship

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[19] Abbe Paul MacPherson, Bruge, to Bishop Geddes, 26th August 1793 in Christine Johnson, *Church in Scotland* p. 87. *L.C.*, 3 October 1792.

[20] See *Letter of the French Bishops residing in England to the Late Pope Pius vi and the answer of His Holiness* (Dublin 1800) in which the Pope expresses his gratitude to King George for his many kindnesses.

between Pius VI and George III. Referring to the period of the King's 'illness' in 1789, Hussey declared that though communication between the two courts had been inter rupted for over two hundred years, and though Rome was the only part of the world to which the King was restricted by law from sending a public message:

> the Supreme Pastor, well knowing that no political difference, nor even a difference of religion and creed can break the gentle.. chain of charity, ordered as fervent supplications to be offered up in that city for His Majesty's recovery as could be displayed in the cathedral of his own metropolis; and Rome saw with astonishment and joy her altars surrounded by pious votaries for the recovery of a king, between whom and them an impolitic wall of separation had been raised for some centuries past.[21]

There were, nevertheless, concrete signs of this *rapproch*ement between the Holy See and London. In November 1791 King George's son, Prince Augustus, visited Rome and was received an enthusiastic welcome to the city. *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* gave a full account of the meetings in Rome between the Prince and the various clerics in Rome. Augustus was described as the first Protestant prince to have been offered apartments in the Apostolic Palace, or to have received the public congratulations of the clergy.[22] During this visit the prince met with the last of the Stuart pretenders, the Cardinal Duke of York, a meeting which reflected the final acceptance of the House of Hanover by Rome and the end of the Jacobite cause.

On a diplomatic level, too, links were strengthened by the activity of Sir John Cox Hippisly in Rome and the arrival in 1793 of Monsignor Charles Erskine in London. The Monsignor had been sent to London by Pius VI, but Dr Douglas, the vicar Apostolic of London, having consulted

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21 T. Hussey, *Sermon preached at the Spanish Chapel, London, 14 May 1798.* (London, 1798)
22 *F.D.J.*, 3 January 1792.

with Grenville, opposed his appointment as nuncio and Erskine acted as unofficial representative instead.[23] Erskine was frequently received at court, where according to Troy he had been well received. Troy was convinced that Erskine's presence would lead to new political and commercial relations between 'these kingdoms and the papal states.'[24] Erskine announced publicly that he had been commissioned by Pius VI to assure the King that he would use the utmost influence amongst the Catholics to inspire 'veneration for, and fidelity to so benevolent a sovereign.'[25] Throughout the 1790s Erskine, often working with the administration, exerted his influence upon the Irish hierarchy urging them at every instance to oppose any manifestation of the French malady. Troy's Roman agent and fellow Dominican Luke Concanen, expressed concern at the possible reaction to Erskine's arrival. Concanen dreaded Erskine's appearance in either Dublin or London and was convinced that it would serve only to 'alarm the opposition party and give room to our enemies for many sharp and satirical publications.'[26] Nevertheless, in spite of the hierarchy's continued resentment of Erskine's presence, he was to be of considerable use to the bishops in the wake of the rebellion of 1798 as Troy sought to quash the representation of the rebellion as a 'Popish Plot.'

The Irish mission had long depended on the continental colleges for the education of the clergy and since the Revolution had resulted in the suppression of the continental seminaries the bishops became acutely aware of the need to provide alternative priestly formation. The urgency of the situation required immediate action as the bishops were alarmed that many of the clerics returning from France had brought with

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[23]M. Buschkuhl, *Great Britain and the Holy See, 1746-1870,* (Dublin, 1982), p. 30.
[24]J. T. Troy to T. Bray, 26 April 1794, D.D.A.
[25] *F.D.J.,* 25 September 1798.
[26] L. Concanen, Rome, to J. Troy, 4 September 1793, D.D.A.

them a 'strong tincture of that destructive Republican spirit which [had] desolated the Church in that unhappy nation.'[27] This corruption was not confined to France and, reflecting the spirit of the Roman Colleges, Cardinal Livizzani urged Troy that only subordinate docile boys should be sent to Rome.[28] Early in 1793 Cardinal Antonelli, Prefect of Propaganda, urged Troy to raise the issue at the next meeting of the bishops. The bishops faced many difficulties in their attempt to establish a suitable domestic seminary, but through perseverance and shrewd negotiations, Troy overcame both the constitutional and moral barriers in his path. Almost single handedly Troy engineered the foundation of Maynooth College, the establishment of which effectively marked an end of the penal restrictions on the practice of the Catholic faith. The foundation of the Royal College at Maynooth in 1795 was greeted with great relief by the Irish hierarchy, not least from its first president Thomas Hussey, who described the college as 'the salvation of Ireland from Jacobinism and anarchy.'[29]

Archbishop Troy had an extensive international correspondence through which he monitored the fate of the Church on the continent. Everywhere the French Revolution had taken its toll: even from America Troy received alarming reports and these combined to strengthen the archbishop's resolve to oppose the spread of the 'French disease' in Ireland. In July 1794, John Carroll, bishop of Baltimore and first Catholic bishop in the United States, informed Troy that 'the decency of religious service had been disturbed' by the profaneness of the numerous

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27 L. Nihell, Bishop of Kilkmacduagh and Kilfenora to J. Troy, 20 February. 1794, D.D.A. Nihell noted that this was inspite of the persecutions they had suffered in France. See Hugh Fenning, '*The Undoing of the Friars of Ireland; A Study of the Novitiate Question in the Eighteenth Century ,'* (Louvain, 1972).

28 Cardinal Livizzani to J. Troy, 3 March 1795 . L. Concanen to J. Troy, 30 June 1795. D.D.A.

29 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr.* viii, pp 140-3

'French democrats' who had arrived there from the West Indies.[30] Troy took every measure necessary to oppose such events in Ireland, and exploited the opportunities offered by the media, publishing pastorals and promoting anti–Revolutionary publications. In particular Troy welcomed the printing by Fitzpatrick in Dublin of the Abbé Barruel's *Persecution of the French Clergy,* which *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* believed contained more to be learned of French politics than **did** any other publication written since the revolution. Troy expected 'much good from this interesting publication,' which was sold for five shillings and five pence. Many similar tracts were reprinted in Dublin and these included the doleful *Retractions* of the constitutional bishop of Mont-Blanc, the printing of which reflected the determination of the hierarchy to harnass the potential of the printed word in their battle against French principles. [31]

The French attacks on the Papal States increased the anxiety of the Irish hierarchy, and the bishops came under pressure from Rome to maintain their vigilance against the common enemy. In February 1795 as the French armies threatened the Eternal City, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Antonelli, had written to the Irish bishops urging them to impress the need for loyalty and civil obedience in the various dioceses of Ireland.[32] This lengthy missive is the strongest and fullest

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[30] J. Carroll, Baltimore, to J. Troy, 19 July 1794, D.D.A.

[31] J. Troy to T. Bray, 26 April 1794, D.D.A. The *F.D.J.*, 8 May 1794 contained a laudatory review of the work, taken from the *Reviewers and Anthologiae Magazine* of March 1794;' Since the formation of human society, so odious and detestable a picture of man's depravity was never more exhibited as in the massacre and persecution of 138 Archbishops and Bishops and 64,000 cures in France. The shocking detail is authenticated by an appeal to 600 French clergy now in Winchester, and by numerous well known facts. The history commences with May 1789 and is brought down to the present times - there is more to be learned from this book, than from all the publications written since the Revolution.' Many such anti-revolutionary pamphlets were reprinted in Dublin. *Declaration and Retractions of Francis Teresa Panisset, Constitutional Bishop of Mont-Blanc in Savoy,* (Dublin, 1797) . The printer, Fitzpatrick, Dublin, is described as 'printer to the Royal College Maynooth.

[32] Cardinal Antonelli, Propaganda Fide to the Irish Bishops, 7 February 1795, D.D.A.

attack on the French system received by the hierarchy from Rome and it was to provide much of the inspiration for their own attacks against sedition in Ireland. The letter declares that the more turbulent the times, the more severe and furious the attack that is made against moral discipline and the sacred precepts of Christian religion. It spoke of the 'viciously inclined multitude' adopting revolutionary ideas, and lamented the spread of the 'infection' to such an extent 'as to taint almost the universal commonwealth.' The letter continued to denounce

> these partisans [who] seem to place the excellency of man and his ultimate wishes in liberty, licentiousness in throwing off all reverence, all awe of magistracy and even God Himself. But what havoc and destruction, both to Christian and civil society have sprung from the pretext of liberty with no other view than to pull asunder the sweet yoke of Christ, to loosen the reins to their own wanton passions and to shake the foundations of all sovereignty and government.

The Irish bishops were reminded of the vigorous exertions which would be necessary if they were to preserve their flocks from the 'incursions and voracious assaults of ravenous wolves.' Antonelli singled out Troy's 1793 pastoral *On The Duties of Christian Citizens* for praise, informing the bishops how 'very sensible' Pius VI had been to the Archbishop's earnest assault on error.

The Irish Catholics were urged to a loyal demeanour and the Cardinal urged the Bishops to rescue the church from any 'imputation of suspicion of disloyalty.' Great gratitude was expressed to King George III for his 'unshakable piety and munificience' in receiving French emigrants and exiles and affording protection and defence to the Pope. Reflecting a keen awareness of Irish affairs, no doubt due to J.C. Hippisley's presence in Rome, Antonelli concluded by reminding the prelates of their debt to the King who had removed an oppressive yoke and endowed the Irish Catholics with many privileges. There was also the hope that the

administration of the 'most excellent new viceroy[Fitzwilliam]' would remove the existing restrictions placing them on a level with other subjects.

Once Napoleon Bonaparte had occupied Milan he demanded a withdrawal of the Pope's condemnation of the Revolution and Civil Constitution. Pius VI rejected these demands in the spring of 1796, but the French invaded the Papal States and the subsequent peace terms forced the Pope to recognise the Republic. The Dublin news papers reported the recognition contained in *Pastoralis sollicitudo* (5 July 1796), which *The Dublin Journal* described as 'in many respects remarkable.' Though the terms of the brief failed to satisfy the French Directory, the paper believed the French could not but be pleased with the Pope's call to Catholics to submit to government.[33] Anxiety grew in Rome as the Irish clerics there feared for the safety of the city. A spate of letters flew from Luke Concanen, Troy's Roman agent, back to Dublin informing him of the fate of Rome, which had been gripped with terror and consternation since news arrived of an imminent French assault on the city. Napoleon's declared plan, according to rumour, was to carry off the Pope and the Curia to Paris as victims of the guillotine, once the Holy City had been plundered. Concanen reported the relief brought to the city by the arrival of a courrier 'crying out through the streets, *pace, pace.*'[34] The following week Concanen informed Troy of the presence of a number of 'desperate' Jacobins in Rome and the discovery of a 'dire' conspiracy to plunder and burn the city and then kill the Pope, cardinals, priests and friars.[35] Such images of misery were held out in the newspapers too,

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[33] Pius VI, *Pastoralis sollicitudo*, 5 July 1796, in *F.D.J.*, 15 September 1796.

[34] L. Concanen, Rome, to J. Troy, 2 July 1796, D.D.A.

[35] L. Concanen to J. Troy, 16 July 1796. With such anxiety in Rome it was little wonder thousands were flocking to see the various miraculous apparitions throughout the city. Concanen commented on an immense crowd gathered at the basilica of the S.S. Apostoli to see the Madonna dell Archetto. The bishop of Edinburgh had also informed Troy of

and the loyal prints reminded the Catholics that their worst situation was preferable to the best that could be hoped for under French dominion. The *Dublin Journal* gave accounts of all the countries in Europe where the French had made 'fraternal visits,' and in a phrase later borrowed by Troy, declared that the 'fruit of the Tree of Liberty is poisonous in its core.' The Tree of Liberty, like the tree in the Garden, would indeed bring knowledge. However, it would be knowledge of being plunged into irretrievable perdition.[36] The reforming *Dublin Morning Post* failed to be swayed by these tales of woe and printed a rather irreverent exhortation to the Pope in August 1796.

The French are deists - devils downright devils.
In heavenly wheat accursed destructive weevils!
Abominations! Atheists to a man.
Rogues that convert the finest flour to bran,
In vice's drunken cup forever guzzling,
Just like hogs in mud uncleanly nuzzling.

I know the rascals have a sin in petto,
To rob the Holy Land of Loretto,
Attacked her temple with their guns so warrish,
And trust the gentlewoman in the parish,
A lady all so graceful, gay and rich,
With gems and wonders lodged in every stitch.

Heir of St Peter, Kindle thy ire,
And bid France feel thy Apostolic fire,
Think of that quantity of sacred wood,
Thy treasuries can launch into the flood,
What ships the holy manger can create,
At least a dozen of the largest rate,
And lo enough of St Martha's hair,
To rig a dozen mighty ships of war,
Our Saviour's pan spoon, that a world adores,
Would make a hundred thousand pairs of oars.

Gather the stones that knocked down poor St Stephen,

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these apparitions witnessed by Mons Latille, chaplain to the Count d'Artois, Dr Hay, Edinburgh to John Troy, 26 August 1796.

[36] *F.D.J.*, 1 November 1796. See John Troy, Pastoral address on the defeat of the Bantry Bay invasion, February 1797.

And fling at Frenchmen in the name of heaven,
Bring forth the thousands of St Catherine's nails,
That every convent, church and chapel hails,
For storms uncork the bottled fights of martyrs,
And blow the rogues to earth's remotest quarters.

Such relics of good mother church the pride,
How would they currycomb the Frenchmen's hide,
Son of the Church, again I say arise,
And slash new marvels in their inner eyes,
With teeth and jawbones on thy holy back,
Thumbs, fingers and knuckle bones to fill a sack,
With joint of rump and loins and heels and toes.

Struck with panic shall the villain leap,
And fly thy presence like a flock of sheep,
Thus shall the rebels to religion yield,
And thou with holy triumph keep the field.[37]

If the progress of the French armies on the continent had alarmed the Irish hierarchy, the appearance of the French fleet off Bantry in December 1796 brought their francophobia to a height. Images of the Napoleonic armies threatening the Papal States may have roused their anxiety, but the advent of Lazare Hoche's army of 14,500 men and 41,644 stand of arms brought a rush of pastorals condemning the French and the associated Irish radicalism.[38] On Christmas Day Bishop Francis Moylan of Cork issued a pastoral calling the Catholics to loyalty to king and government and pointed to the 'irreparable ruin, desolation and destruction occasioned by French Fraternity.' Moylan held up to his congregation the fate of Flanders, Italy, Holland and Germany all basking in French liberty. The bishop warned his flock against the 'specious treachery of the French' and called on them to 'range under the banners of true Irish loyalty.'[39] Moylan's address was widely welcomed in loyalist circles; Robert Day, M.P. and Chairman of the Grand Jury of

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[37] *D..M.P.* 18 August 1796.
[38] For the Bantry expedition see Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, (Yale, 1982), pp. 77-124 and 'The role of Ireland in French war strategy, 1796-1798,' in Dickson and Gough(eds), *French Revolution*, pp. 202-220.
[39] *F.D.J.*, 3 January 1797.

Dublin, described it as 'breathing a spirit of peace and loyalty worthy of an Apostle.' Regardless of every personal consideration, Moylan had not 'balanced between duty and danger,' nor lost a moment in giving battle to an atheistical enemy. [40] W.J.MacNeven, however, dismissed the pastoral as 'a pious fraud.'[41]

16 February 1797 was set aside as a day of solemn thanksgiving for the deliverance of the kingdom from the French invasion. On that day a Solemn high mass and *Te Deum* were celebrated at Francis Street Chapel. Dr Moylan officiated at the altar, but many of the bishops were in attendance including O'Reilly of Armagh, Plunkett of Meath, Delaney of Kildare and Leighlin, Teahan of Kerry and Hussey of Waterford.[42] The sermon, by Archbishop Troy, to a congregation of up to 3,000, was a fierce broadside directed at the French Revolution; Troy's passion was no doubt fuelled by the images contained in Concanen's letters, which O'Donoghue has compared to Burke's *Reflections.* [43]

Troy spoke of the 'sad and frightful picture France exhibited to an amazed world.'[44] 'Liberty and Equality,' he asked, 'what deceits have not been practiced, what crimes have not been perpetrated under sanctioned abuse and misapplication of these magical sounds?', and in a recurrent theme he drew picture of the consequences of the confusion of the *rights* and *duties* of man:

> To these detestable and destructive systems we are to ascribe the sophistical theory of abstract but impracticable *rights* of man, and the uniform silence on his *duties* to God studiously observed by the constitution framers and

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40 *An Address delivered to the Grand Jury of the County of Dublin, on Tuesday the 10th of January 1797, by Robert* Day M.P. One of His Majesty's Counsel learned in law and Chairman of the said County,(Dublin, 1797). See *Letters from a Gentleman in Ireland to his friend at Bath,* (Cork, 1797) p. 30.

41 Examination of W.J. MacNeven before the Secret Committee of the House Of Lords, 7 August 1798 in , W.J.MacNeven, *Pieces of Irish History,* p. 254.

42 *D.M.P.* 18 February 1797.

43 P.O.Donoghue, 'Catholic Church' p. 303

44 John Troy, Pastoral Address, February 1797 in P.F.Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.* iii, 490-504.

> revolutionary dictators of France. *Hence*: their malevolence to pious institutions, their incessant and atrocious persecution of the faithful ministers of religion; *hence*: their veneration for the putrid and moundering remains of their infamous preceptors and associates, avowed atheists and libertines, which they triumphantly enshrined in the most august and magnificent ediface in Paris raised to the worship of the living God, and since converted to a pagan Pantheon; hence: the prostration of churches, their profanation of sacred vessels and ornaments; the robbery, the imprisonment, the transportation, the massacre of the orthodox clergy. . . *Hence*: the emigration of myriads of honourable and respectable Frenchmen of every description, preferring exile and beggary to irreligion and disloyalty: *hence:* the indefinite number of others who have perished in prisons, or on scaffolds or by the daggers of hired assassins: hence: the execrable murder of their lawful Sovereign, the most benevolent of Monarchs, by the sentence of a self created and incompetent tribunal, which usurped and combined the functions of judges, jurors and accusers: *hence:*, their sword of hatred to Royalty, the annual festival to commemorate the horrid deed and the triumph of regicide; as if kingly government wisely administered were essentially incompatible with the social rights and the happiness of subjects: *hence:*, their choice of wild ungovernable democracy as most congenial to their licentious principles and to their formal declaration that insurrection is a sacred duty, *hence:*, the introduction of manners the most profligate and abandoned, the most savage and ferocious, which have barbarised a people heretofore humane and polite.[45]

This was not, Troy assured his congregation, a fanciful or exaggerated description of the innumerable evils from which Ireland had been spared. It was rather a true picture of the mournful sate of France and the countries visited by French fraternity. This simple reflection, the Archbishop was convinced, should be sufficient to put them on their guard against attempts to woo them from attachment to the King or obedience to their superiors. 'Do not then, ' he warned, ' approach the rotten tree of French Liberty if you desire to live.' Despite its shining foliage, it bore 'forbidden fruit, fair to the eye, but deadly to those who taste it.' In the same month the Dominican bishop of Killaloe directed a severe attack at

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[45] *ibid,* p. 494.

the French in his Lenten pastoral. MacMahon, whose French aristocratic relations had suffered at the hands of the revolutionaries, condemned 'the destructive ravages of a furious, blood thirsty foe,' and attributed the saving storms at Bantry to the divine providence.[46]

The Cork Franciscan and veteran pamphleteer Arthur O'Leary delivered a blistering attack on the French Revolutionary system in a sermon during a service of thanksgiving at St Patrick's Chapel, Sutton Street, London.[47] He spoke of the sun quitting the skies to avoid the spectacle of France and, in language worthy of the poet, he compared the National Convention to Milton's Pandemonium 'where the infernal peers sat in council to deliberate on the means of destroying the King of Heaven.' History gave witness to gloomy instances of parricides plotting the death of their father, but only in modern France could be seen a sacrifice with son the priest and father the victim! 'In the obscurity of the night, so favourable for the works of darkness, the Jacobins met in a spacious church, converted into a club room, for debating on murder and politics.' There a French Republican appeared holding a bloody head - 'behold my father's head which I cut off for not subscribing to our glorious constitution; and lo! the sacrifice every true republican should make to liberty.' Apart from the florid literary style, O'Leary's sermon is particularly interesting in that it reflects a view from outside the hierarchy. He was, however, unrepresentative of the lower clergy, given his many previous political involvements; and he was widely believed to be in the pay of the government.[48]

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46 *E.C.*, 27 February 1797.
47 *A Sermon preached at St Patrick's Chapel, Sutton Street, Soho Square, on Wednesday March the 8th 1797, on the day of solemn fast , by the Rev Arthur O'Leary,* (Dublin and London, 1797).
48 *Public Characters of 1798* ,(Dublin, 1799).

Throughout 1797 and '98 the fate of the Pope was particularly critical and dispatches from Rome made deep impressions on the Irish bishops, particularly Troy who had spent a considerable portion of his life there. The Irish newspapers also followed the progress on Italian campaign, with the radical prints showing little sympathy for the Pope's sufferings. The Peace of Tolentino in February 1797, a full account of which was carried in the *Ennis Chronicle*, had extracted a vast indemnity from the Papal States. While Luke Concanen lamented that the museum of Paris 'will be the finest that ever existed,' the *Dublin Morning Post* credited Pius VI with possessing 'the providence of a Churchman' in remitting £600,000 to England. There was little doubt, the paper believed, but the Pope would soon take shelter with the Defender of the Faith[George III].[49] Alluding to the rhetoric of salvation and Providence used in the pastorals of the Irish bishops following the failure of the Bantry expedition, the same paper thought it 'very remarkable' that neither storm, nor earthquake, hurricane nor tornado had halted Bonaparte's march on Rome.[50] Arthur O'Connor's *Press* carried similar pieces as part of a campaign to counter the effects of the propaganda of the hierarchy and loyalist prints. The *Press* reported widely from the continent and attempted to correct the infernal representations of republican Europe; on the contrary, the paper pointed to the joy of the liberated Europeans, in contrast to 'the miseries to which the slaves of the pope are subjected.'[51] In January 1798 the *Press* carried a long report of the health of the French church in an attempt to the correct the 'government journals..[which have] abused the French so often on the score of religion,

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49 *E.C.*, 16 March 1797, L. Concanen to J. Troy, 8 April 1797, D.D.A. *D.M.P.*, 28 February 1797.
50 *D.M.P.* 18 March 1797,
51 *Press*, 1 October 1797.

and evidently for the purpose of exasperating the Roman Catholics of Ireland against them, as destroyers of the Catholic Church.'[52]

By July 1797 most of Italy had fallen to the French and republics had been established on the French line. Many of these republics indeed had outdone the French in matters of religion, much to the alarm of Luke Concanen. In the Cisalpine Republic a Capuchin bishop of Comacchio had been refused entry to his diocese because he had not been elected by the people. This had also been the case in Genoa, where the *Press* reported religion had been abolished and new-born babies were carried to the Tree of Liberty.[53] The French finally entered Rome in February 1798 and Concanen, in a series of letters to Troy dated 'the 1st year of the Roman Republic,' refers to 'a happy and free people,' now that the Old Tyrant had been banished and the Tree of Liberty planted on the Capital. The Pope and the cardinals had been sent out of the city to Siena, but would probably finish up in Paris. As for the Irish Colleges in the City, Concanen held out little hope. The Isidorians(O.F.M.) and Merulani(O.S.A.) had large numbers of French troops in their houses, while 'Master Kelly's house Minerva(O.P.)' quartered 250 horses; 'a pleasant scene for the sons of true liberty.' The worst fears of the Irish clerics in Rome were soon realised with the suppression of the priories and the banishment of up to 2,000 foreign priests and friars in May. [54] With the Pope sent off, 'a poor fugitive priest through the world,' [55] Charles Erskine quickly condemned the action of the French and declared that they had 'given their last proof of their hatred for Christ's church and their determined intention to destroy it by laying their hands

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52 *Press*, 30 January 1798.
53 *Press*, 10 October 1797.
54 Luke Concanen, Rome,to John Troy, 24 February 1798, 17 March 1798, and 5 May 1798. D.D.A. See H. Fenning, *The Undoing of the Friars.* pp354-379
55 Address of Mr Grady, Chairman of Limerick at the close of the Limerick quarter sessions, *F.D.J.*, 1 May 1798.

upon the Supreme Pastor.'[56] He directed that the collect *Pro Pontifice* be said in every parish and that prayers be said for the safe delivery of the pope from the hands of the persecutors not only of the Catholic religion, but of all Christianity. 'Who knows,' Erskine concluded, 'but by exciting in the people a sense of devotion they might also be recalled from that precipice, in which I hear with horror they are plunging themselves.'

This was the horrible reality of the situation. The 'French disease' had brought the Church to her knees in Europe and yet the Irish seemed to have embraced French principles. Throughout the 1790s the continental crisis had maintained a huge influence on the minds of the Irish hierarchy and it is against this background that the bishops' reactionary stance must be interpreted. The destruction of the Church in Europe at the hands of the French had brought home to them the reality of the French Revolution, not in abstract terms nor lofty notions of 'Liberty,' but in images of a Church laid low, particularly in Italy by the onslaught of the 'second Atilla more ferocious than the Hun his predecessor.'[57] The continental crisis had sharpened the sensitivity of the hierarchy to the potential of the growing politicisation in Ireland and also provided images of misery for their pastorals in which they urged loyalty and obedience to the laws. The continental crisis, too, had brought a convergence of interests between the Church and the government and this novel situation provided the atmosphere in which the hierarchy could pursue their deferential campaign for relief. Amongst the lower clergy, however, affairs in Europe failed to bring about any such consensus of opinion and observers noted a shift change in their political stance. Sir Richard

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56 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 6 April 1798, D.D.A.

57 *An address to the Irish Roman Catholics on the necessity of Arming The Government and Constitution with the whole energies of Ireland at the present crisis by A True Born Irishman,* (Dublin 1797). p. 28 .Printed and distributed gratis by the author.

Musgrave, a biased though astute commentator, noted this change, declaring that it struck him how

> the horrors which people had felt at the cruelties and barbarities committed by the French republicans began to abate in the minds of the Roman Catholics in the beginning of the year 1793 and that they continued to wear away gradually until the rebellion broke out.[58]

Many, like James Quigley, had been brought round 'with the majority of the Irish nation.. by calumny, false suspicion, prejudice and unjust persecution'.[59] William MacNeven reported to the French Directory in 1796 that the Irish 'priests had ceased to be alarmed by the calumnies circulated respecting the irreligion of the French,' and had adopted the principles of the people upon whom they depended. They were, he believed, generally good republicans who had rendered great though discreet service in propagating the United system.'[60] Against the background of European developments, it was unthinkable that this should be happening in Ireland; every effort was made by the hierarchy to stem the spread of the French contagion in Ireland.

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58 Musgrave, *Memoirs* , p. 122

59 Valentine Derry, *Life of James Quigley*, (London, 1798), preface.

60 W.J. MacNeven to the French Directory, 1796, in R, Hayes, 'Priests and the Independence movement of 1798', in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record,* lxvi,(Dublin, 1945) p. 259.

II

The Radical Challenge 1790 - 1793.

In looking at the reaction of the Church to radicalism in the 1790s it has been traditional to divide the decade into two halves, taking the failed Fitzwilliam viceroyalty as the dividing line. In many respects this neat division makes sense and provides an adequate framework upon which to hang an analysis of the decade. With Fitzwilliam's recall hopes for Emancipation were dashed and constitutional politics offered little prospect for the removal of remaining Catholic disabilities. Against this background radicalism became transformed, moving from reform towards an underground revolutionary position. Ironically, however, it was the failure of the Relief bill of 1795 and the arrival of Lord Camden which guaranteed the success of the bishops' scheme for a national seminary for Ireland. With the Royal College firmly established the hierarchy gave the appearance of being satisfied and of moving away from the political arena to adopt the mantle of steady loyalism. This divide in 1795, while affording a workable framework simplifies the complexity of the decade, blurring a proper understanding of the period. In many respects the markers had already been laid down with Hobart's Relief Act and the subsequent Convention Act of 1793. From that time the Catholic position seemed to become increasingly polarised with a majority of the clergy

and the laity opting for the opposing sides in the ensuing political conflict.

Under the influence of the French Revolution Ireland witnessed an unprecedented period of politicisation in the 1790s, a process not confined to the realm of 'high politics' but one which transformed the whole of society. In this situation, where according to Samuel McSkimmin's often quoted observation 'every illiterate bumpkin considered himself a consummate politician', the French revolution soon became the test of every man's political creed.[1] It was inevitable that the Catholic Committee would fall under this revolutionary spell, and from early 1790 the Committee adopted a more aggressive stance deciding to press for the repeal of the remaining penal laws.[2] The Committee underwent a farther transformation with its decision to extend the scope of elections to the general committee. This election of members by ballot in effect brought to an end the existing aristocratic domination of the committee and a new radicalised leadership began to emerge from among the Catholic middle class with many subsequent United Irishmen amongst their number.

This radicalisation of the Committee had not gone unnoticed by the Catholic clergy. In August 1790 Thomas Hussey, chaplain to the Spanish ambassador in London, commented to Richard Burke on the changing temper of Irish Catholics. Hussey may have at times lacked political nous, but his intuitions were sharp. In the event of a war with

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1 Tone, *Autobiography,* i, p. 50. S. McSkimmin, [E.J.McCrum, ed.], *Annals of Ulster, 1790-1800* (Belfast, 1906), p.31 cited in Jim Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation, Defenderism and the Catholic Question,' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(ed.), *French Revolution,* p.109. See also J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicization in Ireland in the 1790s,' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1989). K. Whelan, 'Catholics, Politicisation and the 1798 Rebellion,' in R. O'Muiri (ed.) *Irish Church History Today*, (Armagh, 1991) pp. 63-84. 'Politicisation in county Wexford and the origins of the 1798 rebellion' in Gough and Dickson, *French Revolution*, pp. 156-78.

2 R. Dudley Edwards (ed.), 'The Minute Book of the Catholic Association, 1773-92,' in *Arch. Hib.*, ix (1942) p. 116.(henceforth *Minutes*). E. O'Flaherty, 'The Catholic question in Irish politics, 1774-93',(unpublished M.A. thesis, U.C.D., 1981).

France further relief for Catholics would be unavoidable. It was absurd, he argued, to wait until necessity compelled what true policy should offer voluntarily. Besides, Hussey was convinced that the Irish Catholics under the influence of French revolutionary principles would no longer tolerate their situation 'without their resisting or even complaining.'[3]

Archbishop Troy saw the progress of the French disease in a more sinister light and became particularly alarmed at the possible consequences of this new radicalism for religion. The English Catholic Committee had in June 1789 drawn up an oath in the form of a declaration of their civil principles in an attempt to allay Protestant fears concerning farther concessions to Catholics. This notorious 'Protestation' had met with the immediate condemnation of the four Vicars Apostolic in England who saw in it a tendency to schism and a confusion of the temporal and spiritual powers.[4] The Irish bishops, too, condemned the oath with the aged Butler of Cashel describing it as 'fraught with principles most dangerous to religion.'[5] Troy feared a similar oath would be demanded from the Irish Catholics in the event of future relief and sought to define what he regarded as the preserve of the hierarchy. While acknowledging the competency of the Committee in the realm of temporal and political concerns, he claimed for the bishops an 'exclusive an inherent right ' to judge on all points of religious doctrine. In the unfortunate event of a similar oath being proposed to the Irish Catholics as 'the absolute price' of further indulgence, Troy insisted that it not be adopted without the approval of the hierarchy. [6] The Archbishop's adamant stance on this issue reflected his anxiety at

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3 T. Hussey to R.Burke, 28 August 1790, *Burke Corr.*, iv, p. 134.

4 P. O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' pp. 126 - 129. E.O'Flaherty, 'The Catholic Convention and Anglo-Irish Politics, 1791-93' in *Arch. Hib.*, xl,(1985) p.16.

5 J. Butler to J. Troy, 1 March 1790, D.D.A.

6 J. Troy to a member of the Catholic Committee, 13 Feb. 1790.

the growing confidence of the radicalised Committee, and represented an attempt to stem developments along French lines; there the National Assembly was moving closer towards the Civil Constitution which would declare all papal jurisdiction at an end, in effect nationalising the church.

Troy's fears were not without foundation, and the growing links between the Catholics and the radical Presbyterians confirmed his anxiety.[7] Samuel Barber's celebration of revolutionary France as a 'happy country! where rights of men are sacred, no Bastille to imprison the body, nor religious establishment to shackle the soul. Every citizen as free as the thoughts of man,' could hardly square with the Archbishop's appraisal of France or the revolution.[8] That Presbyterians should reach out to Catholics was not an altogether new departure and the failure of the Volunteers illustrated that no reform movement could be successful unless it addressed the Catholic issue. Tone's *Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* sought to bring this home to the Ulster Presbyterians in the conviction that, as Burrowes had argued six years earlier, the Catholics also 'live in a period of liberation - [and] have caught the love of freedom from yourselves.'[9] Presbyterian and Catholic radicalism joined together in the foundation of the United Irishmen in late 1791, but nevertheless many of the northern Presbyterians remained to be convinced of this transformation in the Catholic community and sectarianism continued to blight the growth of any popular union. In this context we can see Fr. James Quigley's mission to the Presbyterians of Antrim and Down, adventures made

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7 For a discussion of the whole 'uniting business' see J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation in Ireland in the 1790s,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, (1989), pp. 29 -62.

8 S. Barber, *Synodal sermon* (1791), cited in K.Whelan, 'Catholics, Politicisation and the 1798 Rebellion', in R. O'Muiri (ed.) *Irish Church History Today* (Armagh, 1990), p. 65.

9 Peter Burrowes, *Plain arguments in defence of the people's absolute dominion over the constitution in which the question of Roman Catholic emancipation is fully considered,'* cited in M. Elliott, *Wolfe Tone, Prophet of Irish Independence*, (New Haven, 1989), p.114.

possible by the priest's extensive contacts with local Defenders.[10] In his autobiography Quigley describes his efforts between 1791 and '93 in which he tried to 'combat many deep rooted prejudices on both sides.' In a telling admission he comments that his 'success would have been comparatively trifling, had it not been for the spirited exertions of that truly, respectable, virtuous and enlightened body, the dissenters of the county of Antrim, but chiefly and in particular those of Belfast.'[11] MacNeven, writing in the wake of the rebellion and union, gave a stylised account of Quigley's journey amongst 'the Covenanters' of Antrim and Down:

> [Quigley] was introduced as a fellow labourer in the common cause. The affection which those poor men showed to one whom, shortly before, they would perhaps have regarded as a demon, was truly astonishing. Intelligence was dispatched to every part, they crowded to receive and caress him, but when they learned that this Romish priest was so sincere a lover of liberty, as to have been actually fighting at the capture of the Bastille their joy was almost extravagant'[12]

The alarm in Government circles at such an alliance was immense and Grenville declared there was 'no evil' he would not prophecy if it were to take place.[13] Quigley, well aware of the government's opposition to any such union, commented how it was 'of great utility to the Irish government that such religious disputes should exist between the Dissenters and Catholics,' besides the leading gentlemen had sought to convince him it would be easier to mix oil and water than to bring the two

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10 L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century politicisation in Ireland: Problems in its study and its French links,' in *Culture et Pratiques politiques en France et en Irlande XVIe - XVIIIe siecle,*(Paris, 1990) pp.137 - 159.

11 J. Quigley, *Life of the Rev. James Quigley*, (London, 1798). pp. 12-13.

12 W.J.McNevin, *Pieces*, p.119.

13 Grenville to Westmorland, 20 October 1791, Dropmore Ms., ii, 213 -214. cited in J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 32.

parties together.[14] Significantly the Presbyterian radical, Rev. William Steel Dickson, made similar claims in his recollections, describing how a government faction in 1792 had propagated notions of Catholic inability to 'enjoy'. let alone 'bear liberty' in order to defeat the prospects of Catholic emancipation.[15]

The Catholic hierarchy shared the Castle's anxiety at the growing ties with the radical Dissenters. Cardinal Antonelli had been informed of events in Ireland by Fr Charles O'Connor of Bellanagare, and the Prefect instructed the bishops of Ireland to take appropriate measures to halt any junction with the Presbyterians.[16] Antonelli wrongly assumed that the hierarchy had it in their power to call their flock back from the edge. However, by the end of 1791 the pace of change in Ireland had accelerated beyond their control. The formation of the Catholic Society in October of that year had brought the divisions within the Committee to a head and illustrated the essential difference between the radical members, McKenna, Braughall and company and the old guard, the former seeking total enfranchisement as a right while the aristocratic party content with a dutiful appeal for relief.

The make-up and identity of the Catholic Society was never clear; Westmorland believed it contained 'fifty or sixty of the most violent agitators'; it was also rumoured to contain up to twenty priests.[17] The Society reflected the mood of the more advanced Catholics of the Committee, and McKenna's *Declaration* , calling for a total repeal of the penal laws, received a warm response, with William Knox informing

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14 J. Quigley, *Life*, pp. 12 - 13.

15 W. Steel Dickson, *Narrative of the Confinement and exile of William Steel Dickson,*(Dublin, 1812) in B. Clifford(ed), *Scripture Politics; Selections from the writings of William Steel Dickson* (Belfast, 1991) p. 23.

16 Antonelli to Troy, 24 Dec. 1791, D.D.A. , Antonelli to Charles O'Connor, 24 Dec. 1791, D.D.A.

17 Westmorland to -----, 21 Nov. 1791, H.O. 100/33/1/116. P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p.151.

Jefferson of the subsequent meetings of Catholics all resolved to remain no longer in an 'excluded state.'[18] Significantly, the *Declaration* was couched in similar rhetoric to the addresses of the newly founded United Irishmen, speaking of a spirit of harmony and sentiments of affection between Irishmen. [19] The loyal prints quickly responded to the *Declaration* , with *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* seeing in it 'unnecessary truths mixed with rank falsehoods, which affects a tone of manliness, and falls in other parts into a style of slavish cunning: which professes loyalty in words, yet seems bursting with a suppressed republicanism.'[20]

The government decided to fight the Committee on the issue of the McKenna pamphlet. Chief Secretary Hobart met four members of the Committee, Edward Byrne, Randal McDonnell, John Roche and D.T. O'Brien, on 26 November 1791 and demanded a disavowal of the *Declaration* under threat of refusing further concessions to the Catholics. Despite Edward Byrne's attempt to stress the separate nature of the Catholic Society , the delegation would not go so far as to reject the principles contained in the pamphlet. The Committee members rightly saw the critical nature of their predicament, but in a reflection of the confidence of the renewed body, they stated that while the Declaration was not the act of the Committee.'unfortunately for us it contained truths as to our situation which we could not disavow and should we even attempt to condemn its publications or the authors of it, divisions and a paper war would be the inevitable consequence.'[21]

Troy was quick to respond to the growing crisis and, anxious to rescue the Catholic body from any imputation of disloyalty, wrote to Major

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18 William Knox to Thomas Jefferson, 17 Jan. 1792, U.S. Nat. Archives., T. 199/3 cited in Elliott, *Tone.*, p. 151.
19 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p.35.
20 *F.D.J.*, 17 Dec. 1791.
21 *Minutes*, pp. 137- 140.

Hobart. Adopting a Burkean line, Troy argued that if the Catholics were given a share in the franchise they would fall more under the influence of their natural leaders, the clergy and gentry. These leaders would in turn become more resistant to radical influences with their own positions secured. Troy, however, unlike Burke would never have accepted any alliance with the dissenters even if it was to defeat them at a later stage.[22] In fact, Troy outlined for Hobart the dangers of the dissenting influence on the Catholics and spoke of bishops' appointment of parish priests being rejected in some country places along French lines under the 'encouragement and connivance of protestant gentlemen.' [23] Troy outlined the injustice where Catholics had been dispossessed of their lands in order to make Protestant freeholders. He also cited instances of Catholics voting at elections under the guise of Protestants and, in a reflection of his subtle diplomacy, declared that 'the most loyal and conscientious Catholics wish the right to suffrage at country elections to be communicated to respectable freeholders of their persuasion.'

Despite the pressure from Hobart the General Committee agreed to press on with their demands for repeal and voted 90 to 17 in favour of presenting the petition intended to have been presented in the previous session. Appended to this petition were the resolutions adopted at the Rotunda convention in 1783.[24] This rejection of Kenmare's proposed declaration of unconditional loyalty led to the secession of Kenmare himself and of the old guard from the Committee.[25] Sixty-eight of the

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22 I am grateful to Conor Cruise O'Brien for this suggestion. C. Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, (London, 1992).

23 Troy to Hobart, 29 Nov. 1791, P.R.O., H.O., 100/34/33

24 *Minutes*, p. 141.

25 The events of the split have been dealt with in great detail by E. O'Flaherty, 'The Catholic question in Irish politics, 1773 - 93,' (M.A. thesis, U.C.D., 1981), P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church in Ireland in the age of Revolution and Rebellion, 1782 - 1803,' Ph.D. thesis U.C.D.,(1975), M. Wall, 'John Keogh and the Catholic Committee' in G.O'Brien (ed.) *Catholic Ireland in the Eighteenth Century; collected essays of Maureen Wall.*(Dublin, 1989) pp. 163 -70.

seceders, led by Kenmare, Fingal, Gormanstown and Troy presented an independent address to the Lord Lieutenant on 27 December in 'order to prevent misrepresentation or misconceptions' of their sentiments.[26] In their petition the seceders, described by Smyth as 'supreme practitioners of the traditional and ineffectual strategy of supplication,'[27] offered the past as a pledge of their future good conduct and looked with 'respectful confidence' to the government for a further extension of its favours. The petitioners did not presume to point out the measure or extent to which such repeal should be carried, but left the same to the 'wisdom and discretion of the legislature.'

The secession resulted in a deep rupture within the Catholic body and Kenmare was formally expelled from the Committee; it condemned the 'insidious and servile address calculated to divide the Catholics of Ireland and eventually to defeat their just application for relief from the grievous oppressions under which they have for so long laboured.'[28] The lines were now drawn for the ensuing conflict between the Kenmarites and the advanced Dublin leadership, with the Catholic community becoming polarised in their loyalty as both sides sought to rally support for their stance. Troy attempted to rally the hierarchy to his side. He wrote to Moylan of Cork explaining his reasons for signing the address; despite the flattery and intimidation used to deter him, Troy emphasised how he felf it was absolutely necessary to step forward in a decided manner at a time when Catholic loyalty was under question and in the face of 'the most extravagant levelling principles being avowed by 'some infatuated people.' Though confident the storm would soon cease, he was determined to stand firm, otherwise the clergy would

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26 Declaration of Loyalty of the Catholics of Ireland, *F.D.J.*, 27 Dec. 1791.
27 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p.31.
28 *Minutes*, p. 144.

'become obnoxious and be reputed the authors of sedition.' Troy was content with his decision, but admitted to having many vindictive persons to deal with, who in 'the genuine spirit of intolerance' had already threatened him with the consequence of his action. Troy requested that Moylan would relay his sentiments to the remaining Munster bishops, Egan, Teahan and Coppinger.[29]

Troy was certain of a favourable response from Teahan of Kerry, given Kenmare's role in the affair. An address was published on behalf of the Catholics of Kerry led by Kenmare and the bishop. In it the Catholics declared their opposition to certain writings and associations which might possibly sow 'the seeds of discontent and impatience among the lower class of their persuasion,' and pledged their unshaken loyalty, perfect submission to the laws, and dutiful attachment to the King and his government. The address rejected every act tending toward faction or commotion and humbly begged 'a relaxation of the penal statutes, made in angry times against them.'[30] The Leinster bishops also presented loyal addresses but none of these received significant popular support. Delaney's address in Carlow received forty-two signatures, while Lanigan could muster a mere sixty-three in Kilkenny. The bishop of Ferns, James Caulfield, was especially opposed to hardline Catholic politics and it is not difficult to imagine his disappointment in receiving only eleven signatures from a congregation of over two hundred. This followed a challenge to the address by Edward Hay and James Devereux, whom the bishop regarded as a 'young hot-headed libertine.'[31] Nevertheless, Caulfield can hardly have

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29 Troy to Moylan, 23 Dec. 1791, D.D.A.

30 *F.D.J.*, 15 Dec. 1791.

31 Caulfield to Troy, 22 April 1792, D.D.A., *Hib. Jn.* 4 Jan. 1792. K. Whelan, 'The role of the catholic priest in the 1798 rebellion in Wexford,' in K. Whelan and W. Nolan,(ed.) *Wexford: History and Society*. (Dublin, 1987), p297.

been surprised, for in November 1791 he had informed Troy of the epidemical 'frenzy for levelling' in Wexford and the 'diabolical Jacobin spirit' of the Committee which he feared would ruin the Church in Ireland.[32] The Wexford Address, however, was never presented and the only other bishop to sign a petition was Thomas Costelloe of Clonfert.[33]

The Ulster bishops retained their composure and remained aloof throughout the crisis. Dr Plunkett of Meath, however, criticised Troy's decision to side with the aristocratic faction and believed some compromise should have been reached; the division in the Catholic ranks had resulted in 'no small amusement of a host of foes.' Plunkett, who had spent twenty-seven years in France and led the Gallican party in the Irish church, believed that had some compromise or adjournment taken place 'we should be more respectable at the moment.'[34]

Troy had obviously hoped for a unanimous response from the hierarchy, but in this his judgement was lacking. The secession had served to illustrate the deep divisions within the Catholic body and highlighted the hierarchy's delicate call on the loyalty of their flocks. A resolution of the General Committee on 15 January 1792 criticised the seceders for their attempt to 'form divisions and to disseminate discord' amongst the Catholics. More ominously for the hierarchy, the seceders were castigated for attempting to 'seduce the Roman Catholic clergy from the laity, and to set them at variance which by converting the ministers of the Gospel into instruments of oppression, tends to vitiate the purest source of confidence, to weaken the closest bonds of society, and to endanger the very being of religion in the minds of the people.'[35] The

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32 Caulfield to Troy, 28 Nov. 1791, D.D.A.
33 Caulfield to Troy, 27 Jan. 1792.
34 P. Plunkett to Thos.. Betagh, 29 Jan. 1792 in Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp. 167 - 172. M. Elliott, *Tone*, p. 153.
35 Minutes, pp. 146 -47.

implication was simple, either the clergy joined with the people, or the people would go alone. The overwhelming support for the Dublin leadership in the winter of 1791-92 did little to boost the bishops' confidence.

The events of 1791 had brought the country to a new level of political awareness and the secession of the Kenmarites and the subsequent collapse in their support had resulted in a full scale mobilisation of political opinion in the country. The pace of change had placed the clergy in a difficult position as they sought to stand by their flock in their demand for further relief, while remaining ostensibly loyal to the government. Within the Catholic body the balance of power had passed from what Burke called 'the dozen or score of old gentlemen,' to the new radicalised leadership.[36] In January 1792, however, London appeared ready 'to play the Catholic game' and some form of relief seemed inevitable. The Dublin administration had come under increasing pressure from Pitt's government, in particular from Henry Dundas, to grant concessions to the Irish similar to those already enjoyed by the English Catholics. [37] Westmorland opposed any gestures to the Catholics and saw in Pitt's proposals a threat to the whole establishment of a country where 'everyman held his estate by the dispossession of a Catholic.'[38] Echoing Duigenan, Ogle and the ultras, he argued that if a man had the right to vote had he not a greater right to have his property restored to him?[39] The Catholic Committee, however, were confident that the London government would manage the progress of a relief bill through all stages in Dublin. The arrival of Richard Burke sent rumours

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36 E. Burke to R. Burke, 3 January 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vii, pp. 11-12.

37 T. Bartlett, 'The Origins and Progress of the Catholic Question in Ireland, 1690 - 1800,' in T. Power and K. Whelan (Ed.), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Eighteenth Century Ireland*, (Dublin, 1990) p. 13.

38 Westmorland to Pitt, 1 Jan. 1792, S.P.O.I., Westmorland Corr., 1789 - 1808, carton i, f. 35.

39 Westmorland to Pitt, 18 Jan. 1792, S.P.O.I., Westmorland Corr., 1789 - 1808, carton i, f. 45.

flying through Dublin that relief was inevitable and the Committee asserted in a manifesto that 'they had the FIRST AUTHORITY for saying that the application would have infinite weight.'[40]

On 25 January 1792 Sir Hercules Langrishe introduced what was essentially a government bill in the House of Commons which granted limited relief for the Catholics.[41] Despite the fact that the bill stopped far short of the Committee's demands for admission to petty or grand juries, freedom to serve in the county magistracies and a share of the county franchise, the concessions made were sufficient to turn the parliamentary debate into an anti-catholic tirade.[42] While the Relief bill was carried, a petition of the Catholic Committee suffered a humiliating rejection, 208 votes to 25, and a petition in favour of Catholic relief signed by over 600 citizens of Belfast met with a similar fate..

The parliamentary session had created deep bitterness and resentment within the Catholic community, and Richard Burke was quick to identify the effects of these attacks upon the Committee and the Presbyterians. Burke spoke of 'Catholic and Dissenter turned adrift together' hand and hand, forming what Thomas Addis Emmet later described as 'a community of insult.'[43] Although Richard Burke believed this marriage was not complete, every attempt was being made to couple the two parties. The toasts at a United Irish dinner in Belfast on the 19th of April reflect this growing union as glasses were raised to Tom Paine and the Rights of Man, Napper Tandy and the Rights of the Subject, Wolfe Tone and Reform of Parliament while 'the Catholic parish priest had proposed religion without priestcraft.'[44] There was

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40 Froude, *The English in Ireland*, iii, p. 59. Elliott, *Tone*, p.154.
41 32 Geo. III, c.21.
42 D. Dickson, *New Foundations*, (Dublin, 1987), p.176.
43 R. Burke to E. Burke, 23 Feb. 1792, *Burke Corr.* viii, pp.68 - 74, W. MacNeven, *Pieces*, p.23.
44 *History of Belfast,* 19 April 1792, cited in Froude, *English in Ireland,* iii, p. 61.

particular resentment amongst the Catholic Committee at the insults hurled in their direction and the attempts made by the ultras in parliament to discredit their body. The Committee members were portrayed as 'shop keepers and shop lifters.' Duigenan referred to them as 'men of very low and mean parentage,' while the loyal prints attacked the right of this 'small popish faction' to speak for the Catholics.[45] Tone in particular reacted strongly to the depiction of the Committee as a 'rabble of obscure porter-drinking mechanicks' meeting in 'holes and corners' and considering themselves the representatives of a Catholic body who disavowed and despised them.[46]

These attacks placed the Committee on the defensive, but before long resentment gave way to anger. Initially the Committee sought to clear themselves from any imputation of disloyalty and on 4 February outlined the limits of their demands.[47] In the following month, consious of its English predecessor, the Committee issued what was in effect an Irish 'Protestation'. in an attempt to show that the principles of Catholicism were in no way incompatible with the duties of citizens or 'repugnant to liberty, whether political, civil or religious.'[48] The declaration continued to answer many of the attacks levelled at the Catholics during the parliamentary debates, and renounced such notions as the deposing power of the pope, his infallibility, his civil authority outside the Papal States, and the breaking of faith with heretics. The Committee also renounced all interests in forfeited estates and declared that should they be restored to the elective franchise they would not use that privilege 'to disturb and weaken the establishment of the Protestant

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45 P. Duigenan, *An Answer to the address of Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan to his fellow citizens*, (Dublin, 1798) p.24. *F.D.J.*, 14 Feb. 1792.
46 W. T. Tone (ed.), *Life*, i, p. 60.
47 *Minutes*, pp. 151-152.
48 *Minutes*, p. 157.

religion or Protestant government' in the country.[49] Nevertheless, the growing mood of the Committee was reflected in the decision taken on the day the declaration was adopted to print and distribute at cost 10,000 copies of Burke's *Letter,* Tone's *Argument* and other pro-Catholic tracts.[50]

The Committee decided to muster the assistance of the clergy to secure maximum support for the declaration around the country. Troy quickly rallied to their assistance and together with his senior clergy, described by D'Alton as the 'Dublin Chapter', promptly signed the declaration.[51] Troy acted independently of the hierarchy and his eager response, despite reservations on certain aspects of the declaration, reflects a desire to bring his isolation from the Committee to an end.[52] The mood in Ireland had changed considerably since the secession and Catholic opinion was now firmly behind the Committee. Besides, while Troy was keen as the Dublin merchants to rescue the Catholic body from the accusations levelled against them in parliament, he was also no doubt aware of criticism that the bishops appeared to be more concerned to support the government than to attend to the suffering of their people.[53] Troy urged his suffragans to subscribe to the declaration, but its importance was lost on some of their number. Daniel Delaney, perhaps the dimmest of the Leinster bishops, compared the declaration to a maidservant denying for the twelfth time that she had taken her mistress' silver spoon. There was a degree of truth in this since a number of similar declarations had been made in the course of the

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49 *Minutes*, pp. 157 -160.
50 *Minutes*, p. 156.
51 D'Alton, *Archbishops*, p.484.
52 Troy to Brancadoro, Liege, 18 May 1792, D.D.A.
53 E. Burke to J. Cox Hippisley, 3 October 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, pp. 439 - 44.

eighteenth century.[54] The Committee's success in obtaining so many signatures to the declaration was largely due to their effective marshalling of the clergy throughout the country. Smyth has described the opposition of the parish priest of Duleek, County Louth, to the declaration as 'far from typical' but there is little doubt that the clergy were in many cases intimidated into supporting the venture against their own judgement.[55] James Caulfield complained to Troy of the violent and sullen mood of the people of Wexford, declaring that it was 'a happy epoch indeed when the people, the puppies, the rabble dictate.' Caulfield believed the radicals planned 'to give the clergy nothing if they do not come into their measures,' while John Keogh confided to Thomas Hussey that 'the people seem well inclined to give them[the nonco-opperating clergy] the French cure.'[56] A similar ambiguity surrounds the clergy's support for the Catholic Convention, and the mistrust the Committee felt for Troy had not altogether been erasedby December. In March 1792 Troy was called on by Randal MacDonnell to account for his conversation with Major Hobart, after he had been seen leaving the Castle. Caulfield, aware that the Archbishop would be questioned, tipped him off, warning 'if you do not acquit yourself with candour, you should be laid aside.' [57] Troy was again called on by the Committee to lend his support for the election of delegates to the Convention; after several conferences he demonstrated his intentions 'beyond a possibility of doubt' and wrote to all the bishops of Ireland requesting their assistance in the plan.[58]

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54 D. Delaney to Troy, 30 Mar. 1792, D.D.A. See M. Wall, 'Catholic loyalty to King and Pope in Eighteenth Century Ireland,' in G. O'Brien(ed.), *Catholic Ireland*, pp. 107 - 115.
55 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 43.
56 Caulfield to Troy, 31 Mar. 1792, D.D.A., Keogh to Hussey, 29 Mar. 1792, P.R.O., H.O. 100/38/243.
57 *Minutes*, p. 160. Caulfield to Troy, 31 Mar. 1792, D.D.A.
58 *Minutes*, p. 167.

In spite of their differences the Committee wished to harness the support of the clergy, and the published plan for the Convention included an appeal for clerical co-operation. The appeal, however, was diplomatically drafted and aimed to exploit the fears of the hierarchy to maximum advantage:

> Every endeavour should be used to cultivate and improve the friendship of our clergy. The clergy and laity, having but one interest, should have but one mind, and should therefore mutually combine their talents, their opinions and their exertions in order to effectuate our common emancipation. This union of sentiments and design, this interchange of counsel and of aid, will serve to strengthen the bonds of common friendship and will be the best security against innovation in matters which relate to religion.[59]

By such co-operation, the bishops were assured in what was certainly a veiled threat, 'will the clergy secure to themselves that influence over the laity of their own persuasion, which it is useful that a good clergy should have.' The Committee sent a number of the Dublin leaders to the country in an effort to canvas support. John Keogh was particularly active in converting the hierarchy to the cause of the Convention. Tone and Keogh travelled together to Ulster in July 1792; Tone's diary for 18 July records him winning the support of bishops at Newry and Downpatrick, and the following day at Drogheda. Again on 9 August the two dined with all the Ulster bishops, apart from Maguire of Kilmore in Drogheda.[60] In Ulster they found a natural ally in Plunkett, and Tone singled him out for praise, believing 'he would be a credit to any situation.'[61] Again Tone credits Keogh with bringing round the six

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59 Plan for the Convention, contained in *Vindication of the Cause of the Catholics of Ireland adopted by the general Committee at a meeting December 7, 1792.* (Dublin, 1793). p. 35.

60 Tone, *Life*, i, pp. 170 - 172.

61 Tone, *Life*, i, p. 184.

Munster bishops, but reports reaching London described Keogh interrupting their conference at Thurles and threatening them with a revival of the Whiteboy tactics of withholding dues and collections unless they lent their support to the Committee.[62] The tenor of Keogh's letter to Bray of Cashel the following month, however, reflected no tension between himself and the prelates and referred to the 'union of efforts and sentiments in the clergy and laity, so essential to our happiness.' He spoke of the respectful attachment which had characterised the relations between priest and people in Ireland and assured Bray that in these dispositions 'the Committee will be zealous to set the example.'[63] Included with this letter were copies of the plan for the election of delegates, presumably the ones referred to by Tone in his diary entry for 1 August - 'busy all day folding papers for the Munster bishops. Damm all bishops. Gog[Keogh] not quite right on that point. Thinks them a good thing. Nonsense!'[64] In the same letter to Bray, Keogh informed the bishop of his mission to the north and of alarming symptoms there of 'poor Catholics' being forced into contests with 'bigoted Protestants.' Despite the 'wicked designs of certain people' the delegates of the Committee had in conjunction with the bishops used every effort to prevent disorder. Lack of episcopal records for Ulster make it difficult to verify Keogh's claims.[65] It is within this context that Fr James Quigley's missionary activity amongst the Presbyterians of Antrim and Down must be interpreted. Quigley's role in the 'uniting business' was crucial, and his Defender links and family connections placed him firmly within a highly radicalised circle. Tone and Keogh were accompanied to

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62 Hobart to Nepean, 8 Oct. 1792, S.P.O.I., Private Official Corr., 1789 - 93, p.231 cited in P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p. 177. J. A. Murphy, 'The support of the Catholic Clergy of Ireland 1750 - 1850,' in *Historical Studies*, v, (London, 1965), pp. 103 - 121.

63 Keogh to Bray, 4 Aug. 1792, C.D.A.

64 Tone, *Life*, i, p. 168.

65 Keogh to Bray, 4 August 1792, C.D.A.

Rathfriland by Fr Edmund Derry, subsequently bishop of Dromore, a close friend and relative of the priest, while Quigley is believed to have introduced Napper Tandy to the Louth Defenders.[66]

Forkhill in county Armagh had been the scene of the horrible mutilations in 1791 of the local Protestant schoolmaster Alexander Barkley and his wife. This incident had aroused much loyalist propaganda and temperatures were running high in the summer of 1792.[67] The sectarian differences were not helped by the fact that the local curate, Fr Cullen, was believed to have been involved in the mutilation and was apparently dismissed by his bishop on instructions from government.[68] It was against this background and within the context of the elections to the Convention of 1792 that 'John Byrne' published his *Impartial Account of the late disturbances in the County of Armagh*, which concluded with an account of the attack on Barkely.[69] Cullen has attributed this pamphlet to James Quigley and sees it as part of the overall politicisation of Co. Armagh, or specificially, as a preparation for missions similar to those of Keogh and Tone in Down. Cullen's thesis is interesting, although not altogether convincing. He identifies a number of features in the text pointing to Quigley, hints of a classical and scriptural education, familiarity with the situation in France, and a keen knowledge of the events of 1641. The latter point is significant since Quigley had intended completing a history of the

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66 B. McEvoy, 'Fr James Quigley,' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, p. 254. R.R. Madden, *Lives of United Irishmen*, ii, p. 2. L.M. Cullen, 'Political structure of the Defenders,' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(ed.),*French Revolution*, p.127.

67 T. Bartlett, 'Religious rivalries in France and Ireland in the age of the French Revolution,' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland* (1991), p. 68.

68 ..... Loughsilly to Ed. Cooke, 29 May 1798 S.P.O. 620/37/212. Camillus, *To the Magistrates, the Militia and the Yeomanry of Ireland.* (Dublin, 1798), p.4. T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism in 1795' in *I.H.S.*, xxiv, no. 95, (1985), p. 376.

69 Patterson MSS T. 1722. The pamphlet in printed in D. Miller, *Peep o' Day Boys and Defenders. Selected documents on the County Armagh disturbances 1784 - 96.* (Belfast, 1990). Extracts from the pamphlet are printed in W. H.Crawford and B. Trainor(ed.) *Aspects of Irish Social History*, (Belfast, 1969), pp. 171 - 175

seventeenth century, but his library and notes were lost when his house was destroyed. The author's use of language also places the pamphlet in a context beyond County Armagh and Cullen singles out 'Byrne's' use of the word 'junto.'[70] There is, however, still a case for suggesting that the pamphlet is in fact the work of John Byrne, son of Edward Byrne the Dublin merchant and prominent member of the Catholic Committee. Indeed John Byrne was elected to represent Armagh city at the Convention.

The Committee had scored a major coup in winning the support of the Catholic clergy for their planned Convention and the huge response to the Declaration and election of delegates had once and for all put an end to the shopkeeper and shoplifter jibe levelled against them. However, the tone of the Catholic meetings had become increasingly violent. A meeting of the Limerick Catholics, under the chairmanship of the prominent merchant Francis Arthur, lamented the 'degraded state in which our children stand,' and declared 'we are taxed without being represented, and bound by laws to which we have not given consent.'[71] Such rhetoric and images of chapel meetings assembled on the instructions of the Committee did little to calm the anxieties of the hierarchy and served also to fuel the prejudices of the loyalists. The ever-sharp Richard Musgrave described the clergy as never failing to inspire their flocks 'with admiration of the Gallic nation and with the most inveterate hatred towards the English,' pointing for example to the active agitation of James Quigley amongst the Defenders and afterwards amongst the United Irishmen.[72] The parallels bewteen the French

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70 L.M. Cullen, 'Late eighteenth century politicisation in Ireland; problems in its study and its French links', in *Culture et pratiques politiques en France et en Irlande XVIe - XVIIIe siecle*, (Paris, 1990), pp. 137 - 143.
71 *L.C.*, 3 October 1792.
72 R. Musgrave, *Memoirs* p. 63.

National Assembly and the proposed Convention were only too obvious; the Roscommon Grand Jury pointed to the 'anarchy and tumult' which had come from the French Assembly, and their colleagues in Donegal, while declaring their 'tenderness' for the Catholics, stated their determination to 'maintain at the hazard of everything dear to them the Protestant interest of Ireland.'[73] The popular support for the Committee had placed the clergy in an impossible situation; Edmund Burke's advice to the Francis Moylan summed up their dilemma, urging minimal involvement in the Committee business, while at the same time urging the hierarchy to avoid any suggestion of opposition to the aspirations of the Catholic laity.[74] Such advice can have afforded Moylan little consolation, given the mood of the Catholics of his own city, reflected in the toasts at a Catholic dinner in October 1792. According to the *Cork Gazette*, a radical if racy newspaper, the toasts included; His Holiness the Pope, Edmund Burke and Maria Antoinette, Cardinal York, Catholic Ascendancy, The Sub-Committee, Confusion to Protestant Bigotry and the Elective Franchise to the Sans Coulottes.[75]

For the most part the hierarchy tried to walk this tightrope and the surviving episcopal correspondence reflects their deep felt tensions and discomfort. Lawerence Nihell of Kilmacduagh had several applications made to him in Ennis to become involved in the elections but he refused, considering it a political matter and noting the alarm concerning the whole business in Government circles. Nevertheless by popular demand he had chaired the meeting held to sign the Declaration, but once that had been completed he withdrew and gave the chair to a lay man. The other prelates of Connaught were, according to Nihell, 'equally reserved as to

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73 Donegal Grand Jury in *Vindication of the Cause of the Catholics of Ireland adopted by the General Committee at a meeting December 7, 1792* (Dublin, 1793) p. 8.
74 E. Burke to Moylan, 18 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, p.293.
75 *C.G.*, 13 October 1792.

the parochial meetings.'[76] A similar stance was adopted by William Egan of Waterford and Lismore who, though wishing the Committee success in gaining the elective franchise, believed the active support of the clergy might work against the cause, rekindling the kind of acrimony present during the 1792 parliamentary session.[77]

There was at the same time a growing fear amongst the hierarchy that their prudential low-key approach had failed to stem the spread of Jacobinism. Troy's anxiety was reflected in his muscle-flexing excommunication of Fr Robert McEvoy in September 1792, and his condemnation of the decrees of the Assembly concerning religion as universally tending to 'establish the dominion of a selfish intolerant philosophy.'[78] Teahan of Kerry, who obviously fell strongly under Kenmare's influence, shared Troy's concern and condemned what he saw as the open and avowed attachment of the Committee to the cause of French anarchy and irreligion. This unbridled spirit had given rise to a contempt for authority amongst the illiterate and a mistaken notion of liberality which sought to shake off restraints of every kind.[79] The western bishops were also anxious: Tone described Boetius Egan of Tuam as 'flinching', while the bishop of Killala, Dominic Bellew, also became alarmed at the potential of the Committee and suggested the hierarchy be given greater authority within the body as a whole. 'Damned kind,' was Tone's response while a furious John Keogh confessed how 'he now began to think the Catholic bishops were all scoundrels .'[80] Keogh later condemned the bishops as 'old men used to

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76 L. Nihell to T. Bray, 18 October 1792, C.D.A.

77 W. Egan to T. Hearn, 2 Oct. 1792, W.D.A.

78 *The Excommunication of the Rev. Robert M'Evoy, Priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin for promulgating and upholding the principles established by the French Revolution; Published 29 September 1792 by John Thomas Troy.* (London, 1798).

79 G. Teahan to Troy, 5 Oct. 1792, D.D.A.

80 Tone, *Life*, i, pp. 183, 198. Froude, *English in Ireland*, iii, p.67.

bend to power, mistaking all attempts at liberty as in some way connected with the murderers in France.'[81] Still, the memories of the Kenmare split were too recent in the minds of the bishops to allow for any rash behaviour and the general spirit in the episcopacy favoured a united stance with the Committee.[82]

(III)

In this spirit Troy and Moylan attended the Convention in December 1792, despite having previously decided against taking any part in the proceedings. Troy confessed to Thomas Bray that he had been compelled to attend by a misrepresentation of his motives for staying away.[83] His initial sensitivity and apprehensions were quickly removed by the great applause that welcomed the two prelates to the Tailor's Hall, and the bishops were placed on either side of the chairman. The two returned to the Convention on the 8 December when the petition, already approved and signed by the delegates, was read aloud. Significantly the petition was presented to the bishops as a *fait accompli* and read merely for their 'information' with no implication that their approval being sought by the Committee. Nevertheless, Moylan and Troy signed the petition on behalf of the prelates and clergy of Ireland, in a tacit acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Committee within the Catholic body. Again reflecting a movement in his position, Troy regarded the petition as 'perfectly unexceptionable' and delivered a

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81 Keogh to ....., 2 Oct. 1792. P.R.O. H.O. 100/38/275 - 8.
82 B. Egan to Troy, 3 Nov. 1792, D.D.A., Bray to Troy, 22 Oct. 1792, D.D.A.
83 Troy to Bray, 8 Dec. 1792, C.D.A.

rousing speech to the assembly in which he proclaimed the bishops and clergy 'second to no description of catholics for their emancipation.' Troy concluded his address to great bursts of applause by declaring the determination of the clergy to rise or fall with the people.[84]

Troy's usually sharp political perceptions had obviously been dulled by the euphoric reception of the bishops at the Convention; he naively attributed the delegate's decision to petition the King directly to a 'diffidence in the Castle.'[85] In this he had underestimated the loyalist opposition to the Convention who saw the appeal above the head of the Lord Lieutenant as a total usurpation of the legitimate power of the Irish government. The reception of the Convention's delegates by the King and their discussions with Henry Dundas represented a further affront and kindled the ire of the ascendancy prior to the debate on Hobart's relief bill.

The hierarchy had been tainted by their association with the Committee and participation in the 'Back Lane Parliament.' Indeed the whole Convention was represented as a papist assembly which the co-operation of the Catholic clergy had made possible. The influential role of many United Irishmen within the Committee, also, disturbed some Protestant sensitivities, while Troy's promise to 'rise or fall' with the Committee placed him inextricably at their head.[86] The temper of the country, too, was at fever pitch; loyalist anger had been greatly roused and the loyalist prints analysed in detail the implications of the Convention. From Wexford the *Dublin Journal* reported a growing divide in the town, reflected in the reaction to James Edward Devere ux's election to the Convention:

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84 *ibid.*
85 Troy to Bray, 8 December 1792, C.D.A.
86 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 57.

> Mr Devereaux who was lately elected a representative for the town of Wexford in the Popish Parliament which is now sitting in this town. under the very nose of government, was upon his election immediately chaired round that town, in all the parade of a legitimate representative of the county. This however had its effect upon the Protestant mind, for we learn that the Mayor and Corporation are to have a meeting to instruct their representatives in Parliament. George Ogle and the Protestant interest is the favourite toast.[87]

In the marathon Commons' debate which followed the introduction of Hobart's Relief Bill the 'Protestant interest' was to the fore, and the anti-Catholic rhetoric which had characterised the 1792 session was revived with even greater ferocity. Alarmed by this development, the bishops sought once again to emphasise their loyalty to the king and constitution. In particular they attempted to distance themselves from any suggestion of their support for the Defenders arising from the house of lords enquiry into Defenderism. Conscious that further relief might be endangered by such accusations the four metropolitans issued a pastoral in January 1793 in which they denounced the actions of 'seditious and misguided wretches of every religious denomination,' describing them as 'enemies of God and man, the outcasts of society and a disgrace to Christianity.' The bishops, stressing the connection between obedience and relief, urged their flock to avoid 'idle assemblies' and every appearance of riot, beseeching 'the Throne of Mercy to assist both houses of parliament in their important deliberations, that they may be distinguished by consummate wisdom and liberality, for the advantage of the kingdom, and the relief and happiness of His Majesty's subjects.'[88] The bishop of Killaloe, the Dominican and aristocratic Michael Peter MacMahon, issued an address in April 1793 calling his flock to 'allegiance, loyalty and gratitdue.'[89]

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87 *F.D.J.*, 31 January 1793.
88 *Pastoral of the Four Metropolitans*, 25 Jan. 1793. C.D.A.
89 *L.C.*, 6 April 1793.

John Troy developed with his customary zeal these themes in his *Pastoral on the Duties of Christian Citizens* in which he addressed the arguments raised by Foster, Fitzgibbon and the ultras.[90] In the pastoral, published in February 1793, the bishop endeavoured to counter the black propaganda levelled at the Church and aimed to end once and for all any question of Catholic loyalty to the King and Constitution. The scope of the pastoral was wide and Troy dealt with the issues of papal infallibility and temporal jurisdiction, the deposing power of the pope.

The pastoral contained a strong definition of Catholic social teaching and, in the face of the current levelling principles, Troy reminded his readers that social inequality was an inevitable part of life. The bishop acknowledged that there were abuses in society, but that protests against these 'should always be loyal and decorous.' Troy was particularly frank in his response to the accusations that Catholics favoured arbitrary government and that they were unfit to participate in a free constitution. Troy traced a long line through history pointing to full Catholic participation in governments of every description in order to demonstrate that, far from being unreliable, the very principles of the faith made Catholics by nature loyal and dutiful subjects since the Church had always taught obedience to constituted authority, whether the government be aristocratic of democratic. In response to suggestions that Catholics were unfit to enjoy the benefits of a free constitution, the pastoral pointed to modern republics which had in fact been established by Catholics.

Once again Troy's independent stance brought a barrage of criticism from a variety of sources. The intended conciliatory effect of the pastoral was destroyed by the anger it arose in both houses of

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90 J. Troy, *Pastoral Instructions on the Duties of Christian Citizens*, (Dublin, 1793).

parliament. In the Commons Duigenan was particularly critical of the pastoral, which he described as 'a political tract, containing arguments not a little hostile to the established constitution in church and state,' while in the upper house Charles Agar and Lord Clare took exception to Troy's reference to the Catholics as 'an enslaved people.'[91] It appeared to many that Troy was advocating republican government, while the very reference to 'citizens' in the title of the pastoral had ominous overtones .[92] Within the Catholic Committee, too, the pastoral was greeted with no small degree of resentment. Anthony Thompson, the Committee member for Thurles, lamented that it was deficient in political perspective and that it had provided ammunition to their enemies by resurrecting 'controversial material long confined to the dormitory.' Thompson's remarks are significant since he represented a moderate voice within the Committee and his comments reflect disappointment rather than criticism, since he acknowledged to Thomas Bray that no man possessed 'more enthusiasm for our liberation than Dr. Troy,' nor had anyone indulged more zeal in the cause.[93]

Troy was conscious that his *Instructions* had been widely misrepresented and in the second edition of the pastoral, published in April 1793, he attempted to remove any ambiguity from the text by singling out the British constitution for approval.[94] This edition received a much more favourable response than the first and Troy was greatly pleased by the compliments paid by many leading Protestants including Lord Donoghmore and Thomas Stopford, bishop of Cork and private secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. The Catholic hierarchy also

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91 P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the present Political State of Ireland*, (London, 1799). p. 18. J. Troy to T. Bray, 16 March 1793, C.D.A.

92 P. O'Donoghue, ' Catholic Church,' p. 206.

93 A. Thompson to T. Bray, 5 Mar. 1793., C.D.A.

94 J. Troy, *Pastoral Instructions on the Duties of Christian Citizens*, (Dublin, 1793), 2nd edition, pp. 124 - 34. J. Troy to T. Bray, 26 Mar. 1793, C.D.A.

expressed their unanimous approval of the pastoral, but perhaps the greatest comfort to the archbishop was the changing reaction from within the Committee: he noted that 'the sudden clamour raised against it by some of our own giddy people, before they even had read it, has totally subsided.'[95]

Despite Troy's confidence, the revisions to the *Instructions* failed to quell the anger of the ultras and, as Anthony Thompson had predicted, the pastoral resulted in the revival of many of the age-old accusations against Catholics.[96] Within the Commons Patrick Duigenan spoke for two hours on one occasion, delivering a virulent attack on the principles of Catholicism, while pamphlets appeared in Dublin pointing to the contradictions between the contents of the pastoral and the Catholic Committee's Declaration of the previous year which Troy and the Dublin clergy had signed. [97] This commotion raised by Duigenan left Major Hobart with no choice but to attach a new oath to his relief bill, as he deemed it 'essential to the security of the Protestant establishment that such tenets should be clearly disavowed.'[98] This development can hardly have been welcomed by Troy, indeed he must have questioned the wisdom of publishing the pastoral in the first place. Ironically while he had intended to rescue the Catholic Body from any suggestion of disloyalty, his efforts had completely backfired and he was now placed in the compromising position of having to accept an oath based on the Committee's Declaration. Given the opposition of the hierarchy to the Protestation of the English Catholics there can be little doubt of their anger at being forced to accept what was in effect an Irish equivalent.

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95 J. Troy to T. Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A. V. Bodkin to T. Bray, 11 Jan. 1794,

96 A. Thompson to T. Bray, 5 Mar. 1793, C.D.A. see Musgrave *Memoirs*, p. 5.

97 A. Thompson to T. Bray, 28 Feb 1793, C.D.A. J. Troy to T. Bray, 7 May 1793, C.D.A.

98 R. Hobart to E. Nepean, 6 Mar. 1793, S.P.O.I., Private Official Correspondence, 1789 - 93, pp. 294 - 5 in P. O'Donoghue,' Catholic Church,' p. 210. A. Thompson to T. Bray, 2 Mar. 1793, C.D.A.

Troy immediately embarked on an attempt at damage limitation and sought clarification on the exact implications of the oath. In particular he was concerned with the final clause of the oath in which the Catholics vowed not to disturb or weaken the establishment of the Protestant religion or government. Seeking assurances from Hobart and 'several Lords and Commoners', Troy believed that this clause was confined to the exercise of the Bill and that in all other respects Catholics were free to act as before, nothing more was intended by the article but to weaken 'by disturbance.'[99] Convinced of this the archbishop and his clergy were amongst the first to subscribe to the oath on the 31st May 1793.[100] Nevertheless, despite these assurances from the Castle, Troy's independent action damaged his credibility in the eyes of the Holy See: Valentine Bodkin reported that he had 'lost much of his credit and vogue' by failing to refer the oath to Rome for approval.[101]

News that Hobart's Relief bill had received the royal assent on the 9th of April brought euphoria to Dublin and a great illumination was planned to mark the occasion. One observer in the city commenting on the celebrations described how 'Dublin [was] now as a noon day, every bell is chiming, every heart delighted.'[102] This joy, however, soon gave way to anger as the Catholics contemplated what had been withheld by the bill. The concessions were indeed significant, but partial relief failed to satisfy Catholic demand for total emancipation and the notion of

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99 J. Troy to T. Bray, 16 Mar. 1793, C.D.A.
100 J. Troy to T. Bray, 7 May 1793. C.D.A.
101 V. Bodkin to T. Bray, 30 Aug. 1794, C.D.A. For a full discussion of Roman reaction to the oath of 1793 see P. O'Donoghue, 'Catholic church,' pp. 210 - 19.
102 A. Thompson to T. Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A.

a share in the franchise without parliamentary representation made little sense; as John Foster warned 'it is vain to imagine that admission to the elective franchise does not draw with it the right of representation.'[103] Tone aptly described their anger when he declared that if the Catholics deserved what had been granted, they also deserved what had been withheld and this resentment soon replaced the initial gratitude for the bill.[104] Added to this the acrimony which had marked the bill's passage through both houses deprived it of its conciliatory effect and served only to fuel Catholic resentments. The combination of these factors led to a growing polarisation of the Catholic community and as the Committee dissolved itself many of the radicals naturally drifted towards the United Irishmen. Disaffection was widespread in the wake of the 1793 session. Edmund Burke complained to Grattan of the 'mutinous spirit' which he believed had become 'the very constitution of the lower part' of his compatriots. This growing support for republicanism was also later commented upon by Richard Musgrave who noted that the general horror at the barbarities of the French republicans began to abate in the minds of Catholics from early in 1793. This fact is borne out by Troy's decision to postpone his intended office following Louis xvi 's execution. Indeed Troy wondered if it was wise to hold the service at all considering the scandalous objections made to it by 'our own people' in Dublin.[105] 1793 also witnessed a rise in Defenderism and that summer saw a number of attacks made upon priests who were then occupied in

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103 *Report of the Debates .. of 1793*, pp. 310-11 in T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p. 168.

104 Tone, *Life*, i, p. 101 in Elliott, *Tone*, p. 207. *A Candid appeal to the Nation upon the present crisis and recent change of ministers,* (London, 1801) p. 45. T. Bartlett, 'The Origins and progress of the Catholic Question in Ireland, 1690 - 1800' in T. Power and K. Whelan(Ed.), *Endurance and Emergence; Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century.* (Dublin, 1990), p. 14.

105 E. Burke to H. Grattan, 8 Mar. 1793, *Burke Corr.* vii, p. 361. Musgrave, *Memoirs,* p. 122, J. Troy to T. Bray, 19 Feb. 1793, C.D.A.

compiling names for the militia ballots, and the bishops came under greater pressure from Rome to call their flock back to a sense of duty.[106]

By the summer of 1793, however, Catholic agitation had taken on a life of its own and the clergy were unable to exercise control over the course of events. The previous two years had brought the country to an unprecedented level of politicisation and few Catholics can have avoided being caught up in the political frenzy. The Catholic church had played an important role in this development in that the Catholic Committee had harnessed the organisational resources of the church and had used them as a vehicle to carry through their programme. And just as the old reform congress of 1784 had failed because the High Sheriffs in the counties were wnwilling to co-operate in the election of delegates, so the Catholic Convention of 1792 had been a success precisely because of the Committee's use of the parish structures and of the clergy which made possible a broadly democratic and representative convention. The role of parish meetings throughout 1792 gave the impression of a powerful church, one capable of exerting real influence over its members. This power, however, was illusory; the fleeting and erratic efforts of Dr Troy in particular reflect the delicate nature of the bond between priest and people. In reality the clergy could at best motivate a *willing* flock and the threats made to various bishops by Keogh, Devereux and the more radical Committee members reflect the new-found confidence of the laity manipulating the real fears of the clergy. The Kenmare secession had illustrated for Troy the limitations of clerical influence and his confused reaction to events throughout 1792 and '93 represent an attempt to respond to this changing relationship. While Troy and the Irish bishops, however regretably, identified this new

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106 J. Smyth, 'Popular politicisation', p. 96. Antonelli to J. Troy, 17 Aug. , 28 Aug, 4 Sept. 1793, D.D.A.

situation both the Roman and Castle authorities failed to acknowledge this shift and, despite information to the contrary, the Dublin authorities continued to presume throughout the 1790s that the hierarchy were in a position to regulate the behaviour of their people. The archbishop of Dublin, however, made no attempt to correct the Castle's perception which he exploited to the advantage of the hierarchy.

III

The transformation of the Catholic hierarchy.[1]

The dramatic events of the first quarter of the 1790s had resulted in deep divisions within the Catholic body. The Irish political landscape had been transformed under the impact of events in France, and the Catholic community had become polarised in its response to the Revolution. The Catholic Convention, however, presented an image of unity which belied this reality and Troy's stated determination to rise or fall with the people completed the illusion. The presence of bishops at the Convention and the manner in which the Catholic Committee had successfully exploited church structures convinced government of the desirability of exerting greater influence over the Church. As a result a power struggle developed in which the Irish bishops fought to resist any measure of state control over the Church and this conflict was further complicated by the presence of lay radicals, reluctant to surrender the influence that they had exercised on the Church during the heady days of the Convention.

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1 For a full discussion of the background to the foundation of Maynooth College see Maurice R. O'Connell,'The Political Background to the Establishment of Maynooth College, ' in *I.E.R.*, LXXXV(May 1956) pp. 325-334, *ibid*, LXXXVI(June, 1956)pp. 406-415, *ibid* , LXXXVI(July 1956) pp.1-16.Vincent J. McNally later took up this question , but he unlike O'Connell had access to the Dublin Diocesan Archives, 'John Thomas Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, and the Establishment of Saint Patrick's College Maynooth, 1791-95,' in *Catholic Historical Review,* LXVII, 1981, pp. 565-588. P. O'Donoghue also discusses the foundation of the College at great length, 'Catholic Church,' pp.205-244.

Heated debate on Hobart's Relief bill in 1793 had once again raised the question of government control over the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Catholic clergy's reliance on their flocks for financial support was identified by many M.P.s as the central cause of their unreliability; the proposed solution to this dependence was the introduction of a provision for the clergy. Some suggested an extension of the *regium donum* to Catholics, but Bishop Thomas Lewis O'Beirne developed a far more ambitious plan, involving both a state provision and an extension of government control over episcopal appointments. A convert from Catholicism, O'Beirne had served as private secretary to the Duke of Portland during his viceroyalty in 1782; it was then that he had first made such suggestions.[2] He was convinced these measures would make the clergy independent of their people and bring 'their bishops more in contact with the government.'[3] Rumours about the imminent introduction of a pension for the clergy abounded in the autumn of 1792; while the Catholic Committee were reported to favour such a scheme, there was general alarm amongst the hierarchy.[4] The bishops opposed any possible crown veto, sharing Edmund Burke's suspicions of Westmorland and any plan designed to separate priests and people.[5]

Archbishop Troy learned of the proposed provision in April 1793 from the Marquis of Waterford, who informed him of the intention of Lord Tyrone to introduce such a measure in the house of commons. This placed Troy in an unenviable dilemma; while he utterly opposed such a scheme, he did not wish to antagonise his adversaries by renewed conflict. Troy believed that the plan would destroy the confidence of

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2 E. A. Smith, *Whig Principles and Party Politics; Earl Fitzwilliam and the Whig Party,* (Manchester, 1975) p.188.

3 T.L. O'Beirne to Castlereagh, Nov. 1800, *Castlereagh Corr.* iii, p. 400.

4 Duke of Portland to Earl Fitzwilliam, 17 October 1792, Fitzwilliam Mss., Sheffield, F. 31(a), cited in O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church' p. 228.

5 Ed. Burke to R. Burke, [Post, 21 November, 1792], *Burke. Corr.* vii, 298.

Catholics in their clergy. He outlined for Thomas Bray the enormous calamities likely to result from any such move; pensions would lead many priests to indigence and a lack of zeal; government provisions would be insufficient and the laity would then use the supposed sufficiency as an excuse to contribute nothing towards their maintenance. All this would leave the clergy materially poorer than before; even more ominously, it would lead to 'a chain of patronage in Government to bishoprics and parishes.'[6] Lord Dillon confirmed Troy's worst fears when he confided that once an establishment for the clergy was fixed, the King would nominate Catholic bishops. Troy fiercely 'combatted' these principles, reminding Dillon that no changes could take place without papal permission. Altogether Troy dreaded 'great evils' if these projects were executed and he derived little solace from his belief that many of the 'inferior clergy without reflecting' viewed them 'in a very favourable light.'[7] Plunkett of Meath expressed similar opposition to the scheme while Troy's anxiety about the lower clergy was shared by Francis Moylan who feared that such pensions would make them independent of their bishops if the money was not 'immediately under the control' of the prelates. In short, it was believed the plan aimed to render the church dependent on the Treasury.[8]

The bishops moved swiftly to oppose the proposed provision. Moylan suggested to Bray that Egan of Waterford should obtain the heads of the proposed bill before the Earl of Tyrone introduced it in parliament. Moylan recommended Egan to handle this business for, apart from Egan's friendship with the Marquis of Waterford, he believed that Troy did not have 'sufficient weight with government to be much

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6 Troy to Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A.
7 Troy to Bray, 27 April 1793, C.D.A.
8 P. Plunkett to J. Troy, 14 April 1793, D.D.A., F. Moylan to T. Bray, 7 May 1793, C.D.A.

attended to.'[9] By implication it would appear that Troy had not as yet rehabilitated himself in Castle circles following publication of his pastoral *Duties* which had greatly sullied his reputation in Dublin. Nevertheless the Archbishop met the Marquis and convinced him of the scheme's dangers. Would such a provision improve the loyalty of the people? Troy asked. On the contrary, it would risk the 'danger that the people would become Presbyterians, or Methodists or politicians.'[10] The Marquis agreed that the measure needed further consideration and introduction of the bill was deferred, much to Troy's relief. However, the whole question would raise its head again during the Fitzwilliam viceroyalty.

The question of Catholic education was also of great concern, to the bishops particularly, as the Revolution's progress had almost completely destroyed the network of Irish colleges in France upon which the Irish mission depended for its supply of priests. This issue once more led the bishops into conflict with both the government and the lay Catholic radicals, for each of them opposed the hierarchy's ambitious plan to create independent clerical institutions under their supervision. The desirability of Irish-based seminary education was obvious, and there was general acceptance of the potential danger posed by the return to Ireland of young clerics, tainted with supposedly destructive democratic principles. Edmund Burke was especially alarmed, and believed that a solution of the education question was 'not only expedient, but of absolute necessity for the order, civilisation, peace and security of the kingdom.'[11] Two major obstacles, however, frustrated the bishops' plans: amendments inserted in the 1793 Relief Act, and the renewed interest of the Catholic Committee in the education question.

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9 F. Moylan to T. Bray, 7 May. 1793

10 J. Troy to T. Bray, 7 May 1793, C.D.A.

11 E. Burke to F. Moylan, 6 December 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, pp. 499-500. L. Nihell to J. Troy, 20 Feb. 1794, D.D.A.

The passage of Hobart's Relief Bill through parliament had been marked by anti-Catholic rhetoric similar to that which had characterised the 1792 session, the difference now being that the Catholic Convention had given greater credibility to the fears of the ultras. Hobart attached a new oath, based on the Committee's Declaration, to his bill and worse, Fitzgibbon introduced an amendment in the Lords subjecting any future college to Dublin University. The amendment also ruled out the possibility of any such institutions being exclusively for Catholic education. The Chancellor's timing was critical; Troy believed that opposition on his part to this new clause would jeopardise passage of the entire bill.[12] This new development dashed entirely any hopes the bishops entertained of establishing seminaries in Ireland. Richard O'Reilly condemned Fitzgibbon's 'wicked clause', which he believed destroyed the possibility of any advance in the area of clerical education under the bill.[13] The aged bishop of Limerick, Denis Conway, expressed disbelief that parliament would hinder the foundation of a college exclusively for Catholics education when clearly no other would be fit for the instruction of the clergy.[14] Troy himself declared that the restrictions in the bill had made it 'useless, at least as far as it regards clerical education.'[15]

The Catholic Committee had also taken up the education question and their entry to the arena raised even thornier difficulties for the bishops. While the Catholic Committee had dissolved itself in April 1793 one of its last acts had been the establishment of a sub-committee of seven gentlemen appointed to advance Catholic education. The radicalisation of the Committee in the wake of the French Revolution has

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12 J. Troy to T. Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A.
13 R.O'Reilly to J. Troy, 10 March 1793, D.D.A.
14 D. Conway, to T. Bray, 20 April 1793, C.D.A.
15 J. Troy to T. Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A.

been well documented and in many respects the post-revolutionary Committee bore little resemblance to its timid predecessor. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Committee dissolved itself with a vote of thanks to secretary Hobart and the dedication of £2,000 for the erection of a statue of King George reflected little of this change and as Elliott has observed their action 'spoke volumes for the satisfied moderation' of the Committee.[16] There was, however, within the old Committee great dissatisfaction with the terms of the Relief Bill, the more radical elements now drifted towards the United Irishmen. Within the new sub-committee this radical element came to dominate, with at least three of their number, John Keogh, Richard McCormick and John Sweetman, being at some stage influential United Irish members.[17]

The bishops had little respect for the sub-committee nor were they inclined to have any dealings with it. James Caulfield disparagingly referred to the seven members as 'your secret committee', while Troy regretted their independent stance, believing that it was 'neither prudent nor decorous [of the Committee] to exclude or not to mention the clergy.'[18] Misunderstanding and mutual suspicion characterised relations between the bishops and the newly formed sub-committee. At the heart of this lay the failure of both parties to appreciate their respective aims; the bishops sought to establish seminaries for clerical formation while the laity aimed at something closer to a university.[19] In this respect the subjection of any future colleges to Dublin University caused the sub-committee little concern, nor the 1793 amendments which ruled out the possibility of exclusively Catholic colleges. Troy was cynical about their

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16 M. Elliott, *Tone*, p. 206.

17 The remaining members of the sub-committee were Hugh Hamill, Thomas Braughall, Edward Byrne and Denis T. O'Brien.

18 J. Caulfielf to J. Troy, 14 May 1793, D.D.A. J. Troy to T. Bray, 7 May 1793, C.D.A.

19 B. Egan to J. Troy, 3 Nov. 1792, J. Troy to A. Wolfe, 9 Dec. 1793,(copy), D.D.A.

intentions, condemning their ignorance of 'the nature of the ecclesiastical spirit' and neglect of the practical observances of the Church. Troy believed that Edmund Burke had expressed a far deeper grasp of the issues involved in the question of clerical education when he had outlined the necessary conditions for the formation of a celibate clergy in his *Letter to Lord Kenmare of 1782*, which had been occasioned by Hely Hutchinson's speech in the Irish House of Commons advocating clerical education within the university.[20] In response to these arguments in favour of liberal education, Burke developed the unique character of seminary formation and set down the distinction between the content of clerical and classical lay education. He declared that even if a Catholic cleric were possessed of such a classical foundation, 'they soon lose them in the painful course of professional and parochial duties; but they must have all the knowledge, and, what is to them more important than the knowledge, the discipline necessary to those duties. All modes of education, conducted by those whose minds are cast in another mould, as I may say, and whose original ways of thinking are formed upon the reverse pattern, must be then not only useless but mischievous.'[21] Thomas Orde's educational plans in 1787 also contained proposals for clerical formation at Trinity College and these met with equally vigorous episcopal opposition; Boetius Egan of Tuam described the proposals as 'a deep laid and hostile plan against the interests of the Catholic religion.'[22] In 1793 Burke counselled the hierarchy to minimise contact with those were who not convinced of the need for exclusive clerical

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20 E. Burke, to Kenmare 21 February 1782' *Burke Corr.*, iv, p. 405-418. This letter was printed with some ommissions in 1783 under the title *A letter from a distinguished English Gentleman to a peer in Ireland,* (Dublin, 1783). Lecky, *Ireland*, iii, p. 349. See E. O'Flaherty, 'Ecclesiastical politics and the dismantling of the penal laws in Ireland, 1774-82' in *I.H.S.*, xxvi, no. 101, (1988) pp. 33- 50.

21 E. Burke to Kenmare, 21 February 1782, *Burke Corr.*, iv, p. 414.

22 B. Egan, to J. Troy, 19 February 1788, *Spicil. Ossor*, iii, p. 410, see J. Kelly, 'The context and course of Thomas Orde's Plan of Education of 1787', in *Journal of Irish Education*, (1986), pp. 3-26.

management of any future seminaries declaring that 'they who would trouble this natural order of things, on account of the poor squabble of religious parties and divisions are either stark mad, or doing the work of the atheistical faction which are at present making havoc in the world.'[23] Caulfield was also concerned that episcopal contact with the sub-committee would be misunderstood in government circles and that the bishops might appear to have taken up the cause of parliamentary reform.[24]

The prelates, however, could not be seen to have dismissed the approaches of the sub-committee out of hand and both groups met in April 1793. At this meeting the committee outlined their proposals for the establishment of a system which would accommodate both lay and clerical students, including non-Catholics. The proposed college would be under joint management of clergy and laity and would be funded by subscriptions raised amongst the laity.[25] Thomas Addis Emmet's subsequent account of this meeting is in stark contrast to the record of the proceedings given to Thomas Bray by Troy. Emmet described how the committee's scheme received the 'most decided approbation' of the 'majority' of the prelates; in Troy's account, the only bishops present were himself and Richard O'Reilly both of whom disapproved of the proposals. The archbishop's version of the transactions would seem to be borne out by Wolfe Tone who condemned the prelates as ignorant bigots for the rejection of the plan.[26] Tone's enthusiasm for the establishment of seminaries is curious in that he recommended the measure as the best

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23 E. Burke to F. Moylan, 6 Dec. 1793 in M. R. O'Connell, The Political Background,' *I.E.R.*, (May, 1956) p.334.

24 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 4 May 1793, D.D.A.

25 T.A. Emmet, 'Part of an essay towards a history of Ireland,' in MacNeven, *Pieces*, pp. 61-63.

26 T. Bray to F. Moylan, 2 May 1793, Kerry Diocesan Archives, cited in V. McNally,'John Troy, Archbishop of Dublin' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, T.C.D. 1975) p. 146. Tone, *Life*, i, p.197.

means of ending the conservatism of the clergy and bringing them around to reform. 'In this light,' he wrote, 'as in ten thousand others, the Revolution was of infinite service to Ireland. . . This education business appears to me of infinite importance for a thousand reasons.'[27] Troy, however, looked on events on the continent with encouragement and cherished what turned out to be unrealistic hopes of a restoration in France. In that event he remained to be convinced of the value of domestic clerical education, given the restrictions likely to be placed on episcopal plans. 'Nothing but absolute necessity,' he declared' would reconcile me to it, as I think it almost impossible to render it as useful as we wish.'[28] Yet there is no doubt that the bishops misled the committee, continuing to meet them throughout the year while at the same time entering into their own secret negotiations with the Castle on the education question.

Meetings of the hierarchy were necessary to advance their plans but the bishops were anxious to maintain a low profile given the reaction the Convention had aroused in the previous year.[29] James Caulfield was particularly concerned that a full meeting of the hierarchy in the spring of 1793 might be misrepresented as the bishops forming a House of Lords, as the Committee had a Back Lane Parliament.[30] For similar reasons Boetius Egan of Tuam opposed any meeting of the hierarchy during the parliamentary session. Richard O'Reilly of Armagh believed that a meeting should take place, but he felt that an Archbishop and one suffragan would be sufficient representation for each province. Troy, for his part, favoured a 'thin and late meeting' of the prelates as most

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27 Tone, *Life*, i, p.173.
28 J. Troy to T. Bray, 9 April 1793, C.D.A.
29 J. Troy to T. Bray, 16 Mar. 1793, C.D.A.
30 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 23 Mar. 1793, D.D.A.

acceptable to the government.[31] In the mean time Troy agreed to meet with Hobart on his return to Dublin so that the archbishop would be in a position to lay any government educational proposals the government before the bishop's meeting.[32]

Troy met with the Chief-Secretary in November 1793 and in a later memorandum outlined for Hobart the critical nature of the education question. The Irish church was facing a critical shortage of priests: despite hopes of a counter-revolution in France, it was unlikely that funds could be recovered to re-establish Irish colleges there. Besides, Troy warned that the licentious principles which had infested France might long survive the restoration there: it would therefore be unwise to expose clerical youth to the danger of 'imbibing seditious maxims' which they might later propagate in Ireland.[33] Troy felt confident in stressing the social responsibility of the clergy, particularly since Catholics had been restored to the franchise. In this novel situation Troy argued the advantages which could be wrought by a well educated and disciplined clergy, pointing to clerical exertions against disaffection and sedition during the previous summer. Adopting a Burkean line the archbishop argued that an educated clergy was essential 'for the support of His Majesty's government and the maintenance of good order, both of which. . . [he believed] would be endangered if the Roman Catholic people were deprived of their religious instructors.'

The Archbishop's memorandum reflects careful and shrewd preparation and its author was determined to leave Hobart with no ambiguities concerning an exact remedy to the education question. Due to the particular nature of priestly formation Troy outlined necessary

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31 J. Troy to T. Bray, 26 Mar. 1793, C.D.A.
32 J. Troy to T. Bray, 27 April 1793, C.D.A.
33 J. Troy to Major Hobart, 29 Nov. 1793, D.D.A.

conditions for the establishment and management of any future seminary as had been described by Edmund Burke in his *Letter to Kenmare.* It was essential, Troy argued, that any such college should be 'exclusively clerical for themselves and subject only to their ecclesiastical superiors,' (the archbishop was aware that this would require the alteration of Lord Clare's amendment to the 1793 Relief Act.)[34] The prohibition of the endowment of Catholic schools contained in the Relief Act of 1782 had also had a disastrous effect on plans to establish colleges: with this in mind, Troy informed Hobart that no scheme could be realised without 'some annual pecuniary aid from government.'

Encouraged by government reactions, Troy met his fellow archbishops as well as Bishops Moylan, Caulfield, Plunket, Teaghan and Bellew: together they drew up ambitious plans for the establishment of diocesan and provincial seminaries.[35] Episcopal optimism had obviously been raised by Troy's account of his meeting with Major Hobart and they decided to pursue the issue with greater vigour, addressing the first of a series of queries to the Attorney General, Arthur Wolfe, concerning the exact position of the Catholics under the 1793 Relief Act. In particular the bishops sought clarification on the ability of Catholics 'to bequeath, grant or apply money for the endowment of schools, academies or other places of education.'[36] It was at this time too that the bishops first approached Edmund Burke in the hope of enlisting his support for their project. Burke was convinced of the value of their scheme, but believed that the bishops' plans required 'management and co-operation upon both sides of the water.' He recommended his son Richard and Rev. Thomas Hussey, 'the ablest man of business and the

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34 ibid.
35 Educational Plans, 20 Nov. 1793, D.D.A.
36 Bishops to Arthur Wolfe, Attorney General, 20 Nov. 1793, D.D.A.

best clergyman' he knew, for this purpose.[37] In spite of the recommendation of his son, Edmund himself devoted great energy to the seminary question and in many respects Richard Burke seems to have been as ineffectual in the Maynooth business as he had earlier been as agent of the Catholic Committee.

The Attorney General's reply to the bishops' queries can hardly have given their plans much encouragement: while he acknowledging the ability of Catholics to educate their youth, he believed that the laws precluded the endowment of schools and seminaries.[38] There was however the possibility that such endowments could be permitted by means of a special royal licence and Sackville Hamilton, under-secretary at the Castle, advised Troy that such a licence could be obtained by a memorial to the Crown.[39] The bishops immediately acted on this suggestion and Dr McKenna was instructed to draw up a suitable memorial for presentation to the Lord Lieutenant.

In December 1793 Troy, accompanied by several members of the hierarchy, met with Westmorland in Rathfarnham and there they presented an address of loyalty to the King. Despite the Lord Lieutenant's known antipathy to the Catholic cause, Troy was pleased with the tenor of the meeting and was confident that the government would soon meet all the bishops' educational needs except for the provision of funds.[40] The meeting with Westmorland marked a new departure in relations between the Irish Church and the Castle administration. The significance of the event was not lost on the

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37 E. Burke to F. Moylan, 6 Dec. 1793, *Burke Corr.*,vii, pp. 499-500. For a full discussion of the role of Thomas Hussey in the foundation of St Patrick's College see William G. Murphy, 'The Life of Dr Thomas Hussey(1746 - 1803), Bishop of Waterford and Lismore,' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, U.C.C., 1968), pp. 99-135.

38 A. Wolfe to J. Troy, 16 Dec. 1793, D.D.A.

39 J. Troy to T. Bray, 21 Dec. 1793, C.D.A.

40 J. Troy to T. Bray, 21 Dec. 1793, C. D.A.

archbishop himself who informed Luke Concanen, his Roman agent, that this had been the first time in over a century that such a conference had taken place between a viceroy and the Catholic hierarchy.[41] Troy was anxious to build upon this new relationship: he met the Secretary Edward Cooke in late December and invited him to report to him 'the names of such clergymen as he might have reason to complain of in future.'[42]

Communication with the Castle served only to deepen the suspicions of the hierarchy harboured by the Catholic Committee, particularly as the bishops kept their planned Rathfarnham meeting secret from the Committee members whom they had recently met.[43] All of this contributed to the 'Castlelick Clergy' jibes which had been predicted by Burke and gave an impression of constant meddling by the administration and the hierarchy in each others affairs.[44] Troy was quite unmoved by these accusations, and equally unconcerned about the possible wrath of the Committee, explaining to Concanen that the bishops had chosen this course of action:

> not only in order to dispose government in our favour, but particularly in order to declare and clarify our true feelings at a time, unfortunately, when many of our people are acting foolishly and raving about a chimerical liberty and the false pretended rights of man. I have been pleased to find this government extremely satisfied with our conduct. Some democrats will raise a racket; but...[we] are equally indifferent to their praise or censure. We are neither aristocrats nor democrats in the modern acceptance of party language. We have spoken as bishops, without taking notice of any party.[45]

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41 J. Troy to L. Concanen, 24 Dec. 1793, A.P.F., *Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali,* Vol. 899, f. 289.
42 J. Troy to T. Bray, 21 Dec. 1793, C.D.A.
43 J. Troy to J. Sweetman, 19 Dec. 1793, D.D.A. J. Troy to T. Bray, 21 Dec. 1793, C.D.A.
44 E. Burke to R. Burke,[Post 21 November 1792] *Burke Corr.*, vii, p.301.
45 J. Troy to L. Concanen, 24 Dec. 1793, A.P.F. *Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali*, Vol. 899, f.289.

The hierarchy were not to be deterred from their chosen course and, pleased to learn that their address of loyalty presented to the Lord Lieutenant had been 'received in a most gracious manner' by King George, they proceeded with their planned memorial requesting the necessary royal licence permitting the endowment of Catholic colleges.[46]

The memorial is couched in the same language as Troy's memorandum to Major Hobart of the previous November and lays a similar emphasis on the mutual advantage to Church and State of the establishment of domestic seminaries.[47] Condemning the 'profligate principles of rebellion and atheism' propagated in France, the bishops declared their unwillingness to expose Irish youth to contagious dangers of sedition and infidelity, nor would they risk the introduction to Ireland of 'the pernicious maxims of a licentious philosophy' which infected returning clerics might carry with them. They emphasised the utility of a properly educated and disciplined clergy who would not only instruct their flocks in the precepts of Christianity, but would also inculcate 'obedience to the laws and veneration for his Majesty's Royal Person and Government.' Once again, the memorial stressed the particular nature of priestly formation, especially the need for strict ecclesiastical discipline, without which the cleric might become a 'very dangerous member of society.' Stressing the unsuitability of Trinity College, the bishops therefore requested permission to establish seminaries where young men could be prepared for the priesthood under 'ecclesiastical superiors of their own communion'; ever conscious of the great financial costs involved in establishing seminaries, the memorial expressed a hope that the plan might 'appear to His Majesty as a subject not unworthy

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46 Sackville Hamilton to J. Troy, 13 Jan. 1794, M. O'Connell, 'Political Background,' *I.E.R.*,(May, 1956) p.330.

47 J. Troy to Major Hobart, 29 Nov. 1793, D.D.A.. Draft Copy of Memorial of Bishops to Lord Lieutenant Westmorland on Seminaries, 14 Jan. 1794, D.D.A.

of his Royal consideration and bounty.' Despite the memorial's urgent tone and Troy's warnings that the 'Protestant establishment would not long survive' the destruction of the Catholic religion, Westmorland failed to be convinced; it was almost nine months before he passed on the memorial to the Sergeant and Solicitor Generals for their opinion.[48] By this time, however, the situation had been dramatically transformed by the formation in summer 1794 of Pitt's new coalition with the Portland Whigs, and Westmorland's administration in Dublin was now in its last days. Indeed one of the last acts of the viceroyalty was a reply delivered by Sackville Hamilton in January 1795 to the bishops' memorial in which the Secretary curtly declared the seminary proposals impossible owing to the terms of the 1793 Relief Act. This was in spite of assurances given by the Lord Lieutenant to Kenmare in January 1794 that the bishops plan met with his complete approbation.[49] This act reflected the characteristic hostility of the old regime to the Catholic claims for relief.[50]

(ii)

News of the imminent arrival of a new viceroy, Earl Fitzwilliam, generated great euphoria and the country was taken up in an orchestrated rush as addresses of welcome were drawn up to place before him. In general the hierarchy shared the hopes of their flock, but there was a degree of uncertainty as to the most appropriate means of expressing their sentiments. John Troy, possibly still reluctant to appear

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48 J. Troy to Sackville Hamilton, 10 Jan. 1794, D.D.A. S. Hamilton to Sergeant General and Solicitor General, 11 Oct. 1794, D.D.A.
49 J. Troy to Lanigan, 27 Jan. 1794, D.D.A.
50 M. O'Connell, 'Political Background,' in *I.E.R.*, (May, 1956) p. 330.

at the head of the calls for reform, sought advice from Thomas Bray. In particular the archbishop was adamant that he would not sign any address unless 'all parties be united' behind it, and he wondered whether a separate address on behalf of the prelates might not be more advisable.[51] The lay Catholics shared none of Troy's reservations; on 23 December a meeting of the Catholics of Dublin appointed a committee of nine who immediately set about petitioning the new Lord Lieutenant for the total repeal of the remaining penal laws. In Dublin, New Year's Day 1795 was set aside for this purpose and the petition was to be signed in the various city chapels. The radical *Morning Post* commenting on the Dublin petition declared that 'it cannot be doubted that every well meaning Catholic will come forward with the firmness and moderation which the occasion requires.' In a possible reference to the archbishop and the more conservative elements of the Catholic community the paper remarked; 'so far no directions have been given to the jobbers and sycophants belonging to the Castle to the contrary.'[52] Thomas Braughall and the more radical Catholics set about canvassing for the petition and attempted to enlist the support of the clergy as they had done with the Convention three years previously. This time, however, clerical assistance was much more forthcoming: among the first to respond to the invitation was Patrick Plunkett, bishop of Meath.

Plunkett represented the Gallican faction in the Irish Church siding with the liberals in the Committee split following Kenmare's secession in 1791. It was to be expected then that he would give the 1795 petition his unanimous support. Writing to Thomas Braughall in January 1795 he declared:

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51 J. Troy to T. Bray, 27 Nov. 1794, C.D.A.
52 *Morning Post*, 1 Jan. 1795.

> I am of your opinion that it[the petition] will derive great weight and consequence from the unanimity with which each county and principal town will make it their own. I have recommended it with energy from my altar and signed it in a most public manner. My two assistants followed my example and I am writing to the vicars of this diocese to exert themselves in promoting the signatures in their respective districts.[53]

Before long the nation's prints were filled with the loyal addresses of Catholics from every corner of the country, many bearing the signatures of the local bishop and clergy. Among the bishops whose names appear on these petitions are the primate Richard O'Reilly, John Cruise(Ardagh), John Young(Limerick), Hugh O'Reilly(Clogher), Daniel Delaney(Kildare and Leighlin), Patrick Plunkett(Meath), Boetius Egan(Tuam), Dominic Bellew(Killala) ,James Dillon(Raphoe) and Francis Moylan(Cork). It does not appear as if Troy signed the Dublin petition of 1 January 1795, but by the end of January the Catholic petitions were so numerous that Henry Grattan declared they would 'reach from College Green to Holyhead.'[54]

Great hopes were placed in the new viceroy and Ireland appeared on the brink of a new era. Within days of his arrival the Lord Lieutenant had begun a series of sweeping changes, dismissing John Beresford as chief revenue commissioner and Arthur Wolfe as attorney general. The radical press celebrated these assaults on the junto, praising Fitzwilliam

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53 P. Plunkett to T. Braughall, Jan 1795, S.P.O. 620/34/50

54 *Hib. Jn.*, 2 Jan. 1795 A selection of the petitions include those from
Barony of Sheilelagh Co. Wicklow, 13 Jan. '95, *F.D.J.*. includes signatures of James Brennan P.P. and John Fitzgerald P.P.,
Rathdrum, 19 Jan. '95, *F.D.J.*, , John Meagher P.P. in the chair.
Kildare Catholics, 27 Jan. '95, *D.E.P.*
Wexford Catholics, 27 Jan.'95, *D.E.P.*
Kings County, 29 Jan. '95, *D.E.P.*
Kilkenny, 29 Jan. '95, *D.E.P.*
Kerry, 3 Feb. ';95, *F.D.J.*
Meath, 7 Feb. '95, *D.E.P.*
Galway, Dr Bellew and Dr Egan, 7 Feb. '95, *D.E.P.*
Tipperary Catholics, 10 Feb. '95., *D.E.P.*
Longford, Rev. Dr Flood, Rev. Peter Daly, 17 Feb. '95, *D.E.P.* *Burke Corr.*, viii, 150.

for dislodging this 'hydra of persecution from its den, the Castle.'[55] The bishops, too, shared the popular image of the Earl holding out the olive branch and lost no time in gathering themselves in Dublin to prepare a new submission on the seminary question. The first of these meetings took place in January at the Augustinian Priory in John's Lane. The changing atmosphere is reflected by the fact that no fewer than eighteen bishops were present, making this by far the largest meeting of the hierarchy for over a hundred years.[56] These meetings continued for over five weeks and the newspapers followed proceedings with great interest. The *Morning Post,* one of the more radical and anti-clerical of the Dublin prints, described the importance of these meetings, sharing Henry Grattan's belief in the need for government support for an 'object so important and so interesting to the morals and conduct of a rising generation.'[57] The bishops were confident their plan would win the support of this new benevolent regime. Fitzwilliam was, after all, a disciple of their greatest ally Edmund Burke and the latter had spent the proceeding months preparing the ground on both sides of the water, persuading the Duke of Portland to send Thomas Hussey to Ireland and convincing Henry Grattan of the necessity of domestic seminaries.[58] Fitzwilliam, however, did not confine his interest in Catholic affairs to education, and the bishops were once again confronted by the prospect of a royal veto on episcopal nominations and the state pensioning of their clergy.

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55 *D.E.P.*, 15 Jan. 1795.

56 The bishops present were, J. Troy(Dublin), T. Bray(Cashel), R.O'Reilly(Armagh), B. Egan(Tuam), F. Moylan(Cork), G. Teahan(Kerry), Coppinger(Cloyne), J. Caulfield(Ferns), D. Delaney(Kildare and Leighlin), D. Bellew'(Killala), T.French(Elphin), P. Plunkett(Meath), Lennan(Dromore),H. O"Reilly(Clogher), J. Cruise(Ardagh), P. McMullen(Down and Connor), C. O'Reilly(Coadjutor of Kilmore), E. Dillon(Coadjutor of Kilmacduagh). P. O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church', p.263.

57 *M. P.*, 29 Jan. 1795.

58 E. Burke to H. Grattan, 3 Sept. 1794, *Burke Corr*, iv E. Burke to T. Hussey, Dec, 1796, *Burke Corr*, iv, p. 389.

In December 1794 Thomas Hussey warned of the imminent introduction into the Irish House of Commons of a bill to establish a provision for the Irish clergy. Hussey repeated many of the fears sounded by the bishops in the previous years, but he was confident that the move would be resisted as it had been in 1792.[59] Troy was particularly anxious to avert the establishment of a royal veto over episcopal appointments and he saw an ominous precedent in the concession of a similar veto to George III in Corsica. In September 1794 he had addressed a letter to his Roman agent, Luke Concanen o.p., urging him to impress on the minds in Propaganda the dire consequences if the nomination of bishops and 'other delicate matters should be dependent on heretics and on a Protestant government.'[60] Again in January 1795 Troy wrote to Cardinal Antonelli about rumours of a proposed veto. Troy was unsure of the veracity of these reports, but expressed the conviction of the entire hierarchy that the plan would be 'absolutely destructive' to the Irish church and requested that any such overtures be resisted by the Holy See.[61] The Cardinal's response was hardly that hoped for by the archbishop: Antonelli, without referring to Troy's warnings reminded the bishops of the 'esteem and gratitude' of the Pope towards King George, and the bishops were called upon to instill loyalty and obedience in their flocks.[62] Indeed this letter is a perfect reflection of the strange twist which the revolution had brought to relations between Rome and the Court of St James. Dependent as the Papal States were on the efforts of British armies, the Roman authorities were obliged, through a mixture of fear and gratitude, to urge Irish

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59 T. Hussey to _____, 6 Dec. 1794, Fitzwilliam MSS, Sheffield, F 29, (a) in O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p. 234.

60 J. Troy to L. Concanen, 25 Sept. 1794, A.P.F., Fondo di Vienna, 28/187 in V. McNally, 'John Thomas Troy,'(Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, T.C.D., 1975) p.157.

61 J. Troy to Antonelli, 10 Jan. 1795, A.P.F., S.O.C.G., 900, f. 217

62 Antonelli to Irish Bishops, 7 Feb. 1795, D.D.A.

Catholics to obedience. It is this curious relationship which makes sense of the contrary directives from Rome during this time, and later especially in 1808-15, urging obedience to the Crown and the laws while on other occasions reprimanding the hierarchy for their willingness to accept the various loyal oaths proposed by the Dublin government.

Once again Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, renowned for his ambition and by now chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant, was to the fore in recommending the establishment of a provision for the clergy and a royal veto.[63] Some form of veto now appeared inevitable and despite their opposition to the principle of state interference, the prelates believed little could be gained from opposing the government's plan. Hussey had reported a proposed scheme in January 1795 which allowed the clergy elect their candidates, but the final choice would be made by government from a panel of three names submitted to them.[64] At a meeting of the hierarchy in Dublin on 17 February the bishops discussed these proposals and agreed that any royal veto ought to be resisted *in limine*. However when they came to formulate their position to be presented to the Holy See they advised the Pope 'not to agree to His Majesty's nomination if it can be avoided.' If it was unavoidable, the king was to be allowed nominate one of three names to be recommended by the respective Provincial Bishops'[65] This certainly represents a weakening of the bishops total opposition to the proposals and reflects a sense amongst the hierarchy in early 1795 that their unrestricted independence would have to be sacrificed as part of the price to be paid for total emancipation.

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63 E. A. Smith, *Whig Principles and Party Politics; Earl Fitzwilliam and the Whig Party.* (Manchester, 1975) p.188.
64 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 29 Jan. 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 125.
65 Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, iii, pp. 470-2.

In the field of clerical education, however, the bishops were adamant that no concessions would be made. In response to the question whether prelates acting on behalf of the hierarchy could 'agree to the appointment of President or Professors in the intended Colleges by Government, Parliament or any lay authority; and if not, what degree of interference on the part of any of these is admissible?' the bishops replied negatively and declared that 'no interference is admissible.'[66] The prelates were determined that there would be no outside meddling in the affairs of the proposed College, which they believed would entirely defeat the purpose of its foundation. In particular they were concerned by the renewed activity of the lay sub-committee and rumours that government intended the college to be open to lay and clerical youth. Thomas Bray was angered by their activities and complained that 'the gentlemen Catholic managers' were using every means at their disposal to pressure the administration into allowing them a 'joint superintendence with the bishops' over the College in the area of professorial appointments and management of funds. Bray resented this interference into what he called 'our business' and insisted on the prelates' exclusive rights in the management of the proposed seminaries. How 'this contest' with the laity would end, he believed, was impossible to forsee but the bishops were determined to 'proceed with all possible secrecy, caution and moderation.'[67] The bishops letter of 2 February seeking Grattan's support for their scheme contained no reference to the sub-committee. Instead they mentioned their discussions with 'our principal laity', most probably the Kenmareites, with whom they had always concurred and declared that they would continue to act with them 'in forwarding every salutary measure for the advantage of our entire

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66 *Spicil. Ossor*, iii, pp. 470-2.
67 T. Bray to Wm. Egan, 31 Jan. 1795, C.D.A.

body.' In what is most probably a reply to this appeal, Grattan referred to differences between the bishops and the Catholic Committee and the latter's objections to the prelates' plans for the College but hoped that this disagreement would be 'settled to all your satisfaction.' [68] The bishops were determined to proceed with caution on the education question. It was expected that the bill to establish seminaries would follow the general emancipation bill and it was understood that the planned college depended on the success of Grattan's bill. [69] As events unfurled, however, this was not to be the case and indeed the failure of the emancipation bill actually facilitated the prompt establishment of the Royal College.

Fitzwilliam's great plan for Ireland and his all-out-war on Jacobinism, particularly his proposed yeomanry, depended upon Catholic emancipation. Fitzwilliam had made no reference to his plans to repeal remaining Catholic disabilities in his speech from the throne of 22 January and poor communications with London convinced him that the cabinet there approved of his proposals. The viceroy was quite unaware of opposition to emancipation in Whitehall and the pressure being brought by Pitt to halt the proposed repeal which King George believed amounted to 'the total change of the principles of government which have been followed by every administration in the kingdom since the abdication of King James ii.'[70] On 12 February Henry Grattan introduced a relief bill in the house of commons. Reaction to the bill was immediate and the Lord Lieutenant's administration was now doomed. Four days later the duke of Portland, believing that the viceroy was

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68 H. Grattan to J. Troy, N.D., 1795, D.D.A. Eighteen Bishops to H. Grattan, 2 Feb. 1795, D.D.A.
69 T. Bray to Wm. Egan, 31 January 1795, C.D.A.
70 A. Aspinal and E.A. Smith (ed), *English Historical Documents, 1783 -1832,* (London, 1969) p.158.

moving too fast, instructed Fitzwilliam to abandon the emancipation bill and to proceed with the planned seminaries and provision for the clergy. These measures, the duke was convinced, would be more effective than total emancipation and with these assurances of the 'good intentions of government', 'all ideas of further concessions might. . be laid aside.'[71] A week later Fitzwilliam was recalled from Dublin, plunging the country into crisis.

Thomas Hussey, who broke the news to Burke, was dumbfounded and described the country as being on 'the brink of civil war.'[72] He could not understand how 'the spirit of this nation [could] bear that the most popular and virtuous viceroy that ever came to this country should be removed'[73] Neither could the Viceroy understand the reservations in Whitehall concerning emancipation and believed the country ripe for rebellion. Referring to the jacobinical principles of the Catholics, he believed that they lacked 'but a cause and a leader and the Castle is furnishing both.'[74] The Castle prints interpreted events quite differently and attributed Fitzwilliam's recall not to the emancipation bill, but rather to his dismissal of 'His Majesty's most confidential and faithful servants.' The removals, the *Dublin Journal* argued, were not on account of any charge of incapacity or misconduct, but rather 'for the mere purpose of giving their employments to His Excellency's family[the Ponsonbys] and friends[Henry Grattan].'[75] Ironically Burke, so long champion of the Catholic cause, had encouraged Fitzwilliam to make this assault on the junto, but had urged the lord lieutenant to avoid the emancipation question which he believed would weaken the new administration and

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71 Portland to Fitzwilliam, 16 February 1795, H.O. 100/56/261-4, 265-70.
72 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 27 Feb. 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, p. 162.
73 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 3 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, iv, p. 288.
74 Fitzwilliam to E. Burke, 4 Mar. 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, pp. 169-172.
75 *F.D.J.*, 12 Mar. 1795.

restore the very faction he had hoped to oust.[76] Nevertheless, whatever the cause of the viceroy's demise the feeling amongst the Catholic body was one of disgust and the title of a political skit, 'The sense of a loyal and insulted nation' by the Irish Addressers', published in the *Morning Post* aptly captured their mood.[77]

Despite Portland's claims to the contrary in his letter to Fitzwilliam on 16 February, little had come of discussions on the educational question at the time of the recall, except that there would be just one college and that the grant of £4,000 would be less than half that expected by the bishops.[78] Hussey feared the planned college would now suffer the same fate as the relief bill, but was greatly relieved when the duke requested him to stay on in Dublin until his plans be brought to a conclusion.[79] Indeed Portland requested Earl Camden, the new viceroy, to proceed with his instructions contained in his letter to Fitzwilliam of 16 February, namely completion of the educational proposals and the establishment of a provision for the clergy.[80] This time however, Burke, who had expressed no such reservations towards Fitzwilliam's plan, swiftly advised Hussey to reject any degree of interference in church affairs and above all to resist a veto and 'Castle choices.'[81] Burke was not opposed to government possessing such powers *per se* , but in the hands of a hostile junto he saw only disastrous consequences.

Camden immediately tackled the seminary question. Both London and Dublin were anxious to remove an anti-Catholic tag from the administration, and the proposed seminary was seen as a final

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76 C. Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, (London, 1992) p.512.
77 *Morning Post*, 17 March 1795.
78 J. Troy to L. Concanen, March 1795, A.P.F., Fondo di Vienna, Vol. 28, f. 207.
79 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 14 Mar. 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, p. 198.
80 Instructions to Camden, 16 Mar. 1795, H.O. 100/45 ff. 301-8. See T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* pp. 207-209.
81 E. Burke to T. Hussey,[ante 10 February 1795] *Burke Corr.* vii, pp. 199-205.

concession and adequate substitute for emancipation. Within three weeks of his arrival in Dublin his chief secretary Thomas Pelham introduced a bill establishing the Royal College to the Commons on 24 April 1795.[82] The Catholic bishops, however had reservations about the scheme particularly the admission of outside interference in the proposed College. Edmund Burke too, dreaded any role for the junto in the College's affairs, urging the bishops to 'trust to God's good Providence, and the contribution of your own people, for the education of your clergy[rather] than to put into the hands of your known, avowed, and implacable enemies, - into the hands of those, who make it their merit and their boast, that they are your enemies, the very foundations of your morals and your religion.'[83]

With this in mind Hussey proposed to Camden that the college be established by charter from the king and that the power of superintendence and visitation would rest not with the local Protestant ordinary, but rather with 'persons amongst the highest orders of the clergy of the R.C. persuasion.'[84] The viceroy rejected this suggestion, believing it gave too much credence to the notion of an establishment for the Catholic clergy and proceeded with his own plans for the College.[85] Under this scheme, the College was to be governed by a board of twenty-one trustees which would include the Chancellor and three Chief Judges. The trustees would be responsible for drawing up the statutes of the College and for internal discipline, while the Chancellor and chief judges as ex-officio members of the board were to act as Visitors. The inclusion of 'Black Jack' Fitzgibbon and the chief judges as trustees

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82 35 Geo. 111, c.21. An act for the better education of persons professing the Popish or Roman Catholic religion.

83 E. Burke to T. Hussey, 17 Mar. 1795, *Burke Corr*, viii, 199-205.

84 Camden's Letter Books, i, pp. 11-14 in M. O'Connell, 'Political Background' in *I.E.R.*, (July, 1956), p.3.

85 Camden to Portland, 14 April 1795, H.O. 100/57 /123-5.

created a sense of alarm in Catholic circles and many shared Burke's view that not alone were all benefits of the College lost, but that 'a more mischievous project never was set on foot' in Ireland.[86] Troy would certainly have preferred if the judges had not been included as trustees, but regarded their presence as a necessary evil. He was however satisfied that internal regulation of the College would be left to the bishops.[87] With great skill and diplomacy the archbishop had successfully brought the new administration, particularly Pelham, around to accepting almost totally his model for the Royal College. Subjection to Trinity College had been resisted, as had outside involvement in appointment of the president and professors. He had compromised by accepting four Protestant and six lay Catholics trustees, but the presence of ten bishops and the president on the board assured effective clerical control of the College.

(iii)

The seminary bill had a swift passage through parliament and received the royal assent on 5 June 1795. Debate on the bill was unusually muted. Patrick Duigenan later commented that the measure had been carried 'with little notice or discussion' and the debate was not even recorded in the Parliamentary Register.[88] Undoubtedly the 'conciliatory mood' of the new regime assisted the bill's passage; so did the death of the Provost of Trinity, Hely Hutchinson, the previous autumn, removing much colour which otherwise would certainly have

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86 E. Burke to T. Hussey, *Burke Corr.*, viii, p.263 in O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, p. 521.
87 J. Troy to T. Bray, 25 April 1795, C.D.A.
88 P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1800) pp. 216-17.

characterised the debate. He had long been the strongest opponent of segregated colleges in the House and Lecky lamented that in his passing 'the nation. . . lost, in a most critical moment, the wisest and ablest advocate of liberal education.'[89] In the Lords there was minor opposition to the bill and Charles Agar, Archbishop of Cashel, attempted once again to affix the Catholic Declaration of 1792 to the oath, but Hussey successfully circumvented these proposals by quiet approaches to the Castle.[90] Significantly, all real opposition to the bill came from outside of parliament.

Fitzwilliam's recall had polarised political opinion in Dublin and Grattan observed that 'never was a time in which the opposition here were more completely backed by the nation, Protestants and Catholics united.'[91] Camden's arrival had brought riots to the Dublin streets, but in time these protests gave way to more sophisticated opposition. Portland had urged Camden to rally the friends of government and to conciliate the Catholics. To this end the new viceroy offered the seminary bill, but under the circumstances his offer seemed little less than derisory to the Catholic body.[92] As the member of parliament, Edward Tighe, had observed the College bill was no more than 'a sop to the Roman Catholic clergy.. by way of compensation' for the emancipation bill which was now doomed.[93]

The leading members of the Catholic Committee were determined not to let this insult pass without protest. Their temper was running high; Edmund Burke complained that their Francis Street meeting on 9 April had been 'wholly Jacobinical' in tone and that the talk

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89 Lecky, *Ireland,* iii, p. 361.
90 J. Troy to T. Bray, 14 May 1795, C.D.A., T. Hussey to Fitzwilliam, undated, Fitzwilliam MSS, Sheffield, f. 30. in P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p. 276.
91 H. Grattan to Fitzwilliam, 28 Mar. 1795, in E.A. Smith, *Whig Principles.*, p.207.
92 Lecky, *Ireland,* iii, p348.
93 *F. D.J.*, 2 May 1795.

of separation reflected 'foolish language, adopted from the United Irishmen.'[94] There was also resentment amongst Committee members that their education plans had been usurped by the bishops, and it was decided by the sub-committee to present a petition to parliament in opposition to the education bill. The petition was brought before the house by Henry Grattan on the bill's second reading; it objected to the proposed college on two grounds. The first was the power given to the trustees to make all College appointments, which the petitioners believed should 'be thrown open to examination, and should be made the rewards of superior merit, without any possibility of jobbing.' The second much more fundamental objection, was to the College's exclusively Roman Catholic character. The petition opposed this segregation, which was described as 'highly inexpedient, inasmuch as it tends to perpetuate that line of separation between his Majesty's subjects of different religions, which the petitioners do humbly conceive it is the interest of the country to obliterate.'[95]

Referring to this episode Lecky declared that there was 'hardly a more striking proof of the change that [had] passed over the spirit of Irish Catholicism than is furnished by the petition.'[96] Yet while the petition reflected both the liberal principles of the committee and the great divide between their priorities and those of the hierarchy, it was also a strategic political move, described by Maurice O'Connell as 'more an expression of anger than a serious attempt to have the bill altered.'[97] The Grattanite party in parliament shared the Committee's frustration and opposed the bill in the belief that its passing might smother the general sense of

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94 E. Burke to T. Hussey, 18 May 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, pp. 245-250.
95 *Irish. Parl. Deb.*, xv. 201-303.
96 Lecky, *Ireland,* iii, p.363 he continues 'if its recommendations had been carried out, the Irish priesthood might have been a very different body from what it has become.'
97 M. O'Connell, *I.E.R.*,,(July, 1795) p. 5.

disappointment in the country on which they hoped to capitalise, and would tend to divide the Catholic and Protestant reformers, whom they hoped to combine in the common cause.[98] Despite these objections, the bill was carried without any difficulty.

(iv)

On the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 June, 1795, Troy and seventeen bishops celebrated a solemn high mass in Francis Street, Dublin. The intention of their 'awful, impressive and affecting' ceremony was 'by way of thanksgiving of the legislature for the late act which endowed a Roman Catholic college, and to implore the divine blessing upon his Majesty's person and government.'[99] Troy had indeed a lot for which to be grateful. He had after all achieved what would have been considered impossible a year earlier - the establishment of an autonomous College under exclusive episcopal superintendence. The first meeting of the trustee's in Fitzgibbon's chambers in the House of Lords presented quite a different spectacle, but with the exception of their attendance at this initial meeting and one more the following month the Protestant trustees took no part in the government of the College.[100] The Catholic lay trustees, Lords Fingall, Kenmare and Gormanston, Sir Edward Bellew, Sir Thomas French and Richard Strange were drawn

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98 Froude, *English in Ireland*, iii, pp. 150-151.

99 Memorandum in Troy's hand, 30 June 1795, D.D.A., J. Troy to Gerdil, 23 July 1795, A.P.F., Fondo di Vienna, Vol. 28, f 233-4.

100 The Protestant Trustees attended a meeting of Trustees on 28 July 1795, Fingal to P. Plunkett, 25 July 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp. 203-4.

from amongst the Catholic Committee seceders of 1791-2 and presented no challenge to episcopal authority.

The absence of any members of the old sub-committee reflects the rupture which had occurred in the Catholic body. In many respects, the hierarchy had been less than honest in their relations with the lay Catholics. Since the sub-committee had first expressed their concern for the education question, the bishops had not been frank with them. Throughout 1793 and '94 they had met with the sub-committee, but all this time they had kept the laity in the dark about their ongoing discussions with Major Hobart and the Castle. The sub-committee had been led to believe that the bishops supported their plan for one thriving national college, only to discover otherwise. In the bitterness which followed the establishment of the Royal College, it was suggested that the hierarchy had used the prospect of a College under the control of radical Catholics as a bargaining tool to frighten government into assisting their own scheme. Thomas Addis Emmet, reflecting much later on the events, believed that such a plan was infinitely more attractive to the Castle authorities who could make it 'subservient to every purpose which the government wish.'[101] Troy was conscious of the anger amongst the sub-committee at how events had unfolded; at one stage he contemplated that 'for peace sake' Edward Byrne might have been included amongst the trustees. However, the fact that Byrne signed the petition against the College Bill ruled out this possibility.[102] By the summer of 1795 the pace of events in Ireland had altered the priorities of the Catholic Committee and the importance of the education now paled into insignificance when compared to the question of general

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101 T. A. Emmet, 'Part of an essay towards a history of Ireland,' in MacNeven, *Pieces*, (N.Y., 1807), pp.61-3.
102 J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 7 May 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp. 199-200.

emancipation. The year had seen their hopes for a repeal of remaining Catholic disabilities dashed. The present constitution offered little hope of relief and the Committee now looked increasingly towards the United Irishmen and to France for their salvation.[103]

The Fitzwilliam episode had also wrought an enormous change in the standing of the Catholic hierarchy. Certainly the bishops shared the general despondency at the viceroy's recall and fate of his Relief Bill, but had it passed, they would certainly have had to suffer the imposition of a veto and provision for the clergy which the viceroy had proposed. The arrival of Camden spared the hierarchy this crisis, and the eagerness of the new Lord Lieutenant to conciliate leading Catholics greatly aided the realisation of their educational plans, without any of the compromises which they had feared necessary only a few months earlier. For this, the bishops owed a particular debt of gratitude to Thomas Pelham, chief secretary at the Castle. Pelham had consulted closely with the hierarchy, and the College was to a great deal his own creation. Fitzgibbon, by then Earl of Clare and himself a trustee of the College, later complained that he had not been consulted on the Education Bill and grumbled that 'Lord Pelham and Doctor Troy had contrived the college between them.'[104] This gratitude is reflected in Troy's congratulatory note to Pelham on his elevation to the peerage in 1801 in which the archbishop spoke of his 'fostering hand by which the College at Maynooth had been raised and protected'. On another occasion, Francis Moylan referred to Pelham as 'the cornerstone' of the College.[105]

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103 Pelham to Portland, 30 March 1795, in Froude, *English in Ireland,* iii, p. 140.

104 Minutes of a conversation between Lord Hardwicke and Lord Clare, 20 Dec. 1801, transcript of state paper 788/2, D.D.A. in P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' pp. 272-3.

105 J. Troy to T. Pelham, 2 Sept., 1801, B.M, Add. MSS 30107, f.405. F. Moylan to T. Pelham, 1 Jan. 1802, B.M., Add. MSS, 33109, ff. 4-5.

In many respects, too, the education crisis contributed greatly to the formation of a national episcopal conference in Ireland and the emergence of a greater sense of unity amongst the bishops. The political activity of the Catholic Committee surrounding the Convention had certainly increased communication between the bishops at both provincial and inter-provincial levels, but the meetings at John's Lane in preparation for the bishops education submission in January 1795 represented the largest meeting of the hierarchy in over a century. The quarterly Maynooth trustees meetings would in future serve as a episcopal conferences and the experience gained in the negotiations prior to the foundation of the College proved invaluable, especially in the Union negotiations. The renewed sense of identity and newly established relations with the Castle buoyed up spirits amongst the hierarchy, and their confidence is reflected in the growing tendency of the bishops to use episcopal titles. Indeed this confidence did not go unmarked. Edmund Burke, on receipt of a letter from Coppinger of Cloyne bearing episcopal arms, urged the bishops to avoid such ostentatious displays, while in the Commons Dr. Duigenan protested that many of the loyal petitions in 1795 were signed by 'persons assuming the titles of Roman Catholic Bishops and Archbishops, in direct contradiction and defiance of the laws which they profess.' With these objections in mind Michael Daly writing to Thomas Bray from Lisbon in June 1795, apologised for failing to address the archbishop as his 'station in life entitles' on account of the noise of 'some scoundrels in parliament.'[106]

More than any one John Troy was responsible for this marshalling of the Irish bishops. He had succeeded in bringing his confreres

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106 E. Burke to T. Hussey, 10 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, p. 143. *F.D.J.*, 14 Feb. 1795., Michael Daly, Lisbon, to T. Bray, 27 June '95, C.D.A.

together to face the crisis of clerical education and in so doing he established himself as leader of the Irish church. Despite the prominent role he played throughout negotiations with administration, he shrewdly involved his fellow bishops at all levels of the discussions, pointing out to Bray the necessity of episcopal meetings 'in order that no bishop may hereafter complain that the important business of clerical education was regulated without his concurrence or consent.'[107] Nevertheless Maynooth remains in many respects a monument to Troy's perseverance and determination, and its foundation greatly enhanced his standing and reputation in the eyes of both the Irish Church and the Holy See. [108] With the Catholic Committee becoming more and more immersed within the United Irishmen, the Archbishop became to all intents and purposes the leader and voice of the Irish Catholics.

Maynooth College, however, had not been established without cost to the hierarchy; above all, the bishops' reputations had been sullied by their Castle courtship. The popular perception of the College as a sop in place of general emancipation survived; as Edmund Burke had predicted, constant meddling of the bishops and clergy with the Castle, had set them at ill with their own body.[109] Grattan too, in the debate on his ill-fated relief bill, referred to the establishment of Maynooth and condemned government for its use of the clergy in order 'pervert religion into an instrument against liberty.'[110] In this scenario Troy was the villain of the piece, having accepted the forty pieces of silver - a grant of £8,000 per annum. Troy was undaunted by these jibes. He had achieved the object of his efforts, the establishment of a great autonomous national

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107 J. Troy to T. Bray, 14 Aug. 1794, C.D.A.

108 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 13 Aug. 1795, D.D.A.

109 E. Burke to R. Burke, [Post 21 November 1792] , *Burke Corr.*,vii, pp. 298301.

110 *A Report of the debate in the House of Commons of Ireland on the Bill Presented by.. Henry Grattan for further Relief of His Majesty's Popish or Roman Catholic Subjects,* (Dublin, 1795) p. 107.

seminary; he now turned to face his next challenge, the crisis of disaffection and Defenderism.

IV

The Catholic Hierarchy; 1795 - 1798.

The extraordinary events of 1795 had wrought enormous change on the Catholic community in Ireland. The year had seen hopes for a repeal of remaining Catholic disabilities dashed; Dublin Castle firmly opposed any such moves and the British government, faced with a crisis of management in Ireland, was no longer willing to play the Catholic game. The present constitution offered little hope of relief to the Catholics who increasingly looked towards the United Irishmen and to France for their salvation. Thomas Hussey had identified this frustration in his warning to Edmund Burke that not alone was emancipation at stake in 1795, but the greater question of whether Britain meant 'to retain Ireland.'[1] The Catholic hierarchy, however, had emerged from the Fitzwilliam debacle greatly strengthened and were anxious lest their achievements be endangered by the rash behaviour of the flock. The bishops were left with little choice but to adopt a course of steady loyalism. In the years from 1795 to 1800, apparently impervious to the very real sufferings of their people, the hierarchy preached unquestioning loyalty and obedience, very often in the face of excessive and draconian government measures.

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[1] T. Hussey to E. Burke, 19 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, iv, 278.

By the spring of 1795 Defenderism had spread beyond Armagh and symptoms of disaffection were to be found in fourteen counties of Ulster, north Leinster and Connaught.[2] Daily reports reached the capital of unrest in the countryside and the papers were filled with accounts of what the *Dublin Journal* described as the 'alarming depredations committed by the Defenders.'[3] The recall of Fitzwilliam added to this tension, and the *Northern Star* declared that the rejection of the Catholic bill had given 'the insurgents a plea for disaffection.'[4] The new Lord Lieutenant, Camden, was puzzled by the Defenders whose curious mixture of the traditional agrarian movement and sophisticated radicalism defied all attempted definitions. Violence continued to spread and the ominous reports of an alliance between the Defenders and the United Irishmen determined Camden to take whatever actions were necessary to halt what he called 'the government of terror.'[5]

The sectarian character of Defenderism did not go unnoticed by the press and the loyalist prints were quick to draw connections between the Catholic question and Defender violence. In February 1795 the *Dublin Journal,* commenting on the Catholic address, declared that the alarming state of the country 'required serious and immediate consideration of the government' and concluded that 'the power of their clergy over them gave us expectation that these disturbances would be quickly terminated'.[6] Troy was conscious of such criticism and was angered by the tone of the Catholic Committee in the face of the impending defeat of the Catholic bill. In a strong letter to Patrick Plunkett,

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2 See J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' pp. 92-115, T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism in 1795' in *I.H.S.*, xxiv, no. 95 (May 1985) pp. 373-394, *Fall and Rise,* pp. 211-227.
3 *F.D.J.*, 3 February 1795.
4 *N.S.* 18-21 May 1795, cited in J. Smyth, 'Popular Politisation,' p. 102.
5 Camden to Portland, 16 May 1795, H.O. 100/46/324 cited in Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p.211
6 *F.D.J.* 3 February 1795

bishop of Meath, he railed against 'our philosophical orators in Francis Street[who] have injured a good cause' commenting that 'friends and enemies equally condemned their violent proceedings.'[7] Troy, compromised by their actions and declarations at the meeting in Francis Street chapel on 9 April, was convinced that the 'Catholic body was sound and ought not suffer for the intemperance of self-created leaders,' Keogh, Sweetman and Lewins.[8] In the House of Commons debate on the Catholic Bill some weeks later the speeches of the 'Francis Street Orators' and the United Irish ideas of the Committee were held us as justification for refusing further relief.[9] Commenting on the proceedings, Marcus Beresford informed his father, 'the debate degenerated into abuse of the Catholics, and attempts to connect them through Tone with United Irishmen, Jackson and treason.'[10]

Such links between Catholics and the Defenders were a source of acute embarrassment to Troy who was anxious to present the loyalty of the Catholics. In July 1795 he was greatly angered by the arrest in Kildare of the schoolmaster Lawrence O'Connor, a freemason and leader of the Meath Defenders. O'Connor, arrested while swearing the country people to be true to the French, was tried for high treason in September 1795.[11] Schoolmasters had played an important role, often serving as local leaders amongst the Defenders, but the fact that O'Connor served as occasional parish clerk in Agher, county Meath, particularly disturbed Troy who complained to bishop Plunkett that:

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7 J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 7 May 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 199.
8 J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 7 May 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 199. *Orations delivered at a ... meeting of the Roman Catholics of the City of Dublin, held at Francis Street Chapel on .. ninth April 1795 on the grand question of Emancipation,* (Cork, 1795). *D.E.P.*, 9 April 1795.
9 See D. Lindsay, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode Revisited,' in D. Dickson, D.Keogh and K. Whelan(eds), The *United Irishmen.*(Dublin. 1992).
10 M. Beresford to J. Beresford, 5 May 1795, *Beresford Corr.*, ii, p. 108.
11 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p.109, J. Brady, 'Lawrence O'Connor - a Meath Schoolmaster,' *I.E.R.*, 5th series, xlix(1937), 281-7.

> this connection between the parish priest and O'Connor furnishes much matter of speculation to all. It is easy to conjecture what our enemies may, and what even our friends do actually say. The latter regret the connection much, and remark that O'Connor as a schoolmaster and clerk, was in some degree an official man in the confidence of the priest who could not be entirely ignorant of his principles. Hence they censure the priest in employing such a person in any capacity instead of endeavouring to banish him from the parish.

Troy concluded by stressing for Dr Plunkett the need for greater caution to avoid similar scandal in the future.[12] The bishop of Meath in turn referred the case to Lord Fingall who recommended that an enquiry be made into O'Connor's behaviour from the priest in question, Father John Cregan, pastor of Summerhill. Fingall, however, criticised attempts to attribute the current disturbances to Popery when in fact they had their 'origin in French principles and irreligion.' It was absurd, he argued, for the government to give 'a legal establishment and encouragement' to Catholicism while at the same time throwing 'out hints and foul unfounded aspersions on its ministers and all who profess it.' The government, he believed, ought to be called on to put a stop to 'the snarlings and illiberal insinuations of its own really most prejudiced servants.'[13] John Troy, referred to by Fingall as 'our zealous friend in town,'[14] was by now feeling increasingly pressurised to take strong action against the Defenders and showed little inclination to criticise government policy. In any event the clergy refused to attend O'Connor at his execution or administer the sacraments to him. He was hanged at Naas in September while Lord Camden was in the town, in a gruesome display which reflected the administration's reliance on exemplary terror

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[12] J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 21 July 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 202.
[13] Fingall to P. Plunkett, 25 July 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 203.
[14] FIngall to P. Plunkett, 25 July 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 203.

as the only means of containing Defenderism. O'Connor's body was disemboweled, quartered and his head placed on a pole over Naas gaol on the specific instructions of the Lord Lieutenant; however, such brutality merely added to the cult which quickly surrounded the dead leader.[15]

Apart from the disturbed state of Ireland, Troy received daily reports recounting the sorry state of Italy and the havoc being inflicted there be the advancing French armies. From Rome the Irish bishops were urged to recall their flock to a sense of duty and peaceable behaviour in the face of severe and furious attacks 'against the most sacred precepts of Christian religion and Catholic faith.'[16] On 6 August Troy published a pastoral condemning the Defenders, similar to the one he had issued in Ossory in 1784 against the Whiteboys.[17]

Troy condemned the progress of the Defenderism which had been marked by 'disorder and plunder; and not unfrequently, by bloodshed.' He declared his hate and abhorrence of 'every proceeding of persons associated under the title of *Defenders*,' and he condemned their acts as contrary to the laws of God and the church,' referring to 'those unhappy *Defenders*, and other similar delinquents, as a disgrace to Christianity, and outcasts of Society.' Defender oaths were in no way binding, but as 'bonds of iniquity' were 'unlawful, sinful, wicked and damnable.' The archbishop cautioned his flock against the 'insidious arts of designing men' and their attempts to 'subvert the orderly subordination established by divine Providence, for the preservation and happiness of society.'

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15 T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism', p. 377, S. Hamilton to T. Pelham, 8 September 1795 in Lecky, iii, p. 392, Froude, iii, p. 169. *The Martyr of Liberty, a poem on the heroic death of Lawerence O'Connor, executed at Naas in Ireland on a charge of High Treason, September 7 1796. Addressed to all Irishmen by an English Brother.*(Dublin, 1798. Printed For the use of United Irishmen).

16 Antonelli to Irish Bishops, 7 February 1795, D.D.A.

17 J.T.Troy. Pastoral against Defenders, in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, iii, pp. 476-9. *Ennis Chronicle,* 17 August 1795.

Troy lamented that his previous instructions appeared to have fallen on deaf ears and had made no impression 'on many, who ceasing to be Christians, obscure and dishonour the bright name of Roman Catholic, which they affect to retain.' No doubt sensitive to the bitterness harboured by many of the radical laity in the wake of the Fitzwilliam/Maynooth episode, the archbishop condemned the attempts of the Defenders to discredit the clergy 'whom they represent to the unthinking multitude, as insensible to the distresses of the poor.' Troy also condemned the interpretation of Defender activity as 'the result of a plan devised by Roman Catholics in general to destroy the Established Government.' In the face of all these evils, and 'of delusion in some, and of obloquy in others,' the archbishop refused the sacraments and Christian burial to all those refusing to abjure Defender oaths.

In terms of rhetoric and philosophical stance, Troy's denunciation of the Defenders differed very little from his excommunication of the Whiteboys.[18] Nevertheless what was novel in 1795 was the archbishop's standpoint and the means he employed to distribute his pastoral. Troy had come a long way since first taking the oath of allegiance in March 1779 and by now was generally regarded as a friend of the Castle administration. Already in frequent communication with the Castle, Troy decided to enlist the assistance of the administration in circulating his pastoral. This was a novel departure reflecting a *quid pro quo* attitude, or an attempt by the archbishop to publicly express his gratitude for the new relationship between the Church and the Castle. It is also certain that by mid 1795 Troy was anxious to establish his loyalty

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[18] *Ossory Dioc. Reg.*, i, pp 162-5. See F. O'Fearghail, 'The Catholic Church in county Kilkenny 1600-1800' in K. Whelan and W. Nolan(eds) *Kilkenny; History and Society*, p.243.

beyond doubt and by so doing replace the radicals or 'self-created leaders' at the head of the Catholic community.[19]

Dr Troy sent a copy of his pastoral to Robert Marshall at the Castle and expressed a desire that to render it more effective it should be circulated as widely as possible through the newspapers 'and otherwise as Mr Pelham shall think expedient.'[20] The archbishop's servant had dropped copies of the address in the newspaper offices, but Troy could not be certain of a favourable response. However, he requested Marshall to make no reference of his sending the pastorals to the offices, should he make representation to the various editors. Troy declared that he had published the excommunication without any communication with the Castle. It was, he said, 'by no means necessary and perhaps inexpedient.' He was certain the well disposed of every communion would 'not be displeased,' but as to the approbation or censure of others Troy was 'perfectly indifferent.'

Thomas Pelham acknowledged the pastoral and informed Troy that the Lord Lieutenant had read the address and 'expressed himself in terms of the warmest approbation.'[21] Troy was overjoyed at the response of the administration, declaring that 'the most humble have ever highly valued the approbation of estimable characters.'[22] He continued:

> In writing and publishing the exhortation... I conceive myself complying with what I owe to the religion I teach and to the society of which I am a member. Both are dishonoured and injured by riot and disorder. It is the duty of every man to oppose the abettors of either and to vindicate the principles he avows from calumny.

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[19] J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 7 May 1795, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 199.
[20] J. Troy to R. Marshall, n.d.[early Aug. 1795] S.P.O. 620/22/29
[21] T. Pelham to J. Troy, 13 August 1795, S.P.O. 620/22/29 see V. McNally, 'John Troy', p. 170.
[22] J. Troy to T. Pelham, 14 August 1795, S.P.O. 620/22/29

Troy must also have been consoled by the compliments paid to him by Charles Erskine. The Monsignor lamented the unruly conduct of the Defenders; he referred to his 'greatest regard' for Pelham and he was confident that Troy by his 'co-operation with government, by preaching, by admonition and instruction of the ignorant and misled' would recall the people to their senses. Erskine was pleased to be able to confirm for the pope, Pius vi, what he already knew that the flock committed to Troy's care 'shall not be exposed to diminution or infection.'[23] Further comfort for Troy came from John Carroll, bishop of Baltimore, who praised his efforts in 'these perilous and perplexing circumstances.' That some had impeached Troy's conduct was not surprising, for Carroll knew that it was much more difficult 'for a good man to resist the heated zeal of impetuous, though well meaning advocates of a good cause than to quell violence of impiety or open persecution.'[24]

The radical *Morning Post* had no such garlands in store for the archbishop: scoffing at Troy's 'power of saving and damning whom he pleases,' it lamented the fate of the Defenders, 'hanged by the laws here and damned by Dr Troy hereafter.'[25] A similar cynicism for Dr Troy's ordinances was reflected in Leonard McNally's celebrated report to the Castle in September 1795:

> A contempt for their clergy universally prevails, deism is daily superseding bigotry and everyman who can read or can hear and understands what is read to him begins in religion as in politics to think for himself. This is evident not only from the declarations of the peasants, and the oaths of the Defenders, now administering in every part of this kingdom, but from the ridicule and laugh which they have all with very few exceptions thrown upon the address, drawn up by Archbishop Troy, and publicly read from altars by priests. The address which a few years ago would operate with terrors of thunder on an Irish congregation of

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[23] C. Erskine to J. Troy, 13 August 1795, D.D.A.
[24] J Carroll to J. Troy, 14 December 1795, D.D.A.
[25] *M. P.*, 3 September 1795.

> Catholics is now scoffed at in the chapels and reprobated in private. Excommunication has lost its terrors, and no wonder when Christianity hourly declines, and I do apprehend that the priests at the altar and the priest in private house hold and preach very different doctrines and should a serious commotion take place I am convinced that Doctor Troy, so far from finding protection in his spiritual character, would be one of the first sacrifices to popular cruelty and revenge.[26]

Similar sentiments were expressed by Arthur O'Connor who declared, 'ask the Catholic clergy and they will tell you that their power is declined. Ask the Protestant gentry from one end of the kingdom to the other, and they will tell you that the superstitious power of the Catholic clergy is at an end.'[27]

Yet the bishops, undaunted by this changing atmosphere, continued to preach against Defenderism. Patrick Plunkett began a visitation of Meath in late April 1795 and his diary reflects the priority and concern the bishop attached to appeals for peace and loyalty. In all Plunkett records thirty six sermons in which he condemned violence and Defenderism. The bishop preached submission to the laws as an act of religion and spoke of 'the madness of the prevailing disturbances.' In September Plunkett stepped up his campaign against Defenderism and broadened the scope of his sermons; at Fertullagh(17 September) and Clonard(21 September) he considered 'the origins of Defenders, its motives and consequences exposed to view, and judged by reason and religion.' Frequently he preached against drunkenness, invariably described as a cause or companion of Defenderism. On 23 August Plunkett denounced the Defenders at Mullingar, which was still free from disturbance. Two days later the bishop was approached by a Mr Reeves, on behalf of the Protestants of Mullingar, requesting a copy of his sermon

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26 J.W. to....., 12 September 1795, 620/10/121/27.
27 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 97. *Parl. reg.*, xv,(1795), 289.

with a view to having it printed. The bishop made no further reference to the sermon; it is unlikely that it was ever published.[28] Nevertheless, the hierarchy were in an invidious position by the end of 1795, anxious to maintain loyalty , while attempting to avoid the 'Castlelick Clergy' jibes to which Burke had earlier referred.[29] The dilemma became particularly acute in December 1795 when the bishops were obliged to lead prayers of thanksgiving for the delivery of King George from an attack made on him while on his way to open parliament. Having consulted with bishop Moylan of Cork, Troy recommended a formula to Thomas Bray which answered the purpose of the address without 'exposing the bishops to censure or obloquy.' However, despite his reservations, Troy was certain of the desirability of receiving the attention 'of the respectable prints for public information.'[30]

The hierarchy continued to ingratiate themselves at the Castle and the measure of their accommodation within Castle circles is reflected in the various accounts of the laying of the foundation stone at Maynooth, in April 1796. The *Dublin Journal* recorded the occasion as 'one of the most affecting scenes we ever witnessed, promising to raise in Ireland the cause of science, morality and religion.' The Royal College, the paper believed, would 'carry down to future times the liberality and patriotism of Lord Camden's administration.'[31] The students of the College, accompanied by a band, led Camden from the upper end of the town to where he laid the foundation stone; three specially written Odes were then recited, one in Greek, Latin and English, and the *Hibernian Journal* recorded that 'the countenances of all manifested pleasing

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28 P. Plunkett, 1795 Visitation in Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp 267-275.
29 E. Burke to R. Burke, 21 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, p. 297.
30 J. Troy to T. Bray, 8 December 1795, C.D.A. 'A Notice to be read in all Dublin churches 13 December 1795., D.D.A.
31 *F.D.J.*, 23 April 1796.

sensations of mind at the liberality of the Legislature and the Government to their Roman Catholic brethern.'[32] The bishops themselves were equally pleased by the event and Patrick Plunkett recorded the occasion in his dairy, the highlight of which was riding back to dinner at the Castle in the Lord Lieutenant's carriage, together with Thomas Hussey and archbishops Troy and O'Reilly.[33] News of the occasion quickly spread and, writing from Rome, the Dominican John Connolly described Plunkett's account of the ceremony as 'by far the most satisfactory that has been yet sent to Rome. Who could imagine, when I left Ireland nearly thirty years ago that some of our Catholic prelates were to go in 1796 in state through Dublin and to dine at the Castle?'[34]

It was not difficult in these circumstances for the Defenders and United Irishmen to portray the clergy as 'insensible to the distresses of the poor.'[35] The winter of 1795 and the first half of 1796 had seen the levels of violence greatly escalated in Ireland and the Castle decided to meet fire with fire; throughout the period 'Defender terror and official terror mirrored each other.'[36] In his recent study of the Catholic Question, Thomas Bartlett has devoted considerable attention to the excesses meted out by the crown forces in their attempt to suppress violence and the levels to which Camden was prepared to excuse harsh and illegal activities.[37] Carhampton had been sent to Connacht to put down disturbances there, resulting from the flow of Catholic refugees from Ulster, and there the Lord Lieutenant turned a blind eye to the behaviour of the soldiers which might 'in some instances be carried on with a

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32 *H.J.*, 21 April 1796, J. Gunn, 'The Foundation of Maynooth College 1795,' in *I.E.R.*, (1883), pp. 316-326.
33 Plunkett's diary, 20 April 1796, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 277.
34 J. Connolly to P. Plunkett, 10 November 1796, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 207.
35 J. Troy, Pastoral against Defenders, August 1795, D.D.A.
36 T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism,' p. 377.
37 T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, pp. 213-223.

warmth which might better have been suppressed.'[38] To bolster their armoury against disaffection the government introduced an insurrection act in March 1796 which allowed the lord lieutenant 'proclaim' areas on the request of the justices of the peace. The act gave the justices sweeping powers of search and arrest, the death penalty was specified for tendering unlawful oaths and the habeas corpus act was suspended in the following October. The excesses of the government forces continued and the introduction of an indemnity act was evidence of Camden's resolve to excuse such illegal acts.[39] The papers were filled with accounts of army cruelties, which reached new heights after the establishment of the yeomanry in late 1796. Resentment amongst the Catholic community continued to rise as they became increasingly vulnerable on all sides; even General Lake admitted in March 1797 that 'some irregularities(though I really believe very few) may have been committed... chiefly by the yeomanry... whose knowledge of the country gives them an opportunity of gratifying their party spirit and private quarrels.'[40]

The hierarchy remained silent on the excesses of the government and continued to call the faithful to loyalty. Troy's lenten pastoral in February 1796 again spoke of current 'impiety and irreligion' and exhorted Catholics to refrain from 'cursing, swearing, from unlawful combinations and still more unlawful oaths whereby you engage in them.'[41] In Troy's private correspondence there is evidence of his concern and alarm at the fate of the Catholics in Armagh, but he absolved the government from blame, attributing responsibility to 'the

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[38] Camden to Portland, 30 May 1795, H.O. 100/69/345-50 in T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p.213.
[39] T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* p.214.
[40] Lake to Pelham, 17 March 1797, in Lecky, *Ireland*, iv, p. 41.
[41] J. Troy, Lenten Pastoral, 14 February 1796, D.D.A.

supine neglect of the magistrates and prejudice of the gentry in that quarter.'[42] On another occasion Troy described the Armagh troubles as 'the Protestant rioters in County Armagh stiling themselves Orange boys, composed principally of low presbyterians encouraged by the connivance of Protestant magistrates, have committed such atrocious excesses against the persons and property of unarmed and unoffending Catholics in that neighbourhood as to create great discontent and alarm in the Catholic body, which only desires that offenders of every description be punished according to the laws.'[43] Lord Gosford, governor of Armagh, had addressed a meeting of the magistrates of the county in December 1795 and Troy's description of the outrages bears many similarities to his lordship's address, thousands of copies of which were printed and distributed gratis.[44] He too referred to the 'supinesess of the magistracy' and grievous oppression of the Catholics of Armagh by lawless persons.[45] The newspapers papers entered into polemical warfare on the causes of the Armagh disturbances, with the *Dublin Journal* denouncing the 'extraordinary and utmost energy taken by the *Dublin Evening Post* to smear the Orangemen of county Armagh' while remaining silent about the Defenders and United Irishmen.[46] The Orange men, the paper stated, 'declare no bigotry or fanaticism, or illiberal prejudice,' but were willing to live in harmony with Turk, Jew, Arab, Cherokee, even 'the Arch Devil himself.. provided the latter gentleman will behave himself properly, find security that he will cut no caper among them in the shape of a Defender, or an United Irishman.'[47]

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[42] J. Troy to J. Carroll, 13 August 1796, Baltimore Diocesan Archives, cited in P. O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church', p.299.
[43] J. Troy to J. Carroll, 15 August 1796, Baltimore Diocesan Archives, cited in P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church', p.299.
[44] J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' pp. 104-107.
[45] Lord Gosford's Address to Magistrates of Armagh, 28 December 1795, in *F.D.J.*, 5 January 1796.
[46] *F.D.J.*, 24 September 1796.
[47] *F.D.J.*, 24 September 1796.

In the House of Commons, James Verner, denounced by James Quigley as 'a man who has done everything but what is right and just, from a common feeder and handler of gamecocks, metamorphosed into a legislator for his country'; he referred to reports of seven thousand Catholics being driven from Armagh, but declared that 'whatever the Roman Catholics have suffered, they had brought upon themselves.'[48]

Throughout the crisis the hierarchy voiced no public criticism of the administration, but there are indications of unease in their private correspondence. There are also instances where the bishops made discreet representations to the Castle, but these were extremely confidential as Troy feared they 'might become the subject of party conversation and newspaper obloquy against the government.'[49] In August 1796 Troy approached the Castle requesting that a confessor be admitted to see Traynor, a Meath Defender under sentence of high treason. Troy made this appeal on receipt of a letter from Plunkett in which he described the 'unchristian rigour exercised at present against the unfortunate Traynor.' Troy shrewdly relayed the bishop of Meath's letter to Cooke in which Plunkett referred to 'the prejudice and unrelenting injustice of a certain part of the public here, who in defiance of common sense and common policy will not be persuaded that we clergy are not secret abettors of the mad and wicked system which threatens to bury religion under the ruins of civil power.'[50] In the following month the Castle approached Troy with a view to supplying a confessor for Charles Teeling, who had recently been brought from Belfast.[51]

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48 *F.D.J.*, 8 November 1796. Quigley, *Life*, p. 23.
49 J. Troy to E. Cooke, 8 August 1796, S.P.O. 620/24/95.
50 P. Plunkett to J. Troy, August 1796 enclosed in J. Troy to E. Cooke, 8 August 1796, S.P.O. 620/24/95.
51 T. Hussey to T. Bray, 26 September 1796, C.D.A.

From Beaconsfield Edmund Burke observed events in Ireland with increasing alarm. More than anyone Burke had foreseen ghastly consequences for Ireland in the recall of Fitzwilliam, to which he responded with 'grief, shame and anguish.'[52] The interim period had served only to confirm Burke's anxiety and he frequently referred to the Camden administration as the 'junto' or the 'Directory.' The Catholics, he believed, were 'treated like enemies, and as long as they are under any incapacities their persecutors are furnished with a legal pretence of scourging them upon all occasions and they never fail to make use of it.'[53] Above all Burke was concerned at the draconian measures adopted by the government, believing that 'in Ireland it is plain they have thrown off all sorts of political management and even the decorous appearance of it.'[54] Burke saw disastrous consequence in these policies which he was convinced would jacobinise Ireland and lead the Catholics to 'use the only means that is left for their protection.'[55] Burke was concerned that the dissolution of the Catholic Committee in 1795 had left the Catholics without an effective voice and he warned Thomas Hussey that 'Catholic Defenderism[had become].. the only restraint on Protestant Ascendancy.' He was critical of the quiescence of the hierarchy and cautioned Hussey on the dangers in overstating passive obedience:

> The doctrine of passive obedience, as a doctrine, it is unquestionably right to teach; to go beyond that, is a sort of deceit and the people who are provoked by their oppressors do not readily forgive their friends, if whilst the first persecutes,[and] the others appear to deceive them. These friends lose all power of being serviceable to that Government in whose favour they have taken an illconsidered step.[56]

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52 E. Burke to Fitzwilliam, 13 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 188-96.
53 E. Burke to French Laurence, 23 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 124-25
54 E. Burke to French Laurence, 11 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 116.
55 E. Burke to French Laurence, 18 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 117
56 E. Burke to T. Hussey, 18 January 1796, *Burke Corr*, viii, 387, 9 Dec. 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 171. See C. Cruise O'Brien, *Great Melody*, pp 572-577, James Conniff,

While Hussey accepted the counsel of his mentor the bishops continued to exhort their flocks to loyalty and the failed invasion of Hoche at Christmas 1796 provided them with another opportunity to rally to the side of the government.

The advent of Lazare Hoche's army of 14,500 men and 41,644 stand of arms brought a rash of pastorals in condemnation of the French and the associated Irish radicalism.[57] On Christmas Day Francis Moylan of Cork issued a blistering attack on 'the specious treachery' of the French and he called his flock to loyalty to King and government. The congregations were warned against promises of emancipation from tyranny and the restoration of lost rights and the bishop held up the fate of Flanders, Italy, Holland and Germany, all of which had fallen victim to French liberty and fraternity. In conclusion Moylan urged his people to 'range under the banners of true Irish loyalty.'[58] The pastoral was warmly greeted in loyalist circles; the *Dublin Journal* described it as 'an admirable address,' while an anonymous pamphleteer praised the bishop of Cork, whom he claimed 'would do honour to any church, and adorn any situation.'[59] In January 1797 Moylan was rewarded with the freedom of Cork and Robert Day, M.P. and chairman of the Grand Jury of Dublin, addressed the Grand Jury and declaring that no panegyric could do justice to the pastoral which reflected 'spirit of peace, loyalty and philanthropy worthy of an apostle.' The bishop had not waited until the danger of invasion had past, but exposed himself to the 'most

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'Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Coming Revolution in Ireland,' *Jn. Hist of Ideas*, (47) 1986, pp 37-59.

57 For the Bantry expedition see M. Elliott, *Partners in Revolution,* pp. 77-124 and 'The role of Ireland in French war strategy, 1796-1798,' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(ed.), *French Revolution*, pp 202-220.

58 *F.D.J.*, 3 January 1797

59 *F.D.J.*, 3 January 1797, Anon, *'Letters from a gentleman in Ireland to his friend at Bath*,(Cork, 1797) p. 30.

rancorous vengeance' and displayed courage and 'striking loyalty.' In all, Day believed Moylan had 'vindicated the great Roman Catholic mass against the misconceptions of men prejudiced because uninformed and what is more difficult against the disaffection and criminal tardiness of certain discontented individuals of their own body.'[60] The lord lieutenant also expressed his pleasure at the pastoral, a fact which the *Morning Post* believed did 'great honour to His Excellency's candour and liberality of mind.'[61] In radical circles, however, the pastoral made little impact; when W.J. MacNeven was asked about the pastoral by the Secret Committee of the House of Lords in 1798, he replied that he never heard it complained about since it was 'only a pious fraud' which 'contained a remarkable falsehood in favour of the administration.'[62]

Moylan's pastoral was followed up by a spirited address from John Young, the strong minded bishop of Limerick. Young's pastoral was read in all the chapels of his diocese January 1797 and its principles were explained in Irish. The bishop's rhetoric was much the same as his confrere's in Cork. Young referred to the great danger facing Ireland with 'a ferocious enemy, inured to slaughter, rapine, and sacrilege' hovering around with the avowed purpose of destroying the peace and prosperity of the country and substituting anarchy in the place of 'good government.' The bishop called on Catholics to show their attachment to the laws and 'the mild and equitable government of his majesty.' The present crisis gave Catholics an opportunity to demonstrate to the world that disloyalty and disaffection were not principles of the Catholic religion; on the contrary, Catholics were reminded of their 'deepest sense

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60 *F.L.J.*, 7 January 1797, *An address delivered to the Grand Jury of the County of Dublin on Tuesday the 10th of January 1797, by Robert Day, M.P., one of His Majesty's Counsel learned in law and Chairman of the said County,* (Dublin, 1797)

61 *M.P.*, 28 January 1797.

62 Examination of MacNeven before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, 7 August 1798 in W.J. MacNeven, *Pieces*, p. 254.

of obligation' to show 'affectionate obedience' to the civil powers. A novel feature of Young's pastoral was his call on his flock to take arms to defend Ireland:

> Your interest and your duty call on you to join heart and hand with your other fellow-subjects, to repel their hostile attempts. If the circumstances of your situation in life do not admit you to repel force by force, you still have it in your power to disappoint the expectation of the enemy, by shewing by your conduct, a determined and unanimous resolution of giving every assistance in your power to the executive government of the land.

Young's pastoral was printed in full in two of the radical Dublin prints, the *Morning Post* and the *Dublin Evening Post*, but neither commented on the text or the bishop's call to arms which was not found in any of the other pastorals in 1797.[63] The strength of the bishop's support for government in 1797 is interesting, considering his later determination to maintain the independence of the clergy and his fears that the proposed pension for the clergy, described by him as a 'douceur' for the Union, would have dire consequences for religion and lead to a claim of government patronage.[64]

John Troy chose the occasion of the day of solemn thanksgiving for the delivery of the kingdom on which to preach against the French. On 16 February a solemn high mass and a *Te Deum* were celebrated at Francis Street. Dr Moylan officiated at the altar, but many of the bishops were in attendance including O'Reilly of Armagh, Plunkett of Meath, Delaney of Kildare and Leighlin, Teahan of Kerry and Hussey of Waterford and Lismore.[65] In front of a congregation of almost three thousand, Troy delivered a fierce attack on the French which was by far

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63 *D.E.P.*, *M.P.*, 28 January 1797.
64 J. Young to T. Bray, 28 December and 30 December 1798, C.D.A.,
65 *M.P.*, 18 February 1797.

the longest of the pastorals in 1797 and has been likened to Edmund Burke's *Reflections*..[66] Troy began by exposing the folly of the French principles and the 'impious demagogues' of France who have 'destroyed everything valuable and dear to man.' They had torn up the very foundations of society and France now presented 'a sad and frightful spectacle to an amazed world,' as did the countries 'which experienced the calamity of French dominion or fraternity.' 'Do not,' he warned ' approach the rotten tree of French Liberty, if you desire to live. It bears forbidden fruit, fair to the eye,but deadly to those who taste it. Rooted in corruption, it vegetates only to destroy.'

Troy then turned his attention to Ireland and warned against the evil and dangers of illegal oaths which tended to 'excite or promote rebellion.' He called his flock to their duty which he summed up in the Petrine admonition to 'fear God and honour the King'(1 Pet. 2:17). In a theme which would be repeated many times, Troy reminded his listeners of the disabilities suffered by Irish Catholics in the past and their 'loyal and virtuous conduct during a long and painful trial' and he expressed gratitude for the relaxation of the penal laws. Troy made no direct references to the United Irishmen, but denounced the 'artifices of designing and ambituous men' who addressed the Catholics 'under the mask of friendship and [tempted] them to a violation of their duty.' This was not the way forward, but only through a continuation of a peaceful and an exemplary demeanour, 'which attracted the first and progressive rays of illumination,' could the Catholics 'expect to enjoy hereafter a brighter sunshine.'

Troy received the customary encouragement for his endeavours from Charles Erskine who congratulated him on his pastoral and

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66 J. Troy, Sermon of Thanksgiving for delivery of Kingdom, 16 February 1797, D.D.A. see Moran, *Spicil Ossor.*, iii, pp. 490-504. P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p. 303.

declared that the Irish Catholics were indeed 'fortunate to have at this critical period such pastors as Your Lordship.'[67] The mood of the country, however, was greatly altered and the Catholics increasingly looked towards the United Irishmen for their salvation. The former Dublin Catholic Committee was now indistinguishable from the United Irishmen; Burke described John Keogh as 'a franc Jacobin,' and little divided himself and Richard McCormick from Oliver Bond and Henry Jackson.[68] Castle reports confirmed these developments and Leonard McNally reported that the successes of the French armies gave great satisfaction and that the fate of the pope, far from being regretted, gave 'sincere pleasure to the Catholics.[69] The *Morning Post* , which had scoffed at the fate of the pope, now ridiculed Troy's letter which it declared 'is rightly termed a pastoral as there is sufficient wool gathering in it to show that the Doctor considered his flock to be sheep.'[70]

In the north General Lake had begun his bloody campaign to disarm Ulster and there the strongest defence of the Catholics against the tyranny of the army was mounted by the *Northern Star.* Examples of this defence were collected in a pamphlet entitled *'Truth Unmasked or Food for the Liberty'* which appeared in April 1797. The pamphlet reprinted articles from the *Northern Star* and was sold in aid of the twenty thousand starving in the Liberty of Dublin.[71] Was it to raise Protestant against Catholic that the Yeomanry and militia were arrayed? Was it to support an administration which has brought the country to the verge of destruction? 'Think in time,' the article reminded the soldiers,

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67 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 25 March 1797, D.D.A.
68 T. Graham, 'The organisation of the Dublin United Irishmen,' (Ph.D. forthcoming, University of Dublin).
69 J.W. to Mr Pollock, 10 February 1797, 620/36/227.
70 *M.P.*, 28 February and 18 March 1797.
71 *Truth Unmasked or Food for the Liberty*, containing The Appeal of the People of Ulster to their countrymen and to the Empire at large,' 'A friend of civil and religious liberties advice to the people. Also 'An advice to the United men of Ireland by an Irishman.'(Dublin, 1797).

'you are Irishmen'. Lake, however, had enough of the *Northern Star* and in the same month sought permission from Dublin to 'seize and burn the whole apparatus,' which he believed had done mischief beyond all imagination.[72] United Irish proclamations denounced the persecution of the Catholics, and in parliament Henry Grattan condemned martial law and the excesses of the military; he went on to resign from the yeomanry in protest, as did Sir Lawerence Parsons and the Duke of Leinster in a concerted Whig manoeuvre. [73] To the great embarrassment of the government Lord Moira also condemned the behaviour of the army in both the Irish and English House of Lords. James Quigley compared the situation in Ulster to the 'tyranny of Robespiere,' and from mid 1797 the government began to employ similar tactics in Leinster and parts of Munster as reports of United Irish activity began to reach the Castle.[74] In November 1797 Arthur O'Connor's *Press* announced that 'the greatest part of Ireland groans under military execution, rapine conflagration and butchery, rage without compassion and control.'[75] Yet throughout this crisis the hierarchy remained silent and voiced no public protest at the excesses or the suffering of the Catholic community, contenting themselves with their traditional chorus of gratitude and loyalty. The one exception to this, however, was Thomas Hussey whose denunciation of the military abuses, despite his otherwise unquestionable loyal, 'strenuous and steady' royalism, led to his ostracisation and stigmatisation as 'the rebel bishop.'[76]

Thomas Hussey differed from the remainder of the hierarchy in many respects. He had spent the greater part of his life outside Ireland,

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72 Lake to Pelham, 16 April 1797, Lecky, iv, p.50.
73 *Parl. Reg.* xvii(1796-8) 131-40. Lecky, iv, p. 61. Jim Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p.176
74 D. Dickson, *New Foundations*, p.189.
75 *Press*, 14 November 1797.
76 E. Burke to T. Hussey, [9] December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 161-2.

and even during his period as President of Maynooth and bishop of Waterford he had continued to spend considerable time in London. Circumstances had placed Hussey at the centre of a bustling political circle and his interests were very often a great deal more temporal than those of his fellow bishops. Hussey's interest in the 'Catholic question,' more often than not, concerned the political implications of the various developments and he attached far greater importance to the material welfare of the Catholic community than is evident in the writings of Troy or Plunkett. This is reflected again and again in his correspondence with Edmund Burke, particularly in his shocked reaction to the recall of Fitzwilliam and the collapse of the relief bill. The freedom and social status Hussey enjoyed in London greatly altered his perspective on Catholic Ireland, and he shared none of the quiescent deference of his confreres. Perhaps it was this confidence, above all, which caused him to misread the political realities of Ireland and lead him into conflict with the establishment there.

Thomas Hussey was born in 1746 in Harristown, county Meath into what Thomas England called 'a distinguished and respectable Irish family', while Edmund Burke described him as 'a man of birth and respectable connections in the country.[77] Having completed his studies at Seville, he was ordained to the priesthood on 25 March 1769 and immediately appointed one of the ordinary chaplains to the Spanish ambassador in London. Fifteen years later he became principal chaplain, a position he held until his death in 1803. This appointment placed the young cleric at the centre of a lively political and intellectual circle. Few failed to be impressed by his intellect and wit; Charles Butler commented that 'he did not come into contact with many whom he did not

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[77] T. England, *Life of Rev Arthur O'Leary* , (London, 1822), p. 192, J. Healy; *Centenary History of Maynooth* , (Dublin, 1895),p. 163.

subdue, the highest rank often sunk before him.'.[78] Before long Hussey could count the Duke of Portland, Lord Chatham, the younger Pitt and Fox and Dr Johnson amongst his acquaintances. It was at this time, too, that Hussey became friends with Edmund Burke, a relationship that would have a profound and lasting effect upon the young cleric. In 1792 he was admitted a fellow of the Royal Society of London. Burke commented that he was 'a man well informed and conversant in the state affairs and general politics of several courts of Europe and immediately and personally habituated in some of these courts.'[79] Despite all this the Belfast Presbyterian United Irishman, William Drennan who was admitedly prejudiced against Catholics, spoke of the 'native broadness and vulgarity of Hussey's brogue, strange that someone of the most ancient strain of Ireland and in foreign courts all his life should smack so strongly of the bogtrotter!'[80]

Hussey's society connections led him into many involvements. During the American War, a secret embassy was sent under Richard Cumberland to Spain in an effort to break the Franco-Spanish alliance. At the special request of King George III, Dr Hussey joined the delegation and despite its failure, he made an impression at the Spanish Court. Cumberland commented that he was 'inclined to think he[Hussey] considered himself as forced upon a scene of action where he was to play his part with as much finesse and dissimulation as suited his interest or furthered his ambition.'[81] In 1793 the Spanish minister, Chevalier Azara, proposed Dr Hussey to Pius VI as intermediary between the Holy

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[78] C. Butler, *Historical Memoirs of the English, Irish and Scottish Catholics since the Reformation* . (London, 1822), iv, p 39.
[79] E. Burke cited in Healy, *Maynooth,* p 169.
[80] D. Chart(ed), *The Drennan Letters*, (Belfast ,1931), p 228. For Drennan's anti-Catholic prejudice see L.M. Cullen, 'The internal politics of the United Irishmen,' in D.D.ickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan(eds), *The United Irishmen*,(Dublin, 1992).
[81] R. Cumberland, *Memoirs*, (London, 1806),p 139 . For a full account of Hussey's part in the Cumberland Mission see S. Flagg Bemis, *The Hussey-Cumberland Mission and American Independence*, (Princeton, 1931).

See and the British government. Sir J.C. Hippisley objected to this suggestion and succeeded in having Charles Erskine appointed instead.[82] Hussey's political development continued despite this set back; he increasingly concerned himself with the interests of the Catholics in both England and Ireland.[83] Not everyone shared Hussey's self-confidence; in September 1796 Francis Higgins informed Dublin Castle that 'the Roman Catholics hold a superficial opinion of Doctor Hussey as a courtly priest - if anything was to be effected, or wished to be done in the Roman Catholic Body, Dr [Arthur] O'Leary could do more with them in one hour than Hussey in seven years.' This comparison with O'Leary is significant, since the Cork priest was in the pay of the Castle and the antipathy between himself and Hussey was renowned.[84]

Exhibiting what Burke called 'a very rare union.. of the enlightened statesman with the ecclesiastic,'[85] Hussey argued that full Catholic Emancipation was not only desirable, but essential. In 1790, he wrote to Richard Burke that 'should these Kingdoms be involved in a war, a further toleration of the Catholics of Ireland will become unavoidable.'[86] It was absurd, he argued, to wait until necessity compelled what true policy should offer voluntarily:

> Hitherto the Catholics of that country have proceeded with proper deference and submission to the laws, in their application for redress, notwithstanding the endeavours of neighbouring countries, suggesting to them to wrest by force and violence, what I hope they will never mention, but with moderation and temper. Sublimated, however, as men's minds are by the French disease, (as it is not improperly called), one cannot foresee what a continuation of oppressive laws may work upon the minds of the people;

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82 Hippisley to Hobart, 12 Jan 1799, *Castlereagh Corr,* iii, p. 86.

83 As early as 1790 Hussey had been requested to represent the Committee of English Catholics in Rome to lay before the Pope their views on the Protestation. No reason for Hussey's failure to go to Rome is given, but it is generally believed that the Spanish Ambassador would not give permission, cf Butler, *Memoirs*, iv,p 43.

84 F.H. to ---- 27 September 1796, S.P.O., 620/18/14. *Cork Gazette*, 5 November 1791.

85 E Burke to T Hussey, 4 Feb 1795 *Burke Corr.* viii . p.136

86 Hussey to R Burke, 28 August 1790, *Burke Corr,* vi p. 134

> and those of the Irish Catholics are much altered within my own memory and they will not in future bear the lash of tyranny and oppression which I have seen inflicted upon them, without their resisting or even complaining.

When Henry Grattan introduced his relief bill in February 1795 Hussey wrote to Edmund Burke urging him to impress on London that the question of the emancipation Bill 'involves another awful one - whether they mean to retain Ireland or abdicate it to a French government, or to a revolutionary system of its own intention.' In the same letter, he warned that without the emancipation bill any attempts by the government to enlarge the army would achieve no more than to fill the ranks with paper soldiers.[87]

FitzWilliam's recall and the consequental defeat of the relief bill aroused astonishment in Hussey. 'How in the name of God,' he asked, 'can the spirit of this nation bear the most popular and virtuous viceroy that ever came to this country should be removed.' [88] This, Hussey assured Edmund Burke, was not his language, but the language of the people. With his finger on the pulse of the country he was alarmed that:

> The people begin to view the interference of the British cabinet in a hostile light; they will soon consider this parliament as a court of register, to obey the dictates of a British Minister. They will wish for a separation from Great Britain and the contemptible light in which they will view their own parliament will induce them to lay it in the dust and to erect a convention on the French scale in its place.

These 'mischiefs' were unavoidable, Hussey believed, if the British government continued on its course.[89] Burke cautioned Hussey and urged him to 'preserve a profound silence,' leaving matters to their own 'natural operation.'

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87 T Hussey to E Burke, 19 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii p. 152
88 T Hussey to E Burke, 3 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii p. 169.
89 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 3 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, p. 169.

The establishment of Maynooth had been a priority for Hussey; his association with the venture began as early as 1793. In December of that year Burke wrote to Francis Moylan, stating that the establishment of the college was 'not only expedient, but of absolute necessity for the order, civilisation, peace and security of the Kingdom.'[90] Burke realised the difficulties involved in the realisation of the project and recommended his son Richard and Hussey, 'by far the ablest man of business, and the best clergyman I know,' to manage the progress of the college. Moylan replied that Burke's recommendation of Richard Burke and Hussey had met with the 'fullest approbation and consent from the prelates' who realised their ability and zeal for the cause.[91] Dr Troy, writing to Archbishop Bray of Cashel, commented that Hussey 'can render us essential service at the Castle and elsewhere. He is independent and can speak with a firm tone to some of our own people here.'[92] Hussey's association with Maynooth met with the approval of the British government and it appears that he was the accredited representative of the Duke of Portland on the Maynooth issue during 1794-95. In March 1795, Hussey was about to return to London, but on the Duke's earnest wish he stayed in Ireland to ensure that the business of the Catholic college was not abandoned. Later that year in June a meeting of the Maynooth trustees appointed Hussey president of the college, apparently on the suggestion of the Duke. Hussey's delight at the progress of the College was unquestionable. In November 1796, he refers to Maynooth as his 'favourite spot, this *punctum saliens* of the salvation of Ireland from Jacobinism and anarchy.' [93]

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90 E Burke to Moylan, 6 December 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii p. 499
91 Moylan to Ed. Burke, December 1793, cited in Healy, *Maynooth*, p 169.
92 Troy to Bray, 23 December 1794, D.D.A.
93 Hussey to Edmund Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix p. 141

Hussey's influence and enthusiasm seemed boundless; this energy led Hussey to espouse yet another cause, the plight of the Catholic soldier in Ireland. It was a crusade, however which was to lead Hussey into conflict with the government, the result of which has been to cast a shadow over his loyalty and generally place him amongst the instigators of the rebellion of 1798. In August 1796, Hussey informed Bishop Douglas of London, that Erskine had obtained for him from Pius VI a vicarial authority over the king's forces in Ireland. On 9 August Hussey's appointment as Chaplain General was officially announced, while at the same time chaplains were appointed to each regiment of the Irish Brigade.[94] Pitt's purpose in confirming Hussey's appointment was, knowing him to be a staunch anti-Jacobin, to stamp out disaffection in the army.[95] This appointment carried no salary, but this did not lessen the Chaplain General's enthusiasm to carry out his duties.

Immediately on his appointment, Hussey began to seek redress for what he regarded as a gross injustice and evil, the practice of forcing Catholic soldiers to attend Protestant services. This problem was not new, but it had become more acute with the formation of the Irish militia in 1793, the rank and file of which was predominantly Catholic. The issue came to a head in 1795 with the case of Private Hyland of the Irish Light Dragoons who had been sentenced by a court martial at Carrick- on - Suir to 200 lashes for refusing, on the advice of his confessor, to attend Protestant services. Hussey complained to Edmund Burke about Hyland's treatment and also raised the question with Fitzwilliam, whom he urged to issue a proclamation against such practices.[96] Burke, too became alarmed at the punishment and warned Fitzwilliam that the

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94 Bishop Douglas's diary for August 1796, quoted in *Burke Corr., ix p 82. Freeman's Journal,* 11 Aug 1796

95 Portland to Pelham, 1 November 1796, Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service*, p 285.

96 Hussey to E Burke, 29 January 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, p.125

French war against religion could only benefit from a civil war in Ireland. Eighteen of the Irish bishops made a similar protest to the lord lieutenant and urged him to take the necessary corrective action .[97]

Hussey's feelings on the subject grew stronger. In October 1796 he made an attempt to meet the viceroy or his secretary, but on every occasion they were 'too busy in settling their bargains with the orators of College Green.'[98] On every occasion when the matter was spoken of in his presence, he expressed his strongest abhorrence to the point where his 'Gentle Friend the secretary of war[William Elliott]' told him that Mr Pelham felt himself much hurt by his opinions.[99] Hussey's alienation from the Castle caused him great grievance and increased his alarm for the security of Ireland. His letter to Edmund Burke on the subject reflects his conservatism and obvious aversion to revolution of any kind:

> How little does His Majesty suspect, that those upon whom he heaps honours, and powers here, are his greatest enemies and the very men who are Jacobinising the country! They are urging these cursed sentiment throughout the country under the name of United Irishmen, this evil is extending beyond imagination... I am terrified at what I foresee regarding my own unfortunate native country. To pass by parliament, and break the connection with Great Britain, is I am informed the plan of the United Irishmen. The wretches never consider that their grievances are not from England but from a junto of their own countrymen.[100]

Hussey's position was becoming more critical and as he received applications for advice from several military corps he found himself forced to choose between acquiescence in oppression or perceived Jacobinism. His response was to exhort the soldiers to patience and he promised that steps would be taken to remove their grievances. For

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97 E Burke to Fitzwilliam, 10 Feb. 1795 , *Burke Corr*, viii p. 145 .Eighteen Bishops to Earl Fitzwilliam, 11 February 1796 in J.McNally, 'John Thomas Troy' p. 179.
98 Hussey to E Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, p. 141
99 Hussey to E. Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr,* ix, p. 141.
100 Hussey to E. Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr.* ix, p. 141.

Hussey, this lack of redress for the soldiers was incredible - soldiers were forming associations in the camps and 'in a country not remarkable for military discipline, where this evil will end heaven only knows.'[101] Immediately he drew up a sketch of a pastoral letter which he would send to the chaplains of the forces. Before he published the letter, Hussey sent a copy to Pelham to receive his approval. Hussey received no response from the Castle and the incident completed the rift between him and the authorities.

Fear of Hussey began to grow in government circles. The wisdom of Hussey's appointment as Chaplain General was now under question; there was even uncertainty as to how and why the appointment had been sanctioned in the first place. Pelham believed that Hussey had behaved in such a manner as to entirely forfeit his confidence. He complained to the Duke of Portland that Hussey had 'thought proper to speak of government in shops and public places' concerning the treatment of Catholic soldiers and that he had shocked those of his own persuasion as much as those who were friendly to government. Hussey, Pelham informed the duke, 'was assured enough to endeavour to frighten me by alarming my private secretary' with a copy of his proposed pastoral. Hussey, however, was too prudent to allow the copy of the pastoral out of his hand, but did give Pelham a copy of his letter to the soldiers in general. Pelham sent on this address, 'the most inflammatory paper that bigotry could suggest,' to the duke and sought clarification on the nature of Hussey's position as Chaplain General.[102] Portland replied that he had no knowledge of Hussey's appointment as vicar general to the soldiers and that the first he had heard of it was from Hussey himself. He had informed the duke that Pius VI was about to make the appointment

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[101] Hussey to E. Burke, 30 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, p. 141.
[102] Pelham to Portland, 26 October 1796, H.O. 100/62/298

and Portland had been led to believe that such an appointment from Rome was necessary in order for the chaplains of the Irish Brigade to perform their ecclesiastical function. In any case, Hussey would never have been appointed had Portland the slightest suspicion that he would have made improper use of his powers. The duke comforted Pelham with the consolation that he was 'sufficiently aware of his[Hussey's] consequence to take no steps respecting him.'[103]

Edmund Burke wrote to Hussey in December of the same year declaring that while Hussey found himself excluded from all communications with the Castle, he could count himself lucky that he was not in Newgate. In the same letter, described by Cruise O'Brien as Burke's political testament with regard to Ireland, Hussey was warned of the dangers of holding out 'to an irritated people any hopes that we are not pretty sure of being able to realise.'[104] In the mean time Burke advised that it would not be wise to push the issue until such time as 'the Castle shall show a greater disposition to listen to its true friends than hitherto it has done.'

Hussey's position was further complicated in December 1796 when he received notification of his appointment to the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore. That Hussey should be chosen to succeed Dr William Egan was no surprise; as early as 1791 he was suggested for the diocese of Cashel and in September 1796 Dr Bray wrote to Moylan of Cork recommending Hussey for Waterford adding that he 'was much esteemed by Dr Egan as the best qualified to succeed him.'[105] In Rome Cardinal Brancador had opposed Hussey's appointment on the grounds that he was anti-Jesuit. The Dominican Fr Luke Concanen, Troy's Roman

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103 Portland to Pelham, 1 November 1796 H.O. 100/62/310-311
104 E Burke to T Hussey, Post 9 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, pp 161-172. C. Cruise O'Brien, *Burke's Great Melody*, p.572.
105 Bray to Moylan, Septtember 1796, cited in Healy, *Maynooth*, p 174.

agent, dispelled the cardinal's reservations and assured him that when 'he'd be in a higher position he'd lose such prejudices.'[106] The clergy of Waterford, too, were divided on Hussey's appointment. Bishop James Louis O'Donnel of NewFoundland wrote to Troy in January 1797 informing him of the deep divisions in the diocese:

> Mr H[Thomas Hearn] expects Mr Hussey will be the bishop and hopes thereby to screw himself into the chief administration of the diocese, as he supposes he'll spend a great part of his time in London and Dublin. This I only heard from the Keating[parish priest of St John's] party who I believe justly complain against H[earn] and his adherents. I am listed with no party.[107]

In other circles Hussey's appointment was credited to government intervention. In their resolution on the veto question in 1799 the Bishops wrote that 'if ever a Catholic Prelate was to be considered the virtual nominee of the Castle, Doctor Hussey himself was assuredly that individual.' If this was the case, Fitzpatrick interprets the government's action as an attempt to remove Hussey to where it was felt he could do little harm.[108] In any case, Hussey was consecrated early in 1797 in Francis Street chapel, Dublin. The event was in stark contrast to the consecration of his predecessor, Dr Egan, who was ordained bishop by Dr Nicholas Sweetman of Ferns, in a private function in the house of his brother-in-law at Taghmon, county Wexford on Pentecost Sunday 1771.[109] Hussey also broke with recent precedent by governing his diocese from Waterford, whereas his predecessors had lived either in Carrick-on-Suir or Clonmel.

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106 Concanen to Troy, 10 December 1796, D.D.A.
107 O'Donnell to Troy, 17 January 1797, D.D.A.
108 Resolutions of the Bishops of Ireland on the Veto Question, 1799, Troy Papers, D.D.A. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service*, p 282.
109 J. Fitzpatrick, *Edmund Rice*, (Dublin 1945), p 87.

The Castle's suspicion of Hussey continued to grow. Leonard McNally informed the Castle that 'many who were formerly for mild measures have joined the determined party - among these is Dr Hussey... he will not act or appear to act with the present government, which he openly says has lost the country.' In the same letter, McNally notes that 'the public declaration of [John] Keogh's party is that there is no longer a Catholic question, but an Irish question before the nation, and that question is freedom for the nation.'[110]

Hussey continued to voice his discontent with the situation in the army. In April 1797, he wrote to Burke that the incidents were so numerous in his diocese that he charged the priests to use all in their spiritual power to resist what he called 'this impolitic tyranny.' He said that he had prepared a pastoral letter, a short one intended only as a preface to a longer one. 'I know its contents will not be acceptable to some, but I am come hither, not to flatter my enemies, but to do my duty.'[111]

Hussey's pastoral dealt with a wide spectrum of subjects, all of which aroused wrath.[112] It begins with the rhetoric normally associated with the hierarchy, but very suddenly alters course, in stark contrast to the pastorals of Young, Moylan and Troy:

> In these critical and awful times, when opinions seem spreading over this island, of a novel and dangerous tendency - when the remnants of old oppressions and new principles which tend to anarchy, are struggling for victory, and which in collision may produce the ruin of religion - when a moral earthquake shakes all Europe, I felt no small affliction and alarm, upon receiving the command of the Head of the Church to preside over the Catholics of these united dioceses.[113]

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110 J.W. to -----, 1 February 1797, S.P.O., 620/36/227.
111 Hussey to Burke, 2 April 1797, *Burke Corr,* ix, p. 304.
112 T Hussey, *A Pastoral letter to the Catholics of the united diocesses of Waterford and Lismore*,(Waterford ,1797).
113 *Pastoral,* p. 3

It was the reference to 'the remnants of old oppression' which set the tone of the pastoral and raised such reaction. Hussey was relieved that 'no part of Ireland was more exempt from turbulence and insubordination to the laws than this district and that the memory of legal injustices and cruelties formerly practiced in this country. . . is completely and happily effaced, I hope forever.'[114] This double-edged approach characterised the earlier pastoral and gave rise to much ambiguity as the bishop continually contrasted the present and the 'forgotten' past.

Hussey warned his priests not to allow themselves be made the instruments of the rich, who would try through them to dominate the people. 'The poor,' he reminded them, 'were always your friends. They inflexibly adhered to you... and shared their scanty meals with you.' The rich, on the other hand, not only shut their doors against you, 'but not infrequently hunted you like wild beasts.'[115] He then instructed his priests to shun all political interferences and to avoid the 'intermixing of the politics of the world with the sublime and heavenly maxims of the Catholic religion - they have not the smallest connection with each other.'[116]

If the Catholic military frequent Protestant places of worship in any of the parishes of the diocese, the priests were to teach them how 'contrary to the principles of the Catholic faith it is, externally to profess one faith and interiorly to believe another.' Such behaviour in the eyes of the world is mean, as well as odious and abominable in the sight of God.[117] The Catholic soldier ought not to be ashamed of openly

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114 *Pastoral* p. 3.
115 *Pastoral*, p 4.
116 *Pastoral*, p. 9.
117 *Pastoral*, p. 5.

professing the Catholic religion, 'the religion of Irishmen.'[118] Hussey granted the officers competence in all matters concerning the service of the king and the soldiers were duty bound to obey them, but in matters regarding the service of God, the officers have no authority over them. He condemned the abuses in the army which had alarmed the king's true friends. Such practices would jacobinise the soldiers and in the hour of danger cause them to forget their duty, in order to revenge their persecutors.

The Bishop launched into what was perceived as an assault on the Church of Ireland, that 'small sect whom it suited to regulate its creed and form of worship according to the shape and form of government, of the limited boundaries where the sect arose, exists and dies away.' What a contrast to the Catholic religion, preached to all peoples and nations and suitable to all forms of government, monarchies or republics, aristocracies or democracies. Despotic or popular governments are not the concerns of the Catholic Church.[119] The penal laws, he argued, had made the Catholics total strangers in their own land. The ruling party, 'with insolence in their looks and oppression in their hearts ,' had ground them down. Even the course of justice was perverted according to the prejudices and party views of the judges, while in the senate some of the most powerful men in the land declared that they hoped to see the day when no Catholic would dare to speak to a Protestant with his hat on.[120] Yet even in these provoking times the Catholics remained inflexibly attached to their religion and their king.

Hussey continued his discourse noting the progress made towards dismantling the popery laws. No matter how hard 'a junto may

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[118] *Pastoral*, p. 6.
[119] *Pastoral*, p. 9.
[120] *Pastoral*, p. 10.

raise mobs to throw obstacles against the total repeal of them, yet all their efforts must be useless.'

> The vast rock is already detached from the mountain's brow, and whoever opposed its descent and removal must be crushed by his own rash endeavours. The popery laws are on the eve of being extinguished forever and may no wicked hand ever attempt to divide this land by making religious distinctions a mask to disturb, - to oppress it.[121]

The education question, too, was raised and the prelate attacked the charity schools of Waterford where, as he had explained to Burke, the clergy of the establishment wanted to have no catechism taught but the Protestant one. Hussey denounced these prosleytising schools and condemned the parent who would 'be so criminal as to expose his offspring to those places of education where his religious faith or morals are likely to be perverted.'

He urged his priests to make their flocks aware of the honour of being accounted a member of the Catholic communion, the religion of so many kings and princes. 'Ours,' he concluded, 'is a laborious but also a meritorious and honourable employment. It forms the strongest bulwark to the state, by being the best supplement to the laws, which without morals are in vain.'[122]

The reaction to Hussey's pastoral was immediate and united in its hostility. At least five pamphlets appeared, all centred on the question of Hussey's liberality and the wisdom of reviving memories of past woes.[123] The purpose of the pastoral appeared very questionable and its contradictions were immediately visible, while 'the industry with which it

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121 *Pastoral*, p. 10.
122 *Pastoral* p. 12.
123 Rev Brittle, *Strictures and remarks on Dr Hussey's late pastoral address to the clergy of Lismore and Waterford*, (Dublin 1797). T. Tickle, *A letter to the Rev. Dr Hussey* ,(Dublin, 1797), Anon, *Remarks on the Rev Dr Hussey's pastoral letter by one of the people* (Dublin, 1797), Anon, *Letter to the Roman Catholic laity occasioned by Dr Hussey's pastoral letter,*(Dublin, 1797) and R. McKee, *Remarks on a pastoral letter lately written by the Rev. Dr Hussey* ,(Waterford ,1797).

was circulated in the metropolis, evinces views different from its avowed design.'[124] The interest in the pastoral may be inferred from the fact that it ran to seven editions: as one critic remarked, the pastoral became the 'talk of Dublin and was circulated freely all over the city.'[125] It was a publication of an 'extraordinary nature. . . an unseasonable and very intemperate production.'[126] At very best it was a 'saucy contemptuous challenge - daring us to enter anew. . . the rancorous field of controversy.'[127]

While 'breathing apparent professions of loyalty,' Dr Brittle, a Castleknock clergyman, accused Hussey of dragging forward 'the remnants of old oppression in order to distract his own clergy and madden the populace.'[128] How at such a critical point in time could a Catholic bishop 'violently tear open the old rankling wounds of past centuries. . . setting afloat the boiling passions of the uneasy mind,'[129] 'blowing up the dying embers of discontent and kindling afresh. . . the unhallowed flame of old animosity and disaffection towards their Protestant brethren?'[130] Surely memories of the 'mangled carcasses of the French clergy' were ample warning to 'cool the headlong ardour of an intemperate zealot?'[131] How different was Bishop Moylan, the pamphleteer asked, who when faced with danger at his door, did not waver one instant between French equality and the happiness of the country?.[132]

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124 *Remarks*, p. 1
125 *ibid*, p 6-8
126 *Strictures,* p 3
127 *A Letter*, p. 1
128 *Strictures*, p. 4.
129 *Strictures,* p 4
130 *Remarks*, p. 1.
131 *Remarks* p. 6
132 *Remarks* p. 5.

The contradictions of the pastoral were obvious to its critics. The call to the clergy to avoid political interference can hardly be credible from one who bustled in politics for most of his life. Hussey's own personal wealth undermined his charge to the priests to separate themselves from the rich since, unique among the Catholic bishops, Hussey was able to live independent of his own diocese and refused to accept the £500 per annum due to the bishop. In the same way he had earlier refused an annual salary of £100 as president of Maynooth. His instructions, therefore, were seen as ungenerous and impolitic, an attempt to 'kindle distinctions between the poor and the rich, and instructing the unthinking and untaught, that the latter are their oppressors, and thus opening wide the door of democratic rage and separation.'[133] His reference to the Anglicans as an insignificant, small sect met with a similar reaction, especially at a time when the liberality of Protestant principles had nearly succeeded in restoring Catholic rights.[134] What were the Protestants to conclude from Hussey's pastoral? Did 'the same intolerant rancour still sour the breast of Irish Catholics?' "Oh! Much injured Ulster,' one pamphleteer concluded, 'these are the friends for whom you smart under the lash of martial law and outlawry.'[135]

Political reaction to the pastoral was swift and stern. In the Irish House of Lords, on 4 May 1797 Lord Dillon described Hussey's letter as the 'most gross and mischievous that could be penned.' It was, the most inflammatory pamphlet which he ever had read and he concluded by asking what could be hoped from the poor 'so long as they are made the dupes of such men as these.'[136] The conservative firebrand Patrick

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133 *Strictures*, p. 6.
134 *Remarks*, p. 1
135 *Remarks* p. 7.
136 *F.D.J.* 6 May 1797; *D.E.P.*, 6 May 1797.

Duigenan echoed Dillon's views that the pastoral tended to 'encourage the evil dispositions of the day.' He described it as 'as seditious a publication as any which has appeared in modern times, provoking the Irish Romanists to insurrection.'[137] He later condemned how 'the pious Bishop most anxiously retailed every vulgar tradition of oppressive conduct during the existence of the popery code - misrepresenting everything that was true and inflaming everything that was false.'[138] Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, the Church of Ireland bishop of Ossory, reacted strongly to Hussey's advocacy of segregated education and declared that 'the worst enemies of Ireland could not devise a scheme more effectually calculated to keep this description of the king's subjects a distinct people forever, and to maintain eternal enmity and hatred between them and the Protestant body.'[139] He was convinced that Hussey wished to erect a spiritual wall to replace civil barriers which were being dismantled.

The response of the Catholic hierarchy was equally united in its criticism of Hussey.[140] On the subject of the pastoral Troy, wrote to Bray in April 1797 that 'there is too much vinegar in it, not sufficiently tempered with oil.' The reference to the lord lieutenant and the government as a faction or junto was too pointed. 'Terms less strong and more conciliatory would be equally effectual without giving offense,' he concluded.[141] Troy believed that the 'moderate Catholics thought it harsh and unreasonable, calculated to irritate, to open and not to close the wounds of party.'[142] The pastoral had been republished in Dublin,

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137 P. Duigenan, A *fair representation of the present state of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1800), p. 20

138 *F.D.J.*, 27/2/1798.

139 O'Beirne to Castlereagh, 27 April 1799 in *Castlereagh Corr* ii, p. 283.

140 F Moylan to Cardinal Gerdil, 6 January 1798, A.P.F., S.C., Irlanda, vol 17, f511, cited in P.O'Donoghue, "The Catholic Church', p. 302

141 Troy to Bray, 15 April 1797.

142 Troy to Carroll, 13 April 1798, cited in O'Donoghue, Catholic Church p 301.

where according to Troy it 'made a great noise' and gave great offence at the Castle. Several copies had been sent to Thomas Pelham by Protestant clergy and laity in Waterford with bitter complaints of the disturbance and bitterness it had caused. The archbishop appealed to Thomas Bray to talk with Hussey in an effort to discourage further indiscretions.[143] In a letter to Luke Concanen in Rome, Troy referred to Hussey's instruction as an 'unpastoral letter.'[144] The bishops were extremely aware of the Castle's reaction and believed Hussey had made himself 'odious and disagreeable by his rash and fatal pastoral.'[145] In May 1797 Troy met with Pelham. Reporting to Bishop Plunkett, Troy wrote:

> Before I could say anything more on this subject he fortunately turned the conversation to Dr Hussey, asking me if he had not gone to England? On my answering 'yes' he said that his pastoral letter was very intemperate and inflammatory, little expected from any Catholic pastor, and especially from one circumstanced as Dr Hussey is, in these times of public agitation, where every honest man should allay the ferment instead of opening the sores. I assured him that it was published without the approbation or knowledge of any of our prelates and that we considered it as unseasonable and reprehensible in its tendency. "I thought so,' said he, 'but am glad to hear it from you, as the contrary was surmised.' He concluded on the subject by saying 'Hussey is very warm, he has acted without reflection.'[146]

Edmund Burke also became alarmed by the reaction to his friend's pastoral. Writing to Hussey, he declared that 'from the moment that the Government who employed you betrayed you, they determined at the same time to destroy you.' The bishop had come to an open issue with them and 'they are not people to stop short in their course' he

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143 Troy to T. Bray, 15 April 1797, C.D.A.
144 L Concanen to J Troy, 10 June 1797, D.D.A.
145 Bray to Moylan, 22 February 1802, E. Bolster(ed), 'The Moylan Correspondence,' in *Collect. Hib.*, ix, 1971, p 121.
146 Troy to Plunkett, 23 May 1797 in Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, ii, p. 212.

warned.[147] Burke agreed that what Hussey had done was 'perfectly agreeable to your duty as a Catholic bishop and a man of honour and spirit.' Whether the bishop's actions were prudent in 'an enslaved country,' was a different question. Hussey derived great consolation from Burke's support and declared that 'such a man's praise more than overbalanced the abuse which the Irish Parliament of ---- memory endeavoured to bespatter me.'[148]

Hussey's own feelings about the controversy are best described in his letter to bishop Francis Moylan of Cork. He opens the letter thanking the Bishop for his 'candid and friendly remarks' concerning his pastoral letter. Hussey was surprised, however, that Moylan replied as if the pastoral had touched on politics. The remainder of the letter is most revealing;

> Surely the religious grievances we have cruelly laboured under and under a part of which we still labour.. are not politick? If they said that I rip up sores already healed; no man knows better than yourself they are not healed. You remember among many other instances the cruel whipping of the soldiers of the Sligo militia a few days ago, of which you complained to the Lord Lieutenant. I infer from the noise which the pastoral letter has made, the low idea which they form of the Catholics of the country when they think it imprudent of them to complain of their religious grievances.
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> Your own pastoral letter, which in the hour of danger justly received the praise of Protestants of both Kingdoms - what has it produced? A declaration from the government that Catholics of Ireland should wear the remaining chains to the end of the world! What I have written does not contain, I am persuaded, a word against the laws; and if I suffer any illegal persecution - why, I am not the first Catholic who suffered it; but of this they may be assured - that I shall not suffer silently.[149]

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147 Burke to Hussey, 16 May 1797, *Burke Corr.* ix , p 342-345.

148 Hussey to F Plowden cited in T England, *Life of Rev Arthur O'Leary* (London, 1822), p. 204.

149 Hussey to Moylan, 22 April 1797, in England, *Life of Arthur O'Leary* p. 202.

Hussey concluded that his private affairs called him to London, but he would not leave Ireland till 'this squall is over.'

It is difficult to assess the local effects of the pastoral. To what extent the 'incendiary' aroused feelings of disaffection is unclear, but many of the Castle's correspondents attributed the disturbed state of Waterford to Hussey. Francis Higgins reported that Hussey had taken a 'very insidious part,' and that in every company he railed against Lord Camden's administration and had personally abused Pelham.[150] Caesar Colclough reported in May 1797 that Wexford and the neighbouring parts of Kilkenny and Carlow were not to be depended on as 'the Ulster address [of the United Irishmen] and Dr Hussey's pastoral letter have been circulated there and it is reported everywhere that the French are coming as friends of the poor.'[151] In other cases, however, the poor resented Hussey's stance believing that it would spoil their chances of employment in Protestant households. Sir Richard Musgrave informed the Castle that Waterford, 'this once peaceable county, escaped the contagion of these abominable principles for four years until Dr Hussey influenced the inhabitants.. by his pastoral and the sermons he preached.' From that time on 'the lower class of people had been much agitated,' and he was convinced Hussey was employed by Fox and Grey as 'an engine to excite sedition in this kingdom.'[152] Later in 1797, the paranoid Musgrave informed Pelham that the disturbances in the county were part of a Popish plot. Hussey, he believed, was behind the plot and Musgrave requested permission to intercept the Bishop's correspondence with his vicar general, Thomas Hearn. He was

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[150] F.H. to -----. 24 April 1797, S.P.O.R.P. 620/18/14
[151] C Colclough to Pelham, 1 May 1797, S.P.O.R.P. 620/30/3
[152] R Musgrave to ----- 28 October 1797, S.P.O 620/32/188.

certain that important discoveries could be made, were the letters intercepted at Waterford.[153]

It was inevitable in the aftermath of the controversy that Hussey would have to resign the presidency of the Royal College. In May 1797 some of the trustees of the College, prompted by the Castle, tried to persuade Hussey to resign, but he refused. At the end of 1797 Hussey was still president, but Troy wrote to Bray of Cashel that 'he may be prevailed upon to resign.' Should diplomatic approaches fail, Troy believed he could be forced to resign, since 'the duties of president and bishop were incompatible.'[154] In the following February the Commons debate on the grant to Maynooth was a cause of great episcopal embarrassment. In a long and heated speech, Patrick Duigenan opposed the level of funding proposed for the College and abused its president, whom he described as 'a precious importation of Lord Fitzwilliam' but that 'by some fatality' Hussey had been left behind when Fitzwilliam 'and his schemes were exported.' The bishop's influence over the students at Maynooth could only be for the worse, and now the country was about to become prey to priests 'turned lose' from the college.' All of these, Duigenan was convinced, had 'their brains heated with the horrible opinions of Dr Hussey their founder.'[155] Eventually Hussey was dismissed as president by the trustees of Maynooth for non-residence, but amongst the bishops there was a feeling that he should also resign the diocese of Waterford. In 1798 Hussey requested a coadjutor, but this was refused in Rome. Luke Concanen wrote to Troy in January 1799 that he had seen a letter to Rome in which Drs Bray, Moylan, Dillon and Sughrue 'complain of his[Hussey's] non-residence,

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153 Musgrave to Pelham, 15 November 1797, S.P.O.. 620/33/63. P. Power, *Waterford and Lismore*, (Cork, 1937) p. 275
154 Troy to Bray, 17 December 1797, cited in McNally, 'John Troy,'.p. 180
155 Duigenan in the Irish House of Commons, 26 Feb. 1798, *F.D.J.*, 27 February 1798.

his pastoral letter and conclude requesting no coadjutor be given him, that he may renounce and be appointed Archbishop *in partibus.*'[156] Earl Camden, too, shared these views and suggested to the Duke of Portland that he recommend the Pope to 'recall so dangerous a man from this kingdom.'[157] In 1801, Hussey once again requested a coadjutor and suggested Dr J.B. Walsh, rector of the Irish College, Paris. This application was also refused on the grounds that Dr Walsh was regarded in London as unsuitable, due to his pro-French sentiments.[158] Hussey had, in fact, left Ireland shortly after the publication of his pastoral and it appears he did not return until late in 1802, a few months before his death. During this period of absence, he busied himself in many enterprises, among them being his attempts to restore the Irish College in Paris which had been closed for nine years. It was also rumoured that he was assisting Cardinal Gonsalvi in the negotiations of the concordat with Napoleon![159] Despite his absence from the diocese, however, the bishop maintained his interest in the affairs of the church in Waterford. Hussey, during all this period, was able to govern his diocese through his vicar general, Dr Hearne.[160]

In retrospect, Hussey regretted the indiscretions of his pastoral and in a most revealing, undated letter to J.B. Clinch, professor of rhetoric at Maynooth, he referred to it as 'a foolish milk and water letter.' [161] This letter, most likely written in early 1799, reflects his continued

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156 L. Concanen to Troy, 12 January 1799, D.D.A.
157 Camden to Portland, 15 April 1797, HO 100/69/201.
158 P. Boyle, 'Documents relative to the appointment of an Archbishop of Cashel, 1791, and a coadjutor of Waterford, 1801,' in *Arch. Hib.*, VII(1918) p. 15.
159 T. England, *Life of Arthur O'Leary,* p 206. John Healy doubts any such involvement, *Maynooth*, p 182. James L. O'Donnel, New foundland to J. Plessis, Quebec, 10 May 1801, in C. J. Byrne(ed.) *Gentlemen Bishops and Faction Fighters: the letters of Bishops O'Donnell, Lambert, Scallan and other Irish missionaries*, (St. John's, 1984) p.188.
160 For Hussey's involvement of Waterford and Lismore see D. Keogh, 'Thomas Hussey, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore 1797-1803, and the rebellion of 1798' in T. Power(ed.) *Waterford; History and Society* (Dublin, 1992).
161 T. Hussey to J.B. Clinch, 10 January(1799?), Madden MSS, T.C.D., 873/197.

interest in Irish affairs. Once again, he refers to the battle between the 'remnants of old oppression' and 'new opinions that lead to anarchy.' Despite the treatment Hussey had received at the hands of the government, despite the criticism and questioning of his loyal principles in all quarters, he confessed to Clinch that his 'affections for his native land were not so effaced as to enable him to say with our countryman after he had gone to bed 'Arrah, let the house burn away; what do I care who am only a lodger?'

Hussey returned to Ireland in 1803 and died suddenly at Tramore 11 of July, having taken a fit while swimming there.[162] Even in death he managed to rouse strong feelings and his funeral became the scene of violent protest. As his remains were being brought to Waterford for burial, the proceedings were interrupted by a group of drunken soldiers returning from an Orange meeting who tried to toss his coffin into the Suir. Thomas Hearn later described to Lord Donoughmore how this mob had uttered 'the most abusive threats to cut up his remains and his friends.'[163] The riot was only quelled with the arrival of the local militia who recovered the remains and escorted the funeral on its way.[164]

Hussey was certainly no radical and his consignment amongst the instigators of the 1798 rebellion is indefensible. Even the ambivalence of modern historiography is difficult to explain, considering the wealth of sources available, the most important of which is certainly the bishop's correspondence with Edmund Burke. It was this friendship which proved the greatest influence upon Hussey. Hussey has become the victim of simplification, while the odd passing reference to him reflects the sheer dearth of solid research on the role of the Catholic Church and the 1798

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162 *Gentleman's Magazine*,(Dublin 1803) p. 881.
163 Hearn to Donoughmore, 16 July 1803, P.R.O.N.I., T3459/D34/1
164 Normoyle,p. 49. *The Morning Register,* 18/1/1825, S.P.O. 620/65/142.

rebellion. Hussey was no incendiary, nor was his voice that 'of a lone, bold, slightly aristocratic man of the world.'[165] Hussey is very much in the mould of the 'prince bishop' and in many ways he had more in common with some of the Anglican bishops than his own Roman Catholic confreres. He was essentially conservative; his views on education, obedience to the laws and his unswerving conviction of priestly competence to regulate the lives of their flocks reflect this. The division that historiography has created between him and the remainder of the Catholic hierarchy is artificial. Their correspondence reflects this clearly, no where more so than in the candid admission of Dr Carroll of Baltimore that he had read the pastoral with 'pleasure and approbation,' until he heard it was 'censured by the most intelligent.'[166] If there was disagreement, it was on the question of prudence rather than on the content of Hussey's pastoral. It is in this respect, however, that the key to understanding Hussey's position is to be found. His English and continental experience had given him a confidence which enabled him to voice his opposition to the penal laws in the strongest terms, seeking redress as a right rather than a reward to be sought with deference. The scope of his concerns, also set him apart from his fellow bishops and these reflected his wide political interests. It is this fact which separates Hussey from the remainder of the bishops, placing him more in line with the aggressive Catholic hierarchy of the nineteenth century than with the quiescent pastors labouring under the Penal Laws.

Nevertheless, the Hussey affair did affect the relationship the bishops had enjoyed with the Castle since the beginning of the Camden administration. The loyal reputation of the prelates had been sullied by the indiscretion of one of their number and Castle paranoia reached such

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165 P 'O. Donoghue, 'Catholic Church' p. 295.
166 J. Carroll, Baltimore, to J. Troy, 12 November 1798, D.D.A.

levels that even Troy, the steady loyalist, became the object of suspicion. Edmund Burke reported in May 1797 that the Castle runners in London were reporting that Troy had taken the United Irish oath, while almost a year later Camden still entertained suspicions about the archbishop's integrity.[167] The taint of suspicion goaded Troy into further exhibitions of loyalty, to the point of allowing the Castle 'improve or alter' declarations of the hierarchy's loyalty, so long as the main point was preserved, 'the exculpation of the Roman Catholic prelates.'[168] The affair had also strengthened the hand of the Castle and allowed the administration place pressure upon the bishops. Indeed their vulnerability was acknowledged by Francis Higgins who advised Edward Cooke to request Troy to read government proclamations from the city's pulpits, a task he was confident the bishop could not refuse.[169] It was this atmosphere which prevailed in the months leading up to the final outbreak of rebellion in 1798; in this air of suspicion the bishops studiously avoided any criticism of the administration, despite their obvious excesses, and co-opperated in the Castle game.

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167 E. Burke to T. Hussey, 16 May 1797, Camden to Portland, 6 May 1798, H.O. 100/69/275-8.
168 J. Troy to R. Marshall, *Castlereagh Corr.*, i, pp 176-177.
169 F.H. to E. Cooke, 18 May 1797, 620/18/14.

V

Priests, People and Popular Politicisation 1795-98.

The events of 1795 left the Catholic community in a state of disarray. Fitzwilliam's arrival in January resulted in popular rejoicing, yet within two months Catholic hopes for a repeal of their remaining disabilities had been dashed and their general disappointment was reflected by the riotous mob which accompanied Camden's carriage into Dublin. Reflecting on events Thomas Hussey described the country as being on the brink of civil war; with the people viewing parliament in an increasingly contemptible light, he feared they would 'lay it in the dust and erect a convention on the French scale in its place.'[1] This frustration quickly turned to anger as it became obvious to him that the race for the Catholics was over and that the 'dark villains of the Ascendancy' intended them to be the 'hewers of wood and drawers of water in eternum.'[2] The events of the previous three years, however, had greatly altered the temper of the Catholics, and the radical politics of the Committee had given them a new confidence and resilience. The heated reaction to the Kenmare secession, the excitement of the Convention, the revolution of 1793 and the Fitzwilliam crisis had all

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1 T. Hussey to E. Burke, 3 Mar. 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, p. 169.
2 *M. P.*, 21 Mar. 1795.

served as a Catholic political apprenticeship and now, with entry to parliament firmly closed in their face, out of door politics became increasingly inviting.

Tone identified this change in 1794 when he outlined for the French government the transformation which had taken place in Ireland, particularly amongst the Catholics who had 'within these two years received a great degree of information and manifested a proportionate degree of discontent.'[3] Sources of dissatisfaction were in no short supply, but the level to which political awareness had filtered down through Irish society reflected the impact of the revolution, at home and abroad. The country had witnessed an unprecedented period of politicisation and the propaganda of the radicals, with its consciously popular appeal, satisfied a desire for information, which in turn heightened the level of political awareness.[4] The United Irishmen brought this political evangelisation to a fine art. In September 1795 Leonard McNally attributed the 'revolution in the Catholic mind' to their publications and addresses which he believed were 'written to the passions and feelings of the multitude' and 'prepared the way for Paine's politics and theology.' In Cork, he believed, Paine's works were read by all the boys and that 'in most houses they now supply the place of the psalter and prayer book.'[5] Public readings from the papers also became a feature throughout the country. Very often the chapel gate was the chosen venue for these readings and their effectiveness is reflected in the many reports reaching the Castle. In May 1797 Pelham received the following account from Baltinglass, county Wicklow:

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3 W.T. Tone, *Life of Wolfe Tone*,(Washington, 1826), i, p. 278.
4 K. Whelan, 'The United Irishmen, the Enlightenment and Popular Culture,' in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan(eds), *The United Irishmen.*
5 J. W. to ---------- Sept. 1795, S.P.O. 620/10/121/27

> our town is overrun with disorder by the means of a republic newspaper now done in Carlow, where every Sunday two fellows come after Mass is over and read what they please to the ignorant country people so we are afraid to stir the day after.[6]

In late 1797 there were frequent reports of 'nocturnal assemblies of ruffians' near College Green, Dublin on the nights of publication of the *Press,* and by early January 1798 the newspapers had brought such disturbances to the streets that hawkers were forbidden from selling them on Sundays under threat of being taken to the Bridewell.[7]

The loyal prints and pamphleteers rounded on the radical newspapers, particularly on the *Northern Star* and later the *Press.* Charles Moore, rector of Moira, published a long reflection on the state of the country in the aftermath of the rebellion in 1798, and devoted considerable attention to the influence of the press.[8] Moore's contempt is plain and he parodied the popular politicisation of the country, describing the village shopkeeper with the newspaper spread across his counter:

> 'fearfully wise he shakes his empty head,
> and deals out empires as he deals his thread,
> His useless scales are in the corner flung,
> And Europe's balance hangs upon his tongue.

He condemned the wide availability of the papers, which were distributed gratis in many places, and the levels to which the *Press* and *Northern Star* had used 'every species of misrepresentation and sophistry to vilify the government, to extend the Union, to shake the connection with Great Britain and induce the people to look for French assistance.' Robert Day, chairman of the Dublin Grand Jury, raised the question of the

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6 Maurice Tracy to T. Pelham, 26 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/ 30/198.
7 *F.D.J.*, 2, 9 Jan. 1798.
8 C. Moore, *Reflections on the present state of our country*, (Dublin, 1798).

newspapers at the quarter sessions in January 1798. In a fierce attack he condemned the 'prostitution of the press' as the most deadly 'of all the calamities inflicted by this French faction.' The press had hitherto been the 'bulwark of our liberties,' he declared, but now it was reduced to a 'vehicle of defamation, infidelity and a sewer of everything vile, abominable and loathsome in society.'[9] Similarly, in the aftermath of the rebellion, the report of the Secret Committee singled out the effect of the newspapers for criticism. They had, it claimed, been used by the United Irishmen to the fullest extent to excite the people and to convert local prejudice into support for their purpose.[10]

Pubs proved a favoured spot for the public reading of newspapers: one loyal pamphleteer declared that every porter house 'could boast a set of statesmen, who without the aid of education or experience conceived themselves competent in every branch of legislative occupation.'[11] Pubs were frequently the location for meetings of the many book clubs which sprung up in the 1780s and 1790s. In Antrim and Down alone, J.R.R. Adams has identified sixteen such clubs in the 1790s; often these clubs provided a pretext for more radical meetings.[12] Captain MacNevin reported from Carrickfergus that the clubs were merely a cover for the United Irishmen, and the *Dublin Journal* in March 1796 described them as 'in general only a sort of preparatory school to the fraternity of Defenders.'[13] In these clubs the members were fed on a diet of Paine and radical pamphlets and prints carried with great industry through the country by pedlars and dealers; Lord Ely reported the case of

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9 R. Day, *A charge delivered to the Grand Jury of the County of Dublin, 9 January 1798*, (Dublin, 1798).

10 Report of the Committee of Secrecy, *F.D.J.*, 1 Sept. 1798.

11 C. Moore, *Reflections on the present state of our country,* (Dublin, 1798) p. 13 Anon, *Letters from a gentleman in Ireland to his friend at Bath*, (Cork, 1798) p. 9.

12 J. R.R. Adams, *The printed word and the common man: popular culture in Ulster 1700-1900,* (Belfast, 1987) p. 39

13 Capt. McNevin in K. Whelan, 'United Irishmen, the Enlightenment and Popular Culture in D.Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan(eds) *The United Irishmen. F.D.J.*, 8 Mar. 1796.

a carman in Enniscorthy who carried seditious papers from Dublin to Wexford and who 'harangues people in public houses against the government.'[14] Frequently, however, priests were described as the principal carriers of radical material; believing this to be the case, a search of the desks of Father Boyce, parish priest of Celbridge and of Father Andrew Ennis, parish priest of Maynooth, was ordered, apparently late in 1797, in an unsuccessful effort to find correspondence between Dublin and Kildare.[15]

The United Irishmen also found a cover for their meetings in the large number of debating societies and political clubs which were to be found in Dublin. The convention act of 1793 had made overt political activity impossible and attention was now focused on these societies and traditional associations in the city, which the radicals transformed for their purpose.[16] These clubs included the Friendly Society of Pill Lane, the Jacobin Club, the Association of Eating and Drinking Democratic Citizens, but most is known about the Telegraphic and Philanthropic societies because of the level of attention they had received in the Defender trials of 1795-6. The clubs and societies were modelled upon the *sociétés populaires* of revolutionary France and performed a similar function in Dublin's political underground.[17] Robert Day warned the Dublin Grand Jury in January 1797 that the treason within the city was 'kept up to delirium, and the infection diffused, by the committees and corresponding associations, acting by these cheap inflammatory publications and by secret missionaries.'[18]

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14 Lord Ely to Camden, 29 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/30/ 226

15 620/51/255 [late 1797?]

16 J. Smyth, 'Dublin's Political Underground in the 1790's' in G. O'Brien(ed.), *Parliament, Politics and People*, pp 134-135. T. Graham, 'Organisation of the Dublin United Irishmen.' in D. Dickson, D.Keogh and K. Whelan(eds) *United Irishmen.*

17 C. Mazauric, 'Political clubs and practices of sociability in revolutionary France,' in D. Dickson et al, *United Irishmen*

18 R. Day, *Address to the Grand Jury of the County of Dublin, January 1797*,(Dublin, 1797) p. 32.

In a similar way radicals turned their attention to the church and took advantage of the many opportunities offered by church structures. The chapel enjoyed a unique position in Irish society and very often it was the recognised meeting place or focal point in the village. In many areas the chapel was the only substantial building available to the people and it invariably served the function of church, school and meeting place.[19] The Right boys had made great use of the chapels for meetings in the 1780s, and in Clare John Fitzgibbon became so alarmed that his celebrated 1787 bill, which intended extending the English riot act to Ireland, singled out the chapels for attention. Claiming that chapels were centres of sedition, he proposed that if an illegal oath was tendered in or adjoining a chapel, the chapel ought be immediately destroyed, and a prohibition placed on the parish forbidding the rebuilding of a chapel within three years. The Catholic hierarchy responded immediately to these proposals, as did Grattan and Gardiner, and Fitzgibbon was forced to withdraw the clause.[20] In the 1790s the chapels again became the focal point for radical activity and the United Irishmen harnessed the great potential of the church, which had been illustrated so forcibly in the electioneering organised by the Catholic Committee in the run up to the Convention.

Chapel meeting were a constant feature of both urban and rural radicalism in the 1790s, and the level of reports reaching the Castle reflects the anxiety which the meetings generated. In July 1796 Leonard McNally claimed that the Defenders had originated in these parochial meetings, but many of these reports were extremely vague,

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19 K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Parish, the Catholic Chapel and Village development in Ireland' in *Irish Geography*, xvi(1983), pp. 1-16.

20 M. Wall, *Catholic Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, pp 158-159. See I. Murphy, The *Diocese of Killaloe in the Eighteenth Century*,(Dublin, 1992) p. 131. J. Kelly, 'The Genesis of 'Protestant Ascendancy,' in G.O'Brien(ed.), *Parliament, Politics and People*, pp. 120-121.

reporting little or nothing of a specific nature, except that a meeting had taken place.[21] The Francis Street meetings, attended by as many as three thousand on occas ion, had always attracted a great deal of attention because of its associations and strategic location in the city. Francis Higgins reported regularly on these meetings, many of which were attended by leading United Irishmen. He reported Edward Lewins, whom he claimed had been educated for the priesthood, haranguing against the government in the chapel in January 1796; in July 1797 he informed the Castle of numerous meetings held in the vestry 'for the purpose of instituting a Roman Catholic Magdalen asylum.'[22] These meetings were attended by John Keogh, Hugh Hamill, McDonell and all the Conventionists, the leaders of the United Irishmen, together with the clergy who had 'united with them.'[23] On another occasion he reported that the charity societies were composed of United Irishmen and that they formed with no intention other than to carry out their sedition.[24]

The large congregations at the church also provided the radicals with an opportunity to disseminate their propaganda, and broadsheets were frequently pasted to chapel doors and handbills were often passed out among the mass goers.[25] Reports of these handbills reached the Castle from all over Ireland. Sir William Godfrey became alarmed at the disturbed state of Kerry in January 1797 and reported his troop removing seditious papers from Listoy chapel door. Again from Munster Edward Newenham sent a copy of a long address taken from the door of the chapel at Nenagh, which may reflect the United Irish use of the 'Orange bogey' amongst the Catholics. The address 'to the poor unhappy

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21 J.W. to ---------- 24 July 1796, S.P.O. 620/36/227
22 F.H. to -------- 1 February 1797. S.P.O. 620/18/14.
23 F.H. to Cooke, 15 July 1797, S.P.O. 620/18/14.
24 F.H. to --------- 26 February 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14
25 T. Knox to T. Pelham, 5 June 1797, S.P.O. 620/53/25 in J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation', p.165.

papists,' contained a supposed Orange oath drawn up by the same party, Newenham believed, who framed the toast 'that the skins of the papists of Ireland may be drumheads to the yeomanry.'[26] Similar notices were placed on the doors of Protestant churches and in March 1798 the *Dublin Journal* printed one of them, found on the door of St Mary's Church Dublin, illustrating 'the various means used by the United Irishmen to irritate[the Catholics] .. and the Protestants against each other:

> Liberty - Erin go Braugh!
> You Protestant hereticks take notice, that mass will commence in this church by the first of May next. Your blood shall flow and your souls sent to Hell, to the devil your grandfather.[27]

The 1780s and 1790s had witnessed growing institutionalisation in the Catholic church and throughout the country the bishops had sought to introduce discipline and order into their diocesses. On one level this renewal is reflected in the restoration in many places of the diocesan conferences which had fallen by the way. Troy began this with the reintroduced regular conferences in Ossory in 1780 and his example was followed in many of the other dioceses in Leinster.[28] The priests in turn sought to catechise their flocks and the usual means of achieving this was by the formation of confraternities, particularly the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine which quickly spread through the country. Maura Duggan has described these confraternities as the outward sign of the church coming into line with the discipline and practice of Rome after the penal laws which had brought a breakdown of ecclesiastical structures and freelance religion.[29] Once again, however, these confraternities

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26 Wm. Godfrey to----------, 22 January 1797, S.P.O. 620/28/130, E. Newenham to ----, 1 November 1797, S.P.O. 620/33/104.
27 *F.D.J.*, 1 March 1798.
28 F. O'Fearghail, 'The Catholic Church in Kilkenny, 1600-1800' in K. Whelan(ed). *Kilkenny History and Society*, p. 245.
29 M. Duggan, 'The Popish Plot in County Carlow' in *Carloviana*, ii (1977) p. 7.

provided the United Irishmen with the necessary cover to carry on their activities.

In April 1797 Francis Higgins, no doubt alerted by John Sweetman's prominent role in fundraising for the new chapel in Clarendon Street, reported on a body called 'the brotherhood' which was attached to Stephen Street chapel. The group was made up of three hundred members who had assisted the Carmelites to build their new church in Clarendon Stree; Higgins was convinced that 'most of the body are sworn United Irishmen.' An attempt had been made to swear one member of the confraternity and he sought the advice of the priest, only to be told 'we will not advise you, act as you think proper, we shall only say taking any oath except which a court of justice compels is unlawful, but do as you please.' Higgins recommended Cooke to approach Troy about the matter, but commented that 'Doctor Troy can be particular, you need not doubt, which shows you that the priests are not averse to the designs of the present day.'[30] From Rush, Thomas Roche warned Cooke of similar meetings, which supposedly met for religious purposes but 'too frequently to disseminate their traiterous principles and to form plans for outrage.' Roche believed that the priests had formed the societies for honourable motives, but again suggested Troy be requested to discontinue such meetings.[31] From Edenderry Mrs Brownrigg, wife of Downshire's agent, pleaded leniency for a prisoner Kennedy, convicted at the Athy assizes for an attack on the Carberry Charter school and declared that:

> he became a great enthusiast in a popish mania that is of late spreading itself among the lower classes in this part of

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30 I am grateful to Niall Coghlan for this reference. F.H. to E. Cooke, 24 April 1797, S.P.O. 620/18/14.

31 T. Roche to E. Cooke, 12 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/61.

> the kingdom, particularly in the defenders called the Rosary or scapular of the Blessed Lady.[32]

The rector of Lackan, James Little, in his diary recording the events in Mayo during the French invasion, pointed to the use scapulars and confraternities by the radicals in mobilising the people; 'after undergoing the cookery of scapularism' he declared, the people were allured to feast upon 'the dish of atheistical libertinism.'[33] Certainly the levels of United infiltration of the confraternities may have been exaggerated, particularly in the anti-Catholic paranoia which gripped the country in the wake of Thomas Hussey's pastoral, but there was a definite overlap in membership and the democratic nature of the societies is also evident. This is reflected in a number of the papers seized on suspects in Dublin in the late 1790s. In June 1797 seditious papers were found on William Green by J.C. Beresford and, along with 'A new song composed on board H.M. Fleet', there was also a notice to attend the Grand Carmelite Fraternity in Ash Street chapel.[34] Papers found on Father Corcoran of Church street included a notice to attend a meeting in O'Brien's Cork Street, which was marked 'election night.'[35] Amongst Dr Troy's papers there is an account of a meeting of a finance committee at Townsend Street Chapel, signed by Richard Passmore, whose name frequently appears amongst lists of United Irish members.[36] Certainly in the aftermath of the rebellion there was a great deal of suspicion surrounding the confraternities, which Caesar Colclough believed had been very destructive in Wexford. In the west, the archbishop of Tuam, no doubt in response to the claims of the kind made by James Little, published a

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32 Mrs Brownrigg to E. Cooke, 27 Aug. 1797, S.P.O. 620/32/77

33 J. Little, Diary, in *Anal. Hib.*, II, p. 67.

34 June 1797, S.P.O. 620/31/180, another undated letter from the same time refers to assassins plotting in Ash Street chapel, 620/5/246.

35 7 January n.d.[1797], S.P.O. 620/36/225.

36 1 January 1795, D.D.A, Troy Papers, 43.

pastoral against scapulars which he believed had become not only objects of superstition, but had been used as banners by the rebels.[37]

Religious processions and funerals also became transformed into United Irish rallies and displays. The first symptoms of this were seen at the funeral of a freemason in Dungannon in November 1796. The funeral procession was joined by several lodges and eventually was broken up by the dragoons.[38] The first of the Dublin United funerals took place in April 1797 when five thousand, including the 'Marats of Pill Lane', marched in procession behind the remains of Edward Dunn.[39] Such funerals became commonplace in the city and again they were the cause of great alarm. Sir Henry Echlin reported one such funeral in Balbriggan:

> As I was returning here in the stage yesterday I was much surprised at seeing at least 200 men on horseback, almost all cropped pass by me. I found they were going to Lusk to the funeral of a man called Wade, a tanner from Dublin. I have seldom seen such an assemblage.[40]

There were also incidents of mock funerals. At the trial of Richard Dry in Cork, in September 1797, a witness Charles Callanan said that a man called Fisher had shown him a sign and asked him if he would go to a funeral. Callanan replied 'was it a real one?' The prosecution enquired why he had asked this question and Callanan replied, 'because I heard there was a coffin filled with stones to be buried.'[41]

The *Morning Post* reported the Castle's alarm at the funerals with no small degree of amusement, and wondered if the government would

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37 Colclough, Kilkenny to ------- 18 January 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/62. See K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Community in Eighteenth Century Wexford, ' in T. Power and K. Whelan(eds) *Endurance and Emergence; Catholics in eighteenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 1990) p. 149. J. Little, 'Diary of Rev. Jas Little,' in *Anal. Hib.*, II, pp. 64-5, Circular letter of Dr Dillon of Tuam, 27 March1799, D.D.A.

38 *M.P.*, 8 December 1796

39 *The Times*, 12 April 1797, in J. Smyth. "Dublin Political Underground', in G.O'Brien(ed) *Parliament, Politics and People*, p. 143. F.H. 9 April 1797 S.P.O. 620/18/14

40 Henry Echlin to ....., 17 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/95.

41 *The Trial of Richard Dry,* (Cork 1797) p. 42.

follow up its proclamation relating to funerals with rules governing the permissible attendances at weddings and christenings. The paper even suggested that in an effort to prevent further assemblies that babies at baptism ought to be called on to renounce not only the devil, but also 'the United Irishmen and all their works.'[42] In a similar way, the *Northern Star* reporting on the regulations concerning funerals declared that 'in future the people must literally follow the injunction of our Saviour, and let the dead bury the dead.'[43] However, the funerals attracted the attention of the Castle authorities and much of the cover which the confraternities and clubs had provided for the United Irishmen was now gone. Francis Higgins reported bitterness within the Society and that the Dublin Committee had been blamed for the funerals and meetings in ale houses, because of the 'government finding them under their eye.'[44] In a similar admission William Walter declared, 'it was them damn funerals which opened the government's eyes.'[45]

There was also a fear in government circles that the level to which the clergy depended on the people for support was bound to expose them to contagion. It was this fear which had made a state provision for the clergy seem so attractive to the administration throughout the 1790s, believing that a financially independent clergy would be much more effective in calling their flocks to a sense of duty. Commenting on this dependence Wakefield later noted that:

> it is necessary for them, from their abject condition, to flatter the weakness and humour the prejudices of the people, over whom they endeavour to acquire all possible influence; but I have been assured by many

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42 *M.P.*, 27 May 1797.

43 *Northern Star*, reported in *M.P.*, 8 Dec. 1796.

44 F.H. to E.Cooke, 27 June 1797, S.P.O. 620/18/14 In Tullow, a publican Mourne handed over the papers of the United committee who had met in his pub to the magistrates, 23 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/130

45 Information of William Walter, T.C.D. Sirr Papers, MS 869/5 ff 5-6 in J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 158.

> Roman Catholic gentlemen that notwithstanding these endeavours the effect is entirely reversed; over them the people have obtained a complete political ascendancy, from their daily food depending on their parishioners, their conduct must be conformable to their opinions. [46]

This same dependence was referred to by Bishop Stock, and in many cases the radicals exploited the position of the clergy, threatening them with a revival of the Whiteboy tactics of withholding dues, collections and so on unless they lent their support to the cause. Apart from mere financial necessity, however, the social links between priest and people introduced certain pressures.[47] In many cases the younger priests lodged with families and there they were exposed to the politicisation which had gripped the country; Father John Murphy's biographer attributes a great deal of the priest's radical formation to the influence of Tom Donovan, with whom he lodged at Boolavogue.[48] On his tour of Ireland, 1796-7, de la Tocnaye noted that the priests, pastors and curates, were invited to 'dinners without end', and in their submission of 1801 the bishops admitted that the priests 'in general dine nearly half the year in private families.'[49] One loyal pamphleteer questioned the reliability of the clergy and wondered if they could be depended on to speak candidly to those upon whom they depended for their subsistence? Were they in a position to urge loyalty to the government, or did they 'conform themselves to the manners of the class of people with whom they chiefly converse, and accompany them to the ale house and dram shop?'[50]

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46 Wakefield, ii, p. 554.
47 Stock in W.H. Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion*, p. 318.
48 N. Furlong, *Father John Murphy*, p. 17.
49 de la Tocnaye, *A Frenchman's walk through Ireland*, (Belfast, 1917) p. 135. *Castlereagh Corr.*, iv, p. 99. see J.A. Murphy 'The support of the Catholic clergy in Ireland, 1750-1850' in *Historical Studies*, v, (London, 1965) pp 103-121. P. Duigenan, *Fair Representation.*, p. 213.
50 *Reform or Ruin, take your choice!* (Dublin, 1798) pp 17-18.

From the appearance of the first symptoms of the French disease in Ireland, the Catholic hierarchy had taken every measure available to them to stem its growth and to establish beyond all doubt the loyalty of the Catholic church. Yet despite their exertions it was impossible to preserve the lower clergy from suggestions that they were not only involved in the radical conspiracy, but that they were to a great degree responsible for its direction. Within the hierarchy it may have been possible to sustain a united front amongst their thirty members, but loyalty proved much more difficult to maintain amongst the eighteen hundred priests in the country.

Ever since the intense political activity of the Catholic Convention the clergy had been regarded by loyalists with a considerable deal of suspicion. The rise in Defender activity and the increased levels of violence in early 1796, however, marked the beginning of sustained attempts to implicate the clergy in the disaffection sweeping the country. To many observers, a transformation seemed to have overtaken the clergy; in the aftermath of the rebellion William MacNeven referred to this in his examination before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords. The priests had, he believed, ceased to be alarmed by stories of French irreligion and had 'adopted the principles of the people on whom they are dependent.' He described the priests as 'generally good republicans,' who had 'rendered great service by propagating with a

discreet zeal the system of the Union.'[51] The anti-catholic Leonard McNally echoed these sentiments and informed John Pollock in July 1796 that now he was convinced of what he had always suspected, that 'the original instigators' and the 'medium of dissention' had been the priests, but that they had concealed their identity from those they led.[52]

For some time the hierarchy had been concerned at the level of support for French principles amongst the clergy, particularly amongst those who had recently returned from France. This anxiety was reflected in their private correspondence; in1794 Lawerence Nihell, bishop of Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, expressed his dissatisfaction that many of the young priests had brought from France a 'strong tincture of that destructive Republican spirit', and in their many submissions to the government prior to the foundation of Maynooth the bishops had regularly referred to this fact.[53] In the aftermath of the rebellion, Leonard McNally claimed that it was the priests and the country schoolmasters who had been the principal agitators of French politics, and he also believed that the most active were the priests and fugitive students who had returned from France.[54] The anti-Catholic Edward Newenham lamented the spread of 'the fanatical rage of equality' to the wife of General Montgomery of Quebec in 1794, attributing it to the priests whom the people obey 'with such superstition that they are the most abject slaves to them.'[55] In August 1796 John Troy received a complaint from Captain Richard Doyle of Ballymore Eustace that the parish priest there, Michael Devoy, had been preaching 'French philosophy asserting that all

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51 W. MacNevin, Secret Committee of the House of Lords, 3 August 1798. *F.D.J.*, 13 September 1798.
52 J.W. to J. Pollock, July 1796, S.P.O. 620/36/227.
53 Nihell to J. Troy, 20 February 1794, D.D.A.
54 J.W. to ---------- 6 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/10/121/111
55 E. Newenham to Mrs Montgomery, 12 February 1794. Newenham Papers, Princeton University. I am grateful to Eugene Coyle for this reference.

men are born equal.' The Captain, who had been a member of the Catholic Convention, could not accept this teaching since 'he had been born a gentleman.'[56] In the wake of the abortive French invasion in December 1796, reports concerning the clergy became more frequent, and Bishop Hussey's pastoral had a similar effect. Suspicion reached a high point in May 1797 as numerous reports of clerical activity reached the Castle. McNally declared that the priests were 'missionaries to a man among the people' and that they were preaching that 'the deliverance of their country from English influence is a religious duty.' Francis Higgins reported that in Munster and Connacht the priests were preaching levelling principles and that they;

> have told their congregations in their sermons that the overgrown rich, who never lived in the country, but drew away all its property were protected from contributing to the work of the country, but the poor of the kingdom in their brogues and even their salt was ordered to pay high rate of tax, to save the rich.

These sermons, he declared, had made 'wonderful impressions and alterations' on the minds of both the farmers and peasantry; from Limerick Edward Newenham expressed great concern that the people there 'led on by their clergy will be more fatal in assassination than the north.'[57] In the same month archbishop Troy met with Thomas Pelham at the Castle; the two discussed Hussey's recent pastoral and the archbishop was questioned about levels of clerical membership of the United Irishmen. When asked if it was true that many priests were associated with them Troy replied 'I hope not and I do not believe it.' Neither did the Chief Secretary believe the extent to which clerical membership was reported, since he was sure numbers had been

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56 R. Doyle, Ballymore Eustace, 4 August 1796, D.D.A.
57 J.W. to ------- 22 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/10/121/58, F.H. to E. Cooke, 25 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/14/18, E. Newenham, 31 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/30/257.

exaggerated in order to give the United Irishmen the appearance of strength. He did, however, have positive information that many priests had been sworn in different parts of the country.[58]

Much of the information reaching the Castle, however, was of very questionable value to the authorities. In many cases the information was of an extremely vague nature and as tension in the country grew from about the beginning of 1797 the reports became increasingly bizarre. Perhaps the most famous of all these reports, William Corbet's 1796 account of the priests of Dublin, illustrates best the weakness of the information reaching the Castle. The report is the most substantial of the returns made by an informer and its detail alone is of great value in locating Dublin's priests in the 1790s. The succession lists of the Dublin diocesan clergy provide useful confirmation; but Corbet's account allows us to locate in addition the city's regular clergy, many of whom were implicated in United Irish activity.[59] Corbet's letter is worth quoting in full as it illustrates both the strengths and weakness of the Castle's information.[60]

15 October 1796

Sir,
I take the liberty of enclosing the list I promised, which to the best of my judgement is accurate. The delay which occurred was unavoidable from the extensive enquiries I had to make as to their principles. Of every individual I either got a personal knowledge or information from their own friends. Amongst others I got acquainted with Leonard or Chabot. He dined at my house on Monday last with his friend Hunter and drank freely. He told me the object of the people. Belfast was to make United Irishmen of the military as fast as they were put there - and that in this they were very successful. That the Limerick Militia were to a man United Irishmen, and that a Scotch regiment sent there since of the same way of thinking and that the

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58 J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 23 May 1797, *Diocese of Meath* iii, p. 211
59 W.M. O'Riordan, 'The Succession of Parish Priests in the Archdiocese of Dublin, 17771-1851,' in *Reportorium Novum*, i, no. 2,(1956) pp.406-433,
60 W.M. Corbet to E. Cooke, 15 October 1796, S.P.O. 620/25/170.

people there would be glad how often the military were changed the better to extend their principles. He told me also of a conversation he said you had with Nelson[Samuel Neilson?] and Rowley Osborne afterwards, and how firmly they behaved.

Under the sanction of an oath of secrecy, I have felt Hunter's pulse. I told him a gentleman I did not know to be connected with government wished me to obtain information of what was going forward, and that I was sworn not to divulge his name. If I could offer him anything confidential I am of the opinion he would be useful privately, but never publicly.

W.M. Corbet.

E. Cooke, Esq.

In Dublin there are 15 chapels, of which nine are parish chapels, and 6 friaries

1. Liffey St. Clark, parish priest, an old man of moderate principles. Gahan, Costigan, Kenny, O'Brien, the same. Conroy, McFarland, negative, Louby, a democrat.
2. Denmark St., a friary. Gibbons, prior, McMahon, Mulcail, Lynch, Traynor, Strong, democrats. Daily, Dalton(brother to the late count of that name), Farrell, Kindelan, Neterville, of moderate principles.
3. Mary's Lane. Dixon, parish priest, Mulcail, Leonard, Gilmore, moderates. Dwyer, Farrell, Cary, democrats.(the last two remarkable for their violent principles).
4. Church St. O'Brien, prior, a democrat. Two of the name of Corcoran, moderate. Caffry, negative. Leonard, Cashell, Carey, violent democrats. (The last mentioned is in the country beyond Swords superintending the farm of his cousin who fled from Defenderism.)
5. Arran Quay. Talbot, parish priest, in a mad house. Russell pro tem adm, democratically inclined. Purcell, Merrit, Dunn, Dixon, Powell, negative.
6. Bridge St. parish priest Fitzgerald, McGinnis, Quigley, Manning, Prendergast, moderate.
7. John's lane. Gahan, prior, Gahan Junr., moderates. Fannin, Boylan, negative. Kelly, Hickey, democrats.
8. James St. Doyle, parish priest, Maguire, Madden, Callan, moderate. Curgan, Tomins, Fitzimons, negative.
9. Meath St. Sherlock, parish priest, moderate, Brady, Dignam, Carberry, negative. Dunn, Kearns, democrats.
10. Ash St. Farrell, prior. Molloy, Cassan, Reynold, democratically inclined.

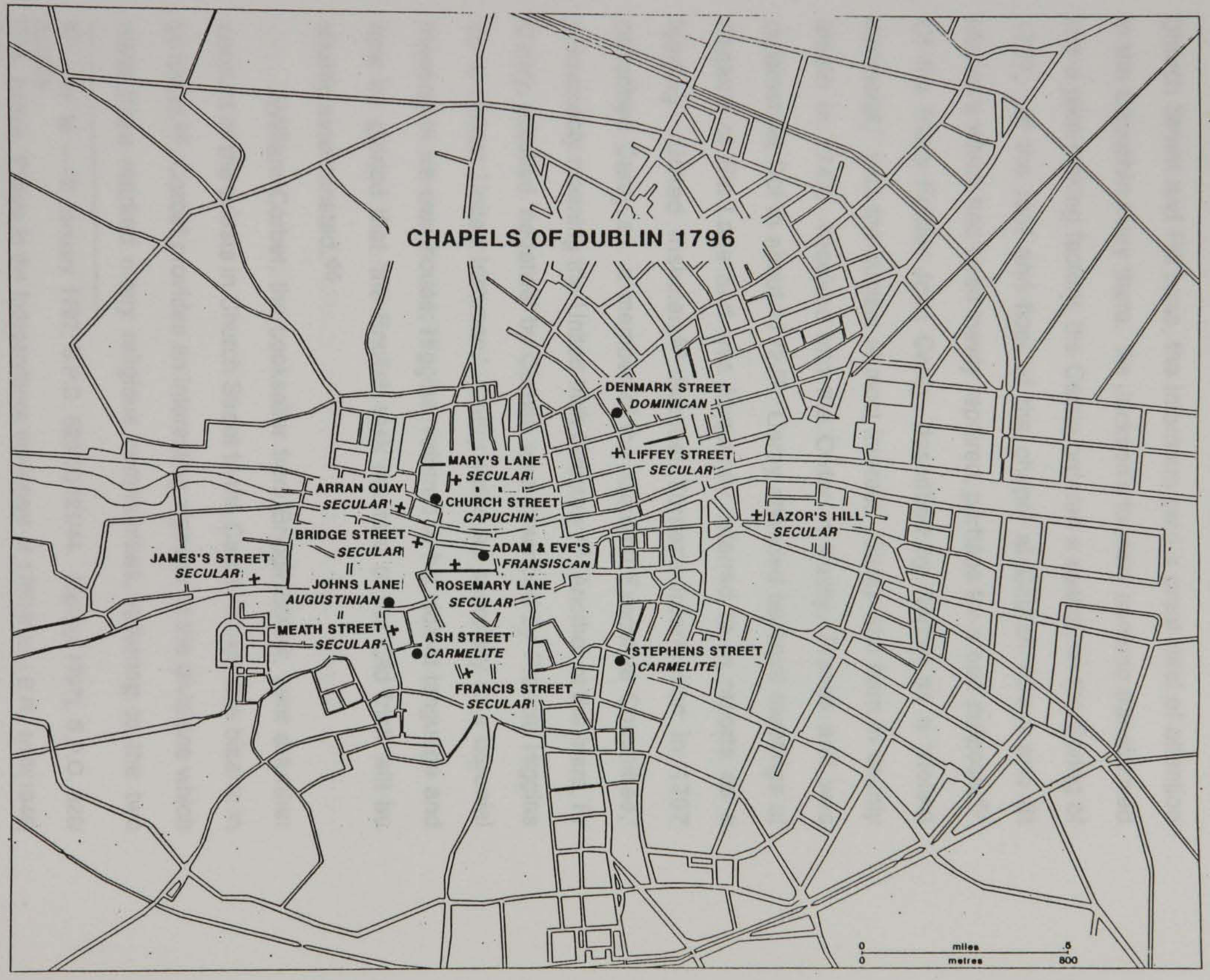
11. Francis St. Dr Troy, parish priest. Hamill, Callaghan, Gerrard, Wade, Byrne, Walsh, Sheridan, Ryan, moderates.
12. Stephen St. Long, prior, Oates, Ennis, moderate. Fitzpatrick, Flyn, Ward, Reilly, democratically inclined.
13. Lazor's Hill. Maurice, parish priest. Darcy, Devine, moderates, Griffin, O'Halloran, Kelly, negative. Smyth, Barret, democrats.
14. Rosemary Lane. Murphy, parish priest, in a mad house. Betagh, pro tem, O'Brien, Byrne, Dunn, moderates. Kinshelagh, Kelly, Carberry, negative. Bergin democrat.
15. Adam and Eve's. Brady, prior. O'Brien, Byrne, Conroy, Purfield, moderate. Two Morans, democrats McMahon of Dorset St. Nunnery, moderate. Finn, parish priest of Ringsend, a democrat. Conolly, parish priest of Butterstown, do.

A breakdown of the information presents a tantalising pointer to the political opinion of the Dublin clergy. 'Democrats' apparently accounted for fewer than one third of the clergy, but amongst the regular clergy the percentage of 'democrats' was far higher than amongst the diocesan priests. This pattern is reflected in many of the other reports reaching the Castle prior to May 1798, but once the actual rebellion broke out the diocesan clergy took a far more active role.

	Moderate	**Negative**	**Democrat**
Secular	38	19	13
Regular	17	3	23
	55	22	36

Perhaps the greatest weakness in the Corbet account is that nowhere does he explain his terms 'moderate,' 'negative' or 'democrat.' Without

these clarifications interpretation of Corbet's information becomes difficult. However, many of the 'democrats' referred to in Corbet's account feature frequently in subsequent reports to the Castle, which may indicate that they were singled out for surveillance.


CHAPELS OF DUBLIN 1796
DENMARK STREET
DOMINICAN
MARY'S LANE
SECULAR
LIFFEY STREET
SECULAR
ARRAN QUAY
SECULAR
CHURCH STREET
CAPUCHIN
LAZOR'S HILL
SECULAR
BRIDGE STREET
SECULAR
ADAM & EVE'S
FRANSISCAN
JAMES'S STREET
SECULAR
JOHNS LANE
AUGUSTINIAN
ROSEMARY LANE
SECULAR
MEATH STREET
SECULAR
ASH STREET
CARMELITE
STEPHENS STREET
CARMELITE
FRANCIS STREET
SECULAR
0 miles .5
0 metres 800

With the heart of the United Irish organisation in Dublin around Church Street and Pill Lane, the informers paid a great deal of attention to the Capuchin friary there. As Jackson's foundry became transformed into a pike-making factory, the Castle ordered a search, in the Spring of 1797, of the roof and floor of the chapel at Church Street and St Michan's which had been 'newly repaired, perhaps for a bad purpose.'[61] Of the friars Father John Carey, described by Corbet as a 'violent democrat,' was the subject of most interest. Carey was born in county Meath in 1747, received into the Order in Vassy, France and was ordained at Dol in about 1772.[62] Carey attended baronial meetings at Fagan's of Pill Lane and was frequently referred to in reports as a leading United Irishmen.[63] Samuel Turner's information in 1797 described Carey as a member of the 'General Executive Committee,' presumably meaning the United Irish Directory.[64] Another of the friars, Fr Caffry, labelled 'negative' by Corbet, was described by Francis Higgins as 'a violent United Irishman.' Caffry acted as secretary to a baronial meeting in his own house; Higgins referred to his violent language and how he gloried that 'the English task masters of the Old Irish will be shortly exterminated.'[65]

William Corbet, the bookseller from Bridge Street, sent a further account of the priests in Church Street to the Castle, which was bizarre in its detail.[66] Corbet provides an interesting vignette of the divisions which must have marked many religious communities, referring to the two

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61 J.W. to -----2 January 1797, S.P.O. 620/10/121/44. [Spring 1797], S.P.O. 620/51/209.

62 M. Ronan, 'Priests in the Independence movement of 1796-8' in *I.E.R.*, lxviii(1946) p.96.

63 Information, [1797] S.P.O. 620/51/214, 620/51/120, 620/51/119, 620/54/30, J.W. to ---- 1 January 1797, S.P.O. 620/36/227.

64 Secret Committee Report, May 1797.

65 F.H. To E. Cooke, 25 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/14/18.

66 Corbet to ---------- [late 1796] S.P.O. 620/27/1

Corcorans there, both of moderate principles, who were much disliked by the community on account of this. In the same house there were three others, 'perfect firebrands.' Carey, known as Marat 'from commonality of mind, was the most inflammatory of them and the others were Cashell, and Leonard. Carey had a brother a priest in St Michan's, Mary's Lane and he was equally zealous in the cause of sedition, Corbet reported that the brothers met annually with a party of republicans to celebrate the death of King Charles, which they marked with a symbolic calf's head swimming in claret!

Corbet referred to several societies of republicans in Church Street of which the Careys, Cashell and Leonard were all members; one society contained eighteen priests and one layman. The most important republican society was 'the Committee' which had formerly met at Vouzden's, but which now met at the White Cross Inn, Pill Lane.[67] This society was made up of about seventy members, mostly men 'of great property', and they imitated all the forms of the Jacobin clubs in France. All, including the waiter, were addressed as 'citizen' under penalty of a fine. The club was attended by Jackson, Bond and all the principal merchants of Church Street and Pill Lane. There were no priests admitted to the club except Fr Leonard, known as 'Chabot' after the notorious French revolutionary capuchin, who acted as chaplain. In Lazer's Hill(Townsend Street Chapel) Father Griffin, 'negative' in 1796, and all the priests were 'completely up' while in John's Lane the Augustinian Fathers Kelly and Kenny, 'democrats,' were very active in propagating and swearing United Irishmen.[68]

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67 In July 1797 a priest from the north, Father Mayne, threw himself out of the window of the White Cross Inn and was killed. *F.J.*, 1 July 1797.
68 J.W. May 1797, S.P.O. 620/10/121/58, J. Verner to E. Cooke, 29 May [1798], S.P.O. 620/51/43.

The Dominicans at Denmark Street friary received similar attention. An undated Castle report contains information from Buchanan, an apothecary in Johnston's Court, that his foreman had confessed to having been first parochial and then baronial secretary to the United Irishmen who met in Denmark Street chapel. The unnamed foreman, however, would not supply Buchanan with names as this would incriminate his brother and several of the priests there.[69] Leonard McNally made an interesting revelation about Fr McMahon, whom Corbet had described as a 'democrat' in 1796. Mc Nally reported that McMahon was at the head of a party of priests who met once or twice a week at Herbert's Tavern at the Sheds in Clontarf and that Reilly, an officer who had served for many years in Germany, was frequently with them. McNally was convinced that they were all concerned with the politics of the day, but it was impossible to discover their real purpose due to their caution; even the waiter had refused £100 offered by Mr Vernon for information. Significantly the *Press* reported that the publican was taken in for questioning in November 1797, which it claimed was for no other reason than for his door having been painted green.[70] Great suspicion surrounded meetings of priests in Dublin and the Castle runners, always anxious to discover evidence of a feared popish plot, monitored clerical gatherings throughout the city. In May 1797, when paranoia was at its height, Miles Dignam, a Grafton Street grocer and leading United Irishman was arrested. Dignam had played an active role in the Dublin leadership and Leonard McNally reported that 'his imprisonment had alarmed many. . .[and] made all cautious' and not without reason.[71] Dignam, who together with John Keogh and Henry

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69 [!797], S.P.O. 620/5/253.
70 J.W. ------ [Late 1797]., S.P.O. 620/10/121/143. *Press*, 14 November 1797.
71 J.W, 27 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/10/121/61 in J. Smyth, 'Dublin's Political Underground,' p. 144.

Jackson had lead Edward Dunn's funeral in April 1797, was mentioned in a report to the Castle in early May when he was present at a meeting in Glasnevin; it was attended by twenty five priests, from the dioces es around Dublin, and many farmers. Every man at this meeting was sworn and each was instructed to bring new members from their various parishes to the next meeting. The conversation at this gathering centred on a new invention, or primitive mine, described as 'a new engine which if thrown on the ground with the sharp probes out would ruin foot and horse that might follow them unawares.' They also were to receive 'a pattern pike' from Henry Jackson, with which all those without muskets would be armed.[72] With such reports of clerical gatherings, the purpose of diocesan conferences which had become a feature of the renewed church in Ireland was very often misinterpreted; in Wexford it was necessary for Bishop Caulfield, in the wake of the rebellion, to include a long section in his *Reply* explaining the nature and purpose of his monthly clerical conferences. These Ferns meetings had intentionally been held in the public house of John Rudd, a Protestant yeoman of Enniscorthy, whom the bishop declared was at least as loyal as Sir Richard Musgrave.[73]

(IV)

Despite initial appearances, then, the real value of these reports reaching the Castle remained extremely questionable. In many cases they reflected more the general anxiety of the period than any firm intelligence. The account of the clerical meeting at Glasnevin, for

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72 B.T. to----------, 12 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/30/60.
73 J. Caulfield, *The reply of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Caulfield Roman Catholic bishop and of the Roman Catholic clergy of Wexford to the misrepresentations of Sir Richard Musgrave, bart.* (Dublin, 1801) p. 20.

instances, contains remarkable detail of military preparations, but the same letter's inclusion of Grattan and Ponsonby among the United Irish Committee members reflects the desperation of the Castle informers and the sheer dearth of information in mid-1797.[74] The administration was justified in its suspicions of clerical activity amongst the United Irishmen, but the general anti-Catholic paranoia dissipated attention and the more significant of the radical priests escaped from focus. This weakness of the Castle's intelligence system is reflected in the failure to gather worthwhile evidence about Father James Quigley prior to his return from France at the end of 1797. Indeed it was only after Quigley had been identified by the Bow Street runners that the Castle authorities began to take any significant interest in the priest.

The radical politicisation of the 1790s had left few aspects of Irish life unchanged and certainly the Catholic Church had witnessed an unprecedented transformation. Gradually emerging from its endurance of the penal laws, the church experienced a period of rapid organisation and institutionalisation in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Yet despite the intentions of the bishops, hoping for renewed discipline and order, these new structures provided the radicals of the 1790s with ideal opportunities in which to introduce and promote their principles. Particularly in the wake of the 1793 Convention act, as all open fora were closed off, the radicals looked to the opportunities provided by the church's institutions and these they quickly transformed into vehicles for their purpose. In the frantic political activity of the period it was impossible for the clergy to remain aloof from the concerns of the people and many of their number became involved in the political process, willingly allowing the occasions their profession afforded them be

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74 B.T. 12 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/30/60.

harnessed in the cause. This was in spite of the exertions of the prelates, yet beyond the examples of Quigley or the Carys the vast majority of the clergy remained loyal to the government ; in the events of 1798 clerical participation bore little resemblance to the alarmist predictions of the Castle informers.

VI

The Hierarchy and the Rebellion of 1798.

To all intents and purposes the winter of 1797-8 had brought rebellion to Ireland. Throughout the winter the level of disturbances had greatly risen and chronic disaffection had spread beyond Ulster into much of Leinster, Munster and Connacht. Since 1796 the necessary legislative steps had been taken to enable a full scale counter attack on rebellion. Yet despite the powerful armoury in position and the draconian measures adopted by the military, the government shied away from declaring an open assault on the conspiracy. There was, however, a feeling in government circles that open conflict was not only inevitable, but necessary if the contagion was to be vented and removed once and for all. In this sense the administration anxiously anticipated an eventual outbreak of rebellion, the advent of which Edward Cooke described as 'the salvation of the country.'[1] The Catholic hierarchy, on the other hand, shared none of the Castle's thirst for conflict, regarding a defusion of tension as infinitely more desirable than the 'burst' the administration believed inevitable. Against this background of impending calamity and doom, with open rebellion in abeyance, the bishops escalated their campaign for civil obedience and spared no opportunity in attempting to recall their flock from the brink of destruction.

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1 E. Cooke to Wickham, 26 May 1798, H.O. 100/76/289-90. in T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p. 321.

Pastoral Addresses of 1798

Date	Bishop	Diocese
c. 14 January	John Troy	Dublin.[2]
c. March	Edward French	Elphin[3]
6 April	Edward Dillon	Kilmacduagh.[4]
26 April	Francis Moylan	Cork[5]
c. April	James Caulfield	Ferns[6]
22 May	John Troy	Dublin.[7]
27 May	John Troy	Dublin.[8]
28 May	Joint letter of Hierarchy[9]	
May/June	William Coppinger	Cloyne.[10]
6 June	John Young	Limerick[11]
June	Michael P. MacMahon	Killaloe[12]
11 June	Joint letter of Munster bishops.[13]	
3 July	Thomas Hussey, letter to Hearn.[14]	
9 July	James Lanigan.	Ossory.[15]

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2 *D.E.P.*, 16 January 1798.
3 E. French, Lenten Pastoral 1798, C.D.A.
4 E. Dillon, Pastoral Address, 6 April 1798, *F.L.J.*, 1 May 1798, *Spicil. Ossor.*, iii, pp. 579-582.
5 F. Moylan, *Pastoral Instructions* (Dublin, May 1798).
6 J. Caulfield, Pastoral Instructions, n.d., [April 1798], D.D.A., *Spicil. Ossor*, iii, pp 561-2.
7 J. Troy, *Letter to Rural Vicars*, D.D.A.
8 J. Troy, *Pastoral Instructions*, (Dublin, 1798).
9 *D.E.P.*, 31 May 1798.
10 W. Coppinger, Pastoral Instructions, May/June 1798, *Specil. Ossor.*, iii, pp 588-594.
11 *Hib. Jn.*, 27 June 1798.
12 No copy of this address appears to survive. *The State of H.M.'s subjects in Ireland professing the Roman Catholic Religion*,(Dublin, 1800) p. 53.
13 *Hib. Jn.*, 27 June 1798.
14 Hussey to T. Hearn, 3 July 1798, published in *Hib. Jn.*, 23 July 1798.
15 J. Lanigan, Pastoral Instructions, 9 July 1798, *F.L.J.*, 11 July 1798.

12 July Joint letter of Ulster bishops.[16]

From the start of 1798 the bishops embarked on a full scale counter-revolutionary attack. For almost ten years they had waged a war of words against the French disease and its associated Irish radicalism, but now there was a greater urgency in their message and its content was far more direct. It is tempting to group the various pastorals together and to view them as an unitary denunciation of the rebellion, yet in so doing much of their weight and original intention is lost. It is essential to view the pastorals of 1798 in a proper chronological sequence; placed in this perspective, the addresses form more of a declaration of the hierarchy's social and political philosophy than a mere condemnation of rebellion. Many of the pastorals, however, are undated but from their tenor it is possible to order them in sequence. The pastorals also reflect a great unity of purpose amongst the hierarchy which had to a large degree been made possible by the foundation of the Royal College. While the discussions prior to the establishment of Maynooth had brought the bishops together in numbers for the first time in over a century, the quarterly meetings of the trustees provided the hierarchy with a regular forum in which to discuss matters of common interest, which in spite of their statutory nature still aroused suspicion in loyalist circles.[17] Bishop Plunkett of Meath recorded the trustees meetings in his diary for 1798,and the participation from all four provinces reflects the origins of a renewed national episcopal conference.[18] Troy's

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[16]Address of Bishops of Ulster, *F.D.J.*, 12 July 1798.

[17] G. Holdcroft, Kells, to John Lees, 6 February 1798, S.P.O. 620/35/119.

[18] Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp. 293 - 5. The January meeting was attended by Drs O'Reilly(Armagh), Troy(Dublin), Bray(Cashel), Egan(Tuam), Plunkett(Meath), Moylan(Cork),Delaney(Kildare), French(Elphin), and Cruise(Ardagh). The meeting from 9-12 May was attended by O'Reilly(Armagh), Troy(Dublin), Plunkettt(Meath), Moylan(Cork), Caulfield(Ferns), Cruise(Ardagh), and French(Elphin).

dominance and this sense of unity greatly facilitated the hierarchy's single-minded action in the events of 1798.

Throughout the early part of 1798 the bishops were united in their denunciation of the disturbances in the country and the progress of the French contagion, and the prelates repeatedly referred to obedience to the laws as a religious duty. In January Troy led a service of thanksgiving for the defeat of the Texel fleet, described by the *Press* as 'ecclesiastical tyranny, made a prayer,' and in a widely published address reminded his flock of the role of divine providence in the victory.[19] The Lord, he declared, was the God of Armies and all victories were to be ascribed to his arm, and although the results of war often confound human wisdom, it was 'certain that virtuous princes and governors have a special title to his protection.' King George had experienced this protection and Troy prayed that Ireland would be spared the 'din and clashing of arms'; he urged his flock to 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and chastity.'[20] Edmund French, half of whose diocese of Elphin had been proclaimed as early as May 1797, echoed these sentiments in his Lenten pastoral which contained a most florid denunciation of the French, their politics and their agents.[21] No earlier pastoral of French survives and this represents a spirited entry into the anti-republican polemic, with the bishop's condemnation of the 'anti-Christian foe' who had waged war against 'nature, God, kings and society.' The French system he described as an 'all-destroying unnatural monster which had wrecked everything in its path; denied the existence of God, substituted a tenth day for the Sabbath, shed the blood of King, Queen and clergy, trampled everything sacred and brought devastation

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19 *The Press*, 16 January 1798, *F.L.J.*, 13 January 1798.
20 *D.E.P.* 16 January 1798.
21 E. French, Lenten Pastoral, 1798, C.D.A.

and horror into many parts of Europe.' This 'hell born foe' had visited our coast, but God in his providence had enabled our 'clement, experienced and brave viceroy' to impress the 'French Tyger[sic] with an idea of its temerity.' The bishop then turned his attention to the condition of Ireland and lamented the presence of 'men of desperate fortunes and still more desperate principles' who had lost no opportunity in spreading disaffection amongst the unthinking and unwary, the consequences of which was the sorry state to which many counties had been reduced. French concluded with a call to loyalty and a reminder that it was in gratitude to the king that 'the shrieks of your widows and the cries of your half-famished orphans do not rend the air.'

The disturbed state of the West was again singled out for attention by Edward Dillon, bishop of Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, in a sermon at the chapel of Kilcornan on 6 April 1798, which was later published as a pastoral.[22] There had been reports of United Irish activity in Galway and the bishop became alarmed at the level of nocturnal incursions from neighbouring Killaloe. Several houses had been burned and robbed of arms and emissaries had been active in the different parishes of the diocese.[23] Dillon's description of the state of the diocese bears out the constant theme in episcopal pastorals that by the spring of 1798 the country was in effect in a state of rebellion:

> There is not one amongst you, even in the most remote and obscure hamlet, who hath not heard of the oaths and associations which have entailed so many misfortunes on various districts of this kingdom. How many poor exiles from Northern Counties, have you seen arrive among you, sent adrift without pity or remourse, by a barbarous association? How many atrocities have you heard committed by persons belonging to societies of, if

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22 E. Dillon, Pastoral Address, 6 April 1798, *Spicil. Ossor.*, iii, pp. 579-582. Printed in *F.L.J.*, 1 May 1798. B.O'Cuiv, 'Treid litir O' 1798,' *Eigse*, 1964-6, vol. xli, pp. 57-63.
23 E. Dillon to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, D.D.A.

> possible, a still more dangerous tendency? How many villages destroyed, and districts laid waste in consequence of illegal oaths and conspiracies?

The bishop informed his flock that obedience to the laws was a sacred precept and in an apologia for the existing social order he reminded his listeners of the benefits they enjoyed, that 'while the thunder of anarchy growled at a distance. . [they were] allowed quietly to partake of [their]. . frugal fare, and compose[themselves]. . to rest without dread of assassin or the midnight robber.' Dillon condemned the current tendency towards independent judgement amongst those whose education consisted of a few scraps taken from immoral or impious writers, yet decided and philosophised on every subject and looked forward to the arrival 'of their brother in impiety.' The bishop outlined the destruction brought by the French throughout Europe and in what was to become a constant theme in future pastorals he described how Pius VI had been reviled, calumnated and stripped of his property. Dillon then called his people to loyalty and to reject all clandestine oaths and associations, and he concluded with his intention of touring the diocese after Easter to guide his flock in the path of conduct their critical situation required. When the bishop finished his address he called on the congregation present to take an oath of allegiance but, in a reflection both of the disturbed state of the county and of diminished episcopal influence, his appeal was greeted with adamant refusal and the people poured out of the chapel.[24] Despite this reaction, the Grand Jury of Galway voted thanks to Dr Dillon for his pastoral exertions and 'excellent and truly Christian exhortation' which they were certain would have beneficial effects. Dillon replied to this announcement with a sense of gratitude; yet perhaps alarmed at his

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24 --------, Galway, 10 April 1798, S.P.O. 620/36/159.

reception at Kilcornan, he declared that but for the dangerous state of the region he would have toured the diocese in person preaching loyalty.[25] Yet some of the western bishops questioned the wisdom of his pastoral, no doubt on account of its veiled reference to the Orange Order and terror in the north. Dillon informed Troy that more than one prelate from the province of Tuam had described it as 'an alarm bell, calculated to raise ferment rather than to allay it.' The bishop, however, failed to name his critics and by the spring of 1798 it was impossible to attribute the rising temperature of the country to any one cause.[26]

Much of Munster, too, had become disturbed and Cork was particularly troubled with reports of atrocities reaching Dublin daily. Against this background Francis Moylan issued a blistering pastoral in Cork on 26 April 1798.[27] Moylan's pastoral on the occasion of the failure of the French invasion in 1796 had been widely acclaimed in loyalist circles and his effort in 1798 received equal praise and the Duke of Portland suggested to Camden that it be translated into Irish and widely circulated.[28] A copy of the pastoral in the Halliday Collection of the Royal Irish Academy has a telling hand-written comment from Thomas Lewis O'Beirne on the title page:

> I willingly give a place to this address among my collection of pamphlets as the author was the only one of his brethren who I believe to be sincere in his exertions to promote loyalty and put down the rebellion. He is a worthy, honest and pious man.

Moylan's pastoral had a strong theological base and he described the address not as 'a political discussion, but a religious reflection.' He drew

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25 *F.D.J.*, 21 April 1798.
26 E. Dillon to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, D.D.A.
27 F. Moylan, *Pastoral Instructions* (Dublin, May 1798), *Spicil. Ossor.* iii, pp 582-588.
28 Portland to Camden, 11 May 1798, H.O. 100/80/279.

heavily from the scriptures to illustrate the evils of illegal oaths, which he declared were not only a direct affront to God, but guaranteed to 'draw down the vengeance of heaven.' The bishop condemned associations of 'atheistical incendiaries' and in a reference to the widescale politicisation of the country called on his flock to return to their proper labours rather than 'bewildering your minds in speculation about government, which you cannot comprehend.' The bishop next refuted the levelling principles, reminding his listeners that this life was a state of trial and that no rank of society was exempt from suffering. Moylan called on his flock to gladly bear the crosses sent and that by loyally 'discharging the duties of our respective states,' rather than engaging in useless murmurings or seeking unlawful means of softening their lot, they would be amply rewarded when their fugitive life was over. But while he spoke of the difficulties of life, he drew attention to the many favours enjoyed by the Catholics and their position now that the penal laws were almost totally removed and a college established for the education of their future priests.

Moylan, too, urged gratitude to the King and government and due obedience and respect for the laws. He then broadened the scope of his address to discuss the disturbed state of the country which had been placed under martial law at the end of March. He condemned the incendiaries and their schemes, which promised nothing but ruin and destruction; coming to you in 'sheep's clothing exaggerating, and then pretending to feel your grievances; but they are inwardly ravening wolves.' Moylan referred to the strict measures adopted by the military in pacifying the country, but singled out the 'known humanity' of the commander in chief(Sir Ralph Abercromby) and the district commander(General Sir James Stewart). He praised their 'benevolent and liberal' hearts and expressed gratitude that they had employed no

unnecessary rigour in their duty, but he did warn that the commanders might in the future be moved to use the formidable powers at their disposal. He called on people to comply with the printed notices of the military commanders and that by so doing the area would be spared great misery.

Moylan concluded his pastoral with a statement of his personal integrity. He had in the past been threatened with violence in an effort to censure his statements, but now he found his name discredited and it was asserted that he acted under the influence of and as a pensioner of the government. Despite the absence of explicit radical condemnations of Moylan, the loyalist fanfare which greeted his 1796 pastoral, particularly the widely publicised praise it received from Camden and Robert Day, must have exposed him to such suggestions and MacNeven later referred to his bias in favour of the administration. In any event the bishops were aware of these rumblings which Moylan totally rejected, adding that were it not for the impressions they had made he would have passed them over. The bishop took this opportunity to declare on behalf of the entire episcopacy that they had never sought or been offered a government pension and that they were motivated purely with regard to their duty to their flock and attachment to king and country.[29] In any event, Moylan refused to allow such accusations dictate his action and his published response to his nomination to the Committee for receiving Voluntary Contributions for the Defense of the Kingdom in February 1798 reflects his determination to defend the *status quo* :

> I beg leave to request you will be so good as to assure the gentlemen of the Committee. . . that I

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29 J. Young to T. Bray, 28 December1798, C.D.A. F.D.J., 3 January 1797, *An address delivered to the Grand Jury of the County of Dublin on Tuesday the 10th of January 1797, By Robert Day, M.P.* (Dublin, 1797), *M.P.*, 28 January 1797, Examination of MacNeven before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, 7 August 1798, in Mac Neven, *Pieces*, p. 254.

> deem myself highly honoured in being named one of its members. The effectual defense of this kingdom at this perilous junction against the foreign foe is a measure truly patriotic and therefore must have my warm and best wishes for its success and as far as the small mite I can afford may contribute thereto; I shall most readily and cheerfully offer it, for I fear as sincere an interest in the peace and happiness of the kingdom as any other of H.M.'s loyal subjects. Circumstanced, however, as I am, on account of a large absence from home, and the variety of avocations, while at this present season press on me, and call for all my time and attention. I trust my attendance at the Board will be despensed with, as it would be very inconvenient for the moment and could be in no degree necessary, to promote the laudable purpose of the meeting.[30]

(ii)

By the Spring of 1798 very considerable external influences had been exerted upon the Irish bishops. The position of the Papal States had become critical and on 15 February 1798 French troops under General Louis Berthier had entered Rome, declared a republic and forced Pius VI to flee to Tuscany. Troy received regular correspondence from his Roman agent Luke Concanen and these letters recounted the horrors inflicted by the liberators on the city; 'the Old Tyrant', Pius VI, had been banished, the cardinals sent from the city, many friars had been exiled and the Irish Colleges there had been closed.[31] With Rome occupied, Monsignor Charles Erskine now assumed a key role in the government of the church and together with Cardinal Borgia directed the affairs of Propaganda Fide.[32]

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[30] F. Moylan to John Anderson, Chairman of the Committee for receiving Voluntary Contributions for the defense of the Kingdom, 27 February 1798, in *F.L.J.*, 7 March 1798.

[31] L. Concanen to J. Troy, 24 February 1798, 17 March 1798, and 5 May 1798, D.D.A. see H. Fenning, *Undoing of the Friars*, pp. 354-379.

[32] M. Buschkuhl, *Great Britain and the Holy See, 1746-1870*, (Dublin, 1982) p. 38. see P. O'Donoghue, 'The Holy See and Ireland, 1780-1803' in *Arch. Hib.*, xxxiv(1977) pp. 99-108.

In this crisis the Holy See became especially dependent on the British as their war effort offered the only possible chance of salvation. The 1790s had brought about a curious turn in relations between Britain and the Holy See; links had been forged between the two courts, Prince Augustus had visited Rome, the Cardinal duke of York had received a royal pension, and the Catholic Church and Britain were united in their common battle against French republicanism.[33] Throughout the decade Propaganda had written to the Irish bishops urging complete loyalty and obedience, but now in the moment of dire crisis Erskine delivered the strongest instructions to Archbishop Troy.[34] Erskine painted a sorry picture of the state of the church; the Supreme Pastor had been driven from Rome and the French now intended to disperse his flock. In this situation it was intolerable that Irish Catholics, 'so commended always for their loyalty,' should league with the French and he instructed Troy to recall them to a sense of duty:

> For God's sake, my Lord, do not cease and may your Reverend Brethren never cease(and I am sure they will never forsake so essential a part of their pastoral duties) to make use of all means that your situation affords you, to open the eyes of that deluded people; sermons, exhortations, confession, prayers, nothing should be left untried to recall them from their miserable infatuation!

This letter from Erskine initiated an interesting sequence of events. While administering the affairs of Propaganda Fide, Erskine conducted his correspondence through the Neapolitan minister in London and on occasion through George Canning, Under Secretary of State.[35] His letter of 6 April, however, was relayed to Troy in a dispatch from the Duke

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33 See T. Hussey, *Sermon Preached at the Spanish Chapel London, 14 May 1798*, (London, 1798).

34 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 6 April 1798, D.D.A.

35 M. Buschkuhl, *Great Britain and the Holy See*, p. 38.

of Portland and it was opened and copied in London. In a transaction which followed between the Castle and Whitehall, Camden inquired from the Duke if Troy and the other bishops could not be encouraged to exert greater influence on behalf of the government. Camden believed some good would come from Troy's preaching and that he might be able to stem the growth of conspiracy, but he believed the archbishop to be 'very timid', and feared that he would not relay the political part of Erskine's letter to the catholics.[36] In the mean time Erskine approached William Wickham, a secretary at Whitehall, and gave him a copy of his letter to Troy and promised a copy of the archbishop's reply. Wickham took this opportunity to inform Erskine of fears in Dublin that Troy 'did not make use of the advantages which his situation afforded him of influencing the conduct of the Catholics.' The monsignor, whom Wickham believed was a 'very honourable right minded man' gave assurances that his future correspondence would be directed with that in mind and that 'he would leave nothing unsaid that could influence his[Troy's] conduct without giving suspicion.'[37]

The level to which Erskine co-operated with the government is unknown. There are the few letters cited here, but amongst the Erskine papers in the English College, Rome, there is little material of Irish interest. Most of his papers there relate to the affairs of the Scots College in the city of which he was protector.[38] It is evident that Troy was unaware of the extent of the monsignor's contacts with Whitehall, but it is also clear that the archbishop and his circle regarded Erskine with suspicion from his first arrival as papal representative in 1793. At that

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36 Camden to Portland, April 1798, H.O. 100/76/91-4

37 W. Wickham to E. Cooke, 21 April 1798, S.P.O. 620/36/192. Portland to Camden, 20 April 1798, H.O. 100/76/95-6.

38 Erskine Papers, Venerable English College, Rome, ERS, 1-11, 52.7, ERS 52.8, ERS 29-32.

time, Luke Concanen believed that his presence would supply their enemies with material for 'sharp and satirical material.'[39] It is also surprising that the Castle did not approach Troy directly, given the contacts which had been established, but in the mania then sweeping through the administration the archbishop was rumoured to have taken the United Irish oath.[40]

The Castle, however, lost no time in making use of Erskine's information and both Giffard's *Dublin Journal* and *Finn's Leinster Journal* carried news that the Pope's nuncio had written to Troy calling him to 'exercise his sacerdotal authority in reclaiming the misguided Roman Catholics of this Kingdom.'[41] The tactical value of such reports was questionable and they may have served only to undermine further the credibility and integrity of the Irish bishops in the eyes of an increasingly disaffected flock. Yet despite this, the *Dublin Journal* followed the report with a long defense of the independence of the Catholic hierarchy:

> Amongst the various artifices used by agitators in this kingdom, there is one peculiarly insidious and meriting special notice. To destroy as far as in their power the influence and authority of the Roman Catholic hierarchy over the clergy and the people of that communion it has been industrially reported that the Roman Catholic bishops are pensioned and bribed by the government. It is a fact that too many are thereby deluded into a persuasion that these prelates are enemies to the country and that they recommend subordination, and respect towards lawful superiors from selfish and mercenary considerations. Every dispassionate and reflecting person must perceive the falsehood and evil tendency of this vile imputation, which nevertheless is credited by thousands of the ignorant and unthinking multitude, who unsuspicious and unacquainted with the real

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39 L. Concanen to J. Troy, 4 September 1793, D.D.A.

40 Camden to Portland, 6 May 1798, H.O. 100/69/275-8.

41 *F.D.J.*, 1 May 1798. *F.L.J.*, 5 May 1798.

> designs of artful advisers are by illplaced credulity estranged from their pastors, whose peaceful principles and paternal instructions they are taught to despise. [42]

The paper traced the origins of these rumours amongst the committees of the United Irishman in the north and saw them as part of the Jacobinical conspiracy to degrade the clergy and destroy the influence of religion, as had happened in France.

In many places the hierarchy appeared to be fighting a losing battle in their efforts to combat the spread of rebellion. In March James Lanigan had informed Troy that in parts of Ossory the priests had been afraid to speak against the United Irishmen for fear of assassination.[43] In early May Thomas Hussey delivered a sermon on the theme of the contemporary prodigal, who 'seeks the company of the libertine and unbeliever where piety is a subject for mockery and scorn' and whom the Church called upon in vain.[44] Thomas Bray, however, was content in Thurles and the bishop of Limerick, John Young, praised the efforts of the army which had been dispersed through the county. The insurgents in the countryside had been intimidated by their presence and , while there were agitators in the city, these were too few in number to cause concern and the 'lower orders were not disposed to favour them.' One priest in the city, Fr Lynch, who had campaigned actively against the conspiracy, narrowly escaped with his life when two shots were fired in his window. 'From this,' Young declared,' we may augur what we are to expect should the enemy effect a landing amongst us.' Earlier in the month the Limerick Grand Jury had attempted to call the Catholics to loyalty in a printed address which informed them of the sufferings of the pope at the hands of

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42 *F.D.J.* 8 May 1798.
43 J. Lanigan to J. Troy, March 1798, *Castlereagh Corr.*, 1, pp 160-162.
44 T. Hussey, *Sermon at the Spanish Church London, 6 May 1798*,(London, 1798).

the French.[45] Patrick Plunkett toured Meath throughout 1798 and while he constantly condemned 'the complexion of the times', it is noticeable that in April and May he devoted particular attention to 'profane swearing' and the theme of revolution in Rome and the fate of the Pope.[46] On 9 May Plunkett attended a meeting of the Maynooth Trustees in Dublin and their decision to take preventative measures to stop the 'infection of the college by the bad principles of the times' reflects growing episcopal alarm at the state of the country.[47]

By the spring of 1798 the condition of county Wexford had seriously deteriorated. A local magnate, Lord Mountnorris, decided to call again upon the local clergy to organise a display of Catholic loyalty as he had done the previous November. At various chapel meetings throughout the north-eastern part of the county the Catholics were called to loyalty, and loyal oaths were presented to the people for their signature. These oaths contained an explicit renunciation of the United Irishmen.[48] It is more than likely that it was during this campaign that James Caulfield issued his undated pastoral against the United Irishmen. This pastoral is extremely significant in that its specific reference to the United Irishmen is unique amongst the surviving pastorals of the 1790s. Indeed direct references to the United Irishmen are extremely rare, even in the private episcopal correspondence for the period, and as late as the winter of 1797-8 the bishops continued to describe the incendiaries as 'Defenders.'

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45 J. Young to T. Bray, 10 May 1798, C.D.A. Address of Mr Grady, at the close of the Limerick quarter sessions, *F.D.J.* 1 May 1798.

46 *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp 297- 299.

47 *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 297. The attendance at the meeting was O'Reilly(Armagh), Troy(Dublin), Plunkett(Meath), Moylan(Cork), Caulfield(Ferns), Cruise(Ardagh), French(Elphin) and Fingal, Gormanstown and Kenmare.

48 K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion,' in K. Whelan(ed), *Wexford;History and Society* (Dublin, 1987). p. 301.

Caulfield's pastoral was addressed to the clergy of his diocese and it reflected the critical state of the county. The address is brief, direct and contains none of the rhetorical denunciations which had characterised the addresses of the other bishops. There is no mention of French libertinism, no references to the plight of the Pope or to Europe basking in false liberty, nor to possible invasions; Caulfield's address was directed quite specifically to the disaffected of his diocese. The bishop's message was blunt and he warned against 'the most imminent and most dreadful dangers' to which the Catholics were exposed. He devoted considerable attention to the horrors of free quarters and military justice and he warned of

> a military force to be sent on them, on free quarters, who will be warranted to commit the greatest excess; to burn their houses, to destroy or consume their stock, their corn and hay, and every article of their substance except what they may chuse or reserve for their own use, subsistence, or convenience; they will be authorised to apprehend their persons, to imprison and flog them, if suspected, and if guilty, they will be doomed to die by the sentence of court martial.[49]

Caulfield's pastoral was written with a purpose and he called on his priests to join the magistrates in touring their various parishes. There they were to call the people to loyalty, to surrender their weapons and to abjure their oaths 'of combining or conspiring with United Irishmen' which he described as bonds of iniquity. In this way, Caulfield declared, the people could 'avert the avenging arm of the offended laws.' The pastoral reflects the level of trust placed by the bishop in the magistracy and he can only have been pleased at the response to his appeal from amongst his clergy, with fourteen of his priests joining Mountnorris's effort

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49 J. Caulfield, Pastoral Instructions, n.d. [April 1798] D.D.A., *Spicil. Ossor*, iii, pp 561-2.

in north-east Wexford.[50] Ironically, however, the alarmist tone of Caulfield's pastoral may only have served to increase levels of tension in the county.

John Troy's silence throughout the spring of 1798 is curious. Since the Revolution and the first signs of the French malady had appeared in Ireland Troy had lead the vanguard for the defense of the status quo. In the heated transactions of the Catholic Committee he had not shirked from the challenge of the radicals, in the discussions on Maynooth he assumed a primacy amongst the bishops; faced with the rising levels of disaffection in 1795 he had taken the bold step of excommunicating the Defenders and associated combinations. Yet in the spring of 1798, with the country on the brink of disaster and in virtual open rebellion, little was heard from Troy by way of condemnation of the United Irishmen. It is against this novel background that Camden began to criticise Troy's lack of activity and timidity, a description hardly applicable to him under normal circumstances.[51]

We can assume that Troy must have regarded with horror the pace and direction of events, the apparent head long rush towards rebellion. Certainly his hatred for the United Irishmen was growing and he can only have looked on their writings with alarm. Troy possessed a copy of Arthur O'Connor's *State of Ireland,* published in February 1798, and his annotations written on the cover in the wake of the rebellion represent a rare episcopal commentary on a specific publication which leaves no doubt as to the archbishop's opinion. O'Connor's address was in essence an apologia for the forthcoming rebellion which set out a full

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50 The priests were, Frs Nicholas Redmond, Nicholas Stafford,(Ballygarrett), Nicholas Murphy(Oulart), Frank Kavanagh, John Redmond(Ballyoughter), John Murphy(Boolavogue), Michael Lacy(Kilmuckridge), David Cullen(Blackwater), Michael Murphy(Ballycanew), Edward Redmond(Ferns), Michael Redmond(Castlebridge), Redmond Roche(Crossabeg), John Synnott(Gorey) and Edan Murphy(Kilrush), K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion,' p. 301.

51 Camden to Portland, April 1798, H.O. 100/76/91-4.

explanations for its necessity. Troy can have had little sympathy for O'Connor's description of the Irish as a 'people cursed with a foreign government and a venal legislature.' He believed 'Citizen O'Connor' had styled himself on Mirabeau and borrowed from his Rights of Man; the two were at most Deists and like Mirabeau O'Connor perverted good principles for the purpose of revolution. The whole tendency of O'Connor's statements, he believed, were seditious and revolutionary, and he condemned his misrepresentation of fact and his description of the French revolution as 'Catholic.' He declared

> a bad cause cannot be supported except by falsehood and calumny, which his State of Ireland and Addresses are replete. The truths contained in them are disfigured and tortured to promote the cause and system of the United Irishmen.[52]

Troy finally broke his silence on the very eve of the rebellion and issued instructions to the rural vicars.[53] The archbishop painted a bleak picture of the state of his diocese, where as a result of threats and personal danger many priests had been unable to oppose the 'torrent of disloyalty and disaffection.' Once again, Troy failed to mention the United Irishmen and he continued to condemn disaffection generally without reference to a broader conspiracy. There is in the letter, however, a sense in which Troy appeared to believe the tide had turned and he referred to the deluded returning to their duty in many places. In this situation, when all the powers of the state were being exerted to end the 'mad revolutionary spirit,' and when many innocent people had suffered as a result of the 'summary measures of government', the silence and indifference of the clergy was inexcusable. Troy called on them to preach against oaths

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52 A. O'Connor, *State of Ireland* (Dublin, 1798), Hand written note, dated 9 November 1798, by 'J. T.T.' , R.I.A. Haliday Pamphlets, vol. 757.

53 *John Troy to the Rural Vicars of the Archdiocese of Dublin, 22 May 1798*, D.D.A.

and associations and to imitate the people of Arklow who had surrendered their arms and made declarations of loyalty to the magistrates. In this way, he believed, the Catholics could be saved from criticism and their persons and property protected.

(III)

Two days after Troy addressed his instructions to the rural vicars the country finally rose in the 'burst' the bishops had long feared. The sword was now drawn, and welcoming the opportunity, Camden vowed not to return it to its scabbard until the conspiracy was finally put down. [54] The country was plunged into open rebellion and through the summer months the bishops saw the realisation of their worst nightmare, from which they had unsuccessfully tried to save their flock. In the confusion of the battle communication between the prelates became impossible, yet they continued their efforts and often in great personal danger recalled their people to order.

In Youghal bishop William Coppinger of Cloyne and Ross swiftly penned a pastoral deploring the disturbances.[55] Coppinger had experienced sectarian tensions at first hand in Youghal and for some time the town had been prey to rumours of a planned Orange rising. The bishop himself had been the target of criticism: it was reported in the town, which he described as famed for the most illiberal animosity towards Catholicism, that he had United Irish connections, in spite of the efforts he had taken to stem the spread of conspiracy.[56] The bishop

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54 Camden to Portland, 24 May 1798, H.O. 100/76/256 in T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p. 233.

55 W. Coppinger, Pastoral Instructions, May/June 1798, *Spicil Ossor*, iii, pp 588-594.

56 Statement of facts relating to Youghal in the year 1798, by the Rev. Dr Coppinger, Bishop of Cloyne, 19 February 1803 in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor,* iii, pp 605- 613.

painted a sorry picture of the state of Cork, the devastation brought to the county, the desolated cottages, the cries of the fatherless, the carnage of the sword, famine and all the misery guaranteed to continue as long as the rebellion. Coppinger condemned the folly of the 'French evangelists' and their extravagant notions of equality, and he developed an elaborate social theory in which he outlined the inevitability of social inequality:

> how can there be cultivation, where there are no tillers and where shall you find tillers if all become gentlemen?
> Rank and property must go hand in hand, and the inequality of both in every civilised country must be as various as the talents of men.. Were every individual in the land possessed at this day of an equal share of property, a lapse of twelve months would exhibit innumerable gradations. The industrious, the thrifty, the honest, the temperate, would soon surpass the idle, the profligate, the squanderers and the licentious.

He concluded his discourse against the levelling principles of the time with the reminder that 'the poor will still be poor, under every form of government.' The bishop's condemnation of the United Irish oath was novel, although he did not refer to the society by name. The oath, he declared, had promised the protection of secrecy to the timid, the oath had been 'your shelter and your shield', but that very promise had led to their destruction. Coppinger concluded by calling on his listeners to come forward, to surrender their arms and to rely on the mercy of the government.

In LImerick John Young issued a pastoral in the first week in June which was to be read from the altar each Sunday until the country was free from danger. He reminded his people of the Pauline injunction to obey the civil laws and in these perilous times he called on them to surrender any arms they may have concealed and not to hesitate in taking the loyal oath. In this they were to follow the example of their priests; reminding them of the ill-fated French landing the previous year,

he urged them to show the same determined resistance to 'the domestic disturbers of your peace and welfare.' Young condemned the fraud and force by which the French had spread their ills and from the strongest ties of gratitude to the king, he repeated his instructions of the previous year, not only to refrain from assisting his enemies, but to actively resist them. Failure to conform to the ordinances of the government, he warned, would endanger man's eternal salvation.[57] Young was pleased with the response to his address; he informed Thomas Bray that none of his priests had been implicated in the rebellion and that the swearing business had been confined to three parishes. This he attributed to the work of emissaries, but thankfully no concealed pikes or arms had been found in the diocese.[58] The aged Dominican bishop of Killaloe, also issued a pastoral in 1798. Michael Peter MacMahon had strong aristocratic connections in France and his family had suffered at the hands of the revolutionaries. Although no copy of the address survives it is not difficult to imagine the tenor the bishop would have adopted.[59]

On 11 June Charles Sughrue was consecrated bishop of Kerry, and in a reflection of the tranquility of the region, most of the prelates of the province were able to attend the consecration at Killarney. The bishops chose the opportunity to hold a conference and afterwards issued a collective condemnation of the rebellion, which was signed by all the province's prelates except Thomas Hussey.[60] The address repeated the church's teaching on illegal oaths and priests were instructed to preach against sedition, regardless of the personal danger.

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57 J. Young, Pastoral Instructions, 9 June 1798, in J. Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the Present time*, (Dublin, 1938) pp. 270-1. *Hib. Jn.*, 27 June 1798.
58 J. Young to T. Bray, 4 July 1798, C.D.A.
59 *The State of His Majesty's Subjects in Ireland professing the Roman Catholic Religion,*(Dublin, 1800) p. 53. see I. Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1991) pp 112-139.
60 *Hib. Jn.* 27 June 1798.

The people were called on to surrender their arms and those persisting in their folly were to be refused admission to the sacraments. The absence of Hussey's name from the pastoral appeared to confirm many of the suspicions of the previous year, yet his failure to sign the address was due to his unfortunate choice of 1798 in which to make his *ad limina* visit to Rome. Hussey, however, wrote to his vicar general Thomas Hearn in July and this letter reflects his strongest opposition to the rebellion.[61] Hussey expressed his consolation that the spirit of rebellion had made no impressions on 'the loyal, industrious and religious Catholics' of his diocese. He was concerned, however, that some had been misled into dangerous associations and he warned that these were forbidden by both the law of God and the land. He urged his priests to impress on the people the evil of these oaths. Justifying such acts on the grounds of religion, he warned, would merely provide their enemies with a pretext on which to blacken the Church. The good of the Church could never excuse one act of injustice; though the establishment of the Catholic Church might follow such an act, 'evil is not to be done that good might follow.' Whatever grievances the Catholics had to complain of, they could never be corrected by unlawful associations. On the contrary, their 'grievances by such means, will only become more irritated and festered.'

Hussey's pastoral was greeted with cynicism and disregard by loyalists. The bishop's delay in condemning the rebellion led to a questioning of his sincerity. The strongest attack on Hussey appeared in a letter in the *Dublin Journal*. .[62] Why, the writer asked, with the country

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61 T. Hussey to T. Hearn, 3 July 1798, *Hib. Jn.* 23 July 1798. D. Keogh, 'Thomas Hussey, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, 1797-1803, and the rebellion of 1798' in T. Power(ed.) *Waterford; History and Society*, (Dublin, 1992).

62 'Letter to the Rev. Dr H----y, R.C.B. of W----- and L----, occasioned by his letter to Rev. Dr. H---n, R.C.V.G. of the D---- of W--- and L--- 3 July 1798, *F.D.J.* 4 Aug. 1798.

in frenzy, had the bishop waited until 3 July, when the rebel cause was almost at an end, to issue his address? The writer also noted similarities between this letter and the infamous pastoral of the previous year. There was, he noted, 'too much of the same spirit' in this letter, and he drew particular attention to the bishop's reference to past ills and injustice. 'I am sorry,' he declared,'to find that you seem to entertain the same idea of your own people, which Mr John Shears entertained of their own brethren, that they were most likely to be persuaded into an opinion that they were aggrieved.' An earlier letter to the same paper criticised the bishop's pretended ignorance of the state of Waterford and pointed to the 'shocking spirit of assassination and plunder' which had begun soon after the 'Pious Doctor' had published his pastoral in 1797.[63]

In Ulster and in Connaught the bishops maintained a low profile. In Ulster the bishops had traditionally remained aloof from political involvement and during the rebellion they continued this stance. No individual pastorals appear to surivive, but Ulster bishops published a collective address in July 1798 in which they called upon their curates to urge loyalty, and they excommunicated the rebels.[64] Little archival material for the Armagh provinces survives, but Richard O'Reilly, who had issued a pastoral against the Defenders as early as 1788, expressed his satisfaction privately in January 1799 that the 'fascinating delusion which involved so many of our countrymen during the latter half of last year in misery and wretchedness is so happily removed.' The archbishop was convinced that the experience had taught that 'a peaceable and orderly conduct is truly the best policy because it is the

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63 *F.D.J.*, 21 July 1798.

64 *F.D.J.* 12 July 1798, the address was signed by Richard O'Reilly(Armagh), Hugh O'Reilly(Clogher), Charles O'Reilly(Kilmore), Anthony Coyle(Raphoe) John Cruise(Ardagh), Denis Maguire(Kilmore),Charles O'Donnell(Derry), Patrick McMullan(Down and Conor), Matthew Lenan(Dromore) and Patrick Plunkett(Meath).

most conducive to happiness even in this world.'[65] Of all O'Reilly's suffragan's Patrick Plunkett's behaviour during the rebellion is best documented. The diocese of Meath had been greatly disturbed during the summer months, but Plunkett was not deterred from completing his visitation. Plunkett had considered writing a pastoral, but he thought better of it, believing it would only heighten discord rather than conciliating the various factions in his diocese. John Troy's pastoral, however, was reprinted in Mullingar, in the west of Plunket's diocese and was distributed at the expense of Captain Rochfort, a local magistrate.[66] Plunkett preached against the insurrection in every parish he visited in the Spring and early summer of 1798, and he noted that the congregations were more attentive than they had been for three years. This he attributed to 'the lessons received in the school of adversity, which had prepared the sufferers for reflection.'[67] On 29 May a diocesan conference was forced to adjourn because of the disturbances, but not before the bishop had instructed his priests to urge their people to loyalty.[68]

Little was heard from the Connaught bishops during the rebellion, but this lack of combined effort may be attributed to the death of the archbishop of Tuam during the summer of 1798. With the exception of Dominic Bellew, bishop of Killala, all the bishops of the province were above suspicion. Bellew's loyalty was however suspect on a number of counts, but the bishop's fiery character and the many conflicts he had had with the merchants in Dundalk during his time as parish priest there did little to help his case, nor did his contempt for John Troy, which dated

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65 R. O'Reilly to H. Conwell, 9 January 1799, A.D.A.
66 P. Plunkett to J. Troy, 13 December 1798, D.D.A. T. Ganley to J. Troy, 3 June 1798, D.D.A.
67 P. Plunkett to J. Troy, 13 December 1798, D.D.A.
68 Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 298.

back to his removal from Dundalk during the controversy surrounding Anthony Blake's last years as archbishop of Armagh.[69] After the French landing, Bellew became president of the Ballina Committee of Public Safety and his brother Matthew, who had been an officer in the Austrian army, was amongst the first to join the invading French.[70] The principal suspicion, however, was based on accusations made against the bishop by one of his priests, Father Bernard Dease, arrested in 1798. Dease claimed that the bishop had long entertained pro-French sentiments, even though he had instructed that prayers of thanksgivings be read in the various chapels after the failure of their landing in 1796. Indeed, Dease reported that at that time he had approached the bishop about necessary repairs for his chapel, but Bellew had told him not to bother, since 'the French would soon be back and the [Protestant] churches converted to chapels.' According to his information, Bellew had instructed his priests to have no dealings with the Protestants, whom he called 'blacks', on pain of suspension.[71] The bishop responded quickly to Dease's accusations, and lost no time in stating his innocence.[72]

In Leinster the position of the bishops became critical, and no where more so than in Wexford. James Caulfield epitomised the conservative element within the hierarchy and had long been a staunch opponent of hard-line Catholic politics. His detestation of radicals such as Edward Hay and James Edward Devereux was renowned and he greatly resented the influence they exerted in the community.[73] Caulfield

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69 B. Hoban, 'Dominic Bellew, 1745-1812,' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, (1972), pp 333-69 and P. Walsh, 'Anthony Blake, Archbishop of Armagh, 1758-1787' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha,*, pp 288-323. See K. Harvey, 'The Bellews of Mount Bellew; a Catholic gentry family in the age of the penal laws,' (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1984), 'The Family Experience: The Bellews of Mount Bellew,' in T. Power and K. Whelan(eds), *Endurance and Emergence*, pp. 171-198.

70 R. Hayes, *Last Invasion of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1937) p. 79.

71 Testimony of Rev B. Dease, 15 September 1798, S.P.O. 620/40/58.

72 S.P.O. 620/56/200, H.O. 100/78/418-21.

73 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 31 March 1792, D.D.A.

had vigorously opposed the spread of radicalism and had been only too willing to join with the magistrates in their attempts to stem the United Irish conspiracy. On 26 May Caulfield stopped at McAuley's Hotel at Oulart on his return from the Maynooth Trustees meeting in Dublin, and urged the large gathering there to surrender arms and to obtain protections. The bishop called on the assembly to'relinquish their wild notions of insurrection, to live in peace and charity with each other', and he threatened the disobedient with the heaviest of God's chastisement.'[74] Four days later Wexford town was captured and a republic declared, but while streets buzzed with rejoicing throngs Dr Caulfield remained in his High Street house for fear of vengeance from the United Irishmen he had so long opposed. The presence of priests amongst the rebel army can only have been a source of great anger to Caulfield, and there is no tradition of any meeting between the bishop and Father John Murphy after the capture of Wexford.[75]

Throughout the rebel occupation of the town, the bishop's position was critical. Contrary to the claims of Musgrave, Caulfield, far from feeling safe, was prepared for immediate death.[76] Yet amongst the loyalists and Protestants in the town there was a belief that Caulfield had sway over the rebels; he later claimed to have been busy from morning till night pleading with the leaders for their safety. However as the tide began to turn in the government's favour, he noted a change in the rebel temper and 'it became treason to plead for protection.' In what must have seemed a realisation of his worst prophesies of 1792, the bishop recalled for John Troy the reaction to his intervention on behalf of Lord Kingsborough, the hated commander of the North Cork Militia:

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74 Luke Cullen MS f. 12.
75 N. Furlong, *Father John Murphy*, p. 86.
76 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 4 September 1798, D.D.A.

> I declared, if any of them had killed my friend, my brother or my father, that I would protect and save him, if he threw himself on my mercy; for it was by shewing mercy that I could expect mercy myself. This conduct and language graduated me equal to an Orangeman; my house must be pulled down or burnt, and my head knocked off; this last sentence was boldly pronounced to my face, surrounded as I was in the public square, by 4 or 5 thousand pikes, spears or muskets, when I was striving to save Lord Kingsboro's life.[77]

Whatever little influence the clergy may have had over the rebels was declining, and despite their continued efforts to restrain the 'Banditti dispatched from Hell,' they became powerless to prevent many atrocities, especially the massacre at the town bridge.[78] When the rebel cause collapsed and the king's army prepared to enter Wexford, Caulfield pleaded with the remaining insurgents to quit the town before the arrival of Lake's troops; Miles Byrne later recalled the bishop at his window 'haranguing the multitude.'[79]

Caulfield's month-long captivity had greatly alarmed his episcopal confreres; in Kilkenny it was reported that he was a prisoner of the rebels, and Lanigan wrote to Troy requesting news of 'poor Doctor Caulfield'; the archbishop himself believed that Caulfield had fled to Wales.[80] By that stage he was under the protection of General Lake, and he lost no time in informing Troy of his liberation and of his being 'tolerably well after a month of the most terrific confusion and tumult.'[81] Lanigan, who had issued what the *Dublin Journal* called a 'spirited' pastoral against the rebels, was pleased that the country was returning to its senses and he welcomed Cornwallis's arrival 'as the aurora that will soon usher in happy days.'[82] Lanigan's pastoral, published 9 July,

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77 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 31 July 1798, D.D.A.
78 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 31 July 1798, D.D.A.
79 M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, i, p. 181.
80 J. Troy to T. Bray, 12 June 1798, D.D.A, J. Lanigan to J. Troy, 22 June 1798, D.D.A.
81 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 25 June 1798, D.D.A.
82 'Letter from Scullabogue' in *F.D.J.* 4 August 1798, J. Lanigan to J. Troy, 22 June 1798, D.D.A.

reminded his flock of the horrors of France, and the United Irishmen, whom he excommunicated, were described as 'cruel and unnatural children' of King George, 'a tender and merciful parent.'[83] Daniel Delaney of Kildare and Leighlin and based in Tullow visited Lanigan in Kilkenny in the first week in June, and while he was there took the opportunity of calling on General Asgill who received him well. Delaney reported to Troy the defeat and 'prodigious slaughter' of the rebels at New Ross and Newtownbarry. By that time there were four thousand troops in Tullow, but even prior to their arrival the town had remained quiet, despite being defended by only the local yeomanry corps, consisting of 23 Catholic and 17 protestant privates. Delaney believed the rebels were 'absolutely possessed by the Devil himself,' but he was confident the 'unhappy miscreants' would be suppressed in a few days.[84]

In Dublin Troy had anxiously tried to salvage the situation and went to great lengths to recall the people to loyalty and absolve the hierarchy from responsibility for the rebellion. Throughout the rebellion he tried to orchestrate the bishops' campaign, co-ordinating the publication of pastorals and presenting loyal addresses to the Lord Lieutenant. On 28 May an address was published on behalf of the hierarchy condemning the rebellion and recalling the deluded to a sense of duty, and two days later an address of loyalty was presented to the Lord Lieutenant signed by the four archbishops, the majority of the prelates and the principal laity.[85] The presence of Boetius Egan, archbishop of Tuam, amongst the signatories of the address indicates that it may have been written a good deal before the rebellion, (there is

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83 Pastoral Address of James Lanigan, 9 July 1798, in *F.L.J.*, 11 July 1798.
84 D. Delaney to J. Troy, 8 June 1798.
85 *Hib. Jn.* 28 May 1798, 4 June 1798. *D.E.P.* 31 May 1798.

confusion surrounding the exact date of his death: the *Dublin Evening Post* announced it on 10 July, but does not indicate when it occurred, but Burke, the Tuam diocesan historian, believed that he died as early as 28 January;[86] since Egan was attending the bishops' meeting in Dublin in late January, Burke's date is obviously incorrect, yet the absence of any comment from him during the rebellion may indicate that the addresses were prepared in advance, reflecting the bishops' acknowledgement of a state of rebellion long before the 'burst' in late May). It is significant that in the wake of Emmet's rebellion in 1803 Hardwicke claimed that Troy's own pastoral had been written before the outbreak.[87]

Troy's address created the greatest stir of all. The archbishop published short instructions on 27 May, and he developed the same theme in a full pastoral published some days later.[88] In the short address Troy had condemned the 'wicked endeavours of irreligious and rebellious agitators, to overthrow and destroy the Constitution.' He repeated his instructions concerning the evils of oaths and he delivered a sharp rebuke to the philosophy of the time;

> let no one deceive you by wretched impracticable speculations on the rights of man, and the majesty of the people, on the dignity and independence of the human mind, on abstract duties of superiors, and exaggerated abuses of authority; fatal speculations! Disastrous theories! not more subversive of social order and happiness, than destructive to every principle of the Christian religion.

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86 *D.E.P.*, 10 July 1798, O.J. Burke, *The History of the Catholic Archbishops of Tuam*(Dublin, 1882) p. 206. *The New History Of Ireland,* ix, p.378, places his death in June/July 1798 on the basis of the *D.E.P.* announcement.

87 Hardwicke to York, 24 August 1803, in T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* p. 276.

88 John Troy, Pastoral Instructions, 27 May 1798, D.D.A., *Pastoral Instructions to the Roman Catholics of the Archdiocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 1798).

Troy called his flock to loyalty, reminding them that submission to the laws was a Christian duty, and he called on them to abjure their oaths, unite with their fellow subjects, deliver up their arms and put down the spirit of insurrection. By so doing they would preserve their persons and property; if they refused, they would be cut off from the Church and refused access to the sacraments. Once again, the archbishop failed to mention the United Irishmen by name, but he was uncrompromising in his excommunication of the rebels.

In the full pastoral Troy traversed much of the same ground covered in his various addresses throughout the 1790s. He condemned the evils of the French Revolution, the destruction of Europe, the irreligious assault upon the Church and the person of the Pope. Again he spoke of the illegality of oaths and the necessity of obedience to the laws and reiterated his constant theme of gratitude to the king for his goodness to the Irish Catholics. There was, however, a sense in which this pastoral reflected a movement in the archbishop's stance. Despite the reminders of the conditions suffered by the Catholics twenty years previously, despite the call for gratitude to the king for his benevolence, Troy now publicly acknowledged the very real obstacles which still excluded 'the most loyal and peaceable Roman Catholics from a seat or vote in parliament, from the privy council, from the higher and confidential civil and military departments of state.' In this the archbishop recognised the demands of the reformers to whom he had consistently refused to lend his support, but he still strongly rejected their methods. The pastoral also contained an implicit acknowledgement of the changed temper of the Catholics and the recognition of heightened levels of anti-clericalism in Ireland. Troy was only too aware of the attacks made by the radical press on the integrity of the clergy; Arthur O'Connor's Dublin-based *Press*, in one example alone, published a 'New English

Vocabulary' in late 1797 and along with definitions of 'Liberty' as 'Life' and 'Equality' as 'Emancipation' the list included 'An Archbishop = An Absorbent,' 'A Bishop = A Bacchanalian', and 'A Priest = A Parasite.'[89] At Christmas 1797 the *Press* carried a seasonal reflection with striking parrallels between Judea and Ireland:

> The PRIESTHOOD and the Government of the province where he[Jesus] had his birth, found his doctrines incompatible with the foreign yoke which their tyranny imposed.[90]

In the face of these endeavours, and in recognition of their success, Troy was forced to make a rare condescension in an effort to justify his actions. As Francis Moylan had done the previous April, Troy went to great lengths to stress the independence of the hierarchy against allegations that the prelates were like 'so many mercenaries prostituting their venal pens and exhortations for pensions and bribes.'

Yet despite the alteration in Troy's tone, the archbishop's excommunication of the rebels aroused an immediate response. Troy had frequently resorted to excommunications in the past and the sanction remained a favoured weapon in his armoury, but in 1798 the sentence appears to have had little effect in discouraging the rebels. Leonard McNally was amongst the first to report the general response to the pastoral and he declared that

> the recent excommunication by the Holy Catholic Church is received by her sons not merely with indifference, but with contempt. It is a measure which in my opinion will nearly go to annihilate all priestly influence, increase deism and draw down upon the priests themselves very severe resentments. In bulk it is laughed at and ridiculed, not only by men, but by women. The [fulminations]of the Pope or his delegates no longer terrify and their anathemas pale like so many *bruta fulmina* upon modern Catholics, or as Mr

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89 *The Press*, 10 October 1797.
90 *The Press*, 26 December 1797.

> Shanky[Royal Dublin Militia?] says, it is but firing sparrow shot against a bastion.[91]

Francis Higgins reported that amongst the lower clergy in Dublin there was a good degree of resentment at the excommunication and that they criticised the manner in which the sentence had been passed without warning. The same priests believed more harm than good would ensue, as the excommunications were generally perceived to have been imposed on government instructions.[92] Similarly, Bishop Plunkett of Meath informed Troy that he had been 'startled' by the excommunications; writing in the wake of the rebellion, he acknowledged that such a sentence was perhaps the appropriate remedy for the situation, but that he had been unable to take similar steps in Meath due to the dangers he faced there.[93] The bishop of Kilfenora believed that the sentence of excommunication should have been pronounced for the whole kingdom, with varying forms to suite local circumstances.[94]

There was unusually strong reaction to the excommunications from the United Irishmen, who normally reacted to episcopal statements with indifference. In early July 1798 the priests of Lazer's Hill chapel[Townsend's Street] received a notice from the secretary of the 'Star Division' of the United Irishmen ,dated the 'first year of the Irish Republic.' The letter is addressed to Frs Morris, P.P., Smyth and Divine and 'the very obliging gentleman who excommunicated first last Sunday,' presumably referring to the archbishop.[95] The letter began with a long tale of the miseries inflicted upon Irish Catholics for centuries, and the cruelties of the Orange men and army in more recent times. The day of

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91 J.W. 26 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/10/121/116
92 F.H. 22 August 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14
93 P. Plunkett to J. Troy, 13 December 1798, D.D.A.
94 Dillon to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, D.D.A.
95 Dr Nephen to Priests of Lazer's Hill, n.d.[July 1798] S.P.O. 620/51/224.

reckoning, however, was close at hand, and within a few days Dublin would be free and the city's lamp posts would be decorated with the skeletons of tyrants. The address then turned to consider the excommunications and issued a salutory warning to the priests on account of their preference for the 'murdering government':

> we never before thought of any our clergy false or ill hearted, we thought they were men of piety, men of love, men of God, until last Sunday. We often heard their admonitions which we apprehended was to keep themselves from the censure of government, but how great was our astonishment last Sunday when we could hear ourselves censured and excommunicated like by the ministers of that very church we are suffering for - we are sure ye heard the effects of such conduct in France, a place that now overflows with milk and honey as God promised.

The same antipathy was repeated in a political skit found amongst the papers of Richard Passmore, the Dublin radical. The skit contained a supposed list of new books and amongst the titles was 'The New Table of Sins,' originally published in *The Press*, which was a story of the Catholic laity consigned to the devil for shaking hands with their Protestant or Presbyterian brethren, and the volume contained 'notes on pacific obedience by Most Rev Doctor Troy, respectfully dedicated to Secretary Cooke.'[96] Watty Cox, the militant Dublin United Irishman and polemicist writing almost twenty years after the rebellion, looked back on the excommunications and condemned that 'terrible anathema, which sent a man to the devil for loving his country.' Yet the people had joined the rebellion without the Troy's leave and, despite defeat, 'their glory was not diminished, only in the view of their archbishop and his friends in Britain.'[97] The level of negative reaction to Troy's pastoral and what Cox called his 'pious alliance' with the government, aroused fears for his

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96 R. Passmore, n.d. S.P.O. 620/53/73.
97 W. Cox, *Irish Magazine*, March 1815

safety. Luke Concanen feared that the archbishop's zeal would expose him to 'the fury of the deluded fanatics' and Charles Erskine referred to the great displeasure with which his pastoral had been greeted in radical circles. The Dublin diocesan historian, John Dalton, records the archbishop narrowly escaping a plot on his life, but he does not substantiate his claim. In any event, Castlereagh felt it necessary to place him under protection in early July.[98] The bishops, however, were not to be deterred by fear of reprisals. Throughout the summer Troy acted on behalf of the hierarchy and made great efforts to have their various addresses and excommunications printed in the Dublin newspapers in an effort to counter the bitter loyalist backlash in the aftermath of the rebellion. The *Dublin Evening Post* , but particularly the *Dublin Journal* on account of its rabidly anti-Catholic stance, were the archbishop's first choice for these publications, but Dillon of Kilfenora complained that the *Dublin Journal* had made exorbitant charges for carrying the reports.[99] Troy in turn sent bundles of the addresses to Charles Erskine for inclusion in the London papers, where the monsignor reported they were received with with just praise and satisfaction.[100]

When the French invasion was finally put down in September the bishops breathed a sigh of relief, taking consolation in the opposition they had offered to what James Caulfield called the 'Dogs of Hell.'[101] Throughout clerical circles praise resounded for the loyal exertions of the Irish bishops and even Pius VI, prisoner of the French at Florence, echoed the tumult.[102] Yet despite the efforts of the hierarchy throughout

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98 L. Concanen to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, C. Erskine to J. Troy, 6 July 1798, D.D.A, J. Troy to T. Bray, 10 June 1798, C.D.A. J. Dalton, *The Memoirs of the Archbishops of Dublin*, (Dublin, 1838) p. 486, Castlereagh, 2 July 1798, D.D.A.

99 J. Dillon to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, D.D.A.

100 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 23 June 1798, 6 July 1798, D.D.A.

101 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 15 September 1798, D.D.A.

102 Pius VI to C. Erskine, 28 July 1798, in Brady, *Anglo-Roman Papers*, p. 143.

1798, and their steady and uniform loyalty through the decade, the bishops soon found themselves once more under siege, this time from the black propagandists seeking to dub the rebellion a popish plot.

VII

Priests and the Rebellion of 1798.

Episcopal reaction to the events of 1798 reflected the level of unity which the turbulence of the 1790s had brought to the Irish hierarchy. Little more than twenty years previously, the prelates had been bitterly divided on the prudence, and even more on the content, of the infamous 'Herveyan test,' yet throughout 1798 they displayed public unity and constancy in rallying to the defence of the Irish establishment. Such a response might indeed have been expected from the hierarchy, conscious of the critical circumstances of the Continental church and anxious to preserve the achievements of their loyal endeavours at home. The likely reactions of the lower clergy in the face of open rebellion were not, however, so easily predicted. Their numbers alone made uniform loyalty more difficult to maintain, while their close ties and dependence on the people made them far more susceptible to the pressures around them. Yet despite the frightening predictions of the Castle runners prior to the rebellion and the representations of loyalist historians in its wake, the 70 priests actively involved in the rebellion represent less than 4% of their total number.

Nevertheless, the significance of clerical involvement in the rebellion is reflected in the level of attention devoted to the 'rebel priest' in the historiography of the period. Many of the accounts of 1798 were written from an understandably partisan perspective and in these narratives the integrity of the priest is often sacrificed to suit the greater

purpose of the author. At one extreme Musgrave strove to portray the rebellion as a popish plot and in this scenario the rebels were depicted as foolish dupes, goaded into insurrection by their priests, whom he believed were 'the chief abettors of this nefarious conspiracy.'[1] Liberal Protestant and Catholic historians sought to play down the levels of clerical involvement in the rebellion: for Edward Hay and many of those implicated in United Irish activities, the presence of the clergy amongst the rebels provided a very welcome scapegoat. Such party accounts could easily exploit the sensationalist, even baroque, tales of the rebel priest at the head of his infuriated flock. Carefully woven into a broader context, they served to confirm the author's desired interpretation of the events of 1798.

In 1863 the old debate was reopened with the publication in Paris of Miles Byrne's *Memoirs*. Byrne consciously singled out the rebel priests for attention, and he rounded upon earlier accounts of the rebellion and misrepresentations of the Catholic historians who had tarnished the reputation 'of those priests who fought so bravely at the head of the people, in their effort to expel the common enemy.'[2] The timing of the publication of Byrne's memoirs was a source of particular embarrassment to the Church, then preoccupied with the challenge of the Fenians, but the old United Irishman's assessment of clerical involvement as 'three or four priests' driven from their neutral position 'by the blood thirsty Orangemen' fell far short of the reality. In the wake of the failed Fenian rising of 1867, the Wexford Fransiscan, Patrick Kavanagh attempted to reconcile the activity of the rebel priests with the church's condemnation of oath-bound societies. The result was a history of 1798 which portrayed the priests as involuntary rebels, reluctantly

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1 Camillus to The Roman Catholics, *F.D.J.* 25 Sept. 1798.
2 M. Byrne, *Memoirs,* i, pp. 54-57.

leading the defence of their flocks against tyranny and oppression.[3] This is the image which has survived in popular lore, and Kavanagh was almost singlehandedly responsible for the measure of acclaim accorded in the popular memory to 'Brave Father Murphy,' the curate of Boolavogue. While the rabidly anti-Catholic Patrick Duigenan had described Murphy as a 'drunken ruffian,' Kavanagh singled him out as a hero, casting the curate in the messianic mould of a selfless leader taking up arms in the face of intolerable persecution; Patrick McColl's stirring anthem 'Boolavogue', written in the 1890s, copperfastened this image.[4] This view of Father Murphy displaced earlier representations, and the priest's most recent biographer has uncritically accepted the heroic role carved out for him by Father Kavanagh.[5] This mid nineteenth-century reassessment of the role of Murphy in 1798 complicated the general appraisal of clerical involvement; all priests were set in the image of John Murphy's 'mighty wave.'

In the recent re-examinations of the rebellion, which emphasise a broader political context, a great deal of attention has been centred on the religious factor in the politicisation of the 1790s. Louis Cullen and particularly Kevin Whelan have focused on the role of the priests in 1798; their efforts point to the more complex nature of clerical involvement than had previously been considered.[6] The great difficulty in separating the

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3 P.F. Kavanagh, *A Popular history of the insurrection of 1798* (Dublin, 1916), A. Kinsella, 'Father Patrick Kavanagh,' (M.Litt. thesis, University of Dublin, forthcoming) L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth-Century Politicisation in Ireland' in L.M. Cullen and P. Bergeron(eds) *Culture et Pratiques*, p. 150.

4 P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1800) p. 11.

5 N. Furlong, *Father John Murphy, 1753-1798*, (Dublin, 1991).

6 L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 Rebellion in its eighteenth-century context,' in P. Corish(ed.), *Radicals, rebels and establishments* (Belfast, 1985), pp. 91-113, 'The 1798 rebellion in county Wexford. United Irishman organisation, membership and leadership,' in K. Whelan *Wexford*, pp. 248-95. K. Whelan, 'The religious factor in the 1798 rebellion in county Wexford,' in O'Flanagan, Ferguson and Whelan(eds), *Rural Ireland*, pp. 62-85, 'The role of the Catholic priest in the 1798 rebellion in county Wexford,' in Whelan(ed), *Wexford*, pp. 296-315. T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, pp 228-268.

reality from the myth stems from the lack of impartial evidence upon which to construct an authoratative study. With the notable exception of the Armagh priest, James Quigley, none of the clerics involved in the radical proceedings of the 1790s left any memoir, and in consequence explanations for their activities have been drawn from indirect sources. A great deal of the recent reassessment has focused on the extensive Caulfield-Troy correspondence in the Dublin Diocesan Archives, but this evidence must be placed against the background of the post rebellion polemic and Caulfield's attempt at damage limitation. The partisan contemporary accounts of the rebellion also present a distorted picture, while the various state papers tend to exaggerate the level of clerical disaffection. Indeed many of the seventy or so priests implicated in the rebellion had very tenuous links with sedition and their convictions were often secured on the word of informers or under severe threats; in Wexford the clergy suffered greatly as a result of 'evidence' of the notorious paid informer Richard Grandy, while a full 'confession' was extracted from the Drogheda United Irish priest, John Martin, at the mouth of a cannon.[7] What has survived, then, are sketchy party accounts which have perpetuated the myth of the 'patriot priest' on one hand, or overstated the loyalty of the clergy on the other.

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[7] Evidence of Richard Grandy, *F.D.J.* 3 July 1798, Musgrave, *Memoirs*, pp. 390-91.

The 'Loyal' Priests.

Apart from defending the rebel clergy in his *Memoirs*, Miles Byrne voiced a strong criticism of the priests in general, condemning their 'pious assiduity and earnest endeavours' to keep the people in thralldom which he believed had 'saved the infamous English government in Ireland from destruction.'[8] Yet as the myth of the rebel priest has been re-examined, this image of unswerving clerical loyalty requires equal deconstruction. Just as clerical disaffection had taken many forms, the loyalty of the clergy was reflected in different ways.

On one level a loyalist tag could certainly be attached to the endeavours of the Cork Franciscan Arthur O'Leary, who by 1798 was in receipt of a government pension and whose sermons preached in St Patrick's chapel, London were reprinted and widely circulated.[9] It is more difficult, however, to categorise the pamphlets of the Dublin Augustinian, William Gahan. While provincial of his order in the 1780s, Gahan became a prolific writer of devotional texts, the best known of which was the *Manual of Catholic Piety.*[10] In many respects Gahan was typical of the leading clergy of the late eighteenth-century, eagerly exploiting the opportunities provided by the recent concessions of Catholic relief. In 1777 he founded John's Lane school; education was to remain his greatest priority and in this task he worked alongside the famous Dublin Jesuit, Dr Thomas Betagh.[11] Gahan established strong links with Troy and many of the crucial episcopal gatherings prior to the

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[8] M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, 1, p. 54.
[9] *Public Characters of 1798*, (Dublin, 1799), p. 98.
[10] W. Gahan, *Manual of Catholic Piety*,(Dublin, 1788), see F.X. Martin, 'Guillaume Gahan, 1732-1804' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, vi, (1965), col. 69-70. P.A. Doyle, 'Father William Gahan, Augustinian of the Penal Days,' in *Good Counsel*, (Dublin, 1957), pp. 119-131.
[11] *D.E.P.* 17 Dec. 1791.

foundation of Maynooth, and the early Trustees' meetings took place at his John's Lane priory. Gahan had also connections with John Butler(Lord Dunboyne), the former bishop of Cork, and these ties placed him at the centre of an unquestionably loyal circle. On the eve of the rebellion in 1798 Gahan published a pamphlet entitled *Youth Instructed* which contained a blunt rejection of Tom Paine and his 'idle speculations, wild ideas and conjectures.'[12] The Augustinian condemned the *Age of Reason* which he declared was:

> no more than a confused medley of captious sophisms, groundless assertions, unsupported dogmas, heterogeneous ribaldry, sarcasms, and ridicule calculated not to instruct and edify, but to pervert and puzzle his uninformed readers, by scattering dust in their eyes, and attempting to make them insensibly swallow the poison of infidelity, disguised under the dress and appearance of solid reason and truth.[13]

Gahan's pamphlet was published by subscription and the list of contributors reflects the range of his influence. Amongst those named are Troy, who received twenty copies, Bishops O'Donnell of Derry and Egan of Tuam, many students of Maynooth, and numerous priests including Father Andrew O'Toole, the parish priest of Wicklow. O'Toole's house was destroyed by loyalists in July 1799, but in the wake of his mysterious death in the following month the *Dublin Journal* described him as a 'man of steady loyalty.'[14] Gahan's pamphlet represents a rare example of published comment from the lower clergy on the radical literature of the time. The assault on the *Age of Reason* may simply have been a preemptive strike against Paine's theology, but it may also reflect the level to which these ideas had filtered through to the Catholic

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12 W. Gahan, *Youth Instructed in the Grounds of Christian Religion, with remarks on the writings of Voltaire, Rosseau, T. Paine etc* .(Dublin, 1798). p. 149.
13 W. Gahan, *Youth Instructed*, p. 148.
14 *F.D.J.*, 29 Aug. 1799.

community, and therefore warranted explicit rebuttal in catechetical texts. Yet, despite of their conservative content and tone, Gahan's writings can not be so easily categorised as Father O'Leary's. Certainly his pamphlets contained valuable material for the loyal preacher, but their purpose was essentially pedagogical. Their author had no consciously loyalist or political agenda, nor were these texts directed towards a popular audience.

While such unsolicited intellectual defences of the establishment can only have been welcomed by the government, the threat of imminent rebellion in the Spring of 1798 demanded more immediate measures. The prominent clerical role in the local activities of the Catholic Committee throughout the 1790s had given loyalists a quite unfounded image of their power. Without doubt, clerical co-operation had been essential to the success of Convention elections; only with their assistance had it been possible to hold the chapel meetings and to conduct the petitioning which had characterised Catholic politics throughout the decade. Yet despite the apparent bond between priests and people, the relationship was often very strained; in many cases the clergy reluctantly co-operated in the business. This tension had been illustrated only too clearly during the days of the Kenmare secession when the limits of the clerical call to obedience became uncomfortably apparent. The lessons of the episode had not been lost on Troy, and the lay radicals exploited these signs of weakness for all that they were worth. The failure of the hierarchy to marshall the church during the crisis illustrated the independence of the laity and it had been a humbling experience for the bishops. Yet the lessons of the episode were lost on the Castle administration, and throughout the 1790s there was an assumption that prelates and priests continued to command the unquestioning loyalty of their flocks. This was not to deny the existence

of independent minded radical Catholics, but there was a conservative consensus that the great body of the Catholic church would fall in behind their natural leaders in the moment of crisis.

To outsiders, the chapel meetings and petitioning of the 1790s presented a powerful image of Catholic unity; thus prior to the rebellion, many magistrates had attempted to harness the great potential of the church in an effort to instill loyalty. Just as the radicals had raised petitions, the magistrates orchestrated loyal resolutions, often choosing the chapel in which to administer oaths of allegiance. Andrew Newton of Coagh, County Tyrone, claimed to have been the first magistrate to have encouraged Catholics to enter into these resolutions. Newton had become alarmed at the level to which the Orange Order had instilled fear into the Catholic community, and he embarked on a campaign to allay their anxieties and stem the growth of the United Irishmen. He began in June 1797 at his local chapel at Ardboe in county Derry and there received the signature of the parish priest, Bernard O'Neill, and 678 Catholics to his resolutions. These acknowledged that many had been induced to take the United oath by 'the arguments of designing men who buzzed into our ears Catholic Emancipation, and the danger of being massacred by Orangemen.' Newton repeated this exercise throughout much of mid-Ulster and was satisfied with the result of 'making a split between them and the Presbyterians.'[15]

Newton's example was taken up in various parts of the country, and the published resolutions provided an interesting barometer of regional levels of tension in late 1797 andearly 1798. The earliest addresses are almost totally from Antrim, Down and other parts of the North, but from the beginning of 1798 they appear in the South with the

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15 Resolutions of the Catholics of Ardboe, county Tyrone, *D.E.P.* 24 Jun. 1797, Andrew Newton, Coagh, to ----, 1 Feb. 1798, S.P.O. 620/35/102.

address of the Catholics of Musgrave's parish of Cappoquin, County Waterford, being amongst the first.[16] The levels of petitioning reached a peak in March 1798 and they generally formed part of a wider campaign, although some were occasioned by specific incidents. The address signed by Father Joseph Power and the Catholics of Tuosista, county Kerry, for example was as a result of an attack on a local tithe proctor.[17] The level of petitioning also depended on other factors, the most significant of which was the presence in the area of an active local magnate or magistrate. In consequence, many of the published resolutions may be centred on the activity of local magistrates such as Andrew Newton, Caesar Colclough, Lord Mountnorris and Richard Musgrave.

The resolutions were viewed with scepticism in some loyal quarters; the Marquis of Downshire had little faith in the addresses, but believed that they 'did no harm' and might at least be useful in separating 'some of these poor deluded fools' from the general conspiracy.[18] It also became common for proclamations to be read in chapels. In Queen's County the governor, William Pole, had extracts from the insurrection act read in the chapels while Charles Tottenham of New Ross instructed that a letter from Venice, giving a very negative account of the impact of the French there should, be read in the churches and chapels of his district in an effort to detach the people from French sympathies.[19] The authorities also involved the clergy in the disarming of the country. In Templekenny, County Tipperary, Sir James Foulis praised the 'zealous exertions and pathetic eloquence' of the curate Father O'Meagher who had assisted

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16 Address of the Catholics of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, *D.E.P.* 25 Jan. 1798,
17 Address of the Catholics of Tuosita, Co. Kerry, *D..E.P.*, 17 Mar. 1798,
18 Downshire to ----------, 14 Jan. 1798, S.P.O. 620/35/34
19 *F.D.J.,* 13 Jan. 1798, Charles Tottenham, Ross to -----, 3 Feb. 1798, S.P.O. 620/35/109.

him in returning the area to order. In Drumcree, William Smyth attributed the tranquility of the area and the 'remarkable change' in the minds of the lower orders to the sermons of the clergy.[20] In the Dublin diocese Nicholas Phepoe, parish priest of Kilcullen, co-operated with General Dundas in persuading his people to surrender arms before the outbreak of the rebellion. So successful was he in this task that the general intervened with the archbishop in early June to stop his proposed transfer to another parish. Dundas, who may have been approached to make this appeal by Phepoe, believed that such a move would be imprudent, as the priest was 'labouring to restore and confirm his deluded flock. . . to a just sense of their duty to their king and country.'[21] Similarly Roger Miley, parish priest of Blessington, won the praise of Dundas and Lord Gosford for the manner in which he remained in his war-torn village throughout the rebellion in an effort to restore peace.[22]

In north County Dublin, Patrick Ryan, parish priest of Coolock, achieved great distinction among the conservatives as a result of his co-operation in disarming the district. Francis Higgins had spent some days collecting rents in the St Margaret's in May 1798, and he informed Edward Cooke of the pastor's exertions:

> At the time of the rebellion raging and many of his parishioners declaring that their servants, gardeners etc. were quitting their service to join the rebels, this Fr Ryan sought after them and publicly as well as privately admonished them. He made his terms with Rt Hon Mr Beresford and the Gent. of the Coolock Association not to molest the people on account of giving up firearms, pikes etc. The consequence was that in the course of five days he caused to be piled up and delivered to the Coolock Cavalry nine cars filled with pikes, old scythes on poles, swords, fire arms etc

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[20] James Foulis to Castlereagh, 23 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/134, W. Smyth, Drumcree to E. Cooke, 15 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/72.
[21] Dundas to J. Troy, 7 Jun. 1798, D.D.A. Nicholas Phepoe to J. Troy, 8 Jun. 1798, D.D.A.
[22] R. Miley to J. Troy, 4 Jun. 1798, D.D.A.

> and as truly observed by him, 'take from them the implements of destruction and you deprive them of the means of doing mischief.[23]

Leonard McNally reported similarly from Coolock, which he described as 'extremely refractory', and he referred to the danger to which Ryan was exposed.[24] The newspapers also carried reports of Ryan's co-operation with Capt Annesley and Capt. Vernon of the South Fingal Yeomanry Corps, and from these accounts it may be inferred that the people were addressed at chapel meetings. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Father Ryan published an acknowledgement of the 'vigilant exertions' of the Fingal Corps, co-ordinated by the Beresfords, on behalf of himself, his curate Eugene McKenna and the Catholics of the Barony of Coolock.[25]

Yet the question of Father Ryan's motivation would come back to haunt him, particularly after his appointment as coadjutor to James Caulfield of Ferns in 1804. Ryan's fiercest critic was to be Watty Cox, former United Irishman and editor of the *Union Star*, who by then was producing the *Irish Magazine*. Cox was highly critical of the hierarchy and their role in the rebellion, and during the veto controversy he published a piece in which both Troy and Ryan were portrayed as pawns of the Castle. The article took the form of a dialogue across the fence between 'Jack Farrell' and 'Billy Dowling', supposedly two farmers from the barony of Forth in county Wexford. After a long discussion of the character of both bishops, Jack concludes, 'since Dr Troy makes such bishops, they might as well be appointed by the king.'[26] Ryan succeeded Caulfield as bishop in 1814 and Cox, once again, revived memories of his loyal exertions in 1798. Above all, Cox rounded upon Ryan for his conspicuous loyalty and haughtiness, which the priest had made great

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23 F.H. to E. Cooke, 22 Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14.
24 J.W. n.d. [30 May 1798], S.P.O. 620/10/121/158.
25 *S.N.L.*, 31 May 1798, *F.D.J.*, 8 Dec. 1798.
26 *Irish Magazine*, 1808.

efforts to cultivate. According to Cox, Ryan had remained totally aloof from his parishioners, with the exception of that 'eloquent and opulent ignorant man' Randall McDonnell, the prominent merchant and member of the Catholic Committee. Ryan moved amongst the local Protestant gentry and enjoyed the greatest intimacy with Lord Annesley of the revenue commission and Captain Swan, the deputy Town Major. Apart from his loyal display in 1798, Ryan had assisted Annesley in an inheritance dispute. Cox claimed that Annesley and McDonnell had both used their influence with Troy in his favour on the 'understanding that one good turn deserves another,' a veiled reference to the promotion of Troy's nephew in the revenue service. Troy in turn recommended Ryan to James Caulfield, then actively seeking a coadjutor, and his appointed in preference to Fr William Chapman of New Ross led to resentment in the diocese. All in all, Patrick Ryan was subsequently portrayed as a sycophant, in stark contrast to Francis Higgin's contemporary if suspect image of a timid pastor interceding on behalf of his flock.[27]

The persistence of such debate illustrates the difficulties in assigning motives for clerical loyalty during the rebellion. The case of James McCary, curate of Carrickfergus, is a further example of this. McCary, a native of Culfeightrim, joined the Dominicans at Coleraine and was educated in Lisbon. He was ordained in 1781 and appointed to Carrickfergus, where he built a chapel six years later.[28] McCary first came to the attention of the authorities in May 1796 when Father Cassidy of Newry informed his landlord, John Corry, of the level of swearing in the district and of the great harm done by McCary, who had been busy preaching to large numbers in the fields near Ballymena. 'Astonishing numbers' had gathered to hear the sermon which had been announced

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27 *Irish Magazine*, 1815, F.H. 22 Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14.
28 O'Laverty, *Down and Conor*, iii, p. 110.

by public notice, the theme of which was 'A new commandment I give You, that you love one another.'[29] Captain Andrew McNevin quickly realised the potential of the priest and decided to exploit his position, confident that he would prove an 'essential instrument to government.. he being at the head of every infamous and rebellious transaction.' McNevin was certain that 'no man in either the county of Down or Antrim can give such real information, nor can be of such material service as himself.'[30] Compromised as he was, McCarry had little choice but to co-opperate with the authorities and he regularly impressed on them the value of his services and the dangers to which he was exposed. In January 1796 the body of the Michael Phillips, the Franciscan informer, had been taken from the Lagan, and possibly fearing a similar fate McCary felt it necessary to publish a notice in the *Northern Star* , denying that a recent visit to Dublin had been for the purpose of informing. Yet in the same month he requested government protection from assassins, declaring that 'prolonging my life might save thousands by all I could do.'[31] McCary maintained regular contact with Captain McNevin over a period of two years, during which time he provided a good deal of information about the United Irish organisation in Carrickfergus, links with France, and rebel plans.[32] In 1797 he published a useful collection of devotional material, entitled *The Sure Way to Heaven*, and the inclusion of Luke and Charles Teeling and the Dublin United Irishman Hugh MacVeagh in the subsrciption list suggests Defender links.[33] McCary

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[29] J. Corry, Newry, to ---------, 10 May 1796, S.P.O. 620/23/102.
[30] A. McNevin, to E. Cooke, 7 July 1796, S.P.O. 620/24/31.
[31] T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism in 1795,' *I.H.S.*, xxiv(May 1985), p. 379, *Northern Star*, 20 July 1796, J. McCary to W. Williams, Post Office Dublin, 19 July 1796, S.P.O. 620/24/43.
[32] McCary 29 Mar. 1797, S.P.O. 620/29/129, 29 Mar 1798, S.P.O. 620/29/130, MacCary to E. Cooke, 28 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/195, 8 Oct. 1798, S.P.O. 620/40/140.
[33] J. McCary, *The Sure Way to Heaven; being a new volume, much as never published before in English, on the Truths of Salvation; compiled and published by Rev. James Matthew MacCary, Catholic Rector of Carrickfergus and Larne, S.O.P.. Hy-br--norm, Prior*

revived the White Scapular Confraternity in the diocese of Down and Conor; this would have provided him with a useful cover under which to carry out Defender/United Irish activity; like so many of the politically active priests, McCary presented a loyal address in January 1798, illustrating the ambiguity of such declarations.[34] From the onset of his contact with the authorities there were signs of his unreliability as an informer; in one of his first communications he requested £300 in return for information; similar appeals became a constant feature of his correspondence.[35] In any event, the diocesean historian referred to McCary's fall into 'intemperate habits,' for which he was suspended in 1802, but the priest continued to 'disgrace the church and outrage society' until his death in the General Hospital, Belfast, in 1833.[36] Rather than reflecting principled loyalty, McCary's co-operation was at most a successful attempt to salvage himself from a potentially disastrous situation in which he found himself.

There are further examples of priests receiving financial rewards for their efforts, but most of these date from the post rebellion period. Father Charles Doran, parish priest of Monasterevin, County Kildare, received £20 from Lord Tyrawly in acknowledgement of his role in preventing people from joining the rebels.[37] Thomas Flannery of Cappoquin, County Waterford, whose name was attached to one of the earliest loyal resolutions in the South, received £50; significantly the priest's name also appeared on a later address from Clonmel.[38] Thomas Hearn, Hussey's dean in Waterford received £70, while Fr James

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of Coleraine. Restorator and Director of the Confraternities of the White Scapular and Rosaries in the Diocese of Down and Conor. (Belfast, 1797).

34 O'Laverty, *Down and Conor*, iii, p. 111.

35 McCary to W. Williams, Post Office Dublin, 23 July 1796, S.P.O. 620/24/45.

36 O'Laverty, *Down and Conor*, iii, p. 112.

37 S.P.O. 620/52/9

38 Gilbert, *Documents*, p. 73 12 June 1798, *D.E.P.*

Jennings of Balinrobe, County Galway, received £50 for his part in the rebellion and his later assistance in the arrest of 'Captain Hough', a notorious Defender leader.[39] In Mallow, County Cork, Fr Thomas Barry was rewarded £100 for informing on a conspiracy in the Meath Militia.[40] The parish priest of Midleton, County Cork, Fr Michael Barry, had been shunned by his people for preaching loyalty during the rebellion and defending a Castlemartyr tithe proctor against threats in1799; in consequence his living was destroyed and he petitioned the Castle for support, suggesting that he be recommended to Troy for the mitre of first diocese which became available.[41] In 1801 Francis Higgins made an appeal on behalf of Peter Moran, a Franciscan of Adam and Eve's, requesting that Troy provide him with some income. Moran had supplied 'most interesting intelligence' in 1798 about planned attacks on the city's prisons and the intentions of the Rathfarnham yeomanry corps to shoot their officers.[42]

The vast majority of the clergy who openly declared their loyalty to king and government in 1798 did so in the context of published resolutions. In these instances too, many pressures were brought to bear upon the priests to attach their names to the addresses. Arthur O'Connor's *Press* mounted a sustained assault against the process, delivering its fiercest attack in December 1797:

> Of all the wretched attempts of the wretchedest tools of the most abandoned administration that ever cursed the most miserable country on the earth, that practice which is now going forward, is the most thoroughly abominable.[43]

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39 Altamont to -----, 17 May 1799, S.P.O. 620/47/28, James Jennings, receipt for £50, 27 Jun. 1799, S.P.O. 620/47/28, G. Miller to Marsden, 1801, S.P.O. 620/60/32.
40 Lord Shannon to ----, 8 May 1801, S.P.O. 620/60/76. Gilbert, *Documents*, p. 75.
41 *F.D.J.* 24 Aug. 1799., Petition of Rev. M. Barry, 15 Nov. 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/49.
42 F.H. 18 Mar. 1801, S.P.O. 620/10/118/10.
43 *Press*, 21 Dec. 1797.

These addresses, 'so humiliating, so sickening to the human soul,' had been collected it was claimed under terror of fire and sword, while the resolution from Rathlin Island was misrepresented to the people there as a petition to bring the Armagh magistrates to justice for their treatment of Catholics.[44] The editorial line of the *Press* stopped short of an all-out condemnation of the priests involved and acknowledged unknown reasons which might have compelled them 'to compliment the Castle.'[45] Despite these allowances, the paper's patience was beginning to wear thin by February 1798. Readers were reminded that 'servile priests have in all ages pressed their surplices into the service of despotism,' and again that 'in France Christianity would never have lost its respect if the ecclesiastics had not on every occasion supported the princes and the Bible justified the Bastille.'[46]

Considerable pressure, was indeed brought to bear on priests to co-operate with magistrates and the army. Immediately prior to the rebellion, the *Dublin Journal* carried an account of the efforts of Captain Swayne of the City of Cork Militia in county Kildare. Swayne lodged his men in free quarters and addressed the congregation of Fr John Lynch of Ballysax, near Kilcullen. So successful was his exhortation that five hundred pikes and vast quantities of arms were 'voluntarily surrendered' over the next two days.[47] While Giffard carried the official account of the proceedings, William Farrell recalled a more brutal, though certainly embellished, memory of Swayne's visit to the chapel of Fr Higgins at Prosperous. According to this account, the captain interrupted Mass and ordered the people to bring in their arms at their peril. Then turning to the

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[44] *Press*, 13 Jan. 1798, Resolution of the Roman Catholics of Rathlin Island, signed Ed. McMullan P.P. and 180 inhabitants, *F.D.J.* 13 Jan. 1798.
[45] *Press*, 21 Dec. 1797.
[46] *Press*, 8 Feb. 1798.
[47] *F.D.J.* 22 May 1798.

old priest Swayne, who was one of the targets in the Kildare insurrection, he warned; 'if you don't have it done, I'll pour boiling lead down your throat.' Farrell recalled that the congregation dispersed 'in sullen and silent indignation, whispering their wrongs and insults and breathing vengeance at any hazard.'[48]

The *Irish Magazine* later carried many similar accounts, unrecorded elsewhere, and equally stylised, which seem to illustrate the popular perception of the conditions under which the clergy were forced to function. One account tells of the measures taken by a Meath magistrate to intimidate the Catholics of Kilmainham Wood. Smyth, 'who exercised his pro-consular powers with singular firmness', erected a gallows at the chapel door and forced the congregation when leaving to take their hats off to the gibbet; failure to do so meant death, any hesitation was rewarded by pitchcapping or flogging. Eventually Smyth siezed the priest John O'Reilly, who would have been hanged but for the intervention of Captain Hedon of the Morgallian Cavalry.[49] Cox printed another account of the brutal torture of Fr Reeney, a Carmelite at Kilcullen. This description is couched in Christian imagery and tells how the priest was brought to the house of J. K. B[a]rk[e]r[?], where he was tied and flogged by an 'Ethiopian' soldier of the Londonderry Militia.[50]

Accounts such as these, while certainly exaggerated, reflect some of the many pressures inducing priests to openly declare their loyalty. Yet as a consequence, these sworn declarations were of little value and may have been taken merely to appease the local magnates. In Wexford, for instance, the presence of John Murphy, Michael Murphy and Nicholas Stafford amongst the signatories of Mountnorris's resolutions in

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[48] W. Farrell, *Carlow in 98*, p. 224.
[49] *Irish Magazine,* 1814, p. 127.
[50] *Irish Magazine*, 1815, p. 248.

the spring of 1798 illustrates the folly of the whole process, since these men were later associated with the rebels.[51] And while the swearing campaign of the magistrates may have hampered the spread of the United Irishmen in some areas, in others it merely provided a smoke screen behind which to organise. In the wake of the rebellion Irvin Johnson informed Castlereagh that everyone of the Cavan signatories 'were less or more concerned in Defenderism and United business,' and that they had continued their meetings in spite of their loyal professions. In Mayo and Sligo, Musgrave also believed, most of the priests had orchestrated loyal resolutions in order to 'disarm the suspicion, and lull the vigilance of the government and magistrates.'[52]

Behind Miles Byrne's image of a servile clergy bolstering the tottering regime in Ireland, there lies therefore a far more complex reality. As a spectrum of motives led the clergy to embrace the rebel cause in 1798, so too a variety of circumstances led priests to 'declare' their support for the government. By far the largest group among the clergy were those who merely laid low and avoided taking any part in the rebellion. It is to this inactivity, perhaps interpreted in the light of the declarations of the hierarchy, that a loyal stance has been attributed to the clergy in '98.

The 'Patriot' Priests

In 1945 Richard Hayes published an article in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* entitled 'Priests in the Independence Movement of

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51 K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion,' in *Wexford.*, p. 301.
52 I. Johnson, Cavan, to Castlereagh, 17 Jun. 1798, S.P.O. 620/38/169. Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 567.

1798', and his analysis of the role of the clergy during the rebellion has provided the starting point of most subsequent studies.[53] Hayes flatly rejected the notion that the Catholic clergy had opposed the 'national movement' of the time, and sought to illustrate beyond doubt their crucial role in the events of 1798. In pursuit of this aim, he assembled information on the activities of 58 priests implicated in sedition and provided a potted biography on each. On this number, three were killed in the fighting, eight were executed, eleven became fugitives after the rebellion, twenty-six were arrested and another ten had no action taken against them.[54] Out of a total of almost 1,800 priests in the country, Hayes's figure represents but a tiny fraction, but he argued that silence and hostility to the cause were not synonymous. Yet even amongst these 58 priests many had only tenuous links with sedition.[55] In spite of its shortcomings this article has remained the most accessible and, in consequence the most influential study of the role of the clergy in the rebellion.

The clergy became involved in the rebellion for many reasons, which remain difficult to discern due to the nature of the sources, and thus clerical motivation has become entangled in a complex historiographical web, which allows for little distinction between actions and possible motives. There are instances of clerical involvement in the United Irishmen, but as various pressures had been brought to bear to produce a loyal response, so too the 'rebel priests' often found themselves in invidious circumstances. There are many accounts of priests been intimidated by the radicals. On the eve of the rebellion Troy identified these fears in the letter to his rural vicars; James Lanigan had

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53 R. Hayes, 'Priests in the Independence Movement of 1798,' *I.E.R.*, lxvi,(1945), pp. 258-270.
54 S. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland*, (Dublin, 1982) p. 227.
55 Some twelve more priests could be added to this list.

earlier referred to the fear of assassination which prevented the priests of Ossory denouncing the United Irishmen.[56] In March 1798 the parish priest of Cashel, Fr Mackey, preached against disaffection and he received an anonymous note, signed 'death before dishonour,' containing a salutary reminder of the use to which the guillotine had been put amongst the French clergy.[57] In Dublin Francis Higgins informed the Castle of information he had learned from Father Sherlock, the parish priest of Meath Street. According to Higgins, the Dublin priests had followed Troy's instructions and counselled loyalty, but the various chapels were then visited by some of the well-known leaders (John Keogh, Hugh Hamill, Richard McCormick and Edward Byrne) and they had issued the priests with stern warnings;

> if they should in any manner whatsoever presume to interfere or to advise, or to admonish the people on political subjects, or against the means of their obtaining their rights - the different committees who collect for the support of their chapels and for the maintenance of their priests had so settled that they should not get so much as a single sixpence to support them, and let those who cannot be silent go to the government for support.[58]

Threats such as these cannot have been easily ignored by the clergy and undoubtedly count for a good deal of the clerical silence during the rebellion.

The Province of Dublin

The clergy of the city of Dublin had come under the closest scrutiny by the Castle runners in the years preceeding the rebellion, and

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56 J. Troy, *Letter to the Rural Vicars of the Archdiocese of Dublin*, 22 May 1798, D.D.A., J. Lanigan to J. Troy, Mar. 1798, *Castlereagh Corr.*, I, pp. 160-162,
57 Fr Mackey to T. Bray, 6 Mar. 1798, C.D.A.
58 F.H., 22 Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14.

their reports to government had pointed to their unreliability. William Corbett's accounts had reflected a large group of 'democrats' in their midst, while in May 1797 Francis Higgins warned that 'there is not, out of the vast number of priests in this city, twenty loyal Roman Catholic clergymen.'[59] While the city failed to rise in '98 many Dublin priests were taken up; yet none of these were called to answer any charges more substantial than 'seditious practices.'

In May 1797 Ceasar Colclough had urged that a strict eye be kept on John Connolly, the Franciscan from Booterstown, whom he was convinced had done great damage by his preaching.[60] Corbett's celebrated report in the previous year described the friar as a 'democrat', but during the rebellion Connolly informed John Lees, a noted hardline loyalist, of rebel activity above Dublin. This information, which may very well have been a ploy to disguise his own activity, described in detail the rebel plans for an assault on the city and told of the numbers of prople missing from their homes, whom he presumed had joined the rebels.[61] In any event, despite this loyal display, Connolly was imprisoned for some time. While Connolly remained as parish priest of Booterstown until his death in 1811, there is little doubt of the Franciscan's radical links: Francis Higgins reported that he was constantly visiting the state prisoners at Kilmainham; in later years he developed a close friendship with Miles Byrne, who was at the centre of a circle of former radicals in Dublin. Byrne recalled in his *Memoirs* spending many evenings with Connolly discussing the state of the country after the Union. He described him as 'very well informed and enlightened,' and as Byrne

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59 F.H. 25 May. 1797, S.P.O. 620/18/14, W. Corbett, 25 Oct. 1796, S.P.O. 620/25/170.
60 Colclough to -------, 29 May 1797, S.P.O. 620/30/232.
61 J. Connolly to J. Lees, Post Office, n.d.[10 June 1798], S.P.O. 620/53/66.

listened to him 'with delight', he was flattered at the confidence the priest placed in him.[62]

Miles Byrne had a similar friendship with Fr John Barrett who had been imprisoned at the end of June 1798. Barrett was lodged at Newgate and although his name appeared on the banishment act, there is no record of the charges brought against him.[63] On his release later in the year Barrett opened a school in Lucan, but he later returned as curate in Francis Street.[64] After the arrest of Billy Byrne of Ballymanus in July 1798, Miles Byrne left Dublin and hid for some days with the priest at Lucan; in later years he frequently visited the 'patriotic priest' in Francis Street.[65] Fr Barrett was assisted in his Lucan academy by another of the Dublin priests implicated in United Irish activity, Fr Long, formerly prior of the Carmelite priory in Stephen's Street. Like so many of the 'patriot priests', Long was caricatured in reports to the Castle as a drinker, and deemed an orator 'among the vulgar of his sect.' Long wore his hair in the 'croppy cut', and was reported frequently drinking in the Widow Reilly's in Johnson's Court, and with his fondness for feasting, he dined every Friday in Hearn's Hotel, 'it being a fish day.' Long had been active swearing members of the United Irishmen, and in the aftermath of the rebellion he was reported in uniform among Humbert and the French officers at Litchfield in England. Banished from Dublin in 1798, Long subsequently lived in the friary at Loughrea, County Galway. [66]

Perhaps the most celebrated of the Dublin priests exiled in 1798 was Fr James Harold, parish priest of Saggart. The Antwerp-educated

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62 F.H. 28 Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14, M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, i, p. 121. W.M. Riordan, 'The Succession of Parish Priests in the Archdiocese of Dublin, 1771-1851,' in *Reportorium Novum*, i, no. 2,(1956), p. 422.

63 M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, i, p. 118, *S.N.L.*, 20 Jun. 1798, *F.D.J.*, 25 Oct. 1798, Prisoners expense list, 11 Sept. 1798, S.P.O., 620/40/39.

64 R. Hayes, 'Priests in the Independence Movement of 1798,' *I.E.R.*,(1945) p. 261.

65 M. Byrne, Memoirs, i, pp. 118-121.

66 Information of Alderman William James, 20 Oct. 1798, S.P.O. 620/3/32/17, Anon information, Galway, 25 Jan. 1799, S.P.O. 620/46/18.

Harold had served as parish priest of Kilcullen before being transferred to Saggart in 1794.[67] During 1798 he was reported to have been actively preaching peace in his parish, while on other occasions he rebuked the yeomanry and militia for their barbarous conduct.[68] The priest was taken up on the strength of the confession of a United Irish captain, John Clinch, who claimed to have been sworn by him, and it was reported elsewhere that pikes had been found in his thatch.[69] Harold was arrested in August by the Rathcoole Cavalry while he was returning from a visit to a friend, Father John Leonard, the parish priest of Ardcath in the diocese of Meath. According to the *Dublin Journal*, Harold produced a protection from the military commander at Drogheda, but in spite of this he was taken prisoner to Dublin Castle.[70] Troy wrote to Edward Cooke three times seeking information about Harold, but apparently his efforts came to nothing.[71] Eventually Harold was transported to Australia along with Joseph Holt on the prison ship *Minerva.* In the 1850s R.R. Madden collected information on Harold for his intended history of the persecution of the Catholic clergy in 1798; included in this was a good deal relating to his time in Australia. Harold immediately established himself as a popular figure in the colony, having entertained the crowds on the quay in Sydney with a rendition of, 'The Exile of Erin,' the famous United Irish song attributed to Rev. James Porter. Some months later he was removed to Norfolk Island following accusations that he had incited a revolt amongst the convicts.[72] Significantly Watty Cox published an account of Fr Harold in1812, which reported that the priest was in good health and enjoying the company of

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67 W.M. Riordan, 'Succession Lists,' *Reportorium Novum*, I, no. 2, 91956) p. 413.
68 P.F. Moran, 'The Irish Convict Priests of 1798' in *Irish Rosary*, Apr. 1898, p. 189.
69 Madden MSS, 873/291.
70 *F.D.J.*, 14 Aug. 1798.
71 J. Troy to E. Cooke, 8 Aug. 1798.
72 Madden MSS, 873/291.

none other than Peter Ivers, the United Irish leader from Carlow arrested in Oliver Bond's house.[73] Again this connection suggests a sympathy for the rebel cause, if not a direct link with the conspiracy, despite the priest's subsequent claim to know 'no more of the rebellion or the United Irishmen than the child unborn.'[74] Harold returned to Dublin and was reinstated as parish priest of Kilcullen by Troy in 1815.

Fr Nicholas Kearns, a curate in Meath Street was taken up in June 1798, but shortly afterwards 'honourably liberated.'[75] Kearns had been labelled a 'democrat' by Corbett in 1796, and Francis Higgins noted that he was continually visiting the state prisoners at Kilmainham. On another occasion the informer Samuel Sproule reported that 'Father Kearns of Meath Street Chapel had attended Lord Edward Fitzgerald in his last moments.'[76] The Dominican Fr James Bush of Denmark Street Friary was banished, and most probably went to New York, as did his fellow Dominican Batholomew Augustine MacMahon of the same friary. MacMahon had been described by Corbett as a 'democrat', while in 1797 Leonard McNally believed he had been 'both active and successful' in the conspiracy. MacMahon's name appeared in the confession of a United Irishman, Finnucane, who claimed to have been sworn by the priest, who was assisted in the swearing by Fr Luby of Liffey Street Chapel. MacMahon made his way, via Philadelphia, to New York and died in the city of yellow fever in 1800. In the following year Francis Higgins reported an imminent French invasion of Ireland, based on information received from Fitzimmons of Capel Street, 'a violent United Irishman,' who had received three letters from Paris in relation to his

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73 *Irish Magazine*, 1812, p. 59.
74 Madden MSS, 873/291.
75 *F.D.J.*, 7 June 1798.
76 F.H., 28 Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14., Sproule, S.P.O. 620/51/22. See J. Meagher, 'Father Nicholas Kearns and the State Prisoners,' in *Reportorium Novum*, i, no. i(1955), pp. 197- 212.

attempts to recover a legacy left to his wife by Father MacMahon.[77] Two Augustinians of John's Lane, Frs Kelly['Democrat'] and Kearns,were reported to have been very actively swearing United Irishmen in the Thomas Street district, the very heart of United Irish activity in south side of the city. They had previously assisted John Sweetman in this, but since his arrest in March 1798, they had worked along with Moore, the iron monger of Thomas Street.[78] By this time James Moore's Work House Division of the United Irishmen had assumed the role of the Directory in the national structures of the organisation. It is significant that another Augustinian, John Martin of Drogheda, was commissioned by Moore to meet up with the Wicklow rebels in 1798, and it is likely that the Order's channels were used to carry communications between Thomas Street and Drogheda. No measures appear to have been taken against the friars. Similarly, Fr James Moran of Adam and Eve's was arrested in 1798 and held for over a year; no charges were brought against him except that he had been personated during the rebellion.[79]

In all, eleven Dublin priests were judicially implicated in United Irish activities; the small total points to the exaggerated nature of the Castle intelligence prior to the rebellion. But despite the lack of evidence brought against these eleven priests and their shadowy role in the conspiracy, the close connections between them suggests they formed part of a radical network of the city. It is also of interest that two of their number, Connolly and Harold, were parish priests and a third, Long, Prior of his religious community. This is in contrast to the generally accepted picture of the 'patriot priests' as curates, often isolated or

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77 J.W. May 1797, S.P.O. 620/10/121/58, Confession of Finnucane, 28 May[1798], S.P.O. 620/52/153, F.H., 5 Jan. 1801, S.P.O. 620/10/118/3, V.F. O'Daniel, *The Dominican Province of St Joseph*,(New York, 1942), pp. 128-29. I am grateful to Fr Hugh Fenning for this information.

78 J. Verner to E. Cooke, 29 May [1798], S.P.O. 620/51/43.

79Prisoners list, n.d.[1799], S.P.O. 620/51/135. Petition on behalf of Rev. Jas. Moran, 28 March 1799, S.P.O. 620/8/82/11.

maginalised within Church structures. It is significant that both Connolly and Harold were reappointed to their parishes once they had served their sentence. In the diocese there were also many conspicuous displays of loyalty. In Wicklow Fr Christopher Low of Glendalough went on his knees before the rebels and prevented the destruction of the homes of several Protestants, while in Arklow as the battle raged, Daniel Murray, later archbishop of Dublin, made his way to the local magistrate and declared his loyalty to the crown.[80] While Troy deplored 'the perversity or insanity' of some of his clergy, he was comforted by the good conduct of the others, of whom General Dundas had written favourably in a letter to the archbishop. Nevertheless, Troy was convinced that had it not been for his own prompt action the chapels of the city would certainly have been closed.[81]

Troy's neighbouring diocese of Kildare and Leighlin witnessed a great deal of fighting in 1798, but only two priests there were associated with the rebel cause. In Monastereven, which was levelled in '98, the curate Father Edward Prendergast was taken up by the yeomanry and tried by court martial under Lord Tyrawley. Protections had been given to the rebels who surrendered, but there was sufficient evidence against the priest to warrant his execution. Prendergast had been reported at the rebel camp, encouraging the men with a pistol in his hand and giving absolution to United Irishmen. Following his execution the local people tried to claim the priest's body, but Sir James Duff had it buried beneath the tree on which he was hanged. Lord Tyrawely had no doubts about the other priests in the area, who had all refused absolution to the United Irishmen and by the middle of June he was confident that the people

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80 *F.J.*, 19 June 1798, Rev. Ed. Bayly, Certificate of Rev. Dan. Murray, P.P. Arklow, 19 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/38/181.
81 J. Troy to T. Bray, 12 June 1798, D.D.A.

were 'heartily sick of rebellion.'[82] Local tradition maintained that Prendergast had gone to the camp in order to baptise a child, while the priest's memory lived long after his death. The local member of the Catholic Board became known as 'Prendergast' Cassidy, as he lived opposite the tree on which the priest died, and in 1815 Watty Cox mockingly announced that the tree was to be placed on the Ecclesiastical Establishment List. On such a tree, he declared, 'only shall such Popish Priests be hanged as may be convicted on the drum head of aiding and comforting foreign or domestic enemies.'[83]

A second priest of the diocese, Fr Travers, pastor of Baltinglass, was imprisoned shortly after the outbreak of the rebellion. Travers had made himself obnoxious to the local magistrates in the early months of 1798 and they were particularly angered at his failure to collect arms. In early May it was reported that he rode up and down his parish, feigning to be collecting arms and took great delight in presenting the odd pike, when he knew there were hundreds concealed in the area.[84] Similar charges were frequently made against him; in mid-May one local correspondent to the Castle enquired if an 'honest and loyal popish priest' would have any better effect, but he doubted that one existed since 'it is inconsistent with the very object and principles of their religion.'[85] At the outbreak of the rebellion Travers approached a local magistrates and offered his assistance in recovering arms, but his offer came to nothing and Captain O'Neal-Stratford decided to take up the priest, on whose drunkenness he commented.[86] The priest was tried by court martial and sentenced to death.[87] Evidence was given against him

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82 Tyrawley to E. Cooke, 13 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/56/192.
83 P. MacSuibhne, *Carlow in '98*,(Carlow, 1974), p. 27, *Irish Magazine*, 1815, p. 280,
84 Anon, Baltinglass, 7 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/35.
85 Anon, Baltinglass to E. Cooke, 19 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/109.
86 B. O'Neal;-Stratford, 23 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/133.
87 *F.D.J.* 28 July 1798.

by one of Rochfort's Cavalry named Tool, and Lord Aldborough went so far as to claim Travers had joined the rebels.[88] The old Carlow rebel, William Farrell, recalled that at the trial a paid informer swore that Travers was a United Irishman and that he had travelled as a delegate from Dublin to Belfast and on to France. On hearing this the priest broke down in the dock; 'it was far enough to send me to Dublin,' he cried, 'or even to Belfast, but to send me all the way to France goes beyond all the bounds of probability.'[89] The sentence on Travers was never carried out and the priest was eventually released. A letter from 'A Carlow Friend' in the *Irish Magazine* attributed his release to the intervention of Troy at the Castle, but this is unlikely. It is more probable that execution was suspended, as the same letter suggests, due to the levels of perjury at the trial, or possibly as a consequence of Cornwallis's policy of reviewing all courtmartial convictions.[90]

In Carlow much of the blame for the sectarian tension which had marked the county since the early months of 1798 had been laid at the door of the local clergy. The prison inspector Rev Foster Archer reported that the priests had been 'extensively at work, promoting and cherishing those vile rumours' of an imminent Orange massacre.[91] Yet in spite of these suggestions, other indications point to widespread clerical opposition to the United Irishmen. Peter Ivers claimed that apart from 'two or three bad characters' the priests were 'universally against them,' and William Farrell recalled the unsuccessful attempts made by Fr Henry Staunton and Fr William Fitzgerald, who had narrowly escaped France during the Revolution, to dissuade Ivers from joining the United

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88 Lord Aldborough to W. Elliott, 5 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/38/51.
89 W. Farrell, *Carlow in '98'*, p 215.
90 *Irish Magazine*, 1811, p 307.
91 Foster Archer, Carlow, to ------, 3 Jan. 1798, S.P.O. 620/35/11. *F.D.J.*, 13 Jan. 1798., *F.L.J.*, 13 Jan. 1798.

Irishmen.[92] During the fighting, Fr John O'Neill, parish priest of Tinryland, went on his knees and begged Michael Heydon and his party of rebels to return to their homes. Heydon, who had assumed command in Carlow following Ivers's arrest, ignored the priest's appeal and his men continued their march on the town.[93]

Francis Hearn, a former student of Carlow College, was executed in Waterford in November 1799 on charges of United Irish membership, swearing, and organising rebellion as late as the previous September.[94] Hearn was a nephew of Thomas Hussey's vicar general, Thomas Hearn, and this together with the fact that he had formerly been a student at Maynooth was quickly seized upon as further ammunition for the black propagandists. Hearn's execution in Waterford became a public spectacle and on the scaffold he was interrogated by the parish priest of Ballybricken, William Power, in an effort to demonstrate the loyalty of the church and on Maynooth College, whence he had been expelled at the visitation in early May 1798. In the course of this examination Hearn condemned Henry Jackson and Dr Drennan who had sworn him, declared them unfit persons to live in society, and 'lamented his ever having seen them.'[95] John Troy was particularly incensed by allegations in the *Dublin Journal* that he had made 'great exertions' at the Castle in an effort to secure a pardon for Hearn, who was described as a student of Maynooth.[96] In a hard hitting letter to Alexander Marsden at the Castle, Troy railed against the partisan bias of the *Journal* and urged him to exert the editor to withdraw the account, which he believed had intended to discredit both the hierarchy and the Royal College. Troy denied

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92 Peter Ivers, Aug. 1798, S.P.O. 620/3/32/12, Farrell, *Carlow in '98,* pp. 39-40.
93 Farrell, *Carlow in '98*, p. 88.
94 *F.D.J.*, 5 Nov. 1799.
95 W. Power to J. Troy, 6 Jan. 1800, D.D.A.
96 *F.D.J.*, 9 Nov. 1799. J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 27 Oct. 1799, D.D.A., T. Hearn to T. Hussey, 8 Oct. 1799, W.D.A.

having made any appeals on Hearn's behalf, in spite of requests to do so, and outlined for Marsden Hearn's record, which had seen him expelled from Maynooth for United Irish activity in May 1798. Hearn had been just three months in Carlow College, but Troy was adamant he had not imbibed seditious principles there, as 'the superior and masters of it were to my own knowledge as loyal as myself or any other person in the kingdom.'[97] No doubt in consequence of Troy's stance, the *Dublin Journal* published a feeble correction, but in spite of this Hearn's behaviour had greatly damaged the reputation of the College and added fuel to the bitter polemic then raging.[98]

The '98 Priests in Wexford

A great deal of the post-rebellion war of words focused on the role of the clergy in the diocese of Ferns, where of a total of 85 priests eleven became actively involved in the rebellion. In Wexford the rebellion was swifly labelled a sectarian war, and a myriad of loyalist writers developed the early impressions of the Lord Lieutenant who wrote that it was

> religious frenzy which agitates the rebels in Wexford; that they are headed by their priests and that they halt every half mile to pray, that the deluded multitude are taught to consider themselves as fighting for their religion, that their enthusiasm is most alarming.[99]

Yet while the exaggerations of the violently anti-Catholic accounts of Duigenan and Musgrave are apparent, the basis of their allegations is well founded.[100] The bishop of Ferns, James Caulfield, was acutely

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97 J. Troy to A. Marsden, 10 Nov. 1799, S.P.O. 620/18A/10/5.
98 *F.D.J.*, 12 Nov. 1799, P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1800), pp. 220-222, P. Flood, *A Letter from the Rev. Peter Flood, D.D., President of the R. C. Col. Maynooth,* (Dublin, 1800).
99 Camden to T. Pelham, 11 June 1798, in Lecky, iv, p. 433.
100 P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland* , (Dublin, 1800), R. Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* , (Dublin, 1802). [R.

embarrassed by the scale of clerical involvement in the rebellion and he engaged the assistance of John Troy and J.B. Clinch, professor of rhetoric at Maynooth, in an attempt to vindicate the reputation of the clergy of Wexford. A great deal of the substantial Caulfield/Troy correspondence in the Dublin Diocesan Archives from this period consists of the information supplied by Caulfield which was to form the basis for the essay published under the pseudonym *Veritas*, and for the *Reply* of the bishop of Ferns to the allegations of Musgrave.[101]

In his correspondence with Troy, Caulfield consciously played down the role of the clergy amongst the rebels and made great efforts to stress the loyalty of the majority of his priests. Within this scenario the rebel priests were presented as unreliable individuals, with only three of them, John Murphy, Nicholas Stafford and Philip Roche, being offically accredited priests of the mission. The remainder he dismissed as 'giddy,' drinkers, or 'notorious agitators'. Yet Caulfield's anxiety to refute the many loyalist allegations against his clergy, and the ease with which he dismissed the 'rebel priests,' played into the hands of Edward Hay, Thomas Cloney and the former United Irishmen anxiously striving to play down the existence of any conspiracy in 1798. The priests were now cast in the role of the 'reluctant rebel' discussed above.

Kevin Whelan's recent reflections on the role of the Catholic clergy have shattered the conventional wisdom of the 'patriot priest'; in place of the all-embracing 'mighty wave', Whelan's studies have illustrated the complex motives and circumstances which led the priests to take up the rebel cause, and their subsequent careers have been shorn of the

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Musgrave], *A Concise account of the material events and atrocities which occurred in the present rebellion, by Veridicus* (Dublin, 1799).

[101] Veritas, *The State of His Majesty's Subjects in Ireland Professing the Catholic Religion*, (Dublin, 1799), J. Caulfield, *The Reply of Rt. Rev. Dr. Caulfield, Roman Catholic Bishop and of the Roman Catholic clergy of Wexford to the misrepresentations of Sir Richard Musgrave, bart.*, (Dublin, 1801).

hagiography and mapped in detail.[102] Whelan has pointed to the close social and family connections between the 'rebel priests' and particular United Irishmen - thus Edward Synnott was a distant relative of the Cloneys, the Dorans of Oulart, and the Rices of Tinnacross, all committed United Irishmen; Fr Thomas Dixon's family had marriage links with the Roches of Garrylough, to whom Fr Michael Murphy was also related; Fr John Murphy had been a regular visitor to the Fitzgeralds of Newpark. Such links were bound to bring the clergy within United Irish circles; the distances travelled by priests to join the rebels, and their recognition within rebel command structures - in preference to known United Irish members - reflects more than involuntary participation. Nevertheless, while these studies have placed the priests in a broader perspective, and shewn very real connections between the clergy and the United Irishmen, the reliance on the Caulfield/Troy correspondence does not establish whether or not they were actually United Irish members. This latter possibility has occupied a good deal of the attention of L.M. Cullen; his work hints at significant clerical membership of the United Irishmen in Wexford.[103] Rescued from Caulfield's bias, the United Irish priests in Wexford emerge with greater clarity as men immersed in communities that were gradually being penetrated by United Irish principles, with they themselves being inexorably drawn in.

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102 K. Whelan, 'The role of the Catholic priest in the 1798 rebellion in county Wexford,' in Whelan(ed) *Wexford,* pp. 296-315, 'The religious factor in the 1798 rebellion in county Wexford,' in O'Flanagan, Ferguson and Whelan(eds), *Rural Ireland*, pp. 62-85, 'The Catholic Community in eighteenth-century county Wexford,' in Power and Whelan(eds), *Endurance and Emergence*, pp. 129-70.'Catholics, Politicisation and the 1798 Rebellion, ' in R.O'Muiri(ed),*Irish Church History Today*, pp. 63-84.

103L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 rebellion in Wexford; United Irishman organisation, membership, leadership,' in Whelan(ed) *Wexford*, pp. 248-295.

The Province of Cashel

Neighbouring Munster remained relatively quiet in 1798 and perhaps in consequence few priests of the province of Cashel were arrested for sedition or involvement in United Irish activities. In the diocese of Cashel three priests were taken up for being involved in the rebellion, but in the case of all three the charges brought against them were not substantiated. Fr John O'Brien, parish priest of Doon, County Limerick was taken before three justices of the peace in Tipperary and sentenced to transportation for treason. O'Brien spent six weeks at Duncannon before being released by General Fawcett on taking an oath of allegiance. In the following March he was again taken up, but was freed following petitions to the Castle on his behalf from Lord Donoughmore and Archbishop Bray, who described the priest as 'undesigning and inoffensive.' Fr O'Brien made a personal appeal to Cornwallis and in this he outlined the history of his case.

In early June 1798 he had met with a very large party of men on the road late at night as he was returning from a sick call. The priest, without recognising any of the group, admonished them and urged them to return to their homes. He was arrested shortly after, but was unable to give satisfactory information as to the mens' identities and was imprisoned as a result. Released after a short time, he was not restored to his parish as Dr Bray was certain that such a hasty move would give offense.[104] The parish priest of Nenagh, William O'Meara, was arrested on 22 May 1798 on the evidence of Tobias Bourke, who claimed a

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104 Donoughmore to E. Littlehales, 24 March 1799, Petition of J. O'Brien, 24 March 1799, Recommendation of T. Bray on behalf of J. O'Brien, 20 Dec. 1799, S.P.O. 620/58/42.

United Irish committee had met in the priest's house.[105] O'Meara was never brought to trial, but remained confined on board the prison ship *Princess* at Cove, despite the ruling of a court of enquiry which denounced his irregular situation. Giving evidence to the commission, R. Dowell of Cove, declared that O'Meara deserved 'the greatest indulgence,' since he had alerted the authorities to a planned mutiny and capture of the ship by the prisoners on the voyage from Waterford to Cobh. There are no further references to O'Meara, but local tradition held that he died on bord the ship as a result of harsh treatment. Fr Talbot, parish priest of Duhara, county Tipperary, supposedly met a similar fate.[106]

In the diocese of Cloyne two priests were banished for United Irish activity. Fr Anthony Kelly, of Mallow was forced to flee the town in mid-May having been charged with United Irish membership. In September he appealed to Cornwallis for permission to return, declaring his greatest detestation for recent acts of outrage and strating his willingness to take the loyal oath.[107] The parish priest of Ballymacoda was transported to Van Diemen's Land for his part in the rebellion: Fr Peter O'Neill, had been a professor at the Irish College Paris, but his career in Ballymacoda was marked from the start by controversy; locals, disappointed that the existing curate had been passed over, refused him entry to his church. In 1798 much of east Cork was marked by bitter sectarian tension and in the town of Youghall a great deal of animosity was directed towards the Catholic clergy;[108] immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion, the forty-year-old Peter O'Neill was taken up and charged with treason and

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105 Tobias Bourke, 22 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/126.
106 R. Dowell, Cobh.----------, 2 July 1798, S.P.O. 620/39/2, see R. Hayes, 'Priests and the Independence Movement of 1798,' in *I.E.R.*, lxvi(1945), p. 268.
107 Petition of Rev. Anthony Kelly, Mallow, 1 September 1798, S.P.O. 620/40/1.
108 Statement of facts relating to Youghal in the year 1798, by Rev. Dr. Coppinger, Bishop of Cloyne, 19 February 1803, in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor*, iii, pp. 605-613.

aiding in the murder of a deserter from the army, a former United Irishman turned informer named Murphy. A Thomas Neill of Cork was hanged for his part in the murder; in a confession at the gallows he denied having any knowledge of Fr O'Neill's part in the crime; nevertheless the priest was taken to Youghal and given a severe flogging.[109] Fr O'Neill was charged with having sanctioned the murder of Murphy, and during his punishment before Lord Loftus and the magistrate Rev Mr Rogers, he confessed to having knowledge of the planned murders and of giving the killers absolution afterwards.[110] O'Neill was confined for a year on board the prison ship *Anne* before being transported to Australia.[111] O'Neill had thus been sentenced on the strength of his own uncorroborated confession, extracted during a severe flogging; following various approaches Lord Cornwallis ordered a re-examination of the conviction under General Graham. This enquiry ordered O'Neill's release, but Col. Littlehale's instructions arrived after the *Anne* had departed for Sydney.[112] Further appeals were made on O'Neill's behalf by Troy amongst others, and his case was re-opened by Lord Hardwicke. O'Neill finally returned to Ireland in mid-1802 and was reinstated in his parish by Coppinger, returning as Lord Redesdale declared 'a martyr in triumph, with insult to the offended justice of the laws.'[113] On his return O'Neill published a controversial account of his sufferings, which initiated a bitter polemic illustrated the sectarian

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[109] *F.D.J.*, 21 June 1798, Neill possesed land worth £500 p.a. and personal property of £5,000.

[110] Sir J. Stewart, Youghal, to Capt. Taylor, 7 August 1798, S.P.O. 620/39/152. Lord Shannon----------, 4 October 1798, enclosing letter of W.A. Hayman, Mayor of Youghal, S.P.O. 620/40/128.

[111] List of Prisoners at Cobh, 5 May 1799, S.P.O. 620/7/79/15(25).

[112] E. Littlehales to ---------, 30 June 1800, in P.F. Moran, 'The Convict Priests of '98' in *Irish Rosary*, 1898, p. 285.

[113] Lord Redesdale to Lord Fingal, 6 Sept. 1803. in *Correspondence between Rt Hon. Ld. Redsdale and Rt. Hon. the earl of Fingal, also a letter from R.C. bishop of Cloyne and Ross to Rt. Hon. Ld. Redsdale with his lordship's answer. To which is added the narrative of the Rev. Peter O'Neill*, (London, 1804). Reply to the narrative of Rev. P. O'Neill, n.d. [1804] S.P.O. 620/52/143.

tensions in Youghal. The official response to O'Neill's *Remonstrance* maintained that Coppinger had reinstated him in Ballymacoda in an effort 'to kindle fanaticism in the Popish multitude, who approached him with enthusiastioc zeal, and revered him as a martyr, persecuted by heretics on account of his holy religion.'[114] O'Neill remained in Ballymacoda until his death in 1846 at the age of 88.

A similar confusion surrounded the sentence imposed on Fr John Brookes, parish priest of Shinrone, King's County in the diocese of Killaloe. Shinrone had a long history of sectarianism and as early as 1778 Brookes had become embroiled in local conflicts, which more than likely singled him out as a target in 1798.[115] Brookes was charged with treason; a court martial sentenced him to the very unusual punishment of transportation to Connacht for seven years. Bishop Michael Peter MacMahon, convinced of his innocence, made representations on his behalf to Cornwallis; his account of the court martial is a stark reflection of both the weakness of the charges against him and the levels to which the clergy were exposed to the political upheavals of the time;

> Q: Did you apply to General Dunn through Sir Lawrence Parsons for a trial?
> A: I did.
> Q: Are you now prepared for your trial?
> A: Feeling myself perfectly innocent of the crime with which I stand charged I am always ready for trial.
> The charges were these:
> Q: Did you not say a first Mass in Shinrone with a view to prevent the people from taking the loyal oath?
> A: No, for in the year 1796 I took the oath in the court House at Birr myself. Since that period I took it at the head of my flock and the flock also took it at the same time.
> Q: Did you not receive a letter of mine[Capt. Rollestone] to read at your altar which you did not read?

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114 *The Humble remonstrance of the Fr Peter O'Neill to the nobility and gentry of the County of Cork, 23 October 1803,* and *Observations on the Remonstrance of the Rev. Peter O'Neil, P.P. Ballymacoda in the County of Cork.* (Dublin, 1804). P.F. Moran, *Irish Rosary*, 1898, p. 287.

115 *Hibernian Magazine*, Aug. 1778, in I. Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe in the Eighteenth Century*, (Dublin, 1991), p. 235.

A: I proved that I read it.
Q: Had you not a United Irish oath concealed in your house?
A: I have been in common with many others of the surrounding neighbourhood a subscriber to the Roscrea newspaper called the *Southern Star*. This paper I received, as did many others at the office at Shinrone, in one of which was inserted the form of the Orangeman's and the United Irishman's oath. The paper was received by many others on the same day containing the same copies and I presume my receiving that paper is [not more] notorious criminal, in me than in them.
Q: Had you in your possession a seditious paper called *The Press*?
A: I had a paper of that description, but once and the gentleman of whom I borrowed it for mere curiosity to read, is here present. The gentleman came forward and avowed having lent it to him.[116]

Brookes was driven out of the town to Connacht and his chapel was burned to the ground by a party lead by Jackson Rea, a justice of the peace. The priest was as unwelcome across the Shannon and the people there, seeing his banishment as a slight on their loyalty, forced him back to Shinrone.[117] MacMahon made further appeals on Brookes's behalf, emphasising the shortage of priests in his diocese. In a compromise the authorities settled on his leaving Leinster and Brookes moved to Ballingarry in county Tipperary.[118] According to local tradition Brookes later returned to Shinrone and there he assisted the pastor, Francis Kennedy, who had been charged with United Irish membership in 1798. At his trial it was stated that Kennedy had been sworn by Fr O'Meara of Nenagh, but a sentence against him was dropped and he received a pardon.[119]

There were further outbreaks in the diocese of Killaloe in early January 1799 as a series of disturbances in Clare threatened to develop into a full-scale agrarian revolt. Despite the long history of Whiteboy

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116 M.P. Mac Mahon to Cornwallis, 4 Dec. 1798, S.P.O. 620/41/66.
117 I. Murphy, *Killaloe* p. 236.
118 M.P. Mac Mahon to E. Cooke, 24 Nov. 1800, S.P.O. 620/48/68. M.P. Mac Mahon to ----, 3 Dec. 1800, S.P.O. 620/9/99/2.
119 I. Murphy, *Killaloe*, p. 236, Hayes, 'Priests in the Independence movement of 1798,' in *I.E.R.* (1945) p. 265.

activity in the county, the violence of 1799 formed more of a postscript to the rebellion than an agrarian movement and the *Clare Journal* reported that the insurgents were 'led on and instigated by strangers who have got among them, supposed to be some of those who escaped the late rebellion.'[120] From Ennistymon it was reported in late January that 'the priests from the country were at the bottom of all this business,' but that no information could be found to convict them.[121] It is in this context that Frs Coleman Hynes and Charles Carrig were arrested, rather than in connection with the rebellion as has generally been assumed.[122] Fr Coleman Hynes of Corofin had been educated in France and joined the French army, from which he deserted and returned to Ireland in 1798. In January 1799 he was arrested by the Romney Fencibles and lodged in Ennis, but was released without trial.[123] Fr Charles Carrig of Kilfenora was taken to Ennis jail in March and court martialled on charges of treason. Following an appeal to the Lord Lieutenant, Carrig was brought to trial in September 1799. He produced witnesses of his innocence, but remained in jail following the evidence of Patrick Callinan, a horse thief and a 'notoriously infamous person.'[124] Archbishop Troy made appeals on his behalf and despite initial refusals, he was eventually released and returned to his parish.[125]

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120 *C.J.*, 11 Jan. 1799.
121 Kenny, Ennistymon to ---- 26 January [1799], S.P.O. 620/46/19
122 R. Hayes, 'Priests and the Independence Movement of 1798' in *I.E.R.*, (1945) pp. 258-270., P, O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church,' p. 362.
123 I. Murphy, *Killaloe,* p. 242.
124 Petition of Rev. J. Carrig, 19 Feb. 1800.
125 Col. Littlehales to J. Troy, 15 May 1800, D.D.A.

The Province of Tuam

In spite of the rumbling discontent which had marked much of Connacht from the middle of the decade, the west of Ireland remained quiet throughout the summer of 1798. This silence was abruptly shattered in late August as a French expeditionary force of one thousand men under General Humbert landed at Killala and began the last campaign of the rebellion. The French were greeted with unrestrained enthusiasm by the locals, but the events of the summer had taken their toll upon the United Irishmen, who were unable to mount a significant response to the news of the long awaited landing. Humbert, however, was not to be deterred and vainly began a march towards the Midlands which was to end in ignomious defeat at Ballinamuck. The presence of the French gave the rebellion quite a different character in the west and a significant number of the clergy, many of whom had been educated in France, lent their assistance to the campaign. The clergy became involved in many different capacities; some acted as translators, others as guides, some took responsibility for securing provisions, and in other instances priests, including Dominic Bellew, the bishop of Killala, served on the municipal councils established by the French.

The standard history of the rebellion in the west remains Richard Hayes' *Last Invasion of Ireland*, first published in 1937.[126] Despite its many shortcomings and total lack of reference to the broader United Irish context, this contributes a great deal of our knowledge of the role of the

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126 R. Hayes, *The Last Invasion of Ireland* (Dublin, 1979). J. Stock, *A Narrative of what passed at Killala, in the county of Mayo and Parts adjacent, During the French invasion of Ireland in 1798* (Dublin, 1800).

clergy in the west.[127] Appropriately, the first French officer to land was the Mayo priest, Captain Henry O'Kane. Educated in the Irish college at Paris, O'Kane served as parish priest of Saint Hermand near Nantes. He had been a member of an Irish Masonic lodge in Paris in the 1780s called Les Irlandais du soleil levant, and had joined the French army at the outbreak of the revolutionary wars.[128] Being the only Irish speaker amongst the army, O'Kane was appointed translator and aid de camp to General Humbert.[129] Musgrave, in a characteristic account, records O'Kane on a platform in Ballina addressing a vast crowd and urging them on with stories of a series of apparitions he had received from the Virgin Mary, instructing him to lead an army to Ireland. Musgrave no doubt wished to give the campaign the appearance of a popish crusade, but in the liberal Bishop Stock's account, the French officers were hailed by the crowd as heroes in arms 'for France and the Blessed Virgin,' and James Little recalled use of the scapulars by the crowd. It was little wonder that in the following year Edward Dillon, the archbishop of Tuam, felt it necessary to issue pastoral instructions regulating the use of scapulars which he declared had become 'badges of sedition.' [130] O'Kane distinguished himself in the attacks on Killala and Castlebar, and his exertions on behalf of the local Protestants were praised by Bishop Joseph Stock in his *Narrative*. Surprisingly, Musgrave included a barbed acknowledgment of O'Kane's humanity, refering to his efforts on all occasions to curb 'the bloodthirsty disposition of the popish multitude.' [131] O'Kane was brought before a court martial in November and faced

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127 See M. Elliott, *Partners In Revolution; The United Irishmen and France* (Yale, 1982),J.P. Bertaud,'Forgotton soldiers; the expedition of General Humbert to Ireland in 1798,' in Dickson and Gough(eds). *French Revolution*, pp. 220-229.
128 I am grateful to Liam Swords for this information.
129 J. P. Bertaud, 'Forgotton Soldiers' in Dickson and Gough(eds). *French Revolution*, p. 225. Bertaud mistakenly refers to the priest as 'MacKeon.' *F.D.J.*, 1 Sept. 1798.
130 Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 583. Stock, *Narrative*, p. 59, J. Little, Diary of Rev. Jas. Little in *Anal. Hib.*, II, pp. 64-5. Circular Letter of Dr Dillon of Tuam, 27 Mar. 1799, D.D.A.
131 J. Stock, *Narrative*, p. 59 Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 583.

execution for treason. However, on account of his undisputed rank in the French army he was sentenced to banishment for life. O'Kane returned to France and resumed his military career, serving in the Republican armies in Germany, Spain and Portugal, for which he was awarded the Legion of Honour. The Wexford United Irishman Miles Byrne recalled meeting him regularly in Paris, where he frequently entertained the Irish officers. O'Kane apparently wrote an account of Humbert's campaign which he passed to Dr MacNeven for publication, but this appears to have been lost.[132]

Also prominent amongst the French was Fr Michael Gannon of Louisburgh, County Mayo, educated in France and former chaplain to the Duke of Crillon. After the revolution he returned to Ireland, but rushed to join the French on their landing at Killala, serving as 'fournisseur general' and translator to the army. Musgrave records him as haranging the crowd from the window of Humbert's appartment, calling on them to join the rebel ranks, while in evidence against him, Michael Burke claimed that he had shown them holy oils which he promised would cure their wounds.[133] After the collapse of the rebellion Gannon hid in Connemara, resisting all attempts at capture despite a reward of £100 offered for him.[134] Escaping from Ireland, he made his way to Spain and travelled on from there to Paris with the assistance of Lucien Bonaparte, ambassador in Madrid. As parish priest of St Germain en Laye, Gannon developed friendships with Miles Byrne and Thomas Addis Emmet.[135]

A similar reward was offered for the capture of Fr Manus Sweeney of Newport. Sweeny had studied at Paris and quickly joined the French

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132 M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, iii, pp. 63-66. Hayes, *Last Invasion*, pp. 205-207.
133 Musgrave, Memoirs, p. 601, Evidence of Michael Burke, S.P.O. 620/52/123-125.
134 *F.D.J.*, 29 Nov. 1798.
135 Byrne, *Memoirs*, iii, p. 62, R. Hayes, *Last Invasion*, p. 195, N. Costelloe, 'Jobit's Journal of the French expedition 1798,' in *Anal. Hib.*, II, (1941). pp. 40-1.

at Killala, bringing many of his parishioners with him. He was captured in September 1798, but escaped only to be betrayed by Fr Michael Conmee, parish priest of Ardagh, who received £50 for his deed.[136] Sweeny was subsequently executed for treason. The Augustinian Myles Prendergast, prior of Murrisk, had a more successful escape and he remained at liberty in Connemara until his death more than thirty years later. Prendergast joined the rebels and made a considerable contribution to the campaign on account of his great influence over the people.[137] The friar was captured after the Battle of Ballinamuck and lodged in Castlebar, but he managed to escape from the prison, killing a jailer in the process. While in hiding in Connemara, Prendergast joined with other former rebels, including the notorious smuggler Johnny 'the Outlaw' Gibbons and they successfully avoided capture. Musgrave, who had described him in particularly jaundiced terms, recorded his death in 1801. Prendergast, however, lived on for almost another thirty years during which time he was maintained by the provincial of his order, with whom he maintained a correspondence. During this time, John Rice, assistant general of his order and brother of Edmund, applied on his behalf to Propaganda for a dispensation for murdering the jailor. This was granted on the understanding that the dead man was a Protestant, but once it emerged that he had killed a Catholic the decision was reversed and the case referred to the Holy Office.[138] A great deal of folklore has survived surrounding Prendergast, who was celebrated in the poetry of Antoine O`Raifteiri.[139] A second Augustinian, Fr Owen

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136 Altamont to ----, 17 May 1799, S.P.O. 620/47/28.

137 Capt Taylor to E. Littlehales, 22 Mar. 1799, S.P.O. 620/46/83, R. Aylmer(Lisburn) to Castlereagh, 5 Oct. 1799, S.P.O. 620/54/12, Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 584. H. McManus, *Sketches of the Irish Highlands*,(London, 1863) p. 78.

138 Myles Prendergast Papers, Augustinian Proivincial Archives, Dublin. A.P.F., Udienza, 6 June 1819, 57. f. 483. 5., 23 Apr. 1820, A.P.F. Udienza, 58 f. 298.3.(304).

139 This lore is included in a appendix to the 2nd edition of Hayes's *Last Invasion* (Dublin, 1939), but is not printed in subsequent editions. J. Gibbons, 'Fr Myles

Kelleen of Balloyovey in county Galway, joined the rebels. Dennis Browne reported that he had done a great deal of damage in Sligo, before coming to Mayo where he had sworn half the county. Killeen surrendered under the terms of the proclamation in September 1799 and was banished over seas.[140]

Fr Bernard Dease of Kilglass, County Mayo, was taken up outside Ballina on 4 September and fired at the yeoman trying to arrest him. Once captured, Dease made a very full confession which incriminated several priests, including Bishop Bellew, as noted above. The bishop, who had served as president of the Ballina Committee of Public Safety and whose brother, Matthew, was one of the leading millitary commanders, lost no time in trying to clear his name from Dease's allegations.[141] In spite of his protests, suspicion continued to surround Bellew and almost a year later he aware that many still believed him 'unfit to act in. . [his] capacity any longer.'[142] Bellew's application for compensation from the Commission for Suffering Loyalists was rejected in September 1799, but the bishop continued to stress his loyalty, giving his active support to the advancement of the Union and acting, on occasion, as agent to the local magnate, Lord Tyrawley.[143]

The four priests mentioned by Dease were less fortunate. Fr Owen Crowly, of Castleconner, County Sligo, had been educated in France and he served as translator to Truc, the commander at Ballina.

Prendergast' in *An Coinneal*, Dec. 1980 pp. 79-82, Leon O'Broin, *Slan le Muirish* (Dublin, 1944).

[140] Denis Browne, to----------, 19 Oct. 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/48, Trial and Protection of Owen Killeen, 7 Oct. 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/220.

[141] C. Verner to -----, 4 Sept. 1798, S.P.O. 620/10/117/6. Testimony of Bernard Dease, 15 Sept. 1798, S.P.O. 620/40/58. B. Dease to E. Cooke, n.d. [March 1799] S.P.O. 620/10/117/6. B. Hoban, 'Dominic Bellew, 1745-1812' *Seanchas Ard Mhacha,* (1972) pp. 333-69, S.P.O. 620/56/200, H.O. 100/78/418-21.

[142] D. Bellew to Lord Tyrayley, 19 September 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/200.

[143] R. Carter to Bellew, 11 September 1799, S.P.O. 620/56/222. See P. Hogan, 'Some observations on contemporary allegations as to Bishop Dominick Bellew's(1745-1813) sympathies during the 1798 rebellion in Connaught,' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, (1982) pp. 417-425.

Musgrave accused him of intending to massacre 120 Protestants in the jail of Ballina, which only the rebel defeat at Ballinamuck prevented.[144] Similar accusations were made against him by General Trench, who described Crowley as a 'very principal leader of the rebellion.' The priest avoided capture, in spite of a reward of £300 offered for him, but continued to disturb the county until his death. Musgrave's account of Crowley's sectarianism, repeated in *Veridicus,* was a source of acute embarrasment to Bishops Troy and Caulfield, then actively attempting to suppress such accusations against the clergy of Wexford.[145] Fr James Conroy of Adragoole was, it seems, active in swearing United Irish members in 1798. He assisted the French and is credited with planning Humbert's route across the mountains by Crossmolina to Castlebar, which allowed the general surprise the garrison. The discovery of various proclamations, along with guns and ammunition in his house, sealed his fate and he was subsequently executed.[146]

Of the remaining priests implicated in the rebellion, little but passing references survive. Fr Boetius Egan, vicar general and parish priest of Castlebar, served on Humbert's municipal council of that town.[147] Fr McGowan of Crossmolina had been 'very active' in the rebellion, but there was insufficient evidence to convict him. Musgrave depicted him as a notorious drunkard who had narrowly escaped the gallows, only to die in a fall from a horse as a result of excessive indulgence 'in the joys of Bacchus.'[148] The administrator of Backs, County Mayo, Fr Thomas Monelly had brought many of his parishioners to Ballina where he served under Captain Truc. The priest, one of those

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144 Musgrave, *Memoirs*, pp. 607-8.
145 Caulfield to J. Troy, 7, 19 Oct. 1799, D.D.A. Poer Trench to A. Marsden, 13 March 1799, S.P.O. 620/46/74.
146 Hayes, *Last Invasion*, pp. 22, 210-11.
147 Hayes, *Last Invasion*, p. 59.
148 Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 590.

informed on by Bernard Dease, was imprisoned in New Geneva in November 1799, but escaped from there to the United States where he became pastor of a parish in Maryland.[149] David Kelly, of Ballysakerry, County Mayo, joined Humbert together with a large number of his parishioners, and he too avoided capture as did Fr Browne of Foxford, Fr Pheilim McDonnell of Easkey and Fr O'Donnell of Kilmeckshalgan.[150]

In all sixteen priests, including the bishop of Killala, or just over 5% of a total of 314 priests in the province, had become involved in the French campaign to varying degrees. The scant nature of the sources, however, make a thorough analysis of clerical involvement perplexing. Most accounts of the rebellion in the West have relied on Bishop Stock's *Narrative* which plays down the political conspiracy in the region, while the presence of the French removed a United Irish focus from the rebellion; consequently it is difficult to place the priests in a broader perspective.[151] At its very simplest, clerical participation may be minimilised by arguing that the priests' Continental connections made them natural allies of the French, yet the commitment they showed for the cause indicates otherwise. The substantial evidence of priests swearing and marshalling their flocks behind the French and the distances some travelled to join with Humbert's army indicates principled involvement. Once again, Miles Byrne's account of the close ties between the former rebels and clerical exiles in Paris suggests sympathies for the United Irish cause.

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149 Information of Bernard Dease, Sept. 1798, S.P.O. 620/40/58. Hayes, *Last Invasion*, p. 195.
150 Hayes, *Last Invasion*, p. 197.
151 L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century Politicisation,' in P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen(eds) *Culture et Pratiques*, p. 146.

The Province of Armagh

The ecclesiastical province of Armagh was arguably the most highly politicised of the four in Ireland. Including not only Ulster, but much of the northern parts of Connacht and Leinster, the province covered the heartland of both the Defenders and the United Irishmen. The unceasing flux of the 1790s had released enormous political energy which the United Irishmen had successfully harnessed. Yet General Lake's 'dragooning' of Ulster and the draconian measures adopted by the military inflicted severe damage on the United Irish organisation in the province in 1796-7 and when the eventual 'burst' came in 1798 the rebels were a poor match for the forces of the crown.[152]

While the United Irish organisation and rebellion in Ulster have traditionally been characterised as a predominantly Protestant affair, recent scholarship has increasingly pointed to the crucial nexus between Presbyterian radicals and Catholic Defenders.[153] From their foundation in 1791 the United Irishmen recognised the potential of such an alliance and invested considerable energy in forging a union with the Defenders; although Thomas Bartlett dates an effective alliance to the post-Fitzwilliam period, it is in this context that we should see the various missions of Tone, Teeling, Tandy, Russell and Keogh throughout Ulster earlier in the decade.[154] From the outset, a crucial part in this 'uniting business' was played by James Quigley, a priest of the Armagh diocese. Quigley was unique among the 'patriot priests' of the 1790s in that he left

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[152] N.J. Curtin, 'The United Irish Organisation in Ulster, 1795-8,' in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan(eds), *United Irishmen*, (Dublin, 1992).
[153] R.B. MacDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen: revolution and the union, 1794-1800,' in *New History of Ireland*, v, pp. 339-373, J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation in Ireland in the 1790s,' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1989).
[154] K. Whelan, 'Catholics, Politicisation and the 1798 Rebellion,' in R.O'Muiri(ed), *Church History Today*, p. 68. T. Bartlett, *Rise and Fall*, p. 212.

a memoir of his life, and from this and other sources, particularly the reports of his trial, it is possible to place him firmly within a United Irish context.[155] In a similar way, Fr John Martin, an Augustinian from Drogheda, took the United Irish oath in 1797 and from that time until his capture during the rebellion he busied himself in the promotion of the 'union,' exploiting all the opportunities his priesthood afforded him. Musgrave interpreted the missions of Fr James McCary, in Antrim, in the same way and recorded him preaching and recommending 'union and fraternity' to the Catholics and Presbyterians of the Ards Peninsula in the summer of 1797.[156]

Further evidence of clerical involvement amongst the United Irishmen of Antrim and Down is reflected in the case of Bernard Maginnis, a priest of the diocese of Dromore, taken up in 1798 and lodged in Carrickfergus. Maginnis' family connections place him firmly within the Defender tradition and his close ties with Fr Edmund Derry, who had assisted Tone at Rathfriland in 1792 and was brother of Quigley's relative and close friend Valentine Derry, point to his role in a far wider network.[157] Indeed there are many striking similarities between the lives of Quigley and Magennis.

In 1800 Edmund Derry, parish priest of Clonduff and later bishop of Dromore(1801-1819), appealed to Castlereagh on Magennis's behalf and this correspondence provides us with the fullest account of his career.[158] Like the Armagh priest, Magennis had studied at the Irish College, Paris, where he had received a bursary. It is tempting to surmise that it was actually Magennis' receipt of the burse which led

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155 J. Quigley, *Life of Rev. Jas. Quigley*, (London, 1798), Howell, *State Trials*, vol. 26-27.
156 D. Keogh, 'John Martin: An Augustinian and the Rebellion of 1798,' in *Analecta Augustiniana*, (1988). R. Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 183.
157 B. McEvoy, 'Quigley,' p. 254.
158 E. Derry to Castlereagh, 6 June 1800, S.P.O. 620/9/100/6.

Quigley to initiate a civil law suit against the rector of the College, which began his controversial career.[159] Again, as in the case of Quigley, Magennis was forced to leave Paris at the outbreak of the rebellion, and Derry declared that 'after his return I often heard him with detestation detail the cruelties of the French.' On account of his poor circumstances Bishop Matthew Lennan of Dromore, in keeping with an established tradition in Ireland ordained Magennis in the hope that by serving in the diocese he could finance his future studies. Derry does not date the ordination but it can only have been after 1795, since the bishop intended him for Maynooth. Yet the declining practice of ordaining candidates prior to the commencement of their theological studies was not without its dangers. No doubt amongst the highly politicised people of County Down, Magennis realised the wisdom of the old Irish saying, *ni bhfaigheann an sagart balbh beatha* (the dumb/silent priest doesn't get a living), and before long he fell in with the radicals. Derry attributed this to 'youth, a want of firmness and a desire of raising the necessary contributions,' but in a telling comment admitted to Castlereagh, 'I need not inform your Lordship, that this was the ready way of obtaining such charities from the greater part of the strangely intoxicated multitude at that time.'[160]

Derry serverely reprimanded the young priest on his return to Clonduff and brought him, under threat of suspension, to take the loyal oath. From that time Magennis lived with him at Clonduff, but was taken up on the instructions of Major Porter by the Rathfriland Yeomanry after the battle of Ballinahinch. In spite of Derry's declaration that he had not 'deviated from the paths of loyalty,' Porter suspected otherwise and he

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159 Quigley, *Life*, p. 11.
160 S.P.O. 620/9/100/6.

was charged with 'acting, aiding and assisting in the rebellion.'[161] Derry's appeal met with an unfavourable response and Magennis remained at Carrickfergus Castle for over two years without trial. During this time he repeatedly refused to accept the banishment offered under the terms of General Nugent's proclamation. Tone's former friend, Sir George Hill visited Magennis in Carrickfergus in December 1801 with the intention of encouraging him to go into exile.[162] Magennis' response to this offer is unknown, but he died as parish priest of Newry in March 1814.[163] Given the nature of Magennis' missionary involvement in the United Irishmen and the striking parallels with the life of James Quigley, the priest has been curiously neglected in the history of the rebellion, failing to merit inclusion even in Richard Hayes's celebrated list.[164]

There are passing references to other priests implicated in the rebellion in the northern dioceses. In Armagh two 'notorious' characters, Cullen and McKain, were reported to be engaged in seditious conversations. Cullen had first come to the attention of the authorities in 1791 when reports implicated him in the gruesome Defender attack on the family of Alexander Barkely in Forkhill. As a result he had been suspended by Bishop O'Reilly, on the recommendation of the government. He since moved to Killevy, where he had been joined by McKain who was 'as infamous'; it was suggested that the two be taken up, but there is no record of their subsequent careers.[165] Fr Thomas Campbell, parish priest of Dromore in county Tyrone, travelled to Longford in 1798, supposedly to visit his uncle, but was arrested and

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161 Belfast, 24 August 1798, S.P.O. 620/39/203.
162 Belfast, 24 August 1798, S.P.O. 620/39/203, S.P.O. 620/4/55, Jas. Drummond to E. Cooke, 25 Jan. 1801, S.P.O. 620/10/116/3., Carrickfergus, 13 July 1801, S.P.O. 620/10/116/13. Sir G. Hill(Derry), to A. Marsden, 5 December 1801, S.P.O. 620/59/91.
163 *F.J.*, 10 March 1814.
164 R. Hayes, 'Priests in the Independence movement of 1798,' *I.E.R.* (1945).
165 ------, Loughsilly to E. Cooke, 29 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/212. see T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism,' in *I.H.S.*, xxiv, (May 1985), p. 367.

imprisoned for two months. No doubt suspected of travelling to join the French, Campbell ended his days in the United States at Baltimore.[166]

The town of Drogheda, divided between the dioceses of Meath and Armagh, was highly organised by the United Irishmen and there three priests were active in the society: the Augustinian John Martin, and the Franciscans James Duffy and Patrick MacCartan. Meath had been greatly disturbed by Defender violence, but the vigilance and regular visitations of Bishop Patrick Plunkett may account for the surprisingly low level of disaffection amongst the priests[167] No priest of the diocese distinguished himself in the fighting which took place in Meath and the loyalty of only two priests was called into question. Plunkett visited Dunboyne on 6 June only to find the chapel, the priest's house and almost all the others in the town had been burned by the loyalists in retaliation for what the bishop called, 'the treasonable practices of the people.' The parish priest, James Connell, had fled and, despite returning, his principles were still under suspicion in 1803 when Alexander Marsden complained of him to Troy. The archbishop relayed the complaint to Plunkett who vowed on his next visitation to 'leave nothing undone to enlighten the minds of the Catholic inhabitants with respect to the enormity of seditious practices and to compel the pastor to renounce the madness of countenancing such unnatural guilt.'[168] Similarly, Patrick Farrell, parish priest of Donaghmore and Kilbride fled during the rebellion, but in the following October Plunkett invited him to return, 'if unconscious of being concerned in the late political commotions.'[169] The battle of Tara cut off the western portion of the

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166 Madden MSS, T.C.D., 873/290.
167 Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, pp. 293-300.
168 Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, i, pp. 196-7, iii, p. 299, J. Brady, 'Documents concerning the Diocese of Meath' in *Arch. Hib.*, viii, (1941) pp. 228-9.
169 Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, i, p. 414, iii, p. 299.

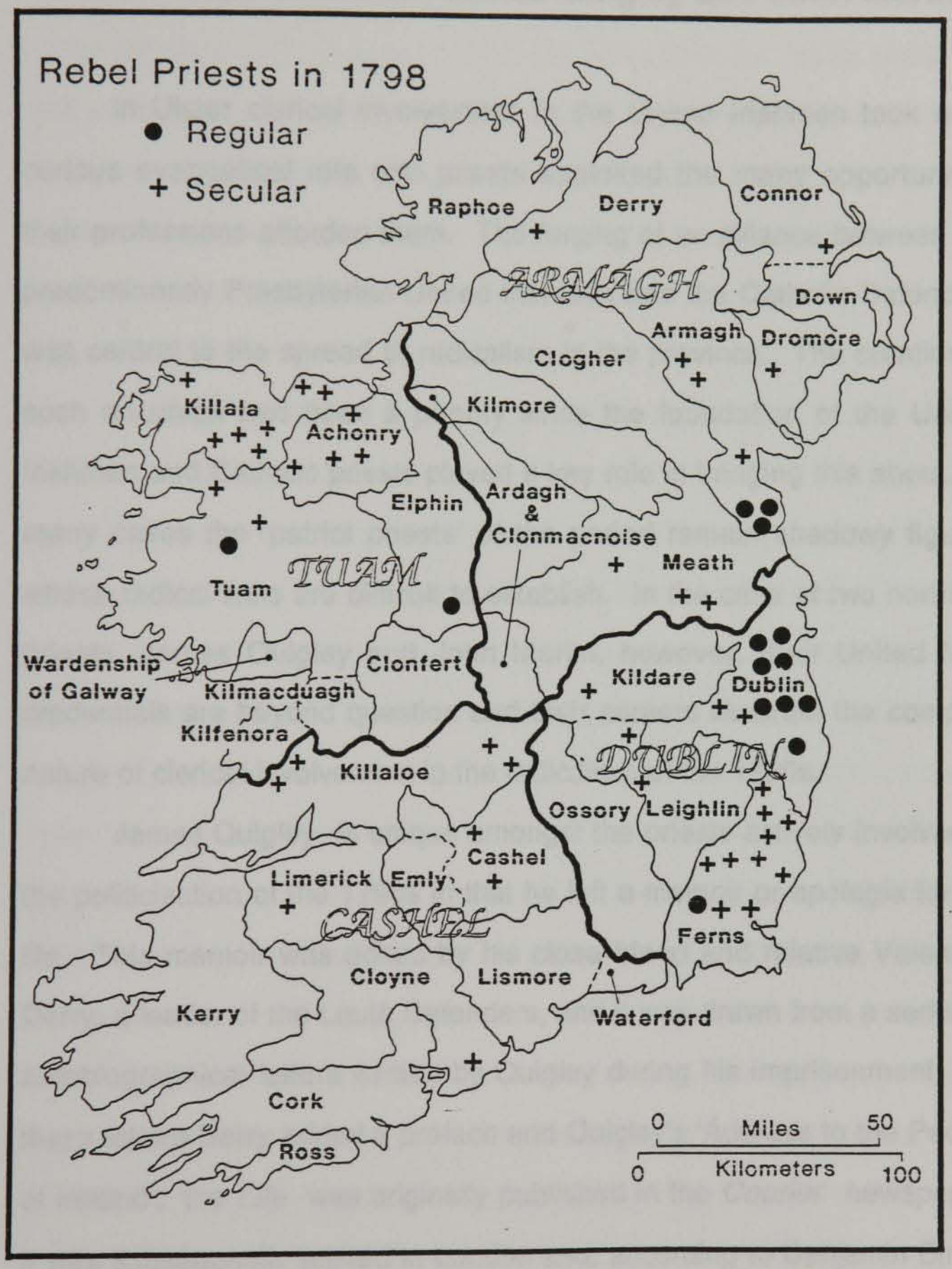
diocese and there rumours of Orange reprisals abounded, following reports of a massacre of Protestants in Gorey. Deprived of the direction of their bishop, the parish priest of Mullingar, Thomas Ganly, wrote to Troy for instruction and in an effort to calm tension, Captain Rochfort had the archbishop's pastoral printed and distributed gratis in the town.[170]

Conclusion

In all 70 priests, or 3.8% of a total of almost 1,800 were called on to account for their conduct in 1798. Some of these had played a prominent part in the rebellion, many of them had slight connections with the rebels, others were implicated on the basis of the vaguest passing reference. In spite of this, the role of the clergy in the events of 1798 was significant and cannot be screened behind the image of the 'reluctant rebel', or at the other extreme the 'drunken ruffian,' (a stereotype which ironically both Musgrave and Caulfield contributed to). Far from being a motley crew, a disparate collection of suspended priests or frustrated curates anxious to settle old scores, the rebel clerics were for the most part parish priests, and the patterns of clerical involvement reflect the complex nature of the radicalized society from which they emerged.

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170 T. Ganly to J. Troy, 3 June 1798, D.D.A.


Rebel Priests in 1798
Regular
Secular
Raphoe
Derry
Connor
ARMAGH
Down
Armagh
Dromore
Clogher
Killala
Kilmore
Achonry
Elphin
Ardagh
&
Clonmacnoise
Meath
Tuam
TUAM
Wardenship
of Galway
Kilmacduagh
Clonfert
Kildare
Dublin
Kilfenora
Killaloe
DUBLIN
Ossory
Leighlin
Cashel
Limerick
Emly
CASHEL
Ferns
Cloyne
Lismore
Waterford
Kerry
Cork
Ross
0
Miles
50
0
Kilometers
100

VIII

Case Studies: James Quigley and John Martin

In Ulster clerical involvement in the United Irishmen took on a curious evangelical role and priests exploited the many opportunities their professions afforded them. The forging of an alliance between the predominantly Presbyterian United Irishmen and the Catholic Defenders was central to the spread of radicalism in the province. The creation of such an union had been a priority since the foundation of the United Irishmen and Catholic priests played a key role in bringing this about. In many cases the 'patriot priests' of the period remain shadowy figures whose radical links are difficult to establish. In the case of two northern priests, James Quigley and John Martin, however, their United Irish credentials are beyond question and their careers illustrate the complex nature of clerical involvement in the radicalism of the 1790s.

James Quigley is unique amongst the priests actively involved in the politicisation of the 1790s in that he left a memoir or apologia for his life. This memoir was edited by his close friend and relative Valentine Derry, a leader of the Louth Defenders, and it was drawn from a series of autobiographical letters written by Quigley during his imprisonment. To these letters Derry added a preface and Quigley's 'Address to the People of Ireland'; the *Life* was originally published in the *Courier* newspaper. It was subsequently printed in London and, according to Benjamin Binns, forty thousand copies were circulated, reflecting again the use of the printed word.[1] Essentially the memoir, described by Quigley on the

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[1] B. McEvoy, 'Father James Quigley,' *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, vol 5, no. 2(1970), p. 266. Ben Binns to R.R. Madden, Jan. 1843, Madden Mss, T.C.D., 873/448.

scaffold as 'a sketch of my unfortunate and afflicted life,' was an appeal for clemency, and many implicating details of his career were ignored in the priest's biography.[2] Madden later claimed that 'declarations of innocence were given in that published statement, which were never made by Coigley.'[3] Quigley is also set apart from the 'rebel priests' in that a full record of his trial survives which throws light on his activities throughout the 1790s. In this also Quigley's case is unique, and the court martial reports of Father John Martin O.S.A. of Drogheda and John Redmond of Wexford are the only comparable accounts and they are less copious.[4]

Quigley's political involvement spanned the 1790s and his life reflects many of the changes which overtook the Catholic community in Ireland during the decade. He was born in 1761, as a student in the Lombard College, Paris, Quigley witnessed the French Revolution at first hand. There, like so many of the clerics in the city, he ran many risks and narrowly escaped being lanternised by the mob. On his return to Ireland Quigley was immediately struck by this 'persecution'. With sectarian tensions running high he found Armagh 'engaged in civil war and religion made the pretext.'[5] He believed these divisions were of great utility to the government and in 1791, 1792 and 1793 he was busily engaged in the 'uniting business' travelling to Randalstown, Maghera, Dungiven, Newtown and Magilligan. These journeys closely mirror the missionary efforts of Wolfe Tone and John Keogh in the elections to the Catholic Committee and Convention and Thomas Russell's visits

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2 *L.C.*, 16 June 1798.
3 J. Quigley, *Life of the rev. James Coigley* (London, 1798). R.R. Madden, *United Irishmen*, third series, vol. 2, p. 43.
4 Howell, *State Trials*, vols 26-27, D. Keogh, 'Father John Martin; an Augustinian friar and the rebellion of 1798,' in *Analecta Augustiniana*, li, (1988)
5 *Life*, p. 12.

throughout Ulster. [6] Quigley then became a key player in the early attempts to form a nexus between the Catholic Defenders and the predominantly Presbyterian Belfast United Irishmen. It is in this context, too, that Louis Cullen has attributed Quigley with authorship of the famous 'Byrne pamphlet' of 1792.[7] The recall of Fitzwilliam of 1795 and the foundation of the Orange Order led to an escalation of violence in Ulster, and Quigley's family home was attacked and burned by what was in essence a 'King and Church' mob. Quigley's library was lost in the blaze and amongst his 'choice collection of books,' the priest's notes for a history of seventeenth-century Ireland was destroyed. W.J. Fitzpatrick believed Quigley was working on a history of the 1641 rebellion. This gives Quigley's political activities an added dimension and reflects the ever present eighteenth century consciousness of what Bartlett has called 'the comet of 1641,' memories of which blighted attempts to solve the Catholic question.[8] Perhaps Quigley was attempting to interpret the events of that year, as 'Byrne' had done for 1792, in an effort to remove the 'occult force' of Sir John Temple's *Irish Rebellion* which would have hindered the growth of the Union of affection. [9]

Based in Dundalk Quigley remained, as the Speaker described him, 'busy and meddling.'[10] McEvoy has suggested that Quigley was never a Defender, a view which is a difficult to sustain given his close

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6 C.J. Woods(ed), *Journals and Memoirs of Thomas Russell*, (Dublin, 1992) p. 71 ff.

7 L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century Politicisation in Ireland; Problems in its Study and Its French Links' in L.M. Cullen and P. Bergeron, *Culture et Pratiques* , pp 138-144. J. Byrne, *Impartial account of the late disturbances in the county of Armagh, containing all the principle meetings, battles, executions, whippings, etc. of the Break of Day men and Defenders, since the year 1784 down to the year 1791 with a full and true account of the rising of both parties, by an inhabitant of the town of Armagh,* (Dublin, 1792) in D. Miller, *Peep O'Day Boys and Defenders*,(Belfast, 1990).

8 W.J. Fitzpatrick, *Life, times and contemporaries of Lord Cloncurry*, (Dublin, 1855) p. 153. T. Bartlett, *Rise and Fall.*

9 A.T.Q Stewart, *The Narrow Ground; Aspects of Ulster, 1609-1969* (London, 1977).p. 49.

10 J. Foster to -------, [n.d.] S.P.O. 620/52/192.

connections with them.[11] He had certainly been active amongst them in the years 1791-3, his close friend and relative Valentine Derry being the leader of the Louth Defenders, and the 'Switcher Donnelly' was his first cousin; Madden believed Quigley had introduced Napper Tandy to the Defenders in the county.[12] His membership of the United Irishmen is beyond doubt; he was sworn by Valentine Lawless and together with Samuel Neilson, Henry Joy McCracken, Thomas Russell and the Teelings actively helped to forge an alliance between the Defenders and the United Irishmen.[13]

In April 1797 when the Armagh freeholders decided to petition the throne for peace, Quigley made himself 'as active on that occasion as possible' riding through the county distributing notices and persuading the freeholders to 'do their duty.'[14] It was also at this time that an anonymous pamphlet appeared, entitled *A View of the Present State of Ireland with an account of the Origin and Progress of the Disturbances in that Country.* The pamphlet outlined the bitter history of sectarian divisions in Ireland, the draconian measures employed by the military. Pointing to the efforts of the United Irishmen towards the creation of a union of affection, it called for freedom and an end to repression.[15] The pamphlet, which James Hope believed 'contained more truth than all the volumes I have seen written on the events of 1797 and 1798,' was attributed implausably by Francis Plowden to Arthur O'Connor, but Raymond Murray has convincingly argued that the anonymous 'Observer' was in fact James Quigley. Murray bases his theory on the

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11 B. McEvoy, 'Fr James Quigley,' p. 254.

12 R,R. Madden, *United Irishmen*, ii, p. 42. R. Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 58. L.M. Cullen, 'The Political structures of the Defenders,' in D. Dickson and H. Gough(eds), *Ireland and the French Revolution.* pp 117-138.

13 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' p. 112.

14 *Life*, p. 20.

15 *A view of the present State of Ireland with an account of the origin and progress of the disturbances in that country; and a Narrative of facts addressed to the People of England by an Observer.* (London, 1797).

style and local concern of the pamphlet, but its appeal to a British audience and its publication in England also point towards the authorship of the Armagh priest.[16] Given the level of opposition, then, to his 'task masters, commonly called His Majesty's Ministers,' it is little wonder that from that time onwards Quigley believed he had been singled out for vengeance by Castlereagh, Beresford and Annesley.[17]

Quigley fled to Manchester and there he busied himself in the promotion of the United Britons; by the end of the year he had spread the system to Bolton, Stockport, Warrington, Nottingham, Liverpool and Birmingham.[18] There is also evidence that while in Britain he worked to unite the republicans of Ireland, England and Scotland.[19] In August of the same year he journeyed, via Hamburg, to Paris with Rev. Arthur McMahon and there he fell in with the Tandy faction of the United Irishmen in the city.[20] Quigley returned to Ireland several months later, but prepared to sail again to France in February 1798, this time in the company of Arthur O'Connor and John Binns who went with a view to securing French assistance for an invasion. Since his return from France, however, Quigley had been trailed by Bow Street runners and on 28th February the entire party was arrested at the King's Head Margate.[21] Quigley's defense was in stark contrast to that of Arthur O'Connor who was acquitted. No witnesses were called by his counsel despite the fact that Valentine Derry and Bernard Coyle had been

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16 R. Murray, 'The Killing of Thomas Birch, United Irishman, March 1797 & the Meeting of the Armagh Freeholders, 19 April 1797, in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, (1982) pp. 267-320. J. Hope in Madden, *United Irishmen*, Third Series, ii, App. 6. p. 392. Plowden, *Historical; Review of Ireland,* vol. 2, p. 537. I am grateful to Fr Murray for his generous help.

17 *Life*, p. 21.

18 See M. Elliott, 'Irish republicanism in England,' in T. Bartlett and D. Hayton(eds), *Penal Age*, pp. 208- 215.

19 A.A.E., Corr. Pol. Ang 592, fo. 43. the Revs Coigley and MacMahon to Talleyrand, 4 Oct. 1797, in M. Elliott, 'Irish Republicanism in England,' p. 211.

20 J. Nugent, London, to E. Cooke, 7 Aug. 1797, S.P.O. 620/1/4/2.

21 *F.D.J.*, 8 Mar. 1798.

subpoenaed, and the priest was convicted on very thin evidence.[22] Nor is there any indication that Quigley received any assistance from the clergy, but on the contrary it appears that Bishop Douglas of London willingly went along with Wickham's attempts to use Quigley's confessor, Fr Griffiths, as a source of information.[23] After his execution at Pennington Heath, John Pollock confessed, 'the fact was this, Quigley it was plain must be hanged - no one cared about him.'[24]

Quigley's role in Ulster radicalism in the 1790s had been crucial. He had been central to the 'uniting business' and had played a prominent role in bringing about the key junction between the Defenders and the United Irishmen, while in the end his actions reflected the growing dissatisfaction of the more militant United Irishmen. However, despite Benjamin Binn's eulogy for Quigley, 'a man than whom no greater or better ever lived,' the priest has been curiously neglected in the historiography of the period.[25] Both Madden and W.J. Fitzpatrick devoted considerable attention to him, and two accounts of his life have been published within the last fifty years, but more recent writers have paid him merely cursory attention.[26] Elliott has perhaps devoted the greatest attention to Quigley, particularly in her study of Irish republicanism in England, and Cullen has discussed at length his supposed authorship of the 'Byrne pamphlet.'[27] By and large, however, the current unprecedented levels of research into the 1790s have

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[22] J. White, Lincoln Inn to Wickham, 3 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/14

[23] *Life*, p. 43, Wickham to E. Cooke, 21 Apr. 1798, S.P.O. 620/36/192.

[24] J. Pollock to ---------, 26 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/37/175. see R.J. Kelly, 'The Trial and Execution of Father Quigley,' in *I.E.R.*,(1906), pp. 528-536.

[25] Ben. Binns to R. R. Madden, Jan. 1843, Madden Mss. T.C.D. 873/448

[26] S. Simms, *Rev. James Quigley*, (Belfast, 1937), B. McEvoy, 'Rev James Quigley,' in *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, v, (1970).

[27] M. Elliott, 'Irish Republicanism in England,' in T. Bartlett and D. Hayton(eds), *Penal Age and Golden Era* (Belfast, 1979) pp. 208-215, *Partners in Revolution; the United Irishmen in France* (Yale, 1982), L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century Politicisation; Problems in its study and French links, P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen(eds), *Cultures et Pratiques,* pp. 138-44.

ignored Quigley and few of the period's radicals cry out so loudly for thorough re-examination.

John Martin

The radical missionary pattern which characterised clerical involvement in the United Irishmen in Ulster is also reflected in Father John Martin, an Augustinian priest of Drogheda. He too has been neglected and no adequate attempt has been made to evaluate the significance of his part in the events of 1798.[28] Little is known of Father Martin's early life, except that he was born in Muckerstaff, county Longford. He later joined the Augustinian Order and was professed in Salamanca in January 1781.[29] On his return to Ireland he was appointed to the Order's priory at Drogheda and Fr William Gahan's *Status Provinciae Hiberniae* of 1785 describes Martin as prior of Skryne, county Meath.[30] This dual appointment reflects the tradition amongst the mendicants in the eighteenth-century of appointing 'blind priors' to the order's suppressed foundations in order to preserve their canonical rights and privileges.[31]

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[28] D. Keogh, 'Fr John Martin, An Augustinian Friar and the Irish Rebellion of 1798' in *Analecta Augustiniana*, (Rome, 1988), pp. 227 - 246. M. Ronan, 'Priests in the independence movement of 1798, *I.E.R.*, LXVI(1945) 'An Episode of 1798' in *Essays in Commemoration*, (Dublin, 1958).

[29] Augustinian Profession Book, Salamanca, 1771-1806, F. 31R, Valladolid Archives, 540 bis. Previously there had been some confusion between this John Martin and his near contemporary of the same name. The second John Martin had studied in Seville and was granted viaticum in November 1751 and in 1759 was appointed prior of the Irish Augustinian community of San Mattheo in Merulana Rome, Simancas Archives, I, 966, Augustinian General Archives, Rome, Dd 201, f. 55r.

[30] P. Duffner, *The Low Lane Church; The story of the Augustinians in Drogheda*, (Drogheda, 1979)

[31] Augusatinian Provincial Archives, Ballyboden. W.J. Battersby, *A History of the Abbeys, Convents and churches of St. Augustine in Ireland* (Dublin, 1856), p. 70. F.X. Martin, 'The Augustinian friaries in pre-Reformation Ireland,' in *Augustiniana*, vi, (1956), p. 382.

While in Drogheda Martin began work on his translation of the *Meditations of Saint Augustine*, which he published in Dublin in 1798. The translation was made from the *Meditationum Liber*, an eleventh-century work attributed to Saint Augustine, which was one of the most popular of its kind in the middle-ages.[32] The friar dedicated his work to the Archbishop of Armagh, Richard O'Reilly and ironically, considering his subsequent actions, in the dedication Martin referred to his own 'feeble efforts in the propagation of piety and Christian devotion in a period when I behold with sorrow the poisoned arrows of libertinism directed against the sacred flock of the Heavenly Shepherd.'[33]

The bishop of Meath, Patrick Plunkett, granted Martin faculties for the diocese in March 1789, but the friar's pastoral efforts took him farther afield into the neighbouring dioceses of Armagh and Dublin and there are reports of him preaching as far away as Kilbride, county Wicklow.[34] Martin's travels, celebrating mass, preaching and questing brought him throughout south Ulster and north Leinster, the heart land of Defenderism. As tensions in the countryside spilled over into Drogheda, the town became increasingly receptive to the radical ideas brought by the travellers on the road from Dublin to Belfast, the two main centres of United Irish activity.[35] Drogheda in the 1790s was thriving and with a population of about 15,000 it was the sixth largest town in Ireland. It was also industrialised, with the main industry being linen. Apart from its geographical location, the presence of the linen industry in Drogheda placed the town firmly within the Ulster sphere of influence and many of

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32 The Latin text may be found in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 40, col. 901-942. Myles Ronan wrongly attributes an edition of the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, to Martin, 'Priests and the Independence movement of 1798,' *I.E.R.*, LXVI (1945), p.99.

33 It is significant that when a second edition of the friar's translation appeared in 1879, the translator was listed simply as 'A Catholic Priest.' *The Meditations of Saint Augustine*, (Dublin, 1879).

34 A. Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, ii, p. 210, S.P.O. 620/38/160.

35 D. Dickson, 'Centres of motion; Irish cities and the origin of popular politics,' in P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen, *Culture et Pratiques* . pp.101-122.

the political tensions of Armagh, Antrim and Down spilled over into Louth and Meath. Smyth in his recent work on the Defenders and popular politicisation in the 1790s has dealt in some detail with these tensions in Louth which surfaced regularly at the fairs as northern Protestant weavers were attacked by local Defenders, while in the town itself these tensions were heightened by the show trials orchestrated by the Speaker John Foster. [36] The thriving linen trade in Drogheda also led to growing discontent in the town as the corporation became increasingly unrepresentative of the town's prosperous Catholic merchants. This kind of discontent, the thwarted ambitions of the Catholic middle class, provided a fertile seedbed for the radical ideas of the United Irishmen. [37]

Against this background Martin joined the Drogheda society of United Irishmen at Easter 1797, at a time when the town was particularly disturbed.[38] Martin was sworn in his own room by two Franciscan friars, Patrick Duffy and James MacCarten, who had often tried in the past to pursuade him to join.[39] Fr James MacCarten was an Ulsterman and had spent a long period lecturing at St. Anthony's in Louvain, after which he was appointed titular guardian of the abandoned friary of Bunmargy, county Antrim in 1794. During this time it is probable that he lived in Drogheda and he was appointed guardian of the friary there in 1800.[40] The *Liber Dublinensis* shows Fr Patrick Duffy as titular guardian of the Monaghan friary from 1794, and it would appear that he too lived in Drogheda until his appointment as guardian of Dromore in the year of his

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36 J. Smyth, 'Popular Politicisation,' pp 46 - 49. T. Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism in 1795,' pp. 373 - 394. C. J. Woods(ed), *Journals and Memoirs of Thomas Russell*, (Dublin, 1992) p.141.

37 A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster; The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendency* ,(Oxford, 1978). pp. 162-63. J. Fitzgerald, 'The organisation of the Drogheda economy, 1780-1820,' (U.C.D., M.A. thesis, 1974).

38 Rev Brabazon Smith, Newry to ....., 1 June 1797, S.P.O. 620/31/6

39 S.P.O. 620/38/160

40 I am indebted to Fr Hugh Fenning op and Fr Benignus Millett ofm for this information and for other generous help. A. Faulkner, *Liber Dublinensis*, (Dublin, 1978)pp. 182, 186, 189, 192.

death, 1815.[41] Much of our information concerning this crucial phase in the priest's life is drawn from his confession made subsequent to his arrest in June 1798 and must be viewed in the light of the intense pressure placed on Martin by the court martial. Nevertheless at that stage he attributed his motives in joining the United Irishment to a belief that they intended to 'put all units on a level' and to 'dissolve all establishments.' [42] Again he declared how he had 'entered into engagement with the United Irishmen to obtain their rights thinking themselves an injured people'; curiously, he was emphatic that he did 'not take the engagement as an oath, but as an affirmation as taking the engagement in this form was contrary to his oath of allegiance.'[43] This late conversion to the United Irishmen is not as surprising as it may first appear and the failure of the United men to gain numbers in county Meath and Louth has been attributed to the effective if harsh measures taken by Foster against the Defenders. John Pollock observed that 'papists here who were first among the Defenders were the last among the rebels, because they had been so roughly handled by the Speaker and all the Protestant gentlemen of property.'[44] Perhaps for the same reason it is doubtful whether Quigley joined the United Irishmen before June 1796.[45]

Following his political conversion Martin busied himself with Augustinian enthusiasm to promoting the principles of the United Irishmen. In this he was assisted by the Drogheda committee, made up of MacCarten, Duffy, Brien, Lenin a schoolmaster, Laurence Aungier, a merchant, Flood of West Street, Smith, a clerk, and Laurence Reily, a

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41 ibid, pp. 186, 189, 192, 196, 199, 206, 209, 213.
42 S.P.O 620/38/126
43 S.P.O. 620/38/160
44 J. Pollock, Navan, to Marsden, 25 Sept. 1800, S.P.O. 620?49/55 in K. Whelan, 'Catholics, Politicisation and the 1798 Rebellion,' p.75.
45 McEvoy, 'Quigley', p. 257.

grocer. Martin himself assumed leadership of the committee, which was typical of the composition of the United Irish committees to be found elsewhere. [46] The town soon became well organised and an officer had been appointed to each street; John Lynch, a merchant, commanded a party, as did Edward Bellew and Burges, who was taken prisoner to Dublin during the rebellion. Several of Lord Gormanston's yeomanry corps had also been sworn and by early May 1798 General Lombard warned that 'every day the public mind here about is becoming more ripe for action.'[47]

(II)

The defeat of the rebel army at the Battle of Tara on 26 May 1798 cast the rebel plans in north Leinster into disarray. The rebel army was quickly dispersed by Captain Blanche's Scotch Fencibles; the road to the north had been reopened and the immediate threat to the capital had been lifted. A similar defeat was suffered by the Kildare men at the Curragh and within a week the rebels were on the defensive. The exception to this was Wexford, where insurgent numbers had been higher than elsewhere, but even there they had failed to break out into the surrounding counties.[48] Indecision amongst the rebel leadership led to the loss of precious time and by failing to capture the strategic town of New Ross the chances of success quickly began to fade.[49] It was

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46 S.P.O. 620/38/160, R.B. McDowell, 'Personnel of the Society of United Irishmen, 1791-4' in *I.H.S.*, LL, (1941) pp 12-53. Nancy Curtin, 'The United Irish Organisation in Ulster,' in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan(eds), *The United Irishmen; A Bicentennial Perspective* (Dublin, forthcoming).

47 S.P.O 620/38/60, Lombard to ....., 4 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/38/20.

48 D. Dickson, *New Foundations*, (Dublin, 1987), p. 191.

49 N. Furlong, *Father John Murphy of Boolavogue*, (Dublin, 1991) Pp. 103-117.

against this background that Father John Martin found himself with an extraordinary commission from the Dublin United Irish Committee, based in Thomas Street.

In the first week of June Martin met with the Dublin committee members at Murphy's, the feather merchant in Thomas Street. This was the same house in which Lord Edward Fitzgerald had been captured a few weeks previously and there Martin met with about twenty five United Irishmen. At his subsequent court martial Martin described this gathering which included 'James Moore, Iron Monger, Thomas Street. John Passmore,Francis Street. Hammond, who keeps a livery stable, Bolton Street. Hugh MacVeagh - sometimes in the iron trade about Bolton Street. Charles Dalahyde(he's a small man), Luke White, not the bookseller - John White, Wattling Street and several others.'

Graham in his recent work on the organisation of the Dublin United Irishmen has pointed out that with the collapse of the Directory the baton of the United Irish executive authority passed to the Workhouse division. John Sweetman's position of command had been taken on by James Moore and the committee of the Workhouse division now assumed authority not only for the city, but for the organisation as a whole.[50] Significantly Verner had informed Edward Cooke in late May that two Augustinians of John's Lane had been working with Moore swearing United Irish members; Martin may have maintained contact with the Workhouse Committee through his Dublin confreres.[51] In this context Martin was commissioned by the Thomas Street committe to go to Dunboyne and Kilbride, where the rebellion had collapsed, and to co-ordinate the activities of the rebels there 'to co-operate at a fixed time -

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[50] T. Graham, 'The Organisation of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen,' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, forthcoming).
[51] J. Verner to E. Cooke, 29 May [1798], S.P.O. 620/51/43.

and to excite the people to act.'[52] Martin returned to Drogheda after his meeting in Dublin and at a dinner informed his own committee of his mission. At this dinner a collection was made for Henry Grattan, whom Martin believed was 'very friendly to the United Irishmen'; the priest himself contributed one guinea and he described the amount raised as 'very large indeed.' Musgrave refers to this collection, but gives it quite a different interpretation; 'a large sum of money had been levied on the Roman Catholics in general, both clergy and laity, every person paying according to his wealth, some an hundred pounds, others one shilling; that he, though a poor priest, was rated at a guinea; that the money so levied, was to be applied to purchase arms and ammunition, and so reward their friends, both in and out of parliament.'[53]

The friar visited Dunboyne and Kilbride twice and on both occasions preached to the people, encouraging them to continue with the rebellion; 'if you are men that have sworn to be faithful to one another, now that you see your houses burned is the time you are called upon to keep your oath.'[54] Martin then travelled on to Greenogue in county Kildare, where the rebels had been particularly active and from there he rode on to Dublin to report on his progress.

By then it was impossible to hold a full meeting of the Dublin committee, given the level of yeomanry activity in the city. Martin made his report to John Passmore and Hugh MacVeagh[a subscriber to James McCary's *Sure Way to Heaven*] whose hopes of a rebel victory had been dashed by accounts of government victories in Meath, Kildare and Dublin. The rebels in Wexford and Wicklow, however, still maintained a good deal of their original momentum and Martin was instructed to ride

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52 S.P.O. 620/38/126
53 S.P.O. 620/28/160 Musgrave, *Memoirs*, (Dublin, 1802), Pp. 390-91.
54 S.P.O. 620/28/126

south to hasten the march on Dublin and to co-ordinate their efforts. Hopes of assistance from the south seemed well founded and the timing of the friar's mission was crucial. Musgrave described the tension in the city around this time, commenting on the fact that 'a great many servants and mechanics, and other persons of various descriptions, suddenly dissappeared in Dublin, and the neighbourhood of Blackrock; and it was observable that the same thing took place, when the rebels were about to make any great effort in Wexford, Wicklow or Kildare.' Similar observations were contained in the letter from Fr John Connolly O.F.M., of Blackrock who informed John Lees that many of his flock were missing and that the insurgents 'intended immediately to descend make some desparate attack and drive all these parts into insurrection.'[55] Musgrave also included in his history a curious letter, no doubt altered to give it a sectarian edge, supposedly found on the body of Fr. Michael Murphy after his fall at the Battle of Arklow and addressed to Thomas Houston of Thomas Street Dublin;

Gorey, 6th June [1798]

> Friend Houston, Great events are ripening. In a few days we shall meet. The first fruits of your regeneration must be a tincture of poison and pike, in the metropolis, against heretics. This is a tribunal for such opinions. Your talents must not be buried as a judge. Your sons must be steeled with fortitide against heresy, then we shall do; and you shall shine in a higher sphere. We shall have an army of brave republicans, one hundred thousand, with fourteen pieces of cannon, on Tuesday, before Dublin; your heart will beat high of the news. You will rise with proportionate force.
>
> Yours ever,

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55 Musgrave, *Memoirs,* p. 294. J. Connolly, Booterstown, to J. Lees, n.d. [9 June 1798], S.P.O. 620/53/66.

Decipher, B.I.K.M.Q.Y. *** M. Murphy.[56]

Father Martin set off for Arklow, but stopped at Rathfarnham where he met with the local parish priest Father William Ledwich, who in turn gave him a letter of introduction to Fr Low, parish priest of Glendalough. A nephew of Fr Ledwich, Patrick Ledwich had deserted from the Yeomanry and with another yeoman named Wade had led an attack on Clondalkin. Both men were captured and following a court martial were hanged at Queen Street Bridge. [57] Above Rathfarnham Martin met with Joseph Holt, the United Irish general, and the two men spent three quarters of an hour together discussing plans. Ruan O'Donnell has suggested that the General had given assurances to the Dublin United Irish Committee that he would not act without instructions from the executive, a fact which reflects the importance of the friar's mission.[58] From Martin's court martial it appears that the two were already well acquainted with each other, and the general informed Martin of rebel strength in the area. Holt had three hundred men and there were two other companies nearby under the command of united Irish captains Nugent, who attended Committee meetings at Blake's of Thomas Street, and James Doyle of Lusk.[59] These three parties were ready to co-operate in the attack of Dublin, which despite victories to the government was still extremely vulnerable.

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56 M. Murphy to T. Houston, 6 June. 1798, Musgrave, *Memoirs*, p. 435, cited in T. Graham, *op. cit.*

57 In 1804 Fr Ledwich was attacked by members of the Roscommon Militia, W. Riordan, 'Succession lists of parish priests in the archdiocese of Dublin, 1771-1960' *Reportorium Novum*, III, (Dublin, 1961). John Meagher, 'Nicholas Kearns, State Prisoner' in *Rep. Novum.*, I, I, (1955), *F.J.* 19 June 1798. Musgrave, *Memoirs* pp. 390-91.

58 B. Senior to E. Cooke, n.d. [June 1798], S.P.O. 620/18/1 in R. O'Donnell, 'General Joseph Holt and the Rebellion of 1798 in County Wicklow,' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, U.C.D., 1991) p. 151.

59 ibid. p. 150.

Martin's plan was straightforward. It was presumed that the rebels could knock out the poorly defended garrison at Rathdrum. Once this had been achieved, Arklow would be defenceless. It was hoped that by then the rebels of Wexford and Wicklow would have obtained the long awaited French assistance; as soon as Arklow was taken, the march on Dublin could begin in earnest. The attack on the city was to be a four-pronged manoeuvre, with detachments moving in from Rathcoole, Glenasmole, Rathfarnham and Templeogue. The purpose of this plan was to draw the government forces out of Dublin, leaving the city defenceless and an easy target for the United Irishmen from county Meath and Kildare. Leaving Holt behind, Martin set off for Arklow where he was assured by the Dublin Committee he would find friends and support. By this stage, however, the rebels had been defeated at Arklow and the main plank of the plan had been removed. To add to an already desperate situation the friar was captured by the yeomanry before he could make contact with the remnant of the rebel army.

Martin rode on into Wicklow to Cronebane where he hoped to meet with the local United Irish leader, Camac, whom the Dublin Committee had assured him was willing to co-operate. Camac had been a member of the Cronebane Yeomanry, but this corps has been disarmed in 1796 when 44 of their number refused to take a test oath, confirming loyalist suspicions that the corps was a United Irish front.[60] John Martin failed to make contact with Cormac and was captured a little after dawn on 11 June 1798 while reviewing Cronebawn mines, where he seems to have intended to secure much needed gun powder for the rebels. Musgrave described his capture with the usual colour;

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60 R. Musgrave, *Menoirs*, p. 303. I am grateful to Kevin Whelan for this suggestion.

> Two yeoman patroling near the Meeting of the Waters, a place between Arklow and Rathdrum, saw a well dressed man, on a horse covered with sweat and foam, from severe riding; they seized him and demanding who he was and whence he came. He answered that he was a gentleman and he had been riding around for pleasure, to see the beauties of the country. Having conducted him to Rathdrum, he was examined by the commanding officer there, but he would not give an account of himself. A young gentleman of Drogheda, a recruiting officer, who was present, recognised the prisoner, gave privately a brief history of him to Captain Giffard, and requested that it be kept a profound secret.[61]

Luke Cullen questioned these accounts and believed that the prisoner was not Fr Martin of Drogheda, but rather Richard O'Reilly, a friend of the Byrnes of Ballymanus and a member of the Wicklow county committee of the United Irishmen, on his way to join the rebel camp then preparing to attack Rathdrum. Cullen believed that O'Reilly had refused to give his name and that the authorities, hoping to 'catch a priest under any shade of criminality', took advantage of the situation to implicate John Martin.[62] Myles Ronan in his later work on the rebel priests of 1798 accepted Cullen's version and believed that the whole Martin confession was a concoction of Captain Tom King of Rathdrum. This thesis, however is impossible to sustain given the evidence to the contrary.[63]

The rabid Orangeman, Captain Giffard of the Dublin city militia warned the friar that unless a full confession was made he would be put to death. If he complied however he would be left at the disposal of the Viceroy, whom he was assured was merciful. If Martin hesitated he would be 'blown away at the mouth of a cannon.'[64] The friar instantly dropped to his knees and begged to be taken to a private room where he would make a full and candid confession.

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61 R. Musgrave, *Memoirs*, pp. 390-1. *F.D.J.* 14 June 1798.
62 Luke Cullen Papers, Madden Ms. 1472, Trinity College, Dublin.
63 M.V. Ronan, *Insurgent Wicklow 1798*, (Dublin, 1948) For a critical assesment of Fr Ronan's work see Professor Hayes-McCoy's review in *I.H.S.*,(1945), p.371.
64 S.P.O. 620/38/!60

Much of what has been said earlier about the friar's initiation into the United Irishmen, the organisation in Drogheda, his preaching and mission, together with the rebel plans, has been drawn from this confession; in it he added a denunciation of the United Irish system;

> He now hates the United Irishmen because they have not stood together and that he considers them as a cowardly rabble, he conceived that they would all have fought and died in the cause. That he did not intend to take arms himself, but he intended to have instigated the people with a fine death in the cause. That he had read Machiavel and that Machiavel taught that they should spare no time whatever to effect the object they had depended on.[65]

The authorities lost no time in making use of their prisoner and it was hoped his confession would provide much useful information. On 14 June he was sent to Dublin under an escort of the York Regiment and in a letter sent with him by Captain John Giffard described the friar as 'the greatest villain in society.' Giffard continued, 'his confession you will see....[is] not very honourable to Mr Grattan. The lesser traitors should be easily taken up.'[66]

Saunder's News Letter of 18 June gave an account of Martin's arrest together with news of the capture of a 'person named Reily, a grocer of Drogheda, who was apprehended on Martin's information on Friday morning, just as he was about to decamp from the city in a stage coach.' On 8 July Father Duffy was arrested in Drogheda, again presumably on Martin's information. Duffy's papers were seized and many of them were found to be 'most inflammatory.. adorned all around with emblematical figures representing harps without crowns, crowns reversed' and so on.[67] The authorities in Drogheda believed that Duffy

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65 S.P.O. 620/38/160.
66 J. T. Gilbert, *Documents Relating to Ireland, 1795-1804*, (Shannon, 1970) p. 17. S.P.O. 620/38/160.
67 *F.D.J.* 10 July 1798.

would easily be convicted; there were witnesses in the town who had heard him make treasonable declarations and their evidence, along with extra proofs from Dublin, would be sufficient to convict him.[68] His trial was fixed for the following Wednesday and Martin was returned to Drogheda for the occasion.[69]

No records of these trials have survived, nor is there evidence of their outcome. Certainly Reily was still in Kilmainham in late September 1798 'on suspicion,'[70] and in the rebellion papers, there is a petition from a Mrs Reily in October 1798 requesting the release of her husband. There is no certainty that this was Laurence Reily's wife, but the interest taken by Lord Fingall in the case might suggest a local connection. In any event the response to the petition declared that no decision had been taken either for or against Reily.[71] Likewise, there is no record of the trial of Father Duffy, but his continual reappointment as guardian of the Franciscan friary suggests that he was acquitted. Once again this is mere conjecture, but it suggests that Father Martin did not supply the authorities in Drogheda with sufficient information to convict his former comrades. By 18 August 1798 the Court Martial had obviously lost confidence in Martin's co-operation and he was returned to Dublin .[72]

Martin was lodged in Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin and there he remained despite the promise of the Viceroy's mercy. In March 1800 he made an appeal to Richard Annesley at the Custom House to intervene on his behalf, but to no avail.[73] Finally on 5 August 1801 Martin

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68 *F.J.* 8 July 1798, George McEntagert to Secretary of war, S.P.O. 620/40/155.
69 *S.N.L.* 18 July 1798.
70 S.P.O. 620/7/79/31, 620/7/79/82.
71 S.P.O. 620/40/155.
72 J.T. Gilbert, *Documents Relating to Ireland*, p.19.
73 S.P.O. Prisoners Petitions, 490.

escaped by ladder from the prison.[74] Fifty guineas were offered for the capture of the friar who was described as

> about fifty years of age, five feet nine inches high, dark complexion, black hair, long visage, stoops very much in walking, has a shrill accent in speaking and lisps; had on him when he went away a blue surtout coat, blue pantaloons and a round hat; did formerly live at Drogheda.[75]

With this description the elusive Martin fades from our vision, never to emerge again.

The subsequent career of John Martin remains shrouded in mystery. It would seem unlikely that he returned to an Augustinian friary to be harboured there. The absence of the pages covering 1797 to 1799 in the House Book of the Drogheda Augustinians might suggest some attempt to protect the renegade, but there are no further references to him in the Augustinian Provincial Archives after his escape. We have seen above how another rebel Augustinian friar, Father Myles Prendergast of Murrisk, escaped from prison, killing a jailer in the process, and lived in Connemara until his death in the 1830s. Prendergast's case is significant, in that while he did not return to his Order, he made many applications to the provincial for support which he seems to have received; in 1832 twelve pounds was levied amongst the Augustinians for his support.[76] There are no records of Father John Martin making similar requests from his provincial, and his subsequent career remains a mystery. Possibly like Frs McMahon, Monelly and Campbell, three other

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74 F. Falkiner, Abbotstown to ....., 10 August 1801, S.P.O. 620/49/115.

75 *D.E.P.*, 3 Sept. 1801.

76 Augustinian Provincial Archives, Ballyboden, Co. Dublin. R. Hayes, *Last Invasion of Ireland* (Dublin, 1937) Pp. 62, 181, 249, Appendix to Second edition(Dublin, 1939). 'Priests and the Independence Movement of 1798', *I.E.R.*, LXVI,(1945), p. 269. J. Gibbons, 'Father Myles Prendergast,' in *An Coinneal*, (1980), p.79.

'rebel priests', he escaped to America and fitted easily into a new life there.

(III)

John Martin has been curiously neglected in the historiography of the 1798 Rebellion. In many respects this may be accounted for by the attempts in the aftermath of the rebellion to play down the United Irish aspect of the events of that year and to present the impression that clerical involvement was involuntary. This is particularly obvious in the books of Thomas Cloney and Edward Hay, and indeed in Joseph Holt's account of the rebellion.[77] The priest provided an excellent scape goat for the former rebels wishing to give the impression of involuntary action and the image of Father Murphy raising the 'might wave' of self-preservation provided an appropriate oppertunity; 'better to die like men than to be butchered in the ditchers like dogs.'[78] Indeed the Carmelite Luke Cullen sought to preserve this illusion in the nineteenth century, rarely refering to the political agenda of the rebellion. Miles Byrne's account of the rebellion represents an attempt to correct this imbalance, but Father Patrick Kavanagh's account of events, written against the

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[77] For a full discussion of the historiography of 1798 see L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth-Century Politicisation in Ireland: Problems in its study and its French Links' in P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen(eds). *Cultures et Pratiques Politiques*, (Paris, 1991) pp.137-158. E. Hay, *History of the Insurrection of the county of Wexford*, (Dublin, 1803), T. Cloney, *Narrative of those transactions in the county of Wexford in which the author was engaged in the awful year of 1798* (Dublin, 1832), J. Holt, *Memoirs*, (Dublin, 1838). M. Whelan, 'Edward Hay 'Styled Mr. Secretary Hay' Catholic Politics 1792-1822,' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, U.C.G., 1991) p. 78.

[78] N. Furlong, *Fr. John Murphy of Boolavogue, 1753-1798.* (Dublin, 1991), p.49.

background of Fenianism, returned to an apologist interpretation.[79] In this version of events it is difficult to see how Father John Martin, a self-confessed United Irishman and organiser, could be accommodated.

Martin's 'confession' must also have contributed to his exclusion from the pantheon of rebel priests. The image which has survived is of a disillusioned informer whose efforts in the United Irish cause have been forgotten. The evidence, however, suggests that this information was of little use and may in fact have served only to distract attention from more influential leaders. Martin's memory certainly suffered at the hands of loyalist historians in the wake of the rebellion, especially in Musgrave's *Memoirs*. It is clear from Musgrave's account of Martin's activities that John Giffard had given him access to the report of the court martial and Martin's 'confession' forms the basis of his narrative of events. Giffard's seventeen-year-old son, Lt. William Giffard had been killed in the rebel attack on Kildare, and the Captain can only have welcomed the capture of the friar as confirmation of the loyalist view of the rebellion as a papist plot. Against this background the Court Martial provided a perfect opportunity to blacken both the Catholics and the reform movement, and Martin's references to Machiavelli and to collections for Grattan were seized upon by Musgrave.

Like James Quigley, John Martin's position among the rebel priests of 1798 is rare, in that his United Irish background is beyond question and a clear record of his political philosophy and conscious role in the rebellion survive. Martin was not a solitary priest, forced unwillingly to take up the cause of his flock, but was rather in the style of the celebrated James Quigley. Martin had assisted in the organisation

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79 Miles Byrne, *Memoirs*, i, P.F. Kavanagh, *A Popular history of the insurrection of 1798* (Dublin, 1916) A. Kinsella, 'Father Patrick Kavanagh'(M.Litt thesis, Trinity College, forthcoming.).

of Drogheda and had preached the United gospel throughout much of north Leinster. The friar's connections with the Dublin United Irish committee place him firmly within a national context, and he also appears to have had connections with the radicals in Wexford. Newspapers referred to this at the time of his capture and Troy's anxious questioning of Bishop Caulfield about the activities of the priest 'Carton' in Wexford might refer to Martin's Drogheda companion. In February 1799 Thomas Brownrigg informed Alexander Marsden of 'Abbe Carton', a native of Wexford who had been sent on board a tender in 1798 for seditious practices, but who had been released and was then living in Dublin.[80] If this was in fact Martin's companion, it would suggest interesting links between the United Irishmen throughout Leinster.

Martin's commission given him by the Dublin United Irish committee at a crucial moment in early June 1798 has also been curiously neglected, given the implications of theinstructions to the friar. It has been traditionally accepted that by the middle of May 1798 the United Irish structures in Dublin had effectively collapsed. The Directory had been arrested in March at Oliver Bond's house, Edward FitzGerald and the Sheares had been captured and the *Dublin Journal*, declared that 'the leaders of the organised bands of rebels are either in custody or have marked their guilt by flight - the subordinate agents feel themselves weak and deserted.'[81] Martin's commission, however, illustrates that the Directory had in fact been replaced by the Dublin Workhouse Division Committee and that their national position had been recognised.[82] Given

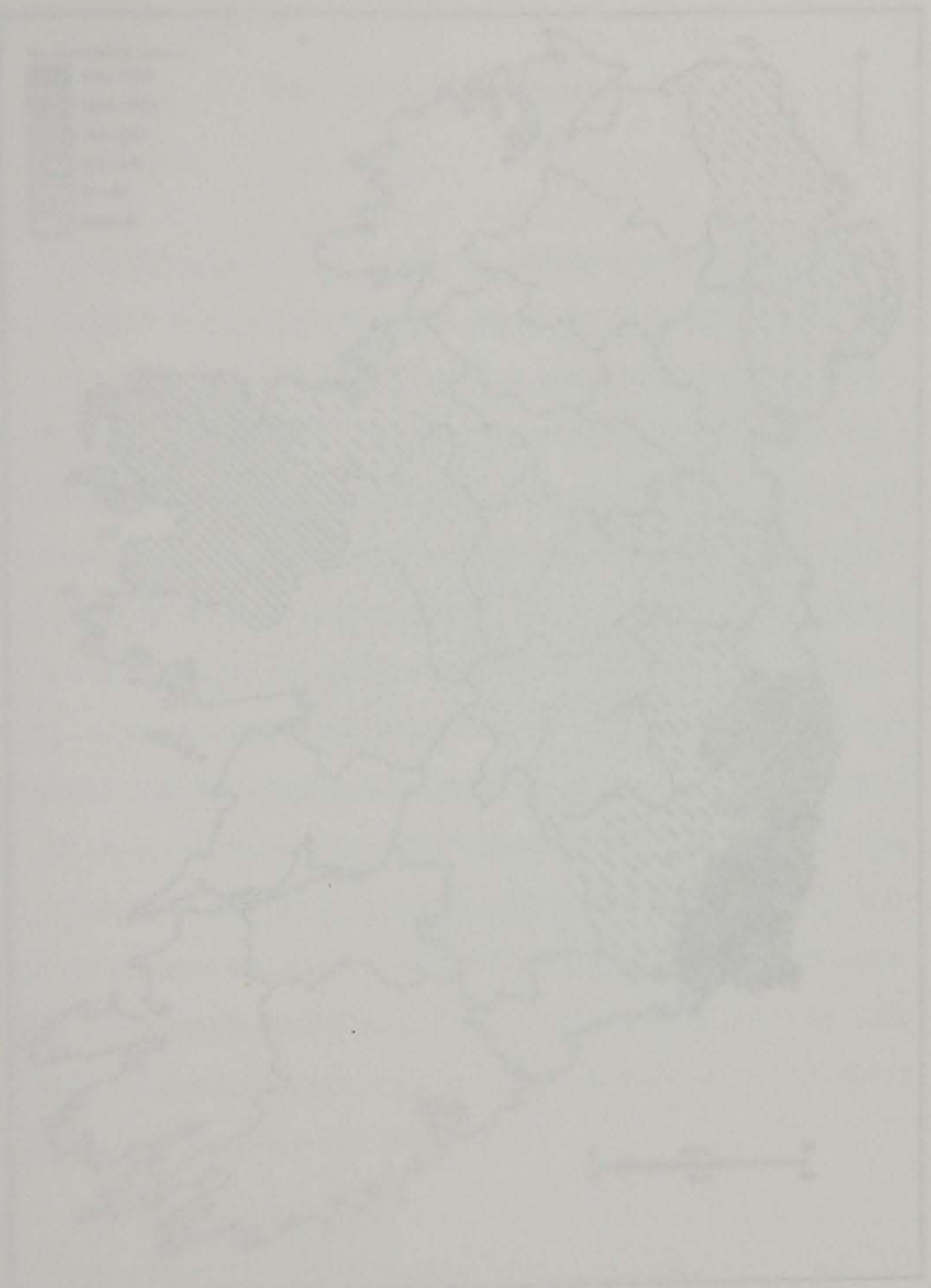
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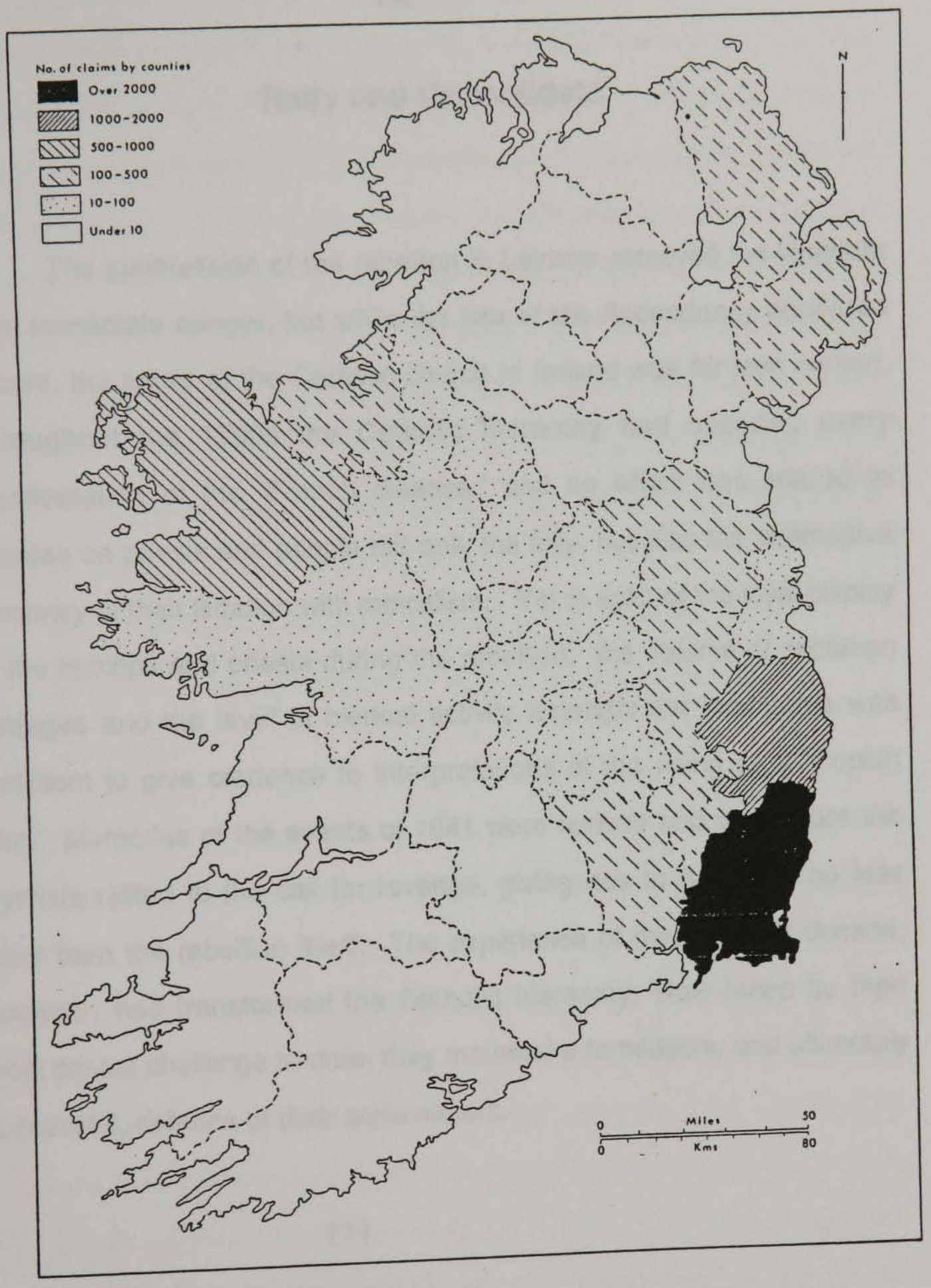
80 Caulfield to Troy, 5 Sept. 1798, D.D.A. cf K. Whelan, 'The Catholic priests and the 1798 rebellion,' in K. Whelan(ed) *Wexford; History and Society* (Dublin, 1987) p. 306. Thomas Brownrigg to Alexander Marsden, 16 Feb. 1799, S.P.O. 620/46/41.

81 *F.D.J.*, 10 May 1798, in J. Smyth, 'Dublin's Political Underground' in G. O'Brien(ed) *Parliament, Politics and People* (Dublin, 1989), p146.

82 T. Graham, 'The Organisation of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen' (Ph.D. thesis, T.C.D., Forthcoming).

these factors, a reexamination of John Martin's role in the events of 1798 would seem overdue.





THE 1798 REBELLION: CLAIMS TO COMPENSATION

IX

Rally and Consolidate

The suppression of the rebellion in Leinster removed the kingdom from immediate danger, but while the fate of the Ascendancy appeared secure, the future of the Catholic church in Ireland was far less certain. Throughout the 1790s the Catholic hierarchy had opposed every manifestation of the 'French disease,' and no effort was spared to impress on priests and people not only the folly, but also the destructive tendency of their flirtation with radicalism. Yet in spite of the loyal display of the bishops and priests during the rebellion, the volume of sectarian outrages and the level of clerical activity amongst the insurgents was sufficient to give credence to interpretations of the rising as a 'Popish Plot.' Memories of the events of 1641 were revived and once more the loyalists rallied to the call for revenge, giving rise to a conflict no less bitter than the rebellion itself. The experience of the previous decade, however, had transformed the Catholic hierarchy. Now faced by their most critical challenge to date, they mounted a formidable, and ultimately successful, defence of their achievement.

(1)

With the collapse of the rebel cause in Leinster the bishops breathed a sigh of relief and drew consolation from the part they had played in the defeat of the rebellion. In the Spring of 1798 Charles Erskine, under pressure from Whitehall, had urged the Irish bishops to a

greater public show of loyalty.[1] In the wake of the rebellion, however, the Monsignor had no doubts concerning the episcopal response and echoed the praise then resounding in London of the hierarchy's loyal exertions in the face of such critical circumstances.[2] Francis Moylan's pastoral, issued in late April, had met with particular acclaim in London and the Duke of Portland recommended that it be translated into Irish and circulated widely.[3] While James Caulfield's conduct in Wexford had brought tears of sympathy to Erskine's eyes, it was above all John Troy's efforts which stood out and had confirmed his position as unquestioned leader of the Irish hierarchy; Edward Dillon, bishop of Kilmacduagh and one of the first to issue a pastoral in '98, summed up the general sentiments of the prelates when he wrote in July:

> May the God of all bounty reward Your Grace for your exertions. Had Providence permitted that a prelate of an indolent unfeeling disposition should preside in the capital in the present circumstances how deplorable would be our situation.[4]

In a very real sense the failure of the rebellion had established Troy at the head of the Catholic body as a whole. The ignominious United Irish defeat had brought the reform cause in Ireland to an abrupt end. The Catholic Committee was already dissolved, but now the leading Catholic radicals, tainted by their association with the United Irishmen, were forced to vacate the political arena. In their absence Troy became the acknowledged voice of Irish Catholics, a development which placed him in a critical position as the events of the following years unfurled. Amongst the bishops the departure of John Keogh and his coterie can only have been welcomed; James Caulfield, whose detestation of the

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1 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 6 April 1798, D.D.A.
2 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 23 June 1798, D.D.A.
3 Portland to Camden, 11 May 1798, H.O. 100/80/279.
4 C. Erskine to J. Troy, 29 July 1798, D.D.A., L. Concanen to J. Troy, 29 September 1798, D.D.A., E. Dillon, to J. Troy, 9 July 1798, D.D.A.

radical elements of the Catholic Committee was well known, expressed caustic satisfaction at their demise. Following the execution of John Hay he declared 'I hope they will now see the differences between their principles and mine.' In September 1798, reflecting on the destruction of the rebellion and the rejection of the bishops' counsel he confessed to Troy, 'many will believe us now, especially those who have any property, but no security and are smarting sorely by the result of their crazy union, that has caused more disunion through this country, than it ever perhaps experienced before.'[5] If the experience of the previous ten years had taught Troy any lessons, he now certainly appreciated that praise counted for little. While acknowledging the garlands from wherever they came, he was also aware of a growing tendency in loyalist circles of depicting the rebellion as a 'Popish Plot.'

By the end of May the country abounded in tales of widespread sectarian massacre, but as June progressed the accounts became more grotesque, events at Scullabogue and particularly Wexford Bridge rekindled recollections of similar atrocities at the Bridge of Portadown in 1641. Loyalist correspondence was replete with such details, and Troy greeted the newspaper reports with increasing alarm. The *Dublin Journal* was particularly vicious in its attack on the Catholic body, no doubt due to the influence of John Giffard. The editor's seventeen-year-old son, Lieutenant William Giffard, had been killed in the rebel attack on Kildare and Giffard was adamant that his 'hero' would not go unavenged.[6] In the first week of June the paper carried many accounts of rebel excesses, and while praising the loyal efforts of the militia, declared its inability to 'palliate the conduct of the many thousand Roman Catholics, who led by some of their priests are in open rebellion.' Even

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[5] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 3 July 1798, 6 October 1798, D.D.A.
[6] Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p. 236.

where the *Journal* conceded the existence of a loyal effort by some Catholics, a barbed rejoinder was added declaring that 'the superior clergy know that the same renegade priest who would urge his blind and miserable flock to the murder of heretics would not scruple to bathe his impious hand in the blood of his bishop!'[7]

Troy took immediate steps to stem this tendency in the press and complained to Edward Cooke of what he called 'false and impolite paragraphs attaching guilt to the body of Catholics.' Cooke apparently acknowledged the justice of Troy's complaint, and the archbishop noticed a lull in the paper's discussion of a 'general plot', which he attributed to the Secretary's intervention.[8] While Troy had grave reservations about the appointment of a papal envoy to London in 1793, he now decided to exploit the advantages of Charles Erskine's presence in that city. Erskine acted on Troy's behalf, orchestrating the publication of the bishops' pastorals there and making representations to Lord Camden and Thomas Pelham, with whom the archbishop had successfully negotiated the establishment of the Royal College. Towards the end of June Erskine optimistically reported that 'everybody is fully convinced that the word religion has only been an instrument' to seduce the ignorant multitude during the rebellion.[9] In Dublin, however, the *Journal* resumed its assault on the miscreant priests and the fall of Michael Murphy at the Battle of Arklow was quickly seized upon as further proof of the popish mania, which could not go unchecked.[10]

As the war of words intensified, so too the loyalist backlash became more severe. Shortly after his arrival, Cornwallis informed the Duke of Portland of 'the folly which has been too prevalent in this quarter

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[7] *F.D.J.*, 5, 7 June 1798.
[8] J. Troy to T. Bray, 12 June 1798, D.D.A.
[9] C. Erskine to J. Troy, 23 June, 6 July 1798, D.D.A.
[10] *F.D.J.*, 12, 14, 16, 19 June 1798.

of substituting the word Catholicism instead of Jacobinism as the foundation of the present rebellion.'[11] While the Lord Lieutenant declared his intention of opposing such notions, he was virtually powerless in his attempt to curb the power of the Orange faction which began to wreck a heavy revenge on the Catholic community. Chapels proved an obvious target for such reprisals, and the burning of the thatched chapel at Ramsgrange, County Wexford, on 19 June 1798 was the first of almost sixty such attacks over the next two years.[12] Yet just as the Orange bogey had been used to such effect by the United Irishmen prior to the rebellion, so too rumours soon circulated that the chapels had been burned by the rebels in an attempt to discredit the yeomanry and rekindle the rebellion.[13]

The levels of recrimination were such that John Troy believed that had it not been for his own exertions the chapels in the city would have been closed.[14] Francis Higgins's report of an incident in Francis Street chapel, in late June, reflects the feverish tension in the city:

> A disagreeable event took place at Francis Street Chapel today. The common people have got impressed on their minds that the government wish to suppress those Roman Catholic places of worship, which has much irritated and inflamed their minds. A party of yeomen passing the chapel yard, some wicked incendiary called out, 'they have come to kill and set fire to the chapel.' This alarm given to an immense concourse of people within, occasioned the struggle to get into the street, many accidents, the breaking of several legs arms etc.[15]

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[11] Cornwallis to Portland, 28 June 1798, H.O. 100/77/200-1.

[12] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 1 June 1799, See L. M Cullen, *Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900* (London, 1983) p. 217. Between August 1798 and October 1800, 27 Chapels were burned in Ferns, 15 in Wicklow, 4 in Kilkenny, 4 in Carlow and 4 in the remainder of the country. *Irish Magazine*, Jan. 1808, pp. 214-225, Luke Cullen MSS, T.C.D., 1472/3-6

[13] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 3 November 1798, D.D.A. T.C.D. MSS, 871 p. 22. Affidavit of Sullivan of county Kildare, offered £400 to swear against yeoman burning chapel, 9 April 1800.

[14] J. Troy to T. Bray, 12 June 1798, D.D.A.

[15] F.H., 24 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14.

Similar rumours of planned attacks on both the chapels and churches were circulated in Athlone on 12 June, as a result of which the religious services in the town were largely unattended. So great was the fear that General Barnett published a notice guaranteeing protection of the places of worship.[16]

Loyalist attacks on priests were also a common occurence. In Wexford many innocent priests suffered in the aftermath of the rebellion. Fr John Redmond, the curate of Camolin, was tried before a court martial and hanged on Gorey Hill on 22 June 1799. Redmond had been incriminated by his presence at the sack of Camolin Park, but his loyalty was beyond doubt; Miles Byrne described his death as poor reward for 'his great zeal and devotion to the enemies of his country.'[17] A number of other priests were court martialed and later freed except for James Dixon, described by Caulfield as 'an honest, innocent priest,' who was sentenced to transportation.[18] In June 1799 the home of Fr Frank Kavanagh at Ballyoughter was raided by a party of the Gorey Yeomanry and his curate John Barry badly beaten.[19] In the following October Fr Pat Cogly, parish priest of Monageer and described by his bishop as 'a truly loyal subject and good pastor,' was attacked by two men while on a sick call. Earlier in the day one of his attackers had boasted that 'there would not be a priest alive in the county Wexford in twelve months time.'[20] Against this background it was little wonder that Caulfield was unable to get a priest to venture to the Mackamores or the neighbourhood of Camolin or Gorey for fear of the yeomanry.[21] In the

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16 *F.D.J.*, 23 June 1798.
17 M. Byrne, *Memoirs*, i, p. 12. E. Hay, *History*, p. 267, Account of the Court Martial of J. Redmond, 30 June 1798, S.P.O. 620/3/26/4, J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 2 September, 15 October 1798, D.D.A.
18 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 6 September 1798, D.D.A. See K. Whelan, 'The Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion,' in *Wexford*, pp. 311-312.,
19 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 27 June 1799, 12 July 1799, 28 July 1799, D.D.A.
20 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 10 October, 10 November, 17 December 1799, D.D.A.
21 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 1 June 1799, D.D.A.

Dublin diocese there were two fatal attacks on priests. In December 1798 William Ryan, parish priest of Arklow, was shot dead in his home by a party of Orangemen and the parish priest of Wicklow, Andrew O'Toole, was killed on the road in the following August. James Caulfield believed that O'Toole's death had been accidental, but the circumstances point to a factional killing.[22]

(ii)

The initial loyalist reaction to the rebellion led to reflection and the tales of wanton sectarian attacks were drawn together to illustrate the existence of a comprehensive 'Popish Plot' conducted under the watchwords of 'reform' and 'emancipation.' This process of reflection reached a climax with the publication of Sir Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* in 1801, and there the lessons found in Sir John Temple's history of 1641 and William King's *State of the Protestants of Ireland* (1691) were repeated only too graphically.[23]

In June 1798 the convert Patrick Duigenan, dubbed 'the black Doctor' by the radical press, published a reply to Henry Grattan's address to the citizens of Dublin.[24] Duigenan launched a bitter attack on the Catholics; describing the rebellion as a 'Popish Plot', he illustrated what he believed was the 'necessary connection between Popish supremacy in spirituals, with its tyranny in temporals.' Duigenan's publication placed the polemical struggle on a new plane and the hierarchy initially

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22 *D.E.P.*, 18 December 1798, *F.D.J.*, 20 December 1798, Madden MSS 873/292. *F.D.J.*, 29 August 1799, J. Troy to Dublin Castle, 29 August 1799, S.P.O. 620/58/100, J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 29 August, 3 September 1799, D.D.A. , Luke Cullen MSS, T.C.D., 1472/5.

23 See T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, pp. 6-9. John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion*,(Dublin, 1746 ed.), William King, *The State of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James' Government* (Dublin, 1691).

24 *The press*, 14 December 1798, P. Duigenan, *An answer to the Address of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan to His fellow Citizens of Dublin,* (Dublin, June 1798).

intended refuting his representation of the rebellion. Charles Erskine was particularly incensed and urged Troy to challenge the connection between Popery and rebellion. The prominence of so many Protestants amongst the executed rebel leaders, however, removed attention temporarily from the Catholics and Erskine came to believe that the pamphlet, if unanswered, would drop off by itself.[25] Significantly Samuel Sproule had informed the Castle that 'the Catholics exult at the present executions - it takes the odium off them -[and they] say the idea can remain no longer of it being a Popish Plot or massacre.'[26] Yet this reprieve was short lived. Thomas Rennell, fellow of Kings College and Master of the Temple, preached a sermon before the University of Cambridge couched in classical anti-Catholic rhetoric. Rennell pointed to the 1641 massacre, 'still fresh in memory,' and declared that 'whenever the public has been distressed by internal comotions, the strength of Popery in Ireland has been fatally experienced.'[27] Rennell traced a pattern of Catholic bigotry from the Lateran Council, through to the 'discreet evasive' pastoral instructions of Dr Troy in 1793 and on to the 'inflammatory menaces' contained in Hussey's 1797 address;

> The history of all ages demonstrates what it has actually been. The tenor of events is uniform. The rebellion and massacre in Ireland in 1641, and that of St Bartholomew in France, and the present commotion in Ireland, all exhibit the same features.[28]

Such generalities were avoided in a letter signed 'Verax', published in the *Dublin Journal* on 16 August 1798. Verax, written in reply to an

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[25] C. Erskine to J. Troy, 29 June, 6 July, 7 August 1798, D.D.A.
[26] Sproule, 21 July 1798, S.P.O. 620/39/02.
[27] T. Rennell, *Ignorance productive of Atheism, Faction and Superstition; a sermon preached before the University of Cambridge, Commencement Sunday, 1 July 1798.* (Dublin, 1799). *F.D.J.*, 18 December 1798.
[28] Rennell, p. 38

account in the *Birmingham Chronicle*, challenged the view that the clergy of Wexford were prisoners of the rebels. On the contrary, Verax [Richard Musgrave?] claimed that the priests were the only ones possessed of any influence and questioned the timing of their intervention on behalf of the Protestants in the town, arguing that the priests failed to take action until the rebel cause was lost.

Verax proved a far more serious threat to the Catholic establishment in Ireland than the earlier tracts and the accusations against Bishop Caulfield and his clergy could not go unchallenged. Indeed Caulfield was convinced that the letter had been written with the express purpose of drawing the bishop into the sectarian debate, as copies were sent by the author to himself and Fr Corrin.[29] In spite of his original reservations, Caulfield rose to the challenge and entrusted John Troy with the the publication of his defence, under the pen name *Veritas,* in the following month.[30] This marked the beginning of the polemical war in earnest. *Veritas* aimed at a vindication of the clergy of Wexford, but its scope was broadened to illustrate that the rebellion was not a 'Popish Plot,' but rather a political conflict. The rebels, *Veritas* argued, 'who possessed a semblance of Catholicity, were, for the greater part, of Tom Paine's school, Catholics in profession, but Deists in religion, the leaders for the most part Protestants.'[31] Ultimately, in spite of the affidavits included, Caulfield was unable to refute the charges of Verax against the clergy; the great dilemma remained; if the priests had any influence over the rebels they were implicated in the 'plot', and if they failed to exert influence, they were passive accomplices. [32] Similarly the bishop could

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[29] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 15 September 1798, D.D.A.
[30] Veritas, *A Vindication of the Roman Catholic Clergy of the town of Wexford, During the Late Unhappy Rebellion, from the groundless charges and illiberal insinuations of an anonymous writer, signed Verax.* (Dublin, 1799).
[31] *Veritas*, pp. 16-17.
[32] *Veritas*, p. 15.

not deny the active part taken by many of his priests and, in the only defence possible, he rejected these as 'excommunicated priests, drunken and profligate couple beggars, the very faeces of the church.'[33]

Musgrave had already written anti-Catholic tracts in the *Dublin Journal* under the pen name 'Camillus', but following the publication of Veritas, he published a pamphlet in March 1799 under the name Veridicus, in which the rebellion of 1798 was inserted into a broad historical and theological study of popery.[34] Musgrave was vicious in his attack on the Wexford clergy and he published endless accounts of their role in the rebellion. Once more Caulfield was criticised for the indiscipline of his clergy and his failure to prevent the massacre of Protestants on Wexford Bridge, Charles Jackson's defence of Fr Corrin was rejected on the grounds that he was married to a Catholic.[35]

Caulfield was greatly alarmed by the escalation of the polemic, believing that Veridicus aimed at 'the general extermination of Bishops and priests, nay all Roman Catholics because their religious principles necessarily make them rebels.'[36] As before, Caulfield turned to Troy, who in turn engaged James Clinch, professor of classics at Maynooth to write a reply to Veridicus. Caulfield collected voluminous details on the priests implicated by Musgrave and these he relayed to Clinch, via Troy. Caulfield was unsure as to the prudence of a reply, given the 'shocking number' of priests 'who had most wickedly volunteered in the damned rebellion.'[37] It was impossible to refute all of Musgrave's charges, and he believed it was not enough to expose Veridicus as a 'slanderous villian' if

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[33] *Veritas*, p. 18.
[34] [R. Musgrave] *A concise account of the material events and atrocities which occurred in the present rebellion, by Veridicus*. (Dublin, 1799).
[35] *Veridicus*, p. 17. C. Jackson, *A narrative of the sufferings and the escape of Charles Jackson*, (Dublin, 1798).
[36] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 26 April 1799, D.D.A.
[37] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 9 June 1799, D.D.A.

the good name of the clergy could not be established; 'without that 'tis better to say nothing for public view.'[38] In any event, the reply to Veridicus appeared towards the end of 1799 and it represents an elaborate attempt at damage limitation on behalf of the hierarchy. Musgrave's arguments are meticulously refuted and once again the embarrasing existence of rebel priests was treated with great care, and these were dismissed with an economy of truth as unemployed, under censure, suspended, while Fr John Keane was described as a 'notorious ideot.'[39]

Clinch's voluntary efforts greatly satisfied Troy who had it reprinted in London; he circulated widely in Dublin amongst the Lords and Commons.[40] Caulfield echoing Troy's praise, congratulated Clinch, declaring 'without hurting your modesty, you can at this day boast and rejoice with me, that you..[answered Veridicus] with ability and effect, for that monster with all his inhumanity and infernal malice, and consummate affrontery, never dared to reply.'[41] However, in the wake of the publication of Musgrave's *Memoirs* in 1801, Caulfield was forced once more to defend his behaviour in 1798, but little ground could be gained from a renewed debate.[42]

The clergy had been too conspicuous amongst the rebels to be ignored and it was futile to dismiss them as unreliable marginal figures.

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38 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 26 April, 3 June 1799, D.D.A.

39 *The State of His Majesty's Subjects in Ireland professing the Roman Catholic Religion, containing an account of the conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy in Wexford, during the rebellion of 1798, and the refutation of a pamphlet signed Veridicus.* (Dublin, 1799) p. 48. Curiously V. J. McNally believed that no copy of Clinch's work has been found, but he was 'certain it did appear bearing the same name Veritas,"John Troy,' p. 230.

40 J. Troy to J. Clinch, 7 January 1800, D.D.A.

41 J. Caulfield to J. Clinch n.d. [1800] , Madden MSS, 873/194-5. This correspondence relates to a misunderstanding between the two over an unwanted payment made to Clinch for his effort, which he returned to the bishop.

42 J. Caulfield, *The Reply of the Rt. Rev. Dr Caulfield, Roman Catholic Bishop and of the clergy of Wexford to the misrepresentations of Sir Richard Musgrave Bt.* (Dublin, 1801), [R. Musgrave] *Observations on the Reply of the Rt Rev Dr Caulfield, Catholic Bishop and of the Roman Catholic Clergy of Wexford to the misrepresentations of Sir Richard Musgrave B.T.* (Dublin, 1802).

Enormous damage had been done to the Catholic cause; not even the liberal Protestant accounts of the rebellion could remove the shadow of religion from the debate.[43] George Taylor, while allowing for the exertions of the clergy on behalf of the prisoners, includes accounts of the rebels calling on him to be baptised and 'to join them in arms, to fight for the cause of Liberty and the Roman Catholic church and faith.' James Alexander's history reflects similar contradictions, moving immediately from a discussion of the zeal of the priests to prevent the rebellion into an account of the merciless slaughter of the 'poor Protestants of Scullabogue, Wexford Bridge and Vinegar Hill.'[44] Neither could the Catholic historians avoid controversy. Edward Hay's apologetic *History* followed Caulfield's line of presenting the rebel priests as renegades, and 'although they were not all, at the time, under suspension or ecclesiastical censure, yet under one so nearly allied to it as to prevent any of them from having arrived to the situation of parish priest.'[45] Hay's work, however, carried little weight with either party; Caulfield believed his intention had been to 'build a loyal reputation on the ruins of the Friars and clergy,' while the Chancellor Lord Redesdale dismissed the *History* as an 'abominable traiterous libel.'[46]

Redesdale had been the author of the British Catholic Relief Bill of 1791 but his experience in Ireland transformed his liberalism into violent opposition to Irish Catholic designs. He attacked Troy, condemning his pastorals which he believed were 'full of violent invective in effect, though

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[43] For a recent discussion of the historiography of 1798 see L.M. Cullen, 'Late Eighteenth Century Politicisation,' in P. Bergeron and L.M. Cullen(eds) *Culture et Pratiques*, pp. 141-151.

[44] J. Alexander, *Some account of the first symptoms of the late rebellion in the county of Kildare and the adjoining part of the King's county.* (Dublin, 1800). G. Taylor, *An history of the rise, progress and suppression of the rebellion of Wexford,* (Dublin, 1800) p. 8.

[45] E. Hay, *History of the insurrection of the county of Wexford* (Dublin, 1803) p. 183.

[46] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 10 September 1799, D.D.A., Redesdale to Perceval, 23 October 1803, P.R.O.N.I., T. 3030/7/10. See M. Whelan, 'Edward Hay 'Styled Mr Secretary Hay'; Catholic Politics 1792-1822' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, U.C.G. 1991), pp. 62-98.

often covered in language against everything positive, and not scrupling any lie for this purpose.'[47] Ironically, the apostate Franciscan, Denis Taaffe, who had taken an active role in 1798, defended Troy from such loyalist attacks, when writing his vindication of the Catholics in 1802, no doubt grateful of the archbishop's example behind which to shield his former comrades :

> I should be glad to know what religion Messrs Troy and Moylan profess, or Lord Fingal, with other Catholic gentlemen and priests, who lent their active services to put down Irish rebels. Are they to be ranked with the disaffected, notwithstanding the zeal with which they supported the government merely because they are Catholics? In vain has Fingal fought and Troy cursed, unless they can purchase a certificate of civism from this OrangeRobespierre[Richard Musgrave].[48]

(iii)

The rebellion of 1798 reawakened Irish Protestant's fear and once again the precarious security of their situation was illustrated only too vividly. The preoccupation with the sectarian complexion of the rebellion blighted any real reflection on the causes of discontent in Ireland, while the obsession with the existence of a rebel plan to establish Catholicism reflected the pathological insecurity of the Ascendancy.[49] Yet the perceived instability of the establishment had serious repercussions for the Catholic community, and there were genuine fears that many of the gains of the previous decade might now be lost.

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47 Redesdale to Percival, 23 October 1803, P.R.O.N.I. T. 3030/7/10. See A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster: The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendency* (Oxford, 1981) pp. 438-40.

48 Julius Vindex[Dennis Taaffe], *Vindication of the Irish Nation and particularly its Catholic inhabitants from the calumnies of Libellers.* (Dublin, 1802) p. 63.

49 Proceedings of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, 14 August 1798. *F.D.J.*, 16 March 1799, Jackson, *Narrative*, p. 44. MacNevin, *Pieces*, p. 273.

This tension was reflected graphically in a tract entitled *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland*, published by the anti-Catholic Patrick Duigenan in 1799.[50] Duigenan, once more describing the rebellion as a 'Popish Plot,' pointed to the unreliability of the Catholics, claiming that the rebels were not only sanctioned, but commanded, to revolt by their faith. In an obvious inference from Troy's controversial *Pastoral Instructions* of 1793 the Doctor declared that the decrees of the Lateran Council had made the Catholics natural Jacobins. Above all, Duigenan sought to illustrate the innate threat posed by the Catholics to the establishment and this he demonstrated both from the argument of numbers and the tenets of their faith. The latter he drew from Troy's *Instructions*, described as 'in truth a political tract, containing arguments not a little hostile to the establishment in church and state.'[51]

Not only was Duigenan opposed to further concessions to Catholics, but he railed against the ills which had resulted from those already conceded. In the case of the concessions made in 1793, he pointed to the 'woeful experience' on the rebellion and the folly of the landlords who had supposed that the votes of their tenants would be at their disposal. On the contrary, he claimed, 'these half savages are mostly under the direction and influence of their priests, who would generally sway county elections.'[52]

Yet in spite of the fears generated by the radicals prior to the rebellion that the government intended a renewal of the penal laws, the political reality in the early months of 1799 was that the proposed Union held out hopes of full emancipation for the Catholics. In this sense

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50 P. Duigenan, *A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland* (London, 1799). See Peter Lattin, *Observations on Dr Duigenan's Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland; Particularly with respect to his strictures on a pamphlet entitled the Case of Ireland Reconsidered.* (London, 1800).

51 Duigenan, *State*, p. 18.

52 Duigenan, *State*, p. 35.

Duigenan's rantings represent a prophetic warning, rather than a realistic attempt to turn back the clock no matter how appealing that might have appeared.[53] Nevertheless Duigenan was deeply resentful at the inroads made by the Catholics on the Protestant establishment and regarded Maynooth College, that 'noxious and unconstitutional weed', as the manifestation of this corruption, a glaring monument 'of the spirit of Burkism.'[54]

Duigenan was not alone in his opposition to Maynooth and the debate on the annual grant to the College in the House of Lords quickly developed into an anti-Catholic tirade. When a grant of £6,000 was proposed to the house, the Orange peer Lord Farnham moved that the grant be made by bill and not by vote. In the ensuing debate the ultras vented a great deal of anti-Catholic rhetoric and the continued presence of Thomas Hussey as president of the College was taken as an indication of the nefarious principles of the establishment. Since the publication of his notorious pastoral in 1797 Hussey had provided a constant hate figure and was still regarded in loyalist circles 'as the viper in the fable who bit the bosom that fostered it.'[55] In the course of the debate Lord Clare rounded on Hussey and characterised the Catholic clergy as republicans and instigators of rebellion. The College, he declared using an expression from Duigenan's *State*, was an asylum for the children of paupers; he opposed the grant, arguing that while the Catholic body was unwilling to contribute towards it, they had been very generous in their support of Tone and his fellow radicals.[56] To the great

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53 F.H. -----, 15 May 1798, S.P.O. 620/18/14.
54 See Flood, *A letter from the Rev Peter Flood D.D., President of Maynooth College to the Hon... ... M.P., relative to a pamphlet entitled 'A Fair Representation of the Present Political State of Ireland,'* (Dublin, 1800).
55 *F.D.J.*, 16 June 1798. D. Keogh, 'Thomas Hussey', in T. Power(ed), *Waterford: History and Society* (Dublin, 1992).
56 Duigenan, *State*, p. 223. J. Troy to T. Bray, 18 April 1799, C.D.A.

surprise of the administration the Lords rejected the grant, but the implications for the Catholic hierarchy were far more significant.

(IV)

The level of clerical involvement in the rebellion and the tenor of the subsequent polemic had greatly embarrassed the Catholic hierarchy. Edward Dillon, the recently appointed archbishop of Tuam, expressed great disappointment to Thomas Bray at the rejection of the grant which he attributed 'in a great measure to the misconduct of the Dublin clergy.' The timing of the Lord's decision, however, was crucial and their rejection of the grant set in process a marked shift in episcopal attitudes towards the proposed government veto and provision for the clergy. In spite of his initial regret, Dillon unwittingly remarked to Bray, that this 'should be a warning to us not to give up our present subsistence for any precarious grant that can be offered.'[57]

Throughout the 1790s the question of the establishment of a government veto on episcopal appointments and a provision for the support of the Catholic clergy had never been far from the political agenda. This policy had been mooted as far back as 1782 by Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, then secretary to the Viceroy Portland, but the bishops had successfully resisted successive attempts at its introduction. In the spring of 1795, however, signs of a softening of the hierarchy's opposition began to appear; with Emancipation in the offing it became increasingly obvious that some concession of independence would have to be offered. The collapse of the Fitzwilliam administration made the urgency of such concessions unnecessary; the bishops meanwhile achieved the great object of their desires, a national seminary, without any sacrifice of indepencence.

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[57] E. Dillon to T. Bray, 17 April 1799, C.D.A.

Yet the government continued to contemplate the desirability of a provision for the clergy. In May 1797 at Troy's difficult meeting with Pelham in the wake of Hussey's pastoral, the Chief-Secretary had again raised the issue of a veto and Troy swiftly replied that 'it was absurd to bribe our prelates to enforce loyalty, as they had always done it from principle, and that the bribe should rather come from the United Irishmen to estrange our bishops from their uniform conduct.'[58] Yet the events of the rebellion illustrated too clearly the influence of a seditious priest and, as before, the frailty of the priest's allegiance was attributed to his overdependence on the people.

In the winter of 1798 the Castle made discreet soundings of Troy and the Catholic gentry. Troy, compromised by the behaviour of his clergy, responded favourably to the proposal and Cornwallis reported that Fingal and Kenmare were both anxious 'to see the Catholic clergy rendered less dependent on the lower orders, by having a reasonable provision under the State.'[59] There is little doubt but Castlereagh outlined to Troy a comprehensive package which he intended for the Irish church. The proposal allowed for a broad scale of payment for the Catholic bishops and priests, the recognition of a role for the government in the appointment of bishops, and the establishment of a system of clerical registration.[60] Troy presented these proposals to a meeting of the Maynooth trustees in mid-January 1799 and they were accepted with certain qualifications.[61] The resolutions were passed on to Castlereagh, with the understanding that they should remain confidential until all

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[58] J. Troy to P. Plunkett, 23 May 1797, Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, iii, p. 211.
[59] Castlereagh to Wickham, 23 November 1798, H.O. 100/79/150-2, Cornwallis to Portland, 5 December 1798, H.O. 100/79/233-5.
[60] Castlereagh to Portland, 16 January 1799, H.O. 100/85/73-6, H.O. 100/85/81-2, H.O. 100/85/82-84. See P.O'Donoghue, 'Catholic Church' pp. 378-420.
[61] The attendance at these meetings from 17-19 January was R. O'Reilly, T. Bray, E. Dillon, J. Troy, P. Plunkett(Meath), D. Delaney(Kildare and Leighlin), J. Caulfield(Ferns), F. Moylan(Cork), E. French(Elphin), and J. Cruise(Ardagh).

outstanding differences were settled, while Bishops Troy, O'Reilly and Plunkett were instructed to carry out any necessary negotiations with the administration.[62]

Clerical reaction to the apparent willingness of the Trustees to accept the administration's proposals was mixed. Since the foundation of the College, the Trustees had held quarterly meetings and these took on the role normally filled by a national bishops' conference. Ever since the Catholic Convention there had been a reluctance amongst the bishops to meet as a conference, lest their gathering be misinterpreted as an upper house of the Back Lane Parliament. The establishment of the board of trustees had removed this anxiety and their regular meetings provided a perfect channel through which the church could be governed. With the exception of Thomas Hussey, the absent bishops had been canvassed before the January meeting, and all except John Young of Limerick agreed to the proposals, with Michael MacMahon of Killaloe offering no opinion.[63]

Troy was perturbed at the bishop of Limerick's opposition to the scheme, which had resulted from the government's suspicion of 'the loyalty of many of our clergy since the late rebellion.'[64] Young, however, was to remain a formidable opponent of any measure of state intervention in the government of the church, which he believed would have dangerous consequences for the cause of religion.[65] Besides, he believed that the provision was merely intended as 'a douceur' for the proposed Union and, expressing his satisfaction 'with the constitution of

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62 Resolutions 28 January 1799, D.D.A.
63 J. Troy to J. Young, 23 February 1799, D.D.A.
64 J. Troy to J. Young, 23 February 1799, D.D.A.
65 Note in Young's hand on Troy's letter of 23 February 1799, D.D.A.

our country in its present form,' declared his intention to refuse any 'bribe to acquiesce in the annihilation of its independence.'[66]

Thomas Hussey, had returned to London shortly after the publication of his pastoral in 1797, but from there he mounted an effective opposition to the proposed veto. Traditionally it has been accepted that Hussey carried little weight within the hierarchy, but it is apparent that during the spring of 1799 he exerted considerable pressure upon Charles Erskine to alert the Holy See of the dangers inherent in the government's proposals.[67] Hussey had been a close disciple of Edmund Burke and in the spring of 1799 he echoed many of his now deceased mentor's arguments any diminution of the independence of the hierarchy. His letter to Clinch in early 1799 is entirely Burkean in its inspiration:

> Another project upon which I have been consulted is to grant salaries or pensions to the Catholic clergy, of the higher and lower Order. The condition upon which they are to be granted, as first proposed to me, are directly hostile to the interests of Religion and taken in the most favourable point of view, must be detrimental to the Catholics, by cutting asunder the slender remaining ties between the pastor and his flock, by turning the discipline and laws of the church into a mercantile, political speculation and must end in making the people unbelievers and consequently Jacobins upon the French scale.[68]

Hussey, believed himself to be a victim of the ungrateful administration, but there is little doubt that his manoeuvres in London greatly affected the course of negotiations on the veto question. As in the case of his acceptance of the oath in 1793, Troy had conducted his negotiations with

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[66] J. Young to T. Bray, 30 December 1798, C.D.A.

[67] P. O'Donoghue claims that his influence amongst the hierarchy was 'non-existent.' 'Catholic Church', p. 386.

[68] T. Hussey to J.B. Clinch, n.d. [January 1799], Madden MSS, 873/197. See E. Burke to T. Hussey, 10 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, pp. 142-3, E. Burke to T. Hussey, 17 March 1795, *Burke Corr.* viii, 199-205.

the government without consultation with the Holy See or with Charles Erskine in London. Perhaps his reluctance to involve outside parties was a reflection of his own belief that a provision for the clergy would never materialise, given the opposition of the ultras in Dublin to any measure resembling an establishment of Catholicism. Troy failed to inform Erskine of the agreed resolutions until 12 March 1799 and his first communication with Propaganda came in June, only after he received an angry rebuff from the Pro-Prefect, Cardinal Borgia, who had learned of the proposals from Erskine.[69] In a complex exchange of letters Troy sought to defend his actions in relation to the veto, from Erskine arguing the destructive potential of such a concession to government and from Borgia reprimanding Troy for an infringement of the prerogative of the Holy See. Erskine's opposition to the proposed provision is curious, given his initial enthusiasm for the proposal and his own role in the negotiation of a similar grant to the Scottish clergy.[70] It is likely that Hussey had informed Erskine of the government's proposals and it was his warnings which alerted the Monsignor to the likely consequences of the scheme. Sir John Cox Hippisly had informed Lord Hobart that since his appointment to the diocese of Waterford, Hussey 'had wormed himself into Erskine's good books.'[71] Nevertheless Erskine did appreciate Troy's dilemma and the pressure upon the hierarchy to 'disarm the insinuations which malicious persons, have been making about them.'[72]

In any event the debate of the Union overtook all other issues in priority, and the veto question and the proposed provision for the clergy

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[69] C. Erskine to Borgia, 3 April 1799, A.P.F., S.C. Irlanda, vol. 17, f. 538, Borgia to J. Troy, 15 June 1799, D.D.A.
[70] C. Erskine to J. Troy, 24 February 1799, D.D.A. see C. Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829*, (Edinburgh, 1983) pp. 119-129.
[71] J. C. Hippisley to Lord Hobart, 12 January 1799, *Castlereagh Corr.*, iii, p. 86.
[72] C. Erskine to Borgia, 3 April 1799, D.D.A.

slipped quietly down the agenda. Behind their apparent willingness to co-operate with such proposals, the bishops had never been enthusiastic about the slightest surrender of their independence. Throughout 1799 there was marked hardening of opposition to the government's plan. The unreliability of such schemes had been illustrated by the Lord's rejection of the Maynooth grant, and the opposition of the Holy See to any veto, in spite of their own dependence upon the British, was a cause of concern. Nevertheless, the offer of some concession to the government remained the bishops' trump card; in 1795 they had offered it as the price of promised Emancipation and the establishment of a national seminary, and now it was offered once more as a token of loyalty and reparation. On both occasions the spirit of the offer would not be put to the test, and Troy's relief was reflected in letter on the subject to his Dominican confrere, Luke Concanen, with whom he conducted a frank and honest correspondence:

> The proposal has not been renewed by Government since January 1799. . . We all wish to remain as we are, and we would so, were it not that too many of the clergy were active in the wicked rebellion or did not oppose it. . . If we had rejected the proposals in Toto we would be considered here as rebels. This is a fact. If we agreed to it without reference to Rome, we would be branded as schismatics. We were between Scylla and Charybdis.[73]

The aftermath of the Union, however, saw a revival of the veto controversy, creating bitter divisions within the Catholic body and blighting all attempts at a solution of the Catholic Question for almost twenty years.[74]

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[73] J. Troy to L. Concanen, n.d. [Spring 1800], D.D.A.
[74] T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, pp. 268-304.

(V)

Protestant security in Ireland depended upon the preservation of their own unity and the good will of England. From the 1750s, however, serious strains had begun to show; the Dissenters proved a menacing threat to Protestant unity, while the Money Bill dispute and the decline of the undertakers led to rising Protestant nationalism and subsequent tensions in the Anglo-Irish relationship. While the vaunted constitution of 1782 offered apparent security, the impact of the French Revolution and London's willingness to 'play the Catholic game', illustrated clearly the vulnerability of the Protestant establishment. Increasingly an union appeared to offer a solution to the complex problem of the Anglo-Irish relationship, while in the wake of the rebellion it emerged as the best hope of halting the march of the popish phalanx. Yet ironically the Union passed with the support of the Catholic hierarchy and their quiescent role in the debates stands out in stark contrast to the vigour with which they battled to secure the establishment of Maynooth College. [75]

Troy, in particular, has been widely castigated for his part in the management of the Union negotiations. With the reform cause in disgrace after the rebellion, Troy had become the effective voice of the Catholic community, but his willingness to co-operate with the government has been interpreted as a betrayal of Catholic aspirations. But while Cornwallis believed Troy was 'perfectly well inclined' towards a Union, provided that such an arrangement placed no bar on future Catholic hopes, the archbishop continued to have serious reservations about the act. Writing to Lord Castlereagh in December 1798, just a few

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[75] For a full discussion of the Union and the Catholic Question see T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* pp. 240-245.

days after Cornwallis's assesment of his position, Troy declared that 'no arrangement to tranquilize' Ireland could have any hope so long as the Catholics remained 'excluded from the benefit of the constitution, and remained subject to their present disqualifications.'[76] Yet in spite of the vague hopes and Pitt's sympathy for the Catholic cause, the king's known oppposition to Catholic emancipation ruled out any further concessions.

The Catholic bishops were, once more, faced with a dilemma. While one anti-union pamphleteer may have believed that the fruit of emancipation was 'ready to drop into your hands, unless the tree be cut up by the roots,' it made little sense, as Edward Cooke pointed out, 'to oppose a measure that was opposed by their enemies the Orangemen.'[77] In April 1795 the famous meeting of the 'Francis Street Orators,' reeling from news of Fitzwilliam's recall, had declared any future emancipation unacceptable on the terms of a union. Bishop Patrick Plunkett was less enthused about Irish independence. Writing to Troy in December 1798 he confessed, 'as a separate Kingdom, I cannot recollect at what period of our existence we were a contented happy people.'[78] Thomas Hussey put it more bluntly, stating his preference for 'a union with the Beys and Mamelukes of Egypt to that of being under the iron rod of the Mamelukes of Ireland.'[79] The sole dissenter amongst the hierarchy was John Young of Limerick who opposed what he believed was an 'annihilation' of Irish independence, but such opposition to the

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[76] Cornwallis to Portland, 5 December 1798, *Castlereagh Corr.*, ii, pp. 35-6, Troy to Castlereagh, 15 December 1798, P.R.O.N.I., D 3030/412.
[77] Anon, *An address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland on the conduct they should pursue at the present crisis on the subject of a union. By an Old Friend.* (Dublin, 1799) p. 8. E. Cooke to Castlereagh, 17 December 1798, *Castlereagh Corr.* ii, pp. 46-7.
[78] P. Plunkett to J. Troy, 13 December 1798, D.D.A.
[79] T. Hussey to J.B. Clinch 10 Jan [1799] Madden Mss, 873/197.

union would never amount to more than a pious gesture, given the scale of the Orange backlash to the rebellion.[80]

In any event, the government, concerned to avoid a confusion of issues, was determined that the union would be unaccompanied by further Catholic relief.[81] The remnant of the old Catholic Committee met at Fingal's Dublin home on 15 December 1798 to consider the appropriate policy on the union. The Committee had been shorn of its radical members and the forty attending were described by Troy as 'respectable persons, gentry and the principal merchants of the city.'[82] William Bellew expressed his anger at the failure of the union package to address the Catholic question and he rejected the belief that emancipation would have an easier passage through a united parliament.[83] The meeting failed to reach a conclusive decision and was adjourned until 20 December, in order that the subject could be 'discussed finally in a meeting of a more general description of the Roman Catholic Body.'[84] The subsequent meeting was equally indecisive, and with Bellew withdrawing his objections following private discussions with Cornwallis, the assembly dispersed without agreement. Ironically, the anti-union faction led by George Ponsonby was anxious to involve the Catholics in the debate and they held out certain offers to the Catholic body in return for their support for a petition opposing the measure. Incredibly John Foster, the pillar of the ascendancy, was reported to have promised the Catholics 'everything on condition of their joining to defeat the project of union.'[85] Yet in spite of the initial defeat of the union proposals in the Commons on 23 January 1799 the

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80 J. Young to T. Bray, 30 December 1798, C.D.A.
81 Castlereagh to Camden, 22 October 1798, PRO 30/8/327/19-20.
82 J. Troy to Castlereagh, 24 December 1798, *Castlereagh Corr*, ii, p. 61
83 Cooke to Castlereagh, 17, 20 December 1798, *Castlereagh Corr.*, ii, pp. 46-7, 49-50.
84 *F.D.J.*, 18 December 1798.
85 Castlereagh to W. Wickham, 18 February 1799, H.O. 100/88/125-6.

government were unprepared to enter into a renewed race for the Catholic. A meeting of the Catholics in Dublin in February 1799 resolved to take no part in the union debate.[86]

In spite of these resolutions the Catholic hierarchy, prompted by the administration, threw themselves behind the union measures and actively canvassed the support of their flocks. Much of this effort was, no doubt, due to their anxiety to demonstrate loyalty to the government, with whom Troy was conducting negotiations on the question of compensation for the many burned chapels, and there was also the belief that the union afforded the best safeguard to the tyranny of the Orange faction. There was also, however, a more substantial issue involved in that the union provisions, in failing to bar future Catholic advances, contained implicit encouragement of their aspirations. Bishop Caulfield's letter to Troy on the union issue in July 1799 reflected the mixed motives prompting episcopal support for the measure:

> I consider the case, the time and the circumstances exceedingly delicate and tender. Union is looked for; in order to obtain it the Ascendancy is not to be irritated, but rather to be kept in tolerable good humour, but that point gained, I am persuaded in my own mind, we shall be better off than ever. For the ruling powers are convinced, that the late unfortunate and wicked rising was not on the part of Catholics, a rebellion against the King, but against the Protestant Ascendancy and Orangemen. Persuaded as I am of the good and honest intentions of government on both sides of the channel, I would not press or urge any measure that can tend to defeat or obstruct government in the way to the main point.[87]

Troy busied himself behind the scenes promoting the union. In February 1799 he enlisted the support of Bishop Matthew Lennan of Dromore to secure the election of the liberal, pro-union candidate, Isaac Corry, in the

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86 T. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, p. 255.
87 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 15 July 1799, D.D.A.

Newry by-election.[88] James Lannigan signed a petition in Ossory and Troy encouraged Caulfield to present an address on behalf of the Catholics of Wexford in favour of the Union. Caulfield dutifully obliged and an address, appropriately repentant for the folly of the rebellion and couched in loyal rhetoric was presented in the following November.[89] Similar resolutions were signed by Bishops Bray(Cashel), Dillon(Tuam), Sughrue(Kerry), Cruise(Ardagh), Coyle(Raphoe), French(Elphin), MacMahon(Killaloe) and Bellew(Killala), while Thomas Hearn signed the Waterford address in Hussey's absence. The tenor of the Raphoe address was particularly penitential and, referring to 'the baneful seeds of the French rebellion,' lamented the late rising and 'especially such of our own religion as have ungratefully and in direct opposition to the principles of our holy religion enlisted under the laborum or standard of the most unnatural and ever to be reprobated rebellion.'[90] In many dioceses the bishops sent priests from parish to parish promoting similar resolutions which were published widely in the press.

Yet the bishops' campaign had not gone unopposed. The renegade Franciscan Dennis Taaffe was arrested in March 1799 and charged with the publication of a seditious paper called *The Shamrock*, which the *Dublin Journal* believed was designed to produce mischievous and disloyal results 'under the convenient mask of anti-unionism.[91] Yet Catholic opposition to the union was ambiguous, since it implied either a desire for more than emancipation or a belief that it would be offered from another quarter.[92] The Dublin Catholics, many of whom had been in favour of accepting the offers of the Ponsonby faction,

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88 M. Lennan to J. Troy, 7 February 1799, *Castlereagh Corr.*, ii, p. 168.
89 *F.D.J.*, 23 July 1799, *F.D.J.*, 9 November 1799,
90 Pro-union address of R.Cs of Raphoe, 3 December 1799, S.P.O. 620/49/6.
91 *F.D.J.*, 16 March 1799.
92 Anon, *Considerations upon the state of public affairs in the year MDCCXCIX,* (Dublin, 1799) p. 61.

opposed the union. There was similar sentiment in the neighbouring diocese of Meath, where Bishop Plunkett, despite his support for the measure, was unwilling to raise a petition declaring, 'in political questions it becomes us rather to follow than to lead.'[93] The archbishop of Cashel echoed this reality claiming to Pelham that 'if we act in any ostensible capacity in the business of Union, either by a personal signature to an address in favour of it, or otherwise, in my humble opinion, instead of serving the cause we may injure it.'[94] In Wexford James Caulfield met with considerable opposition from James Edward Devereux and Philip Hay, whom he claimed was 'leading the wise men of Ross' in the presentation of an independent petition.[95] The opposition to Caulfield's deferential address in New Ross reflected the levels of political awareness amongst the people there; one objection was that 'we should not criminate anyone,' while others protested that 'the Quakers have greater privilege in England than the Catholics.'[96] In Galway Bishop Dillon faced similar opposition and was initially reluctant to sign a pro-union address, for fear the crowd would brand him 'an Orange bishop, the tool of government, well paid for my services etc.'[97] It was not by chance, then, that Castlereagh defended the integrity of the clergy during the union debate:

> I shall notice the insinuation that the Roman Catholic clergy have been bribed to the support of this measure; it is an illiberal imputation thrown out for the dangerous purpose of weakening their authority, by lowering them in the opinion of their flocks.

If, he continued, the measure of the union was a measure of bribery, 'if bribery and public advantage are synonymous, I must readily admit that it

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93 P. Plunkett to Castlereagh, 29 October 1799, *Castlereagh Corr.*, iii, pp. 226-7.
94 T. Bray to T. Pelham, 1 July 1799, *Castlereagh Corr.*, ii, pp. 344-5.
95 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 30 October 1799, D.D.A.
96 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 16 September 1799, D.D.A.
97 E. Dillon to J. Troy, 9 July 1799, *Castlereagh Corr.*, ii, pp. 347-8, 386-7.

is a measure of the most comprehensive bribery that was ever produced.'[98]

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98 *The speech of the Rt. Hon. Lord Castlereagh upon delivering to the House of Commons of Ireland his Excellency' the Lord Lieutenant's message on the subject of an union, 5 February 1800.* (Dublin, 1800).

(VI)

There was no cynicism involved in the hierarchy's support for the act of union, nor did they regard the measure as a panacea for all Ireland's ills. The rebellion had greatly damaged the reputation of the Irish Catholics and against the background of a sustained loyalist backlash a union offered the best security for Catholic interests. During the House of Lords debate on the union, Fitzgibbon rounded on the Catholic clergy, declaring that 'conscientious popish ecclesiastics will never become well attached subjects to the Protestant State.'[99] Equally, the Protestant State had never shown great attachment to Catholic interests, and in the terror of the post rebellion period it appeared as if the Orange faction was intent not merely on exacting revenge, but on the destruction of the Church itself.

The events of the 1790s had greatly altered the fortunes of the Catholic community in Ireland. The impact of the French revolution had brought the country to an unprecedented level of political awareness. The Catholic Committee, the vehicle of Catholic political expression, had become transformed and was eventually surpassed by the United Irishmen, as its radicalised members sought reform and relief, not as an indulgence to be requested with deference, but as a right to be pursued with vigour. The social and political transformation and the threat posed by impending war with France had serious implications for the security of the kingdom. Once more the question of management dominated the political agenda; London opted to 'play the Catholic game' and the constitutional revolution of 1793 saw the Catholics admitted to the forty

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99 *The speech of the Rt. Hon. John Earl of Clare in the House of Lords, 10 February 1800,* (Dublin, 1800), p. 69.

shilling franchise. Yet concession of the vote made little sense without conceding the right to sit in parliament, and the Catholics admitted to part of the constitution increasingly demanded the whole.

For the hierarchy, too, the progress of the 'French disease' had serious implications. In France the Catholic church had been abolished under the terms of the Civil Constitution and throughout Europe the spread of the revolution had made serious inroads into religion. The Irish bishops were particularly conscious of events in Europe. The restrictions of the penal laws had given the continental colleges a crucial role in the Irish church, while their educational experience gave the clergy a heightened sensitivity and insight into the plight of the church in Europe. It was with increasing alarm, then, that the Irish bishops watched the headway made by the French principles amongst their flocks. This transformation was illustrated only too clearly in the events surrounding the acrimonious Kenmare secession from the Catholic Committee, during which Caulfield bitterly complained of the 'puppies, the rabble' dictating to the prelates.[100] More ominously, however, the bishops watched with increasing anxiety the active role taken by so many of their priests amongst the radicals, culminating in the implication of as many as seventy clerics in the rebellion of 1798.

In a curious twist of fate, however, the crisis of the 1790s resulted in Catholic emergence from the penal era and the transformation of the Irish mission into a church with the appropriate institutions. The continental crisis had brought a novel convergence of interests of the British government and the Catholic Church and their mutual concern created a new atmosphere of trust and dialogue. The Catholic church became the perceived bulwark against the advance of Jacobinism in

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[100] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 31 March 1792, D.D.A.

Ireland, while British arms offered the only hope of salvation for the continental church. Shared sentiments were transformed into action under the influence of Edmund Burke and Charles Erskine, and the foundation of Maynooth College represented the end of the restrictions that the penal laws had placed on the practice of religion in Ireland.. More significantly, however, the complex process which had led to the foundation of the College witnessed both the emergence of a national episcopal conference and the establishment of a *modus operandi* between the Catholic Church and the Protestant State. The turbulence of the latter half of the decade, particularly the perceived sectarian complexion of the rebellion of 1798, placed this relationship in jeopardy. The bishops, however, successfully salvaged their reputation. Troy enjoyed unrestricted access to the Castle where he had the confidence of Cornwallis, while Francis Moylan was rewarded for his loyal exertions, spending a week as the guest of the Duke of Portland at Bulstrode, a sojourn James Caulfield regarded as 'a strong prognostic of very great benefits to this country, which I have strong hopes of being realised ere long.'[101]

The great achievements of the decade had resulted largely from the efforts of Troy. The archbishop had shown courage, leadership and determination in the face of successive crises which threatened the survival of the Catholic church in Ireland. The revolution in France, its associated radicalism and the loyalist reaction in Ireland all combined to present an apparently insurmountable challenge. John Troy, however, through a combination of tenacity and diplomacy, skillfully transformed crisis to opportunity, creating the modern Irish church in the process. Hated by the radicals, hailed by the hierarchy, the archbishop's greatest

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101 J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 12 August 1799, D.D.A.

admirer, James Caulfield, declared that 'St Peter's Chair would not be an extravagant reward for. . [Troy's] great, judicious and zealous efforts.'[102]

[102] J. Caulfield to J. Troy, 23 June 1799, D.D.A.

Apependix 1.

Sample of Catholic Loyal Declarations

1797

24 June Declaration of the Catholics of Arboe, County Tyrone, acknowledged by Rev. Bernard O'Neill.

10 December Declaration of the Catholics of Rathlin, signed by Ed. McMullan PP, Alexander McDonnell and 180 inhabitants.

23 December Declaration of the Catholics of Loughgeel, Killraughts & Grange of Killogan, County Antrim, signed by Tully McNally PP, James McCormick and 751 inhabitants.

29 December Declaration of the Catholics of Ballinderry, County Tyrone, signed by Pat Devlin PP.

31 December Declaration by the Catholics of Clonegall, Moyacomb & Barragh, signed by 1561 inhabitants.

21 December Declaration of the Catholics of Culfaghtrim & Grange, County Antrim, signed by Pat Brennan PP.

1798

23 January Declaration of the Catholics of Ramoan, County Antrim, signed by Roger O'Murray, pastor.

23 January Declaration of the Catholics of Saul, County Down, signed by Rev.McCartan PP.

25 January Declaration from Catholics of Cappoquin parish signed by Thomas Flannery, PP and 817 inhabitants.

30 January Declaration of the Catholics of Templeshanbo, County Wexford, signed by Miles O'Connor PP, Silvester Clinch, David Doyle, Thomas Redmond and 564 inhabitants.

3 February Declaration of the Catholics of Marshallstown, County Wexford, signed by John Doyle PP.

6 February Declaration of the Catholics of the parishes of Crosses of Kilmatial [Kilmyshall] & Ballindaggin, signed by 100 inhabitants.

6 February Declaration of the Catholics of Rinagh & Gallan, signed by Peter Reynolds PP for 320 parishioners.

6 February Declaration of the Catholics of Tiffaran & Rillegally, signed by Felix McHugh PP for 690 parishioners.

6 February Declaration of the Catholics of Seven Churches, signed by Ed. Leddy for 415 parishioners.

13 February Similar declaration from parish of Affane and Modeligo, County Waterford, signed by John Hearn PP and 780 parishioners.

13 February Similar declarations of Catholics of the parishes of Litter, and Monamolin, County Wexford, signed by Michael Lacy, PP and 500 parishioners.

20 February Declaration of the Catholics of Lismore, signed by Daniel Lawler PP and 300 residents and assented to by 1022 Catholics.

1 March Similar declaration 'from inhabitants of all religious professions resident in the parish of Clonoe, County Tyrone', signed by James Devlin, PP, 'at the desire of all the Catholics of Clonoe'.

1 March Similar declaration of Catholic inhabitants of the parish of Killrush, County Wexford, signed by Edanus Murphy, PP and 514 of its inhabitants.

3 March Similar declaration of 'Catholic inhabitants of the united parishes of Lissan and Kildress in the counties of Derry and Tyrone', signed by Bernard Muldoon, PP and 800 parishioners.

10 March Similar declarations of the Catholic inhabitants of the parish of Kinawley, commonly called Knockninny, in the county of Fermanagh, signed by Michael Wynne, PP for 557 parishioners.

13 March Declaration of the Catholics of Killiarvan County Donegal, signed by John McElwea PP and 900 parishioners.

17 March Declaration of the Catholics of Tuosista, County Kerry, signed by John Power, pastor.

17 March Declaration of the Catholics of Killillee & Castle Ellis, County Wexford, signed by David Cullen PP, William Talbot and 230 parishioners.

18 April Addrees of magistrates and leading inhabitants of Tipperary, signed by Robert White PP of Moderny and D. Murphy, pastor of Nenagh.

1 May Declaration from the Catholics of Castlebridge County Wexford, signed by Michael Redmond PP.

1 May Declaration from the Catholics of Kilmallock, signed by Raymond Rourke [recté Roche]PP.

1 May Declaration from the Catholics of Ferns and the union, signed by Edward Redmond PP Gorey and John Murphy, Curate, Kilcormuck.

1 May Declaration from the Catholics of Ballynamonaboy, signed by Nicholas Synott, PP.

29 May Declaration of loyalty signed by John O'Callaghan, D.D., PP of Inniscarra and Matchy; Cornelius O'Mahony, PP of Magourney and Aghabollogue; Denis Coakly PP of Ahina.

7 June Declaration of the Catholics of Carrick-on-Suir, with 106 names

12 June Declaration of the Catholics of Clonmel, signed by Rev. Thomas Flannery.

12 June Address of principal Catholics of Clones [Clogher], signed by the priests of Clogher, including Hugh O'Reilly PP, James Murphy Tedavnet, Pat McGinn, Monaghan, Pat Coyle, Killeevan, Michael McGinn, Clontibret, William McGuire, Drummully, Ed. McArdle, Donagh, Bernard Duffy, Clones, John McAnally, Roslea, Pat Murphy, Ematris, Ed. Malone , Kilmore, Pat Bellew, Curran, Edm. McMahon, Fintona, Jas. McMahon, Aghalurcher, Thos. Raverty, ditto, John McMahon, Dromore,Charles McKenna, Kilskeery, Ter. McKosker, Clogher, Chas. McMahon, Enniskillen, Philip McGruaran, Cleenish, Stephen Keenan, Templecarn, Bernard Raverty, Derryvullan, T. Corrigan, Maheracoolmaine, James McGar, Thuro [Trough], Edmund Muldoon, Moy, Pat Thally, Devenish. Curates: Pat Hughes, Chas. McPherson, Pat Duffy, Thos. Campbell, Pat McCawell, Philip Kelly, Peter Ingoldsby, James Mee, Pat Henraty.

16 June Address of Catholics of Desartgreat and Derryloran, County Tyrone, signed by 'upwards of a thousand of the inhabitants and Arthur Tegart PP.

16 June Address to the Lord Lieutenant from the Catholics of County Longford [72 names].

19 June Declaration of the Catholics of Longford, signed by T. Cruise, Bishop of Ardagh for himself and the clergy.

19 June Declaration of the people of Dungarvan, signed by Edmond Prendergast PP.

21 June Declaration of the people of Dundalk

28 June	Declaration of the Catholics of Omagh, signed by Rev. P. McLaughlin for himself and 500 inhabitants.
28 June	Declaration of the Catholics of Newry.
30 June	Declaration of the Catholics of Ballinahinch.
1 July	Address of the Catholics of Moat, signed by Thos. Reynolds PP, John Jennings PP, Pat McNamee PP, Dan Malledy PP, James Fagan PP.
7 July	Declaration of the Catholics of Seaforde and Tyrella, signed by Patrick McCartan for himself and 1200 of his congregation.
7 July	Declaration of the Catholics of Moat.
12 July	Declaration of the Catholics of Ulster.

Appendix 2

I

Martin a priest from Drogheda taken up viewing the position of the rising at Cronebawn and brought to c. martial this day acknowledges before the court (in the hope of saving his own life) that he came last from Rathfarnham, and had been round all the land after being thro' Rounwood and the mountains to summon all the United men to attack Dublin tomorrow night and three camps were actually forming by Holt, Nugent and Doyle – their camps – their places of assembly are a chapel near the Hollow above Rathfarnham.

Holt has a brother at the foot of Mt Venus near it – Martin held a correspondence with Gilligan of Rathfarnham and Fitzpatrick a printer who he says was printing a book for him and has introductory letters to Lowe a priest in this country from Ledwitch a priest near Rathfarnham –

C.M. composed of
Capt. Giffard, Dublin,
Capt. Paridine,
Lt. McCormick,
Capt. King, Rathdrum,
Lt. McAuley, Antrim.

II

5 p.m. 11 June 1798

Rathdrum.

Sir,

A priest a spy was taken up this morning a little after dawn by a reconoitring party of mine who had such suspicious appearances that I ordered a c. martial on him this forenoon when the enclosed came out.

Knowing he would suffer death, did he not disclose all he knew, I trust in God that this has been a fortunate discovery. No more was taken

down. I have him in the charge of an officer who shall never quit his presence and no other person communicate with him but c. martial and myself, but this strikes me as so material that I loose not an instant in informing you to give you all possible time to guard against such a dangerous conspiracy – he shall be examined again this evening and a second express sent if there is any thing more material.

I am,
Joseph Hardy

To Lt. General Lake,
Comm. in Chief,
Dublin Castle.
[S.P.O. 620/38/126]

III

11June, 6 O'Clock p.m.

Martin a priest from Drogheda taken up viewing the position of Cronebawn mines. Brought to c. martial this day, acknowledges before the court (in hopes of saving his life) that he came here from Rathfarnham and has been round the coast after being through Roundwood and the mountains. To summon all U.I. men to the attack of Dublin tomorrow night, and three companies are actually formed under Holt, Nugent and Doyle, three captains. Their place of assembly is a chapel near a hollow above Rathfarnham.

Holt has a brother at the foot of Mt Venus near it. Martin held a correspondence with Gilligan of Rathfarnham, Fitzpatrick a printer who he says was printing a book for him and he had an introductory letter to Lowe, a priest in the country from Ledwitch a priest in Rathfarnham.

Captain Giffard of Dublin who is president of this court martial is extremely anxious to go up to take up these people, but I am insistent upon his first communicating with government.

I have sent off word to General Dundas and to Bray, but did not give more than notice to be generally prepared at Bray. To General Dundas I disclosed the whole. If there is a necessity for the court martial

to sit, I would detain Captain Giffard but shall find to give P. That is the case.

620/38/126

IV

16 June 1798

Confession of Martin in the presence of Mr. Cooke, Mr. Marsden and Mr. Harman.

That McKartin and Mr Brien tendered the United Irishmen's oath to him in Easter week a year past. That he did not take the engagement as an oath, but as an affirmation as taking the engagement in this form of an oath was contrary he conceived to his oath of allegiance – that Duffy, the friar was present. Mr. Lenin, Angier and that Duffy had often endeavoured before to persuade him to become an United Irish man.

Martin said he conceived the principle of the United Irishmen was to put all units upon a level, that is equally to establish the three sects or to dissolve all establishments.

That he had Sunday last preached to the people of Kilbride [Manor Kilbride, County Wicklow] to stand together and that they suffer themselves and to persevere in fighting for their ends.

That he now hates the United Irishmen because they have not stood together and that he considers them a cowardly rabble, he conceived that they would have all fought and died in the cause. That he did not intend to take arms himself, but intended to have instigated the people with a fine death in the cause.

That he had read Machiavel and that Machiavel taught that they should spare no time whatever to effect the objects they had determined on.

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V

The prisoner being interrogated as follows made the folowing replies;

Q. What was your business in the country?

A. To excite the people to meet their other friends to attack Dublin tomorrow night.

Q. By whose direction were you sent?

A. By a committee of the District of Dublin, Thomas Street Dublin and by verbal instruction.

Q. Do you know the names of the persons composing that committee?

A. I do know some of them, namely, James Moore, ironmonger, Thomas Street. John Passmore, Francis Street. Hammond who keeps a livery stable, Bolton Street. Charles Delahyde (he's a small man), Luke White – not the bookseller, John White, Wattling Street – and several others to amount to about twenty five.

They met about a fortnight ago at the house of Murphy in Thomas Street (in which the traitor Fitzgerald was taken). They employed the prisoner to communicate with several persons near Dunboyne, Kilbride and in the county of Wicklow to co-operate at a fixed time – and to excite the people to act. He went to Dunboyne twice since the dispersion of the rebels there to promote a second rising.

Q. Did the committee send you down to excite the people to join Holt and the other leaders?

A. They did and Holt knew me as he saw me and he had mentioned his name. The committee directed him to a place where he met Holt. He sat in a sheebeen house with Holt about three quarters of an hour, who informed him that captain Nugent and captain Doyle were just over the way and concerned and ready to co-operate with the body that was ready to attack Dublin – Holt said he could show him three hundred men just behind the hill, independent of Nugent and Doyle – he wished the prisoner to go and see them and that he would have a look out for the prisoner as he went back in order to show him his people.

It was supposed that the rebels who since attacked Arklow would be able to carry all before them and march down to Dublin – the rebels in the city expected to be supplied with some arms by them for arms were scarce in Dublin and it was hoped the rebels of the Co. Wexford and Wicklow had obtained arms from the French – and upon that supposition that the rebels would reduce Arklow – the prisoner was sent to encourage and hasten this march on Dublin.

Q. Having been sent to Dunboyne and Kilbride he preached as an Ecclesiastic to the people the propriety of rising – (thus if you are men that have sworn to be faithful to one another – now that you see your houses

burned is the time you are called upon to keep your oath) or words to that effect, stopped at Langan's at Greenogue whom he thinks a harmless innocent man.

When he returned to Dublin he made his report to Mr Passmore and Hugh McVeagh and Luke White – not a company for they were afraid to meet from the vigilance of the yeomanry – they were much cast down at hearing such destruction had fallen on their friends in Co. Meath, Kildare and Dublin, but directed him to come towards Arklow where there were better prospects of success. That he rode towards Arklow where he was to join with the rebel camp and communicate with them and it was understood by the Committee of Dublin that Camac and his brother and their corps were friendly to the cause of the rebellion – on which account the committee was much displeased when the corps was disarmed. He was told by the committee that upon telling his name he would find friends enough about Arklow.

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Confession of John Martin a Friar of Drogheda.. Entered into engagement with the United Irishmen to obtain their rights thinking themselves an injured people about a year ago last Easter. He was initiated by an Mr Duffy and a Mickarten of Drogheda, two friars. They were both present when they swore him in his room in Drogheda – afterwards he forwarded the business in Drogheda. His associates were Mr Lenin a schoolmaster, Mr Lawrence Reilly. He himself was the principal man in Drogheda.

Acknowledges that he had been very active in exciting the people of Dunboyne to perform their engagement – he had a large company with him the day before he left Drogheda which was...

He went to Ledwich the priest at Rathfarnham and to Gilligan and Lowe... He met Holt behind Rathfarnham. From Holt he came to the county of Wicklow for the purpose of exciting the people here. He says Holt was a captain of the rebels and he will point out where he lives. Doyle another captain *whom he will also point out.* Nugent another captain *whom he will point out.*

He was told by the above Drogheda men that the town of Drogheda was organised – that officers were appointed to each street. John Lynch, a merchant in Drogheda, commands a party. Edward Bellew also had a command. Burges now a prisoner in the castle was also a commander. Lord Edward Fitzgerald was considered at the head of the rebels. Several persons in Lord Gormanston corps were engaged in it.

The whole company which dined with him the day before he left Drogheda were acquainted with the object of his journey to the county of Wicklow. Mr Grattan was considered very friendly to the United Irishmen. They made up a sum of money for him. He does not know the amount, but his own subscription was one guinea which he paid into the hands of Mr Angier or Mr Bellew, he does not recollect which. He thinks the sums Grattan received was very large indeed.

John Martin.

Witness Frank Murray
This confession taken before me at Rathdrum, June 14, 1798
John Giffard – captain
president of Garrison Court Martial 620/38/160

VII

June 14 '98

Dear Sir,

I send you the greatest villain in society, one Martin, a popish priest. His confession you will see in my handwriting, a confession not very honourable to Mr Grattan. The lesser traitors should be easily taken up and indeed should be. The priest Martin was taken in the very act of reconnoitring, or as he expressed it, viewing the beauties of the country. Being examined before a court martial of which I was president and being found prevaricating, we ordered him for instant execution. He begged mercy and said he would tell all. Upon which promises we suspended his trial, took his examination and sent him to you God ever bless you,

Your faithful sevt.
John Giffard

Capt. Giffard to Marsden

VIII

Kilmainham

Gaol,

March 24th

1800

Sir,

As you have once honoured me with your acquaintance I am embolden thereby to trouble you with an account of my present situation; ever since I had the pleasure of knowing you at the Exchange I remain a prisoner and have suffered many wants to which I was a stranger all my life.

During my confinement many state prisoners have been liberated by interference of gentlemen connected with the administration, but latterly by benefit of the Habeas Act. Unhappily for me I have no friend to step forward on my behalf in either respect, unless I should presume Sir to call you one; to flatter you would be mean, but I am confident that you are possessed of both humanity and influence sufficient to induce you to befriend the friendless. I therefore earnestly entreat your kind interference with Government to procure my liberation. Should you honour me with a promise of so doing you would place me under the greatest obligation that a mortal could bestow.

Your answer would much oblige me, while I remain your humble servant.

Rev. John Martin

Rt. Hon. Richard Annesley,
New Custom House,
Dublin.

S.P.O. Prisoners Petitions, 490
620/38/145

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