CONTROVERSIES IN ULSTER PRESBYTERIANISM, 1790 - 1836

by

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(Peterhouse)

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.
This thesis looks at the period between the United Irish rebellion of 1798 and the introduction of unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith in the Synod of Ulster in 1836. The period includes the Act of Union, a considerable increase in Regium Donum (the government grant given to Presbyterian ministers), the provision of a home education for ministers in the Belfast Academical Institution, the controversy over 'Arianism' (the view that Jesus Christ is a created being) in the Synod, Catholic emancipation, the 1832 Reform Bill, and the re-establishment of ministerial communion with the Church of Scotland. The main questions discussed are why there should have been Presbyterian support for Catholic involvement in political life in the 1790s; what impact the evangelical movement made in the early part of the century; why the Synod had such an apparently tolerant attitude towards Arianism prior to the late 1820s; and why the voluntary movement, demanding the separation of church and state, made so little impact in the 1830s. I take a particular interest in the 'Reformed Presbyterians' or 'Covenanters', especially in their controversy in the 1830s over the question of the right of the civil magistrate to punish heresy. In general, I am concerned with ideas and arguments as found in pamphlet literature, and with the relations between theological and political ideas, as well as with the location of developments among Ulster Presbyterians in the development of British culture as a whole. I argue that they were distinguished from English and Scottish dissenters by the lack of impact made by the evangelical movement (considered either as a drive to social improvement or to conversionary endeavour); and by the context of a substantial and increasingly self-assertive Roman Catholic population.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My supervisor was Dr David Thompson of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. I had useful conversations with Professor R.F.G. Holmes and Principal J.M. Barkley of Assembly's College, Belfast, and also – quite a long time prior to embarking on the thesis – with Rev William McMillan of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland and Prof. David Miller. I would like to thank Prof. Adam Loughridge of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland for letting me use the very interesting collection of material held in the Church's Theological Hall, Belfast; the staff of the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland, particularly G.J. Slater and A.H. Harrison who drew my attention to much interesting material I might otherwise have missed; R. Adams of the Linenhall Library who helped me with finding pamphlet and periodical literature; Noel Nesbitt of the Ulster Museum for letting me see the Museum's Samuel Barber material; and J.D. Hogan for setting up a programme on a programmable calculator. I would also like to thank my parents for their help and encouragement.
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'Every earthly kingdom depends, under Providence, for its origin, support and continuance, upon mere opinion...'

HENRY COOKE
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with describing and understanding the theological and political ideas that were available to Ulster Presbyterians in the early nineteenth century. My starting point was a desire to examine the thesis that the Arian controversy played an important part in the conversion of Ulster Presbyterians from radical republicanism in the 1790s to conservative unionism in the 1880s. Put at its crudest, this view argues a straightforward connection between theological and political views. Orthodox theology is identified with conservative politics; radical theology with radical politics. The triumph of orthodox trinitarianism in the 1820s can therefore be read as a triumph for political conservatism, especially since the leading apologist for the orthodox cause, Henry Cooke, emerged as a Presbyterian defender of the Church of Ireland and of the landlord interest, while a number of the Arians claimed that the theological attack being mounted on them was a covert attack on their support for Catholic emancipation. (1)

It is clear that the political and theological ideas of this period cannot be neatly disentangled. The mere fact of being a Presbyterian in a country where an episcopal church was established by law had political implications. And the differences within Presbyterianism itself were largely differences as to the correct relation that should exist between the church and the state. The view that religion is a private matter without political implications
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is one of the almost unquestioned assumptions of modern British culture. But, although it existed as a political ideal in the early nineteenth century, it could by no means be taken for granted as a political fact. Nor can it be taken for granted as a political fact either in the Republic of Ireland or in Northern Ireland today. This thesis can be read as a small part of the history of such religious 'indifferentism' in an area where conditions proved to be unfavourable.

There were two leading ideas which can be obviously identified as contributing to the secularisation of political life - 'latitudinarianism' and 'voluntaryism'. By latitudinarianism, I mean the tendency to reduce the number of theological doctrines which were seen as necessary to salvation, and to raise the importance of civilised behaviour as against 'faith'. It seems to me that Cooke's real target in the 1820s was not so much Arianism itself as the Synod's preparedness to tolerate it, thus devaluing its own authority in theological matters. His campaign has interesting similarities to the contemporary efforts of the Tractarians and of the Darby-ites, who began with the ambition to persuade the church to take its own transcendental claims more seriously. While Cooke eventually secured widespread support for his view that the ability to define dogma was important, the issue of the church's role in society was complicated by wide divergences of opinion on the right relation between dogma, the church and the state; and since these disagreements turned on questions concerning relations with the
Established Church and with the Roman Catholic population, they had distinct political implications.

Latitudinarianism was not necessarily unfavourable to the principle of Church Establishment. In fact, it was widely argued that an established church was peculiarly favourable to the spread of latitudinarian ideas (since a church which claimed to encompass the whole nation had to encompass a wider variety of religious ideas than a church which people joined voluntarily on the basis of a clearly defined constitution). Nonetheless, latitudinarianism facilitated a secular approach to politics since it accorded little importance to differences in religious belief, drew no political conclusions from particular religious beliefs (other than the need for toleration) and was therefore free to concentrate on other matters without reference to religious belief.

'Voluntaryism' was the view that churches should be voluntary societies that were not in any way financed or otherwise supported by the state. Governments should have no say in religious matters, which should be entirely the business of individuals in civil society without reference to law. The main impetus for the distinct voluntaryist campaigns in Scotland in the 1830s and in England in the 1840s came from people who were orthodox in their theology and who argued that establishment sapped churches of their seriousness and commitment. They had a much more optimistic view of the vitality of Christianity than the advocates of
establishment who tended to argue that mankind left to its own devices without a commitment on the part of the state would fall into barbarism and irreligion. Marx has commented on this, and on the connection between voluntaryist ideas (which took North America for their model) and the emphasis laid by the political economy of the period on free economic activity:

'Just as industrial activity is not abolished when the privileges of the trades, guilds and corporations are abolished, but, on the contrary, real industry begins only after the abolition of these privileges; just as ownership of the land is not abolished when privileged landownership is abolished, but, on the contrary, begins its universal movement only with the abolition of privileges and free sale of land; just as trade is not abolished by the abolition of trade privileges, but finds its true realisation in free trade; so religion develops in its practical universality only where there is no privileged religion (cf. the North American states)...

'The state declares that religion, like the other elements of civil life, only begins to exist in its full scope when the state declares it to be non-political and therefore leaves it to itself. To the dissolution of the political existence of these elements, as for example the dissolution of property by the abolition of the property qualifications for electors, the dissolution of religion by the abolition of the state
church, to this proclamation of their civil death corresponds their most vigorous life, which henceforth obeys its own laws and develops to its full scope.' (2)

A successful voluntaryism would mean that religion was no longer a matter for governments, and it would therefore constitute a separation of theology and politics to the extent that 'politics' is seen as simply a matter for governments. But it was of course a highly political movement, basing itself on theological arguments, but aiming for a radical change in the nature of the state. Marx's view of the voluntaries is based on their own view of themselves. The abolition of privilege in religion would liberate the most energetic and deeply committed of the religious tendencies which had evolved within civil society against the opposition of the state, and enable them to become the determining factor in the religious life of the nation.

If Ulster Presbyterians are considered simply as a community dissenting from an established church, then it is very surprising that the voluntaryist movement of the 1830s made so little impression. The Scottish Secession, among whom the movement began, were dissenters in relation to a Presbyterian establishment. Leaving aside the fact that the Scottish Secession was itself organised in Ulster, the Synod of Ulster, living under an episcopal establishment, had all the more reason for discontent, and voluntaryist ideas had been widespread among them in the late eighteenth century.
Obviously, the fact that they themselves received financial assistance from the state was of crucial importance. I also draw attention to the fact that the conversionary theology which played an important part in voluntaryism had not struck deep roots in Ulster in the period of this thesis. But the most important element determining the peculiarities of Ulster Protestant political development was the fact that Roman Catholics constituted the great majority of the population in Ireland (and even in the nine counties of Ulster itself). This Catholic population was embarking on a period of rapid intellectual and social development whose starting point and general direction were alike incomprehensible to the British political culture in which the Ulster Protestants were developing. Thus the conflict between 'progress' and 'reaction', democratic civil society and aristocratic privilege, liberalism and conservatism - whatever terms are used - did not develop fully in terms of the society itself. It had to a large extent to develop in terms of attitudes towards an element that was foreign to the society and potentially much more powerful, a problem which became especially acute with the emergence of the Catholic Association in the 1820s.

This thesis begins with the radical ferment of the 1790s and ends with a defeat for self conscious latitudinarianism through the imposition of unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith in the Synod of Ulster in 1836. The finishing date also sees the failure of the Belfast Voluntary Church Association. It
would, however, be a mistake to see the extraordinary period of
the 1790s as a norm from which subsequent developments are a
deviation. It would be even more absurd to see 1836 as marking
the end of the history of secularisation in Ulster Presbyterianism
(or indeed the end of voluntaryist sympathies). And it would be
wrong to treat the development of Presbyterianism as identical with
the development of the Ulster Protestant community as a whole.
It is certainly possible to argue that the historiography of Ulster
Protestantism has suffered from too much emphasis on precisely the
subject of this thesis.

Finally, I should emphasise again that I am concerned principally
with understanding ideas - and principally ideas held by ministers.
It is not a sociological study and does not describe the changing
nature of the laity - the economic activities in which they were
engaged or, in anything other than a superficial manner, the
relations between ministers and their congregations. I started with
the intention of working along these lines but came regretfully to
the conclusion that it would require at least as much work again
as the job of clarifying ideas and arguments. Faced with a choice
between the two approaches, I chose the latter, partly because it
was more congenial, but also because it was more practicable,
granted that I was based for much of my time in Cambridge rather
than in Belfast. I recognise that the absence of any account of
the popular base of Presbyterianism is a serious limitation.

Peter Brooke, Belfast, April 1980.
EXPLANATION OF TERMS

The table below gives the percentage of Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and members of the Church of Ireland in each of the nine counties of Ulster, extracted from the 1834 Report of the Committee on Public Instruction (which was widely accused of underestimating the proportion of Presbyterians):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>% Church of Ireland</th>
<th>% Roman Catholics</th>
<th>% Presbyterians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>355,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>39.63</td>
<td>57.99</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>188,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>22.08</td>
<td>54.84</td>
<td>22.64</td>
<td>333,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londonderry</td>
<td>13.49</td>
<td>45.67</td>
<td>39.94</td>
<td>200,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>50.05</td>
<td>19.96</td>
<td>212,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>180,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>261,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>14.46</td>
<td>68.88</td>
<td>15.84</td>
<td>294,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>16.68</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>45.89</td>
<td>360,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster</td>
<td>19.48</td>
<td>53.07</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>2,387,788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1790, Presbyterians were divided into five connections: the Synod of Ulster, the Presbytery of Antrim, the Seceders - who were themselves divided into Burghers and Antiburghers - and the Reformed Presbyterians.
Of these, by far the largest was the Synod of Ulster, with about one hundred and eighty congregations. The Seceders had about sixty seven - twenty-five AntiBurgher, forty-two Burgher. The Presbytery of Antrim had nine, the Reformed Presbyterians had seven (though they also had a number of 'societies' without regular ministers). 

The Synod of Ulster had been formed on a regular basis after the Williamite Revolution, in 1690, from ministers ejected from their livings at the Restoration of Charles II for refusing to recognise the authority of Bishops. They were, for the most part, Scottish in origin. The Presbytery of Antrim had originally been formed by the Synod after disputes over whether or not ministers should be expected to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Those ministers who were opposed in principle to making subscription to creeds a condition of joining the ministry were put into it and, in 1726, the whole presbytery was expelled. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, relations between the two bodies were close, especially since support for the principle of non-subscription had grown throughout the Synod.

The Secession Synods originated through disputes in Scotland both over theological questions and over the relations between the Church of Scotland and the state. The Seceding ministers felt that not enough emphasis was being put on the Calvinist doctrine that good works could do nothing towards the work of salvation (the doctrine of 'justification by faith alone'). They also objected
to the power vested by law in 'patrons' (usually local landlords) to appoint ministers, which denied the right of congregations to elect them. This second grievance did not apply in Ulster (though the Synod of Ulster had a method of election which the Seceders opposed and which favoured wealthier members of the congregation, who were, of course, contributing more to the minister's stipend).

An 'Associate Presbytery' was formed by dissidents within the Church of Scotland in 1733 and its ministers were formally expelled in 1740. The Presbytery was soon invited to organise in Ulster but, before this happened on any large scale, a 'breach' occurred over whether or not it was lawful to take the 'Freemason's' or 'Burgess' oath in use in Scotland at the time. The Scottish Presbytery split into Antiburghers (who thought the oath was sinful) and Burghers (who thought it could be taken) and both sides organised in Ulster. The Burghers formed an Irish Synod in 1779, the Antiburghers in 1788. (6)

Prior to the 1790s, the Reformed Presbyterians had a fitful existence in Ulster. They also originated in Scotland, where they went under a variety of names - 'Camerions', 'Mountain Men', 'Society Men', 'Macmillanites', 'Covenanters'. They developed out of 'societies' formed in the reign of Charles II under the leadership of Richard Cameron, to oppose the re-imposition of an episcopal church establishment. While a number of such Society men (including all their ministers) felt able to join the Church of Scotland when it was re-established through the Williamite
revolution, a 'suffering remnant of the true Presbyterian Church in Scotland' refused to do so, on the grounds that the Williamite settlement did not recognise the perpetual obligation of the national covenants of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant (which included, for example, the obligation to 'endeavour the extirpation' of popery and prelacy in England).

In 1706, the suffering remnant was joined by a minister, Rev John MacMillan and in 1743, a second minister enabled them to form a presbytery and conduct their own ordinations (Presbyterian church government requires the presence of more than one minister at an ordination).

There had been equivalent Irish societies since the seventeenth century and these put themselves under the care of the Scottish Presbytery in 1743. A presbytery was formed in Ireland in 1763, but collapsed owing largely to the emigration of ministers to America in 1779. It was formed again in 1792. (7)

Outside Ulster, there was the 'Southern Association', which was formed from non-subscribing ministers in Dublin at the time of the expulsion of the Presbytery of Antrim in 1726. It was divided into the Southern Presbytery of Dublin and the Presbytery of Munster (the subscribing ministers formed a Presbytery of Dublin which came under the authority of the Synod of Ulster). There was initially an Independent element in the Southern Association but in 1809, the two presbyteries joined in the Synod of Munster. (8)
All these bodies held in common the Presbyterian form of church government under which ministers were equal in authority and met regularly to exercise joint sovereignty over the church. Congregations were grouped together in 'presbyteries' and presbyteries grouped into 'synods'. Students for the ministry were put under the care of presbyteries and educated until they qualified as 'licentiates'. Then they were allowed to preach but did not become full ministers until they received a 'call' from a particular congregation. Each congregation was ruled by a 'session' consisting of the minister together with the lay elders, who were nominated by the session and approved by the congregation. Elders were represented at meetings of presbyteries and synods. (9)

Finally, the 'Regium Donum' was a grant of money given by William III at the time of the Revolution. It was suspended for a time under Queen Anne, and renewed with the Hanoverian succession. It was originally given as a lump sum to the Synod of Ulster and distributed as the Synod saw fit. The Presbytery of Antrim continued to be a part of this scheme after its expulsion. A smaller sum was given to the Seceders in 1784. The Reformed Presbyterians, who did not recognise the government as legitimate, never received it.
CHAPTER ONE

PRESBYTERIAN POLITICS IN THE 1790s
PRESBYTERIAN ATTITUDES TO GOVERNMENT

In his Present State of the Church of Ireland in 1787, the Bishop of Cloyne declared:

"Most of the leading Presbyterians in this kingdom (indeed all whose opinions the author has been able to collect) differ essentially from their brethren of Geneva, Switzerland, Holland, Germany and Scotland, as they reject the idea of any national church. If the Church of Scotland, to which they have an hereditary attachment, and to which they adhere, were established in this kingdom, they would still dissent. They are Independents in a civil view; though they are Presbyterians as to ecclesiastical discipline. Their principles do not, like those of the Roman Catholics, tend to set up, but merely to pull down, an ecclesiastical establishment." (1)

William Campbell, Presbyterian minister of Armagh, in his reply, argues that Presbyterians were not opposed to the principle of a national church, but confirmed Cloyne's view by saying that they did not regard it as essential to the maintenance of civil order. Campbell's argument does not suggest any disagreement with the Bishop over the theological doctrines taught by the respective churches; his main concern is to defend 'the freedom of our constitution' (meaning the civil constitution) from the encroachments of the existing ecclesiastical establishment. The superiority of the
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Presbyterian church as a national church lay, in his eyes, in its greater commitment to civil and religious liberty. Prelacy was too closely associated with Toryism and with an ambivalent attitude towards Popery, Jacobitism and the Divine Right of Kings. (2)

Campbell judges the questions of ecclesiastical polity and interdependence with the state in entirely secular political terms. He doesn't argue from scripture, and he certainly doesn't invoke the Solemn League and Covenant. He argues in favour of tithe commutation, not because a heretical church should not be supported by the government, but because the distribution of clerical wealth in the Church of Ireland was arbitrary, and because the Church was not fulfilling its obligations to repair churches and feed the poor. He praises 'moderate churchmen' who were prepared to defend the rights of Presbyterians, and ends by arguing for the reincorporation of Presbyterians into the established church, without saying how this could be done, granted Presbyterian objections to episcopacy, and his own objections to the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords.

His argument thus seems more located in the tradition of English than of Scottish Presbyterianism, and it is interesting that the main historical precedent he holds up for admiration is the Long Parliament:

'Shall we say with you that the Church is so essentially incorporated with the State that the subversion of one must necessarily involve the overthrow of the other and
consequently that this religious establishment is friendly to
civil liberty? or shall we agree with the Long Parliament
that the ecclesiastical establishment is in no sort essential
to the existence of the state and to the freedom of our
constitution? (3)

Despite its aggressive tone, Campbell's 'Vindication' represents the
moderate end of the scale of Presbyterian opposition to the estab-
lished Church. On the other end of the scale was the Act,
Declaration and Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery, published
in Scotland in 1761. This took the view that the Revolution
settlement was 'a turning aside like a deceitful bow' since it had
established prelacy and the supremacy of the state over the church.
In contrast to Campbell's view that 'there should be an universal
toleration of religion', the Reformed Presbytery maintained that:
'No less wicked is it for a magistrate to protect by a
promiscuous toleration, all heretics, heresies and errors...
Experience has in every age taught that a toleration of all
religions is the cut-throat and ruin of all religion - it is
the most effectual method that ever the policy of Hell
hatched to banish all true godliness out of the world.'

They regard the Synod of Ulster as 'unworthy of their regard or
notice in these papers' since they were 'rather to be termed a
synagogue of libertines, a club of Socinians, Arians, Pelagians
etc. banded together against Christ and the doctrines of his cross,
than a Synod of the ministers of the Gospel.' But they testified
at length against the Seceders, mainly on the grounds that by maintaining their loyalty to the civil establishment, they were thereby endorsing the religious establishment with which it was inextricably connected. (4)

The Seceders took the view that rendering unto Caesar the things that were Caesar’s and unto God the Things that were God’s meant that a full testimony against the evils of the religious establishment was compatible with a full profession of loyalty to the civil establishment. They interpreted Rom XIII, 1 - 8 (the key passage in the debate on the relations of Christians with the civil power) as inculcating loyalty to the government whatever its nature, so long as it was supported by the people (a qualification not found in St Paul). In opposition to this view, the Reformed Presbyterians argued that the Bible contained objective standards by which magistrates could be judged and by which their right to rule could be qualified:

'the Christians have a right to set a King over them, yet it is evident they are not left at liberty to choose whom they please but are, in the most express and positive terms, limited and circumscribed in their choice to him whom the Lord their God shall choose.'

Evidently, God would not choose prelatists and covenant-breakers:

'It is full of contradiction, and a mocking both of God and the world, to pretend to own and defend the destroyers of the true religion in the defence of religion, as Seceders
do in their mock acknowledgement of such as are sworn to maintain prelacy, in opposition to the reformed religion.'

The Seceders were guilty of confusing the 'preceptive' and the 'providential' will of God. Obviously, anything that happened was the will of God, but this did not mean that Christians should submit to everything that happened. That would entail recognising the lawful sovereignty of the Devil as the Prince of the World, since he holds his power by God's providential will 'with... the consent and goodwill of all the children of men while in a natural state.... The like may be said of the Pope of Rome, the devil's captain-general, to display his hellish banner against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords with respect to those nations where he is acknowledged in his diabolical pretensions.' (5)

The dispute between the Associate and Reformed Presbyteries also turned on the nature of the obligation to renew the Solemn League and Covenant. The Covenant seems to have been abandoned by the Synod of Ulster in the 1670s, but its renewal was an obligation for both of the dissenting Presbyterian connections. The Seceders took the view, however, that it could be altered to take account of altered circumstances. The effect was to turn it into a statement of obligations for a particular religious community rather than for the nation as a whole. This abandonment of the political obligations of the Covenant enabled the Seceders to adopt a 'loyalist' position in the late eighteenth century which was not available to Covenanters. We shall see that in the nineteenth
century, the further theoretical separation of religious and civil politics led the Scottish Seceders to adopt a radical voluntaryist opposition to all church establishments. (6)

Thomas Ledlie Birch - a Synod of Ulster minister implicated in the United Irish rising - writing against the Seceders in 1796, praises 'the little despised Presbyterian body termed Covenanters... as they endeavour to maintain a profession in some degree conformable to their Covenants' and, of the two Secession bodies, he regards the less compromising Antiburghers as the 'most rational upon Secession principles and more regular in their church discipline'. He felt that the loyalty of the Seceders was 'like a mushroom sprung up in a day, in the hot-bed of the Royal Bounty', which had been extended to include Irish Seceders in 1784. He attributes this to the gratitude of Lord Downshire, since Seceders had supported the Downshire interest in the 1783 election against Robert Stewart (Lord Castlereagh's father). Stewart was standing on a platform of parliamentary reform, but was opposed by the Seceders on the ground that the political ferment of the period was distracting Presbyterians from their religious duties. In 1784, they went further and opposed a petition from the electors of Co Down calling for a reform of Parliament. One of the local Secession ministers at this time was Rev Francis Pringle who was later forced to emigrate when he supported the government in opposition to his congregation at the time of the United Irish rising. (7)

Birch's fellow United Irishman, Jemmy Hope, also attributes
Secession loyalty to the Regium Donum:

'One day I heard Mr Patton explaining the 83rd Psalm and praying for the downfall of Turk and anti-Christ, and for the purging of the blood that lay unpurged on the throne of Britain and also for the downfall of Pope and Popery, which latter prayer composed part of his devotions every Sabbath. But when the Royal Bounty was extended to our ministers, then the destruction of Pope and Popery became the principal supplication of the poor northern sinners to the throne of divine grace; the throne of Britain, according to the fanatic notions of those times, was purged and purified in the smoke of the blood then beginning to be shed in the woods of America, and in fairs and markets in Ireland, particularly in the County of Armagh.' (B)

The American reference is to the American Revolution, and the Armagh reference is presumably to the Hearts of Steel risings, both of which occurred in the 1770s, before the bounty had been extended. Hillsborough was indeed responsible for the extension, though his gratitude to the Seceders was not great, since he complained in private correspondence that the government had been too generous. As we have seen, the Reformed Presbyterians were attacking the Seceders’ preparedness to pray for success to an uncovenanted King in 1761, at least ten years before Patton was praying for 'the purging of the blood that lay unpurged on the throne of Britain' so that the ambivalence of a loyalty based
on submission to the providential will of God was already well established before the extension of the Regium Donum. (9)

The Reformed Presbyterians thus argued for a covenanted state in which the Church would be in a large measure sovereign over civil society but with an authority distinct from that of the secular government. They refused to recognise any other mode of government as legitimate. The Seceders shared this political ideal, but felt that Presbyterians should be loyal to whatever government had been established by the providential will of God which was by implication identified with popular consent, carrying the further implication that the government could be overthrown if it lost that consent. Campbell wanted to see Presbyterianism established, either in its own right (as in the case of the Church of Scotland) or as part of the Church of Ireland (citing the loose structure of the early seventeenth century as a precedent) but believed that such a church should have no political power: 'Churchmen, of whatever denomination, should, as a body, have no political existence.' (10)
PRESBYTERIANISM AND WHIGGERY

In December 1783, when Campbell, together with Dr Benjamin McDowell of Dublin, was petitioning for an increase in the Royal Bounty for the Synod of Ulster, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Northington, 'told him he was fully satisfied of the justness of our principles - that they were the true old Whig principles which he revered...' Campbell's 'Vindication' says that Presbyterians 'have always been persecuted by the Tories and always protected by the Whigs and moderate churchmen,' a process which is described for the early eighteenth century in J.C. Beckett's Protestant Dissent in Ireland.

The term 'Whig' of course originally referred to the Scottish Covenanters, the sense in which it is used in Sir Walter Scott's Old Mortality and The Heart of Midlothian. It would be safe to say that there was no traditional Toryism on the English model among Ulster Presbyterians. Apart from the fact that the period of Tory ascendancy under Queen Anne was remembered as a time of persecution, defence of the established church was obviously an important part of Toryism, and the fact that Irish landlords were overwhelmingly Anglican prevented the religious bond between squire and tenant from which English rural Toryism derived its strength. (11)

Ulster Presbyterianism differed from English dissent both in its theoretical claim to the rights of an establishment, and in its numerical strength. The most numerically strong of the English
dissenters in the eighteenth century (outside Methodism) were the Congregationalists, but by the 1851 Census, there were still very few areas in which they made up more than eleven per cent of the population (and this was after something of a revival in the early nineteenth century). Their adherence to the idea of independent congregations consisting only of the visibly saved worked against any claims to the status of a national church incorporating the whole population. English Presbyterianism on the other hand wasn't organised on a national scale until the nineteenth century, and in the eighteenth century its main distinctions from the Independents lay in its insistence that more than one minister should be present at ordination and in its greater tendency towards Unitarianism. The substance of the English Whig ideal of religious tolerance lay not in the strength of dissent so much as in the strength of the 'moderate churchmen' prepared to defend the rights of dissenters. (12)

In Ulster (the nine counties) on the other hand, the 1834 Report of the Committee for Public Instruction revealed a majority of Presbyterians over Anglicans of 27% against 19% of the whole population (the Roman Catholics having a majority over the two Protestant groups combined). This did not prevent Presbyterians from complaining that the Report - based on returns made by Anglican clergymen - had underestimated their strength. Campbell in 1787, and William Steele Dickson in 1792, claimed that the majority of Irish Protestants were Presbyterians. They could also feel themselves to have
a more substantial ecclesiastical organisation than the Church of Ireland in that all their ministers met annually in Synod to decide the affairs of the Church, while the sovereign body of the Church of Ireland was the Irish Parliament where its bishops were only represented as a minority in the House of Lords. As Beckett argues, they were, however, inhibited from using this numerical and organisational strength to pursue their own political interests in opposition to the Church of Ireland, by the overwhelming numerical preponderance of the Roman Catholics. It was recognised that the position of Protestants - both Anglican and Presbyterian - was precarious and depended on the strength of Protestant ascendancy. (13)

Although nineteenth century Liberalism was largely defined by its support for Catholic claims, the Whig 'toleration' of the eighteenth century was for the most part confined to Protestants. Its principal theorist, Locke, excluded Catholics on the grounds that theirs was the religion most favourable to tyranny. Whiggery had after all been initially distinguished from Toryism by its more uncompromising anti-Catholicism, and the Williamite revolution had been a Whig victory. 'Civil and religious liberty' was seen as a Protestant slogan in opposition to Catholicism and, as late as the 1780s, the 'Protestant interest' was a toast acceptable to radical Whigs, including some who were later involved in the United Irish rising. (14)

There was a strong tendency towards theological latitudinarianism among the moderate churchmen who supported Whig political ideals in England and Ireland and in both countries they were closely
associated with latitudinarian Dissent. English Presbyterianism, with its tendency towards nonsubscription and Unitarianism, was closely associated with the Church of England, and aimed more at reforming than at rivalling it. The victory for nonsubscription at the Salter's Hall conference had been welcomed by Anglican latitudinarians, most notably by Bishop Hoadly; and the ideal of a minimal doctrinal standard and the free exercise of a reason which was assumed not to be innately corrupt was also embodied in the Anglican 'Feathers Tavern Petition' of 1772. The failure of the Feathers Tavern Petition helped towards the formation of distinct Unitarian congregations in England by both Anglican and Dissenting clergymen who were closely associated with the more radical Lockean Whigs. (15)

There was a link between this English Unitarian Whiggery and the Irish Patriot Party in the person of John Jebb, who had resigned from the Church of England following the failure of the Feathers Tavern Petition and who, in December 1779, addressed a pamphlet to a meeting of Middlesex freeholders calling for a national convention which would have authority to dissolve the House of Commons - the assembled nation having the authority to dissolve the social contract. Jebb was one of the 'Knights of St Patrick' or 'Monks of the Screw' which had been formed in Dublin in 1779 with Flood, Grattan, Charlemont, Daly, Burgh and Yelverton, pledged to secure greater independence for the Irish legislature. The conventions of the Irish Volunteer movement, in which he
played an active part, came close to realising his ideas in practice. He was also tutor to the United Irishman, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who subsequently became a Presbyterian and sided with the putatively Unitarian Remonstrants in the 1820s. Grattan's attitude towards religious disputes was succinctly summed up in a speech he made in 1782 (against the penal code): 'when men begin to differ upon principles of religion, it is because they have no greater object to engage their attention.' (16)

This is not to suggest the intrinsic connection between Unitarianism and irreligion seen by their orthodox opponents. There was in this period a greater theological seriousness among Unitarian Whigs than among High Church Tories. But while Unitarian conclusions might be regarded as true, they were not regarded as necessary to salvation. Latitudinarian Christianity, which tended towards agnosticism on the question of the Trinity, was characterised by an indifference to doctrinal distinctions, and this facilitated a secular approach to politics.

LATITUDINARIANISM AND POLITICS

Although there was very little explicit Unitarianism in Ulster in the late eighteenth century, there were several Synod of Ulster ministers who argued publicly against the use of creeds and in favour of latitudinarian principles, most notably Rev John Cameron of Dunluce. Cameron had been a Reformed Presbyterian who joined the Synod in 1752. In 1769, he published The Catholic
Christian, or the True Religion Sought and Found under the pseudonym 'Theophilus Philander'. In it, a Christian resolves to hold communion with all the major denominations, since he is convinced that there is goodness in all of them. He visits a Roman Catholic priest, a Church of England minister, and ministers of the Synod of Ulster, Associate Presbytery and 'Mountain Men' (Reformed Presbyterians). In each case he finds that he cannot hold communion with them without renouncing communion with the others. Finally, he finds a non-subscribing clergyman, who explains to him that creeds provide the basis for the intolerant and persecuting spirit of the major churches and that free inquiry is the best preservative against religious error. The scriptural use of the word 'heresy', he argues, refers not to mistaken opinion but to hypocrisy: 'No mistaken opinions will render a man an Heretic in the sight of God while his heart is sincere and his life such as becometh a Christian.' (17)

Cameron was quickly replied to from inside the Synod by Benjamin McDowell, who argued that 'The Catholic Christian' raised no serious theological objection to the Westminster Confession of Faith and therefore advanced no good reasons for refusing to subscribe to it. When Cameron said: 'I am persuaded that it would be much more to the honour of the Christian religion if men's characters were made the terms of admission to ministerial and Christian communion rather than their opinions', he was falling into the doctrine of justification by works rather than justification by faith:
'It is oft times remarked that betwixt what is called new light in this kingdom and Popery there is a greater affinity than the generality are aware of: that the former contains the essence of the latter, the merit of works, and naturally leads to it.'

Cameron aims 'to spread indifference about all doctrines in order to make way for the most pernicious ones', substituting human righteousness for Christ as the agent of salvation. (18)

In 1781, the Presbytery of Armagh declared that they had abandoned subscription to the Westminster Confession as a condition of entering the ministry, and in 1782 McDowell tried to tighten up the Synod's regulations on subscription, arguing that it was necessary to prevent the spread of Unitarianism. His main opponent was William Campbell, who thought that most ministers were Trinitarians, but some questioned what he called 'the metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity'. The Synod resolved in 1783 to leave the matter to the discretion of presbyteries, thus in effect weakening the application of the Pacific Act of 1720 under which subscription (albeit allowing for qualifications and exceptions) was an obligation imposed by the Synod. (19)

It is important to note that the doctrine of the Trinity as such was not the central cause of disputes over subscription in the eighteenth century. The Presbytery of Dromore was formed in 1743 out of the Presbytery of Armagh because of the latter's loose attitude
towards subscription. The immediate cause of the split was the Synod's refusal to allow the licensing of Richard Arprichard in 1737, because he scrupled subscription. Arprichard's objections were that he couldn't accept that invincibly ignorant heathens were necessarily damned, nor that the civil magistrate had a right to interfere in religious matters. There was a small pamphlet war on the question of the magistrate's power at the time. When the Presbytery of Bangor split with the secession of the rigidly subscribing Presbytery of Belfast in 1774, the proximate cause was the ordination of Rev Samuel Martin Stephenson, despite his scruples over subscription. But Stephenson's grounds were that the Presbytery's formula for subscription - 'I believe that all the important doctrines of the Christian religion are contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith' - was absurd and could not exclude heretics since Unitarians could easily subscribe to it. His main doctrinal objection was to the view (in Chap XXIX para VII) that there was a real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Communion service. Robert Allen thinks that Stephenson was probably an Arminian and that the main worry of the orthodox was not Unitarianism so much as the elevation of human rationality and capacity for goodness as against reliance on the saving power of revealed truth and Christ's atonement. (20)

McDowell's reduction of new light theology and popery to a common denominator of justification by works is misleading. The 'works' condemned by Calvin as ineffective were primarily devotional and participation in the Church was necessary to their fulfilment. The
human qualities admired by John Cameron and William Campbell were rationality and liberality, qualities assumed to be discoverable in a natural man who could belong to any or no religious faith at all. What was shocking was not that these qualities were admired but the argument that no-one who possessed them could possibly be damned, thus rendering the Church as an engine of salvation superfluous. (21)

This theology of human virtue was linked to reformist politics in 1782, when the Presbytery of Killyleagh published an advertisement in the Belfast News Letter against the penal code in which they said that 'to continue penalties against obedient children for the disobedience of their ancestors' was 'a black branch grafted upon the blasphemous doctrine of imputed sin.' They were rebuked in the Synod for the reference to 'imputed sin' which was presumably intended to be provocative since the connection between the penal code and the doctrine of imputed sin is tenuous. One of the ministers in the Presbytery of Killyleagh was William Steele Dickson who was later involved in the United Irish agitation, and who supported Robert Stewart and his son - later Lord Castlereagh - in the Hillsborough elections of 1783 and 1790. (22)

In a sermon on 'Scripture Politics' preached before the Synod of Ulster in 1781, Dickson adopted an interpretation of Rom XIII, 1 - 8 similar to that of the Covenanters: 'religion admits that disobedience is criminal only when the power of the magistrate is exercised "for the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of them
who do well". When this order was inverted, 'resistance becomes not only lawful but necessary and honorable'. The great object of religion was the happiness of men, which was also the great object in politics, so that 'in this important particular, religion and politics are inseparably connected'. Politics, however, was only a part of morality, while religion comprehended the whole:

'Yet the part assigned to religion is subordinated to policy and the dependence to which she hath been reduced truly humiliating. She hath been shackled by forms of human device, as if the parent of happiness was in danger of destroying her favourite issue; bedizened with ceremonies, as if such tawdry ornaments could add to her native beauty; fortified by penal statutes and guarded by gibbets, racks and flames, as if the solid arguments on which she rests her claims, and the power of God - the only power which she acknowledges - were not sufficient to protect and support her.' (23)

The part assigned to religion by Steele Dickson was to 'inculcate the generous affections'. This could only be done freely, without the corrupting aid of the civil power. In Sermons preached before his congregation in Portaferry in December, 1792 and January, 1793, he traced the decline of Christianity from the time of Constantine, when it was incorporated into the state. Presbyterians themselves, he said, had been guilty of intolerance and he particularly attacked the penal laws against Roman Catholics. Thus, he would differ from the Covenanters in defining the good which both
politics and religion were to promote not as a particular theological system but as a morality presumed to be a known quantity common to all Christian denominations. Insofar as the government was oppressing the great majority of its citizens (Presbyterians and Roman Catholics) by penal laws and excessive taxation for purposes of bribery, a struggle for radical reform (which was preferable to violent revolution) was a religious obligation. (24)

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

In 1779, Steele Dickson preached a sermon to the Echlin Volunteer Company, attacking them for refusing to allow Catholics into their ranks. He subsequently regretted that friends had persuaded him to water down his sentiments in the published version. Rev Samuel Barber of Rathfriland, who was also active in supporting Stewart in 1783, and imprisoned on suspicion of United Irish sympathies, preached a sermon to the Castlewellan Rangers and Rathfriland Volunteers in 1779, in which he said: 'I have the honour this day to address a Protestant audience. Let the sounds Derry, Enniskillen, the Boyne and Aughrim rouse us to an imitation of our worthy fathers.'

He reminded them that their French enemy was Roman Catholic, but stressed that they were to be distinguished from Irish Catholics, who had remained peaceful despite the penal laws. He looked forward to a time 'when every creature of God may worship him
in sincerity and truth in the mode agreeable to their consciences, without any to make them afraid... (25)

Catholic Emancipation was first advanced as a realisable political ideal in the 1780s, but was hardly regarded as an immediate possibility until the 1790s. Support for Catholic claims is sometimes treated by modern historians as a natural position for Presbyterians to adopt, and the extent to which they deviated from this natural position after the 1790s then becomes a problem to be solved. But this natural position is itself problematic: Catholic emancipation, granted the existence of an independent Irish Parliament, implied the possibility of Catholic majority rule, and this could hardly be justified even on the grounds of a disinterested political morality when the Roman Catholic Church was widely associated with Anti-Christ. The spread of the United Irish system in the 1790s required as a precondition either a separation of religion and politics (together with an assumption that the latter would be more important in determining social behaviour); or a confidence that the nature of Roman Catholicism was radically changed - that Roman Catholics could behave - in Wolfe Tone's phrase - 'like other people'. (26)

Catholic emancipation was not an inevitable concomitant of a demand for Parliamentary reform. William Drennan's Letters of Orellana, an Irish Helot (1785) argue strongly for reform but against the extension of the franchise to include Catholics. He saw this, not as a strengthening of the demand for reform by bringing the
weight of Catholic opinion to bear on the subject, but as a wea-
kening:

'I assert it as a fact that the leading men among the Catholics
did not begin to agitate this unhappy question. It was forced
upon them by men whose goodness of intention is the best
excuse they can make for their want of foreknowledge; and
who have unconsciously supplied the enemies of reform with
the means of warding off the otherwise irresistible impulse
of public opinion. Let, then, every man among you know
that the Catholics have withdrawn their claim of civil franch-
ise, and that they do it because the business of reform must
be retarded rather than promoted by their interference.'

He goes on to say that he thinks that 'a reform, attended by an
equal participation of civil rights with the Catholics' would be
worse 'than to continue without a reform', his reason being 'that
the plurality among them are placed, as it were, in an earlier
stage of society than the rest of the island.' This was a temporary
state of affairs until they could acquire 'self estimation, conscious
dignity, and in short that republicanism of soul which will announce
to the world that the people who possess it are stamped by the
hand of Heaven, heirs of independence.'

Drennan's argument was wholly secular, and he regarded the absence
of distinctively religious considerations as a virtue. The objection
to Catholic emancipation was not Catholicism as such but the
absence of 'men of weight and estimation to sweeten that leaven
of intolerance and persecution which in other persuasions is not perhaps less in quantity, but is well tempered by numbers in the middle ranks of life; who gently instil into the minds of those beneath them, the milk of human nature....' It is interesting that Drennan, the son of a non-subscribing Presbyterian minister, attributes this civilising function to the wealthier sections of society rather than to a religious ministry - a view which one would associate more easily with Anglicans than with Presbyterians. (27)

In the Belfast Town Debate of January 1792, Rev William Bruce, minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast (non-subscribing) argued against immediate emancipation on similarly secular political grounds. The principle was granted (as it was by Drennan) that government should be indifferent to religious belief and that eventual emancipation was desirable; but 'no man would assert that the Roman Catholics (taking them in the aggregate) are in their present state as well informed, or as capable of holding the reins of government with wisdom and moderation, as the Protestants.' Gradual emancipation was necessary to overcome the prejudice and bitterness left by years of oppression. He also used Fitzgibbon's argument that the only right by which Protestants held their property was a right of conquest which it would be unreasonable to expect Catholics in a position of power to respect. (28)

The Belfast meeting, however, endorsed immediate emancipation by 'a very considerable majority'. Drennan himself had changed his views and had been involved in the foundation of the United
Irish system in 1791. In answer to a number of 'strictures' on the United Irish test in the Belfast News Letter, he explained that a Catholic middle class had emerged on the basis of commercial interests:

'and produced that enlargement of mind, that energy of character and that self dependence which men acquire whose interests do not hang at the mercy of this or that individual, but on general and necessary consumption.... The Catholic mind has thrown off its feudality...’ (29)

The ineffectiveness of the reforms achieved by the Volunteer movement in 1782 by Protestant strength alone was advanced by Robert Thompson as an argument for immediate emancipation:

'all that we have obtained has been to benefit the aristocracy not the people. What have been the advantages of your free constitution, as it is called? why, an advance in the price of boroughs: £3,000 instead of £1,000 for a seat; but how does the point stand in respect to the people? an increase of taxes to bribe our own countrymen to oppress us, which was formerly done by the English gratis. In every step we took to obtain our trade and constitution, our own aristocracy and borough mongers (being chiefly interested) warmly supported us. But is it in their interest to support us in reform? Do they not almost to a man warmly oppose us? How then can one million of Irishmen obtain their rights, in opposition to Irish aristocracy - to English influence -
to three millions of their own countrymen? (30)

But the most decisive influence in popularising the ideal of immediate emancipation was probably the French Revolution, which impressed not only those who were attached to secular politics, but also those who were attached to definite dogmatic statements as not only true but necessary to salvation.

The French Revolution proved that it was possible for Roman Catholics to oppose papal power and absolute monarchy. It changed the balance of world power between 'tyranny' and 'liberty'; and it raised doubts as to the completeness of the Glorious Revolution in England. Wolfe Tone's Argument on Behalf of the Catholics in Ireland pointed to the significance of the Revolution for Protestant attitudes towards Irish Catholics:

'It is not six months since the Pope was publicly burned in effigy at Paris, the capital of that Monarch who is styled the eldest son of the church. Yet the time has been when Philip of France thought he had a good title to the Crown of England from the donation of the Holy Father. The fallacy lies in supposing that what was once true in politics is always true. I do believe the Pope has now more power in Ireland than in some Catholic countries or than he perhaps ought to have. But I confess I look on his power with little apprehension, because I cannot see to what evil purpose it could be exerted; and with the less apprehension as every liberal extension of property or franchise to Catholics will tend to
diminish it. Persecution will keep alive the foolish bigotry and superstition of any sect as the experience of five thousand years has demonstrated. Persecution bound the Irish Catholic to his priest, and the priest to his Pope; the bond of union is drawn tighter by oppression; relaxation will undo it. The emancipated and liberal Frenchman may go to mass and tell his beads; but neither the one nor the other will attend to the rusty and extinguished thunderbolts of the Vatican, or the idle anathemas, which indeed his Holiness is nowadays too prudent and cautious to issue.¹ (31)

MILLENARIAN POLITICS

Such a Catholic rebellion against the Pope was naturally seen by distinctively Calvinist Presbyterians as a very significant event. In 1791, the Burgher Synod issued a Reasons for a Fast which ended by referring to the Synod's continual petitions to God for the downfall of Antichrist, and said that 'the wonderful revolution in France seems to hold out that event as a hastening in the holy Providence of God.' In 1792, the newly established Reformed Presbytery issued a Causes of Fasting, which declared that 'the signs of the times loudly call upon all who have any interest to employ it with God that he would hasten the downfall of Popery, Prelacy, Judaism, together with Mahometan delusion.' It regretted that those working 'for the abolition of tyranny and oppression from
the whole earth, and especially from the lands of our nativity, that have long groaned under the unrelenting jaws of cruel despots' did not appreciate 'that God's covenant interest in his Son and in his Church is the surest pledge the world has for overturning oppression and introduction of universal liberty.' The signs of the times indicated however that the period of the pouring out of the last vial on the Beast and his kingdom was imminent. This was written by James McKinney who went to America in 1793 after he had, according to M. Hutchinson, 'barely escaped from the hands of the Government for his connection with the troubles in Ireland.' (32)

1793 saw the publication in Edinburgh of Robert Fleming's Discourse on the Rise and Fall of the Papacy, written in 1701, which argued that the period in which Fleming was writing coincided with the pouring out of the fourth vial in Revelation, which represented the rise and fall of France as a Catholic power, France being symbolised by the sun. He argued that the judgement on France would occur in 1794. This was reprinted in Belfast in 1795, and Miller shows that the duty on it was paid by 'the projectors of the Northern Star' - the journal of the United Irishmen. In 1793, the Northern Star published a set of queries 'humbly submitted to the divines and the religious in Ireland, Great Britain and elsewhere by A Believer in Prophecy, Saintfield, 14/4/93:

'Querie 1. In what period was to take place the fall of Antichrist, or the two beasts spoken of in Revelation (termed in the original Wild Beasts), which, by comparing Revelation
with Dan, 7th chapter and 17th verse, appears to signify Tyranny in the Christian and Mahometan worlds?

Querie II. Has the present contest in which the World is about to be engaged any of the striking features of the battle in which the beast and his party were to be totally overthrown, as a prelude to the flowing in of Jew and Gentile into the Christian Church: and an introduction to the peaceful reign of a thousand years — described in Revelation, chapter 12, from the 11th verse?..." (33)

The believer in prophecy from Saintfield is almost certainly Rev Thomas Ledlie Birch, who was accused of preaching an inflammatory sermon at the United Irish rallying point of Creevy Rocks on the 10th June, 1798 (though he denied the charge). He was also active in supporting Stewart in the 1783 election. In June 1793, he preached a sermon before the Synod of Ulster, with Dickson as moderator, in which he declared:

'We must think that the final overthrow of the Beast, or opposing power, is almost at the door; and especially as we may observe in a certain contest the seemingly literal accomplishment of the prophecy of the Battle of Armageddon, in which the Beast and his adherents are to be cut off, as a prelude to the peaceful reign of 1,000 years.' (34)

The coy reference to 'a certain contest' suggests the war between Britain and France, in which Birch clearly sympathised with the French (Dissenting ministers in Belfast were accused in a report of
the Lords' Committees in March 1793, of praying for the success of French arms. This was firmly denied by the nonsubscribing ministers, Bruce and Vance, and by the orthodox James Bryson; it was rather more equivocally denied by the orthodox Sinclaire Kelburn, who was later imprisoned for complicity in the rebellion.\(^{(35)}\)

Birch's interpretation of prophecy is interestingly different from that of Fleming, but closer to McKinney's. For Birch, the Battle of Armageddon was to last until 1848, when the Millenium would begin; Fleming postponed the opening of the seventh vial to about the year 2,000, but thought the Pope would suffer a direct, though not final, attack in 1848. Both reached the year 1848 by adding 1260 years (adjusted to take account of the difference between the 'prophetic' and the Julian calendar) to the year 606. But their interpretations of the significance of that year differed. For Fleming, it was the year in which the Emperor Phocas gave Pope Boniface the title of Universal Bishop. For Birch, it was the year in which the Pope confirmed Phocas' title as Emperor. Fleming identified Antichrist directly with the papacy, but Birch equated it with 'the love of worldly power', which included the papacy but also included all persecution, which was a refusal to recognise that Christ's kingdom was not of this world, and a usurpation of His right to change the hearts of men. The progressive removal of penal statutes against Roman Catholics and Dissenters was, for Birch, part of the assault on Antichrist's power.\(^{(36)}\)

Fleming was referred to in War Proclaimed and Victory Ensured by
Rev William Stavely, who, however, preferred an interpretation more like Birch's by which the present period represented the sixth vial, which included the Battle of Armageddon, and the flowing of Jew and Gentile into the Christian church. Stavely was the most energetic of Reformed Presbyterian ministers in Ireland at the time, and he was imprisoned on a charge of taking part in the rebellion. The involvement of Covenanters in the rebellion is particularly problematic since they were distinguished by their refusal to recognise the authority of an uncovenanted magistracy and certainly couldn't recognise the authority of a magistracy which included papists or prelatists. (37)

This view, already stated in the Auchinsaugh Renovation of 1716 (when they constituted themselves as a distinct church) and the Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1761, is repeated very strongly in a pamphlet called Two Sons of Oil (after Zechariah Ch IV v 14), written in America by Rev Samuel Brown Wylie who was forced to emigrate at the time of the Rebellion, while he was still a licentiate. His main complaint against the American Constitution is that 'the government gives a legal security and establishment to gross heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, under the notion of a liberty of conscience.' A specific grievance he cited was the licensing of a Roman Catholic society in Philadelphia. (38)

A more equivocal account of covenanting politics can be found in James McKinney's View of the Rights of God and Man, also published in America. He identifies the covenanting cause with the cause of
liberty, but evades the question of the magistrate's right to punish heresy by assuming that the Christian religion revealed in its purity would be so attractive that all men would wish to subscribe to it. The major obstacle to this happy outcome was tyranny, and its support by the churches:

'There is nothing of which natural men are better judges than of the common rights with which humanity has been endowed by its bountiful author. When, therefore, they hear the nominal representatives of Jesus standing up in the face of the sun, tell the Christian Church that it has nothing to do with the political movements of the earth, it is not wonderful that a religion which is conceived to be so slavish should become the object of derision to men just escaped from the dreary dungeon of gallish oppression.' (39)

The reference to 'natural men' indicates the extent to which Lockean ideas were taken for granted even among strict Calvinists as the means by which politics were to be thought about; Wylie refers to 'the social compact, in which mutual protection is solemnly stipulated.' (40)

Infidelity, in McKinney's view, was less objectionable than hypocrisy, and could even play a role in furthering God's work:

'It is a piece, perhaps, of the most shameless effrontery that has ever been practised when the despots of the earth pretend to sigh and sob at the growth of infidelity, while their own wretched and abominable principles have been the true cause
of at least nine tenths of all the evil which at present
threatens the interest of Immanuel upon earth.... The roar-
ing lion of infidelity, with all its yelping whelps, is not so
offensive to the ears of a pious, honesthearted Christian as
the melancholy croakings of these devouring ravens...
In the name of wisdom, let even infidelity, if heaven will
have it so, tear in pieces the charm of hypocrisy, super-
stition and domineering pride rather than that they should
longer remain a scourge either to the Church or to the
world. *(41)*

A particular infidel McKinney probably (as the title of his essay
suggests) had in mind was Tom Paine. In 1796, Stavely wrote an
Appeal to Light as a reply to the _Age of Reason_, in which he said
in the Introduction: 'Was my arm long enough, I would stretch it
over to the Gallic shore and take you by the hand as a friend of
the liberties of men and a pointed opposer of despots.' He was
present at the execution of the first United Irish martyr, William
Orr, an old friend of his according to Samuel Ferguson, though he
is supposed to have held New Light views. He was also at the
execution of another United Irish martyr, Daniel Eglish. However,
in a letter written shortly after his arrest in June, 1798, he denied
having been a United Irishman himself:

'Nor did I ever say with my lips or write with my hand or
signify by any instrument whatever that I would join with
Roman Catholics, and I now declare that I would not join
with the United Irishmen because their principles are deistical, their practice very immoral, such as I mean as I have any acquaintance with.'

After his release, he changed congregations because of suspicion over his part in the rising and, together with Rev Hans Boggs, he submitted to a censure from the Presbytery. The congregation which he left - Knockbracken - was later (in the 1830s) associated with political conservatism, while the congregation he joined - Cullybackey - was associated with political liberalism. (42)

The United Irish leader, Thomas Addis Emmet, claims that Covenanters joined the United Irishmen 'in numbers', and Miller comments on this:

"Emmet's own explanation of their conduct - that they became convinced that the Presbyterian aims of the Solemn League and Covenant "could only be accomplished by the efforts of reason, which could best be promoted by mixing with the misled (that is with the Catholics - DM) and gradually convincing them of their errors" - betrays the usual naivety of the Dublin intellectual. His account of the visit of Father Quigley, a United Irish leader, to a Covenanting district, however, unwittingly provides a clue to their motivation. 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" he writes "their joy was almost extravagant." The real key to their behaviour is not reason
but joy: if popish priests themselves were taking a hand in
dismantling the outworks of Bayblon, the promised deliverance
must indeed be at hand'. (43)

However, the evidence of McKinney and Stavely, and the later
politico-theological arguments of the Eastern Presbytery, suggest that
Paine's ideas had made a considerable impact on Covenanters. The
United Irish argument that 'persecution, in itself unjust, had also
been found insufficient for reclaiming Catholics' is the argument
continually repeated by Rev John Paul of the Eastern Presbytery in
his dispute in the 1830s with Rev Thomas Houston over the power
of the Christian magistrate. In the course of that dispute, Houston
referred to a longstanding 'ungodly leaven' in the Church 'at least
since the political disturbance of 1798. About that time, and soon
after, a number of individuals entered the membership of the Church,
distinguished by little else than their hatred of the British govern-
ment...'. In repelling the charge on a personal level, Paul none-
theless indicated the strength of United Irish sympathies at the
time:

'no man living was under stronger temptation to join that
body and to imbibe their principles than myself. If the
influence of my pastor and my preceptor and my neighbours;
if the influence of friendship and affection and hope and
fear; if the influence of the tide of public opinion sweeping
all before it; if all these influences united and combined
had been capable of making me a United Irishman, I certainly
would have been one.' (44)

Paine's attack on toleration as the counterfeit of intolerance - 'the one assumes to itself the right of withholding Liberty of Conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the Pope armed with fire and faggot and the other is the Pope selling or granting indulgences' - may have provided Paul with the means of explaining away the attack on tolerance in the 'Act, Declaration and Testimony'. And his account of the origin of civil society as 'a compact between God and man, from the beginning of time' is closer to covenanting political theory than Locke's free association of natural man. (45)

SUMMARY

While it is quite probable that Reformed Presbyterians such as Stavelly and Wylie could not co-operate with Catholics or with the generally latitudinarian United Irish leadership, their inclusion of the government among the forces of Antichrist, together with the view that the times were ripe for radical change, may well have been important in helping the tiny handful of Belfast and Dublin radicals to find a mass base in Presbyterian Ulster - especially in Antrim, where the Covenanters were especially strong. The simplified confrontation between the forces of Christ and Antichrist was confused with the equally simplified confrontation promoted by the United Irishmen between the forces of liberty and the forces of
despotism. The Volunteer movement had familiarised Protestants with the idea of achieving political change by popular armed pressure. As Samuel Barber preached in 1779: 'those who resign the sword must also give up the sceptre and permit those who wear the sword to govern them.' John Jebb and others involved in the Volunteer movement had drawn out of Locke the conclusion that the associated people had an authority greater than that of their supposed delegates in Parliament, and it was a common view among Presbyterians that the Church - which was also made up of the associated people - had a similar authority. The problem lay in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the 'nation' were Catholics, who were an unknown quantity politically, identified both with the papal Antichrist and with gallic despotism. The French Revolution was seen as combining an attack on the Catholic establishment with an attack on secular tyranny, and it had been conducted by Catholics. This, combined with the emergence of a secular and non-aristocratic centre to Catholic politics in the reformed Catholic Committee, which held a convention in Dublin at the beginning of 1793, suggested that Roman Catholics were changing their nature. In declaring war on France in 1793, England was siding with the forces of Antichrist and despotism and, through its wartime measures, government was assuming an increasingly despotic aspect in Ireland. Nonetheless, it is hardly surprising that a union with Catholics on this basis was tenuous and short-lived, existing chiefly as a notion in areas where there were relatively few Catholics, and suffering a severe shock when news came of the sectarian nature of the rising in Wexford. (46)
CHAPTER TWO

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT, 1800-1820
INTRODUCTION

The most immediately striking thing about the period following the United Irish rising is the relative absence in Ulster Presbyterianism of controversial literature, and of practical initiatives in religious affairs. The main issues which agitated the General Synod during the period were, first, the government's method for distributing a substantially increased Regium Donum; then, about 1810, the right of William Steele Dickson, as a minister 'implicated' in the rebellion, to receive it; then, about 1816, the proposal that the Belfast Academical Institution (formed on an initiative from outside the Synod) should be used as a seminary for Presbyterian ministers against government opposition. The controversy over Regium Donum may have contributed to the expansion of both the Seceders and the Covenanters. The Covenanters formed a Synod in 1811. The Seceders, however, lost some support when they accepted Regium Donum in 1810 on the same terms as the General Synod. One minister, James Bryce, left with his congregation and later formed a separate connection on voluntary principles. Several other congregations left over a period of time for similar reasons, attaching themselves to the 'old light' Burgher and Antiburgher Synods in Scotland.

None of these events suggests much development of evangelical endeavour, or even of a theological readjustment to facilitate such endeavour, though Reid/Killen says that 'the election of Mr Hanna as professor of theology (in the Belfast Academical Institution in
1817 – PB) demonstrates the ascendancy of the evangelical party in the largest section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Hanna was indeed evangelical in the broad sense that he supported missionary work and clerical initiatives towards social improvement, but in this he was still atypical (Killen is probably thinking chiefly of his orthodoxy). The Synod for the most part remained surprisingly aloof from the interest in social improvement – especially in the field of education – which was gaining ground in the Church of Ireland. (1)

NON-PRESBYTERIAN INITIATIVES

The main impetus for this activity seems to have come from London and it was orientated towards the predominately Roman Catholic areas of Ireland. The Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practise of the Christian Religion was founded in 1792 within the Church of Ireland. The London Missionary Society was formed in 1795 on a congregationalist and Scottish secession initiative. It was involved in establishing the shortlived Evangelical Society of Ulster. In 1798, as a direct response to the rebellion, the Irish Methodist Conference began a general mission to the Irish speaking population, which initiated the remarkable career of Gideon Ousely. The Hibernian Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge in Ireland (the 'London Hibernian Society') was founded in 1806 and, like the Association for Discountenancing
Vice, soon concentrated on establishing schools. The Hibernian Bible Society was also formed in 1806 on the initiative of the Dublin Anglicans, B.W. Mathias and Joseph Singer, in imitation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Hibernian Sunday School Society was formed in Dublin in 1809.

These organisations were quite consciously a reaction to the threat posed by the ideology of the French Revolution. The Fifth Report of the London Hibernian Society, for example, says:

'If but a fourth part of her (Ireland's - PB) lowest population - slaves as they are to a dark and ferocious bigotry, and imagining themselves to have no interest in preserving the present settlement of their country, were once organised under the standard of invasion and rebellion by a foe whose ability equals his malignance, the consequences are too obvious and too terrible to require detailment.'

Irish Protestants had of course been living for a long time with the threat of violent disruption posed by the Whiteboys. But the French Revolution and the radical ferment it provoked throughout the British Isles - issuing in actual rebellion in Ireland - opened up the new possibility that 'the mob' could overthrow the existing social order on a more permanent basis, given the right leadership. Eighteenth century civilisation, with its almost neurotic concern for order, rationality, simplicity and enlightenment, was confined to a thin social layer, precariously stretched across a disorderly and 'unenlightened' mass with whom it had very little social contact.
In Catholic Ireland, the gulf between the civilised ruling elite and the great mass of the population was all the greater because of the religious difference and, in many cases, a difference in language. In addition, the prevailing form of social organisation (the landlord/tenant relationship) had been imposed by conquest. The native form of social organisation, held together by clan loyalties, had continued unchanged in its major features for over a thousand years before being violently disrupted by outside forces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The removal of the clan leadership and the imposition of an alien culture, together with the penal legislation which prevented the Catholic church from providing an alternative leadership, rendered the population unable to effect a permanent overthrow of the new social order. Although the Whiteboys could achieve a temporary domination of parts of Ireland; and although they could exert sufficient pressure to prevent agricultural reform (with its consequent clearance of small peasants off the land), they could not produce a leadership capable of providing - or even of realistically proposing - alternative methods of government. (3)

The culture of the Irish peasantry in the eighteenth century was isolated not only from the English speaking and largely secularised culture of their landlords, but also from developments in the organisation of the main body of the Catholic Church in Europe. John Bossy has shown how the Counter Reformation in the seventeenth century was seen by the Catholic Old English as a means of 'civilising' the Old Irish, and how it was resisted as such after the
1620s, when the Old Irish regained control of the hierarchy. The failure of the Counter Reformation, followed by governmental repression, which was, of course, most effective in the upper tiers of the Church, meant that Irish Catholicism remained, in Bossy's phrase, 'a conglomerate of autonomous entities', with no uniform practise of mass attendance and no commonly recognised body of theological ideas. While recent historians have been at pains to point out that the penal laws did not of themselves constitute an effective obstacle to commercial development in the Catholic community, it would be difficult to exaggerate their effect on religious and cultural life - though the effect was more to prevent developments that had not yet occurred than to suppress developments that were already taking place. (4)

The result was that by the end of the eighteenth century the culture of the great mass of the population was hostile to that of the ruling class, not from the standpoint of a realisable alternative to it, but of a form of social organisation which could not be regained. The religious culture could, according to Miller, help deal with the anxieties of the agricultural year (seasonal festivals) and, Bossy suggests, with the anomy induced by death (wakes), but it was functional only for a society with a very limited number of options available to it. There was no scope for upward mobility into a culture which was both foreign and incomprehensible. (5)

This was the problem to which the evangelical agencies from the 1790s onwards had to address themselves. While the government
set itself the task of suppressing or suborning the radical intelligent-sia which could offer this disaffected mass a revolutionary leadership, the evangelical societies aimed to close the fearful gap between what they saw as the civilised world and the great mass of the society. Early nineteenth century Evangelical Christianity was remarkable for its - almost unprecedented - insistence that social problems were capable of solution. Important as the desire to save souls undoubtedly was, the emphasis on provision of education facilities (largely, though not exclusively, in the English language) rather than on the work of itinerant Irish speaking preachers such as Gideon Ousely, was a recognition of a social need - already registered within the community itself by the informal establishment of 'hedge schools' - which had to be met in the interests of social stability. As the Third Report of the Hibernian Sunday School Society declared:

'The public feeling has undergone an awful and powerful process in the events of the last thirty years. "In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, Revelation underwent a total eclipse; while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age and sex in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre - that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generation of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society and the safeguard of the social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions and
secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyments of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of their thrones." The important lesson has not been wholly lost on these countries; our princes - our nobles - the great and wealthy of our land have associated for the purposes of conveying the blessing of education to the remotest quarters of the empire.' (6)

So far, I have used the term 'evangelical' in its broadest possible sense, without reference to distinct theological views. While the Association for Discountenancing Vice was distinctly Anglican, using the Church of England's catechism (which, however, was non-compulsory for Catholic children), the London Hibernian Society, the Hibernian Bible Society, and the Hibernian Sunday School Society tried to be non-sectarian with regard to both denominational and theological divisions within Protestantism: 'Their great and sole desire is to make proselytes to genuine, uncorrupted Christianity, as it appears on the pages of the New Testament, without any note or comment whatsoever.' This emphasis on the Bible (and particularly on the New Testament) alone as the religion of Protestants could be shared by latitudinarians. In 1814, the London Hibernian Society changed its name to emphasise its educative function and its exclusive concern with the Bible, as opposed to 'religious knowledge' in general. It said that: 'the operations of the Society being thus simplified, all occasion of conscientious
scruple is removed and Christians of every name, it is presumed, will cheerfully concur in promoting this labour of love.' While struggles with local priests were described in detail and the society boasted that every Catholic schoolmaster it employed 'immediately withdraws from his priest as to confession,' occasions on which cooperation with priests occurred were looked on with pride and, in 1815, they boasted that 'many of the school houses are Catholic chapels.' The rapid spread of the Society's schools (140 in 1814, 347 in 1817) indicates that it was answering a need felt in the community - presumably for basic literacy rather than for conversion to 'genuine, uncorrupted Christianity.' (7)

The period in which the London Hibernian Society changed its name and the emphasis of its work also saw the appearance of the most important of all the efforts to bring the Irish Catholic population into the ambit of British Protestant culture - the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland, or 'Kildare Place Society'. Under government patronage, this grew rapidly from eight schools in 1816, to 1,621 in 1831. The government gave a grant of £6,000 in 1816 which, by 1831, had become £30,000 which, as Akenson points out, is all the more surprising in that the first parliamentary grant for education in England (£20,000) was made in 1833. It also used the Bible without note or comment, but it included Catholics, of whom Daniel O'Connell was one until 1819, on its Board of Managers. (8)

While these developments display an evangelical devotion to social
improvement, they precluded an emphasis on saving grace, and the absence of dogmatic content in the education provided was indeed a condition of government aid (which was also given to the London Hibernian Society). Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs resulted in 1814 in the formation of the Irish Evangelical Society, again on an initiative from London. This initiative was mainly congregationalist and it eventually became a distinctly congregationalist body. It concentrated on preaching the Gospel rather than on providing social services and seems to have had little effect, though, together with the appearance within the Church of Ireland of the 'Irish Society' (the Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their own Language) in 1816, it indicated a shift towards a more purely conversionary emphasis. The 'Irish Society' provided schools, but since the education was given in Irish, it was not so straightforwardly an attempt to bring Irish Catholics into the ambit of British culture.(9)

THE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY OF ULSTER

What is most remarkable for our present purpose is the lack of involvement or even interest shown in this activity by the northern Presbyterian connections. The most distinctly Presbyterian initiative, which seems to have been confined to a revivalism among Presbyterians themselves, was the Evangelical Society of Ulster, formed by a group of Burgher ministers in 1798 in the immediate aftermath

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of the Rebellion. It adopted a policy of interdenominational co-operation to promote basic salvationist doctrine without emphasising the peculiar tenets of each connection, and it promoted the idea of itinerant preaching. It found supporters both among the Anti-burghers and in the Synod of Ulster, and it applied to the London Missionary Society for itinerant preachers. (10)

In June 1799, however, Rev Thomas Campbell of Ahorey was criticised in the Antiburgher Synod for sitting on its committee, and the Synod resolved that, while recognising the Society's good intentions, 'the principles of the Constitution are entirely latitudinarian, whereby the truth of the Gospel is in danger of being destroyed and the practice of godliness overthrown where they have been established in the Providence of God.' Campbell was nonetheless allowed to continue as a subscriber, but in 1800, the Synod resolved that 'persons belonging to our communion should be admonished to withdraw from private religious societies not under our inspection and join with those under our inspection.' (11)

The Burghers, after initially approving the Society, passed a resolution in 1800 against lay preachers not commissioned by ordained preachers, preachers interfering with the congregations of their colleagues, and 'promiscuous communion in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.' A minority felt that these resolutions did not go far enough, and thought that members of the ESU were following a schismatic course. (12)
The Society was not formally condemned by the Synod of Ulster, but in 1804 the principle of itinerant preaching was condemned in a motion 'that no man not a member of this body or a licentiate under its care (the Presbytery of Antrim and the Southern Association excepted) shall be permitted to officiate for us in our congregations, until he shall first submit his credentials to the Presbytery in whose bounds he wishes to preach and until he shall be approved by the Presbytery.' It is not clear if this was an attack on the Evangelical Society, which was probably defunct by this time, but Alexander Carson of Tobermore gave it as one of his reasons for leaving the Synod in the same year: 'Shall I then submit to be cooped up in a corner and restrained by human fetters from lending a hand to rescue my brethren from the pit of destruction?' (13)

In 1805, the rule was amended to add the Church of Scotland to the Presbytery of Antrim and Southern Association as exceptions and in 1806 it was explained that the resolution didn't exclude any regularly ordained and zealous minister of any other Protestant church from occasionally using the Synod's pulpits. This probably represents more of a concession to interdenominational moderatism than to interdenominational evangelicalism of the kind being promoted by the ESU. (14)

Of the Burghers involved in the ESU, George Hamilton of Armagh and John Gibson of Richill went Independent in 1802 and 1803 respectively, taking their congregations with them. Gibson's former congregation in Sligo also went Independent. William Gunn joined
them at about the same time, though his congregation at Smithborough rejoined the Burgher Synod in 1812. The Antiburgher, Thomas Campbell, left the Synod in 1806, but this seems more related to doubts about the New Testimony of the Scottish Synod than to his membership of the ESU, which he had left in 1800. He emigrated to America, where he became a leader in a new movement, which eventually gave birth to the 'Disciples of Christ' on evangelical but non-subscribing principles. Carson became a non-subscribing Independent in 1804. An Independent congregation was established at about the same time, which built a church in Donegall Street in 1804 with money provided by Robert Haldane.\(^{(15)}\)

Carson’s Reasons for Separating from the Synod of Ulster indicate a wide gulf between the Congregationalist emphasis on an individual experience of conversion and the Presbyterian emphasis on membership of a disciplined church. He opposed subscription to creeds and confessions - even impeccably orthodox ones - on the grounds that mere profession of faith was meaningless without a new birth. He believed in what he saw as a closed communion, confined to those who could give evidence of new birth. But his closed communion would certainly have looked to the Burgher Synod like ‘promiscuous communion’, since he was indifferent about the denomination to which his communicant belonged. He praised the Congregationalist system because it was so impractical from the point of view of human organisation, that it required the presence of God for its survival: ‘a Presbyterian court can proceed as
independent of God as a court of civil justice'. Soon after his conversion, he followed the Haldanes further and became a Baptist. (16)

Carson was the most substantial of the Society's converts to congregationalism but the threat posed by interdenominational salvationist preaching in this period does not appear to have been great, especially when compared with the success of the Haldanes in Scotland. There, a substantial Congregationalist and Baptist cause was established. The 1834 Report of the Committee of Public Instruction, however, lists only eleven Independent churches and six Baptist churches in the whole of Ulster. The Antiburgher Synod's strong condemnation of the Society - and the less strong condemnation by the Burghers - was probably due to concern at developments in Scotland. The Narrative and Testimony published by the Scottish Antiburghers in 1804 condemns Haldane's 'Tabernacle people' in terms reminiscent of those in which the Irish Antiburghers condemned the Evangelical Society:

'In fine, this scheme has a tendency to spread independency and latitudinarianism more widely in this country, to discredit the office of the ministry and the ordinance of preaching, and to throw open a wide door to anarchy and confusion in the church.' (17)

The Evangelical Society is probably best seen as a 'spilling over' of an essentially Scottish phenomenon into Ulster. The Synod of Ulster's resolution to guard against itinerant preaching follows a more strongly worded resolution by the General Assembly of the Church of

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Scotland in 1799. Carson had completed his studies in Glasgow in 1798 and had been associated with Ralph Wardlaw, who became a Congregationalist under the Haldanes' influence in 1800. It wasn't until 1810 that a reply was made to his 'Reasons' and even then its author, Andrew Stevens, was a layman. It consists of a rather arid collection of New Testament quotations in support of Presbyterian principles of church government. Stevens himself is critical of the failure of ministers to reply and accuses them of failing in their duty to counsel an erring brother. Although there was a bitter law suit over the possession of Carson's church in Tobermore, it does not seem that the Synod felt itself to be greatly threatened by the ideas Carson was very ably expounding. (18)

THE SYNOD OF ULSTER

The most prominent 'evangelicals' in the Synod in this period were Benjamin McDowell, minister since 1778 of Mary's Abbey in Dublin, whom we have already seen defending subscription and orthodox Calvinism against John Cameron, and Samuel Hanna, from 1799 minister of the Third Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast, where he succeeded Rev Sinclair Kelburn, who was in prison on suspicion of involvement in the United Irish rising.

As far back as 1787, McDowell had been involved in an apparently shortlived General Evangelical Society and in 1797, he appears as one of the directors of the London Missionary Society. His
primary interest thus seems to have been more in the salvationist side of evangelical endeavour than in social improvement. He was, and felt himself to be, untypical of the Synod. He was raised in New Jersey, by Reformed Presbyterian parents, and studied at Princeton before being received into the Church of Scotland. We have seen how he failed to impress on the Synod the necessity of subscription. During his controversy with Cameron, he suggested, in 1775, that orthodox ministers might have to secede, and his withdrawal to Dublin in 1778 to a congregation of only six families was a physical separation which gave him freedom to develop in ways significantly different from those of the rest of the Synod. He created a substantial orthodox Presbyterian cause in Dublin. In 1804, he opposed the Synod's resolution restricting the right of ministers of other denominations to use their pulpits and in 1807, he published a very critical Letter to the Ministers of the Synod of Ulster under the pseudonym, 'Amicus'. (19)

McDowell's coadjutor in Dublin from 1791 was James Horner, who joined him in trying to revive lapsed Presbyterian causes in the South and West of Ireland. In 1813, McDowell's duties were taken over by James Carlile, who was one of the first secretaries of the Irish Evangelical Society. Like McDowell, Carlile's formative experience had taken place outside the ambit of the Synod, since he had been raised in Scotland and licensed in the Church of Scotland. (20)

Brought up inside the Synod of Ulster and minister first in Drumbo,
then in Belfast, Hanna was more centrally placed than McDowell, Horner or Carlile. Like them, he had connections with the London Missionary Society, and preached a sermon before them on the importance of belief in the Trinity, though, like Carlile, he was later to oppose Henry Cooke in his efforts both to purge the Belfast Academical Institution of its heterodox elements and to drive the Arians out of the Synod. In 1807, he was appointed on to a committee to raise money to provide Bibles for the Presbyterian poor. Though his commission only covered the Presbyterian population, the Bibles were provided at reduced prices by the Anglican Association for Discountenancing Vice, and free copies were also obtained through McDowell from the British and Foreign Bible Society (though they proved unsatisfactory since they didn’t include the Psalms).

The support for this venture does indicate the emergence of a distinct body of opinion in the Synod characterised by a combination of trinitarianism and application to the practical job of making the Bible more easily available. Of the fourteen subsequent members of the Remonstrant Synod who had been ordained at the time of the Bible Committee, only John Mitchell subscribed (£19.12s. 0d.) to the fund. By contrast, of the seventeen ministers who signed a protest against the reinstatement of Josiah Kerr to the Synod after his avowal of Arian views in 1811, only four did not contribute. Of these, one was ordained in 1811, the year in which the scheme came to an end, and two (Horner and McEwen) were from Dublin. No Dublin ministers appear on the list (including McDowell, despite
negotiations with the BFBS) which implies that Dublin was not included in the scheme. The protest signatories include some of the most impressive contributors - Hanna (£76.12s. 0d., in addition to £58.12s. 11d. from his congregation); Samuel Dill (£81.13s. 6d.); James Elder (£59. 7s. 2½d.); James Gowdy (£57. 5s. 3d.) and John Thompson (£45.14s. 0d.). I should add, however, that the list includes several members listed in the Fasti as 'non-evangelical', including the disgruntled William Steele Dickson (£7.13s. 7d.: His principal antagonist, Robert Black - also very much a 'non-evangelical' - gave a derisory £1. 2s. 0d. 'for self').

In 1811, the Committee suggested 'that the formation of different branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in this province has in a great measure superseded the necessity of their labours. The purposes for which your Bible Committee was appointed will now be accomplished by your recommending it to the ministers of this Synod to encourage the formation of branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in such places as may be established in their respective neighbourhoods.' This invitation to interdenominational co-operation was approved by the Synod, apparently without any difficulty.

The Hibernian Bible Society was opposed within the Church of Ireland for its interdenominationalism. The Primates, Stuart and Beresford, who had initially sponsored it, withdrew their support since 'in becoming Bible distributors some have forgotten they were churchmen' - a controversy similar to that which surrounded the BFBS in London. It was promoted most energetically by the
negotiations with the BFBS) which implies that Dublin was not included in the scheme. The protest signatories include some of the most impressive contributors - Hanna (£76.12s. 0d., in addition to £58.12s. 11d. from his congregation); Samuel Dill (£81.13s. 6d.); James Elder (£59. 7s. 2½d.); James Gowdy (£57. 5s. 3d.) and John Thompson (£45.14s. 0d.). I should add, however, that the list includes several members listed in the Fasti as 'non-evangelical', including the disgruntled William Steele Dickson (£7.13s. 7d.: His principal antagonist, Robert Black - also very much a 'non-evangelical' - gave a derisory £1. 2s. 0d. 'for self'). (21)

In 1811, the Committee suggested 'that the formation of different branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in this province has in a great measure superseded the necessity of their labours. The purposes for which your Bible Committee was appointed will now be accomplished by your recommending it to the ministers of this Synod to encourage the formation of branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in such places as may be established in their respective neighbourhoods.' This invitation to interdenominational co-operation was approved by the Synod, apparently without any difficulty. (22)

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evangelical party in the Church of Ireland, including Archbishop Trench of Tuam, who became its President. It was at meetings of auxiliary Bible Societies of the kind recommended by the Synod that the controversies associated with the 'New Reformation' movement in the 1820s began. (23)

Nonetheless, before 1820, the emphasis still seems - like that of the education societies - to have been on a non-dogmatic promotion of the Bible (Trench supported the Society before his own conversion), certainly with the intention of converting Catholics to Protestantism, but not necessarily to a salvationist Protestantism. The Ulster Register gives an account of an anniversary meeting of the Bible Society in Hanna's meeting place in April 1817, chaired by Hanna, in the absence of the Bishop of Down and Connor. This was addressed by William Bruce of the non-subscribing Presbytery of Antrim, who was already known as a Unitarian, and who said that the aim of the British and Foreign Bible Society was 'the diffusion of pure and undefiled Christianity' (Hanna called it 'the greatest human institution ever established on earth'). He hoped 'that the existing differences between the Catholic Church in Ireland and the See and the Court of Rome, aided by the dissemination of the scriptures may produce a renovation of true religion among that people', thus indicating a strong tendency among the evangelicals of the period to believe in the possibility of a process of Protestantisation occurring within the Catholic church itself (hence the LHS's willingness to co-operate with priests). By the late 1820s, this view would seem
as fanciful as the possibility of Unitarian/Trinitarian co-operation in promoting 'pure and undefiled Christianity'. (24)

One last evangelical initiative in this period needs to be looked at - the formation of a congregation in Carlow, treated as the revival of a congregation which had become non-functional in 1750. Even for this specifically Presbyterian venture, the initiative came from outside the Synod, in this case from Rev Thomas Cox, an Independent who had studied under Dr Bogue at Gosport. According to James Morgan, the first regular minister to the congregation, Bogue had suggested that Cox join the Presbyterian Church, though, since he does not appear in the Fasti, or in the Records of the General Synod of Ulster, he may have applied to the non-subscribing and predominately Arian Synod of Munster. The Synod of Munster thanked the Synod of Ulster for supplying Carlow (with Henry Cooke and Robert Stewart) in 1818, the same year in which the congregation applied to be put under the Synod of Ulster's care.

Relations between the Arian Synod of Munster and the orthodox Presbyterians in Dublin seem to have been friendly. The leading member of the Munster Synod, Dr James Armstrong, wrote to William Porter in 1825, as an incident in the Arian controversy, to say:

'I have been labouring for several years to combine the exertions of the Presbyterian bodies and direct them to the revival and extension of our interest in the south and west of Ireland; and, I trust not without success.' (25)
R.F.G. Holmes reports that Cooke, during his visit to the South of Ireland, became friendly with Armstrong. A committee was appointed in 1820 'to co-operate with the ministers of Dublin, the Synod of Munster and the Trustees of the General Fund (a joint fund administered by both Synods - PB) in preserving and extending the Presbyterian interest in the above mentioned parts of the kingdom' (meaning the south and west - PB). The committee included two of the older generation of orthodox ministers (Hanna and Thompson, who had also been on the Bible Committee and was known as a strict Calvinist), together with the newer generation (Cooke and Stewart); but it also included the latitudinarians, Dr William Neilson and Henry Montgomery. According to Rodgers, it had strict instructions not to interfere with members of any other communion. (26)

Morgan was appointed to Carlow in the same year and refers to inroads he was making into the Church of Ireland (owing to the local rector's fondness for playing billiards) and in the army. But the rather glowing account in his Recollections of my Life and Times is based largely on the 'godliness' of the local Anglicans. In 1835, he told the Synod that he had found only twenty-five Presbyterian families when he began his ministry. Other ministers, Kennedy and John Hanna, who supplied the congregation subsequently during vacancies, found only about twelve. Morgan recommended that the charge be abandoned. In general, the venture is probably more important for the effect it had on the ministers involved (Cooke, Stewart and, principally, Morgan) than for any effect it might have
had on religious life in southern Ireland. It brought them into closer contact with the Church of Ireland evangelicals and with the evangelical Presbyterian grouping in Dublin. (27)

In the field of education, I have found no evidence of Irish Presbyterian participation in the London Hibernian Society, despite considerable aid from within the Church of Scotland. Individual Presbyterians supported the Sunday School Society and a separate 'Belfast Sunday School Society' affiliated to the Hibernian Sunday School Society, was established in Belfast, largely on the initiative of lay Presbyterians. The Sunday School in Belfast had been founded in 1802 'for the purpose of affording education to those in the situation of servants and apprentices who are employed during the rest of the week, and to those parents who cannot afford to pay for their education.' The purposes of the education provided were secular: 'to afford the means of mental improvement to the children of the lower classes by communicating to them useful knowledge and teaching them habits of good order and regularity of conduct,' though Bibles and Testaments were given as prizes. In 1814, the Society opened a day school on Lancasterian principles and resolved that:

'the bible and testament shall be read in the school three days a week; these and other approved books shall be given as premiums for proficiency and good conduct. The Douay translation to be used and distributed among children of the Catholic persuasion.' (28)

This Lancasterian School received help from the Kildare Place Society
and was subsequently identifiable as a latitudinarian and liberal establishment. It is safe to say that the standard of education among Presbyterians improved in this period due to the aid provided by the KPS, but in this case they were the objects rather than the initiators of social reform.

SECEBERS AND COVENANTERS

The picture is not much altered if we include the Seceders or Covenanters. We have seen that the Evangelical Society of Ulster originated among the Burghers, that it issued in a small congregationalist cause, and that it can be seen as a marginal incident in the history of Scottish congregationalism. There was a symbiotic relationship of mutual influence and recrimination between the Scottish Secession (especially the Burghers) and Scottish congregationalism, which was mirrored on a much smaller scale in Ireland, especially in Dublin. If the Secession is seen as a half-way house between a covenancing position and a Calvinistic Methodist position, the turn of the century saw it shift in the Calvinistic Methodist direction with the adoption of 'new light' principles by both Synods, partly through the competitive influence of the congregationalists.

The term 'new light' seems to have been borrowed from Ulster, where it signified the latitudinarian theology of the non-subscribers. In Scotland, however, it signified broadly the view that heresy should not be punishable as a civil crime. This view was incorporated in
the new Narrative and Testimony issued by the Antiburgher Synod in 1804, and in the Preamble to Ordination Questions issued by the Burghers in 1799. The Narrative and Testimony did not abandon the ideal of the covenanted nation, but it did represent a concession to arguments already advanced by the non-covenanting Relief Synod and the congregationalists, and it was a step towards the later adoption of a Voluntaryist position. It resulted in the departure from both Synods of a small number of 'old light' ministers who maintained the ideal of a national church capable of imposing restrictions on the religious practise of dissenters. (29)

The Old Light/New Light split was not paralleled in Ireland either among the Burghers or the Antiburghers, though one Burgher probationer, David Graham, applied to join the Covenanters in 1804 because of doubts over the Burghers' doctrine of Christ's mediatorial dominion, magistracy, and the obligation of the covenants. He was, however, deposed from the Reformed Presbytery in 1808, and his subsequent career in the Reformed Presbytery of America showed him to be something of a maverick. A 'Scotch Secession' (Old Light) interest did appear later, but this was in response to the controversy over classification of the Regium Donum, 1809-11, rather than to the Scottish controversy. The Antiburghers' New Testimony seems to have been generally welcomed. Rev John Tennent of Roseyards, one of the first Antiburgher ministers to arrive in Ireland, wrote in 1802 (presumably about a draft of the Testimony):

'I know a great cry long ago among many for a new impression
of the Act and Testimony (the original statement of Secession principles, before the 'Breach' between Burghers and Anti-burghers occurred - PB). But this is more clear and plain and the disputed parts about Church and State is (sic) what the most I have talked with are pleased.' (30)

The only complaint raised in the Synod was by Thomas Campbell, the former member of the Evangelical Society of Ulster, who gave notice in 1802 that 'a number of difficulties... of a very embarrassing tendency' had arisen from the 18th and 23rd chapters. These chapters refer respectively to covenanting and to church discipline. The perpetual obligation of covenants was recognised, but only insofar as they were lawful: 'They could neither bind themselves, nor us, to impose a religious profession upon any by external force or violence.' The 23rd chapter gives the church a right of excommunication. Campbell left Ireland before the 1807 Synod without having had his objections discussed. It is not clear what they were, but since the movement with which he became involved in America was nonsubscribing, it is probable that he felt uneasy about the church's right as a collectivity to exercise power over individual members. (31)

The lack of controversial literature in the period even among Seceders suggests a general lessening in the emphasis on 'sectarian' peculiarities (which were mostly to do with the relations between nation and church). In 1812, the Anti-burghers, prompted by Hanna of the Synod of Ulster, decided to co-operate with the Hibernian
Bible Society. In the same year, Alexander Waugh of the London Missionary Society, spoke to the Burgher Synod in Ireland in favour of foreign missions. While approving of this interdenominational endeavour, the Synod felt it couldn't afford to offer practical or financial help. (32)

Waugh had been - together with the English congregationalist, David Bogue, and the Scottish congregationalist, Robert Haldane, one of the founders of the LMS. Although he was a Scottish Burgher, he was based in London, so he was outside the ambit of the Synod, and his relations with it may have been similar to Benjamin McDowell's with the Synod of Ulster. Together with a Scottish Antiburgher, G. Jerment, he was instrumental in establishing the Irish Evangelical Society in Dublin in 1815, as a reaction against the London Hibernian Society's change of emphasis in 1814 from preaching to education. One of the first secretaries of the IES (together with the Synod of Ulster's James Carlile) was an Antiburgher layman, James Clarke of Dublin. But the Antiburgher Synod as a whole did not support the Society and in 1818 rejected an overture proposing that ministers be allowed to preach under its inspection. (33)

At its first meeting in 1819, the Presbyterian Synod in Ireland, formed by the uniting of the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods, set up a committee to devise a plan 'for the further spread of evangelical principles in Ireland'. A mission to the South and West of Ireland was established at the 1820 Synod, which also resolved to
support the Hibernian Bible Society and, on a request from the Marquess of Donegall and Sir Robert Bateson, the Auxiliary Hibernian School Society. The Second Report of the Mission, published in 1821, emphasised its non-sectarian nature: 'It is not to increase the number of Seceders that the mission committee are labouring so assiduously...'. There was to be no interference with the work of ministers of other denominations, including the Church of Ireland, if they were preaching the gospel (which was thus assumed to be something apart from doctrines of church government). They were critical of the IES as a body which masqueraded as interdenomination-
al but which in fact promoted congregationalism:

'The Irish Evangelical Society solicited the aid of all denomi-
nations of Christians and professed merely to introduce the Gospel into the dark corners of Ireland, leaving the congrega-
tions formed by their instrumentality to choose what form of ecclesiastical rule they pleased, and at the same time estab-
lished an academy for the education of missionaries in the principles of Independency.' (34)

Nonetheless, in 1823, the Secretary of the Mission, David Stuart, was appointed to a chair in the IES's Theological Academy (which was dissolved in 1828). Stuart, the minister of New Mary's Abbey in Dublin, seems to have been the driving spirit behind what missionary activity there was among the Seceders. He was the Moderator in 1819, when the aim of the mission was approved, and his congregation (which included James Clarke of the IES) contributed
£50 out of the £130 raised in its first year of operation. In its second year, £330 out of the £400 raised came from Scotland. As the Second Report said: 'alas, our funds are gone, and our people are not making any advances to supply them.' (35)

As with the General Synod, then, the idea of promoting a gospel common to all theologically orthodox Protestants was accepted by the Seceders, but pressure for activity came from outside the Synod, and the greatest enthusiasm for it was shown by those far from the centre.

The minutes of the Reformed Presbytery and Synod in this period give no evidence of participation in the work of interdenominational evangelical agencies, though the Causes of Fasting and Thanksgiving of 1823 (a document that was later to become controversial through its opposition to 'persecuting principles') included the spread of education among the Causes of Thanksgiving and said of the Sunday Schools: 'The pious and intelligent Christian who may object to some of the plans at present adopted for the diffusion of knowledge will still rejoice when he sees some of the effects produced.' In 1820, the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Scotland wrote to the Irish Synod that:

'Never at any former period were more laudable efforts made for propagating the Gospel of Christ... and it becomes us by every means in our power to co-operate in such a beneficent design.'
and in 1821, the Irish Synod replied:

"We have great pleasure in stating that the doctrines of the Gospel are much more acceptable to the inhabitants of this country than they were a few years ago. It has consequently become more fashionable to preach them. Whether this in all instances may proceed from a conviction of the truth, or in some from a desire to please, we do not determine: but whatever may be the motive, we "rejoice that Christ is preached..."" (36)

Here again the evangelical movement was external to the Synod, and, while ministers were impressed by it, they were less inclined even than the General or Secession Synods to take a leading part in it.

**SUMMARY**

The absence of dramatic innovation in Ulster Presbyterianism during this period need not necessarily be described as a failure; it could equally point to a satisfaction among Presbyterians that their religious needs were being adequately met. Methodism has frequently been described as a popular movement registering dissatisfaction with the Church of England, and Kiernan describes Anglican evangelicalism as an attempt to broaden the Church of England to incorporate that dissatisfaction. The success of Scottish congregationalism also suggests the existence of popular needs which were not met within
the Church of Scotland - either because of its inadequate geographic-al distribution (which left large areas of the highlands open to con-gregationalist penetration) or because of its unexciting doctrine. Of course the area covered by Presbyterianism in Ulster was much smaller than that of the established churches in England and Scotland. The Synod of Ulster was a small enough body to give an adequate sense of ministerial equality and effective democracy to its annual meetings; and it did not have the problems of patronage which plagued the Church of Scotland. (37)

It is also arguable that the Seceders and Covenanters performed some of the functions which Methodism performed in England. Halevy suggests that the division in English nonconformity between rationalist and Calvinist provided an opening for Methodism (and Walsh feels that the impact of Methodism on nonconformity was greater than Halevy acknowledges). The same division provided an opening for Seceders and Covenanters in Ulster. While neither body was particularly attached to the principles of itineracy or field preaching, they practised both; and while the attempt to form a liaison between Whitefield and the Scottish Secession ended in mutual recriminations, they had at least recognised a similarity in their ambitions. Halevy points to a class division in English nonconformity between more educated latitudinarians and poorer Calvinists, and the Seceders and Covenanters likewise appealed chiefly to the poor. (38)

The obvious distinction between the Scotch/Irish Presbyterian
'dissenters' and English Methodism lies in the latter's insistence on the experience of conversion (an emphasis common to both Calvinistic and Arminian Methodism). This can be taken simply as reflecting a difference between the typical forms of English dissent and Scottish Presbyterianism. English dissent was attached to the ideal of the gathered church, while Scottish Presbyterianism was attached to the ideal of a church co-terminous with civil society. The gathered church requires a knowledge of salvation, and Walsh suggests that Methodism appealed to English dissenters 'uneasy at their failure to produce in a cooler religious climate the classic marks of regeneration demanded of them by Puritan doctrine and Puritan forebears'. This demand was not made by Scottish Presbyterianism. \(^{39}\)

The appeal of the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Seceders and Covenanters was the appeal of a comforting doctrine of grace. Much that has been written on Calvinism has been influenced by Weber's view that the doctrine of election necessarily induces anxiety. Miller takes this as an a priori assumption, arguing that this anxiety is relieved in 'prophetic' orthodoxy by membership of a church destined to revolutionise the world, and in 'conversionist' orthodoxy by an internal knowledge of salvation. But the doctrine of election can equally be seen as a comforting doctrine, relieving the Christian of responsibility for his own salvation. While 'gathered church' congregationalism, with its insistence on evidence of regeneration, may have been anxiety-inducing, Scottish Presbyterianism adhered more closely to Calvin's own idea of the church's function, which was to
provide comfort to its members through the regular reiteration of God's promises. Justification by faith can perhaps best be understood as justification by confidence in the promise of election - a confidence induced by membership of the church. (40)

The popular tendency in Ulster Presbyterianism was thus towards a comforting doctrinal orthodoxy and membership of a 'true' church, not, until the 1859 revival, towards an emotionally exciting form of preaching. The Seceders and Covenanters acted as a safety net for dissatisfaction within the Synod of Ulster, keeping dissatisfied elements inside the ambit of Presbyterianism. Disruptive as they might have appeared to Synod of Ulster ministers in the eighteenth century, they can be described in retrospect as a stabilising factor, reducing the chances that dissatisfaction may have taken an enthusiastic and/or non-Presbyterian form.

Nonetheless the lack of controversial literature in the early nineteenth century suggests an inability among Presbyterians to attach the importance to their own affairs which they were able to feel at the end of the eighteenth century. At the same time, their inability to take substantial initiatives in the fields either of national education or of conversionary endeavour suggests that they did not have a strong sense of responsibility towards society as a whole - whether in Ulster or throughout Ireland. They still felt themselves to be a distinct society within - and in important respects alien to - 'the nation' (whether Irish or British). The rebellion had been in part an attempt to overcome that alienation through dismantling the
identification of the state with a hostile church. The failure of the rebellion, and the subsequent surrender to the conditions attached by government to the increased Regium Donum, brought home to Presbyterians their powerlessness as an independent polity. The Dublin ministers and Hanna can be said to have tried to overcome this through the development of a sense of responsibility to society as a whole, parallel to the non-enthusiastic, socially responsible evangelicalism of Thomas Chalmers in Scotland. But on the whole, the mood of Ulster Presbyterianism in this period can probably best be characterised as sulking.
CHAPTER THREE

THE INCREASED ROYAL BOUNTY
THE ACT OF UNION

There was no popular pressure for the Act of Union. It was a remarkable political manoeuvre on the part of a handful of individuals, convinced that it was the only possible policy for Ireland and determined to push it through despite the opposition both of the reforming 'patriot party' and of the borough owners, with their vested interest in the existing Parliament.

The advocates of Union were trying to deal with the same problem that pre-occupied the theorists of the United Irish rising - the weakness of a state structure which had so few interconnections with the population it was governing. The moderate reformers (who included Fitzgibbon and Castlereagh, the architects of the Union) had argued for a Parliament that would be as fully representative as possible of Protestants. Some of them (notably Joy and Bruce in Belfast) had argued that this would provide a basis on which Catholics would eventually be incorporated into the political nation. The problem as they saw it lay in the fact that political power was a marketable commodity. While this was also the case in Great Britain, the problem in Ireland was exacerbated by the subordinate status of the Irish Parliament. Westminster had a vested interest in buying Irish legislation, and Irish legislators had a vested interest in increasing the price through irresponsibility. Both Unionists and United Irishmen recognised that the legislative independence of 1782 had done little more than to increase the price of government in Ireland still further.
The radical alternatives to the existing system were the elimination of the subordinate Parliament through a full Union, or the establishment of Ireland as a fully independent country. In between those radical solutions stood a reform of the subordinate Parliament by which the legislators would be forced into behaving virtuously by being unable to achieve political power without the support of their constituents. The radical solutions were not seriously contemplated until the 1790s, when the reform movement split on the question of extending the franchise to include Catholics.

The problem of including Catholics lay in the radical divergence of interest which was felt to exist between Protestants and Catholics. Fitzgibbon put the problem in very stark terms. It was foolish for Irish Protestants to argue in terms of Locke's 'social contract' since the Protestant interest had no other basis in Ireland than a 'right of conquest' which Locke did not recognise: 'The Act by which most of us hold our estates was an Act of violence - an Act subverting the first principles of the common law in England and Ireland.' According to Lockean theory, the nature of property was such that 'without a man's consent it cannot be taken from him.' Catholics could never be expected to acquiesce in the spoliation of their property and the establishment of an alien church, yet this was the basis for the whole property and wellbeing even of the members of the Patriot Party. The maintenance of the Protestant interest in Ireland was fully dependent on the continued denial of political power to the Catholic interest. (1)
Robert Stewart (later Lord Castlereagh), who had been elected as a moderate reformer in 1790, substantially agreed with this when, in 1793, he wrote to his uncle, Lord Bayham (later the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Camden, and one of the earliest advocates of the Union):

'There appears to me this strong distinction between the two sects, that the Protestants may be conciliated at the same time that the constitution is improved; the Catholics never can by any concession which must not sooner or later tear down the Church or make the State their own.' (2)

While supporting the civil concessions in the Catholic Relief Bill of 1793, (as did Fitzgibbon) he opposed the extension of the franchise, which rendered the position of the moderate reformers non-functional. Henceforth, a democratic reform of the Irish Parliament would open up the possibility of a full-blown Catholic ascendancy. If the subordinate Parliament continued in existence, the maintenance of the Protestant interest would depend on its continuing to be unrepresentative.

The moderate reformers in Belfast - Bruce and Joy - had a less stark view of the contradiction between Protestant and Catholic interests, presumably because the property they represented was not landed property and could not so easily be said to have been stolen from Catholics. They saw the problem in ideological terms and had a strong faith (which they shared with their most prominent controversial opponent, Drennan) in the progress of ideas. The establishment of Protestant ascendancy through the Williamite victory had
been the victory of a more advanced and rational system of ideas over a more backward and superstitious one. The penal legislation had been necessary to safeguard this desirable revolution, but a process had already been initiated in which the penal restrictions could be progressively eased while Catholics increasingly adopted the attitudes and ideas of their more enlightened Protestant neighbours. Thus far I have been summarising the argument as advanced in Drennan's *Belfast Monthly Magazine* of 1808. Bruce and Joy differed from Drennan and Tone, however, in that they wanted the process to continue in piecemeal fashion, while Drennan saw radical constitutional change as a means by which it could be speeded up. Catholics, given the responsibilities of free men would be forced to behave as free men. For Bruce and Joy, the additional political power of Catholics at their present stage of development, would simply be thrown behind corruption and subordination:

'As far as the feelings of Catholics are concerned, they (the opponents of immediate extension of the franchise - PB) rejoice in the extension of franchise; but as a national measure, their enfranchisement without a reform will be a calamity.... It will drown the few good voters we can boast of in a deluge of the meanest class of Catholic electors. With a reform, this extension of the franchise would have benefited all parties. They should therefore have gone hand in hand. Had this been the case, the Catholics would have remained with the people. They will now, it is apprehended, strengthen the hands of government, encrease the expense and
corruption of elections, and render many of the old patriots tenacious of their boroughs, as a bulwark of the Protestant interest. They insist that the Protestant and Catholic should have been bound together by the tie of a common interest, a partnership in oppression, and a joint hope of freedom, which neither could obtain without the other. This, they admit, would have required time; but they do not think that a material objection. Being apprehensive of sudden shocks in the political machine, they profess themselves friends to gradual and deliberate measures. Incredulous with respect to sudden revolutions in popular or religious prejudices, they fear that the progress of liberality or the decay of bigotry, is not by any means as great or general as is pretended; and that whatever views wise and enlightened men may take of the subject, three millions of people will not be easily excited to an opposition which some may consider dangerous to themselves, and others ungrateful to the court. A religious sect, whose dearest prejudices are in favour of Monarchy and Hierarchy, will scarcely prefer a combination either with associations suspected of republicanism, or with professed Presbyterians, to an alliance with the State and with the Church of Ireland, which they may consider as a sect of popery; since it acknowledges a human head and professes to derive the efficacy of all its orders and ordinances by apostolical succession thro' the Church of Rome.' (3)
The Catholic Relief Bill of 1793 left as alternatives the maintenance of Protestant ascendancy through the maintenance of parliamentary corruption; the abolition of the subordinate parliament; or its reform to make it more dependent on an overwhelmingly Catholic electorate, either under the British crown or fully independent of it. The United Irish support for the last of these alternatives was based on a refusal to recognise any essential divergence of interest between Protestants and Catholics - a refusal which was only possible because of the formless nature of Irish Catholicism.

The establishment of a potential Catholic Parliament was, however, as unthinkable to Westminster as it was to the great majority of Irish Protestants. Protestant fear of the spread of United Irish rhetoric, together with the tractability of the corrupt Parliament, enabled Westminster to establish a virtual military dictatorship in Ireland, which in turn gave substance to the United Irish rhetoric of a struggle between liberty and despotism, but left them with no alternative other than complete legislative and military independence. The great majority of Presbyterians who joined the United Irish rising saw it as a simple conflict between themselves and their military oppressors. They were persuaded that Irish Catholicism was not a political force to be reckoned with, and that Catholicism as an Antichristian and despotic system had been comprehensively defeated in the French Revolution; and their personal experience of Catholics was a shadowy affair when put beside their disaffection from the Anglican establishment.
The defeat of the United Irish rising left the Union as the only alternative to an unstable and impotent ascendancy Parliament, but it had to be completed quickly before radical reform again presented itself as a possibility and the whole process was repeated.

CASTLEREAGH AND THE PROBLEM OF PRESBYTERIAN LOYALTY

The Act of Union opened up the problems and opportunities of establishing a new sense of national loyalty. There was no coherent Irish national loyalty - only the contradictory possibilities of Protestant ascendancy - with or without the Presbyterians; Catholic ascendancy, in conflict with the existing property settlement; or - the spectre of the United Irish rising - Republican ascendancy, which would necessarily have to establish itself by a Jacobin reign of terror. The reduction of Irish political representation to a substantial minority in Westminster, however, did away with the necessity for such clearcut alternatives, and suggested the possibility of dissolving the distinction between Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter in a common allegiance to Britain. This required adjustments in British culture to facilitate the incorporation of the radically different cultures in Ireland; but it also required adjustments in the Irish cultures to incorporate sectarian allegiance into a common national allegiance.

Most obviously, Castlereagh thought that the Union rendered the admission of Catholics to Parliament possible. Fitzgibbon disagreed.
Like the other great theorist of Protestant political monopoly, Patrick Duigenan, Fitzgibbon came from a Catholic background. Where Protestant politicians saw only a shapeless and ultimately manipulable mass, Fitzgibbon and Duigenan saw a steady disaffection which must on no account be given the opportunity of coherent political expression. Castlereagh was more optimistic. Catholic leaders were used to a subordinate position both through the structures of their Church and through the experience of living in Ireland. The subordination required by their incorporation into British culture would be much less oppressive than that to which they were accustomed under the Irish Parliament. And the new opportunities available to them now that there was no danger of Catholic ascendancy, would result in a steady decline in their sectarian alienation.

Presbyterians, on the other hand, appeared to him to be more problematical, possibly because he knew them better. They did not seem to pose any great obstacle to the actual achievement of the Union. As both Lord Londonderry (Castlereagh's father) and Luke Fox (one of his parliamentary supporters) advised, Presbyterians disliked the Irish Parliament and would not regret its passing. Even Drennan, who wrote a pamphlet and took part in demonstrations against the Union, was half-hearted and unhappy about the company (the supporters of parliamentary corruption) in which he found himself. (4)

Despite some efforts on the part of Drennan, there was very little
sense of a distinct Irish national identity among Ulster Presbyterians. They identified themselves as Presbyterian rather than as 'Irish' or 'British'. Their Presbyterianism was a maverick element in society. It was more capable of coherent action than English dissent; but unlike Catholicism it had no clearly defined leadership with whom the government could negotiate and which could act as a moderating influence on the rest of the body (though the actual influence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland in this period was vastly less than Castlereagh appears to have imagined). It had a substantial tradition of rejecting 'human authority' in matters of religion, and there were wide disagreements as to where the boundary between civil and religious matters should be placed. The authority in the Church was quasi-democratic and it proved readily accessible to republican ideas which complemented its own methods of organisation. The very indifference to such an important measure as the Act of Union could be seen as ominous for the prospects of incorporating Ulster Presbyterianism into British political culture.

Castlereagh set himself the task of buying the loyalty of the Synod by making it more financially dependent on the government, and encouraging the emergence of a 'top level' of ministers whose position would be based on wealth and therefore on a vested interest in the political status quo. His ally in this delicate operation was Robert Black, minister of Londonderry, of which Castlereagh said after the rebellion: 'Derry, under its present guidance, has long been the counterpoise to Belfast and the rallying point for
the loyalty of the North. (5)

Black had been one of the moderate reformers and prominent in the early days of the Volunteer movement. He had spoken in favour of Catholic relief at the Dungannon Convention of 1783 and had worked with Dickson, Barber and Birch in support of Castlereagh's father in the Co Down election of the same year. The Synod had appointed him as agent for Regium Donum in 1788 (there was some doubt about the constitutionality of the pro re nata meeting which made this appointment but it was confirmed by 'a great majority' in 1789). As late as 1793, he was one of only seven Protestants (who included Tone, Hamilton Rowan, Samuel Neilson and William Steele Dickson) at a Roman Catholic dinner for Richard Burke, Tone's predecessor as secretary of the Catholic Committee. By this time, however, he had already gone into opposition to the United Irish agitation in a speech given in the cathedral in Londonderry in January. (6)

Negotiations began between Black and Castlereagh in 1799, and the result was a Plan for strengthening the connection between the government and the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster, with the aim of:

'rendering the Ministers of the Synod more independent of popular caprices and the arts of factious members of their congregations, and for enabling them to apply more diligently to their ministerial duties, and for inducing young men in a decent station to devote themselves to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.'
A Royal Commissioner, who was to be a Presbyterian, was to sit on the Synod's debates 'in the same manner as in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.' Ministers, before their appointment to congregations, had to be approved by Government if they were to receive a share of the bounty. The Synod was to be divided into three classes; the first, with about fifteen ministers 'in the cities and large towns', receiving between one and two hundred pounds a year; the second, with about seventy ministers 'in the more populous congregations', eighty pounds; and the third, with one hundred ministers, sixty pounds.

The quotas were to be paid through an agent chosen by the Synod with the Government's approval. In addition, a college was to be established in Ulster which would include Presbyterian trustees and professors. Previously the grant (Regium Donum) had been given to the Synod as a whole and distributed in equal shares by an agent appointed by the Synod. The proposed system of 'classification' was especially controversial as introducing (and intended to introduce) something resembling a hierarchy. (7)

Opposition to Castlereagh's proposals came not just from the Synod, but also from the Westminster government. The proposal to establish a college had been argued for within the Synod for some time. Campbell had been negotiating for it in the 1780s, and William Crawford had established an academy in Strabane whose degrees were recognised by the Synod (James Crombie of the Presbytery of
Antrim opened the Belfast Academy in 1786, but this did not include a course in theology. Crawford had briefly revived the issue during Fitzwilliam's administration in 1795. Here, a specifically Presbyterian institution was envisaged, but in 1794, the Archbishop of Armagh, Primate Robinson, died, leaving a bequest for a University to be established in Ulster within five years of his death. One of the executors of his will, Rev J.A. Hamilton, wrote to Cornwallis in August 1798 to say that 'that great character (Robinson - PB) thought nothing could tend so much to conciliate and soften down the minds of our various sectaries in the North of Ireland and bind them to the common interests of the empire as the foundation of a "second university in the province of Ulster".' (8)

Castlereagh proposed early in 1799 a 'Plan for a University of Ulster' in which dissenters were to be eligible for fellowships and professorships. Hyde says that this 'came to nothing, since the Home Office turned it down on the curious grounds that as students in Trinity College were already too apt to injure their health by overwork it was not desirable to stimulate Dublin University to any further exertions by the foundation of another institution on similar lines.' (9)

But the main objection raised by the Home Secretary at Westminster, the Duke of Portland, was that 'though the policy of the country admits of their (dissenters - PB) being tolerated, as long as it shall judge an Established Religion to be necessary, so long must it be
inconsistent for it to give premiums for the profession of other religious persuasions; and I should incline to say that it must be so long impossible for it to establish a school and appoint Divinity Professors whose doctrines were not subjected to any control or responsibility, and which were in several respects in opposition to those which the Government of the country was obliged to recognize and support. (10)

On Robinson's legacy he thought 'it is not to be presumed that the Primate would have contributed in any manner to the establishment of an institution for the encouragement of Schismatics and Separatists from the Church of which he was not only the first minister, but one of the most zealous and devoted members.' It is hardly surprising that Castlereagh's allies in the Presbytery of Antrim (Bruce) and in the Synod (Black) were anxious for some guarantee of Presbyterian rights to be written into the Act of Union. As Bruce commented, Presbyterians were understood in Ireland 'while in England, we are either unknown or looked upon as an obscure set of schismatics. Another point of difference is that the imperial Parliament cannot confer any benefit on us that they shall not be prepared to extend to the English dissenters, and might even be persuaded to reduce us to the same level.'

And Black was worried about the proposal to postpone the increase in the grant until the united Parliament met, presumably because he felt it would be less sympathetic to Presbyterian claims. (11)
Notwithstanding his opposition to a dissenting University, Portland was in favour of increasing the Synod's Regium Donum, but 'to the best of the recollection of those by whom this measure was entertained and discussed, a principal object in the increasing and new-modelling the allowance to the persons of this persuasion (which, I must observe, was intended to be restrained to the ministers of that church, and who were the only persons of that description in the contemplation of those who discussed the point) was to make them more dependent, and render them more amenable to Government; and one of our principal views was to prevail upon them by these means to form among themselves some such orders and gradations as prevail in the Established Church of Scotland, to which part of this kingdom and to its Universities it is much more desirable that they should resort for their institutions and tenets than to any school or Professor they may be set up in their own country.'

THE DISPUTE IN THE SYNOD OF ULSTER

The principle of classification thus seems to have been under discussion for some time beforehand. In April 1799, Black submitted a list of ministers with their stipends, complaining that 'uncommon pains had been taken to excite distrust and alarm on this occasion. Ministers were industriously told that they were to be bribed into a surrender of the independence and constitution of their country.' If William Steele Dickson's accounts of the Synod's meetings in
this period are accurate (he was in prison at the time), they were very stormy, principally on the matter of financial support for ministers accused of complicity in the rebellion and their dependants. Black seems to have seen himself as a man with a mission to tame a refractory Synod, a mission that was to make him very unpopular not only with the Synod, but among subsequent Presbyterian historians. (13)

The Synod of June, 1800, appointed a Committee to negotiate terms with Castlereagh and it reported to a pro re nata meeting in October 1800 that the Government intended to change the terms on which the grant was given. The Committee was itself divided on the issue, with Black supporting the proposed changes and Dr Little of Killyleagh arguing against them. The Synod petitioned against them. (14)

John Sherrard of Tullylish wrote to Castlereagh to complain that classification would 'put an end to that friendly intercourse and brotherly affection, which have hitherto reflected both honour upon themselves and done signal service to the religion they profess and preach to others.' But the main principle involved - that there should be no distinction in rank between ministers and, especially, that there should be no such distinction introduced by an external, secular power - was not likely to cut much ice with the government. As Castlereagh said to Black: 'far from operating as an inducement with them to dispense with precautions, these
sentiments are calculated to inspire additional caution. (15)

Cornwallis, the Lord Lieutenant, resigned in February 1801 after the King had vetoed the arrangements for securing Catholic loyalty under the Union proposed by Castlereagh. Castlereagh, as his Chief Secretary, resigned with him, though both continued to fulfil the duties of their offices until the end of May, when Lord Hardwicke, as Lord Lieutenant, and Charles Abbot, as Chief Secretary, took over. The change in administration took place at an awkward time for Black. The Synod had formally appealed against classification at the pro re nata meeting in October. The system then proposed only included fifteen ministers in the first class and relatively few ministers had a vested interest in defending it. But opposition was muted by the straightforward desire for an increase whatever the terms, and by the fear (which Black was not above cultivating) that the government might withdraw the grant altogether. Black saw himself as a lonely figure upholding the principles of national loyalty in an assembly whose loyalties were mainly devoted to the sect. He identified Presbyterian sectarianism with the Jacobinism of the United Irishmen, and felt that this opposition could only be defeated by the material incentive of the increased grant. There is almost a feeling that classification was desirable, not because of any result it might achieve on its own but because the sectarianism of the Synod was opposed to it and that sectarianism needed to be humiliated. In December, 1800, he had written to suggest that 'the Seceders require regulation.
still more than the Synod and I believe the Southern Association do not require it less' and to point out that if the Seceders were not 'regulated' in this manner it would increase their popularity and they would secure converts from the Synod. He was putting himself in opposition to a popular spirit which went far beyond either the narrow area of self conscious Jabobinism or the wider area of support mobilised by the United Irishmen. (16)

The new ministry had been appointed on the basis of refusing to make the adjustments in British political culture which Pitt and Castlereagh thought necessary to incorporate Ireland. If the principle that the body politic was to be co-terminous with the established church was to be maintained with respect to Catholics, this did not augur well for Presbyterians. The endowment of Presbyterianism had no implications for British culture as a whole so long as Ireland had a separate legislature, but under the Union, as Bruce had pointed out, it became an anomaly; and it had dangerous implications at a time when 'old dissent' was under political suspicion and a new revivalist dissent was proving highly disrupting to the established church.

The change in the ministry suggested that this logic would assert itself, in which case Black would be left with no means of regulating the Synod. Loyalty to the sect would predominate over loyalty to the nation: 'It is needless to point out to your Lordship, who are so well acquainted with our unhappy divisions, the loss of influence which loyal ministers will sustain, and the complete
ascendancy which men of a different description will acquire, should those engagements not be observed which were made in the name of the late administration.' He wrote again in May 1801 to insist on the principle that the agent should be appointed by the government: 'every wise man whom I have consulted, and many who have given unasked opinions, are satisfied that nothing but this can save the Synod from cabals and almost yearly contests - certainly if I am not protected by Government, I will not hold the employment a second year. A character more congenial to the party is already nominated to supply my place so soon as the arrangement is settled.' (17)

Black argued that the Synod should not be given the chance to discuss the proposals in detail, merely to accept or reject them as a package: 'a body formed as the Synod is must ever be incapable of wise and unprejudiced deliberation on a measure which must disappoint the wishes and hopes of so many respecting their share in the distribution.' In particular, elders were not to be given a say in discussions of the grant, in which case 'the popular party would be much weakened, as the elders always vote on that side.' In the event, no proposals were put before the June 1801 Synod, which resolved that elders should be allowed to discuss questions relating to the Synod's grant. Black and twenty-seven other ministers (including Moses Hogg, William Dunlop and Sinclaire Kelburn, who had been associated with the United Irishmen) protested against the participation of elders, arguing that the Regium
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Donum was a grant to ministers not to the Synod as a whole. It was a negotiation between the government and individual ministers, and the Synod's participation in this negotiation was not a matter of right but of 'the courtesy and indulgence of government only'. The principle that ministers were to a large extent to be financially dependent on the government rather than on the Presbyterian body as a whole, was thus openly put, and it could be said to complement the non-subscribing argument that ministers should be responsible in doctrine to their own consciences rather than to the Presbyterian body as a whole. Thus it is not inconsistent that while the elders were here seen as opponents of the 'conservative' Black, they were in the 1820s seen as supporters of the 'conservative' Henry Cooke. (18)

The Synod sent a letter to Castlereagh thanking him for 'the pains you have taken in explaining to His Majesty's ministers what has already passed on the subject of the augmentation of the royal bounty, and for recommending the measure to their consideration and adoption.' But after Castlereagh had left office, Alexander Knox, formerly his private secretary, now Treasurer to Maynooth College, seems to have taken on the role of intermediary between Black and the new administration. Confronted with an administration which was not prepared to modify its concept of British constitutional principle to take account of the needs of Irish society, Knox was anxious to find a means of reconciling Castlereagh's measures (whose 'expediency' he recognised) with Addington's
principles. In particular, as far as Presbyterians were concerned, 
he wanted to prove that Irish Presbyterians had a constitutional 
right to a substantial Bounty which could not be extended in prin-
ciple to any other sect in Ireland or Great Britain (Knox was in 
favour of endowing Catholic priests, but argued that this should 
be on essentially different principles to those on which Presbyterian 
ministers were endowed). (19)

The principle that he found (in Kirkpatrick's Presbyterian Loyalty) 
was that Ulster Presbyterians were not dissenters in that they had 
ever separated from an episcopal church. Presbyterian ministers 
had been introduced by the government as part of the Scottish 
plantation and in the seventeenth century an ambiguity had been 
maintained by which Presbyterian ministers had been allowed to 
regard the Bishops who ordained them as presbyters. Many had 
emigrated from Scotland at the time of persecution under the Restora-
tion and it was reasonable for them to expect a share in the bene-
fits of the re-established Church of Scotland after the Revolution. 
The denial of this right on the part of the episcopal Church of 
Ireland had created the habit of alienation which had finally issued 
in the '98 rebellion.

While it was reasonable that dissenters should be tolerated, it was 
not reasonable that they should be subsidised, and, while Knox 
argued that the Synod of Ulster were not dissenters, it was obvious 
that the Seceders were. The Seceders should not therefore receive 
a grant. For the morally fastidious Knox 'the introducing of them
at all is a striking specimen of the vagueness of mere expediency' and therefore an illustration of the need for an argument from principles such as the above. (20)

With the defeat over the participation of elders, and with the government's delay in giving the grant, Black seems to have felt the ground slipping from under his feet, and Knox told Castlereagh that he had received a constant stream of letters from him: 'Black has certainly had too high raised views, as of a business not sub judice but settled; and his exceeding cruel and ungrateful treatment from the Synod, with rather declining health, has, I fear, rather lessened his equanimity.' His letters 'discover so much ulceration of a mind of so peculiarly sound and almost noble a cast originally.' Immediately before the Synod met in June 1802, however, Alexander Marsden, now Under-Secretary for the Civil Department, following Edward Cooke, wrote on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant 'to signify to you his Excellency's pleasure that the mode hitherto pursued be strictly adhered to, and that the administration of the fund remain exclusively under the direction of the ministers as has heretofore been the uniform practice.' This was followed by a letter saying that the Cabinet had agreed to advise the King to increase the Regium Donum in the next year. (21)

Castlereagh called the decision on Hardwicke's part to exclude the lay elders 'a most seasonable manifestation of authority and has given weight to the friends of government in that body which will have the best consequences,' though an amendment the Synod passed
to its resolution on elders is ambiguous - excluding them from voting on the management of the fund, but allowing them to vote on future changes in its method of administration. There seems to have been some doubt in the Cabinet as to the need to impose the conditions Castlereagh had suggested and which had provoked the opposition. Castlereagh therefore wrote to Addington, the Prime Minister, in July 1802 to explain why he thought conditions were necessary. (22)

Firstly, the fact that the Government and its supporters had so far called for classification meant that to abandon the principle 'would surrender the authority of the body very much into the hands of its worst members, by accomplishing the whole of what they have from the first contended for. The distribution and government of the fund is a natural engine of authority.' Power over the grant had to be vested in the State, not in the Synod, since ministers' dependence on the government and independence from their congregations 'are the only means which suggest themselves to my mind for making this important class of dissenters better subjects than they have of late years proved themselves.' Presbyterian sympathy for Jacobinism derived from the principles of ministerial equality and accountability to congregations of their own church. It was therefore desirable not only to make ministers less accountable to their congregations, but also to introduce a principle of inequality: 'Having a hierarchy of their own, they (Roman Catholics - PB) are less alive upon the principle of subordination than the Presbyterians,
whose Church is republican in all its forms and too much so in many of its sentiments.'

The grant was at last offered to the Synod on conditions which included classification at their meeting in June 1803. Marsden, in his accompanying letter, explained the conditions, by saying that they were aimed, first, to help Presbyterians guard against 'the disgrace and evil that would attend the appointment of a dis-loyal minister' and secondly (through 'a proper gradation of emol-ument') 'to hold out to individuals the means of advancing them-selves by the superior endowments of piety and learning.' The plan was altered in some details from its 1799 form. Most importantly, the number of congregations in each class were equal, thus creat-ing a wider vested interest in support of the scheme. As Black had recommended, the idea of appointing a Royal Commissioner was dropped and the agent was to be appointed by the government, not by the Synod. (23)

It is by no means obvious from Marsden's account of the plan that the government had the right to withdraw the bounty once it had been offered to any particular minister. The plan says: 'the bounty once granted in no case to be withdrawn from any minister during his continuance in the charge of that particular congregation, so long as it shall please His Majesty to continue the bounty to the body at large.' Yet Sherrard complains in his A Few Observations that the Lord Lieutenant's right to withdraw the grant infringes on
the people's right to choose their own ministers. This could refer to the right to withhold the grant from a congregation at the time of a minister's appointment, but Black was later (1812) to claim that 'under the existing arrangement, each minister holds his bounty by the same tenure that the judges of the land hold their places – during good behaviour...'. (24)

The issue of the government's right to withhold the grant had been discussed in the Cabinet, and Wickham, who had replaced Abbot as Chief Secretary in Ireland early in 1802, had, in April 1803, been in favour of postponing discussion on the subject. In September, he was proposing that it should be made an annually renewable parliamentary grant. In the event, there were never any cases of the grant once given being withdrawn. (25)

EFFECTS OF CLASSIFICATION

The plan was accepted by the Synod, but a protest was lodged by Rev Henry Henry of Connor on the basis of objections he had already published in his Illustration of the present critical state of the Synod of Ulster. These were that classification was unscriptural; that congregations had not had the chance to discuss the plan; that 'classified churches are and have been the most venal of all others, generally surrounded by external pomp and luxury'; that the Synod was classified by a power external to itself; and that this interfered with the right of church members to choose and
control their clergy. (26)

Another pamphlet in opposition to the scheme was published by John Sherrard of Tullylish. Much of this was taken up with an attack on Black and his allies - 'our learned and pious doctors, who have laboured incessantly in the vineyard these four years passed to have the present plan adopted; but who, in all probability, when it is finally established, will command the lower ranks to become their obedient humble servants, to afford them a short interval of rest from their toil and leisure to enjoy the fruits of their honest industry.' He argued that the promoters of the plan in the Synod had been responsible for drawing it up and that thus the government 'when intending to do us both a very great favour and a very great honour, have been advised to adopt a mode of conferring their favour which must both disgrace us and entirely frustrate their own wise and good intentions.' (27)

Ministers who knew of the details of the plan had concealed them from other ministers on the insulting grounds that they might be easily inflamed. While he begins the pamphlet by saying that material necessity will force him to accept the grant, he goes on to argue against it in terms which suggest that he couldn't possibly accept it: 'In a word, must not everyone see that these changes go to dethrone the true king and head of his church, to give up that liberty whereby he has made his followers free, to overturn the constitution of the Presbyterian church, and to substitute in its place a completely human establishment?'
The civil magistrate was to replace Christ as the head of the Church by determining its constitution (i.e. the classes into which it was to be divided); equality before God was to be replaced by an inequality before the magistrate; the seeds of jealousy were to be sown by inequality of rank; the state in its dealings with the Synod would clearly take account only of the feelings of first class ministers who would exercise vigilance over the rest; the Synod was to become 'an inquisitorial, a kind of Star Chamber court'; contrary to Marsden's note, financial reward could not act as an inducement to piety since money was the root of all evil and emoluments were nearly always given to 'the idle and profligate, who had influence with men in power' (not an argument likely to appeal to the government). The overall effect would be to turn the Synod into an established (and Erastian) church, and thereby 'soon leave dissenters nothing but name.' (28)

A perspective similar to Sherrard's was jubilantly expressed by Knox to Castlereagh in July, 1803, soon after the Synod had acquiesced in the plan. The agent appointed by the Government (with a salary of £400 taken from the surplus of the grant) would be 'to all intents (with less state but far more efficiency than in Scotland) a Royal Commissioner in the Synod.... He will be a kind of permanent moderator to whom in all matters of a public nature infallible attention and deference will be paid':

'Never before was Ulster under the dominion of the British crown. It had a distinct moral existence, and moved and
acted on principles of which all we could certainly know was that they were not with the state, therefore when any tempting occasion occurred, ready to act against it: now the distinct existence will merge into the general wellbeing, the Presbyterian ministers being henceforth a subordinate ecclesiastical aristocracy, whose feeling must be that of zealous loyalty, and whose influence on their people will be as surely sedative when it should be so and exciting when it should be so, as it was the direct reverse before.\(^{(29)}\)

It is of course difficult to estimate the extent to which Sherrard's fears and Knox's optimism were justified. The mere fact that Synod ministers had been in receipt of a grant since - with some interruptions - the mid-seventeenth century distinguished them from the dissenters in England and Scotland (a small Regium Donum was given to English dissenters and went towards their widows' fund). Drennan thought that the grant was of itself politicallyemasculating and had complained when Black (apparently on his own initiative) applied for an increase in February, 1792, that 'if they get a great increase to the bounty, their dependence on the crown will increase in the very same ratio. They will be dissociated from the laity and our religion will be contaminated by the corruption of our pastors.' After the grant was given, he commented: 'I think the Presbyterian parsons are pretty well gagged now' and again, at the beginning of 1793 (in response to Black's loyalist speech in Derry Cathedral): 'they are well and truly pensioned and not
one here (Dublin - PB) wishes to speak on any public subject.

Thus the mere fact of being paid by the government at all regardless of the conditions of payment can be said to have had an effect on the political behaviour of ministers, and this charge was most forcibly made during the 'Voluntary' debates of the 1830s, when Ulster Presbyterianism in general disregarded the opposition built up by English and Scottish dissent to the principle of state support for religion (though there was substantial Presbyterian support for reform of the method of tithe collection). The failure of Voluntaryism in Ulster had wider repercussions insofar as it deprived radicalism of one of the stimuli that were important to it in Great Britain. But, as we shall see later, the endowment of Presbyterian ministers was not the sole reason for Presbyterian caution in this matter, and was not in any case likely to much effect the attitude of Presbyterian laymen.

Drennan expected that the new grant could result in a drive towards congregationalist principles, owing to dissatisfaction among the laity at their loss of influence. But insofar as the split he envisaged between laity and clergy did occur, the main beneficiaries seem to have been other Presbyterian bodies - the Seceders and Covenanters, until the Seceders succumbed to classification and a number of their congregations turned to the Scottish 'Old Light' Synods and to James Bryce's 'Primitive Secession.'

Knox's view that the Synod's agent would become 'a kind of
permanent moderator to whom in all matters of a public nature infallible attention and deference will be paid' does not appear to be justified by the event. Black came into conflict with the Synod as a whole in 1806 when a memorial was submitted to the Lord Lieutenant, asking for an equalisation of the bounty. Twenty-nine ministers, including Black, supported a protest against the memorial on very straightforward secular grounds of the rights of private property. Of these, twenty-five were in First Class congregations, and there was only one Third Class minister. A smaller number of more definite supporters of Black protested against negotiations for the equalisation being conducted by a Synodical committee instead of by Black and the Presbytery of Dublin ministers (who also supported classification) since the latter normally conducted negotiations with the government. In the event, Black visited Dublin at the same time as the Synod's commissioners to argue against equalisation which was refused by the government - a move which can hardly have endeared him to the rest of the Synod. (33)

Black's personal prestige was also put to the test in his dispute with William Steele Dickson in 1812 over the latter's Narrative of the confinement and exile of William Steele Dickson, when the Synod ordered the publication of Black's Substance of two speeches against what were taken to be Dickson's calumnies. Dickson refused to sign a vaguely worded declaration against errors in the Narrative, but an effort to suspend him was defeated 'to allow
Dr Dickson an opportunity of publicly retracting his misstatements and misrepresentations. The result was his Retractions, which forcibly reasserted his arguments against Black. Dickson was supported in the 1813 Synod by William Porter, previously a protege of Black's. The result was not a clear-cut victory for either side. It was agreed that there were some errors in Dickson's Narrative (Dickson himself did not dispute this), but it was also agreed 'that in the minute of 1799, the phrase "implicated in treasonable and seditious practices" as applied to two of its members then in confinement (which was the main point under dispute - PB) was inaccurately used, inasmuch as it appears to be liable to an unfavourable construction respecting them" and that the Synod regretted its failure to answer a memorial from Dickson in 1805 wanting this point clarified. (34)

So that, although Black was widely regarded as being in the ascendant during this period, a coherent opposition to him continued. Those who supported a protest by Porter against the Synod's handling of the matter included seven out of the twelve ministers accused of complicity in the rebellion who still remained in the Synod. Some backing can be given to the argument that the Arians of the 1820s continued a politically radically tradition in the Synod by the fact that eight of the fifteen Remonstrants who were in the Synod in 1813 supported Porter (including Porter himself). A ninth, W.D.H. McEwen, subsequently joined the Presbytery of Antrim. In 1813, he appears to have been orthodox,
insofar as he opposed the Synod's leniency to Josiah Ker, who had declared himself to be an Arian in 1810; though this may be complicated by the fact that Ker was a consistent supporter of Black. (35)

Black was finally defeated on the question of the Belfast Academic Institution, which seems to have been responsible for his suicide in 1817, and his successor, George Hay, also of Londonderry, did not play an important part in the Synod's affairs. Thus it is only in the first ten years that a case can be made for the agent for Regium Donum being a new disciplinary centre to the Synod, and this period saw a political quiescence which stretched far beyond the bounds of the Synod. Black certainly made an impact. According to Dickson, he 'discharges his poisoned urn, as a pestilential Aquarius, to chill or overwhelm' every tender bud of candor and liberality 'with the turbid effusions of his envenomed eloquence'; and Montgomery, leader of the Arians in the 1820s, accused Cooke of trying to fasten Black's yoke back on the Synod. But it was the circumstances following the rebellion, together with the skill of his envenomed eloquence which gave Black his influence, not the post of agent for Regium Donum itself. (36)

Dickson was the only case of a minister being deprived of Regium Donum because of his political views, and his case is slightly complicated by the fact of his congregation (second, Keady) having been erected after the list on which the grant was based had been drawn up; and by his insistence that he was not applying for the
grant: he simply wanted to know why it hadn't been offered to him. (37)

Dickson was the only minister of those accused of complicity in the rebellion who was made a state prisoner. Concrete evidence against the United Irish leaders was difficult to obtain (owing to the reluctance of informers to testify) and this resulted in the agreement with the Dublin prisoners, whereby they gave the government an account of the progress of the United Irish system in exchange for freedom to leave the country. Dickson, according to his own account, took a leading part in preventing such an agreement being made with the Belfast prisoners, who therefore had eventually to be returned to Ireland. Subsequently, he denied that government had proved his involvement in rebellion, but refused to deny that he had been involved; while maintaining that he had never engaged in politically dishonourable activities or betrayed 'his country' - of both of which he accused Castlereagh. (38)

He was also the only minister to take a fairly prominent role in radical politics in the immediate aftermath of the Union. He was active in opposing Castlereagh in the 1805 election (which Castlereagh lost); he wrote for Drennan's Belfast Monthly Magazine (albeit on the innocuous subject of improved methods for flax spinning); and his Narrative was a fierce attack on the government's early treatment of United Irish prisoners and on the Union itself. His congregation received Regium Donum after his resignation for health
reasons in 1815. (39)

It would be difficult to argue that classification produced an 'ecclesiastical hierarchy' based on wealth, where none had existed before. Reid/Killen points out that there already were considerable variations in the amount of stipend paid to ministers, and the new arrangement aimed as far as possible to coincide with the old. Of the seventeen ministers who became Moderators between 1804 (after classification had been introduced) and 1820, twelve came from first class congregations. Two came from third class congregations. It is worth noting that the appeal against classification in 1806 and the subsequent quarrel with the government over the Belfast Academical Institution took place under Moderators from second or third class congregations. But of the twenty-six ministers who became Moderators between 1778 and 1803 (before classification was introduced), fifteen came from congregations which were subsequently put in the first class, and only three from congregations which were put in the third class. (40)

Generally speaking, congregations which, according to the list Black submitted to Castlereagh in 1799, had stipends of over £50 a year were put in the first class; between £40 and £50 in the second class; and under £40 in the third class. There was a considerable overlap at £50 and £40, though most £50 ministers were put in the second class. There are a number of surprises (1st, Omagh, with £30, in the first class; Aughnacloy with £65, 1st Coleraine and Tobermore with £60, Newtownards with £70, all in
the second class; Dunluce with only £20, also in the second class; Dunmurry with £60 and Glendermot and Omagh each with £50 in the third class). There seems little pattern in these irregularities, except that of the five second class congregations receiving less than £40 in 1799, four underwent a change of minister during this period.

Certainly it is difficult to relate these variations to support or otherwise for Black previous to the introduction of the scheme. Of the five £50 ministers put in the first class, none supported the 1801 protest against allowing elders to speak on the Regium Donum (two out of the twenty-three £50 ministers put in the second class did so). Of the fourteen ministers put in the second class, only two supported the protest, while three out of the thirteen in the third class did so. Of nine ministers who benefitted surprisingly from classification, two (1st Coleraine, and the particularly surprising 1st Omagh) had supported the protest, but so had one (1st Newtownards) of the nine ministers who lost surprisingly.

There is no evidence of discrimination against ministers associated with the rebellion, outside the case of Steele Dickson; or against congregations whose ministers had been executed or had left the country because of such association. Five such ministers were in the first class, together with four such congregations. Only three such ministers were in the third class, with only one such congregation, none of them surprising (though James Porter's congregation at Greyabbey was a borderline case at £40). There are only two

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surprises: James Davison with £65 was put in the second class, while William Dunlop, with only £40 was put in the first class (Dunlop supported Black both in opposing the participation of elders in discussing Regium Donum, and, subsequently, in opposing the memorial for equalisation). (41)

The new 'hierarchy' of reward thus conforms more closely to existing divisions of wealth than to reputations for loyalty or disloyalty. Clearly, the new source of income was more secure than payment by congregations and thus could be expected to have a tendency to fix these divisions, but since the grants inhere in congregations rather than in the ministers themselves, and congregations still had the right, with the agreement of the Synod as a whole, to dismiss their ministers, it probably had less effect than Castlereagh had hoped in rendering ministers independent of their congregations (the Fasti lists about fourteen ministers suspended, dismissed or deposed between 1804 and 1820, mostly on points of moral behaviour).

The greatest effects of the grant were probably to increase the 'respectability' of Presbyterian ministers (with a corresponding decrease in their sense of alienation); and to render them independent of other sources of income such as farming or teaching. Classification was not necessary to either of these effects. The main distinct effect of classification was to inflict a moral defeat on the Synod, which had resolved against it yet had to accept it.
with gratitude: this in turn produced a redistribution of Presbyterian sectarians which strengthened the Reformed Presbyterians and, after the Seceders had been incorporated into the scheme, finally issued in the 'Scotch' Secession interest. It can thus be said to have had a marginal effect in reducing the emphasis on Presbyterian peculiarities within the classified synods, thus possibly helping to incorporate the sectarian into a national (or 'imperial') loyalty, as Castle-reagh and Knox had hoped it would.

CLASSIFICATION AND VOLUNTARYISM

The opposition to Regium Donum in this period was not yet a fully fledged voluntaryism. The Scottish Secession had moved towards voluntaryism by opposing any coercive power on the part of the magistrate in religious matters, but it had not yet declared itself opposed in principle to state support for religion and the Scottish Synods took a tolerant attitude towards the Irish Synods' surrender to classification. But voluntaryism was implicit in the Scottish New Light position in that funds derived from the whole community to support the religious practice of a part of the community could still be seen as a form of persecution - a penalty on dissent (and John Macleod in his Scottish Theology sees the adoption of the New Light position as the first step of the Secession towards regarding themselves as 'dissenters'). (42)
Thomas Ledlie Birch (like Joseph Priestly in England) had seen the union of church and state as the Antichrist, and traced its origin from the first tithe; Drennan (and, to a lesser extent, Steele Dickson) saw any form of state endowment as a form of political emasculation; Rev Henry Henry declared that 'I am no advocate either for establishments or royal gifts, especially establishments professedly intolerant' (he was replying to an attack by the Reformed Presbyterian, Matthew Meek, who subsequently supported the neo-voluntary Rev John Paul in the disputes in the 1830s). Voluntary sentiments were thus undoubtedly current, but once the option of revolution had been ruled out, no coherent programme was formulated on the basis of them, and while revolution was a possibility, such issues tended to be obscured in generalities to maintain the broadest possible alliance. The main beneficiaries of popular discontent over classification - the Reformed Presbyterians and the Old Light Secession - were the strongest advocates of the covenanted state: though the Reformed Presbyterians were later to be split by the tension between the voluntaryist and covenanting tendencies of their opposition to the actually existing establishment. (43)

James Bryce, in his account of the Antiburghers' acceptance of classification, gives what appears to be the full apocalyptic argument for principled voluntaryism:

'The beast with the seven heads and ten horns upon which the woman sat, is evidently the ten kingdoms of the western empire supporting Christianity. This connexion between
church and state is called Babylon, or spiritual adultery; in other words, all churches receiving legal support from the civil power are, in the language of prophecy, committing fornication with the kings of the earth. Our Lord Christ has pledged himself in the marriage covenant to support his own spouse. Suppose any other man to supply my wife with food and raiment from year to year, would not every person consider himself justified in calling me cuckold? So, if the spouse of Christ receive her support from the kingdoms of the world, is not this to commit fornication against her Lord? (44)

But Bryce's objection was to the manner in which the state support was given, not to the principle of establishment as such. He argued that a priest of Jehovah could take offerings which had been given to Jehovah. The government had a perfect right to make a freewill offering to the church; the church had no right to become a pensionary of the government. His objection was to the minister of Christ, in his ministerial capacity (in which he should be sovereign over civil society) having to petition humbly to the civil power for half his income:

'This last expression - "as approved by him" (the Lord Lieutenant - PB) - was always the grand obnoxious clause, particularly to me, who had already resolved that no magistrate, in any station, should ever have it in his power to put either a positive or a negative on the one half of
my income as a minister of the gospel. (45)

He had no objection in principle to classification, which he called 'a mere blind to cover the real evils the whole transaction contained' and, though the requirement to take the oath of allegiance could be regarded as insulting, he thought it understandable under the circumstances, and that it could have been borne with. He thought the provision of a regular stipend from the congregation contained in embryo the same dangers as state support: 'The people in general consider their stipend as a tax on their property and not as a solemn service to our Lord and Saviour.' (46)

By 1820, Bryce had about six congregations under his (and his colleague, Hugh McIntyre's) care, of which the second largest, Dervock, with about sixty families, left in 1821 to join the Scottish Antiburgher 'Synod of Protestors' (formed in opposition to the union of the Scottish Burgher and Antiburgher Synods in 1820). The Scottish Original Synod (Old Light Burghers) only had about three. The minutes of the Reformed Presbytery only record one case of a request for supply of sermon to a Secession congregation dissatisfied with classification (some Burghers in 1810). (47)
CHAPTER FOUR

THE BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

The history of the Belfast Academical Institution dates back to the
founder John Murray, a wealthy merchant who established the
institute in 1810. The institution was founded to provide a
formal education for the children of the city's artisans and
manual workers, who were previously excluded from
a formal education.

In 1810, the institution opened its doors with a
small group of students, and over the years, it has
grown to become one of the most prestigious
institutions in Northern Ireland. The institution
has produced many notable alumni, including
political leaders and business tycoons.

The immediate success of the institution can be
described as a testament to the dedication of
its founders and the support of the local
community. Today, the Belfast Academical
Institution remains a beacon of academic
excellence and a symbol of the power of
education.
FORMATION OF THE BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

One of Bryce's leading lay supporters was Dr Robert Tennent, brother of William Tennent, one of the state prisoners, and of John Tennent, who fled to France in 1798 and joined Napoleon's army. Dr Tennent was the chairman at a dinner in Belfast on St Patrick's Day in 1816 at which various toasts objectionable to the government were proposed (including one to Marshall Ney). The dinner was one of the few occasions on which the continuance in Belfast of a political tradition sympathetic to the aims of the United Irishmen was made manifest, and it resulted in a government attack on the recently formed Belfast Academical Institution, which was in the process of replacing Glasgow as the main seminary for the Presbyterian ministry in Ulster. (1)

The formation of the Belfast Academical Institution was first proposed in 1807. It was an ambitious scheme, aiming to combine the functions of a school with those of a college for further education and to provide popular lectures on scientific subjects. In 1808, it was proposed that facilities should be provided for Professors of Divinity responsible to their respective denominations, so that the Institution could become a seminary for the training of ministers. (2)

The immediate precedent was the Royal Cork Institute, projected in 1803 by Rev Thomas Dix Hincks, an English Unitarian who eventually held the chair of Hebrew in the Belfast Institution. The
Cork Institute was in receipt of government funds and, from the first, the Belfast Institution sought the support of the government. After one of the earliest applications, John Foster declined to support it on the grounds that its constitution differed from those of the Cork and Dublin Institutes, but said that he would send Hincks to Belfast to examine it. Foster may have had other reasons for concern, since the application was made on behalf of the Belfast Institution by William Tennent. (3)

There is an account of the constitution of the Cork Institute in William Drennan's Belfast Monthly Magazine (Nov 1808). Like the Belfast Institution, it had boards of managers and visitors, but the visitors were appointed by the King and were all members of the established church. The managers had the right to nominate their own successors. The Monthly Magazine commented that 'the want of a principle of renovation within itself, without having recourse to a body so unconnected with it and with one another, so little interested in its aims, and so difficult to be brought into action as the visitors, cannot escape animadversion.' (4)

The Belfast Institution on the other hand was highly democratic. The sovereign body was an annual general meeting of subscribers, who functioned as the shareholders in a commercial enterprise, with the right to elect both boards of managers and visitors, and there was a complicated system (introduced into the scheme in May, 1808) for ensuring the rotation of members on the Boards, the intention
being 'to preclude the possibility of the management falling into the hands of a few individuals.' Black wrote to Bruce in Nov 1807, ridiculing the project and incidentally relating the concern with constitutional niceties to the great interest in constitutions which had been excited in Belfast by the French Revolution:

'I see your townsmen have been busy and in their characteristic manner - I have seldom seen a more "rudes alque indigesta moles" than the production of their committee. It is a plan which will not, cannot work, unless modified by soberer heads. It put me in mind of the French Constitution with which we were so frequently amused. The machine is so full of checks that it will not move. I see they are to have a Board of Managers from the aristocracy or 20 Guinea subscribers, but this is to have a Board of Control, or eight visitors from the Democrats or 5 Guinea men. These last are wisely invested with great powers and as they are presumed, of course, to be persons of deep discernment and finished classical taste, they are to appoint and attend Examinations for discovering the proficiency of students etc. etc. etc. and three of these wiseheads may constitute a Board. I will say nothing of the "First Consul for Life" (the Marquis of Donegall - PB) because he is my landlord and of course a very finished scholar and patron of literature - but I cannot help congratulating the sagacity of the Committee in page 9 when they so regulate their schools (before limited to two)
"that no Master shall have more pupils than he can properly attend to with a view to their greatest possible improvement" then, after a paragraph about economy (comprehending cheap pens and copy books) they judiciously add - "There shall be no limitation either as to the number or age of the pupils in any of the schools of this Institution." I remember you used to laugh at me about 25 years ago for questioning the infallibility of Belfast and Lisburn at our Volunteer meetings. Forgive me if I am again a sceptic...." (5)

Bruce had already opposed the formation of the Institution. In October, he submitted a memorandum arguing that there was only a need for one school in the town, albeit supplemented by private seminaries; that the stock of charity available for education should not be overstretched; that the Literary Society, of which he was a leading member, was itself seeking government aid to provide popular lectures; that the Belfast Academy, of which he was Principal, had tried the proposed idea of uniting a classical and a commercial school, but had found that it introduced an uncouth element from the country who made unsuitable companions for 'gentlemen's children, reared with such nice attention to innocence and gentleness as is commonly to be observed in this town'; that the idea of businessmen managing a school was absurd; and that the competition between the two academies would introduce an unpleasant rancorous element into the provision of education.
Principally, however, he objected to the idea that the Belfast Academical Institution should become a college - an idea which he said was 'now abandoned by the projectors and, as it would not bear the inspection of professional and literary men, application for signatures was made only to gentlemen in business of unsuspecting liberality.'

'Such a scheme would be favoured neither by the opinion entertained by government of the religion, learning, and politics of the town, nor even by its local situation. Neither the church nor the state would be favourable to such pretensions, even if Dublin College were willing to forgo its monopoly of educating the Protestants of Ireland.... In 1799, Government was induced to take the establishment of a Northern college into consideration in consequence of the recent establishment at Maynooth, a desire to do a popular act on the eve of the union, and a legacy of £5,000 bequeathed for that purpose by Primate Robinson. But Belfast was never thought of for the site of it. Armagh was the place in contemplation as the metropolitan see of all Ireland, as situated in the centre of this province, as the residence of the Primate and a body of clergy....' (6)

Sir Arthur Wellesley, Chief Secretary in 1808/9 also opposed it in correspondence with Lord Liverpool as a 'democratical establishment' which would 'separate to a greater degree this numerous sect' ('the Presbyterians of Ireland') 'from the inhabitants of Great Britain and
from their own countrymen' and be pervaded by 'the republican spirit of the Presbyterians.' He recommended temporising on the question of granting a Charter of Incorporation until an alternative system of education which would promote the interests of the Establishment became feasible, and he cited Castlereagh as someone to be referred to on the matter. A Charter was, however, granted in 1810. (7)

The Institution attracted some Establishment support, principally from the Marquis of Donegall, 'patron' of the borough of Belfast, and Rev Edward May, his son-in-law. Wellesley stated that this support was due to the anxiety of Donegall and May to lease the land on which the Institution was built, which suggests that he was supplied with local information, possibly by Bruce. But messages of support were also received from the Bishop of Down, Castlereagh (which might have been part of Wellesley's policy of temporising), the Bishop of Dromore, the Marchioness of Downshire, and the Lord Primate of Ireland (William Stuart) who enrolled as a first class subscriber. Donegall, May and the Marquis of Downshire were particularly consistent in their support. May's survived an incident in 1813 when he came to blows with Dr Tennent over the latter's attempts to hold a town meeting to discuss the nature of Orangeism (Tennent was imprisoned and subsequently sued May unsuccessfully for unlawful imprisonment). Most surprisingly, the bill for the incorporation of the Institution was moved in Parliament by Sir George Hill. Hill had been connected with Tone's arrest and was the MP for Londonderry, where
Black was influential, and which Wellesley had indicated as a possible site for an alternative to the Institution. He turned against it after the St Patrick's Day Dinner affair. (8)

But the main impetus for the project undoubtedly came from the radicals. Its earliest most energetic promoters included the Tennent brothers; Robert Simms, who had been a state prisoner with William Tennent; Robert Callwell and William Simms, who had been among the proprietors of the Northern Star; William Drennan, who arrived in Belfast from Newry at the end of 1807; and Rev Henry Henry of Connor, who had been suspected of complicity in the rebellion and whose opposition to classified Regium Donum we have already seen. (9)

Dr Tennent had been a ship's surgeon and out of the country at the time of the rebellion, but his papers contain notes of a mutiny at Table Bay in which he was involved in 1797, together with some rare items of United Irish memorabilia. He was closely involved with radical politics until his death in 1836. Together with Drennan, Callwell, Simms, his brothers and, subsequently, John Barnet and Robert Grimshaw, who were also involved with the Institution, he played a part in just about every radical demonstration in Belfast between 1809 and 1820. Much of the Institution's establishment support was also anti-ministerial. Downshire was out of favour with the government through his consistent opposition to the Union and in 1815, the Institution sought to raise subscriptions in India with the encouragement of Lord Moira, the Governor General, who had been
a leading opponent of government policy in 1798. A list of books for the literary department prepared in 1815 by Professors Cairns and Young (who were not particularly prominent as radicals) includes works by Horne Tooke (Diversions of Purley), William Godwin (Life of Chaucer), Joseph Priestley, and his successor at the Gravel Pit Meeting in Hackney, Thomas Belsham. (10)

The Institution opened as a school early in 1814 and first received an annually renewable grant from Parliament in July, which enabled it to open as a College in November, 1815.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SYNOD OF ULSTER

Although Hanna and Henry were closely involved with the Institution from the beginning, it wasn't until 1813 that negotiations with the Synod of Ulster began in earnest. A letter had been prepared to be sent to the moderators of presbyteries in January, 1808; the proposal to provide facilities for divinity professors was made in March, 1808 and agreed in December; an approach was made to the Synod in 1809 requesting patronage and support in very general terms. In 1810, the Synod reported, through Henry, that it would be prepared to consider any plan to promote the Institution's interests, and in 1811, it expressed satisfaction at the Institution's having received its Charter of Incorporation. But no real progress was made until 1813, when, rather surprisingly, the Institution's letter was presented to the
Synod by John Thompson of Carnmoney, normally an ally of Black's. By this time, of course, the Institution was already largely built and it was clear that it would actually come into existence. (11)

A deputation from the Synod met representatives of the Institution in August, 1813 and agreed to all their proposals - that the Synod should treat the Institution's certificates as equivalent to certificates from 'foreign' (i.e. Scottish) universities in subjects for which Professors had been appointed; that the Synod should establish Professorships of Divinity, Hebrew and Ecclesiastical History, and that members of the Synod would help to raise subscriptions for the literary department of the Institution. The deputation was headed by Thompson and also included Black's successor as minister for Londonderry and agent for Regium Donum, George Hay, together with Robert Stewart, later a close ally of Henry Cooke's (though at this time, according to his later assertions, he had Arian sympathies). Six of its sixteen members (Acheson, N. Alexander, T. Alexander, Dunlop, Porter and Stewart) had supported Steele Dickson against Black in the 1813 Synod, and a seventh, Dr Neilson - later classical master in the Institution - had supported Dickson as Clerk to the Synod in 1805 (other supporters of Dickson in 1813 included, in addition to Henry Henry, Henry Montgomery and W.D.H. McEwen, who were shortly to be closely identified with the Institution). (12)

Although the conduct of the deputation was 'unanimously' approved in the 1814 Synod (which was also informed of the Lord Lieutenant's
support for the attempt to secure a grant) nothing was done about it until 1815 (after the grant was safely secured) when the Synod resolved - again 'unanimously' - to recognise the Institution's certificates and to take steps to appoint a Professor. In practical terms, the Synod's support dates from 1815, since young men training for the ministry could now take their qualifications in subjects other than Divinity from the Institution, and the Synod joined the Institution in examining them. But the appointment of a Professor turned out to be a slow, unwieldy business, especially when contrasted with the Antiburgher Synod, which also resolved to appoint a Professor in 1815 and did so straightaway (Samuel Edgar). The Synod of Ulster appointed a committee with a minister and elder from each presbytery, which reported that the apparently unlikely sum of £3,000 would be necessary to make the appointment. During the following year, it failed to get a quorum at any of its meetings and had made no progress by the 1816 Synod, by which time the Institution had fallen into disfavour with the government. (13)

GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION

In the second decade of the nineteenth century - and especially in the period immediately following the end of the war in 1815 - the government was faced with what appeared to be a recrudescence of the radical spirit of the late eighteenth century. There were, of course, significant differences, principally in a separating out of
radical elements. There was a more obvious antagonism between urban and rural radicalism and, within urban radicalism, an antagonism between bourgeois and working class radicalism. Bourgeois radicalism had developed from a broad, idealistic emphasis on constitutional reform into more sophisticated theories of social organisation based on the science of political economy, maintaining the argument for the autonomy of civil society as against the state but developing it to coincide more clearly with distinctively bourgeois interests. (14)

Belfast could hardly be said to be playing a leading part in this development, but insofar as it had a radical caucus, it seemed to be concentrated in the Joint Boards of the Belfast Academical Institution who were now in the process of securing control over the education of the Presbyterian clergy. The suspicions which Wellesley had already voiced over the 'democratical' and 'republican' nature of the Institution seemed to be confirmed by the 'disloyal toasts' of the St Patrick's Day Dinner.

Tennent's papers contain a sketch for a speech to be given as chairman for the dinner, in which he mentions that 'a plan has been suggested for forming a society with some appropriate name, which might become a centre of union to those who love their country, and enable them with more energy and effect to direct and combine their efforts for promoting her prosperity.'

'Such a plan, if executed with sufficient prudence and wisdom, might be eminently useful in any nation, but how
much more so in a country now circumstanced like our beloved Ireland - her general happiness should be the paramount consideration sought for on the eternal principle of equal, impartial justice - were this standard once erected in our land and the people but convinced that it were so - how soon would all our lamentable dissensions vanish and the Irish character be again displayed in all its native beauty and excellence....

'My young friends - when I look around I do not - I cannot - despair of my country. I have full confidence that the patriots of 80 and of 92 - whose splendid talents, virtue and patriotism were so flattering to Irish hearts and so effectual for Irish objects - shall not all close their eyes on this world without the high gratification of seeing a double portion of their spirit rest upon the heads of their youthful successors.' (15)

On 22nd April, after newspaper reports of the toasts given at the dinner, Vesey Fitzgerald, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote to say that he could not support a renewal of the Institution's grant for 1816. Soon after, the Joint Boards condemned the sentiments expressed at the dinner, and sought explanations from the teachers who had been present. One of them, James Knowles, published a letter in the papers, defending his right to his political opinions. When he was summoned before the Joint Boards, he said that he 'would have preferred living on bread and cheese' rather than submit to the powers he now realised the Joint Boards had under their Charter of Incorporation.
Early in May, Dr Tennent and William Magee resigned at a general meeting of the proprietors called to discuss Fitzgerald's letter. They were followed by John Barnet, and there was a unanimous resolution that the remaining members of the Boards who had been present - Robert Grimshaw and W.B. Neilson (son, incidentally, of Samuel Neilson, editor of the Northern Star) should resign. \(^{(16)}\)

Notwithstanding the resignations, the attack was renewed in Parliament by Sir George Hill, who had been responsible for securing the Charter of Incorporation. In a letter to the Secretary, Joseph Stevenson, he called for a complete change in the constitution. He condemned the connection with the Synod and suggested that managers and visitors had too much influence over the teaching staff. These - together with the adoption of collegiate status - became the main themes in discussions with Castlereagh and Peel about the continuation of the grant. On 25th June, however, the same day that the Synod discussed its continuing relations with the Institution, Samuel Thompson, one of the Vice Presidents, and Lord Downshire reported that Peel and Vesey Fitzgerald had promised to bring the grant forward for 1816. \(^{(17)}\)

Fitzgerald's initial letter to Stevenson had said that 'various and repeated communications have been transmitted to His Majesty's government in Ireland' about the Institution, and Drennan continually blamed the influence of 'the two Presbyterian Doctors' (Bruce and Black) for the government's attitude. In May in fact he was inclined to blame the Synod as a whole: 'The Synod and Mr Hanna are as
little friends to the present Institution as Dr B (Bruce - PB) and it is not unlikely are secret prompters of the government (Drennan was in Chester at the time both of the dinner and of the subsequent row). The government's aim was 'to make it (the Institution - PB) a piece of patronage such as the Synod and such as the learned Doctor may like better than its present organisation.' Black wrote to the Boards prior to the Synod's meeting in June, requesting copies of papers, which the Boards sent instead to their sympathisers, Revs John McCance (the current Moderator) and Henry Henry. At the Synod, Black openly opposed the Institution apparently for the first time (he wasn't present at the 1815 Synod, when the connection was formally agreed). (18)

Nonetheless, the Synod resolved to go ahead with appointing a Professor, and appointed a committee to raise subscriptions (after Black vetoed a proposal to raise the money directly from ministers' Regium Donum, for which he was agent). Drennan's correspondent, Mrs McTier, who seems to have enjoyed expressing opinions which he could be expected to find offensive, described the Synod to him and said 'I think Dr Black in particular pleased me much in sermon and manners; but on his side, he had not one speaker and but four votes against the whole toll.' The four votes subsequently (in protest against the connection made in 1817) appear as himself, James Elder, Adam Hill and James McCullough. (19)

It is possible that the Synod's enthusiasm for home education was
influenced by the recent discovery that, under the Act of the General Assembly passed in 1799 against the spread of congregationalism and itineracy, its ministers were excluded from the pulpits of the Church of Scotland. The issue had arisen in 1814, when the Synod agreed 'to enquire whether the law of the Assembly which excludes from their pulpits ministers of a particular description be intended to apply to the ministers and licentiates of the General Synod of Ulster, and, if so, to request a copy of it.' The Assembly replied in 1815, enclosing a copy of the relevant act and making it clear that the Synod's ministers were excluded. The Synod wrote to request a change in the Act, but no reply was received by 1816. (20)

The Synod had resolved to appoint a Professor at a special meeting in November but shortly before this a deputation from the Joint Boards met Castlereagh, apparently at their own request, for two meetings, one in Belfast and one at Mount Stewart, at which he particularly attacked the connection with the Synod 'which, if persisted in he would consider as an act of hostility towards Government, and might lead to the withholding of the Regium Donum' (William Boyd, on the Joint Boards' delegation, insisted that the threat to withhold Regium Donum was made, though Castlereagh later denied it). He proposed that the managers, elected by the proprietors, should confine their attention to overall supervision of the economy and buildings of the schools, while the visitors would be made up of professional men and would require to combine with the professors to supervise lectures and appoint teachers. (21)
These ideas were developed in a letter later in the month (and after the Synod's meeting) from Sir George Hill, which denied that Castlereagh threatened to withhold the Regium Donum and accused Boyd of going back on an agreement he had made to dissuade the Synod from appointing a Professor. The government, he suggested, had just cause for alarm when the constitution of Belfast's main seat of learning had been dictated by 'men of no slight suspicion of revolutionary character' who were enemies of the established church, aiming by means of the Institution to 'crush and annihilate' the purposes for which the Regium Donum had been granted. The bounty had been increased on the basis of information about the constitution of the Synod, which the Synod now aimed to change without consulting the government. The government could not endow Professors of rival sects to preach at the same University, since this would result in confusion. Hill professed himself nonetheless 'a friend to every enlarged and liberal view which can be imparted to the youth of our country without giving them a democratic, anti-constitutional inclination on the one hand, or a slavish, bigotted bias on the other.' (22)

Supporting evidence for the assertion that the Boards had promised to dissuade the Synod from appointing a Professor in November 1816 is provided by Drennan, who says that 'Lord Castlereagh gave the Regium Donum in his conference the very just epithet of pension - and the annual grant seemed to have the same soporific, paralysing effect on the Boards, until awakened and electrify'd by the behaviour of the Synod.' Stevenson's letter to the Synod explaining the state of the
negotiations is indeed rather dissuasive. After summarising Castlereagh's case quite forcefully ("in his opinion, such a measure if adopted would be deemed an act of hostility by His Majesty's Government - and his lordship recommends to the Synod that no such appointment should be made at present. When the Institution has been matured, such a connection may become a measure of adjustment between the government and the Synod") he concludes 'that it would be a matter of extreme regret to the Boards should any circumstance arise to lessen the confidence and harmony which ought always to exist between His Majesty's Government and the Synod of Ulster.' Stevenson later proposed that Castlereagh's proposed changes in the constitution should be adopted almost in their entirety. (23)

Nonetheless, the Synod agreed to go ahead with the appointment, though it was delayed until June on the grounds that there was only one candidate (Hanna). Further negotiations between the Joint Boards and the government (represented by Fitzgerald and Peel), together with discussions on possible alterations to the constitution took place until, in June 1817, the government refused to renew the grant. Whether by accident or design, this decision was finally made while the Synod was meeting (as was the decision in June 1816 to continue the grant). The Synod resolved to press ahead with appointing Hanna, only Black, Elder, Hill and McCullough dissenting, and resolved 'by a great majority' 'that the regulations for the education of our young men intended for the ministry are strictly a matter of Discipline.' That some ministers continued to have a cautious approach was shown
by an unsuccessful motion that Hanna should give his lectures in his own Meeting House rather than in the Institution until the negotiations between the Government and the Institution had been 'satisfactorily terminated'. But the more radical side of the Synod was represented by a protest from Steele Dickson and William Harrison (an only recently ordained minister who replaced Hanna on the committee to raise money for the Professorship) against any explanation being offered to the Government 'as it appears to recognise a right in the Government to interfere with our regulations for the education of candidates for the ministry.' (24)

THE INSTITUTION AND PRESBYTERIAN LOYALTY

Once the connection with the Synod was established, the education of the Presbyterian clergy was removed from the control of the established Church of Scotland through Glasgow University and put under the close supervision of a management elected by voluntary subscribers. The government argued that the constitution effectively meant that the Institution's management could fall into the hands of a clique, though this is what it had originally been designed to prevent. Peel told a deputation from the Synod in July 1817 that he had no objection to the present membership of the Boards (this was after the 1816 purge) but there was no guarantee that they would not fall into bad hands in the future, and the most active members of the Boards could determine the nature of the school. From the
time the school was first proposed, in fact, a small number of individuals, who included Drennan and Tennent, played a continuous and active part, helped by the fact that as their period of office on one board expired, they could move to the other (and the distinction between the Boards was becoming rather nebulous). (25)

In part, two rival conceptions of public accountability were at stake. Drennan took the view that the Institution should be directly accountable to a public that was prepared to pay for it. Castlereagh and Peel felt that public accountability meant accountability to the state as representative of the whole society, supporting it through money derived from taxes paid by the whole society. Thus, Drennan described the voluntary subscriptions as 'our first, our best and perhaps it were to be wished our only patron' and felt that the Institution was in the process of selling itself to the government:

'to that ministry which spreads its monstrous palm over every liberal institution, moulds them to its own purposes of influence by the modifications it imposes; and while it disclaims all positive patronage, contrives to secure it more effectively by its negative or veto; thus manacling and fettering the Institution, as it were, from head to heel, yet all the time professing, with the most insolent courtesy, its solicitude for your welfare.' (26)

The problem was closely linked to the controversy surrounding the Regium Donum between those who believed that the churches should
be informal organisations within civil society and responsible only to their membership, and those who believed that they should be supported by and in some degree accountable to the state. Sir George Hill saw the Institution as an attempt to undermine the connection between the government and the Synod. Drennan denied this 'however the exertions of individuals of the Institution, through the medium of a free press might contribute to inform public opinion with regard to the nature and tendency of that connexion.' (27)

As we have seen, the intention of the increased Regium Donum was to help dissolve the sectarianism of Ulster Presbyterians (their primary loyalty to their own community) into a common British identity. Drennan by this time appears to have been reconciled to the union, but nonetheless he laid great emphasis on the virtues of the Institution as 'patriotic in its ultimate object and end' and patriotism had been the central theme of Tennent’s St Patrick’s Day address. The government had derived comfort from the Synod’s connection with the established Church of Scotland but, now that this had been revealed to be a dead letter, there was a strong desire to assert the Synod’s rights as an independent church. A more stridently patriotic voice was also being heard in the Ulster Register, first published in August 1816 and edited by the Repealer, John Lawless, who had arrived in Belfast from Newry earlier in the year and almost immediately threw himself into the dispute over the Institution, calling for a coalition of all denominations against the government. (28)
When the Synod agreed in November 1816 to appoint a Professor, Lawless congratulated them on their refusal 'to bow their consciences and their characters to the insolent dictations of a British minister and an old United Irishman' (Castlereagh was rumoured to have enrolled in the United Irish Society when he was still known as a reforming politician). Castlereagh's attempt to bind the Synod 'has circulated through the North a spirit of Patriotism'. In August 1816, he published a satire on the dispute in the form of 'a letter from Benjamin, near Dromore, to his friend Jeremiah of Newtownlimavady' regretting the new spirit of patriotism. This was based largely on a letter from 'Presbyter' (Bruce) in the Belfast News Letter. Benjamin complains about the Synod being held in Belfast (as it had been since 1815) rather than in Cookstown:

'When removed to this hotbed of Irish feeling, no reasonable man, my dear Jerry, could expect any good to result from our deliberations - we were all ashamed to say anything against Ireland, though our own private interests often goaded us to speak out.' After ministers had been educated in Glasgow 'there is a Scotch sanctity in their physiognomy, a melody in their tones, that make the vulgar Irish bow down with reverential homage to their superiority.' Benjamin did concede that the teachers in the Institution were for the most part English, Scottish or only partly Irish and that there was 'little fear therefore to be entertained that they have any ardent leaning towards Ireland's interests' but they might nonetheless convey 'the poison of their liberality.' (29)
Lawless' call for a union of denominations against the government remained fanciful. While some verbal support was given to the Institution from the parish priest of Belfast, William Crolly, the issue was between Presbyterians and the Government, and the Joint Boards' insistence on the non-denominational nature of the Institution was little more than a complication, at least as far as the college was concerned. By 1825, the Collegiate Department had only forty-four students 'not intended for the Presbyterian ministry' out of one hundred and sixty. Drennan, arguing that it was not a dissenting college, could only point to the appointment of one Anglican minister (Rev Andrew O'Beirne, the classics master who was shortly to leave when he wasn't given the classics professorship in the collegiate department). The interdenominational ambitions of the Institution meant little more in practice than that the Synod did not have control over the education of its ministers outside the divinity department, and that its curriculum was primarily secular, accommodating both the latitudinarian and orthodox wings of Presbyterianism but, in its secularity, naturally favouring the former. The problem that this posed for the Synod itself rather than for the government, formed a major part of the controversies in the 1820s. (30)
CHAPTER FIVE

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY
THE COURSE OF THE CONTROVERSY

Before discussing the reasons for and the effects of the major dispute which dominated the Synod of Ulster in the 1820s, it will be useful to give a short outline of the course of events. (1)

In 1821, the Unitarian Fund in England sent a minister, John Smithurst, on a preaching tour of Ulster, apparently at the invitation of Rev W.D. H. McEwen, who had recently (in 1817) transferred to the Presbytery of Antrim, and who, in the same year, became a teacher of elocution in the Belfast Academical Institution. Smithurst had the use of several Presbyterian pulpits, including those of McEwen himself and of Rev Fletcher Blakely of the Synod of Ulster. He also preached in Killyleagh, though not in the church, at the invitation of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who had been allowed to return to Ireland and who had become a Presbyterian. Killyleagh had formerly been McEwen's meeting house, but there had been dissatisfaction over his latitudinarianism and, after he left, he was succeeded by the orthodox Henry Cooke. Cooke was prompted into debating with Smithurst by Rowan's son, Captain Sidney Hamilton Rowan, who was an elder in his church. Subsequently he followed him on his tour to denounce his doctrines. Smithurst was a 'Humanitarian' or Socinian, who believed Christ to be fully human (as distinct from the 'Arian' view that he was divine but still subordinate to God). He was also a 'voluntaryist', who ascribed what he saw as the theological timidity of Ulster latitudinarian ministers to the influence of Regium Donum. (2)

In the same year, Rev William Neilson, headmaster of the Classical School
and Professor of Greek, Latin and Hebrew in the Belfast Academical Institution, died. His post was divided, and Rev Thomas Dix Hincks, formerly Principal of the Royal Cork Institute, was appointed to the Classical School. Rev William Bruce was elected as Professor of Greek, Latin and Hebrew (though he relinquished Hebrew to Hincks in 1822). Bruce was the son of Dr William Bruce, whom we have seen as a prominent opponent both of radical politics in Belfast since the 1790s and of the Belfast Institution. It was hoped that his appointment would help to defuse opposition to the Institution and to facilitate the restoration of the grant. He had an overwhelming majority, and his supporters included Hanna and Rev Edward Reid, then Moderator of the Synod of Ulster (who travelled from Donegal specially to cast his vote). There was nonetheless strongly felt opposition. Rev Samuel Edgar, the Professor of Divinity appointed by what was now (since the union of the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods) the Secession Synod (or Presbyterian Synod of Ireland) complained of his Arianism, and he was also opposed by John Barnet, one of the Board members who resigned in 1816 but who had since been re-elected. Barnet was a Seceder, but he was also opposed to the motives of political expediency which had dictated the appointment. In the hope of stirring up opposition to Bruce, he wrote to Cooke, describing the circumstances of the election.

In response to Edgar's queries about the dangers of Arian influence, the Board of Masters (for the School) and the Board of Faculty (for the College) signed declarations that they would not interfere in any way with the religious principles of their pupils. But in the Secession Synod
of July 1822, a motion was passed that:

'the Synod have learned with deep regret and alarm the appointment of Professors in the Belfast Institution who hold Arian or Socinian principles and, considering the opportunities which teachers of Greek and Hebrew have of instilling their peculiar principles into the minds of their pupils, they agree to consider at their next meeting whether this does lay a just ground for discontinuing their connexion with the Institution.'

Cooke raised the issue of Bruce's election in the Synod of Ulster in Newry in June, giving notice of a motion calling for an enquiry into the orthodoxy of the Synod's Professors. He was seconded by Rev James Carlile of Dublin but, receiving no support, had to withdraw. A second attempt to raise the issue in Armagh, in June 1823, was also unsuccessful, though he seems to have had more support. The Secession Synod resolved that the declaration of the Boards was a sufficient guarantee 'deeply as the Synod regret the Introduction of Professors reputed to be of Arian principles into the Institution and strongly as they detest such principles.' One minister, Robert Rentoul, dissented because he objected to 'our students studying the Hebrew language under Rev Mr Hincks.'

In December 1823, a Committee of the Synod of Ulster met at Moneymore to discuss a Code of Discipline which had been prepared largely by Cooke. This had been projected in 1810 on a proposal from Horner, McDowell's coadjutor in Dublin. Cooke became involved in it in
1819, assisting John Thompson of Carnmoney, who was ill. Montgomery claims that a section drawn up by Dr A.G. Malcom on the superiority of the Presbyterian system of church government had been dropped because of 'an evident courting of Orthodox and High Church approbation' following Bruce's election. He says that Cooke had been largely responsible for the section on doctrine but that he had been keen to introduce what would have been a new clause which would require subscription to the Westminster Confession, to be imposed by the Synod as a condition of ordination. A compromise was reached whereby presbyteries had the right to ascertain the 'soundness of faith' of licentiates 'either by requiring subscription to the Westminster Confession, or by such examinations as they shall consider best adapted for that purpose.' Killen asserts that this confirmed the right of the church to exhaustively explore the theological opinions of its licentiates; at the time the New Light view was that it at last freed the Synod from the Pacific Act which required subscription to the Westminster Confession to be imposed by presbyteries with latitude given to candidates to explain any objections they might have to particular passages. (6)

The new Code was approved by the 1824 Synod in Moneymore, only James Elder of Finvoy, who wanted full subscription, dissenting. In the meantime, Dr William Bruce (Senior) had published his Sermons on the Study of the Bible - the first published avowal of Arian opinions in the history of Ulster Presbyterianism (an anonymous pamphlet in defence of Unitarian principles had been published at the end of the
previous century), in which he claimed that 'Arian principles were making extensive, though silent, progress in the General Synod of Ulster.' Cooke secured a condemnation of this passage. (7)

In 1824, the Government announced a Commission of Enquiry into Education in Ireland, and the Institution was anxious to be examined by it, in the hopes of securing a restoration of the grant. They reported to the 1824 Synod that their chances would be greatly increased by an expression of confidence on the Synod's part. Cooke secured a resolution that when the Moderator voted at elections for the Institution's professors (as he was entitled to do by the Act of Incorporation) his choice should be determined by a Synod's Fixed Committee, who should be shown all the candidates' testimonials. This motion was seconded by the Synod's clerk, William Porter, whose Arianism was soon to be at the centre of the dispute; it was also supported by the Institution's representatives (McEwen and Hancock) though it caused resentment among the Joint Boards.

Cooke was elected Moderator in 1824 and thus gave evidence to the Commissioners for Education and also to Committees of the Lords and Commons enquiring into the state of Ireland, in response to the agitation of O'Connell's Catholic Association. His evidence provoked a great outcry when it was published in 1825 (prior to the 1825 Synod); in particular because of his views that most Presbyterians were opposed to Catholic Emancipation and that the Belfast Academical Institution risked becoming a 'great seminary of Arianism.' In reply
to this criticism, he published an Illustration and Defence of Rev Mr Cooke's Evidence in which he attacked Bruce's election (secured 'by overshadowing patronage and tickling promises') and the principle of non-interference in the religious principles of the pupils:

'O, the "feast of reason and the flow of the soul", the "Noctes Ambrosianae" when all mention of the supreme dignity of the Redeemer, his atoning blood, the sinful state of man by nature and the power of the eternal Spirit to enlighten and renew are excluded by "holy alliance":' (8)

At the 1825 Synod in Coleraine, Cooke preached his sermon as outgoing Moderator on the importance of orthodoxy to evangelical endeavour and church discipline. He attacked the Presbytery of Armagh for ordaining Rev S.C. Nelson, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Antrim, as minister to the congregation of Dromore (the ordination was upheld but the Presbytery of Armagh was censured). A resolution was passed which, without indicating agreement with Cooke's evidence, affirmed the Synod's confidence in his integrity (it was passed as an amendment to a motion of James Morell of Ballybay, deprecating the 'unwarrantable attacks' that had been made on him). On the Belfast Institution, the Synod resolved, on Cooke's proposal, that when a Professor was to be elected, the Moderator should collect a committee with one minister and one elder from each presbytery to choose which candidates should be considered eligible; that the committee should only recommend orthodox candidates; and that the Institution should be expected always to take their opinion into account.
He also secured a motion stating that there had been no ecclesiastical connection in doctrine, discipline or jurisdiction with the Presbytery of Antrim since 1726.

A deputation from the Synod met the Joint Boards of the Institution in October 1825 to persuade them to incorporate the Synod's Overtures into a set of bye laws. The Joint Boards felt that there was no need for a bye law since they had already agreed to facilitate the Moderator in consulting with a Committee through their acceptance of the 1824 Synodical Overture. Montgomery's biographer, J.A. Crozier, says that Cooke put up a half hearted resistance at this meeting, but Holmes suggests that he wasn't in fact present at it. (9)

It was soon after this meeting that the Commissioners of the Irish Education Inquiry began their examination of the Belfast Academical Institution, and the questions turned mainly on its supposed Arianism. The Report was not published until early in 1827.

The 1826 Synod represented a setback for Cooke (it is not mentioned in the account of his biographer, J.L. Porter). The outgoing Moderator, James Carlile, delivered a sermon in favour of freedom of religious opinion. When the report of the deputation to the Joint Boards was discussed, Dr Wright, the new Moderator, said he regretted the 1825 Resolutions on the Institution and thought the 1824 overture sufficient. The Synod resolved that, though they would like the Institution to incorporate the resolution into some sort of permanent bye-law, they were generally satisfied with the present state of
affairs. They resolved, however, on a proposal from Rev Henry Montgomery of Dunmurry, the Institution's English master, that the electors should be recommended not to appoint any minister holding a pastoral charge to any of its professorships (a major orthodox argument having been that an Arian refraining from expressing his opinions in the school could still exercise influence from a nearby pulpit).

James Elder of Finvoy, who had opposed the Code of Discipline, proposed that no candidate should be licensed or ordained without subscribing to the Westminster Confession. Cooke moved an amendment saying that 'He knew there were things in the Westminster Confession of Faith to which neither he nor any other member of the house could subscribe, such as the parts relating to the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters' - a sentiment that was brought up against him with great glee later when he called for unqualified subscription in the 1830s. He proposed that a Committee should draw up 'a new confession, to be called, if you will, that of Ballymena....'. Elder's motion and Cooke's amendment were both negatived, the main argument for nonsubscription being advanced by the 'moderate Calvinists', led by Carlile.

In the meantime a Unitarian journal had appeared, published in London by Rev John Kitcat, with the help of John Scott Porter, son of the Synod's clerk, William Porter. It was called The Christian Moderator and took a very close interest in the Synod's affairs. It also provided a forum for a debate that was long overdue among Ulster Unitarians as to whether or not they should continue to conceal their Unitarianism.
The debate on the Institution had not turned on whether or not Arianism was deplorable, but on whether or not the Institution would inculcate it; the assumption remained that it was deplorable. Smithurst had been the first Unitarian missionary Ulster had ever seen, the Christian Moderator was the first aggressive Unitarian journal, though in relation to English Unitarian journals, it was intended, as the title suggests, to be moderate (the Northern Whig was edited by a Unitarian and sympathetic to the Arians, but this was argued on the general ground of religious liberty not on the basis of the truth or otherwise of Arian doctrines).

Cooke seems to have been depressed and ill after the 1826 Ballymena Synod, and spent the Summer on the estate of Lord Mountcashel, a prominent Anglican evangelical to whom he had been introduced by Sidney Hamilton Rowan (Holmes, following Porter, says that he visited McDowell in Dublin at this time, but McDowell died in 1824). A second edition of Bruce's Sermons was published and replied to by the Reformed Presbyterian, Rev John Paul of Loughmore, in his Refutation of Arianism, which was to prove a mine of arguments for the orthodox.

In 1827, the Fourth Report of the Commissioners of the Irish Education Inquiry was published. In it, both William Porter and Henry Montgomery avowed their Arianism and Porter claimed that Arianism was widespread throughout the Synod. (10)

The 1827 Synod began with a debate on a motion from Rev Robert Magill of Antrim that Porter should be discontinued as Clerk to the
Synod on account of his evidence. In the course of the debate, Cooke for the first time proposed a division of the Synod (Barkley attributes this to the influence of Mountcashel). Porter claimed that the real reason for the attack on him was his support for Catholic Emancipation. Eventually an amendment was passed disapproving of Arianism but continuing Porter in office. Cooke, and forty-one other ministers, protested. Then, as Crozier says, 'the real struggle' began. Cooke proposed that all members of the Synod should, there and then, declare their belief in the Trinity. He was seconded by Robert Stewart of Broughshane. Montgomery claimed that it was clearly unconstitutional to bring forward such a motion without any notice. (11)

There was a long debate as to the form of words in which the doctrine of the Trinity was to be expressed. Cooke went on to say that he would like to see positive measures taken against those who did not subscribe to the test. Eventually, when the roll was called, 117 ministers declared their belief in the Trinity, two ministers declared their disbelief, and eight abstained. Ministers not present were told to declare their views in person or in writing at the next Synod. The ten dissenters lodged a protest.

Archibald Hamilton Rowan published Montgomery's speech against the test and in August he unsuccessfully tried to organise a public debate in Cooke's Killyleagh congregation, while Dr Armstrong of the Synod of Munster published a letter attacking Cooke's view that the Southern Association had no connection with the Synod of Ulster. In the
Autumn of the same year, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church was opened in Belfast, with James Morgan as its minister (though a section of the congregation had supported a call to Cooke). Thomas Chalmers from Scotland preached a sermon at the opening against the agitation of religious controversies which was widely interpreted as a criticism of Cooke.

The beginning of 1828 saw the introduction into Ulster of the New Reformation Societies for the conversion of Catholics, which became a target for the liberal press since they were seen as an indirect attempt to counter Catholic emancipation and provide an outlet for Orangeism (the Orange Order had been banned in 1825, together with the Catholic Association. The ban was lifted in 1828). At the end of 1827, the Ulster Guardian, edited by James Stuart, a former editor of the Belfast News Letter, had appeared with the explicit aim of supporting the Reformation Societies. It also supported Cooke in the Arian dispute and opposed Catholic emancipation.

A dinner was held in Montgomery's honour in Belfast shortly before the 1828 Synod. Cooke published an open letter calling for rigorous tests of the orthodoxy of both ministers and elders, and, as the Synod opened, a poem was circulated by Rev Robert Magill, who had opened the attack on Porter in 1827. It was called 'The Thinking Few' after Porter's remark in his evidence that Arianism was making progress among the thinking few.

After the ministers who had been absent from Strabane had been asked to declare their views on the Trinity, Morell of Ballybay proposed
resolutions by which a committee of Synod could investigate the
theological views of candidates for the ministry and of ordinands,
this being at the time the responsibility of presbyteries. He was sup-
ported by Carlile, and Crozier interprets the move as a cunning ploy
to disarm the 'moderate Calvinists' and prepare the way for the more
rigorous test proposed by Cooke. Cooke, again calling for a separation,
proposed amendments which specified the doctrines which candidates
were expected to hold ('the Trinity, Original Sin, Justification by
Faith, and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit'). After several days
debating, Cooke's amendments were passed. Twenty-one ministers
signed a protest against the Overture and against the Examining Comm-
ittee which was appointed in consequence of it.

After a dispute over the election of James Morgan in Fisherwick (in
which the decision of the committee was upheld against those who
supported the call to Cooke), Cooke gave notice of a motion demand-
ing an enquiry into the state of the Synod, which provided him with
an opportunity to reply at length to a long speech Montgomery had
made in opposition to his amendments. It took the form of an appeal
for separation, was widely circulated, and inspired a series of memor-
ials supporting him from congregations all over the Province.

Finally, there was a dispute over James Simms, who was a candidate
for the ministry under the (Calvinist) Presbytery of Route. After the
Presbytery had objected to a sermon he gave which contained 'some-
thing very like the Romish doctrine of purgatory' he wanted to be
transferred to the more latitudinarian Presbytery of Bangor. Permission was refused and he withdrew from the ministry, later to become editor of the Northern Whig.

In September, those who disagreed with the overtures establishing the theological committee met in Belfast to discuss tactics and agreed to draw up a 'Remonstrance' containing their complaints. This was presented to an open meeting in October at which it was attacked by Cooke and Stewart. In November, there was a special meeting of the Synod to discuss the government's proposals to renew its grant to the Belfast Institution. These included giving the Synod a veto over the appointment of the 'religious professors' - of Hebrew, the Classics and Moral Philosophy. The Synod - at Cooke's suggestion - agreed not to demand this right but to remain content with the 1824 agreement, if the Institution agreed to make it one of their bye-laws. The Northern Whig at the time, and Crozier and Robb subsequently, argue that this was because they were afraid that the Institution might not accept the grant on these terms, thus maintaining their independence and endangering the existence of the collegiate faculty and its Divinity professorships.

Montgomery at the turn of the year made a speaking tour of Unitarian chapels in England and in January attended a public meeting in Belfast in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Peel and Wellington introduced their Catholic Emancipation bill in March and the Presbytery of Ballymena called for a special meeting of the Synod to discuss the
political state of the country. A special meeting could only be summoned on a call from three presbyteries. Cooke was unsuccessful in trying to persuade his own Presbytery (Dromore) to support the call from Ballymena. (12)

As if on purpose to complicate matters, Dr John Young, the Institution's Professor of Moral Philosophy, died in March 1829. The Synod's committee recommended James Carlile as his successor, but listed a number of other candidates, including Dr John Ferrie from the University of Glasgow, as eligible. Ferrie was elected, and doubts were immediately cast as to his orthodoxy.

When the Synod met at Lurgan, Magill again proposed the deposition of Porter as Clerk to the Synod. Carlile and Horner proposed a trial of Montgomery on the grounds that he had once, as was revealed in earlier debates, travelled to Dublin on a Sunday. A letter was received from the Trustees of the General Presbyterian Fund in Dublin withdrawing support from the supposedly Joint Mission of the Synods of Ulster and Munster, on the grounds that the Ulster Synod had excluded the latitudinarian Munster Synod from its operations.

When the Report from the Joint Boards of the Institution was heard, Cooke launched an attack on the bye-law introduced in response to the 1828 agreement with the Synod over the restoration of the government grant, arguing that the clause of the Synod's 1824 overture requiring that the Institution take note of the Moderator's recommendation was missing. But the main attack was on Ferrie's appointment to
the Chair of Moral Philosophy, and on the Synod's committee for having declared him eligible. Carlile supported Cooke. To quote Robb: 'the debate was adjourned until the next day, and on that day Montgomery and Cooke delivered two of the greatest speeches ever heard in the Synod, the personal antagonism of the two orators altogether obscuring the real point in dispute.' Montgomery finished his speech by suggesting that there would have to be a separation.

As representative of the Institution, Montgomery produced a number of testimonials in favour of Ferrie's orthodoxy. Cooke claimed to have been ignorant of them, but secured a resolution calling for a Committee of Synod to consult with the Joint Boards and with the Secession and Reformed Synods to investigate the matter. This was followed by a cross examination of witnesses Cooke had ready to prove that Ferrie was a 'rank Socinian'. Stewart successfully proposed, against the protest of the Remonstrants, that discussion of the overtures establishing the Theological Committee should be postponed until a special meeting in August to be held at Cookstown.

Finally, there was a dispute over the congregation of Clough which, on the death of its minister, William Campbell, had elected his assistant, David Watson. The election had been short of a synodical majority. His supporters wanted him to be reheard on the grounds that underhand measures had been used against him. A countermemorial wanted the congregation to be removed from the care of the Presbytery of Bangor and put under the care of a committee of Synod,
which was to find an orthodox minister for them. The Synod supported
the minority in a vote from which the Bangor Presbytery was excluded.
Sixteen ministers protested in what Crozier calls 'the last personal act
of the Remonstrants in the Synod of Ulster.'

Later in July, the Clough congregation put itself under the care of
the Presbytery of Antrim. On 30th July, the Remonstrants met and
agreed to separate from the Synod.

In early August, the proprietors of the Belfast Institution met the
Synod's Committee. The General Synod's Committee agreed that if
Ferrie were to renew his subscription to the Westminster Confession
(which he did) this would be a sufficient guarantee of his orthodoxy.
In fact, the controversy was renewed in the 1830s.

Only a handful of ministers appeared at the Synod's special meeting
in August to discuss the Remonstrance. Porter, who was still Clerk to
the Synod, presented it, and an Address drafted by Montgomery.
Cooke announced the principle that wherever a minority, no matter
how small, in a separating congregation remained orthodox, it should
be regarded as the true congregation, entitled to the meeting house
and to Regium Donum. Porter resigned.
TRINITARIANISM AND CHURCH ORGANISATION

The clearest statement of Cooke's argument for the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity can be found in his sermon as outgoing Moderator to the Synod of 1825. It is based on the text: 'Thou hast a name to live and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain' (Revelation 11:1,2) and is a plea for the revitalisation of the Synod of Ulster as a coherent church. The Bible, he argues, supplies the element of religious truth which cannot be found by the unaided intellect. 'Natural religion' - the truths about God which are discoverable through the study of nature - was sufficient for man while he was in a state of grace; but man is in a state of alienation from God, is aware of this through a diffuse internal feeling of guilt, but can find no evidence in nature that God will pardon him:

'While obedient to God, man knew God loved him - but where has God told him he will love him though an enemy? While he remained in innocence, he felt God's protection - but where has God told him he will save him though guilty? And even if God can love and pardon the guilty sinner - where shall the sinner look for evidence of that pardon?' (13)

There was thus a need for 'a new manifestation of God': 'Let us then hold steadily in view that the object of God was to reveal himself to man in a character not discoverable in nature - that of the "sin-pardoning God".' Man of his own nature is incapable of deserving pardon: 'There can be only two possible grounds for the pardon of a
sinner - his own works of repentance or the free grace of God in Christ.' But scripture assures us that human works are inadequate to salvation and that 'the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 John-1,vii). The sinner is thus wholly dependent for his salvation on the Redeemer.

The Redeemer, however, cannot be wholly dependable if he is a creature - particularly if, as in the Socinian system, he is fully human; but also if, as in the 'high Arian' system, he is a very high order of created being:

'still, though the Saviour were an angel, man is but a little lower than the angels and would therefore have to depend on an arm little stronger than his own. Nay, as all but God himself is liable to change; as God is declared to have even charged his angels with folly; this Saviour, this Redeemer, might fall from God and be banished into that misery from which the Gospel, by him, proposes to rescue sinful man.'

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ was thus essential to the doctrine of the atonement, which was essential to salvation. So that, without a belief in the divinity of Christ, the Church could not participate in the work of salvation. It could not offer the 'pardon' - the element in religion that was not available through the unaided power of the individual intellect.

The rest of the sermon is taken up with suggestions for tightening the discipline of the church, enabling ministers and elders to exercise a
close supervision over the religious life of their congregations. Many congregations were too large for their ministers to do anything other than perform the basic ordinances; licentiates (of whom there was a superabundance) could be employed as assistants to visit the sick and catechise the young. There was a need for 'a spiritual eldership, ruling their families in the fear of God; attending to the situation and wants of the poor; ready to exhort the young to their duty, or to rebuke the wanderer for the error of his ways; often by the bed of sickness with the voice of exhortation or prayer; attending upon Church-courts to watch over the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.'

There was a need for more discipline in excluding the children of the profane from Baptism and the profane themselves from the Lord's Supper. Presbyteries should exercise more vigilance over the ministry and should keep statistics on 'the number of families in each congregation; the number of Bibles in each family; the state of family religion as evidenced by family prayer; the state of attendance upon catechisings; the state of attendance upon public worship.'

In short, the Church was to become 'a temple unprofaned by the foot of the enemy - a building of God amidst the ruins of the universe.'

This emphasis on discipline is consistent with the Code of Discipline - largely written by Cooke - which the Synod approved in 1824 and finally adopted in 1825. The acceptance of the Code indicates that a need for a more rigorous and consistent discipline was generally felt. In the Presbytery of Templepatrick, for example, visitation
questions at the turn of the century were perfunctory, merely ascertaining if the minister and congregation approved each other. In 1821, they became more detailed, and in 1825, a Committee was appointed to work out a fixed set of questions. It produced a large number of questions going into considerable detail, which was accepted in 1827. This was one of the less orthodox presbyteries, losing five of its sixteen members to the Remonstrants in 1829. What was controversial in Cooke's insistence on discipline was his view that it should include doctrine. (14)

Cooke emphasised that the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin and the atonement were essential to 'the church'. Montgomery, on the other hand, denied that the Synod of Ulster was a church:

'The root of the error into which those fall who advocate the power of Ecclesiastical Courts, lies in mistaking the meaning of the word church as it is used in the New Testament. They seem to think that it was some kind of clerical conclave or synod; whereas it never has any such meaning, but either signifies the whole body of believers or a particular congregation. Whatever power therefore was originally vested in the church "to try spirits", or in other words to judge of the doctrines of teachers, is now solely vested in distinct worshipping societies and not in presbyteries or synods. To the Synod of Ulster I owe no allegiance in matters of faith....' (15)

By the 1820s, the Synod was indeed an extraordinary amalgam -
Presbyterian in its organisation, but largely Congregationalist in matters of doctrine. The Pacific Act required subscription, but the responsibility for enforcing it lay with presbyteries, who could choose their own formula (Barkley has found sixteen different formulae between 1774 and 1800). The formula could be quite meaningless, as for example, 'We believe the Westminster Confession of Faith contains the essential doctrines of Christianity and as such we subscribe it'; and most presbyteries had dropped the practice of subscription by 1820.

This informal arrangement was sanctioned in the 1824 Code of Discipline, which gave presbyteries freedom to decide their own methods for ascertaining a licentiate's 'soundness in faith'. The Synod had decided in 1816 to exclude doctrine from the terms of reference of the committee appointed to compile the Code, though Cooke tried to introduce it in 1823. De facto authority in the matter lay with the congregations themselves, since, if they did not like a particular presbytery's practice, it was not difficult to transfer, and it was even possible to erect a new presbytery (Dromore and Belfast had both been formed by congregations dissatisfied with nonsubscribing presbyteries).

Thus it was not clear where doctrinal authority lay: in the Synod, in the presbytery or in the congregation, but in practise it lay in the congregation, it being rare for the Synod or presbytery to overrule a congregation's choice of minister. That ministers were in general satisfied with this state of affairs is shown by the difficulty Cooke had in persuading the Synod that it had the right to exercise doctrinal authority, even though there was no problem in securing assent to the
proposition that Arianism was wrong, or even that it was wicked. In 1826 and 1827, Cooke's main orthodox opponent, James Carlile, referred favourably to the example of the Independents, whose church structure was such that bitter doctrinal disputes outside the ambit of individual congregations were impossible (since there was no church structure outside individual congregations). (17)

This 'nonsubscription' was not just a matter of convenience to facilitate heterodox ministers. It was a positive ideal in its own right - an ideal which abolished church boundaries (for any purpose other than administrative convenience), thereby abolishing disputes between churches with their resultant wars, persecutions etc. Both Montgomery and A.H. Rowan praised the Presbyterian system in Ulster because it was the system most conducive to the principles of civil and religious liberty. Carlile's moderatorial sermon of 1826 can be seen as a reply to Cooke's in 1825. Cooke had argued for the tightening up of the internal discipline of the church. Carlile (who was closely involved with the Irish Evangelical Society, a largely Independent body) was more concerned with the 'evangelisation of the world' - a missionary movement that was not concerned with the extension of particular church structures. The mere fact that the church structure of the Synod of Ulster was little more than a matter of convenience was in his eyes a positive virtue:

'I exult in the liberty we have of declaring our sentiments unreservedly on all subjects, without any other apprehension
than that of being convinced of error; and I declare it to be the conviction of my own deliberate judgment that the compulsory measures that have been invented and employed by various ecclesiastical bodies for securing uniformity of doctrine, have increased the error which they intended and, I doubt not, honestly intended to prevent. (18)

He counterposed an emphasis on internal discipline to missionary endeavour:

'When a Christian church becomes satisfied with attending to its own internal edification and uses no endeavours to disseminate its principles, so far from really providing for its own spiritual interest, it sinks itself into a lifeless attendance on outward forms....'

and during the 1826 debates, he said that:

'it was impossible to draw a distinction between those doctrines necessary to salvation and those that are not. To some, more is necessary, to some less; and God alone can judge - he alone knows our opportunities and circumstances - and to him alone we owe an account. (19)

To some extent, Carlile's views resemble those of Alexander Carson, who had become an Independent on the grounds that participation in a corporate church inhibited evangelical endeavour; and who opposed subscription on the grounds that it was a meaningless formality and
was an imposition on the freedom of a Christian. Like Montgomery, Carson argued that 'the Church' was the individual congregation. But for Carson, membership of that individual congregation was impossible without visible evidence of regeneration, and he shared Cooke's views that salvation was impossible without the saving work of Christ in the atonement and of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; and that Christ and the Holy Spirit were to be conceived of as co-equal with God the Father. Certain doctrines were therefore necessary to salvation, but salvation was an experienced process, not a system of belief.

Cooke did not emphasise such an observable process of individual conversion. For him, the church was a voluntary society with definite, publicly known principles, capable of corporate action. It was the duty of ministers to keep watch over each other and over their flocks, but what they were watching for was not signs of regeneration but the more easily measurable signs of a disciplined life and a good grasp of the church's doctrines. This clearly suggested the need for some authoritative statement of what those doctrines were. We have seen that he wanted to introduce some form of subscription in 1823 and in 1825 he told the Commissioners of the Irish Education Inquiry that he was in favour both of subscription and of a separation from the Arians. The fact that he did not formally propose either subscription or separation to the Synod at any time during the dispute indicates his awareness of the strength of feeling against him. This was not the strength of Arianism itself but of the 'moderate Calvinism' of Carlile.
and Hanna. The strength of Arianism lay in the common ground it shared with trinitarian opinion. (20)

ARIANISM AND MERE MORALITY

The clearest statement of what was understood in Ulster as 'Arianism' was the *Sermons on the Study of the Bible* by Dr William Bruce, which played a crucial role in clarifying the terms of the dispute. In the 1820s, Bruce was in correspondence with a Dublin Anglican, Robert Perceval, who argued that there was no point in openly avowing a high Arian position, since the high Arian conception of Christ was so elevated that it was nearly the same as the Trinitarian position, and that most Trinitarian formulations for the nature of Christ (that he was divine, the Son of God etc) were quite acceptable. Indeed, Montgomery declared in 1828: 'I have heard nothing but Arian prayers since I came to this Synod' and in 1825, the Presbytery of Templepatrick, under Arian influence, asked its licentiates if they believed:

'that this ever blessed Saviour is the brightness of the Father's Glory and the express image of his person, that is (crossed out: the delegated representative) of divine majesty, the only head of the church on earth, the Mercy Seat or medium through which divine mercy is tendered to man and through which man's sincere and perseveringly righteous endeavours are accepted
instead of perfection and that he is the constitutional judge of
the quick and the dead.' (21)

Much of Bruce's book is taken up with deprecating religious controversy
and stressing the 'obvious' points of Christianity about which there could
be no disagreement: for example, that there was One God who was
pleased by charitable deeds and a holy life. He encourages a select-
ive approach to religious literature, basically excluding anything that
could arouse 'a discordant emotion in the sublime tenor of our devout
affections.' Books of controversy were useless and the Bible itself could
not be regarded as equally edifying in all its parts. The most useful
parts of the Bible were the words of Christ himself as recorded in the
Gospels, while 'the moral and devotional Books' (Job, the Psalms and
the Prophets) were the most useful parts of the Old Testament. The
basic tendency of the Bible was towards moral edification: 'there are
many things, then, of a spiritual nature in which we are most deeply
interested of which, nevertheless, it is not at all necessary nor poss-
ible that we should be informed.' There was no virtue in speculating
on the precise nature of Christ: 'it is enough for the humble believer
to be assured that he was invested with divine authority and that he
made known the nature and will of God.' There was no virtue in
speculating on the nature of eternal punishment, since sin was self
evidently odious. Nor could the precise nature of God's covenants
or secret decrees, or the nature of the atonement, be known. Only
what was easily comprehensible by the 'humblest rustic' could be
regarded as essential. (22)
Nonetheless, certain ideas were incompatible with the basic and most obvious fact of religion: the goodness of God. These included the imputation of Adam's sin, the requirement of a sacrifice to satisfy God's wrath, the vicarious atonement, predestination (by which God becomes the author of sin), the damnation of mankind prior to individual sin and (though here he becomes more tentative) the eternal nature of punishment. It contrast to the Calvinist view that mankind was naturally sinful, Bruce saw mankind as essentially capable of goodness and the Bible as a means of developing that inherent capacity. Natural man was capable of rejecting sin as self-evidently odious. There was therefore no need for a vicarious atonement and the strength of Christ was not indispensable to overcome the natural state into which man had fallen.

The Arian dispute was not simply, therefore, a matter of disagreement about the nature of Christ considered as a question in itself isolated from other theological issues. It involved the whole question of the function of religion - whether religion was to be seen as a means of edifying and civilising human society, or as the indispensable means of salvation from sin. Under Bruce's scheme, the Bible and the church were useful civilising agents, but it was possible - if dangerous - to live without them, and other religions could provide a similar function (he cites the Hindu, Rammohun Roy, as an authority). (23)

Bruce's minimalist religion was ridiculed by the Reformed Presbyterian, John Paul, in his *Refutation of Arianism* which argued that Bruce had
treated the apostles as commentators (on the words of Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospels) whose commentary was more obscure than the text. Christ, he maintained, was the author of the whole Bible so that, if all parts were not equally important, they were equally authoritative and were interdependent and all necessary to a complete understanding of the whole. According to Bruce's view 'from a creed drawn from the gospels all blessings would flow; but from creeds drawn from the whole Word of God all evils, natural and moral, have ensued.' - 'Have not such "safe rules" and liberal maxims a direct tendency to stop the march of mind, to arrest the progress of Reformation and to lead us back into darkness and popery?' It was only through intense controversy over every passage in the Bible that truth could be revealed and Bruce, in abusing Calvinism, was engaging in controversy despite all his disclaimers. (24)

The Refutation of Arianism was also an attack on Bruce's 'Arminianism' - the view that man could contribute by his own efforts to the work of his salvation (and Paul's book prompted an anti-unitarian reply by the Arminian Methodist, Samuel Tucker). Arminianism provided a common ground between Trinitarians and Unitarians, so long as the Unitarians were not prepared to declare themselves unambiguously (the Presbytery of Templepatrick's question to licentiates quoted above is Arminian in its reference to man's 'sincere and perseveringly righteous endeavours'). The cultivation of human virtue and brotherly affection seemed incompatible with the abrasive and jeering tone adopted by Paul and Cooke. As long as the Synod served the function of mutual edification such
quarrels over details seemed degrading and trivial.

Paul, a liberal in politics, described this as a spurious liberality, allowing the blind to fall into the ditch. It was only by rigorous separation from heretics that they could be shamed into seeing their error, while giving them power and influence in the church merely undermined the church's foundations: 'The Church of God, mingling with the excommunicated offspring of Cain, rapidly degenerated until the earth was filled with violence and till (Noah and his family excepted) all flesh was corrupted and the flood came and swept them all away.' Under a scheme whereby man was fully dependent on a force outside himself, precise theological truth became a matter of great importance, while matters of opinion could not be regarded as secondary to polished manners and civilised behaviour. A self conscious uncouthness has been characteristic of Scottish orthodoxy since the days of John Knox. It came into its own in Ulster in the 1820s. (25)

THE ARIAN DISPUTE AND CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

We have already seen how slow the Synod was in responding to the evangelical initiatives which were coming from within the Church of Ireland, and we have seen that even the evangelicals were attached to the principle of the Bible without note or commentary - the very principle of 'sufficiency of scripture' which the nonsubscribers took as their slogan. The most active promoters of evangelical activity prior
to the 1820s - Carlile and Hanna - were the leading spokesmen for the moderate Calvinist opposition to Cooke.

In national (all-Ireland) terms this non-dogmatic evangelicalism was due to the anxiety to incorporate Catholics into a broadly Protestant culture - an anxiety which overrode divisions within Protestantism itself. But, as Desmond Bowen points out, the 1820s saw a much greater emphasis on doctrine within Anglican evangelicalism, which he attributes largely to the influence of William Magee, Archbishop of Dublin from 1822 to 1831, and especially to his 'charge' published in October 1822. The pace of controversy was forced by a more militant sectarianism on the part of Roman Catholics. One sign of this had been the emergence of John Lawless in Belfast as a distinct Catholic voice in contrast to the liberal Protestants who had previously almost monopolised the articulation of Catholic interests. (26)

In 1824, a series of quasi-formal controversies began between local priests and local auxiliary Bible Societies, one of the earliest of which (in November) resulted in a riot in the Presbyterian meeting house in Carlow. Where evangelicals had previously tried to concentrate on similarities between Catholicism and Protestantism, and had tried where possible to cooperate with priests, attention was now very much focussed on differences and the controversies became like tournaments. The 'New Reformation Society' was formed, largely on the initiative of the Anglican landlord, Lord Farnham, in order to promote such controversies as the best means of exposing Romish errors and winning Catholics
into the Protestant fold. It claimed an astonishing (and rather improbable) number of conversions. Bowen comments on the lack of impact this development had on Ulster Presbyterians: 'They steadfastly ignored the Catholics wherever they could in order to continue the purifying of their communion and of Ulster society' but the very concentration on doctrinal purity within the Synod entailed an abandonment of the view that religious divisions in Ireland could be overcome by a doctrinal minimalism along the lines proposed by Bruce and Montgomery. (27)

The Arians, and to some extent the moderate Calvinists, certainly interpreted Cooke's theological aggressiveness as an attack on efforts to obliterate the political effectiveness of religious differences. That, after all, had been one of the proclaimed functions of the Belfast Academical Institution, which was Cooke's first target. The publication in 1825 of Cooke's evidence in the First Report of the Commissioners of the Irish Education Inquiry was seen as confirmation of this point of view and John Jamieson comments that 'it was only after the uproar made by the liberal Presbyterians that Cooke began in earnest his campaign to kill their influence in the Synod.' In 1827, Porter complained that the efforts to have him dismissed as Clerk to the Synod were due, not to his Arianism, but to his support for Catholic Emancipation. And in 1828, when the New Reformation Society was extended to Ulster, an article in the Christian Moderator complained that:

'the grand object of the promoters of the northern reformation is not to pull down the Romish hierarchy, but to foster political
bigotry against the Roman Catholics now petitioning the legislature for relief and to stir up religious animosity against all Protestants who are so audaciously honest as to profess their belief in what are here called new light doctrines.' (28)

Cooke several times commented on the increased zeal of ministers from the Church of Ireland, saying in 1827 that 'the numerous conversions it has made through the outpouring of the glorious gospel of God have cast a stigma on us and on our labours.' By 1825 he was on friendly terms with a number of landlords involved in the Anglican evangelical movement, most notably Dufferin (the major landlord in the Killyleagh area), Roden and Mountcashel. Montgomery was subsequently to argue that on the defeat of Black's opposition to the Belfast Academical Institution in 1816, he set about cultivating the evangelicals as a likely source of loyalist fermentation in the Synod. Some small corroborative evidence can be supplied in the general support Black received from the evangelicals McDowell and Horner, who seem to have influenced Cooke when he was helping to supply Carlow; and in Cooke's apparent presence at a dinner given to Black in 1816 to compensate him for his defeat. After 1830, Cooke was active in trying to promote a 'Protestant Union' of Anglicans and Presbyterians against the steadily increasing social and political power of the Catholic leadership. (29)

But while the negative side of liberal policy - reluctance to engage in religious controversy - was strongly felt in the Synod, there was very little sign of any commitment to promoting positive liberal
politics (Catholic Emancipation or parliamentary reform). Montgomery attended a dinner held in honour of the Catholic parish priest, Dr Crolly, in May 1825, mainly as a protest against Cooke's evidence. McEwen and Montgomery attended a dinner in favour of Catholic Emancipation in January 1828. In January 1829, Montgomery toured some Unitarian congregations in England speaking in favour of Catholic Emancipation and later in the month he attended another Emancipation dinner in Belfast, when he commented on the fact that he was the only Protestant minister present. He also commented on the fact that he was the only minister of any denomination present at a meeting held in support of parliamentary reform in Belfast in December 1830. While there may have been more sympathy for Catholic interests among the Remonstrants than among the orthodox, that was about the extent of their public agitation on the matter. Protestant support for Catholic claims was in any case upstaged by the activities of O'Connell's Catholic Association which most Protestants - Montgomery included - found very upsetting. The main initiative for what Presbyterian support there was came from laymen, notably Dr Tennent and John Barnett, both of them Seceders and therefore theologically orthodox.

Nor can it be said that there was much agitation among ministers against Catholic Emancipation. Cooke's evidence on the subject was far from being a 'vicious outburst' (as Jamieson describes it). He supported the admission of Catholic MPs to Parliament but thought that it should be accompanied (as in the event it was) by an increase
in the property qualification. The reason he gave was that after Emancipation, Catholic freeholders would be reluctant to vote for their own Protestant landlords who would therefore be tempted to replace them with Protestant tenants. He made it clear that he had an aversion to elections in themselves and that, even without Emancipation, he would be in favour of raising the qualification: 'I think he (the forty shilling freeholder) would lose a strong temptation to sin; he would lose the temptation to get into bad company every five or six years and to commit perjury and other crimes.' He also felt safeguards had to be introduced because of the extraterritorial allegiance of Catholics to the Pope and because of the power of the priests over the consciences of their flocks. (31)

There was a need to preserve 'a distinct and visible superiority of the Protestant power, so that the state may be decidedly Protestant.' He thought that most of the Catholic peasantry involved in the agitation for Catholic Emancipation saw it as a means of restoring forfeited estates into Catholic hands, and that the ultimate intention of Catholics was to overthrow the Protestant state. Protestant hostility to Catholic Emancipation, he said, had been greatly increased by recent events, particularly the agitations of the Catholic Association and a recent papal encyclical which had reasserted, albeit 'in a much more genteel manner', the view that there could be no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

The view that caused most offence was his statement that most Northern
Protestants, and indeed most Presbyterians in the lower orders, were opposed to emancipation, while most educated Presbyterians would prefer a limited emancipation. Those Protestants who argued for a full emancipation without safeguards really wanted 'to enable the democratic part of the constitution to overwhelm the aristocratic.'

Nonetheless, he thought that a limited emancipation, introduced by 'the present government' in which Protestants had great confidence, would do good:

'I think it a tolerably general opinion with thinking men that since the union between Great Britain and Ireland, the Protestantism of the state is so fully protected that there would be no danger from the introduction of a number of Roman Catholics to office; while by this limited advancement a subject of complaint would be taken away and a legitimate object presented for the ambition of leaders of learning and property. Many men consequently indulge the hope that the country would sink down into peace, when the agitators of it had been removed to a high employment, by which they think they would be converted into better men.' (32)

While he shared many of the fears which he attributed to 'the less informed' Presbyterians 'the hope of benefitting a miserable population, and confidence in the measures of the administration could alone reconcile my mind to it under present circumstances.'

Cooke's proposals for an increase in the franchise qualification and
for payment of the Roman Catholic clergy (he thought they should be paid more than Presbyterian ministers) were almost identical to those in the bill submitted to Parliament by Sir Francis Burdett at the time he was giving his evidence (March 1825) - conditions with which O'Connell was prepared to comply (it was rejected in April by the Lords). Crozier complains against his statement that most Presbyterians were opposed to emancipation, but this was a straightforward statement of fact which Crozier himself confirms later in his book. The only attempt Cooke made to agitate the question outside his evidence was his unsuccessful effort to support Stewart's call for a special meeting of the Synod in March 1829, when the Emancipation Bill was tabled. Holmes comments on the confused nature of this proposal, in which Catholic Emancipation was only one of a number of political topics proposed for discussion. He was defended on this occasion by R.J. Bryce, by this time principal of the Belfast Academy, a supporter of Catholic Emancipation and opponent of Regium Donum (he was James Bryce's son), who pointed out that his evidence had actually supported Emancipation. From the inception of the Ulster Guardian in 1827, it continually complained that Presbyterians were not tabling petitions and organising meetings as Presbyterians in opposition to Emancipation. (33)

Cooke's evidence - or rather, the denials of the liberal press that he was accurately representing Presbyterian opinion - did provide the opportunity for some congregations (Jamieson has counted fifteen) to publish advertisements opposing Emancipation in 1825, and Montgomery
accused him of having created the opposition he described. The Ulster Guardian which supported Cooke in the Synod, and the Belfast News Letter, which took a more neutral position, opposed emancipation, while the Northern Whig and the Belfast Commercial Chronicle, which opposed Cooke, supported it. On the whole, we can say that the most remarkable characteristic of the Synod's response to Catholic Emancipation was the lack of agitation on either side of the question, but that orthodoxy was still popularly associated with opposition, or at least caution, while Arianism was associated with support; and that this may have contributed to the popularity of Cooke's position. (34)

THE UNITARIAN OFFENSIVE

The clarification of points of theological disagreement was not just a matter of a new militancy on the part of the orthodox. Unitarians were also becoming more 'evangelical' - in the sense of willing to propagate their views. Paul was later (1828) to accuse the Arians of being the aggressors:

'In the present controversy between Trinitarians and Antitrinitarians, Dr Drummond charges the orthodox with being the aggressors.... Were this charge of aggression true, I do not see that the crime would be great. To attack error, wherever we find it, is not a crime but a duty. The charge, however, is not true. In this controversy, it is not the Trinitarians, but the Antitrinitarians that have been the aggressors. Did not the Antrim Presbytery
republish Price's sermons? Did not Dr Bruce publish a volume of controversial sermons? Did not the Arians republish, or import, Channing's sermons? Did they not attack the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ through the medium of a public journal (probably the Christian Moderator, but possibly the Northern Whig - PB)? Did they not display their illiberality by refusing to insert a reply? Was not a missionary (Smithurst - PB) sent from England for the express purpose of attacking the Trinitarian creed? Were not tracts circulated, gratis, for the same purpose? Were not all these public acts made by the Arians prior to any controversial publication on the part of the orthodox (Paul's own Refutation, or possibly James Stuart's Reply to Channing - PB)? (35)

Smithurst had been invited over by Rev W.D.H. McEwen of the Presbytery of Antrim and, as we have seen, had been invited by Rev Fletcher Blakely of the Synod of Ulster to preach at Moneyrea. His appearance at Killyleagh, which started Cooke's campaign, seems to have been intended as a direct attack on Cooke's influence, though Smithurst himself was probably unaware of this.

McEwen had preceded Cooke as minister in Killyleagh. Sidney Hamilton Rowan subsequently told the Synod that during his ministry the congregation 'had very nearly been destroyed... in consequence of its members not having had the doctrines of their religion truly preached and explained to them.' When McEwen left (to join the Presbytery of Antrim), Sidney's father, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, wrote to Lord

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Dufferin to complain about the new mood of intolerance in the congregation, and particularly about the hostility to one of the candidates - David Davison. Davison was thought to be preaching 'new doctrines'. Dufferin, who subscribed money to the congregation, had been told about this and his disapproval was being used as an argument by the orthodox party. Rowan wrote that Davison:

'did not, nor do I believe would he, thunder out damnation to those who did not think as that intollerant (sic) faction think or pretend to think of the complete efficacy of faith and the total inefficacy of good works in an hereafter.' (36)

He warned Dufferin against 'a second brood of roundheads, who excell all in holiness; and who in their zeal for seeking the Lord and re-establishing their holy Zion would trample over the same obstacles as their brethren have done in the last century' and complained against 'my son's brother-in-law, Mr Johnson, or another gentleman... who might, as they did, call down damnation in express words by one and logically the other, upon all those who thought that good works had any right with a just and omnipotent God in the world to come' (the reference to 'Mr Johnson' is to John Johnson of Tullylish, who was closely involved with Cooke in the Arian dispute, though Montgomery was fond of calling him an Arminian). (37)

Davison was defeated by the intolerant faction (later, in 1825, becoming the minister of a Unitarian chapel in London) and Cooke was elected. It was Archibald Hamilton Rowan who invited Smithurst to
Killyleagh. Smithurst was a 'Humanitarian', believing Christ to have been solely human. Although Blakely was reputed to be a Humanitarian, this was a substantially new doctrine in Ulster, which drew attention to the Trinitarian question in a much more radical manner than did high Arianism with its neo-Trinitarian formulae. Most Presbytery of Antrim pulpits were closed to him and, according to Alexander Gordon, one of Bruce's reasons for publishing his Sermons was to distinguish his position from Humanitarianism. (38)

It had only recently become legally permissible to impugn the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ (the Act of 1813 exempting Unitarians from the Blasphemy Act of 1699 had accidentally overlooked Ireland, and this had been rectified in 1817). But Humanitarian doctrines had been openly preached in London since at least 1773 (the establishment of Lindsey's chapel in Essex Street) while the Unitarian Fund Society, which promoted Smithurst's tour had been founded in 1806. Granted that the Synod had no reputation for a rigorous Calvinism, it is difficult to account for the apparent absence of distinct Unitarianism prior to the 1820s except on the grounds that the non-subscribing ideal, with its opposition to doctrinal controversy, was a more appealing cause than Unitarianism would have been. Paul, opposing non-subscription in 1819, had asked Blakely what was the principle of cohesion in the Synod. Blakely might have replied that it was non-subscription itself and the refusal to agitate on controversial matters - hence Carson's view that the Synod was an obstacle to the work of individual ministers in disseminating theological truth. The agitation
of such a distinct controversial position as Unitarianism would have threatened the cohesion of the Synod on the basis of what many ministers regarded as its main raison d'être: that, in Montgomery's words: 'the principles of our Church (are) essentially favourable to the great cause of Civil and Religious liberty' and, in Hamilton Rowan's, that the 'essence' of Presbyterianism was that it was 'established on the indefeasible rights of private judgment as declared in the Word of God and recognised by the laws of our country....' (39)

Thus, all the cases of Unitarian 'aggression' cited by Paul came from outside the Synod, and it was not until 1827 that Trinitarian agitators were able to point to any published avowal of Arianism by a Synod of Ulster minister. The effect of a Synod whose cohesive principle was the desire not to offend the religious principles of other ministers was not only to inhibit evangelical endeavour, but also to inhibit the development of theological radicalism.

Smithurst felt that Cooke had done a service to the Unitarian cause by so dramatically drawing people's attention to it. In August, 1827, Rev Hugh Hutton, who had been trained in the Belfast Institution but was now a Unitarian minister in Birmingham, preached a sermon to the Second Congregation, Belfast, in which he argued that the zeal of the supporters of creeds was a praiseworthy example, and that a united body of the friends of private judgment was necessary to complete the work of the Reformation. Although he begins by attacking attempts to achieve 'harmony of opinion' he goes on to argue in terms
not unlike those used by Cooke that a house divided against itself cannot stand and that the opponents of creeds needed unity tocreate 'a spirit of noble daring.' Since he condemns 'abstruse and mystical tenets, by whose teaching the Glory of Jehovah is divided among three, and the parental relation which he sustains in the Gospel towards his earthly family given up for a different representation of his proceedings, which holds him forth as a despotic, vindictive and partial sovereign' - it is clear that Trinitarians and Calvinists could not be included among the friends of private judgment. (40)

A reviewer in the Christian Moderator suggested that, given the Presbyterian system in Ulster, Hutton's scheme was impossible:

'the rigid adherence to the presbyterian or rather Scotch model of church government, to which all Dissenters in Ulster are accustomed, and from which some even of the better informed among them would perhaps think it sinful to depart, would frustrate any attempt that might be made at present to form the advocates of private judgment into a united body....' (41)

The coarse majority would always be able to trample on the more individualistic minority: 'Hardly can any system, even popery itself, work better for keeping the bulk of the people in ignorance and the greater part of the ministers in trammels.' A reply from 'A North of Ireland Arian' called for a 'straightforward, open and manly course' of Unitarian agitation, and the establishment of an association along the lines proposed by Hutton 'now that a conclave of persecuting
bigots have called the attention of the people to polemico-theology.' He accepted that the logic of his position entailed a separation but he thought that this was unproblematical, granted the existence of the Presbytery of Antrim. Such views, however, remained untypical and largely of English inspiration. The more typical view was outlined by William Porter, explaining why most of the Synod's Arian ministers preferred to keep a low profile:

'I vindicated them by adding that they did not consider the points in dispute essential to salvation; therefore they did not wish to perplex the minds of their hearers by introducing topics of discussion which the great bulk of congregations were incapable of comprehending....' (42)

Even after the separation had taken place, James Martineau in Dublin was to complain that Irish Unitarians were 'marvellously slow in all their movements'. Montgomery did not publish a straightforward account of his views until 1830, and it concluded that 'Perhaps some who have been taught by clamour and misrepresentation to look upon Arianism with horror may find it (Montgomery's 'creed' - PB) very like their own and fully as much resembling the truth of the Bible as even Calvinism itself.' (43)

The divine nature (as distinct from the deity) of Christ, and the literal truth and infallibility of Scripture (which had not actually been denied in Bruce's Sermons) continued to be taken for granted among the nonsubscribing connections until the 1840s, when the challenge
mounted to them under the leadership of Rev David Magennis of York Street resulted in a bizarre replay of the Synod of Ulster's schism, with Montgomery attempting to impose doctrinal standards at Synod level and Magennis quoting his earlier speeches and the Fundamental Principles of the Remonstrant Synod against him. The controversy prompted from the Cooke the remark that:

'You may break, you may ruin the vase as you will
But the scent of the rose will be found in it still.'

It lasted from 1848 (when a committee was appointed to draw up a new code with doctrinal standards) until the early 1860s, when the radicals began, one by one, to transfer to the Presbytery of Antrim. The result was a split in the Presbytery of Antrim when the conservatives formed the Northern Presbytery of Antrim in protest against the Presbytery becoming (in Classon Porter's phrase) 'a degraded receptacle into which the Remonstrant Synod was to be allowed, whenever the occasion required it, to shunt its rubbish.' It became clear that Presbyterian church organisation and freedom of religious speculation were indeed uneasy bedfellows, and that the success of a nonsubscribing Presbyterian church depended on a lack of definiteness or militancy in the doctrinal views of its individual ministers. (44)
The most satisfactory explanation for Cooke's attack on Arianism seems to be his own – that he saw it as a soul endangering sin and that the Church, in countenancing it, was forfeiting its right to any authority over its people. It was difficult for an orthodox Calvinist not to view Arianism in this light. The problem then is not why the Arian dispute occurred in the 1820s, but why it didn't occur earlier, and at least part of the explanation lies in the fact that it was only in the 1820s that a distinct Arian position was clarified. Previously it had been known, as Cooke put it, 'by defect rather than by declaration.' (45)

The clarification of a distinct Unitarian position in Glasgow by James Yates resulted in attacks from Ralph Wardlaw and John Brown of Biggar between 1814 and 1816. George Harris's Unitarianism in 1824 prompted the 'Manchester Socinian controversy'. Since Yates and Harris were effectively Congregationalists (if nominally Presbyterian) these disputes occurred between churches rather than within a particular denomination. They therefore could not result in a schism, as occurred in Ulster, though the Wolverhampton case which started in 1816 could have triggered a widespread challenge to Unitarian property were it not for Lord Eldon's decision that trusts disputed among dissenters could be claimed by the established church. A policy of challenging trusts in Unitarian hands was advocated in Hadfield's Manchester Socinian Controversy and attempted in the wake of the Lady Hewley Trust
decision of 1833, when some Irish properties were implicated. (46)

In Ulster, the open promulgation of Unitarian ideas occurred outside the Synod - Smithurst's mission, the activities of the Presbytery of Antrim, and the importation of English and Scottish Unitarian journals - the Christian Reformer, the Christian Pioneer and, especially, the Christian Moderator. What Carlile called 'our modification of Presbyterianism' - its doctrinal Independency - discouraged doctrinal dispute at Synod level, and the desire to preserve it discouraged the agitation of new theological ideas. The material interest ministers had in their continued membership of the Synod through Regium Donum also probably - as Paul, who was not in receipt of government money, was fond of pointing out - contributed to the 'harmony' which Montgomery so much admired.

The points at which this newly vocal Unitarianism touched directly on the Synod were the Presbytery of Antrim, which had an ambiguous relationship with it, and the Academical Institution. The Institution had been formed on lay initiative on the latitudinarian assumption that there was a common rational and moral ground to all the varieties of Christianity, and that education - including training for the ministry - was largely a secular affair with 'divinity' a specialist subject. In some ways, the Institution remarkably anticipated the non-sectarian Benthamite University of London of 1828. Although it was hoped that other denominations would supply divinity professors, only the Synod and the Secession Synod actually did so and, as we have seen, the
Fourth Report of the Irish Education Inquiry found that 'the Institution must be viewed as essentially Presbyterian.' In both the Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church, it was taken for granted that the clergy required an education fully under church control, and both had universities in Ireland (TCD and Maynooth) to fulfil the need.

The Synod's approach to education was indeed quite secular. At an examination of students under its care, held in Cooke's meeting house in Donegore in 1816 (before the Synod began its arrangement with the Institution), the Presbytery of Templepatrick set as subjects for examination: 'What is conscience?', 'Liberty and necessity'; 'In what does virtue consist?' and 'Taste and the best method for improving it', while in 1817 at Ballyeaston, papers were again read on 'Liberty and necessity' and 'Conscience' as well as on 'A historical and philosophic-al account of mechanical powers' and 'Magnetism'. (47)

The Academical Institution, in providing the only theological college that was available to the Presbyterian ministry in Ireland, was in a position to dictate the nature of the ministry's education and was doing so from the standpoint of a largely fictitious interdenominationalism, which complemented and appeared to favour the Synod's doctrinal agnosticism. To attack this was certainly a breach of the Synod's tradition of leaving doctrinal matters to presbyteries and congregations and it seems to have been regarded and dismissed as such in 1822 and 1823. John Barnet, one of the Institution's managers, and himself a Seceder, complained that the Moderator in 1823 had wanted the
Presbytery of Antrim to be given the same voting rights as himself in the election of Professors other than the Professor of Divinity; but had opposed the Secession Synod being given similar voting rights unless the General Synod was given five votes. Barnet certainly did not see the Synod's Moderator as a guarantor of orthodoxy. (48)

Despite the declaration of 1822 by the Institution's professors that they would not interfere with the religious tenets of their pupils, Cooke's view that the Institution was promoting Arianism was not unreasonable. McEwen, who invited Smithurst, was a lecturer at the Institution and he later gave some volumes of Dr Price's Sermons as prizes to his pupils (he was not a member of either of the Institution's faculty boards and therefore hadn't signed the 1822 agreement).

Smithurst's visit had been followed by the appointments of Bruce and Hincks, both Unitarians. Cooke's attention had been drawn to this by John Barnet, who was a radical in his politics and who objected to Bruce's appointment not just because he was an Arian, but also because one of the reasons had been to conciliate the government, and one of the reasons for the rejection of the orthodox candidate - R.J. Bryce - had been his opposition to Regium Donum. Barnet was later to repent of his folly, but the incident makes it more difficult to see Cooke's campaign against the Institution as motivated simply by his aversion to radical politics. (49)

The declaration of the professors that they would not interfere with the religious tenets of their students was hardly reassuring in the case of
professors teaching subjects such as Classics, Hebrew and moral philosophy, which related to religion. It merely meant that pupils were to be deprived of an important part of their religious education, while teachers were not to be allowed to declare what they believed to be true.

Nonetheless, the Synod as a whole did not join Cooke in his attack. He had to withdraw his motion of 1822, in contrast to the Secession Synod, which formally condemned Bruce's and Hincks' appointments. The 1824 resolution that the Moderator should consult a committee of Synod before voting in the Institution's elections was entirely an internal affair for the Synod. Cooke in 1825 drew the government in on his side, but this was an individual initiative which he was able to take by the accident of his being Moderator when the Education Inquiry was being held. Although the 1825 Synod supported him and demanded that the Institution incorporate the substance of the 1824 resolution into a bye-law, the 1826 Synod was very apologetic about the whole affair. Despite all the noise Cooke made about Ferrie's election in 1829, the Synod merely agreed to consult with the Secession and Reformed Synods on the matter.

John Barnet pointed out to the Education Commissioners the anomaly of Cooke's concern about the doctrinal purity of the Institution when he himself 'belongs to a body (the Synod - PB) as mixed as the Institution yet continues to commune with them.' He suggested that the Seceders were less worried about the Institution than Cooke because the Secession Synod practised subscription and that therefore its
own discipline was sufficient to guarantee it against heterodox ministers. Indeed, Paul, though involving himself in the attack on Arianism and advocating subscription, did not involve himself in the attack on the Institution until the Ferrie case was revived in the 1830s. Although the Reformed Presbyterians had no Divinity Professor in the Institution they did use it for subjects other than divinity and even seemed to be flattered by the attention paid to them by the Joint Boards. (50)

But the effect of the agitation against Arianism in the Institution was to force a clarification of doctrinal views in the Synod itself, and it opened up the possibility of the Synod being able to act as a corporate body untrammelled by the restrictions on the free expression of particular doctrinal opinions which had been imposed by the etiquette of non-subscription - the refusal to cause offence. The new self confidence and sense of direction given by the ability to promote certain doctrines as true and reprobate others as false put an end to the long period of demoralisation over which Black had presided. It restored to the church the feeling that it was an engine of salvation, and prepared the way for reunion with the Secession Synod and restoration of communion with the Church of Scotland. Although it entailed the rejection of a non-sectarian 'ecumenism' based on doctrinal minimalism, it had, by the 1820s, become almost impossible, granted the increasing vigour of Irish Catholicism, to believe that that ideal could overcome the religious divisions in Ireland.

The Volunteer movement had offered the possibility of substantial
secular advance for the Presbyterian community as the members of the church whose constitution was most favourable to 'civil and religious liberty'. Doctrinal disagreements were subsumed into disagreement over the rival options of respectability or revolution. When revolution ceased to be an option, the Synod achieved respectability, at some cost to the pride of the sect, through government patronage. Civil and religious liberty proved to be outside the Presbyterian ministry's power to grant, and the emergence of the Catholic Association in the 1820s ended once and for all the dream of the Protestant radicals that they could take charge of the political development of Ireland and direct it into secular democratic channels. The Arian schism restored to Presbyterian the pride of the sect through the possession of doctrinal truth. It remained to be seen whether this new sectarianism would remain primarily Presbyterian, or whether it would extend into a common Protestantism in alliance with the Church of Ireland in response to the newly militant Catholicism.
CHAPTER SIX

THE REFORMED PARLIAMENT
Prior to the 1830s, radical politics in Belfast had been centred round
the two issues of Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform,
both of which had been achieved by the time of the 1832 election.
Although the same names appear in informal requisitions and public
meetings held in support of political objects, there was no clearly
defined party system and, under the unreformed electoral system,
Belfast radicals could not hope for parliamentary representation. They
had, however, acquired a social prominence through their participation
in a network of cultural, charitable and administrative agencies which
they had largely created themselves. This social prominence masked
their lack of organic connections with society outside Belfast and,
indeed, with the rapidly growing population of Belfast itself. It was
possible to see the Belfast Academical Institution as an attempt to
form such connections through control over the education of the Pres­
byterian clergy.

A 'Belfast Reform Society' was formed in January 1831, with a pro­
gramme of triennial parliaments; assimilation of Irish and English laws;
abolition of tithes; appropriation of church property to national purpos­
es; election of grand juries by ballot; fairly selected juries to adminis­
ter the law; cuts in the civil and military establishment; abolition of
sinecures and unmerited pensions; reduction of taxes on the necessities
of the labouring classes; abolition of newspaper tax; rendering the laws
'simple, accessible and cheap'; phasing out colonial slavery; and the
abolition of all monopolies, especially the East India Company. No conservative equivalent was formed until the ambiguous 'Belfast Society' of December 1832, though the conservatives did have the beginnings of a national organisation in the Dublin based 'Conservative Society of Ireland'. (1)

The Reform Society sponsored two candidates for the election in December, 1832, Robert James Tennent, Dr Tennent's son, and William Sharman Crawford. The principle of party discipline was by no means established, however, and Crawford declined either to be bound by the Society's programme or to urge his supporters to vote for Tennent. Opposing them were Lord Arthur Chichester and James Emerson Tennent. James Emerson had been a close friend of Robert James and they had gone together to Greece to support the cause of Greek independence. He had adopted the surname 'Tennent' as a condition for becoming the heir of William Tennent, after marrying his only legitimate child, Letitia, without her father's consent. Emerson and Chichester won and Slater agrees with the view expressed at the time by Crawford that the Reform Society's candidates were defeated at the time through Robert James Tennent's refusal to declare his views on Repeal (he said that if the question arose, he would consult with his constituents and resign if he differed from them). (2)

The problem which has plagued radical politics in Ulster was already beginning to be felt. The radicals wanted to develop a politics based on secular material interests without reference to religious differences.
But a distinct Catholic politics was emerging on the basis of a demand - repeal - which was unacceptable to Protestant opinion (including the radicals themselves). To secure Catholic support for a non-sectarian political programme, an ambivalence over the question which was of prime concern to Catholics appeared to be necessary. At times when this political disagreement between Catholics and Protestants - the national question in all its forms - was at the centre of politics, such an ambivalence could not be maintained; but the fact of having been ambivalent led to distrust on both sides. The radical candidates in the 1832 election barely secured two hundred votes from Protestants (out of an electorate - Protestant and Roman Catholic - of around 1,600). Crawford emerged in 1833 as a supporter of some limited form of devolved government for Ireland. He never again stood for Belfast. (3)

The election, however, had not yet clarified a distinction between 'liberal' and 'conservative'. Emerson Tennent had been a member of the Belfast Reform Society, and was known to have held anti-monarchist views in the 1820s. He had been persuaded to stand by James MacNeight, editor of the Belfast News Letter, who later emerged as an opponent of Cooke's views on the need to support the Church of Ireland. While Robert James Tennent had stood on a full programme, refusing only to declare himself on the subject of repeal, Emerson Tennent refused to declare himself on any topic other than repeal. The 'Belfast Society' was formed by his supporters in the course of the election, but it initially had no political programme other than 'to
unite all men of moderate views but of sound constitutional principle
in one common band of union, who will co-operate on all public
occasions with a view to procure a just and fair representation of the
inhabitants, in all municipal departments, and to prevent the few
judging for the many in this town.' Rev John Edgar, a Seceder who
had been active in promoting the New Reformation Society but who
nonetheless supported the radicals, wrote to Robert James Tennent as
the results were being announced, ascribing his defeat to 'the high
personal feeling against the old firm, Barnet, Grimshaw and co'; and
Emerson Tennent gave as one of the reasons for following MacNeight's
advice and standing that Robert James Tennent had been chosen as the
Reform Society's candidate in preference to himself by a committee
rather than by a public meeting. The Belfast Society could thus be
said to have been formed in opposition to the embryonic party system
which the Reform Society represented. MacNeight and Maurice Cross,
both members of the Belfast Society who subsequently joined the radic-
als, later complained that it had originally been politically neutral,
but had subsequently become a distinctly conservative grouping. The
occasion for this seems to have been a controversy over the Brown
Street School in Belfast, and its connection with the National Educa-
tion System recently introduced by the Reformed Parliament. (4)
THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Although the Kildare Place Society was strongly opposed to the National Education System (it ultimately folded into the Church of Ireland's Church Education Society) the new system can to some extent be seen as a continuation of the Society's work - the attempt to overcome the potency of religious and cultural divisions through English speaking and non-sectarian schools. The Society had attempted to involve Catholics in its management, but this co-operation had broken down over the Society's insistence on the free use of the Bible as a textbook. The Brown Street School, which had been in receipt of a grant from the Kildare Place Society, was a case in point, and William Crolly, the parish priest of Belfast, had withdrawn Roman Catholic pupils from it in the early 1820s. (5)

The Catholic Church's opposition to openly proselytising Societies (principally the Association for Discountenancing Vice, the London Hibernian Society, and the 'Irish Society') and to the Kildare Place Society, was greatly strengthened by the Catholic Association. The Irish Education Inquiry of 1825 was largely a response to the generally felt need for education in Ireland and to Catholic opposition to the Protestant education which was available. The National Education System was an attempt to secure the assistance of the Roman Catholic Church in a uniform system of education with inbuilt guarantees against proselytism. It thus came into straightforward conflict with the hope of the proselytising societies that education would be the means of - as
they saw it - freeing Irish Catholics from the control of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the withdrawal of Catholic support, the Kildare Place Society had been moving closer to the position of the proselytising societies.

Cooke had outlined his views on primary education to the Commissioners of the Irish Education Inquiry in 1825. They were based largely on his own background. He approved of mixed education and thought that the masters should teach pupils the letter of the Bible and of the catechisms of their own denominations, leaving their own clergymen to teach the spirit. He had himself been taught his catechism by a Roman Catholic teacher and had not been harmed by the experience, nor by his having picked up snatches of the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic catechisms. If it was necessary to secure Catholic participation in a new education system, he would be prepared to abandon the use of catechisms in schools, though he thought this would make the job of ministers much more difficult: 'I would find it very difficult to give a person of moderate capacity any consecutive view of religion for want of having an outline in the memory such as the catechism provides'. But he thought the scriptures would continue to be necessary. On the whole: 'I think it would do a great deal of evil to educate them separately; education is a common and neutral good, and there they may and should meet to rub away prejudices and asperities.' (6)

The National Education System was started in 1831 with a grant of
£30,000 on the proposal of E.G. Stanley, who had initially been a strong supporter of the Kildare Place Society and reluctant 'to throw the whole education of Catholics, supported by the State, into the hands of the priesthood.' Grants to other educational bodies - the Kildare Place Society and the proselytising agencies - were withdrawn. It was administered by a Board of Commissioners on which the major denominations were represented: Archbishop Murray of Dublin for the Roman Catholics; Archbishop Whately of Dublin for the Church of Ireland; Robert Holmes for the Synod of Munster; and James Carlile for the Synod of Ulster. Whately and Carlile, however, were quite unrepresentative. The Church of Ireland and the Synod of Ulster went into immediate and vociferous opposition. A substantial opposition also developed, though more slowly, from within the Roman Catholic Church, led at first by Archbishop McHale, who was appointed to Tuam in 1834, partly on the strength of his opposition to the national system, and who soon after refused to allow the schools in his province to receive grants from the Board. (7)

The main objections raised from within the Synod of Ulster were the restriction on the use of the Bible and the requirement that managers should make the school's facilities available to the Catholic priest in the area as of right, and should exclude Catholic children from scripture lessons rather than simply excusing them if they did not wish to attend. They also objected to what Cooke called 'the anti-Presbyterian prelacy conferred on Mr Carlile' through his membership of the Board, and to the influence Unitarians (through the Synod of Munster)
and Roman Catholics could exercise over Presbyterian schools. (8)

Carlile shared the Synod's concern that if the Bible could only be taught on a voluntary basis outside school hours, many children simply would not attend lessons, and therefore would not have any scripture education at all. He therefore proposed the use of 'scripture extracts' which would require the approval of the whole Board and which would not be based exclusively on either the Authorised or the Douai translations. Murray had proposed a similar idea to the Education Inquiry in 1825. The Board approved it, giving Carlile responsibility for compiling the book to be used. (9)

In January 1832, a poorly attended special meeting of the Synod condemned the system, with only Carlile defending it. Carlile in February wrote to Rev W. Innes in Edinburgh to say: 'If you deduct political opposition to the present ministry, Orange antipathy to Roman Catholics and High Church jealousy both of Dissenters and Roman Catholics, I am fully persuaded you would withdraw five sixths, more probably nine tenths, of the hostility to us.' Cooke, who was leading the Synod's attack from the pages of the Orthodox Presbyterian, replied to the charge by saying that of the two hundred and sixteen ministers in the Synod, sixteen were ('entre nous') Arians, who would support the system. One Calvinist, Rev William Mulligan of Strabane, was anxious to secure the Chair of Mathematics in the Belfast Institution (he got it) and would be anxious to please its Arian management. Besides which, he was 'radical', and opposed to all establishments.'
That was the extent of the Synod's support. As for the remainder:

'Of these two hundred (bating one) there is not a man that feels any special antipathy to the present ministry - most of them - I believe every man of them - are reformers. Some not to the extent of the ministry - but all reformers.'

As for Orangeism 'there is not an Orangeman in the body.' The Seceders, so far as he could gather, were opposed. The Covenanters were solidly opposed. But the Arians were 'all friendly to anything the government pleases.' In fact, there was some support for the system among the Seceders which led in May and June to a quarrel with Cooke, who complained that 'some of their leading members are literal radicals and in proportion as they see the Synod of Ulster assume the form of an establishment, they are moved to become our antipodes in everything which they can oppose themselves.' Against the charge that the opposition to the system was political, he said that its supporters were 'mere Politicians - Radicals - Levellers - and every form of Infidels.' (10)

The principle of state aid for educational purposes given to religious bodies other than the Established Church had already been conceded in Ireland through the money given to the Kildare Place Society in 1816 and to the Lord Lieutenant's Fund (which was allowed to provide funds to Roman Catholic managers) in 1819. The same principle was applied in England in 1833, when £20,000 was divided between the National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in
the Principles of the Established Church, and the largely dissenting British and Foreign Schools Society. In both cases however the money was being given to distinctly religious bodies which had responsibility for administering the schools. Under the Irish system, the state itself was taking on the responsibility for determining the constitution of schools it supported and doing so with the express aim of ensuring that education was secular, or at least that only a minimalist religion could be taught. It was thus usurping what was generally recognised at the time as the function of the churches and threatening the establishment principle. The quarrel between the Church of England, fighting for the principle that it should be responsible for any education provided by the state, and dissenters, opposed to any favouritism being shown towards the Anglicans, prevented the introduction of any similar system in England before 1870. (11)

While the Synod was not formally opposed to the establishment principle, it did not itself happen to be the establishment. Its opposition was therefore not as strong as that of the Church of Ireland which felt that its status as an established church was under attack. Basically, the Synod argued for the right of schools themselves to determine their own laws. If the Commissioners approved the laws made by the schools, the grant could be given conditional only on the managers keeping to them. The principles the Synod wished to see observed in schools under its ministers were: that the Bible (or scripture extracts other than those made by Carlile) could be freely used as a textbook; that lessons on the catechism could be given in school hours and that while children
should be free not to attend such lessons, they should not be excluded from them if they wished to remain; and that 'the ministers and people of this church' should be able to apply for aid 'without the necessary concurrence of the ministers or members of any other church.' In wanting freedom to catechise in school hours, they were actually going beyond the conditions of the Kildare Place Society. (12)

This demand was introduced by a Committee appointed at the special meeting in January 1832. There were widespread criticisms of the Committee in the 1833 Synod when it was found that its chairman, John Brown of Aghadowey, had failed to keep members who might have been prepared to compromise informed of its meetings. Freedom to catechise was introduced into its programme without the sanction of the Synod. Nonetheless the Committee managed, albeit with difficulty, to retain the Synod's confidence. (13)

The June 1832 Synod ratified the opposition of the special meeting in January and in May, 1833, Cooke and a deputation from the Synod submitted the proposals outlined above to the government. Carlile agreed to support them in the Synod of July 1833 and in August, the government - apparently, at least - accepted them. Cooke was one of the subscribers to the Brown Street School and he proposed that it be transferred to the Board. The agreement, however, appears to have been based on a misunderstanding. The Synod thought that managers were now free to run schools according to rules they had framed themselves, requiring only the approval of the Board. The Commissioners,
however, continued to insist on the implementation of their rules, issuing query sheets to check that this was being done. These included the appointment of ministers of other denominations which had children in the school as ex officio visitors. (14)

Cooke therefore opposed the Brown Street School transfer at a meeting in September which was, according to the Belfast Commercial Chronicle, packed out by 'obscure persons of strong political feeling.' A new committee to manage the school was elected at a separate meeting in which John Scott Porter of the Presbytery of Antrim and the minister of an Independent congregation in Donegall Street confusingly called James Carlile were dismissed. From this point on, I shall have to refer to the Presbyterian James Carlile and the Independent James Carlile, where there is danger of confusion. The Independent James Carlile wrote to R.J. Tennent in December, 1833 to say of the incident that:

"The political religionists" are ashamed of their victory.... It has literally bound with disgrace the "Belfast Society" and made some of its friends to blush. In fact it was well nigh scattered to the winds by this affair.... I am equally anxious to prove that there is no necessary because no natural connection between orthodoxy in religion and illiberality in politics. Religion has suffered much in Belfast from the illiberality of many of its defenders, and I can truly say that a desire to rescue it from such an unhallowed profanation had dictated in some manner the course I have taken and intend to adhere to in public life. (15)
He complained about an 'unnatural union' between 'two parties whose unprincipled coalition has secured a short lived triumph.' The two parties appear to be the orthodox Presbyterians opposed to the national system, and the Anglicans. The Ulster Times was subsequently - in 1837 - to claim that Cooke was 'the man who had himself been mainly instrumental in cementing the hallowed and truly Conservative coalition', and though the notorious Hillsborough meeting of 1834 was the most dramatic indication of what was meant by this, the Brown Street incident, in which Cooke was closely involved, was a crucial event in the Belfast Society's conversion into the 'Belfast Conservative Society'.

There was considerable opposition to Cooke's views on the National Education System, especially in the 1834 Synod, when the debate turned on the question of whether or not the government had actually granted the Synod's demands. John Barnet of Moneymore - son of the Belfast liberal, John Barnet, and a strong supporter of Cooke's in the Arian controversy - proposed a motion that the Synod could now recommend ministers and members of their congregations to apply to the Board for aid. Robert Stewart proposed an amendment to the effect that the situation was unchanged. The Presbyterian James Carlile argued that the Board was merely looking for a guarantee that general education would take place on consecutive hours so that Roman Catholics would not feel that they were being tricked into Bible lessons sandwiched into non-religious lessons. The Board's schools, with their scripture extracts approved by the hierarchy, were a means by which Catholic children could voluntarily gain a taste for the Bible they
could not acquire anywhere else. Cooke had objected that a note in the scripture extracts identified the woman whose seed would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen III, xv) with Mary. Carlile replied that the schools of the proselytising 'Irish Society' used Gallagher's Sermons, which contained a graphic description of the assumption of the Virgin Mary, as a textbook. There was a need for tact in introducing Roman Catholics to the Bible. (17)

Carlile was supported by William Molyneaux of Larne who, in 1835, helped Cooke in providing a substitute when the Synod withdrew its students from Dr Ferrie's Moral Philosophy classes. Carlile had said that the true distinction recognised in the Gospels was between a Christian and a non-Christian, not a denominational one, and Molyneaux said he 'was willing to merge the name of the sectarian into that of the Christian.' It was necessary in dealing with Roman Catholics to 'insinuate the Bible by degrees' and the National System was a means by which this could be done.

James Seaton Reid, who was enjoying considerable popularity in the Synod after the publication of the first volume of his History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, pointed out that the Synod had no educational system of its own: 'they had never come out of the mass of the people to establish schools for themselves.' Stewart's amendments, he argued, presupposed a fully Protestant society, while the Board's system was adapted to a mixed population.

The System's supporters included those most interested in proselytism,
including Robert Winning of Ervey, who had just made an appeal to
the Synod in favour of the Irish Society (he himself was able to
preach in Irish) and Alexander Patterson of Ballymena, who had
supported the London Hibernian Society, but thought the National
System an improvement (he had proposed a motion in 1833 condemning
Carlile for his membership of the Board). Hanna was also a supporter.
Cooke's opposition can be seen as a renunciation of an evangelical
perspective - a concentration on the internal discipline of Presbyterian-
ism in opposition to Catholicism, as against Carlile's feeling of respons-
ibility towards Irish society as a whole. It can thus be seen as a
continuation of their disagreement during the Arian dispute when
Carlile had emphasised the importance of a free-wheeling evangelisa-
tion as against excessive concern with the internal discipline of a
particular denomination. It was clear that Cooke's views had changed
since his 1825 Evidence and in September 1836 he told the Brown Street
School committee that he thought he had been wrong in 1825 to support
mixed education and that zeal against popery was a necessary sign of
a Christian. (18)

Stewart's amendment opposing the System passed the Synod, but only
through the votes of elders. Sixty-two ministers supported the System
as against fifty-six in favour of the amendment. Twenty-four elders
as against twelve swung the vote. The Synod's view was thus far from
clearcut. In 1833, they had voted to support the efforts of the Synod's
Committee to change the System, but had left ministers free to join it
or not as they chose. Now they had voted against any new connections
being formed but had left ministers free to continue existing connections. Molyneaux and John Dill of Carnmoney had said that they would disregard the resolution of the Synod if it went against them since the Synod had no jurisdiction in such matters.

As Seaton Reid had pointed out, the fact that the Synod were counterposing a non-existent Presbyterian education system to the actually existing national one was clearly anomalous and in December a special meeting was held on a requisition from the Presbyteries of Magherafelt, Ballymena, Connor and Belfast to discuss the introduction of a Presbyterian scheme. Ministers were given no prior details of the scheme, which was introduced by Robert Stewart for immediate ratification. Control over the administration of the schools (including the choice of books and hours devoted to different branches of study) was vested in parents, in consultation with the Sessions of the congregations to which the schools were attached. The choice of teachers was vested in a Committee of Synod subject to the Synod’s approval. There were to be visitations by ministers and elders and yearly examinations of students by a Committee of Presbytery. Overall authority was vested in the Directors of the Synod’s missions. All Presbyterians were recommended – but not required – to connect their schools with the Synod’s system. There was no opposition in principle from the National System’s supporters. Carlile himself had said that a purely Presbyterian system would be desirable and that the function of the National System was simply to provide education for those who could not otherwise afford it. John Barnet, however, felt that people were unlikely to be prepared
to pay for the new system, while John Brown of Aghadowey (who had been in the forefront of opposition to the National System) wanted the proposals to be more widely discussed before they were adopted. Hanna and George Hay of Londonderry (a protege of Black and his successor as agent for Regium Donum) were also in favour of delay, but Cooke, supported by Seaton Reid, was anxious to open subscriptions as quickly as possible, to present the Church with a fait accompli. (19)

The scheme was approved, but does not appear to have aroused much enthusiasm. Hamilton Dobbin of Lurgan said in September 1836 that Presbyterians were keen on the Synod's system but not prepared to pay for it, while John Brown (whose opposition to both the national and Presbyterian systems suggests that he was no great enthusiast for education of any sort) said that most congregations thought it was visionary. Cooke proposed writing to those who hadn't contributed, raising funds in Scotland and taking measures against those ministers who still had schools under the Board. He complained that every tenth minister in the Synod had a school under the Board. (20)

VOLUNTARYISM (1)

The Independent James Carlile's December 1833 letter to R.J. Tennent goes on to say:

'I am happy to find that your views of church government seem so fully to coincide with mine. Episcopacy and Presbyterianism
too admit of incorporation with the state and I confess that the impracticability of incorporating Independency with the state appears to me strong internal evidence of the accordance of the system both with the principles and precedents of the primitive age. I rejoice much to see the high toned decision of the English dissenters. In Scotland too the dissenters (are?) all life and energy - but in Ireland we are dead... just because of the golden bribe called Regium Donum. I have been looking for an antagonist re this subject in one or two articles signed 'Presbyter' but as yet I have found none. I intend soon to appear as an advocate of the voluntary principle in the pages of the Patriot. That good principle is spreading here.' (21)

Tennent has put a query in the margin against Carlile's statement that they agreed on principles of church government. In 1835 he claimed to be an Anglican but earlier, in 1833, he had been in correspondence with R.J. Bryce, minister of the York Street Church attached to James Bryce's 'Primitive Secession', about the possibility of Bryce baptising his child. The York Street congregation had been founded by Dr Tennent (apparently with John Barnet, though by 1825 he told the Education Commissioners that he belonged to the main Secession Synod). When R.J. Tennent left his father's house, he told R.J. Bryce that he didn't wish to be a regular member of his congregation. Bryce explained in 1833 that his church did not require anything more than a simple statement of belief in Christ, but that it should so far as possible exclude non-believers, who could only be judged on the basis of
conduct and profession, it being impossible to prove the heart as some
Methodists and Independents attempted to do:

'The Church of England, and her two pensioned daughters in this
country, the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod churches,
have run into the opposite extremes as the natural result of their
adulterous connection with the world, and admit everyone, clean
and unclean without almost any enquiry.... The Covenanters
have all this, but they err by excess; for they add a great many
more historico-political terms of communion to the simple, script-
ural "one thing needful".' (22)

R.J. Tennent, in reply, claimed to be a more extreme variety of
Independent, insisting that, though he agreed with Bryce on doctrinal
matters, he did not recognise the right of any church to exercise
discipline over its members. It is reasonable to assume that this was
largely a means of keeping himself aloof from the tangle of ecclesias-
tical affairs in which the politics of the time were - distressingly from
his point of view - becoming involved. (23)

Bryce wrote to Tennent in January 1834, enthusiastic about the volun-
tary principle:

'By the by, did it ever strike (you) how powerful a proof of the
divine origin of the Bible is its perfect consistency with sciences
which were unknown at the time it was written; the coincidence
of precepts which it founds on other principles with the dictates
of political economy is a striking instance of this.' (24)
We have already seen that the term 'orthodoxy' covered a wide range of differing views on the rights of the church with regard to society at large, the two extremes of which could be characterised by the covenanting position that the church should include the whole nation, which had already (in 1647) entered into a formal covenant with God, and the Independent position that the Church should consist only of those who could give evidence of having experienced regeneration. The Scottish Secession, while prepared even before the 'new light' controversy, to modify the terms of the covenant, had originally maintained the covenanting ideal of the church co-terminous with the state, and of itself as a valid part of the established Church of Scotland, even if it had seceded in protest against the corruptions of the main body. Mathieson argues that this perspective was abandoned with the union of Burghers and Antiburghers in 1820, when adherence to the covenant ceased to be a necessary term of communion. He says that most ministers would have agreed to one of the original terms proposed for the amalgamation which aimed at 'a general union of the various denominations of dissenters throughout Britain.' (25)

The Scottish Seceders were thus prepared to identify with 'dissent' at a time when the Church of Scotland was apparently reforming itself and the 'evangelical' party was coming to the fore. Seceders had already been involved in a large amount of missionary work in concert with English and Scottish congregationalists both at home and abroad, and they had together taken the lead in the attack on Unitarianism (Wardlaw and Brown, who attacked Yates in 1816, were respectively
an Independent - from a Seceding background - and a Seceder). But through the 1820s the Church of Scotland was applying itself to foreign missions and to church extensions in Scotland, a development principally associated with Thomas Chalmers. Far from bringing about a rapprochement with the dissenters, this led to a more dramatic estrangement. The supporters of the established church attributed this to jealousy on the part of the dissenters - that the Church of Scotland, with the greater means at its disposal, was at last fulfilling obligations which had previously been left to the dissenters who were therefore now non-functional. The dissenters argued that the extension was a merely formal affair, that to promote church membership as a civic duty conflicted with the need for regeneration, and that the state was a body that was necessarily secular and foreign to the church.(26)

This last argument assumed special force after Catholic Emancipation. The British state had always been foreign to the Church of Scotland since it upheld prelatical establishments in England and Wales, and in Ireland. This had been a principal argument for the separation of the Secession and Relief Churches, and for the refusal of the Covenanters to join the Church of Scotland. With the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and with Catholic Emancipation, the government was formally pluralist and the ideal of a Church co-terminous with the society was no longer tenable. The continued connection with the state could be nothing other than a hindrance to the work of the church, since the two polities had radically different and even opposed purposes.
The Voluntary movement in Scotland can therefore be seen as a curious amalgam of reaction against and enthusiasm for the radical ferment which characterised the turn of the decade. Bulloch and Drummond describe Andrew Marshall, whose sermon against establishments in 1829 marked the beginning of the movement, as 'otherwise one of the most conservative Seceders' and they suggest that there had been more opposition among Seceding ministers to Catholic Emancipation than among ministers of the Church of Scotland (though Mathieson, in the passage they refer to as their authority, says the reverse). Marshall had argued that on the establishment principle the Roman Catholics now admitted into government had every right to press for the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church, and the argument was to be frequently repeated when the issue was debated in Ulster. (27)

The urgency of the implications of Catholic Emancipation for the establishment principle was felt most pressingly in Ireland, where Emancipation was followed almost immediately by the 'tithe war'. The Emancipation campaign had raised high hopes in the Catholic population which the measure itself could hardly be expected to satisfy. We have seen Cooke telling the House of Lords Committee that Emancipation was popularly thought to mean redistribution of land. Magee, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, complained to the Committee on the State of Ireland that 'there has been an eagerness of exertion connected with objects, as I believe, beyond those which are professed to be sought. The real aim of the agitation was to establish the Catholic religion as the religion of the country.' (28)
O'Connell had attempted, after Emancipation had been achieved, to give it greater substance by using the machinery he had created to agitate for Repeal of the Act of Union, and therefore the establishment of a Roman Catholic government. But tithes were a much more immediate burden and symbol of subjection to a foreign church, and he seems to have been unable to harness the spontaneously developing tithe agitation to the broader political question of Repeal (though his attempts to do so resulted in his imprisonment early in 1831). There was a widespread refusal through the South of Ireland to pay tithes, accompanied by an intensification of agrarian terrorism. The Church of Ireland - obviously unpopular, and forced to resort to draconian measures to collect the dues to which its position as a state church entitled it - was the weakest point of any argument in favour of the establishment; and it was an obvious target for any government elected on a broad mandate of reforming abuses in church and state.

The bill to reform the Church of Ireland was introduced by the new government as one of its first measures, in February 1833, and it became law in August as the Irish Church Temporalities Act. It barely touched the question of tithes and was a rationalisation of the structure of the Church, involving a redistribution rather than a reduction in endowments; but the suppression of ten sees, including two archbishoprics revealed the vulnerability of an Erastian Church subject to the control of a pluralist Parliament. In England, it produced Keble's sermon on National Apostasy, and the beginnings of the Tractarian attempt to define the nature of the Church's authority. Among the English
dissenters, it seemed to suggest for the first time that disestablishment could be a political possibility. (29)

The secularisation of the state was already part of the Benthamite radical programme, and O'Connell announced himself in favour of disestablishment in his reply to the King's speech in February. During the debates, he and Joseph Hume were - unsuccessfully - anxious to establish the principle that the State had the right to apply church endowments to secular purposes. In the wake of the act, the English dissenters, by now familiar with Scottish voluntaryist literature, took up the separation of Church and State as a general principle underpinning their renewed agitation for the redress of practical grievances. Resolutions in favour of disestablishment were passed at meetings in December 1833 and January 1834 in Leeds, Nottingham, throughout the Midlands, Lancashire and Glasgow. The United Committee, which had been formed to fight the Test and Corporation Acts, declared in favour of the separation of church and state in response to the Leeds meeting's call for a convention on dissenting grievances. The Protestant Dissenting Deputies in London condemned the Regium Donum given to English dissenters (a much smaller grant than the Irish one, performing the role of a Widow's Fund). (30)

It was to this activity that Carlile was referring when he talked about the 'high-toned decision of the English dissenters.' Carlile had only arrived in Belfast (from Newry) in 1830. Like his Presbyterian namesake, he had been involved with the Irish Evangelical Society, and
was acutely aware of the Roman Catholic nature of Irish society outside Ulster, and believed that Protestants had to atone for past misdeeds if evangelical work was to have any hope of success. As an evangelical Independent he believed that religion was a matter of regeneration, not of simple membership of a church, however correct its doctrine. We have already seen that this religion of experience as opposed to doctrine had made little headway in Ulster. (31)

Both the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod were in any case in receipt of what he called 'the golden bribe' and we have already seen that the Irish Secession had not clarified its attitude to the covenanting ideal (there had been no equivalent to the old light/new light conflict in Scotland). In Magherahamlet Secession congregation, for example, the questions to elders in 1831 included a commitment to the perpetual obligation of covenants, but the covenants are not mentioned in a similar set of questions to elders in John Edgar's church in Fitzroy Avenue, Belfast. While Cooke had detected a drift towards voluntaryism on the part of Seceders in 1832, the Synod of Lothian and Tweed-dale, discussing in May 1834 the repeal of the Church of Scotland's 1799 Act to re-enter communion with the Synod of Ulster, were told that 'the Seceders there (Ulster - PB) had no connexion with those in this country, and that they were all staunch supporters of the Established Church.' A letter to the Orthodox Presbyterian from 'A Seceding Minister' in March 1834, proposing a union of the Synods, gave as one of its arguments, that 'in the present time, when there is so much noise respecting civil and religious politics, it is of
considerable importance that as far as our connexion with government is concerned, both are agreed in their politico-ecclesiastical tenets. (32)

I should also mention that Mathieson attributes the popularity of Scottish voluntaryism in part to a drive, especially in Edinburgh, to collect the 'Annuity Tax' set aside for part payment of ministers' stipends, and Halevy attributes the popularity of English voluntaryism to a similar drive on the part of Anglican clergymen to collect tithes before a date fixed by the government on which the obligation to full payment was to lapse. There was no equivalent event in Ulster. (33)

Carlile skirmished with the Orthodox Presbyterian on the rights and wrongs of the Independent as opposed to the Presbyterian mode of church government and on compulsory assessment for the support of religion. In January, 1835, he started a voluntaryist journal, the Christian Liberator. And in March 1836, a 'Belfast Voluntary Church Society' was formed. (34)

COOKE AT HILLSBOROUGH AND THE 1835 SYNOD

In 1834, James Emerson Tennent replied on behalf of the government to a major speech by O'Connell calling for Repeal. He declared that in Ireland the middle ground between outright support for O'Connell and support for the Protestant ascendency was fast becoming untenable. Stanley - architect of the National Education System - agreed with him and said that there could only be two parties in Belfast - the
Roman Catholic party and the Protestant party. The Northern Whig, which was trying such a middle ground between support for a radical programme of reform and opposition to Repeal, was faced, from September 1833, with a rival in the shape of the Northern Herald, which supported devolved government along the lines now advocated by William Sharman Crawford, who was moving closer to O'Connell. The difference in attitude between the two papers can be seen in the Whig's description of Parliament as 'the United Reformed Parliament', while the Herald called it 'the Imperial Parliament'. Straightforward support for the government became more difficult as divisions in the government became more obvious under pressure from O'Connell and the radicals for yet further reform of the Church of Ireland. (35)

In May 1834, Lord John Russell declared in support of O'Connell's attack on church endowments in opposition to Stanley. Four members of the cabinet, including Stanley, resigned when the issue was brought forward for debate. The process by which 'moderate reformers' such as Cooke and Emerson Tennent were moving into alliance with Peel was beginning.

It was O'Connell's strength in Parliament that gave strength to the radicals. But the interests of O'Connell and the radicals were different. The radicals supported the attack on the Church of Ireland as a means of establishing the principle that church endowments were derived from secular society and could be reclaimed. The most ambitious of them envisaged the complete secularisation of the state. In this, they had sporadic support from English dissent. The full voluntaryist programme,
though argued in terms of the best interests of religion, required the secularisation of the state. Even the more moderate programme for the redress of 'practical grievances' tended towards this aim since the practical grievances included having to pay for the Established Church. O'Connell, on the other hand, was primarily interested in establishing the principle that in a country whose population was mainly Catholic, the Catholic interest should predominate. This did not require the formal establishment of the Roman Catholic Church. O'Connell was an early advocate of the 'liberal ultramontane' ideal advocated in France after the July Revolution by Lacordaire, Lammenais and Dupanloup - a free church in a free state. In France and in Spain, the Church/State relationship had harmed the Church. The State had imposed conditions on it and used it as an instrument of policy with the result that the Church had shared in the State's unpopularity. But if his policy did not require the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church, it clearly did require the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. (36)

The attack on the Church of Ireland could not be seen from an Irish point of view simply as a secularisation of the state or as an advance for the dissenting interest. It was an advance in the Roman Catholic interest which, in the context of the agitation for Repeal, could only be seen as an advance toward Roman Catholic ascendancy. Whether O'Connell thought that in such circumstances the Church would act as a 'voluntary' organisation in a secular state, or whether he envisaged the free church exercising power over the state through the consciences of its legislators, may be open to question. The former was certainly
his public position in England and MacDonagh sees him as a co-heir with Wolfe Tone to the Enlightenment. O'Tuathaigh also gives him an impeccable secular radical intellectual pedigree. Bowen attributes sincerity to his statement in 1845 that 'I would rather die upon the scaffold, and I say it with all the solemnity of truth, than consent to a Catholic ascendancy in Ireland' but later quotes a letter to Cullen in 1842 which says:

"If the union were repealed and the exclusive system abolished, the great mass of the Protestant community would with little delay melt into the overwhelming majority of the nation. Protestantism would not survive Repeal ten years." (37)

Whatever O'Connell's personal views, radical secularist and voluntary-ist ideas had to cope with the argument that the real beneficiary of their agitations in Ireland would be the Roman Catholic Church.

This was the background to Cooke's appearance at the Hillsborough demonstration of October 1834 in support of the Church of Ireland. O'Connell had called for an all-out tithe strike when tithes fell due in November. Lord John Russell had proposed that, prior to November, Parliament should hold a special session for the further reform of the Church of Ireland. By an Act of February 1834, the government, which had now taken on responsibility for tithe collection, had agreed to pay tithes not received between 1831 and 1832 out of its own revenue. Russell proposed that this money should be paid out of the endowments of the church and, further, that all benefices serving
parishes in which less than one tenth of the population were members of the Church of Ireland, should be suppressed. If this was put through, the Church would clearly lose even the small appearance it retained of being a 'national' church, and Ireland would lose the slight appearance it retained of being a 'Protestant' country. (38)

The idea of a mass demonstration of Protestant feeling in Ireland had been widely canvassed since a meeting of the Conservative Society of Ireland in August. Clearly it would have to take place in Ulster, where Protestantism was strongest. Belfast had been suggested as a possible site, but there was a fear of antagonising Presbyterians, and thus revealing a division in Protestant opinion. Finally, Hillsborough was agreed, with Lord Downshire, who had consistently supported Catholic Emancipation, as host. (39)

Cooke's presence has been seen as a logical outcome to his campaign against Arianism and as the final surrender of Presbyterianism to Anglican ascendancy. A.T.Q. Stewart describes a smooth process of Presbyterians and Anglicans coming together, and concludes that 'It only remained for Cooke to proclaim the banns of marriage between them at the Hillsborough meeting of 1834.' Cooke himself, however, was nervous about attending, and it was only on October 25th that he wrote to Roden to accept the invitation, saying:

'were my public acts not to influence the private success of my ministry, I could easier come to a conclusion. But you are well aware that any decided line of procedure must offend some,
several, perhaps many whom I should wish to please for the Gospel's sake.' 

He went on to say that the Synod was 'knee deep in a negotiation with H.M. Government as to an increase of endowment to the lower class congregations' and that his presence in a Conservative assembly would therefore arouse 'all their dissatisfaction, obloquy and opposition.' He could not support the form of a prelatical church government, but he could 'stand up in defence of all the property of the Episcopal Church.'

Cooke was not the only Presbyterian minister present. The Guardian mentions nine others (three of them Seceders) including James McCullough, who had supported Black against the Belfast Institution (and who had recently retired, being succeeded in First, Newtownards by his son, Julius, who was also present). Cooke's argument - often to be repeated - was that there was an alliance against 'the Word of God' and that Protestants had to unite to resist it. The attack on the property of the episcopal church was only a first step towards dismantling the whole Protestant interest: 'if the Protestant aristocracy be put down, Protestant plebeianism would soon be put down also.' The episcopal church was 'another column of our noble Protestant army who, though differently officered and differently dressed; yet wield the same weapons of truth, and serve under the same banners.' There was no serious discrepancy between the theology of the Thirty Nine Articles and that of the Westminster Confession.
In 1825, he had disclaimed any interest in politics, but he was advancing fast towards the position he held in 1837 that political and religious interests could not be separated - that a religious commitment required a political commitment, the core of which was the maintenance of Protestant as opposed to Catholic power through support for the landed interest and the Established Church.

Cooke's confidently asserted view that the Synod was committed to the establishment principle was open to question. The Westminster Confession had been re-adopted as a standard in 1832, on a motion from John Brown of Aghadowey. But this had been regarded as a further preservative against Arianism and exceptions continued to be allowed until August 1836, when unqualified subscription was required. Before the Synod met in June 1834, the Northern Whig, which claimed to be alone in the view that 'political justice is never done when civil governments either establish or endow particular sects' was worried that certain leaders planned to bring forward the establishment principle and commit the Synod to it, without raising the question of endowments paid for by taxation. In the event, the Synod was, as we have seen, dominated by the question of the National Education System, and the establishment issue was not raised. More surprisingly, perhaps, it wasn't raised in the Synod of 1835 in opposition to Cooke's Hillsborough speech. Alexander Patterson of Ballymena, whom we have seen as a supporter of the National System, attacked Cooke in a letter to the Belfast News Letter in November. A pamphlet was published by 'John Knox Jr' (whom Holmes identifies as Rev D.G. Brown of
Newtownhamilton) called The First and Second Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Union of Presbytery and Prelacy. But it was Cooke's support for the prelatical establishment - not his support for the establishment principle itself - that was the object of the attack. (42)

The 1835 Synod was dominated by an appeal from Rev Alexander Patterson against a censure imposed on him by his Presbytery (Ballymena) owing to his vote in favour of the National System. The attack on him had been led by Rev George McClelland of Ahoghill, who had resorted to melodramatic methods - putting up placards against the system, organising processions with bands, and even occupying Patterson's own pulpit to denounce him. He had been supported in this by William McKay of Portglenone. Similar complaints against McClelland's activities came from Grange (Robert Rusk), Tubbermore (William Brown), Cullybackey (Hugh Hamilton) and Londonderry (George Hay and William McClure - who was, at the time, Moderator). The affair was highly embarrassing to Cooke, who wanted to separate the disciplinary question from the question of the National System itself - and was therefore accused of backpedalling by both McClelland and John Brown. The System's supporters (Carlile, Hanna and Hay) agreed with him on separating the issues. Clearly neither side felt confident in the results of a show of strength, which might have produced either a reversal of the 1834 decision, or stronger measures against ministers still connected with the Board. (43)

Despite an attempt on Cooke's part to prevent the debate, Patterson's
appeal was upheld (by a majority of 96) and McClelland was dis-annexed from Ahoghill and put under the care of the Presbytery of Connor by a unanimous vote (Cooke explained that he had disbelieved newspaper accounts of McClelland's activities until forced to accept the evidence of ministers in the Synod). Though this certainly represented a moral victory for Cooke's opponents, Patterson and D.G. Brown (who supported Patterson in the discussion), the issues raised by Cooke's appearance at Hillsborough were not discussed. 'Protestant union' remained a political option which had neither been formally endorsed nor condemned. The Synod was, however, moving towards unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession, and therefore to endorsement of the establishment principle. James Seaton Reid, who was in negotiation with the Church of Scotland on the possibility of reopening communion between the two churches, read a minute of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, approving the Report of a Committee it had appointed to look into the question, which recommended communion. A decision was, however, deferred to 1836, and a condition for reunion was unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession. An adjourned meeting of the Synod at Cookstown agreed that no exceptions were to be allowed when subscribing to the Confession 'whereas it is most desirable in itself and indispensable to the renewal and maintenance of ecclesiastical communion with other Presbyterian Churches to adhere to an unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith.' This decision formed the basis of a resolution by the General Assembly in 1836, reopening communion. (44)
The question, however, was not closed until the 1835 decision had been confirmed by the 1836 Synod; and the dispute over unqualified subscription coincided with the attempt to establish a distinct and coherent voluntary movement in Belfast.

In December 1835, the voluntary cause received a remarkable boost from an apparently unlikely source, when the Eastern Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod published a *Causes of Fasting and Thanksgiving or Signs of the Times*, written by Rev John Paul of Loughmore, author of the Refutation of Arianism. The Causes of Fasting were the iniquities of the established church and of the endowments given to Presbyterians, to both of which he attributed the strength of popery in Ireland. The Causes of Thanksgiving were the progress of Reformation principles in Scotland and Ireland, changes of attitude among Irish Roman Catholics, and virtually the whole programme of the Reformed Parliament. (45)

The principal barrier to the Reformation in Ireland, Paul argued, was tithes and Regium Donum:

'...to force money out of their (Roman Catholics' - PB) pockets to pay all these exactions, and all this in order to promote principles which they believe to be damnable; and then, after all, to attempt to proselytise them to the Protestant faith, is one of the most absurd farces ever enacted upon the face of
the earth.... (Consequently) we find that while popery is coming down in Spain and Portugal, it is spreading in Ireland.'

The King should be a nursing father to the church, but when he showers gifts on his favourite children and starves the others, he shows bad feeling, contempt and jealousy. Tory hatred of papists was due to fear: 'they have injured them and guilt begets fear.' The Church of Ireland, through its connection with the state, had no authority of its own.

While crying out against popery and infidelity, it was, in the Reformed Parliament, at the mercy of papists and infidels: 'Bishops and Archbishops can be made or unmade by papists and infidels e.g. ten mitres blown away by one puff of the British parliament.'

Presbyterianism too had been converted by the bounty into an instrument of state policy. The Seceders received less bounty than the Synod of Ulster because 'everyone knows that it requires less force to put into motion a small force than a large one'; 'Seceders in Scotland are attacking the Presbyterian establishment, whilst in Ireland they are not attacking the Episcopal establishment.... Now, what is the reason? Can any satisfactory reason be assigned but this - in Ireland the Seceders receive a Regium Donum, in Scotland none?'

The bounty kept Arianism alive: 'Many Arian congregations are mere skeletons and could not support a minister at all, were it not for the aid of Regium Donum' - though he also says that 'Unitarian ministers in general are favourable to civil and religious liberty.' The principle of endowments entailed the endowment of rival religious systems -
presbytery in Scotland, prelacy in England and popery in the colonies (the Roman Catholic Church in Canada was in receipt of government money).

He went on to argue that the Reformed Synod was itself in need of reform:

'The Reformed Churches reviewed their creeds frequently; some of them every year; they altered their creeds; they amended their creeds. Their presbyteries met monthly and held public discussions. Do we follow their example? Do we not rather act on the principle that the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did everything and of course left nothing for us to do?'

His argument was put into the context of a millenarian expectation:

'The first reformation was a glorious reformation – the second far excelled it, but a third is approaching more glorious than both. The former reformations may be compared to the light of the moon; the approaching reformation to the light of the sun.... We thus compare them, because they are so compared in the sacred volume.'

He pointed to the spread of evangelical principles in the Churches of England and Ireland and in the Synod of Ulster, where 'the progress, indeed, has been so rapid, that if we did not see it with our own eyes, we could scarcely believe it.' The Scottish Secession's opposition to patronage had influenced the Church of Scotland in taking a stand against it (referring to the resolutions of the General Assembly
of 1834 that congregations should have a veto over the appointment of ministers). Popery and prelacy were destroying each other. Popery was under attack in Spain and Portugal, while prelacy was under attack through the suppression of bishoprics in Ireland. Irish Catholics were now ashamed of their persecuting principles:

'The position in which they stand, fighting the battles of civil and religious liberty, is certainly well calculated to eradicate persecuting principles and to inoculate them with principles of liberality and charity. We cannot but admire both the wisdom and goodness of God in putting them into such a position at the very time that he is putting the sacred oracles into their hands and that these holy scriptures are making rapid progress among them.'

He approved of the reform of Parliament: 'Prior to these changes, the House of Representatives was a complete misnomer. We had no representatives or only a mock representation.' The Reformed Parliament had abolished slavery, abolished church rates and church cess, introduced reform of municipal corporations, ended the monopoly of the East India Company, and promoted peace. With a memory going back prior to 1815, he attacked the Tories for supporting war 'for the purpose of crushing the liberties of our friends and brethren on the continent of America; and for the purpose of supporting the tottering cause of tyranny and despotism on the Continent of Europe.'

The fact that deists and infidels had helped to achieve these reforms
did not invalidate them: 'Will you tell your maker that if he had employed Covenanters, Seceders or orthodox Presbyterians you would have thanked him; but because he has employed infidels and papists, you feel yourselves under no obligation?'

This was an extraordinary document to come from the most rigorously orthodox of Presbyterian bodies - a church which could not acknowledge the legitimacy of the government because it did not recognise the perpetual obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant. But Paul had previously indicated his opposition to the identification of church and state which seems to be the basis of the Covenanting Church. In his Creeds and Confessions Defended of 1819 he had argued that the Act, Declaration and Testimony of 1762 - the constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian church - when it attacked the toleration of error, was in fact attacking the pretence that such toleration implied of power vested in the state over religious matters. The scripture references in the Act 'were quoted to prove that no man or magistrate has a right to assume the character of judge in matters of religion - that he has no right to license men to publish and propagate whatever doctrines he may think proper and to prohibit by law the publication of others.' Either the views he licensed were true, or they were not. If he licensed error, he would sin; if he licensed the truth, he would be presumptuous: 'What would be thought of the President of the United States if, coming over to Ireland, he were to issue proclamations tolerating us to obey the laws of our country?' (46)
In his *Speech of Rev Henry Montgomery Reviewed* of 1827, Paul held that 'Every society of Christians is, or ought to be, a voluntary association' and he advanced the argument which he was to use through the 1830s that the Old Testament represented the childhood of man, when the rule of law was enforced by pains and penalties, but the New Testament dispensation was the adulthood of man when he was free to make mistakes without any physical punishment on earth (though also without escaping the consequences of those mistakes after his earthly death). (47)

In 1831, a virulent controversy began in the Reformed Presbyterian Synod between Paul and Rev Thomas Holmes Houston. Houston was a young minister who had started as a member of the Eastern Presbytery, but had been transferred with his congregation - Knockbracken - to the Northern Presbytery after a quarrel with Paul, apparently over the appointment of Rev John Alexander - subsequently a close ally of Paul's - to the congregation in Linen Hall Street, Belfast. The rejected candidate, James Dick, was subsequently an ally of Houston's. (48)

In January 1830, the Synod issued a *Causes of Fasting*, which lamented 'the admission of Roman Catholics to places of power and trust in the British Empire.... We have reason to mourn that Britain, instead of discovering her subjection to the Mediator by appointing able, upright and pious men to places of power and trust, has openly disclaimed his mediatorial supremacy by admitting to her most influential offices the intriguing and idolatrous vassals of the Roman pontiff.' In July of the
same year, a new committee of the Synod issued a Causes of Thank-
giving, prepared by Paul, which celebrated, together with the spread
of evangelical ideas, the advance of civil and religious liberty.

Houston was later to complain, in The Covenanter’s Narrative and Plea
that Paul and his supporters prevented the emission of future Causes
between 1830 and 1835 because of the ‘full and faithful exposure of
the evils of Roman Catholic Emancipation which was made in the
Synod’s Causes of Fasting for 1830....’ (in fact, Causes were issued
in 1831 and 1832). At the end of 1830, Houston founded a journal
called The Covenanter, quarrelling with Paul when a meeting he called
to form a management committee turned out to be almost exclusively
made up of Eastern Presbytery members. (49)

The Covenanter, when Houston took full control of it, asserted the
right of the civil magistrate to punish heresy. Houston took the view
that all authority derived from God and that the Christian magistrate
was a minister of God, but could only be recognised as such through
the possession of ‘scriptural qualifications’ of piety, integrity, justice
and zeal for the honour and good of the people. Without those qual-
ifications, his authority was invalid and consequently the authority of
the present government was invalid. The magistrate should be chosen
by the people, but only in accordance with God’s law. He was
keeper of both tables of the law: the two commandments relating to
duties towards God, and the eight to duties among men. He therefore
had the right to suppress heresy - ‘not heresy in the mind, but heresy
or idolatry publickly avowed, propagated and obstinately persevered in’:
'The most excellent parts of the British constitution are those which provide for the promotion of religion and the suppression of such flagrant offences as are directly committed against God's honour and truth. Till a recent period, the Romish idolatry throughout the British Empire was regarded as calling for civil penalties; even yet there are some offices in the state from which the profession of it is excluded. Deism openly avowed and propagated is, in the eye of the British law, illegal.' (50)

Tithes were objectionable because they were unfair to farmers (taking only agricultural not manufacturing produce), supported prelacy and were unequally distributed between poor hardworking clergics and 'haughty, idle lordlings'; but the principle of applying one tenth of all wealth to the support of religion was nonetheless a good one.

These ideas did not interfere with liberty of conscience since 'God is lord of the conscience, it has no rights which are contrary to his law' nor would they lead to persecution, since 'Persecution is oppression for righteousness' sake... it cannot consist therefore in restraining and punishing men for gross violations of the law of Heaven.'

Paul argued in reply that secular authority could not be dependent on piety, since there was no way of assessing piety. Houston was contradicting the Westminster Confession, which asserted that 'Infidelity or difference in religion does not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority'. He said that when Houston argued that the magistrate
should use all his power to further the glory of God, he was insisting that he be a perfected saint. (51)

Houston's tithe system (one tenth of all wealth) was infinitely more burdensome than the Church of Ireland's:

'The inhabitants of this country have long groaned under the present tithe system. They have borne the load until they can bear it no longer. They are determined to throw it off. Mr Houston himself is willing that the present tithe system should be abolished. But why? That he may substitute another vastly more grinding.'

Prelates did not receive the full tenth. Houston wanted to take the tenth and add to it a tenth of all manufactures. He was providing the Church of Ireland with the argument that 'dissenters wish to overthrow our tithe system for no other purpose than to establish their own.'

All Houston's arguments for the punishment of heresy derived from Old Testament punishments for idolatry, which provided for the death penalty. Houston had no authority for departing from the death penalty if he maintained that the Old Testament dispensation was still fully valid. His basic error was to confuse the two dispensations. Insofar as Houston could cite Reformation sources in defence of his arguments 'the truth is that our Reformers, notwithstanding their immense progress in reformation, still retained some dregs of popery, both with regard to the magistrate's power and the censures of the church.' The Standards of
the Church were not final authorities. To say that they were scriptural because they had been compiled by eminent divines was 'unphilosophical, anti-Protestant and unscriptural. It does not proceed upon the Baconian, or inductive, mode of reasoning - the present approved mode of philosophising - the only effectual mode of investigating truth.'

The dispute was suppressed by the 1833 Synod, which forbade Paul and Houston to write against each other, though their quarrel smouldered through the Synods of 1834 and 1835 in which the question arose of the attitude to be adopted towards the Reformed Presbytery of America. This had split between those who felt that the American constitution could be recognised as a 'moral ordinance of God' and those who opposed it on the grounds that it didn't recognise the sovereignty of Christ, it authorised slavery, and gave 'support to the enemies of the Redeemer and admits to its honours and emoluments Jews, Mahometans, Deists and Atheists.' Paul supported the 'new light' faction which wanted to recognise the constitution. (52)

In December 1835, Paul, together with Revs John Alexander and William Henry of the Eastern Presbytery, attended a 'soiree' in Belfast to discuss opposition to endowments. Robert Workman, an elder in Cooke's May Street congregation, was chairman, and Paul, Henry and Alexander spoke, together with the Independent James Carlile, the veteran reformer Dr Tennent, and James Simms, now editor of the Northern Whig. A committee was formed to supervise the Christian Liberator, which began to appear on a regular, monthly basis. The
Liberator claimed that 'to the influence of this pamphlet (the Eastern Presbytery's Causes - PB) do we owe the large and influential committee under whose auspices this periodical now appears.' Paul, Alexander and Henry were later to disclaim any connection with the paper, but the Whig attributed an article on tithes in January 1836 to Paul; there were letters from him in February and June 1836, and the March 1837 issue contained an article by him on 'the Blinding Influence of Regium Donum.' (53)

In March 1836 the Voluntaryists held a public meeting in Belfast, inviting John Ritchie of the Scottish Secession to speak to them. A letter of support was sent from Dr Heugh of Glasgow in which he said that the mere exaction of money would not have committed him to a political position, but that, in Ireland, the exactions were being made by force:

'In the whole history of ecclesiastical iniquity, Ireland stands first among the foremost. That a great people should be legally plundered, in opposition to their belief, their inclinations and their interests, to support the worship of a handful of rich aliens; and that priests and politicians should proclaim, up to this hour, that legal spoliation is necessary to the interests of protestantism and Christianity in the country; is something so monstrous, as that, were it not a fact, we should deem the man absurd who should insert it, as a fiction, in some Utopian romance.' (54)

The Eastern Presbytery was represented by John Alexander of the Linen
Hall Street congregation, Belfast. Dr Tennent was in the chair and Rev Hugh McIntyre of Loan-Ends represented Bryce's Primitive Secession. But the meeting was dominated by a debate between Cooke, supporting the establishment principle, and Ritchie. Alexander was unable, as a covenanter, to attack the establishment principle as such. He claimed to the 1836 Reform Presbyterian Synod that he had attended the meeting as a protest against endowments, not knowing that Ritchie would be there: 'so far from compromising any principle, his statements on the subject in question were attacked by the leader of the Voluntaries in no measured terms, and Dr Cooke, instead of opposing, had expressed approbation of his statements as they respected establishments.'

The first speaker was Rev McIlwaine from Ohio in America, who argued that the voluntary system had been successful in America and that ministers were well supported. He was followed by Alexander, who said that he could not attack the abstract principles of establishments, but went on to compare the existing establishment to the compound image in Daniel, comparing the gold to the kingly power and the iron to Regium Donum. Nonetheless, the state had conferred rights on the established churches and if those rights were to be withdrawn, it should be done gradually and with compensation. Hugh McIntyre argued that 'every man is in duty bound to support that form of religion of which he approves.' The establishment principle could only be justified if all sects were endowed, and so long as any denomination received government support, the endowment to Maynooth was unassailable. An established church was tied to a secular state whose commitment to its
interests was unreliable. He described the Secession and General Synods as 'a mere pensioned hack' while the ministers of the Established Church in Ireland had to 'keep their powder dry' against their supposed parishioners.

Ritchie argued that Ireland had been badly governed for three hundred years, until the Melbourne administration, which was 'the best and most popular government that ever ruled its destinies.' The Church of Scotland was stained with many abuses, yet it was petitioning for extension and using underhand measures to secure signatures to its petitions.

Chalmers wanted to carve Edinburgh up into a system of parallelograms with ministers unable to move from one parallelogram into another. There could be no objection to co-operating with infidels, papists and radicals in promoting the work of voluntaryism. Many motives may move a committee to light a town with gas, but this did not mean that the end was undesirable. Radicalism and agitation were necessary. He ridiculed Alexander's support for establishments in the abstract, saying that he had only ever come across establishments in the concrete.

Cooke argued that the abuses to which Ritchie pointed did not affect the principle of the matter. Ritchie's illustrations of abuses in the Church of Scotland were 'as if I should attempt to write the history of the Ulster gentry and draw the materials from the annals of Castle Rackrent - an individual picture all too true to the original, but as a general description of the landlords of Down, Antrim etc at once a fictitious and a libellous caricature.' 'Establishments are stained with
abuses, therefore they are not of God's appointment: but Dr R. and Dr C. are likewise stained with many sins, therefore they are not the creation of God.'

Ritchie supported agitation and radicalism: 'Now who does not know that agitation is just a discreet name for Daniel O'Connell, and that radicalism is but another word for the destruction of the House of Lords?' The end result of the radical attack on establishments would be a tyranny in which 'the whole shall be trodden by the iron heel of another Oliver Cromwell, canting in the name of "civil and religious liberty" when he is forging the chains of despotism to shackle and enslave his country.'

Dr Tennent had argued that 'no man should be called on to pay for the religious instruction of another against the light of his own conscience,' but he himself was a supporter of the National Education System through which Protestants were forced to pay for Roman Catholic instruction. The Voluntaries were not active in the agitation against Maynooth. Against McIlwaine, he argued that some of the voluntary supporters in America were slaveholders. He regretted:

'that deification of self and supercilious contempt of other governments with which America's children often dance round the cap of liberty and chant the hymn of independence while the chains of their slaves rattle like the castinets of a figurante, and the deep voiced groans of their captives respond, in melancholy accompaniment, to the shrill voiced treble of the public joy.'
If the reference was unfair, it was no more so than Ritchie's using the massacre at Rathcormac to illustrate the wrongs of the establishment. Against Alexander and McIntyre, he argued that it could never be just on the part either of the government or of individuals to endow error. And against McIntyre in particular, he cited the Primitive Secession itself (though not by name) as evidence of the failure of the voluntary system in Ireland: 'They see, moreover, how little Voluntaryism has done for Ireland - and how it scarcely can hold together a few rickety congregations - and how it depends, for building its chapels, and sometimes for its ministerial salaries, on the labours or generosity of the very men and churches whose principles it denounces, and whose possessions it would alienate.'

Cooke resumed his marathon speech the following evening, quoting from journals about the problems churches were facing in America, and quoting from Houston's The Covenanter an article by Ebenezer Ritchie defending the establishment principle. He argued that the opposition to the Church of Ireland had been inspired by the favouritism shown by the government to O'Connell. He was opposed to any domination by the state over the church, and particularly to the suppression of the convocations of the Churches of England and Ireland, which were now 'bottled up like a preserved commodity in the pocket of the Prime Minister.' But the Synod of Ulster and the Church of Scotland were free churches both engaged in vigorously reforming themselves. They could not be said to be inhibited in any way by the state connection. A recognition of Christian doctrine by the state was necessary if
the Sabbath was to be observed. It was a great wrong that sailors
and bakers were forced to work on a Sunday, but this could only be
rectified if the state recognised the Christian principle of Sabbath
observance. If the state was not Christian, it could not enforce oaths,
prevent blasphemy, enforce monogamy, or prevent divorce. The prin-
ciple that the state should reward secular services was allowed; why
should it not be allowed to pay for religious services? In advancing
the last point, Cooke pursued an analogy between himself as Wellington
and Ritchie as Napoleon. Although he was not prepared to discuss the
merits of different forms of church organisation, he ended by praising
the Church of Ireland:

'Prelacy, I admit, has not changed; but its notorious prelates
have; the system of church government remains unchanged; but
the character, piety, zeal and efficiency of the clergy have
risen, and are rising, every hour. This gives room for mutual
"forbearance" on points of government and discipline, and gives
a stimulus to "brotherly kindness" in matters of truth and god-
liness.'

The published account of the debate was compiled from notes taken
for the Tory Ulster Times and was of course heavily biased in Cooke's
favour. Its accuracy was challenged, for example by Alexander and
McIlwaine, by 'A student of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution'
in the Christian Liberator and by Ritchie, who published a Reply to
Rev Dr Cooke in 1837. But even without Cooke's intervention, the
Belfast voluntary movement had little prospect for success. Scottish
and English voluntaryism had a secure denominational base in the Secession and in Congregationalism, which could point to considerable success in missionary work. The only ministers who supported the Belfast association were members of churches not in receipt of government money - the Independent James Carlile, the 'Primitive Secessionists', Bryce and McIntyre, and the Reformed Presbyterians, Paul and Alexander. The Reformed Presbyterians could support the attack on existing establishments, but not the attack on the establishment principle. Their efforts in any case were diverted to the struggle within the Reformed Synod on the magistrate's power to suppress heresy - a much earlier stage along the road the Scottish Secession had travelled towards principled voluntaryism. (56)

The Eastern Presbytery's 'Causes' was strongly attacked at the Reformed Synod in 1836, and Houston's congregation, Knockbracken, presented a memorial condemning it. One of the Knockbracken commissioners, Ephraim Chancellor, complained that 'Ministers associated with the known enemies of the Covenanted work of Reformation, that God would bring down, though they were told he would reform them. So great was the defection that Dr Cooke had to come forward in defence of the covenanted Reformation' (Cooke seems to have made a point of playing on the disputes in the Reformed Synod by representing himself as a 'Son of the Covenant'). Rev James Dick proposed a motion that 'we cannot make common cause with any of the political parties of the day, or with such as deny and oppose the principle of a national establishment of the religion of Jesus Christ.' Paul replied that he
was merely opposing the right of the civil magistrate to persecute heretics. He proposed a counter motion to the effect that 'We believe that prelacy, so far from being a bulwark between us and popery, is in reality a principal supporter of popery in Ireland. In no country in the world do Roman Catholics cling to their religion with so much tenacity, and tithes we believe to be one principle cause.'

In the debate, he attacked Houston for advocating death for heretics and increased tithes:

'By putting forward this preposterous sentiment, Mr Houston was doing everything in his power to support prelacy in Ireland, and he (Mr P) was not one of those who thought prelacy essential to the keeping down of popery. The two systems were knocking their heads against each other and he hoped they would soon knock out each other's brains. The language practically held out to Roman Catholics was that the burden of tithes for the Established Church, and of Regium Donum for the Synod of Ulster, the Secession Synod, the Remonstrant Synod, the Presbytery of Antrim and the Southern Association, should be laid upon their shoulders, besides additional assessments for church building, and if they did not quietly submit to the impost, they must be shot, or sent across the Boyne water... the consequence is that their conversion is rendered hopeless and, under this treatment, they must remain Roman Catholics to the end of the world....'

Tithes and Regium Donum were abuses to which Reformed Presbyterians
had always been opposed. The time was now ripe to get rid of them and writing in defence of the abstract principle of church establishments merely strengthened the actually existing prelatical establishment.

Houston argued in reply that the 'Causes' had opposed tithes and Regium Donum on political, not covenanted, grounds. It had not attacked the Erastianism of the Established Church; it had approved the present government, which, according to the Knockbracken memorial, was 'in several respects worse than many of its predecessors' and it had failed to attack the persecution of Protestants in the South of Ireland. In his Narrative and Plea, Houston later argued that the 'Causes' had greatly exaggerated the evil influence of tithes and Regium Donum, making them the sole causes of Irish poverty, without any mention of popery. It was absurd to say that the Catholics fighting against tithes were fighting for civil and religious liberty:

'With as much reason might the Indian savage with his tomahawk and scalping knife, slaying or torturing his victim with savage delight, or the Thugs in India, who make murder their trade, be said to be fighting the battles of civil and religious liberty.' (58)

There was no evidence that Catholics were renouncing persecuting principles. No such change in the nature of the Mother of Harlots was described in Revelation.

Dick's motion was passed by the Synod and Paul's rejected. Thereafter, Paul's efforts were devoted to trying to alter the Synod's terms of communion in line with changes that had already been made by the
Scottish Synod - particularly in the Fourth term of communion which dealt with the obligation to renew the national covenants, including the Auchensaugh Renovation of 1712, with its insistence on the need to suppress heresy. This was a topic that had been under discussion for some time. In 1819, the Irish Synod had written to the Scottish Synod about the propriety of retaining the Renovation as a term of communion. In 1820, they had resolved that it should be retained, but accompanied by an explanation. In 1821, the Scottish Synod had removed any mention of the Renovation, replacing it with a clause acknowledging in general terms 'the duty of a minority adhering to these views, when the nation has cast them off, and under the impression of solemn covenant obligations, following their worthy ancestors in endeavouring faithfully to maintain and diffuse the principles of the Reformation.' Paul and Alexander themselves had been asked to prepare a summary of their views on the Renovation but failed to do so, and in 1828, the job was given to Rev John Stewart of Rathfriland (who wrote in the Covenanter in favour of the death penalty for heresy) while Paul was asked to outline principles for a revision of the Act, Declaration and Testimony. Paul later claimed that he had 'declined the honour. My principal reason was my knowledge of your (Houston's - PB) intolerant and persecuting principles. I dreaded a collision of sentiment and therefore judged it better to write no synopsis at all than run the risk of dividing our church.' (59)

After a complicated series of disputes, during which Paul and Houston were still bound by the 1833 resolution not to write against each other
in public, Paul left the church in 1840, taking the Eastern Presbytery with him. His subsequent writings were mainly devoted to the dispute with Houston.

James Godkin, an Independent minister writing in the Northern Whig under the pseudonym Q.E.D., described Paul as 'a David, sweating in Goliath's unwieldy armour' - the armour being the standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Although his Review of Rev Thomas Houston's 'Christian Magistrate' of 1833, and the Causes had endorsed the principle of revising the standards, and although he had argued that the work of the Reformation was incomplete, the actual changes proposed in 1837-40 were relatively minor. They were opposed because it was clear that the Eastern Presbytery wanted to involve the church in liberal politics at a time when many church members shared Cooke's fear that the country was being plunged into an agitation which could only result in a Catholic ascendancy. (60)

Houston, like Cooke, stood on the rights of 'truth' as against 'error':

'What is it connected with religion that the popular idea of persecution does not by native consequence confound? It confounds the churches of Christ and Antichrist; it obliterates a main distinctive feature of Christ's genuine and Rome's pretended martyrs; it identifies the persecutor with the persecuted, and reconciles righteousness with unrighteousness - Christ and Belial.' (61)
But the rights he was defending were not any existing and enforceable rights but the theoretical rights of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the consequence of his victory was to keep the church out of any active involvement in politics. He could not join Cooke in an outright defence of the prelatical establishment, any more than Paul could openly propagate a fullblooded voluntaryism. Paul's attempt to convert the 'Reformed church' into the 'Reforming church' was an attempt to involve it in mainstream political debate by abandoning its commitment to an unrealisable ideal (the covenanted state). This was by no means a secular ambition. His political optimism was apparently based on a millenarian expectation that the attacks on endowments represented the attack of the ten horns (the kingdoms of the world which supported Christian churches) on the Whore in Revelation XVIII, xvii. preparatory to the millennium. In his last work - A Solemn Protest, written in 1847, he wrote that Catholics were contending for ascendancy, and that 'The struggle for the golden cups (a reference to the golden cup held by the Harlot riding on the beast. Paul identified it with the state endowment - PB) has already commenced. The conflict will be tremendous. The empire is in danger of being torn to pieces.' (62)

R.J. Bryce shared these expectations. Also in 1847, he wrote to R.J. Tennent to say that he intended to follow the 'Covenanters' example in not registering to vote. He had voted in the period of political enthusiasm which was shared by 'many of the strictest Covenanters' but had since gone on to study prophecy and to feel that citizenship
in the world was not compatible with allegiance to the King of Kings. He thought that the millennium was imminent and it was the duty of Christians to separate themselves from the world. The time scale both Paul and Bryce seem to have been working on is interestingly similar to that of Thomas Ledlie Birch and William Stavely from the United Irish period who proposed 1848 and 1850 (or 1866) respectively as the period of the final overthrow of the Beast. Fleming’s Discourse on the Rise and Fall of Antichrist had predicted an attack on the power of Antichrist in France in the 1790s and had been reprinted in that period. It predicted a direct assault on the papal power in Italy in 1848 and was reprinted in 1847 and 1849. (63)

Bryce was already disillusioned with party politics in 1837 when he wrote to R.J. Tennent to say 'you cannot expect us (himself and his brother James - PB) to have much sympathy with the latter (the Reform Association - PB) if you remember that like other parties they obey their leaders and that of those leaders, seven eighths are ready to cut our throats.' James Carlile was also disenchanted with the Belfast reformers and wrote to Tennent just before the 1837 election to say that he would support them 'though I have no great confidence in the Reform Party in this town, having received neither sympathy nor encouragement from them.' The Christian Liberator appeared irregularly in 1837 and the last issue appeared in November. Carlile resigned his congregation and left Belfast in 1839 after a split had taken place apparently over his involvement in politics (the Orthodox Presbyterian had referred to dissatisfaction on this score as early as 1834). Godkin
seems to have left at much the same time, while Dr Tennent died in 1837. (64)

In October 1836 Robert Workman was dismissed as elder in Cooke's May Street church after Cooke had produced resolutions published by the Belfast Voluntary Church Association which, the session resolved, contained 'a gross, scandalous, false and malicious libel on the character of Dr Cooke.' Workman had chaired the meeting at which the resolutions (referring to Cooke's behaviour over the public meeting in March) were passed and his name was fixed to them, though he claimed to the session that 'he had wished the resolutions to be differently worded, and that his name as an elder should not be published in connexion with the statement.' He resigned from the congregation and appears in 1838 as an elder in John Edgar's Secession congregation in Alfred Street (Fitzroy), Belfast. The incident complicated the already tangled financial affairs of the May Street congregation, since Workman's father, John Workman, was one of the original lessees of the May Street site. (65)

UNQUALIFIED SUBSCRIPTION

In July 1836, the Church of Scotland, on the basis of the General Synod's provisional adoption of unqualified subscription in August 1835, approved the report of its Committee recommending ministerial communion. The ratification of unqualified subscription had, however, been
postponed on a motion from Stewart when the 1836 Synod met in Omagh, until after the Church of Scotland's debate had taken place. Stewart probably felt that the General Assembly's decision would be adversely affected by the opposition to the Westminster Confession which still existed in the Synod, especially on the question of the magistrate's power to suppress heresy. This had become public in 1836 through a pamphlet published by 'a member of the General Synod of Ulster' called The Dens Theology Humbug. The member of the General Synod of Ulster was James MacNeight, editor of the Belfast News Letter, whom we have already seen as a sponsor of James Emerson Tennent in the 1832 election, and a founder member of the 'Belfast Society', who had gone over to the Reformers at least partly over the Brown Street School affair. (66)

The pamphlet was an attack on Cooke's appearance at a Tory evangelical meeting in Exeter Hall in June 1836 to protest against the fall of Peel's shortlived administration at a time when the major issue in Westminster politics was appropriation of the Church of Ireland's property. Cooke was in London at the time trying to raise money for the May Street church. It was clearly important to the Tory case to be able to argue that the Roman Catholic church was still a persecuting church at a time when such sincere liberals as Doyle, Crolly and Murray were its official spokesmen. In 1835, a Church of Ireland clergyman, Robert James McGhee, got hold of a copy of the Theologia ad Usum Seminariorum by Pierre Dens, which, he claimed, was in use in Maynooth and which contained the view that 'heretics and
apostates generally’ could be 'compelled by corporal punishment to return to the Catholic faith and the unity of the church.' McGhee revealed Dens' Theology at the Exeter Hall meeting, and Cooke and Mortimer O'Sullivan, an ex-Catholic whom Bowen describes as 'the most important of the Protestant controversialists of the pre-famine period, and the most intelligent and interesting of them' subsequently toured Scotland to publicise it as evidence of the threat a Catholic ascendancy posed to Irish Protestants. (67)

MacNeight argued that the Dens' Theology meetings were 'specially intended by the actors behind the scenes, to get up an artificial alarm amongst the rabble, in order that municipal corruptions in Ireland may be perpetuated - that a sinecure establishment may be continued at the cost of the millions who derive from it no other benefit than oppression and insult...'. (68)

Like Paul, he argued that Roman Catholics, who might be expected from the submissive character required by their creed to be Tories, were fighting in Ireland for religious and civil liberty, and that 'the man who has established for himself the right of independent thinking in politics, cannot be permanently a slave in religion.' If a commitment to persecuting principles in Dens' Theology, which was not an accepted standard of the Roman Catholic Church, was to be used against Roman Catholics, what could be said of the standards of the Church of Scotland? The First Book of Discipline of 1560 called for death for profaners of the Protestant sacraments, the Larger Catechism
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condemned the toleration of false religion, and the Westminster Confession itself gave the civil magistrate power to suppress heresy. At the same time, the Church of Ireland, in whose interest the Dens' Theology issue had been raised, did not recognise the validity of Presbyterian ordinations (though it recognised Roman Catholic ordinations). Daniel Bagot, recently the champion of orthodoxy against the Unitarian John Scott Porter, refused to preach in a Presbyterian church in Glasgow because 'it had not undergone the mummery of consecration', while Bishop Mant of Down and Connor had said that Presbyterians were destitute of the means of grace.

MacNeight refers to the dispute between Paul and Houston:

'Mr Houston's Christian Magistrate, his defence of that publication in reply to Mr Paul, and especially the pages of his periodical, The Covenanter, ought to be consulted by the 'Protestant Associators' before they bring forward Dens as a purely Popish anomaly in the nineteenth century.'

Houston subsequently said that MacNeight 'is generally suspected to be a certain intimate associate of Dr Paul' and accused Paul of promoting his pamphlets. (69)

Unqualified subscription was passed in August 1836 by the votes of ninety-five ministers, thirty-one elders in favour and twenty ministers, eight elders opposed. Most of the debate took place in 'interloquitor' - closed to the public - to the chagrin of the Northern Whig and
Numerous carriages filled with ladies.' According to MacNeight, Cooke insisted on an interloquitor so that the public could not hear heresies spoken by ministers against the Westminster Confession, but the interloquitor was in fact proposed by Carlile's assistant in Dublin, W.B. Kirkpatrick, who was in favour of allowing explanations, and seconded by John Dill of Carnmoney, who supported the National Education System. The opponents of unqualified subscription tended to be supporters of the National Education System. They included the more missionary minded Southern ministers - Carlile, Kirkpatrick, Winning, and the recently ordained John Dill of Clonmel. Carlile put his case in a pamphlet called Uses and Abuses of Creeds and Confessions in which he maintained the commitment to a more inclusive definition of the church which had been the basis of his opposition to subscription during the Arian controversy and of his support for the National Education scheme. Although he agreed with the doctrines of the Confession and had himself already subscribed it, it could not be a condition of membership of the church since everyone who was baptised was a member of the church. The Synod was adopting a crouching attitude towards the Church of Scotland, and sacrificing its own distinctive tradition in so doing. Winning shared his concern that in adopting unqualified subscription the Synod was raising a wall against other faithful churches (he joined the Church of Ireland in 1842). (70)

The issue of the civil magistrate's power was raised by Richard Dill Jr (the youngest of the three Richard Dills in the Synod at the time), who had moved from Tandragee to Ussher's Quay, Dublin in 1835, and who
had opposed Cooke on the National Education System. Edward Marcus Dill, who had been ordained to Coagh, Co Tyrone in 1835 (and who later moved to Cork and became an agent for the Home Mission) thought that unqualified subscription couldn't guarantee the unity of the church, since issues such as the power of the civil magistrate could never be agreed. Most forcefully, the magistrate's power was attacked by James Gibson, an elder, who used MacNeight's argument that the Confession sanctioned persecution and its compilers had practised it. Gibson had already come into conflict with Cooke when he represented the Belfast Academical Institution in the dispute over Dr Ferrie's moral philosophy classes. (71)

Against Gibson, John Barnet of Moneymore and James Seaton Reid (both of whom had supported the National Education System) argued that the Confession did indeed sanction the power of the civil magistrate to suppress heresy, but that there were times in which such power was necessary and he was not obliged to use it on all occasions. MacNeight described this as a jesuitical 'mental reservation.' (72)

After the vote had been taken, MacNeight published an attack on it - Persecution Sanctioned by the Westminster Confession - arguing that the Synod was now committed to the very principles Cooke was condemning in Dens Theology:

'Our Presbyterian name has hitherto been looked upon as synonymous with all that is liberal in politics and tolerant in religion, and we neither can nor will endure to be made a laughing stock
to papists on the one hand, or to Arians and Socinians on the other. (73)

He was supported by Rev John Dill in a pamphlet on *The Power of the Civil Magistrate in the Church*, which argued that the view that the Westminster Confession did not give the magistrate unduly coercive powers was based on a disregard for the scripture references the Confession gave and which explained the nature of the penalties he was allowed to employ. He complained that:

'We are now going forth on a missionary enterprise to our Roman Catholic countrymen and if ever we were called to address them in the language of conciliation it is now.' (74)

The debate on unqualified subscription uncovered a reasonably clearcut division between those who saw the church as a walled enclosure, and those who saw it as a missionary body which could provide an evangelical leavening in a predominately Roman Catholic population. The former perspective was strongest in Ulster, the latter in the South of Ireland. Cooke drew out of the former view the need for 'Protestant Union' and opposition to a government which was weakening Protestant (albeit Anglican) power and consequently strengthening Roman Catholic power. It was, however, equally possible to argue that the Church as a walled enclosure needed to defend itself against the Church of Ireland. The missionary perspective suggested the need to dissociate Presbyterianism from a Protestant power which was experienced by Roman Catholics as an enemy. In March 1836, Kirkpatrick wrote to the Orthodox
Presbyterian to argue that Presbyterians had an advantage in missionary work in that they were not identifiable as the Protestant enemy in the tithe war. A dissociation from the Church of Ireland and a preparedness to compromise to facilitate friendly relations with Catholics seemed to them to be necessary for successful evangelical work. (75)

The Belfast liberals, MacNeight and Gibson, may not have been so interested in missionary endeavour as such but their opposition to tithes and their support for a government anxious - under pressure from O'Connell - to give substance to Emancipation by putting more power into Catholic hands, complemented the arguments of the missionaries. The liberal candidates for Belfast in the 1832 and 1835 elections had either been vague in their religious views (R.J. Tennent) or Unitarian (John McCance, who won the election early in 1835 but died in August, when the Conservative, George Dunbar, won the seat against Tennent: William Sharman Crawford had been an Anglican when he stood in 1832, but subsequently became a Unitarian). In the election of August 1837, James Gibson won the seat, together with Lord Belfast, for the Reform Association, and laid great emphasis during the campaign on his orthodoxy. His success produced a panic in Cooke, who preached a sermon soon after on the Sins of the Times in which he appealed against evangelical protestant involvement in liberal politics:

'Do they not see, and will they not proclaim, that Popery at this moment - if Heaven in mercy restrains her not - holds within her grasp, and wields in her hand, the interests and destinies
of this great Protestant empire?'

and at the end of the month he held an open meeting in May Street, together with the defeated Conservative candidate, Emerson Tennent and the anti-Catholic polemicist, Hugh McNeile of Liverpool. The vicar of Belfast, Rev A.C. Macartney, was in the chair. (76)

But the liberalism against which Cooke was protesting was the liberalism of the Belfast News Letter, not the full blooded voluntaryism of the Whig. Godkin and the Independent Carlile were typical of radical dissent in England and Scotland. They were oddities in Belfast. Gibson and MacNeight were not attacking Regium Donum, nor were they attacking the establishment principle. Gibson's programme of a fairer distribution of church revenues to benefit the poorer clergy was not unlike proposals put forward by Emerson Tennent during the 1834 election (his success was shortlived since the Conservatives managed to have his candidature annulled by showing that he did not fulfil the required property qualification). (77)

The opposition to the National Education System, and the introduction of unqualified subscription were certainly successes for Cooke. But the crucial vote on national education in 1834 had only barely gone in his favour and Cooke himself had had to join in the Synod's condemnation in 1835 of McClelland's attempts to enforce it. Unqualified subscription can be seen as a success for a Presbyterian exclusiveness which was as inimical to Protestant Union as it was to the accommodating attitude towards Catholics required by the missionary perspective.
At the turn of the decade, a group of young Presbyterian ministers writing under the pseudonym TEKEL, published a series of pamphlets defending the Presbyterian system of church government against prelacy; and when the non-intrusion controversy in Scotland reached its height, together with a dispute over the legality of mixed marriages solemnised by a Presbyterian minister, and Peel's recognition of Unitarian property rights in the Dissenters' Chapels Act, a strong movement developed for distinct Presbyterian politics, led by, among others, John Brown of Aghadowey, John Barnet of Moneymore, and Clarke Houston of Macosquin, all of whom had been in favour of unqualified subscription.

The _Banner of Ulster_ began publication in 1842 as a vehicle for the new Presbyterian self consciousness in Belfast, and MacNeight became editor of the _Londonderry Standard_, its equivalent west of the Bann.

It is a joke among Presbyterian historians that, though Cooke pro-claimed the banns of sacred marriage between the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Ireland at Hillsborough in 1834, the marriage was never consummated.
CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this period, Presbyterians in Ulster were a population out of sympathy with the political establishment. Their disaffection was not just a matter of the legal disabilities they suffered. It was also a matter of their commitment to Presbyterianism as a superior system to Episcopacy, which was established by law. Some believed that Presbyterianism should replace Episcopacy as the form of the establishment, others that there should be no established church.

As members of a church with conclaves that met regularly, the Presbyterians could function as a coherent community in a way that was not so easily available to English Independents. They were aware of themselves as a community that was increasing in wealth and influence - a wealth and influence that was based on individual industry, not on hereditary wealth or state protection. Through their participation in the Volunteer movement they had experienced themselves as a potential military power, capable of bringing about radical constitutional change. They had, however, been inhibited from forming into a distinct political force by the fact that the very power they would have to oppose - the power of the Anglican landed aristocracy - was also their protection against the Roman Catholic majority, who, even though they had proved incapable throughout the century of any coherent political organisation, were still seen as alien and antichristian.

When Roman Catholics overthrew papal power and despotism in France,
many Presbyterians believed that radical change was possible and that
a self confident Protestant leadership could determine political develop-
ments after the overthrow of the existing government. Those who
had been pressing for constitutional change through the Volunteer move-
ment were divided according to the degree of their confidence that Catholics were harmless.

The defeat of the 1798 rebellion rendered the 'revolutionary' viewpoint
nonfunctional and inhibited the reformers. The Act of Union was seen
as little more than the removal of an obnoxious tier of government.
Though the seeds of a modern nationalism were undoubtedly present
among Presbyterians in this period, they fell on stony ground, and
there is little connection between the Drennans, Tennents and Neilsons
of the 1790s and the Catholic nationalism which developed in the nine-
teenth century.

Castlereagh had the conscious aim of dissolving sectarian loyalties in
Ireland into a common British identity. But his proposals with regard
to Catholics entailed a weakening in the connection between the state
and the established churches of England and Scotland, which was still
seen as an essential component of national unity in Great Britain.

The increase in Regium Donum and the conditions attached to it may,
however, have had a tendency to elevate Presbyterian ministers into
more of a clerical caste, possessing a respectability with regard to
the community at large, not just with relation to the Presbyterian comm-
unity itself. It may thus have helped towards breaking down the
exclusivity of the Presbyterian community.

Such a lessening in sectarianism was, however, implicit in latitudinarianism, which was widespread in the explicit and self-conscious form of nonsubscription. Latitudinarianism contributed to an ability to discuss politics without reference to theology or to the rights of the church; and the political leaders of the period tended to be latitudinarian. But this applied to the leadership of the reformist/constitutional element as well as of the revolutionary element. A lack of emphasis on sectarian peculiarities obviously facilitated a claim to national - as opposed to sectarian - political leadership. And it facilitated an advance into respectability, which was, of course, largely defined by the political establishment. Thus Castlereagh's chief allies in his attempt to dissolve Presbyterian sectarianism and respectabilise the ministry were the latitudinarians, Black and Bruce.

There had been an orthodox element in the radicalism of the late 1790s, sharing the generalised slogan of 'liberty' but taking the view that the great changes that were imminent were a working out of prophecy, and that the end product would be the universalisation of Christianity as they understood it. This has led David Miller to see the period as one of transition from a 'prophetic' orthodoxy (the church as the means of revolutionising the world) to a 'conversionary' one (with an emphasis on individual experience of salvation). He treats this as a product of pressures internal to the Presbyterian community. I am unable to find this conversionary emphasis, except in the influence of
the evangelical movement occurring outside the Synod; and millenarian-
ism seems to me to be a continuous strand in Presbyterian thinking
which acquired urgency in the 1790s. Nonetheless I would agree with
Miller in seeing a decline in Presbyterian sectarianism after the Act
of Union.

The evangelical movement was far from being simply an orthodox re-
vival. To the orthodox it appeared itself to be latitudinarian in that
it argued for a common cross-denominational Christianity. The emphasis
on education and primarily on education of Roman Catholics carried
with it a latitudinarian emphasis on the Bible alone 'without note or
comment.' The emphasis on experience of salvation - Miller's 'con-
versionary' emphasis - carried with it an indifference to sectarian
boundaries. It favoured, and was largely promoted by, Independency.
Neither emphasis was taken up by the Synod at its centre in Ulster
though both had influence on the periphery among Southern based
ministers. They were both strategies for trying to overcome the alien
nature of Roman Catholics, but by the 1820s, they were meeting resist-
ance from within the Catholic population in the highly coherent and
well organised form of the Catholic Association.

The evangelical movement outside the Synod can be seen as an attempt
to establish organic connections in a society - both in Britain and in
Ireland - in which there was still a powerful and chaotic element,
'the mob', which had not been incorporated as a working class, into
a coherent economic system. The problem was acute throughout most
of Ireland, where there was not even the tenuous bond of a common church between the landed aristocracy and their tenants. It was not, however, strongly felt among Ulster Presbyterians, who existed as a largely self-contained community with numerous economic links among themselves that had little reference to their Anglican landlords.

Although the Arian controversy has been represented as a triumph for the evangelical perspective, it lacked the missionary dynamic of the evangelicalism that surrounded it, and Cooke was opposed by the more missionary minded ministers such as Carlile and Hanna. It can be seen as an attempt to reassert the coherence of the Presbyterian community itself, threatened as it was by the advance in social respectability and consequent diminution of the sense of being a disaffected sect. Latitudinarianism was the language appropriate to this development, but it had become so much a habit of mind that no attack on it was likely to be successful (both Benjamin McDowell in Dublin and James Elder of Finvoy had tried). Unitarianism was a more vulnerable target and, though the latitudinarians in the Synod were careful not to express Unitarian sentiments, the Presbytery of Antrim had no such inhibitions. The clarification of a distinct Unitarian theology in the Presbytery of Antrim provided the occasion for Cooke's struggle for theological coherence within the Synod; even so, it was only when ministers in the Synod were finally induced to reveal their Unitarianism that the struggle was successful.

The controversy coincided with the emergence of the Catholic Association.
Latitudinarianism, for which human virtue was of prime importance, was less immediately upset by this than orthodoxy, for which dogma was all important. The missionaries - anxious to win Catholic hearts and minds - tended to sympathise with Catholic politics. But the emergence of a coherent and politically purposeful Catholic community, increasingly impervious to missionary penetration and - by the 1830s - committed to Repeal of the Act of Union, which would necessarily result in a Catholic ascendancy, was a real and alarming problem. Cooke saw it in straightforward terms of a struggle for power, and wanted the newly coherent Synod to throw its political weight behind the Protestant establishment. But his own efforts in the Arian controversy had strengthened the sectarianism of the Synod - its awareness of itself as a true church - and consequently its preparedness to assert itself in opposition to the Church of Ireland. Thus, ministers who shared Cooke's vision of the Synod as a walled city defended against heresy, Arian or Papist, were divided on the alliance with prelacy. They could to a large extent co-operate in opposition to the latitudinarians and evangelicals on the questions of the National Education System and unqualified subscription. They could not agree on the policy of Protestant Union.

The 1832 Reform Bill cemented the Union as far as Presbyterians were concerned, insofar as British politics ceased to be a game played in a far off place, and began to require local organisation, holding out the prospect of real changes, whether they were seen as desirable or undesirable. The radical caucus in Belfast had had a loose existence
as a pressure group for the promotion of certain vaguely formulated values. With the achievement of their main demands - Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform - Westminster was confirmed as the centre of their political ambitions. But Westminster was dominated by discussion of the church question. An alliance of radicals (who saw the established church as an expensive pensionary of government, and as an agent of aristocratic privilege) with conversionist evangelicals (who saw it as an obstacle to the job of working up the need for experienced salvation) were anxious to find whatever means they could to weaken the connection between the Church of England and the state. The easiest target was the Church of Ireland, which could not by any stretch of the imagination be said to incorporate the religious life of the nation; and the attack on the Church of Ireland brought with it the support of O'Connell and the Irish Catholics.

Despite their opposition to tithes, the Belfast radicals were ill-equipped to make political gains from this dispute. Their major venture - the Belfast Academical Institution - had had ironic consequences. It had been a real service to Irish Presbyterianism, and had helped to develop the sense of independence and sectarian self importance which finally triumphed with the departure of the Arians. But the intention had been to develop that sectarian independence in favour of 'patriotism' and political liberalism (opposition to aristocratic privilege and government supported monopolies). An elaborate pretence was maintained that the Institution was not a Presbyterian college, but the consequence of this was not that it became a 'national' (i.e. cross denominational)
Institution, but that it embodied a compromise between the main parties within Ulster Presbyterianism - the latitudinarians and the orthodox. This compromise naturally favoured the party of compromise - the latitudinarians - and the Institution therefore found itself on the losing side in the Synod's dispute.

The Belfast Reform Association in 1832 presented itself as a patriotic party, equally appealing to all denominations. Again, this was misleading. They were principally a Presbyterian party, whose non-sectarianism identified them with the defeated latitudinarians. The sectarianism of Presbyterians in the 1790s had been the sectarianism of a disaffected community and it therefore favoured political radicalism. The sectarianism of the early 1830s was based on a clarification of dogmatic truth, without reference to the political claims of the church, and it was therefore suspicious of the reformers' religious indifferentism. The reformers therefore could not gain the monopoly of Presbyterian politics which they had expected. The liberals could not appeal to the strength of Presbyterian sectarianism until they could identify with Presbyterians as a community bound together by an orthodox theology. The arguments by which this could be done were provided in a hard form by the voluntary movement which, however, existed outside the centre among the small marginal groupings which did not receive Regium Donum.

Despite its marginality, Cooke recognised voluntaryism as a substantial danger. But it was the voluntaryists' argument in the softer, apparently more abstract, form of opposition to the power of the civil magistrate
in religious matters, that provided the means for a more substantial opposition. While it was unsuccessful in opposing unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1836, it provided reformers with a language in which to appeal to the new sectarianism. Its subsequent history - largely concerning involvement in the tenant right movement on the part of ministers from the traditionally orthodox areas west of the Bann - lies outside the scope of this thesis.

Finally, it may be useful to add a brief word on the importance of the controversies described in this thesis for the development of Irish society as a whole. Regretfully, I do not think they were very important. The mere fact that a Presbyterian community existed in Ulster was of course of crucial importance, and I hope this thesis has made some useful observations as to its nature. But I do not think that the ideology of Presbyterianism changed greatly during this period. It is true that Presbyterians were less disaffected in the 1830s than they were in the 1790s, but I do not think this can be ascribed to changes in their own thinking so much as to changes in their political circumstances. The major changes demanded in the 1790s took place with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill. The national separatism which developed at the end of the eighteenth century had been little more than a means of securing reforms from an already separate Parliament. Its withering away after the Act of Union was remarkably speedy and painless.

The imposition of unqualified subscription in the Synod of Ulster
certainly marked a change. But the Westminster Confession had been a standard of the Synod since the beginning of the eighteenth century, and unqualified subscription was taken for granted in the Secession and Reformed churches. The objections raised by MacNeight in the 1830s on the power of the civil magistrate were the same objections that had been made in the eighteenth century and acknowledged by Cooke in 1826. The only new ideas introduced into Presbyterian controversy were Unitarianism (in the 1820s) and Protestant Union (in the 1830s), neither of which struck deep roots.

I have suggested that Cooke in the 1820s was fighting for the coherence of the Synod, threatened by an advance into social respectability. There is room here for an examination of session records, since on the superficial examination I have made, it appears that there was a marked change in the nature of the discipline exercised by the sessions between, say, 1810 and 1830, and Cooke's synodical sermon of 1825 seems to be addressed to this problem. It may be that if the Synod had been unable to assert a theological authority, it would have degenerated and Presbyterianism would have been a more divided and less potent factor in the nineteenth century than it was. The apparent purposelessness and demoralisation of the first two decades of the nineteenth century suggests that this was a possibility, but it remains entirely speculative. To my mind, Cooke's victory preserved the Synod's sense of its own importance when this seemed to be threatened. But if anything this conservative achievement was inimical to the innovating policy of Protestant Union for which he later fought.
The major changes occurring within the Presbyterian community in this period were social and economic and lie outside the scope of this thesis. The context in which political (and theological) discussion took place was greatly changed by the Act of Union, the 1832 Reform Bill and the political organisation of Irish Catholicism. But the Presbyterian Synods did not initiate changes with substantial consequences outside their own community; and the controversies within the Synods registered shifts of emphasis within a fairly constant body of ideas, rather than major changes of direction.
SOME ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

BNL Belfast News Letter
Cast Corr: Londonderry, Lord (ed): Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh
CL Christian Liberator
CM Christian Moderator
DNB Dictionary of National Biography
Fasti McConnell (ed): Fasti of the Irish Presbyterian Church
LHS London Hibernian Society
LMS London Missionary Society
NS Northern Star
NW Northern Whig
OP Orthodox Presbyterian
PRONI Public Record Office for Northern Ireland
RGSU Records of the General Synod of Ulster Vol iii
RP Reformed Presbyterian
RPSI Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland
UG Ulster Guardian
UR Ulster Register

Basic biographical information about ministers not given in the notes is derived from Fasti and Killen: History of Congregations.
INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION OF TERMS

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i (1) This thesis can be found in its crude form in e.g. A. Boyd: Holy War in Belfast, New York 1972, pp.4-6; and L. daPaor: Divided Ulster, Harmondsworth 1971, pp.45-46; it can be found in a more developed form in e.g. J.L. Jamieson: The Influence of Rev Henry Cooke on the Political Life of Ulster, unpubl MA thesis (QUB) 1950; and in J.M. Barkley: The Arian Schism in Ireland, 1830 in Studies in Church History vol IX, Cambridge 1972.

v (2) K. Marx and F. Engels: The Holy Family or the Critique of Critical Criticism, Moscow 1975, pp.136 and 138.

viii (3) Extracted from the First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction, Ireland, PP 1835 xxxiii.

ix (4) For Synod of Ulster, see list of congregations in RGSU, pp.288-90 (June 1804); figure for Seceders extracted from congregational histories in David Stewart: The Seceders in Ireland, Belfast 1950; there are references to nine congregations prior to 1820 in the Records of the Presbytery of Antrim, 1783-1834, PRONI T1053/1; Reformed Presbyterians from Adam Loughridge: Fasti of the
(5) Account of Synod of Ulster based on James Seaton Reid: *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, 3 vols, Belfast 1867.

(6) Account of Seceders from Stewart: *Seceders*.

(7) Account of Reformed Presbyterians based on Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland: *Reformed Presbyterian Testimony Part II: Historical*, Belfast 1939.


(9) Account of Presbyterian church government from e.g. G.D. Henderson: *The Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh N.D., pp. 59-61.
CHAPTER ONE: PRESBYTERIAN POLITICS IN THE 1790s


3 (2) William Campbell: A Vindication of the Principles and Character of the Presbyterians of Ireland, Belfast 1787.

4 (3) Ibid, pp.31-32.

5 (4) Reformed Presbytery: Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation, Belfast 1832, quotations from pp.83 and 93.

6 (5) Ibid, quotations from pp.99, 122, 104-107. For the Seceders' views, see e.g. The Present Truth: A Display of Secession Testimony, Edinburgh 1774.


(7) Thomas Ledlie Birch: Physicians Languishing under Disease, Belfast 1796, pp.22 and 27-28; for the Seceders and the 1783 election see e.g. Stewart: Seceders, pp.


9 (9) Earl of Hillsborough to Lord Nottingham, 1/3/1784 in PRONI Pelham MSS T755/2, pp. 59-60.

(10) Campbell: Vindication, p. 72.

10 (11) RGSU, p. 65 (June 1784); Campbell: Vindication, p. 69.


12 (13) See table in Explanation of terms above, p. viii and fn.; Campbell: Vindication, p. 36; William Steele Dickson: Three Sermons on the Subject of Scripture


(17) 'Theophilus Philander' (John Cameron): The Catholic Christian, Belfast 1769, p.54.

(18) Benjamin McDowell: Requiring Subscription... Defended, Glasgow 1770, pp.35-37. Quotation from Cameron: Catholic Christian, p.56.


(21) For Calvin's view on justification by works, see T.H.L. Parker: John Calvin, London 1975, p.36.

(22) Belfast News Letter, 17/5/1782; RGSU, p.45 (June 1782).


(24) Ibid., pp.8, 33-34, 63-64.

(25) William Steele Dickson: A Narrative of the Confinement and Exile of William Steele Dickson, D.D., Dublin 1812, p.10; Samuel Barber: Sermon before Castlewellan Rangers and Rathfriland Volunteers, 24th October 1779 in Ulster Museum MSS 602-1914; for Barber in 1783 election, see An Historical Account of the Late Election, 1784, e.g. pp.49-50.
(26) William Theobald Wolfe Tone (Ed).: Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone; Washington 1826, p.187.


(29) Ibid., p.51.

(30) Ibid., pp.19-20.


(33) Robert Fleming Jr: The Rise and Fall of the Papacy, Edinburgh 1846, pp.46-49; David Miller: Presbyterianism and "Modernisation" in Ulster, Past and Present, LXXX
(34) For Birch at Creevy Rocks, see Charles Dickson: Revolt in the North, Dublin and London, 1960, p.143; for Birch in 1783 election, see Historical Account, e.g. pp.50-51. Thomas Ledlie Birch: The Obligations upon Christians, Belfast 1794, p.31.


(38) Samuel Brown Wylie: The Two Sons of Oil, Paisley 1806, pp.47 and 50.

(39) Extracts reprinted from The Covenanter Vol i, Belfast 1831, pp.245-246.

(40) Wylie: Two Sons, p.45.

(41) Covenanter Vol i, p.401.
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33  (42) Ferguson: Biographical Sketches, pp. 38-40, 49, 53-55; Dickson: Revolt, p. 177.


Barber: Sermon before Castlewellan Rangers.
CHAPTER TWO: THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT, 1800 - 1820

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44 (6) For the evangelical seriousness about social problems see e.g. Ian Bradley: The Call to Seriousness, London 1976; quotation from Hibernian Sunday School Society: Annual Report 1813, Dublin 1814, p.4.

45 (7) Quotations from LHS Reports, 1813 (p.5); 1814 (p.8); 1813 (p.12); 1815 (p.7).


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(11) Minutes of the Antiburgher Secession Synod in Stewart MSS, PRONI D1759/1F/1, pp.21 and 24.


(14) RGSU pp.298 (June 1805) and 309 (June 1806).

(15) For Armagh, Richill, Sligo and Smithborough, see Stewart: Seceders, pp.273-274, 342-343, 348-349; for Campbell's departure, see Antiburgher Minutes, p.54; for Donegall Street, see James E. Archibald: A Century of Congregationalism: The Story of Donegall Street Church, Belfast 1901.

(17) See Introduction, fn (3) above; Associate Synod: Narrative and Testimony, Edinburgh 1804, p.91.

(18) For Church of Scotland’s Act see e.g. Drummond and Bulloch: The Scottish Church, 1688-1843, Edinburgh 1973, p.153; for Carson and Wardlaw see William Lindsay Alexander: Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, Edinburgh 1856, pp.21-23; Andrew Stevens: Two Letters Addressed to the Rev Alexander Carson, Londonderry 1810; for lawsuit over Tobermore, see RGSU, 1806-1810.

(19) Account of McDowell in DNB; for his involvement with the General Evangelical Society see Robert James Rodgers: Presbyterian Missionary Activity among Irish Roman Catholics in the Nineteenth Century, unpubl MA thesis (QUB) 1969, p.66; for McDowell and the LMS see London Missionary Society: Reports of the Missionary Society from Its Formation in the Year 1795 to 1814 Inclusive, London N.D., e.g. p.46.

(20) Carlile in DNB.
(21) For Bible Committee, see RGSU pp.325-326 (June 1807); 340-341 (June 1809); 356-357 (June 1810); 367-368 (June 1811); list of opponents of Rev Josiah Ker in ibid, p.370 (June 1811); list of Remonstrants in J.L. Crozier: Life of Henry Montgomery, London 1875, p.403, with additions subsequent to 1830 from Fasti.

(22) RGSU p.368 (June 1811).


(27) Morgan: Recollections, pp.15-16; debate on Carlow in Northern Whig 2/7/1835.


(29) For the split in Scotland see C.G. McCrie: The Church of Scotland, Her Divisions and Her Reunions, Edinburgh 1901, pp.70-83; Drummond and Bulloch: The Scottish Church, pp.150-151; for an account favourable to the 'old light' element see John McLeod: Scottish Theology, Edinburgh 1974, pp.229-254.

(30) For David Graham's career see Minutes of the Proceedings of the Reformed Presbytery in Ireland, 1803-1811, pp.12-15 and 24-25, 55, 78, 158-159, 195; and Alexander McLeod (New York) to William John Stavelly, 6/12/1870 in Armour MSS, PRONI D1792/C/1; for history of 'old light' Secession congregations in Ulster see Stewart: Seceders, pp.381-392; Rev John Tennent to Dr Robert Tennent, 16/6/1802 in Tennent MSS, PRONI D1748/B/211/35.

(31) Antiburgher Minutes, p.29 et seq; Narrative and Testimony, quotation from p.158.

(33) For career of Alexander Waugh, see James Hay and Henry Belfrage: Memoir of the Rev Alexander Waugh, D.D., Edinburgh 1839; Waugh, Bogue and Haldane are in DNB; for Clarke, Jerment and IES, see Rodgers: Missionary Activity, p.84.

(34) Minutes of the Secession Synod in Stewart MSS, PRONI D1759/1F/2, pp.18 and 21 (July 1819) and 32-33 (July 1820); Report of the Missions of the Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, Glasgow 1821, p.1.


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(3) Belfast Monthly Magazine, Vol i, no 4 (Sept 1808),
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(12) Portland to Cornwallis as in fn (10) above.

(13) Black to Castlereagh, 27/4/1799, in Cast Corr iii, pp.165-166; William Steele Dickson: Retractations, or a
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(16) Black to Castlereagh, 30/12/1800, in Cast Corr iii, p.422.

(17) Black to Castlereagh, 28/2/1801 and 30/5/1801, in Cast Corr iv, pp.65 and 87.

(18) Ibid, p.87; RGSU pp.244-246 (June 1801).

(19) RGSU p.247 (June 1801); Knox to Castlereagh, 5/2/1802, in Cast Corr iv, pp.216-218.


(22) Castlereagh to Wickham, 1/4/1802 in Wickham MSS, PRONI T2627/5/6/6; Castlereagh to Addington in Cast Corr iv, pp.223-226.

(23) RGSU pp.270-271 (June 1803).


(26) RGSU p.272 (June 1803).


(28) Ibid, pp.21-22, 30, 31 and 16.

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(30) Drennan to Samuel McTier in Chart: Drennan Letters, Feb 1792, p.72; 27/2/1792, p.85; 31/1/1793, p.125.

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(41) The above discussion based on list of congregations in each class, RGSU pp.288-289; list of supporters of the 1801 protest in ibid, pp.245-246 (June 1801); the list of congregations with stipends submitted by Black to Castlereagh in Cast Corr iii, pp.167-171 (1799); the list of ministers implicated in the rebellion in Miller: Presbyterians and "Modernisation", p.78, together with Fasti and W.D. Killen: History of Congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Belfast and Edinburgh, 1886.

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(43) For Priestley, see Clarke Garrett: Joseph Priestley, the Millenium and the French Revolution in Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol XXXIV, i (Jan-March 1973), e.g. p.58, and Joseph Priestley: The Present State of Europe Compared with Ancient Prophecies, London 1794; for Henry Henry, see Witherow: Memorials, p.291; for Meek supporting Paul, see Matthew Meek: Letter to the Rev Thomas Houston, Ballymena 1832; and for dispute
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108  (44) Bryce: Narrative, pp.52-58 (fn).

109  (45) Ibid, p.28.

(46) Ibid, p.29 (for classification); pp.28-9 (for oath of allegiance); pp.34-35 (for attitude of people).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

(1) Relations between Bryce and Tennent in e.g. James Bryce to Dr Tennent, 13/11/1818 in Tennent MSS, PRONI D1748/B/33/1.

(2) Minutes of the Belfast Academical Institution, Vol i, PRONI SCH524/3A/1, pp.2-4. For the proposal to admit professors of Divinity, see ibid pp.49 (31/5/1808) and 65 (8/11/1808).

(3) Thomas Dix Hincks in DNB; negotiations with Foster in BAI minutes p.27 (13/1/08).


(5) Black to Bruce, 9/11/1807, in Bruce MSS, PRONI T3041/1/E52. For the constitution of the BAI, see BAI minutes pp.10-17 (22/9/1807) and for subsequent modifications prior to government intervention, see ibid, pp. 34-36 (Feb 1808), p.50 (May/June 1808) and p.71.

(6) BAI Minutes p.18 (20/10/1807); Bruce's letter from letter book of James McCleery in PRONI (ed): Problems, pp.41-44.

(7) Wellesley to Lord Hawkesbury (later Earl of Liverpool), March 1808 and to the Earl of Liverpool (N.D. but
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(8) BAI Minutes, e.g. pp.22 (25/11/1807) and 32-33
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Incorporation, see John Jamieson: History of the Royal
Belfast Academical Institution, 1810-1960, pp.5-6; and
for rumour that Hill was responsible for arresting Tone,
see Thomas Pakenham: The Year of Liberty, London 1969,
p.344.

(9) BAI Minutes, passim. Drennan first appears on p.22
(25/11/1807) and is elected as visitor p.29 (4/2/1808).

(10) Tennent and Table Bay in PRONI D1748/B/261/1-4;
for radical demonstrations, see Stewart: Transformation,
pp.120-140; for Downshire's opposition to the Union,
see Hyde: Castlereagh, pp.328-330, 345-346, 354; for
proposal to raise subscriptions in India see letter from
A.J. Macan in RBAI MSS, PRONI Sch524/7B/9/94.
For Moira's politics in the United Irish period, see
Pakenham: Year of Liberty, e.g. p.240.
(11) BAI Minutes, pp.25 (13/1/1808); 45-46 (22/3/1808); 69-73 (21/12/1808); 92 (20/6/1809); RGSU, June 1810, June 1811; June 1813; BAI Minutes, pp.265 (10/6/1813); 267 (22/6/1813 and 29/6/1813); 271 (6/7/1813).

(12) RGSU June 1813 and June 1814: BAI Minutes, pp. 276 (5/8/1813) and 277 (11/8/1813). Report of conference in SCH524/7B/7/37. For Neilson supporting Dickson, see Black to Bruce, Dec 1804, in Bruce MSS, T3041/1/ E50.

(13) RGSU June 1814; June 1815; June 1816; Antiburgher minutes, p.74 (July 1815); Stewart: Seceders, p.199.


(15) D1748/B/264/19.

(16) W.V. Fitzgerald to Joseph Stevenson, 14/5/1816 in SCH524/7B/10/9; condemnation of St Patrick's Day Dinner in Minutes of the Belfast Academical Institution Vol II, PRONI SCH524/3A/2, pp.104-105 (30/4/1816); interview with Knowles in BAI Minutes II, p.106 (7/5/1816); general meeting of proprietors in ibid, pp.108-110 (9/5/1816).
(17) Hill to Stevenson, 15/6/1816, SCH524/7B/10/24; BAI Minutes II, p.119 (25/6/1816).


(19) RGSU June 1816; Mrs McTier to Drennan in Drennan Letters (cJuly 1816), p.392; RGSU June 1817.

(20) RGSU June 1814, June 1815 and June 1816.

(21) BAI Minutes II, pp.150 (1/10/1816); 160 (2/11/1816); 166-167 (12/11/1816).

(22) Hill to Stevenson, 15/11/1816, SCH524/7B/10/49.

(23) Drennan MSS, PRONI D531/1, pp.47-52 (these papers have not yet been sorted and the present pagination is arbitrary); Stevenson's letter in RGSU, November 1816.

(24) RGSU June 1817.

(25) Diary of a deputation to Mr Peel, July 1817 (kept by Joseph Stevenson), SCH524/7B/11/24.

(26) Notes dated 15/11/1816, presumably for meeting held on the 16th November to discuss constitutional
changes in the light of the interview with Castlereagh, D531/1, pp. 28-31; and ibid (written at same time), pp. 20-23.

130 (27) Hill to Stevenson as in (22) above; Drennan MSS as in (23) above.

(28) D531/1, pp. 28-31; Tennent's speech as in fn (15) above; a pamphlet by Lawless arguing this case is referred to in Drennan to Mrs McTier, 7/6/1816, in Drennan Letters, p. 392.

131 (29) UR 15/11/1816 (p. 295) and 9/8/1816 (pp. 21 and 25-26); Bruce's letter in BNL 26/7/1816.

(1) I include this account to keep an outline of events in mind for the discussion. It is extracted from the best known secondary sources, of which the most useful is still Crozier: Montgomery. See also Reid: History; J.L. Porter: The Life and Times of Henry Cooke, Belfast 1875; Holmes: Henry Cooke; Jamieson: History; Fisher and Robb: Centenary. The remaining footnotes for this section - fns (2-12) - will refer to particular points not usually emphasised.

(2) The role of McEwen and S.H. Rowan is discussed in Holmes: Cooke, pp. 79-80 (McEwen) and 71-73 (Rowan). Account of Blakely in DNB; A.H. Rowan's role is discussed below, pp. 171-172; Smithurst's voluntaryism in The Christian Reformer vii, London 1822, p. 220.

(3) Barnet's role in Holmes: Cooke, pp. 78-80.

(4) Seceders' resolution in Secession Minutes, p. 65 (July 1822).

(5) Secession Minutes, p. 77 (July 1823).

(6) Montgomery's views in Crozier: Montgomery, pp. 91-94.


(10) For visit to McDowell see Porter, p.93; Holmes, pp.135-136; McDowell in Fasti.


(12) There is an interesting discussion of this in Holmes: Cooke, pp.202-206.

(13) Henry Cooke: A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the General Synod of Ulster, Belfast 1825. Quotations in this discussion from pp.8, 9, 21, 5-6, 34, 39, 46.

(14) Minutes of Templepatrick Presbytery, PRONI MIC IP/85.


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155 (17) Carlile's speeches in CM Vol I, p.144 (Ballymena 1826) and Vol II, p.248 (Strabane 1827).


158 (19) CM Vol I, p.144.

158 (20) First Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland, PP 1825 xii, p.826.

159 (21) Bruce/Perceval correspondence in Bruce MSS, PRONI T3041/1/E24-41; Montgomery in Crozier, p.486; Temple-patrick Minutes, October 1825.


160 (23) Ref to Rammohun Roy in Bruce:Sermons, p.305 (fn).


162 (25) Paul's 'Creeds and Confessions Defended' in Works, pp.347-349; for an example of the orthodox polemic
against polished preaching, see Gavin Struthers: History
of the Rise of the Relief Church, Edinburgh and London
1848, p.189.


(27) Ibid., pp.98-101; claims for conversions in e.g.
letter from 'McG' in The Record, 18/1/1828, and Ulster
Guardian, 9/10/1829; Bowen on Presbyterians in Protest-
ant Crusade, p.33.

(28) Jamieson: Henry Cooke, p.74; Porter as in fn (11)
above; CM Vol III (1828), p.17.

(29) Cooke as in CM Vol II (1827), p.187; Montgomery
in NW 27/5/1830; Cooke and Carlow in pp.56-58 above;
Witherow: Memoria, p.271, for account of dinner 'told
me in conversation by Dr Cooke.'

(30) NW 19/5/25; Crozier, pp.167-168, 232-244, 246-
250, 420-422 and (Montgomery on Parliamentary reform)
p.567; for Montgomery on O'Connell see ibid, pp.581-
599.

(31) Jamieson: Cooke, p.24; Cooke's evidence in
Minutes of Evidence on the State of Ireland, PP 1825
ix, pp.206-221 and 268-271; and Report from the Select
Committee on the State of Ireland, PP 1825 viii, pp.
341-380.

(33) Burdett's bill in Halevy: History 1815-1830, pp. 221-223; Crozier pp.95 and 230; Holmes as in fn (12) above; Bryce's letter in NW 30/4/1829; e.g. UG 17/3/1828.

(34) Jamieson: Cooke, p.72; Montgomery in Crozier, pp.533-534.

(35) Paul's 'Review of a Speech by Dr Montgomery' in Works, pp.483-484.

(36) S.H. Rowan in CM Vol II (1827), p.245; A.H. Rowan to Dufferin in Dufferin MSS, PRONI D1071B/C/41/5. I am grateful to A. Harrison of PRONI for drawing this to my attention.

(37) Montgomery on Johnston in Crozier, pp.478 and 519-520.


(39) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911: 'Unitarianism'; Bernard Lord Manning: The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, Cambridge 1952, esp. pp.53 and 63; for extension of
1813 Act to include Ireland see article by B(ruce?) on 'The Progress of Nonsubscription to Creeds' in CM Vol II (1828), p.458; Paul: Creeds and Confessions Defended, Works, p.377; Montgomery and Rowan as in fn (18) above.


(41) CM Vol II (1827), pp.382-383.

(42) Letter in ibid, pp.542-545; Porter in report of 1827 Synod in ibid, p.231.


(44) Dispute with Magennis in McMillan: Nonsubscribing Church, pp. Quotations, pp.

(45) Cooke in PP 1825 xii, p.822.

(46) Alexander: Wardlaw, pp.150-161; Manning: Dissenting Deputies, pp.64-66 (for Manchester Socinian Controversy) and p.58 (for Wolverhampton case).

(47) Templepatrick Minutes, 7/5/1816 and May, 1817.

(49) For James Bryce (R.J. Bryce's father) see pp.108-109 above.

(50) Barnet in Fourth Report etc., p.121; RP attitude to the Belfast Academical Institution in RPSI Minutes, 1811-1825, pp.40 (July 1816), 51-52 (July 1818), 188 (July 1821); for pleasure at BAI's 'respectful address' see pp.166-167 (Appendix: Letter to RP Synod of Scotland, 31/7/1821).
CHAPTER SIX: THE REFORMED PARLIAMENT

187 (1) This account of Belfast politics is based largely on G. Slater: Belfast Politics, 1832-1868, uncompleted Ph.D. thesis (NUU).

(2) Relations between James Emerson and the Tennent family in D1748/C/3/31/1-15 (for journey to Greece) and D1748/A/332/1-27 and D1748/A/327/1-17 (for marriage to Letitia).


189 (4) Slater: Belfast Politics; John Edgar to R.J. Tennent, 20/12/1832 in D1748/C/180/2; evidence of James MacNeight (McKnight) and Maurice Cross in Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Progress and Operation of the New Plan of Education in Ireland, PP 1837 viii, esp. pp. 1170-1172 and 1355-1356.


191 (6) PP 1825 xii, pp.811-812.

192 (7) Akenson: Education Experiment. For subsequent Roman Catholic opposition, see also E.R. Norman:
(8) See e.g. Porter: Cooke, pp.202-222; Henry Cooke to Dr John Lee, 24/3/1832 and 4/5/1832 in Lee MSS, PRONI MIC 349.

(9) James Carlile to W. Innes, 24/2/1832 in MIC 349. For Murray's approval of scripture extracts see Akenson: Education Experiment, pp.95-96; for Board's adoption, see ibid, pp.244-246.

(10) Carlile to Innes and Cooke to Lee as in fns (8) and (9).

(11) Akenson: Education Experiment, pp.80-87; for rivalry between dissenters and Anglicans see e.g. Manning: Protestant Deputies, pp.337-338.

(12) Speech of John Whiteside in report of 1834 Synod, NW 30/6/1834.

(13) Debate on conduct of Committee in NW 4/7/1833.

(14) Debate on government's new proposals in 1834 Synod, NW 3/7/1834; account of Brown Street School dispute in Holmes: Cooke, pp.351-356.

(15) Belfast Commercial Chronicle, 18/9/1833, quoted
(16) Speech of Henry Cooke... at the Conservative Dinner, Belfast 1837, pp.

(17) This account of the debate from NW 3/7/1834.

(18) Cooke's remarks to Brown Street committee in NW 1/9/1836, quoted in Holmes: Cooke, p.387.

(19) Account of special meeting in NW 18/12/1834 and 22/12/1834.

(20) NW 15/9/1836.

(21) See fn (15) above.

(22) Tennent's claim to be Anglican in Slater: Belfast Politics; for origins of York Street Church, see Benn MSS, D3113/7/61, where, however, Barnet is called 'Basnett'; Bryce's account of his principles, R.J. Bryce to R.J. Tennent, 7/6/1833, D1748/C/76/42.

(23) Copy letter, Tennent to Bryce, 7/6/1833 in D1748/C/76/40 and 42.

(24) Bryce to Tennent, 25/1/1834, D1748/C/76/56.

(25) W.L. Mathieson: The Church and Reform in Scotland, Glasgow 1916, p.279.

(27) Drummond and Bulloch: Scottish Church, pp.220-221; Mathieson: Church and Reform, p.282.


(30) Manning: Dissenting Deputies, pp.227-228.

(31) Carlile to Tennent as in fn (15) above; Carlile's career in Archibald: Donegall St Church, p.13.

(32) Magherahamlet Session Book in PRONI D2487/1 and Stewart: Seceders, p.372; Fitzroy Avenue (later Alfred Street) Session Book, PRONI MIC 1P/4; Cooke on Seceders in Cooke to Lee 4/5/1832 as in fn (8) above; letter in OP (April 1834), p.252.

(33) Mathieson: Church and Reform, p.281; Halevy: History, 1830-1841, p.152.
(34) See e.g. OP LIV (March 1834), pp.214-232.


(37) Oliver MacDonagh: Ireland, the Union and Its Aftermath, London 1977, p.151; G. O Tuathaigh: Ireland before the Famine, 1798-1848, Dublin 1972, pp.53-54; Bowen: Protestant Crusade, pp.131 and 263.


(39) Discussion of background to Hillsborough meeting in Slater: Belfast Politics.

(40) A.T.Q. Stewart: Presbyterian Radicalism, p.194; Henry Cooke to Lord Roden, 25/10/1834 in Roden MSS, PRONI MIC 147/7.

(41) Account of meeting in UG 31/9/1834 and in Porter: Cooke, pp. 273-274.

(42) NW 12/6/1834; Patterson's letter in BNL 28/11/1834; attribution of D.G. Brown's pamphlet in Holmes: Cooke,
(43) Account of 1835 Synod in NW 6/7/1835 and 9/7/1835.

(44) Discussion on communion with the Church of Scotland in NW 6/7/1835; see also Robert Allen: James Seaton Reid, Belfast 1951, pp.91-95.


(49) RPSI: Causes of a Fast, Belfast 1830, p.8; Causes of Thanksgiving, Belfast 1830; Houston: Narrative and Plea, p.35; for establishment of The Covenanter, see e.g. ibid, pp.3-6.
(50) Thomas Houston: The Christian Magistrate, Belfast 1832. Quotations in this discussion from pp.60, 61 (fn), 46, and 94.


(53) NW 17/12/1835 for soiree; The Christian Liberator Vol II (Jan 1836), p.23 for claim; Report of the Proceedings of the RPS, Belfast 1836, p.20 for denial; NW 11/1/1836; CL Vol II, pp.8-14 (Jan), 38-40 (Feb), and 133-140 (June) 1836, and Vol III (March 1837), pp.43-52 for Paul's involvement.

(54) (William McComb): The Voluntaries in Belfast, Belfast 1837. Quotations used in discussion from pp.6, 8-9, 10, 11, 16, 26, 17-18, 22, 25, 38, 59.

(55) 1836 Report, p.22.
(56) Alexander and McIlwaine in NW 21/4/1836 and
5/5/1836; RBAI student in CL Vol II (July 1836), pp.
152-159; Ritchie in John Ritchie: A Reply to Rev Dr H.
Cooke, Edinburgh 1837.

(57) 1836 Report. Quotations from pp.14, 17-18, 27, 13;
text of motions from RPSI: Abstract of Minutes of the
RPSI 1836, pp.15-16.

(58) Houston: Narrative and Plea, p.42.

(59) Debate on changes in terms of communion in RPSI
Minutes, 1811-1825, pp.59 (1819), 73-74 (1820); RPSI:
Abstract of Minutes of the RPSI, 1826, p.11 and 1828, p.8.

(60) Godkin in NW 29/7/1837 and CL Vol III (Sept
1837), pp.166-171.

(61) Thomas Houston: The Reviewer Reviewed, Belfast 1833,
p.22.

(62) Paul on the Reformed and Reforming churches in
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(July 1837), p.207; Paul: A Solemn Protest against that
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(63) Bryce to Tennent, 5/1/1847, D1748/C/76/75; for
Birch and Stavely see pp.27-30 above; for Fleming on
1848 see Rise and Fall, p.54.
(64) Bryce to Tennent 11/11/1837, D1748/C/76/70; Carlile to Tennent, 28/7/1837, D1748/C/94/10. Carlile's departure in Archibald: Century, pp.17-18; Godkin's name ceases to appear in Belfast Directories, 1839; Dr Tennent's funeral in NW 24/1/1837 and obituary in CL Vol III (March 1837), pp.66-72.

(65) May Street Session Book no 1, (10/10/1836), PRONI MIC 1P/3 reel 3; Fitzroy Avenue Session Book, (27/8/1838), MIC 1P/14; financial difficulties in John Williamson: May Street Presbyterian Church Centenary, Belfast 1929, pp.35-37.

(66) Church of Scotland decision in Allen: J.S. Reid, pp.94-95 and NW 25/7/1836; 1836 Synod in NW 4/7/1836; A Member of the Synod of Ulster (James MacNeight): A Letter to Those Ministers and Members of the Church of Scotland who have Lent Themselves to the Dens Theology Humbug, Edinburgh 1836.

(67) For Cooke's visit to London see Holmes: Cooke, p. 386; for McGhee and Dens' Theology see Bowen: Protestant Crusade, pp.114-116 and for O'Sullivan see ibid, p.117.

(68) (MacNeight): Dens Theology Humbug, quotations from pp.v, 10, 34, 36.
(69) Houston: Narrative and Plea, p.35.

(70) Account of debate in NW 15/8/1836 and in A Member of the Synod of Ulster (MacNeight): Persecution Sanctioned by the Westminster Confession, Belfast 1836, p.5; John Dill's support for the education system in NW 17/9/1836; Winning joining Church of Ireland in Fasti.

(71) Richard Dill's support for National Education System in NW 8/12/1834; Gibson's defence of Ferrie in NW 13/7/1835, cited in Holmes: Cooke, p.392.

(72) Persecution Sanctioned, p.16.

(73) Ibid, p.viii.


(76) Account of Belfast elections from Slater: Belfast Politics; Crawford's conversion to Unitarianism in Sharman Crawford MSS, PRONI D856/G/8A-10 and 15; Henry Cooke: Sins of the Times, Belfast 1837, p.38; account of May Street meeting in Holmes: Cooke, p.419 and Porter: Cooke, pp.280-282.

(77) Slater: Belfast Politics.
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